

Facebook Group Analysis of Violence against Women: A Content Analytical Study

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ABSTRACT

This research work seeks to examine Facebook groups and the portrayal of violence against women. The objectives of this study among others include to find out contents on Facebook groups with violence against women and to find the types and forms of such uploads. Uses and gratification as well as symbolic interaction theory were used as theoretical framework. Content analysis was adopted, the sample size is 334. This was arrived at using Australian calculator. Coding sheet was used as an instrument of data collection. Findings show that there are contents on Facebook groups portraying violence against women. Findings also show that there are different types of violence against women and it comes in various forms. It therefore recommends among others, that Facebook should strongly criticise groups and uploads with violence against women and also give prominence to and promote speeches that advocates women's rights and course, even if such speeches contain descriptions of women's bodies as long as these descriptions are not violent in nature.

Keywords: Facebook, facebook groups, social media, women, violence and violence against women

1.0. INTRODUCTION

The society has mistaken the concept of women being the weaker vessel for mistreating them. Most disturbingly, the social media seems to be encouraging this societal vice by the kinds of uploads permeable in the various social networking sites. Social media has become a significant outlet for violence against women. This is due to the anonymity that it provides. Perhaps many of these trolls would never actually voice such violent tendencies to a person in real life. The decrease in human interaction caused by increased internet use, reliance on the internet and social media as a social life, means that people are losing the ability to moderate their own behaviour, and to assess what is appropriate. People are anonymous online, and they do not have to be held accountable for violence. (Melanie, 2015)

Social media are elements of the new media and have become the highest activity on the internet in recent times. According to Experian Marketing Services (2012), 91% of today's online adults use social media regularly. This makes the use of social media the number one activity on the web. Similarly, Nielsen (2012a) observes that people continue to spend more time on social networks than any other category of websites, accounting for 20% of their time spent on personal computers and 30% of their mobile use time. Smith, A. Seagall L, Cowley S (2012) observe that in 2012, more than one billion people were active users of Facebook each month, similarly, 32% of all internet users used Twitter (Honigman, 2012). Nielsen (2012b), also observes that Twitter users send one billion tweets every two and half days, while Instagram users upload forty million images everyday (INSTAGRAM, 2013) and Facebook users share 684,478 pieces of content every minute and YouTube users upload forty-eight hours of new video every minute (James, 2012).

Social media has become a significant outlet for Violence. This is due to the anonymity that it provides. Perhaps many of these trolls would never actually voice such violent tendencies to a person in real life. The decrease in human interaction caused by increased internet use, reliance on the internet and social media as a social life, means that people are losing the ability to moderate their own behaviour, and to assess what is appropriate. People are anonymous online, and they do not have to be held accountable for violence. They can get away with violent behavior. (Melanie, 2015)

Violence against women through social media manifests in many forms ranging from the use of words, photographs and physical injury resulting to the death of many women. The use of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp have increased risks of violence against women. Medi. (2016) the chairman of UHRC cited in Mark (2016). He further said cases of online violence against women had risen in 2015 and 2016. “The commission has noted increased cases of abuse against women, especially through the Internet by stalking, sexual harassment, public shaming on social media by ex-partners and spouses.”

In almost every society today (especially the developing countries) issues of several cases of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), trafficking young women for prostitution, child labour and forced labour, widow inheritance as well as discrimination against girl child. Perhaps, the worst of these cases is violence against the girl child (a potential woman). There are many reported cases of girl child sexual exploitation and child rape in Nigeria. Violence against women seems to be the order of the day in our society today. Initially, perpetrators of these violent acts hide themselves and try to hide their victims. This may be due to lack of adequate medium to ‘flaunt their exploits’.

Unfortunately, women seem to be treated with violence, disrespect and hurts. Violence against women is a broad term covering all practices that humiliate women, impair their health and endanger their lives. The United Nation’s declaration on the elimination of violence against women (1993) in Fagbemi (2000, p. 1) described violence against women thus:

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

The above description by the United Nations clearly shows that violence against women manifest in many forms. In most developing nations, especially Nigeria, violence against women, usually occur in forms like wife battering, female infanticide, incest, marital rape and forced pregnancy. Sexual harassment in work place and harmful traditional practice like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), premature marriages and widowhood rites, are other forms through which violence against women used to be executed. Today, with the advent of social networking sites like facebook, Twitter, 2go, blackberry phones, Ipads etc, the story has changed. Violence against women is no longer only on face-to-face basis. The social media forms are being used to perpetuate violence against women. It now transcends international boundaries and affects all classes of women irrespective of income, class or culture, (Grange, 2000; Madunagu, 2003).

However, with the advent of social media, these perpetrators seemed to be presented with avenue to display their escapades. The social media seems to make it possible for uploads of rape, women battering, hate speech against women and such vices. Seeing this uploads, some people might hail the perpetrators as bold, daring and manly. Others could desire to carry out their own escapades and post them on a social media such as Facebook.

2.0. Statement of the Problem

The swift development in information communication technology has created immeasurable opportunities for the people (media users). With the advent of mobile technology devices and the growth of social media platforms such as facebook, my space, twitter, e.t.c has given numerous accesses to the people not only to consume media but also to make media and share it more easily and swift. However, increased access to media consumption and creation has its latent consequences; one of such is Violence against women. The society seems to have turn women who are supposed to be the weaker vessel treated with respect and dignity into objects of disrespect and disdain. Social media has become a significant outlet for violence against women. Violence against women is an ongoing problem. It is something that has deeply manifests itself in many forms, physical, psychological, emotional, and verbal. The past years has seen an eruption of violence against women through the various social media outlets. It is in view of this that this work seeks to study the Facebook Groups and violence against women by content analysing pictorial uploads on Facebook groups depicting violence against women.

3.0 Research Objectives

1. To examine contents on Facebook Groups with violence against women.
2. To determine the types of violence being portrayed against women on Facebook Groups
3. To find out the forms in which people upload contents with violence against women on Facebook groups.

Research Questions

1. Are there contents on Facebook groups with violence against women?
2. What are the types of violence being portrayed against women on Facebook groups?
3. In what forms are these contents portrayed on Facebook groups?

4.0 Literature Review/Theoretical Framework

4.1 Uses and Gratification Theories:

This theory was propounded by Katz Elihu and Blumer Jay G. in 1970. The theory is of the view that media consumers influence the entire process of communication because they select messages based on their needs, beliefs or preferences, Folarin (1998, p. 65). The focus here is not just on media production and disseminations but on audience and consumption.

Katz (1974) cited in Okunna (2002, p. 20) says “uses and gratification theory is concerned with the social and psychological origin of needs which generates expectations of the mass media or other sources which leads to differential pattern of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in need gratification and other consequences, mostly unintended ones”.

The relevance of uses and gratification theory to this study lies in the fact that Facebook as social medium can be used by its subscribers to satisfy certain needs. Facebook users can use the medium to satisfy the need to reinforce self image. Image reinforcement in the context of this work can be seen in two folds. On one side are the perpetrators of violence using the Facebook groups to upload their escapades to reinforce the image of authoritativeness and boldness; through Facebook groups, they can project themselves as being daring and in charge. On the other side are the women against whom violence had been carried out. Facebook can be a medium to be used for image reinforcement and redemption.

In the light of this theory, Facebook group users can acquire and shape knowledge, information regarding violence against women, have post on Facebook group that can help to determine how people perceive and react to issues concerning women.

4.2 Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic interaction theory was propounded by Lakossa and Reifus in 1969. Asemah (2011:208) says symbolic interaction is the process on the course of which people interpret symbols used by the interaction partners and that their own actions are based on the representative’s interpretation and or situation definitions”. Asemah further says “when people interact overtime; they come to a shared meaning for certain terms and actions and thus, come to understand events in particular ways”. Stanley J. Baran (2004, p. 433) has it that “cultural symbols are learned through interaction. In other words, people give meaning and meaning control their behaviour”.

The major tenets of symbolic interaction theory according to Anaeto, Onabanjo and Osifeso (2008) as cited in Asemah (2011) include the followings;

- Communications occurs through the creation of shared significant behaviours;
- Individual develop self concepts through social interactions. Social concept is constructed through communication and interactions with others.
- People give things meaning and the meaning controls their behaviour towards those things;
- Human act towards people or things on basis of meanings they assign to those people or things; and
- Meaning and social reality are shaped from interactions with others and that, some kind of shared meaning is reached. The boundary condition for this theory is that, there must be numerous people communicating and interacting and thus, assigning meaning to situations and objects.

Symbolic interaction theory has in-depth relevance to this research paper. A Facebook group is a social arena for sharing symbols. As these symbols are shared, interactions take place. Pictorial and textual uploads containing or encouraging violence against women has meaning attached to them by those who upload them. In the course of interaction, meaning and social reality are shared with others and some kind of shared meaning is reached. That is, overtime, people tend to see and interpret violent content against women in the light which those who upload the content want them seen. Since individual develop self concepts through social interaction, it follows that people give meaning to these contents based on what they have perceived and this meaning control their behaviour towards women.

4.3 Social Media and Violence against Women

There seems to always be argument on the relationship between the media and violence; and in recent time violence against women especially. According to Hasan (2013, p. 151), “Media has always been accused of

presenting violence in its news and entertainment. It is an established fact that violent in media content has led to negative effects on people, children, adolescent and adults". Hasan (2013, p.153) further notes that "there is no denying the fact that media communicated violence has had its toll on the societal health. It makes people acquire lasting attitude, emotional reactions and behaviours".

Narrowing down a bit from media in general, Hasan noticed that virtual violence both on the television and the internet (on which the social media – Facebook operates) have greater effects. In Hasan (2013, p.154) words, "virtual violence is already available on the World Wide Web – children and young people can download violent lyrics and visit websites that feature violent images and video clips. Much of the violence is also sexual in nature". Talking on the fate of Indian women, Hasan (2013, p. 142) has it that "women's issues in the Indian media still by and large, seen as narrow, niche issues and covered as much as dramatic or lurid cases of violence or discrimination and continue to receive more coverage than other equally important issue". This means that violence and discrimination against women are issues portrayed on media worldwide.

Facebook as a social medium has been accused by several internet users as guilty of encouraging and allowing violence against women. In an open letter to Facebook (2013), Laura Bates, Soraya Chemaly and Jaclyn Friedman draw Facebook's attention to the issue of rape and domestic violence. They reveal that there are advert messages on Facebook with contents that target women for violence, that "there are group pages and images that explicitly condone or encourage rape or domestic violence or suggest that they are something to laugh or boast about". Bates et al mentioned such pages on Facebook to include 'Fly kicking shits in the uterus', 'Kicking your girlfriend in the fanny because she won't make you a sandwich', 'Violently raping your girlfriend just for laughs', 'Raping your girlfriend' and more. The letter reveals that "images appearing on Facebook include photographs of women beaten, bruised, tied up, dragged and bleeding with caption such as 'The bitch don't know when to shut up' and 'Next time don't get pregnant'". Elliot (2011) also points out pages such as 'Roses are red, violets are blue', 'I've got a knife, get into the van', 'You know she's playing hard to get when you (sic) chasing her down an alleyway', 'I kill bitches' and 'Punch the shit in the face'.

These pages as observed by Glaser (2011) have 200,000 likes. Many similar groups also exist on the website including 'You know she's playing hard to get when she's trying to break out of your van'. This site has 52,000 likes. Another site, 'Wiping make up off your shoe after a long day of kicking shits in the face', has 89,000 likes while the website 'Riding your girlfriend softly because you don't want to wake her up' has 87,000 likes.

Bates *et al* (2013) point out to Facebook that "these pages and images are approved by your moderators while you regularly remove contents such as picture of women breastfeeding, women post-mastectomy and artistic representation of women bodies". This implies that while uploads with violent contents against women are allowed by Facebook moderators, nonviolent contents are intentionally removed. The letter also has it that "women's political speech involving the use of their body in non sexualised ways for protest is regularly banned as pornographic while pornographic contents prohibited by your own guidelines remains". Bates *et al* (2013) asserts that "it appears that Facebook considers violence against women to be less offensive than non violent images of women bodies and that the only acceptable representation of women's nudity are those in which women appear as sex objects or victims of abuse".

4.4 Empirical Review

Nwammuo, (2013). Examined Social Media and Perpetuation of Violence against Women in Nigeria: The Case of Facing Death on Facebook. The study shows that In recent years, criminals who invade and negatively use the opportunities offered by the internet and the World Wide Web, seem to be removing smiles off the faces of many Nigerian women. Social media forms due to their high interactivity are used to perpetuate violence against women. Facebook remains the most commonly used one. This trend has resulted in the use of facebook to commit violence against women. Facebook executives have done little or nothing to stem this ugly trend. The specific clause in facebook's statement of rights and responsibilities that is supposed to protect women against violence and hate speech instructs the user: "you will not post content that is hateful, threatening, or pornographic; incites violence; or contains nudity or graphic or gratuitous violence."The case of Cynthia Osukogu provides basis for this assertion. Violence against women through facebook manifests in many forms ranging from the use of words, photographs and physical injury resulting to the death of many women. The study examines the documented cases of violence against women through facebook using the analytical discussion method. It concludes that such violence has led to emotional, psychological and physical torture of Nigerian women. It however, recommends that caution should be the watch word of women, especially young girls who access facebook and other social media forms.

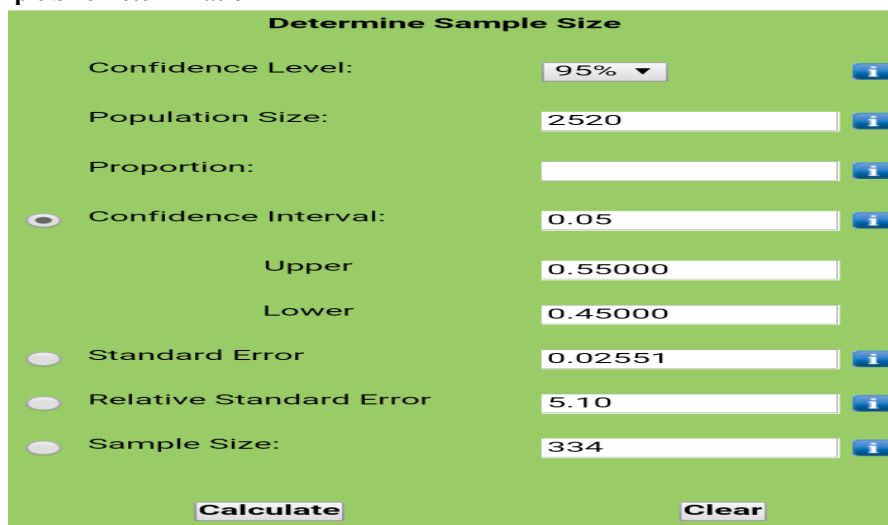
Eshiet (2014). Examine youths, Social Media and Gender-Based Violence: An Emerging Trend in Nigeria. The study paper investigated social media orchestrated gender-based violence among youths in Nigeria, using a combination of methods - content analysis of reported cases in the media and in-depth interview of victims. With the advent of mobile technology devices and the growth of social media platforms, endless access has been provided for the youths not only to consume media but also to make media and share it more

easily and quickly. However, increased access to media consumption and creation has its latent consequences; one of such is gender-based violence. Findings reveal a dangerous pattern of social media orchestrated gender-based violence among youths. This calls for media literacy education for Nigerian youths on the need to use social media critically and cautiously.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

This work uses content analysis as the method of data collection. The population for this research work is the upload on Facebook groups that contains or encourages violence against women within January 2017 to March 2017, a period of three months. Since uploads on Facebook groups takes place by the seconds, a study was done to determine the average upload per day. An average of 4 uploads per day was discovered. Thus, average upload per day multiplied by the numbers of days and facebook groups selected in the three months under study forms the population for this work. Facebook $4 \times 7 \times 90 = 2520$. Therefore, the population for this work is 2520 uploads. The sample size is 334. This was arrived at using Australian Calculator.

5.1 Sample Size Determination



Parameter	Value
Confidence Level	95%
Population Size	2520
Proportion	
Confidence Interval (Selected)	0.05
Upper	0.55000
Lower	0.45000
Standard Error	0.02551
Relative Standard Error	5.10
Sample Size	334

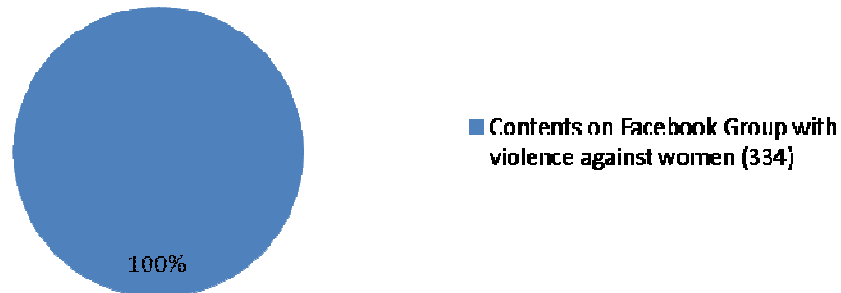
The sampling technique used in this study is multi stage sampling. First and foremost, the researcher purposively chose facebook groups relating to violence against women because they were considered to be in better position to provide information on the subject matter. Secondly, Simple random sampling was then used to select seven (7) facebook groups relating to violence against women which are; rape me, love dating groups for boys and girls, ladies secrets, ladies big fat ass, girls for boys love dating room, rape me girls, fuck me how u want groups.

The instruments for this research are the content on Facebook groups that contain or encourage violence against women. These contents are categorized into; Pictorial, Textual, Form of upload, types of violence. Also, this paper uses the instrument of code sheets. For this research paper, the unit of analysis are uploads on Facebook groups that contains or encourages violence against women within the period of study. Such upload could be pictorial or textual. This work assesses the Facebook groups' contents through the internet. This research therefore paper uses the percentage table method for data analysis.

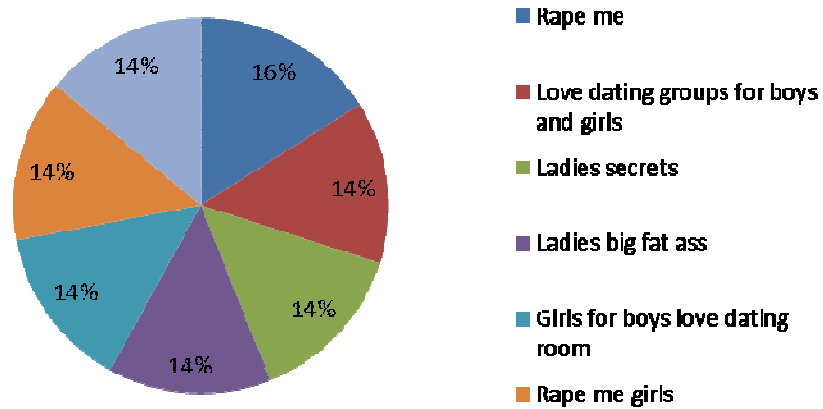
6.0 DATA PRESENTATION

Research question 1: Are there contents on Facebook group with violence against women?

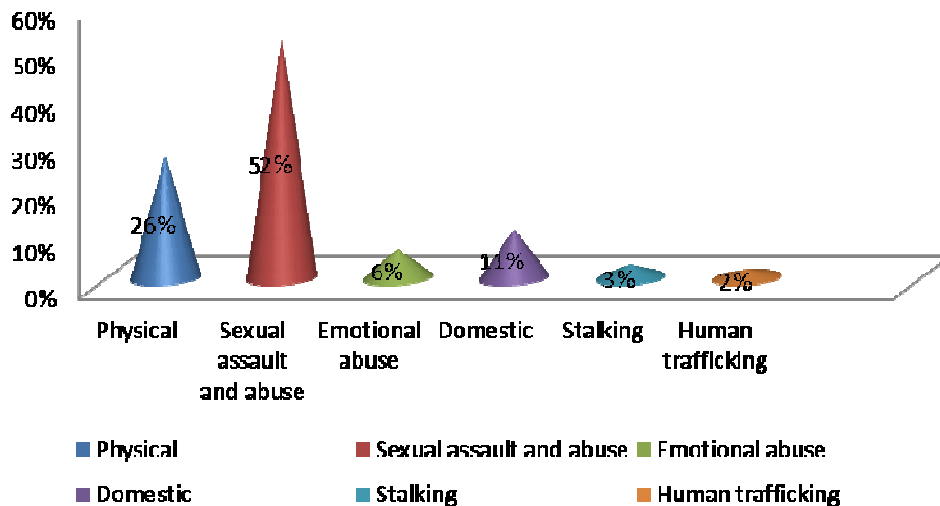
Sales



Uploads with violence against women of facebook groups



Research question 2: What are the types of violence being portrayed against women on Facebook groups?



Research question 3: In what forms are these contents portrayed on Facebook and Twitter?

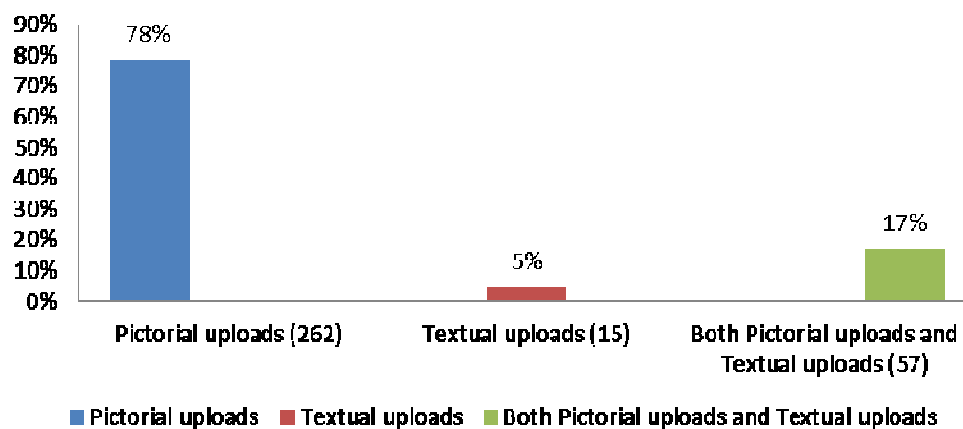


Table 1.1 has been able to establish that there are contents on Facebook groups with violence against women; table 1.2 reveals the types of violence being portrayed against women on Facebook groups; table 1.3 shows the forms in which these violent contents are uploaded.

6.1 Discussion of Findings

From this study, it has been clearly established that there are contents/uploads on Facebook groups that contains, encourages and depicts violence against women. Most of these upload come from facebook groups. Groups are social associations that people belong to on Facebook. It is disheartening to discover that people belong to groups on Facebook such as Rape me, love dating groups for boys and girls, ladies secrets, ladies big fat ass, girls for boys love dating room, rape me girls, fuck me how u want groups, referring to women as bitches to be killed; ‘I’ve got a knife, get in the van’, most likely the knife is to be used on the woman; ‘wiping make up off your shoe after a long day of kicking shits in the face’, obviously, women are the ‘shits’ and so many of them are kicked so hard that there are enough make ups on the shoes to wipe out. This fact was supported by Medi. (2016) the chairman of UHRC cited in Mark (2016) stated that “The use of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp have increased risks of violence against women”. He further said cases of online violence against women had risen in 2015 and 2016. “The commission has noted increased cases of abuse against women, especially through the Internet by stalking, sexual harassment, public shaming on social media by ex-partners and spouses.”

The study shows that there are different kinds of violence against women on Facebook groups. People upload a picture that depicts different types of violence against women. 26% of the total uploads on Facebook groups depicts physical violence, 52% depicts sexual assaults and abuse, 6% are emotional abuse, 11% depicts domestic violence, 3% depicts stalking, 2% depicts human trafficking on women.

Most saddening is the fact that Facebook is permissive to all of these. When the picture with the caption ‘Women deserve equal rights and lefts’ was reported to Facebook, the response as reported by Chemaly is “thanks for your report. We reviewed the photo you reported but found it doesn’t violate Facebook community standard in hate speech”. However, Chemaly points out that “hate speech negates posts or photos that attack a person based on their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability or medical condition”.

Looking at the effect of these Facebook contents, Chemaly (2013) noted that “contents like these usually mock victims and glorifies abusers and violence in general. So violence against girls and women becomes a fiction, a fantasy, something they watch as rack up points in a game, enjoy a drink or eat dinner”. The open letter to Facebook signed by Bates Laura, Soraya Chemaly and Jaelyn Friedman sum it up as;

The latest estimate from the United Nations’ ‘Say no to violence’ campaign is that the percentage of women and girls who have experienced violence in their lifetime is now up to an unbearable 70%. In a world where this many girls and women will be raped or beaten in their lifetime, allowing content about raping and beating women to be shared, boasted and joked about contributes to the normalisation of domestic and sexual violence, creates an atmosphere in which perpetrators are more likely to believe they will go unpunished and communicates to victims that they will not be taken seriously if they report.

7.0 Conclusion

Facebook has grown to become one of the most used social networking sites. As Oison (2013) noticed, “it has grown from a gossip site to include cause-focused advocacy and global issues as parts of its information sharing. News stories, events and opinions now go on viral sites like Facebook before they reach the TV”. Being a social networking site with this large number of users, it has become a readily available avenue for people to portray and receive violent contents against women, which are capable of and are actually negatively changing opinions and behaviours towards women. As symbolic interaction theory points out, “people give things meaning and the meaning controls their behaviours towards these things”.

Summarily, this research paper has been able to find out contents on Facebook groups with violence against women; reveal the types of upload of these violent contents on and show the forms in which these violent contents are uploaded via Facebook.

8.0 Recommendations

This research paper recommends that;

- a) Facebook should strongly criticise pages and uploads with violence against women.
- b) That Facebook user should desist from joining groups that promote violence against women.
- c) Facebook should compel advertisers whose advert messages appear on Facebook and tweets on Twitter to desist from advert messages portraying women as objects of violence and where such adverts already exists, they should be removed.
- d) That Facebook should give prominence to and promote speeches that advocate women’s rights and course, even if such speeches contain description of women’s bodies as long as those descriptions are not violent in nature.

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