

Silenced Voices on the Net: A Systematic Literature Review on Gender-Based in Social Media Networks

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Abstract

Gender-based violence against women on social media networks is a significant problem due to its pervasive and harmful impact on individuals and society as a whole. This issue manifests in various forms, including harassment, threats, and abuse, which can have severe psychological, emotional, and physical consequences for the victims. This systematic review identifies and analyzes the dynamics of gender-based violence on digital platforms, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, using a systematic methodology according to PRISMA guidelines. The findings reveal that while social media can be powerful tools for empowerment and connection, they also perpetuate and facilitate forms of violence that reflect and amplify the inequalities and abuses of the physical world. The study concludes that it is imperative to recognize and address these dynamics to protect and empower women in all spaces, both physical and digital.

Keywords: *Gender-Based Violence; Social Networks; Systematic Review; Violence against Women.*

Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, gender violence has increasingly infiltrated various social networks. Technological advancements have facilitated global connections and the swift dissemination of critical information, promoting freedom of expression and the reporting of human rights abuses. However, these advancements have also created fertile ground for new forms of gender-based violence against women. This digital violence is escalating at alarming rates and often occurs without adequate punitive measures. Social networks have become integral to daily life, with platforms like Twitter and Facebook offering users vast contact lists and gaining significant political and social influence (Fuchs & Schäfer, 2020). The pervasive nature of these platforms means that the reach and impact of gender-based violence are amplified, making it a significant issue in today's digital landscape.

Many women, particularly those in politics and journalism, have faced relentless cyber violence, prompting some to pursue legal action (Lomba, Navarra, & Fernandez, 2021). These digital tools facilitate harmful actions by partners, ex-partners, and strangers, contributing to the normalization of violence against women in society. The prevalence of gender-based cyber violence is anticipated to rise, especially among young people. The hostile nature of digital environments often discourages women from engaging on social networks, leading to the erosion of their digital support networks. This situation underscores the need for robust legal frameworks and platform policies to protect women from online harassment and violence..

This dynamic creates a paradox where efforts to raise awareness about violence against women inadvertently perpetuate ingrained beliefs that violate women's rights (Lomba, Navarra, & Fernandez, 2021). While social media platforms are crucial for raising awareness and mobilizing support against gender violence, they also provide spaces where such violence can proliferate unchecked. This paradox highlights the complexity of addressing gender violence in digital spaces and the need for comprehensive strategies that balance awareness-raising with effective prevention and intervention measures.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated instances of violence against women, underscoring the need to understand the new dynamics of violence within social networks. As more people turned to digital

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platforms for work, social interaction, and information during the pandemic, the instances of gender-based violence online increased. This shift has highlighted the urgent need for better protections and support mechanisms for women online, as well as the importance of addressing the underlying social and cultural factors that contribute to gender-based violence.

The infiltration of gender violence into social networks represents a significant challenge in the digital era. The same technological advancements that have enabled global connections and the spread of critical information have also facilitated the emergence of new forms of violence. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook, while essential for social and political engagement, have also become venues for cyber violence, particularly against women in public roles. The anticipated rise in gender-based cyber violence, especially among younger demographics, further emphasizes the need for effective measures to combat this issue.

The paradox of using social media to raise awareness while inadvertently perpetuating violence illustrates the complexity of this problem. Efforts to combat gender violence online must be multifaceted, involving legal action, platform accountability, and societal change. The exacerbation of online gender violence during the COVID-19 pandemic serves as a stark reminder of the vulnerabilities in our digital environment and the necessity for robust solutions to protect women's rights and well-being in these spaces.

Social networks, despite being valuable communication tools for personal and professional interactions, have also become platforms where gender violence thrives. Many social media platforms lack sufficient filters to protect women from harassment, intimidation, and psychological abuse, making violence against women on these networks as damaging as other forms of violence.

This systematic literature review aims to clarify recent concepts and perspectives on gender violence against women and explore the dynamics of this violence on social networks during the COVID-19 pandemic. By examining these aspects, the review seeks to illuminate the multifaceted nature of gender violence in the digital age and highlight the critical need for effective interventions.

Methodology

This systematic review was carried out in accordance with the PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021). This approach ensures that all relevant aspects of the study are considered and reported clearly and coherently, including the definition of inclusion and exclusion criteria, exhaustive literature searches, study selection, quality assessment of included studies, and synthesis of results. Adherence to the PRISMA guidelines significantly enhances the transparency and reproducibility of the review, allowing other researchers to replicate the study and thereby strengthening the reliability and validity of the findings. Transparency also facilitates the identification of potential biases and limitations in the methodology used. This process was designed to transparently document the rationale, methodology, and outcomes of the review (Higgins & Green, 2022).

Furthermore, the use of PRISMA is widely recognized and recommended by numerous academic journals and research organizations, making its implementation a common and accepted practice in the scientific community. By following these guidelines, researchers ensure that their work meets the expected quality standards in the academic field, thus increasing the credibility and potential impact of their research. The PRISMA guidelines include a flow diagram that helps visualize the study selection process, from the initial identification to the final inclusion, providing a clear and concise representation of the review process. This facilitates the reader's understanding of how the review was conducted and how decisions were made at each stage. In summary, the use of the PRISMA guidelines in conducting a systematic review ensures that the study is carried out rigorously and transparently, contributing to the quality and reliability of the findings and fully justifying its use in systematic reviews.

An initial search was carried out in the E.B.S.C.O. (Elton B. Stephens Company), Scopus (Elsevier), and Web of Science (Clarivate Analytics) databases to locate previous systematic reviews related to gender violence on social networks. However, no published or ongoing reviews explicitly addressing this concept were found. The search for documents in these databases was conducted using keywords such as Facebook,

female abuse, female violence, gender abuse, gender violence, social media, social network, social platform, social site, social web, Twitter, woman abuse, woman violence. This review aims to examine the evidence of gender violence against women through social networks during the COVID-19 pandemic. To meticulously design the inclusion and exclusion criteria, various parameters were established.

The study selection procedure involved several stages. Initially, seventy-six works were identified: thirty-one articles from Scopus, twenty-five from Web of Science, and twenty from EBSCO. All studies were manually filtered, and duplicates, totaling thirty-eight, were removed, resulting in thirty-eight texts for review. The titles, publication years, authorship, and abstracts were independently reviewed according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure a thorough vetting process. From these, articles not available in full text, numbering seven, those lacking versions in English or Spanish, totaling four, and those not focusing on gender violence against women in social media networks, numbering nine, were excluded. This process resulted in eighteen articles for further analysis. An independent review of the full texts of these eighteen papers was conducted, focusing on ten criteria: author, year of publication, objectives, methods, sample, scope of research, techniques and instruments, conclusions, and language of publication. This review led to the elimination of two documents that did not meet the inclusion criteria. Ultimately, sixteen articles were selected for detailed examination.

During the data analysis phase, a matrix was used to organize the most significant information from the selected studies, incorporating the ten previously mentioned criteria. This method enabled a quantitative synthesis of the data.

Results

Sixteen articles met the inclusion and exclusion criteria established by the methodology. The majority of publications were found in the EBSCO (8 articles) and Scopus (7 articles) databases, with fewer in the Web of Science (3 articles). The primary languages of these publications were English (14 articles) and Spanish (2 articles).

The studies were conducted across various regions, with two each from North America, Northern Europe, and South America. Additionally, there was one study each from Africa, Oceania, South America, East Asia, North America, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East (Arab countries), Western Europe (United Kingdom), and Western Asia (Turkey). Most of the studies were published in 2021 (9 articles), followed by 2020 (4 articles) and 2022 (3 articles).

Balance of Objectives and Methods

Exploring Theoretical Concepts of Gender Violence. In examining theoretical concepts of gender violence, one study aimed to provide a comprehensive empirical understanding of its prevalence by conceptualizing online gender-based abuse in terms of frequency, character, and consequence (Erikson, Hakansson, & Josefsson, 2021). This approach allows for a detailed analysis of how often such violence occurs, its nature, and its impacts. Another investigation focused on the dynamics of violence against women on social networks, setting four main objectives: comprehension, better understanding of the victims, development of relevant terminology, and contributing new theoretical knowledge (Kumar, Gruzd, & Mai, 2021). These objectives are crucial for forming a robust theoretical foundation. Additionally, some authors discussed male peer support as a theoretical framework to understand the perpetuation of gender violence (Berggren & Gottzen, 2022). These studies collectively aim to deepen our understanding of gender violence by providing diverse theoretical insights and empirical evidence.

Exploring Prevention Strategies Against Violence Towards Women. Several studies have focused on prevention strategies to combat violence against women. One study emphasized the role of conversations with service providers as a central strategy in preventing violence on social networks (Fairbairn, 2020). This highlights the importance of direct communication in intervention efforts. Other authors have noted the necessity of peace and liberation strategies for women facing gender violence, suggesting these as critical components of prevention (Krisvianti & Triastuti, 2020). Additionally, some research has proposed

evaluating how young people use social networks to prevent gender violence, as part of an Australian media campaign (Molnar & Hendry, 2022). These strategies reflect a multifaceted approach to prevention, incorporating both direct intervention and broader societal change.

Exploring Activism in Social Networks Against Violence Towards Women. The role of activism on social networks in addressing violence against women has been a significant area of focus. Two authors examined how social media influences the struggles of indigenous women, highlighting the platform's role in amplifying marginalized voices (Pilote & Hubner, 2022). Another study explored how women use Twitter to protest against various forms of gender-based violence and its impact on gender activism (Datiri, 2020). This demonstrates the power of social media as a tool for mobilization and awareness. Additionally, an analysis of Facebook's reactions to news reports on police complaints about gender-based violence showed the platform's potential for public discourse and accountability (Pérez, 2021). These studies underscore the transformative potential of social networks in feminist activism.

Exploring the Forms of Violence Against Women. Research has also delved into the specific forms of violence against women. One study prioritized analyzing tweets about six types of violence—physical, verbal, sexual, harassment, brutal murder, and victim-blaming—highlighting the diversity and severity of these acts (Ogan & Bas, 2020). Another study proposed a detailed examination of new methods men use to monitor, restrict, harass, and intimidate feminists on social networks (Bali, Omer, Abdulridha, & Ahmad, 2021). These insights are vital for understanding the various ways in which gender violence manifests and evolves, particularly in digital spaces.

Exploring the Analysis of Language Data in Social Networks. Analyzing language data on social networks has provided significant insights into gender violence. One study employed a natural language processing model to classify content messages on gender violence, showcasing the potential of computational tools in this field (Soldevilla, Flores, & IEEE, 2021). Similarly, another study proposed developing a standardization methodology for natural language data analysis in social networks (Chaparro-Saenz & Galpin, 2021). Researchers also conducted an exploratory analysis using computational linguistic methods, complemented by qualitative studies of misogynistic discourses on Twitter (Fuchs, 2014). These studies highlight the importance of advanced analytical techniques in understanding and addressing gender violence online.

Exploring Migration Due to Sexual Violence. The intersection of migration and sexual violence has been another critical area of research. One study analyzed the pathway from sexual violence before migration to the risk of suicide, emphasizing the lack of support networks for refugee women (Um, Lee, Kim, Rice, & Palinkas, 2020). This research highlights the compounded vulnerabilities faced by migrant women and underscores the need for targeted support systems.

Exploring the Impact of the Permissive Climate of Social Networks. Lastly, the permissive climate of social networks and its broader impact on perpetuating gender-based violence has been examined. One study explored how this permissive environment exacerbates the issue, highlighting the need for stricter regulations and more proactive measures (Watson, 2022). This research points to the significant role that platform policies and societal attitudes play in either curbing or enabling online gender violence.

In terms of the methodological approach, the studies varied significantly, employing mixed, qualitative, and quantitative methods. Of the 16 studies reviewed, 10 used a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of their research questions. These studies utilized sample sizes ranging from over 931,363 cases to as few as four, highlighting the flexibility and adaptability of mixed methods in handling diverse data sets. Three studies adopted a purely qualitative approach, working with sample sizes ranging from more than 14 to fewer than six cases. This approach focused on in-depth understanding and detailed analysis of smaller, more focused groups. The remaining three studies employed quantitative methods, involving sample sizes between 85,837 and 273 cases, demonstrating the ability to handle large-scale data and provide statistically significant results.

The studies also differed in the sources of their data. Seven were based on data from Twitter, reflecting the platform's prominence in social media research. Two studies used data from Facebook, while two others

combined data from both Twitter and Facebook, showing an integrative approach to understanding social media dynamics. Additionally, two studies drew data from various social networks, and one included data from both Reddit and Twitter, indicating a broad scope in data collection to capture diverse social media interactions.

Regarding research instruments, mixed-method studies employed a variety of tools, including analysis questionnaires, surveys, and interviews, to gather and analyze data. These instruments allowed researchers to triangulate data and validate their findings through multiple sources. Qualitative studies used techniques such as the "garden hose" communication method, which likely involves open-ended, flowing conversations, alongside traditional interviews and virtual observation. These methods enabled researchers to gain deep insights into participants' experiences and perspectives. Quantitative studies, on the other hand, utilized advanced tools like Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT), a state-of-the-art machine learning model for natural language processing, and visual ethnography, which combines visual data with ethnographic research methods to analyze cultural phenomena.

Overall, the methodological diversity among these studies highlights the importance of using varied approaches and tools to address the complex and multifaceted nature of social media research, particularly in the context of gender violence and social interactions. This diversity ensures a robust and nuanced understanding of the phenomena under study, drawing on the strengths of different research paradigms and data sources.

Research on gender violence presents several similarities and differences in their objectives and approaches, reflecting the complexity and breadth of the topic. A notable similarity is the focus on social networks, which appears in multiple studies. This common interest underscores the growing importance of digital platforms both in perpetuating gender violence and in its prevention and activism. Social networks are not only channels where violence manifests but also potential tools to combat it. Additionally, the diversity of methods used in these studies, ranging from content analysis and natural language processing models to in-depth qualitative approaches, demonstrates a concerted effort to capture the complexity of the phenomenon from multiple angles. This multidimensional approach is crucial for developing effective intervention strategies and policies. The theoretical contributions these studies seek, as well as the global perspective they adopt, highlight the need for a robust conceptual framework and the international relevance of the problem of gender violence.

However, there are also significant differences in the specific approaches and methods of analysis employed. While some studies focus on the prevention of gender violence (Fairbairn, 2020; Krisvianti & Triastuti, 2020; Molnar & Hendry, 2022), others focus on activism (Pilote & Hubner, 2022; Datiri, 2020) or the theoretical conceptualization of the problem (Erikson, Hakansson, & Josefsson, 2021; Berggren & Gottzen, 2022). The variety in the methods used, from computational techniques and data analysis to in-depth qualitative methods, reflects different ways of addressing the phenomenon. Computational methods allow for scalability and generalization, but they may lack the depth that qualitative approaches offer. On the other hand, qualitative studies provide detailed and nuanced understanding, which is fundamental for addressing specific aspects of the problem, such as male peer support or indigenous activism.

Furthermore, there is considerable variation in the scope of application of the studies. While some focus on specific contexts, such as indigenous activism (Pilote & Hubner, 2022), others adopt a more general perspective on the permissive climate of social networks (Watson, 2022). The diversity in the populations studied, from young people and migrant women to victims of gender violence in general, shows that gender violence affects different groups in diverse ways. This highlights the need for personalized approaches that can address the specific needs of each affected group.

In summary, although studies on gender violence share certain approaches and objectives, such as the analysis of social networks and theoretical contributions, the differences in their methods and study populations reflect the richness and complexity of the field. An integrative approach that combines various methodologies and perspectives can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the problem and develop more effective intervention strategies. These similarities and differences not only enrich the field

of study but also underscore the need for multifaceted approaches to address a problem as complex as gender violence.

Gender, Gender Violence and Sexual Violence against Women

Upon reviewing the literature, it is evident that the term "gender" is defined and conceptualized in various ways within the examined texts. The persistent role of "gender" in the social context is emphasized, suggesting that "gender" should be viewed as an analytical and relational category that is constructed and maintained through social interactions and norms (Scott, 1986). This perspective highlights the fluid and evolving nature of gender, which is continuously shaped by societal dynamics. The analytical approach proposed by Scott (1986) provides a robust framework for understanding how gender roles and identities are not fixed but are perpetually influenced by the surrounding social environment.

Gender-based violence is identified as a grave violation of human rights, encompassing a wide range of harmful behaviors directed at individuals based on their sex. These behaviors include psychological, physical, and sexual actions without consent, along with any form of discrimination (World Health Organization and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, 2010). The types of violence experienced by women are notably diverse, spanning physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and semiotic forms (Krook & Sanín, 2016; Krook, 2020; Krook, 2017). Additionally, violence against women and children is classified as a crime against humanity, emphasizing the severity of these acts and the urgent need for intervention (Hürriyet Daily News, 2022). Recognizing such violence as a human rights violation underscores its global significance and necessitates comprehensive measures to address and mitigate its impact. This multifaceted nature of gender-based violence, categorized as a severe human rights violation, calls for immediate and comprehensive interventions. By including various types of violence—physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and semiotic—the breadth of the problem is illustrated, highlighting the need for diverse strategies to combat it effectively.

Gender violence is widespread, cutting across social classes and educational levels (Sánchez, 2010), manifesting in various domains and consistently harming victims. The forms of gender violence against women include physical and sexual abuse, psychological and economic violence, and even verbal or written abuses. Perpetrators of such violence can be intimate partners, colleagues, or political adversaries. A prevalent form of gender violence, intimate partner violence, encompasses physical, sexual, emotional abuse, and controlling behaviors by an intimate partner (World Health Organization, 2022). This widespread and diverse manifestation of gender violence emphasizes its complexity, affecting women across different social strata and educational backgrounds. By detailing various forms of violence and identifying potential perpetrators, it highlights the necessity for a multi-faceted approach to identify, prevent, and address these harmful behaviors across different contexts. The discussion of intimate partner violence, in particular, underscores the need for targeted interventions, and the suggested multi-faceted approach is crucial for effectively addressing the diverse contexts and types of gender violence, emphasizing tailored strategies in prevention and intervention efforts.

Psychological violence is a common form of gender violence that often manifests through abusive language. This language can be explicit and overtly derogatory or implicit, hidden behind sarcasm and irony (Waseem, Davidson, Warmesley, & Weber, 2017; Schmidt & Wiegand, 2017). Additionally, misogynistic language, rooted in the belief that women are inherently weaker, represents another significant form of violence (Pamungkas, Basile & Patti, 2020). Social networks play a crucial role in facilitating abusive language against women, partly due to ineffective filters against such behavior on some platforms, leading to the rise of cyberbullying. Historical analysis of social networks reveals elements suggestive of gender violence, highlighting the shortcomings in laws aimed at combating online harassment (Barak, 2005). The impact of psychological and misogynistic violence on social networks necessitates improved regulatory measures and platform policies to protect users from harassment.

The repercussions of gender violence are extensive, affecting every aspect of a victim's life, including mental and physical well-being and social development (Barter et al., 2018). Sexual violence, in particular, includes all actions with sexual implications, such as any sexual act, attempt to secure a sexual act, or unwanted

sexual comments or insinuations, as well as acts that limit sexual freedom through coercion in any environment, whether at home or in the workplace (Sprague & Laube, 2009). Furthermore, sexual violence against women is prevalent across all social contexts, with indigenous women being particularly vulnerable. This widespread occurrence emphasizes that such violence extends beyond gender-specific contexts, impacting various segments of society (Perreault, 2017). The pervasive nature of sexual violence and its profound impact on victims highlight the need for targeted interventions and support systems to address and prevent these violations effectively.

Social network and Gender Violence against Women

Social networks significantly impact community health and behavior, often rendering health procedures precarious and ineffective due to the scarcity of resources, particularly affecting a young audience (O'Neill, 2018). Defined as mobile services, social networks enable millions to connect and conduct their daily activities online (Dewing, 2012). In these virtual spaces, algorithms facilitate connection searches, sparking debates among users and fostering addictive behaviors toward these platforms (Dixon, 2014). Furthermore, virtual communities on these networks consist of groups of people who forge relationships online, thereby creating numerous online communities (Rai & Spary, 2018).

The perceived impartiality within these cyberspaces has led to divergent views. Some consider these spaces neutral or egalitarian concerning security, yet they often perpetuate the exclusion of certain members (Correa & Pavez, 2016). Highlighting the importance of decolonizing technology is crucial as it introduces unique human aspects, influencing personal rationality and introducing new justice issues, despite prevailing dominances (Duarte & Vigil-Hayes, 2017).

Social networks, integrated into our lifestyles, influence routine activities that potentially harm victims, suggesting these victims are embroiled in cycles of violence (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Factors contributing to this include the presence of an accessible victim, a motivated offender, and the absence of a guardian, all of which facilitate the occurrence of violence (Holt & Bossler, 2008; Felson & Eckert, 2015). Nonetheless, not all aspects of social networks are detrimental; they can foster positive interactions and assertive communication if they promote friendly relationships (Fuchs, 2014; Gruzd & Haythornthwaite, 2013). However, digital cultures inherently sustain problematic structures such as patriarchy, which continue to marginalize women within these networks, thus having profoundly negative impacts (Shaw, 2014; Gray, 2012).

The varied reputation women develop within social networks is crucial as it challenges stereotypes and combats violence (Palmer & Simon, 2010). The role of social networks in providing support through relationships has been noted; they serve as vital communication tools that enhance interactions between law enforcement and the public. Notably, broader network relationships offer greater access to diverse support and information, whereas narrower networks might contribute to higher risks of detrimental outcomes like suicide among women (Perry, Pescosolido, & Borgatti, 2018; Um et al., 2020). Additionally, social networks are increasingly used by police as tools for public communication (Walby & Joshua, 2021).

Feminism Activism in Social Networks

The literature on feminist activism within social networks elucidates various theoretical approaches that enable a deeper understanding of feminism's integration into digital environments. The studies highlight how feminist activism in social networks fosters a reciprocal and transformative relationship, reevaluating the women's movement through its diversity and the broad spectrum of social contexts it encompasses, such as institutions, associations, and universities (Paveau, 2017; Bereni, 2012). This form of activism is expressed in several distinct approaches: Liberal Feminism and Social Media utilizes liberal values—justice, equality, and equity—to challenge the patriarchal state system and critically assesses the impact of technological advancements, which are often seen as male-dominated (Paveau, 2017). African Feminism addresses the specific challenges faced by women on the continent, including educational deficits, female genital mutilation, early marriage, domestic abuse, and life-threatening conditions, characterizing African feminism as both philosophical and pragmatic, deeply rooted in the lived experiences of African women

(Muttume, 2005; Ihle, 2009; Ahikire, 2014). Intersectional Feminism emphasizes the interconnected nature of gender-based systems with other forms of subordination such as race, age, disability, and socioeconomic status, highlighting how these intersections diversify the experiences of gender violence among women (Crenshaw, 1989).

Additionally, the critical analysis of feminist discourse is extensively covered through various scholarly works, providing formal conceptual definitions that aid in dissecting the nuances of feminist interactions within social spheres. This includes the analysis focused on social issues, which scrutinizes the role of discourses in perpetuating societal problems and dominations, particularly affecting oppressed groups who oppose those wielding power (Van Dijk, 2003). The examination of masculine privilege delves into the discursive practices that sustain and perpetuate societal structures favoring men, often at the expense of women's well-being and inclusion (Lazar, 2005; Lazar, 2007; Lazar, 2014). Moreover, the analysis centered on mass media explores the production and reproduction of gender identities and representations within media platforms, which often legitimize and perpetuate gender inequalities (Lazar, 2005).

These academic perspectives together create a thorough framework that explains the dynamics of feminist activism on digital platforms. They also highlight the essential need for a nuanced comprehension of how digital and social media affect and reshape feminist practices and ideologies in different global settings.

Discussion and Conclusions

The literature review reveals that the definition of "gender" remains ambiguous when not directly associated with violence. To construct a comprehensive theoretical framework, it is crucial to integrate theories on gender violence (World Health Organization and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2010; Krook & Sanín, 2016; Sánchez, 2010; World Health Organization [WHO], 2021) with theories on women's social networks (O'Neill, 2018; Dewing, 2012). This combined perspective is essential to fully grasp the dynamics and implications of gender within social contexts. By merging these theoretical views, we gain a deeper understanding of how gender is constructed and maintained through societal interactions and norms, reflecting its fluid and evolving nature.

Within this integrated framework, several theoretical concepts emerge as vital for understanding gender violence in social networks. The concept of virtual communities, for instance, explores user participation and dialogue within emerging internet groups (Rai & Spary, 2018). Investigating biases in social networks reveals their lack of neutrality, particularly concerning the inclusion of socially excluded members (Correa & Pavez, 2016). Examining the decolonization of technology provides insights into how these digital elements reflect broader human expressions (Duarte & Vigil-Hayes, 2017). These theories collectively offer a nuanced understanding of the social dynamics at play in online spaces.

The routine activity theory of the cyber lifestyle helps explain how direct interactions between individuals can lead to harmful behaviors (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Key factors such as the presence of an accessible victim, an incentivized offender, and the absence of a guardian are critical in understanding potential transgressions (Holt & Bossler, 2008; Felson & Eckert, 2015). Furthermore, examining the reputation of women in social networks highlights the importance of managing one's reputation in these digital environments (Palmer & Simon, 2010). These theoretical approaches provide valuable insights into the mechanisms of gender violence in digital spaces.

Understanding support networks for female victims of gender violence is crucial. Broad network contacts can facilitate support from various sources (Perry, Pescosolido, & Borgatti, 2018), whereas narrower networks might result in reduced support (Um et al., 2020). The reciprocity between feminist activism and social networks suggests that these platforms could transform feminist practices (Bereni, 2012; Paveau, 2017). Additionally, theories on liberal feminism and its impact on social networks provide deeper insights into justice and equality for women, highlighting that true gender equality remains unachieved. These perspectives underscore the significance of social networks in both providing support and enabling activism.

Theories on African feminism reveal the continent's philosophical underpinnings, which are academic, experimental, and practical (Muttume, 2005; Ihle, 2009; Ahikire, 2014). The approach to intersectional feminism enriches our understanding of the complexity of feminist discourse and its critical analysis (Crenshaw, 1989). This also applies to theories focused on social issues (Van Dijk, 2003) and masculine privilege, which elucidate how discourses support a system of privileges toward men (Lazar, 2005; Lazar, 2007; Lazar, 2014). Media discourse theory further clarifies how communication networks can delegitimize gender representations in their production modes (Lazar, 2005). These theories provide a comprehensive view of how gender issues are represented and perpetuated in various social and media contexts.

From a methodological perspective, a mixed-methods approach is considered the most suitable for analyzing and describing gender violence against women on social networks. This approach allows for the utilization of both large and small sample sizes, depending on the study's objectives. Popular social networks such as Facebook and Twitter are predominantly used for data collection, while platforms like Reddit are less frequently utilized. Research studies adopting a mixed-methods approach typically employ interviews and surveys, alongside analysis questionnaires. For qualitative studies, methods such as interviews, the 'garden hose' technique, and virtual observation are prioritized. In contrast, quantitative studies often make use of surveys and advanced techniques like Bidirectional Encoder Representation from Transformers (BERT) and visual ethnography. The use of a mixed-methods approach is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of gender violence in social networks. This methodology allows researchers to gather rich, qualitative data through interviews and virtual observations, while also collecting quantitative data through surveys and advanced analytical techniques. The systematic review of gender violence against women on social networks highlights the diversity of theoretical perspectives on the topic. By incorporating various theories, researchers can better explain the multifaceted nature of violence against women, considering the influences of psychological aspects, relationships, and socio-cultural contexts. This diverse methodological approach ensures a robust analysis, addressing the complexity and breadth of gender violence in digital spaces.

The composition of social networks, differentiated by gender, highlights significant regulatory gaps in preventing online harassment. Gender violence has inflicted irreparable harm on women's lives, especially regarding sexual violence, where any act with sexual implications is defined, severely restricting women's freedom. The prevalence of gender violence across various domains, such as politics, where the landscape is predominantly male-dominated, leads to the marginalization of women due to the pervasive patriarchal social system globally (Rai & Spary, 2018; Krook, 2020; Lovenduski, 2005). The feminist movement actively confronts this issue, advocating for solutions and dialogue to bridge the gap between women and institutions, thereby empowering them. Addressing these regulatory gaps and promoting equitable representation in digital spaces is crucial for advancing women's rights and safety.

A significant limitation of our research is the outdated foundational concepts of gender and the challenge in locating studies that address systematic gender violence beyond professional contexts, as most researchers tend to focus solely on their specific areas of interest. Ultimately, adopting a less analytical and more pragmatic approach is crucial for developing realistic and effective solutions applicable to all societies where violence against women persists. This strategy emphasizes the importance of education as the cornerstone for preventing practices that undermine the physical and psychological integrity of women.

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