[1]Ajaegbu Oguchi, [2]Ikpegbu Emmanuel, & [3]Olorunpomi A. Rebecca.

Social Media Framing of Domestic Violence Against Men in Nigeria: A Review of Literature

[4]Mass Communication Department, Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria.
[5]Mass Communication Department, Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria.

[6]Mass Communication Department, Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author: olorunpomi0141@pg.babcock.edu.ng; *+234 802 577 0453.*

Abstract

It is no gainsaying that domestic violence happens to both men and women as it knows no boundaries to race, educational level, or ethnicity. It is a general problem that has matured from a social issue to a public health concern. However, there has been much focus on domestic violence against women while little has been done on women who are perpetrators. Given that there are only a few research on the reportage and framing of domestic violence against men, this study assesses social media framing of domestic violence against men in Nigeria. Anchored on the agenda setting and media framing theories, this paper adopts a qualitative research design, using document review and library research as data collection methods to generate secondary data. These data were purposively sampled from published works from 2015 to 2023 to provide information-rich data in line with the study. Findings reveal that social media coverage is arguably the most effective route through which the disturbing acts of domestic violence can be made known to society, as media reportage of domestic violence serves as a voice for victims. The paper concludes that very few crimes were reported where men are victims of domestic abuse and even fewer of such cases were highlighted in the media. This has given female abusers some sort of leniency despite the public's zero tolerance for any kind of abuse, portraying the abuse as self-defence. It then recommends the need for more social media reportage of domestic violence against men in order to shape the public's opinion.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Framing, Men, Social Media.

Introduction

Domestic violence is a severe problem that disrupts the peaceful coexistence of individuals in relationships, particularly close partnerships. Although domestic violence has existed for decades, there has been a rise in its frequency, internationally, which has led to studies on how to address the issue (Kolbe & Büttner, 2020). They further state that no one is immune to the risk of domestic violence, whether rich or poor, black or white, male and female, and old or young. Adekoya and Olaseinde-Fayomi (2020) however state that domestic violence against women is still prevalent and more generally researched probably because domestic violence against men is often treated with levity as victims are not certain of justice. For instance, 38% of all murders of women are committed by intimate partners; 35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence; while a lesser percentage of 28.5% of men have experienced physical or sexual intimate violence (Adekoya & Olaseinde-Fayomi, 2020).

Wallace, Wallace, Kenkre, Brayford, and Borja (2019) also state that the failure to view men as victims have limited reportage, visibility, and support to victims, and that these are the reasons domestic violence against women gets more attention than violence against men which are perpetrated by women. Wallace et al. (2019) further argue that this affects men's access to help when they seek it and hinders their attempt to leave abusive relationships. Men often report disbelief, ridicule and how organisations that were meant to help mocked them for their experiences and even suggested that they somehow, were responsible for the abuse. Enakele (2019) also opines that domestic violence against men has remained largely unreported due to shame and fear, which has resulted into silence. This is why Hine (2022) says that men tend to take the blame for their victimisation than women because it is not always labelled what it is.

The media as a social force is expected to serve as the voice of the voiceless, oppressed, and the less privileged, passing information through newspapers, radios, and social media pages like WhatsApp, Twitter (X), Instagram and Facebook (Meta). This is why Metaj-Stojonova (2017) states that the media is responsible for increasing the public's knowledge of violence and challenging its stance in our society. Kim, Wang, and Oh (2016) state that the media, particularly news media, have so much influence that they can determine how news consumers perceive critical societal issues. This implies that, how the media report problems determine the public's perceptions of and reactions to such problems. This underscores the power which the media hold over the public. Ekweonu (2020) also states that the media assist in shaping and manipulating public opinions and discussions on matters relating to violence, rape cases, molestation, as well as mistreatment of any kind, thus increasing the emphasis placed on those crimes, and challenging the so-called traditional rites and societal beliefs about women. Therefore, if domestic

violence cases are presented casually, the audience tends to underrate the news and ignore it. However, if the message is passed with emphasis on the deeds done, the lasting effect it has on the victims, and the dangers to society, it can draw significant attention.

There is therefore no doubt that the media have a fundamental role in assisting the voiceless victims in attaining justice. Anisur and Najuwa (2022) however state that the media do not effectively report domestic violence against men because the media framing of domestic violence reduces the chances of the man being portrayed as the victim and justifies the actions of the female perpetrator as self-defence. It is no gainsaying that domestic violence can happen to both men and women as Thomas (2015) notes that domestic violence knows no boundaries to race, educational level, or ethnicity. It is a general problem that has matured from a social issue to a public health concern.

However, there has been much focus on domestic violence against women while little has been done on women who are perpetrators. Asekun-Olarinmoye, Asekun-Olarinmoye, Adebimpe, and Omisore (2019) discover that very few crimes were reported where men are victims of domestic abuse and even fewer of such cases were highlighted in the media. This has given female abusers some sort of leniency despite the public's zero tolerance for any kind of abuse, portraying the abuse as self defence. This is why men in African countries such as Nigeria are less likely to admit that their female partners are violent towards them because men are thought to be strong and invulnerable (Asekun-Olarinmoye et al., 2019). Given that there are only a few research on the reportage and framing of domestic violence against men, this study assesses the new media, specifically, social media framing of domestic violence against men in Nigeria through the review of extant literature.

Method of Data Analysis

This study adopts a qualitative research design, using document review of empirical studies as well as library research such as articles and relevant documents on issues related to domestic violence against men in Nigeria as data collection methods to generate secondary data. These data were purposively sampled from academic sites to provide information-rich data in line with the study. The review covers works published from 2015 to 2023.

Theoretical Framework

Agenda-Setting Theory

The Agenda Setting theory proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972 is a popular communication theory that has gained significant recognition in the media industry for over decades since its introduction (Luo, Burley, Moe, & Sui, 2018). Auwalu (2018) posits that the theory assumes that the media can influence and change the public's perceptions through the media's power in establishing a hierarchy of news prevalence. In other words, the agenda-setting theory refers to how the media's coverage of a particular event determines the issues that become topmost in the public's minds. In addition, the theory assumes that the matter of urgency to the media will automatically be considered with utmost attention by the public (Auwalu, 2018). In essence, the media determines how relevant a piece of information becomes to the public.

Another assumption of the theory is that its effects can be explored through two phases, that is, the transmission of issue salience and the transmission of attribute salience (Luo et al., 2019). From this assumption, it can be inferred that the agenda-setting theory empowers the media to either put forward the criticality of an issue as it is or as it decides to put it forward based on interests. Both stages have proven the purpose for which the agenda-setting theory was introduced; to determine which issues deserve the most attention. Based on this fact, the idea has maintained its relevance up to the sudden emergence of the internet and the changing media landscape.

Based on the assumptions of the agenda-setting theory, it can be inferred that domestic violence against men in Nigeria may be explained in the sense that this issue is not given the same hierarchy of prevalence as domestic violence against women in Nigeria. The assumption that through agenda-setting, the media can influence the public's perception of the weight of a matter is proven correct in the case of domestic violence against women in Nigeria while the same thing cannot be said in the case of domestic violence against men. After all, as a result of less representation, this issue receives significantly less attention, hence, few deliberate actions have been taken to reduce the issue. This study assumes that if the media can use their agenda-setting obligation to place the issue of domestic violence against men in Nigeria on a higher hierarchy, there are more chances of more public awareness, and the issue will move from a minor to a major one.

Media Framing Theory

The Framing theory was propounded by sociologist Erving Goffman in 1974 who "put forth that people interpret what is going on around their world through their primary framework" (Marra & Myer, 2020). This indicates that the framing theory involves people using their primary framework, to frame what goes on in their environment from different sources. A subset of the framing theory is the media or news framing theory. This theory

assumes that the media have the power to present a particular event or issue in a style or "frame" to enhance public attention and shape public opinion (D'Angelo & Shaw, 2018). Magnusson, Sperling, Veenman, and Oteman (2021) also state that the media framing theory assumes that news can be framed to filter and set boundaries of what information can be processed from such items before releasing information to the public. Additionally, news framing can foster social movements like protests, domestic violence cases, and gender equality which can be generally acknowledged by several communities, both the literate and the illiterate audiences (Teresa, 2022). More than determining which issue receives the most prominence, the news framing theory assumes that the media is capable of presenting an issue using frames that can shape how the issue is perceived by public opinion (D'Angelo & Shaw, 2018).

In the context of this study, this assumption is true. Extant literature focus on the fact that prior to 1970, little attention was paid to domestic violence because it was framed in the media as riots and terrorism, hence, it was not seen as an issue that was within the 'pay grade' of the citizens (Odenigbo, 2019). Therefore, how domestic violence is framed matters as to how seriously the issue is perceived and how it is responded to. Another assumption of this theory is that frames could be either positive or negative. Therefore, this study, using the lens of the media framing theory, assumes that due to negative frames, domestic violence against men is not perceived as it should be; men being victims and women being perpetrators. Hence, the issue does not receive as much attention as it should.

Review of Literature

The Concept of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence has several definitions because the concept is perceived as individualised. Many specialists have sought to define or explain it, albeit with small variances. Nevertheless, all definitions indicate that domestic violence is a kind of familial dysfunction which has negative effects both on victims and the society at large. According to Ekweonu (2020), domestic violence refers to the pervasive violation of individual's fundamental human rights in a particular marriage or cohabitation. The author further clarified domestic violence to be in various forms like sexual, physical, and emotional, causing lasting damage to the victims.

In the view of Ali, Dhingra, and McGarry (2016), domestic violence happens between individuals who share an interpersonal relationship. Olaseinde and Ogwuche (2022) explain domestic violence, which also referred to as domestic abuse, spousal abuse,

battering, family violence, dating abuse, and intimate partner violence (IPV), as a pattern of behaviours involving the abuse of one partner against another in an intimate relationship, such as a marriage, partnership, dating, or within the family. This is in line with Paulino (2017), who opines that the irony of domestic violence is that it occurs mainly between family members in a domestic setting, those who are related by blood or share some form of intimate connection. For example, domestic violence occurs between couples, siblings, parents and children, guardians and children, and extended relatives.

Huecker, King, Jordan, and Smock (2022) further explain that domestic violence can be physical, psychological, sexual, and emotional. Psychological or emotional domestic violence involves threats, intimidation, criticism, and other acts demonstrated by the abuser to degrade self-esteem and worth of one, while physical abuse involves visible attacks on victims (Paulino, 2017). On the other hand, sexual abuse, the most common form of violence against society, involves forced engagement in sexual acts against the victim's free will (Ligiero et al., 2019).

Although used interchangeably, Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence are two distinct phrases with distinct meanings. According to Moorer (2021), while Domestic violence occurs within a home and between any two people in that household (a couple, a parent and a child, between siblings, or even roommates), intimate partner violence (IPV) occurs only between romantic partners, whereby one intimate partner, whether current or previous, creates dominance and control over another intimate partner. These partners may or may not share a household. This dominance and controlling behaviour include physical or sexual aggression, or financial, emotional/psychological, cultural, spiritual, and reproductive abuse (Moorer, 2021).

Cases of Domestic Violence against Men in Nigeria

Recent events and studies are revealing that women not only physically abuse their partners but also go as far as committing murder. Olaseinde and Ogwuche (2022) reiterate some of such cases: Mrs. Onyebuchi, a banker, who was arrested on October 26, 2016, together with Kingsley Ikechukwu and Chigozie Smart for attempting to assassinate her spouse. Also, in Ogun State, Oluwakemi Etu was accused of killing her husband because he had taken a second wife. A female lawyer named Yewande Oyediran, slit her husband's throat for having another wife. These alleged examples show that domestic violence against men occurs in Nigeria as well.

Aside from the risk of being killed, some men also endure other forms of domestic violence such as sexual deprivation, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, and physical assault such as slapping, kicking, and hitting with an object (Olaseinde & Ogwuche, 2022). Most of the time, men avoid talking about this because they believe it would make them look bad or even weak because it is frowned upon in Nigerian culture for a woman to beat a man, after all, women are the 'weaker vessels' and have less strength compared to men.

Domestic Violence against Men in Nigeria

Domestic violence against women has been the subject of many pieces of research and reporting worldwide, a situation that has made domestic violence against men receive far less attention. Olaseinde and Ogwuche (2022) highlight several factors that have made domestic violence against men receive less attention than domestic violence against women and children. These factors include; low self-esteem, lack of courage, emotions of helpless embarrassment, fear of failure, and stigmatization which impede them from reporting violence against them. Hine, Bates, and Wallace, (2022) opine that domestic violence occurs due to men's desire to dominate and control; a misconception that emanates from history and other socially constructed patriarchal values that emphasise and facilitate male dominance. Unfortunately, this misconception has given rise to a gendered paradigm, that is, domestic violence stereotype, which influences literature to describe domestic violence as abuse perpetrated by men against women, while excusing female violence as an action done in self-defence.

The result of a survey carried out by the NOI polls in 2016 reveals the prevalence in violence against men, women, and children in Nigeria as 47%, 97%, and 79%, respectively. Another survey carried out by the NOI polls in 2019 revealed the prevalence of domestic violence among the three demographics (men, women, and children) in Nigeria as 43%, 82% and 70% with a reduction of 3%, 15% and 9% from the 2016 survey. This shows that all demographics experience domestic violence. While men experience domestic violence the least, domestic violence against them is very much existent. However, while domestic violence against women takes the upper hand, the number of respondents aware of men being victims of domestic violence increased from 16% in 2016 to 19% in 2019.

Politics Nigeria Newspaper (2023) reports that Lagos state had 340 cases of wives beating their husbands to submission as of 2022. According to the report, there was a rise in domestic violence against men throughout the year as 340 men reported to the Lagos Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA), that their wives had abused them between

September 2022 and July 2023. This was more than twice the 140 cases that were recorded between September 2021 and July 2022. The report further states that domestic violence occurred in the evening, while Sexual Violence occurred mainly in the afternoon. In all, the trend for 2023 cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) received for adults, including males and females, showed a sharp increase in reportage of the issue in September 2022 and July 2023 (Politics Nigeria Newspaper, 2023).

Causes Of Domestic Violence in Nigeria

According to the results from the survey carried out by NOI polls in 2016 and 2019 as seen in figures 1 and 2, there are several causes of domestic violence in the Nigerian system. These include, economic hardship or poverty, misunderstanding between couples, lack of trust, un-submissiveness (specific to wives), lack of moral values, impatience, illiteracy, greed, culture, and traditions (NOI Polls, 2016 & 2019).
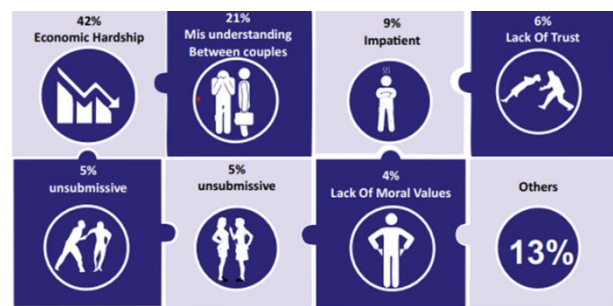

Figure 1: Causes of Domestic Violence in Nigeria (**NOI polls, 2016**)
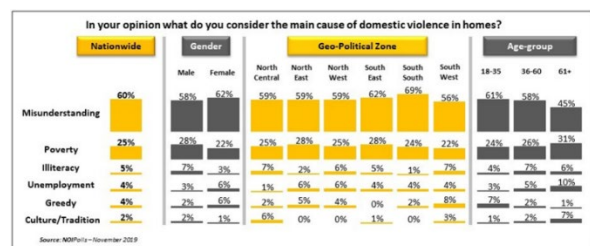

Figure 2: Causes of Domestic Violence in Nigeria (**NOI polls, 2019**)

These statistics increased significantly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the resultant lockdown which required families to stay at home and conduct almost all activities therein including schooling and work, hence its global impact on health, the economy, and interpersonal connections, especially on intimate relationships and partnerships (Long et al., 2022). Data on reported incidents of Gender Based Violence (GBV) cases in Nigeria based on preliminary information from 24 states shows that in March 2020, the total number of GBV incidents reported was 346, while in the first part of April, same year, incident reports spiked to 794,

depicting a 56% increase in two weeks of lockdown with some of these violent incidents tragically resulting in the death of victims (Aki, Lamptey, Hembah, Oibiokpa, & Tachin, 2020).

The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, (DSVA), reported a three-fold increase in the number of telephone calls received through their hotlines in one month. DSVA in its report acknowledges a peak of domestic violence between spouses in March 2020 with a total of 390 reports in the month, an average of 13 new cases daily (Premium Times, 2020). Statistics also show that the total lockdown imposed on Lagos and Ogun states, as well as the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, from the 30th of March to the 5th of May, resulted in a considerable spike in domestic violence of up to 56% (Premium Times, 2020). These significant increases in statistics highlight that while federal and state governments enforced work-from-home measures to contain the spread of the virus, domestic violence victims found themselves confined in their homes with their abusers for weeks on end (Aki et al., 2020).

The Relationship between the Media and Domestic Violence in Society

The media, whether in the form of newspapers, radio stations, magazines, or television, is responsible for stirring public reactions and raising opinions on a particular issue (Majek, 2017). There is often the tendency for the audience to view the broadcast, print, and outdoor media as more appropriate to spread news and discuss serious societal matters ahead of the internet media. However, Vermeer, Trilling, Kruikemeier, and de Vreese (2020) note that internet media has as many roles to play as other kinds of media. They conclude that people have increasingly used the internet as their primary source of information because it offers "an enormous amount of available information sources and channels, as well as greater opportunities for interaction and co-creation among news consumers" (p. 1114).

It should be noted that the use of internet media is not restricted to developed countries, developing countries are equally leveraging the use of internet media to access news, information, and enlightening discussions on arising issues. Nigerians before the advent of the new media got informed about events in the society and country via the early morning newspapers which got improved with the birth of the broadcast media (radio and television), especially with the re-diffusion of network news and later on with the proliferation of private broadcast media (Akintayo & Ekeh, 2020). However, the advent of new media has made live updates reach citizens effortlessly and wherever they are.

In stating the role of the media in presenting domestic violence, Okoli and Ngwube (2018) opine that the media is a "powerful tool to start a grassroots campaign" (p.72). A lack of reportage of domestic violence issues will keep its implications hidden and continue to discourage the victims from speaking up. However, constant reminders and awareness from the media through all its forms can expose the dangers and consequences of domestic violence. Moreover, the heavy responsibility placed on the media came from the popularity it has gained over the years and its unique trait of reaching a larger audience within and beyond the country (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020).

The Effect of Social Media Presentation on Domestic Violence

Liu, Xue, Zhao, Wang, Jiao, and Zhu, (2021) argue that as a result of the use of social media to present domestic violence cases, researchers have a tool through which they can gather data to conduct studies on or to make inquiries into pieces of research based on domestic violence cases. Furthermore, they argue that due to social media, the research gap found in the insufficiency of current studies that can provide direct, accurate, and reliable evidence on the impacts of domestic violence on mental health, can be closed. According to Subramani and O'Connor (2017), the capacity of social media platforms to present domestic violence can help to impact the testimony of victims as victims post about their abuse. Conversely, the abuser may also use social media to discredit the testimony of the victim. Either way, the social media presentation of domestic violence can significantly impact the outcome of domestic violence cases for both the victims and the abuser.

Panyandee (2022) states that many victims of domestic violence can turn to social media to connect with others draw strength and seek assistance from others who may understand their situation. Furthermore, there are many features across social media that serve as internet resources which victims may utilise without the fear of being found out by their abusers. For instance, Reddit, a social media website with subforums became a good place where victims turned to for assistance (Subramani & O'Connor, 2018).

Additionally, domestic violence organisations also utilise code words and phrases on their social media platforms to nudge abuse victims to seek help. For instance, they issued a statement on their Facebook page inviting anybody who needed assistance with cake recipes to contact them immediately, when asked about the pineapple incident, the poster claimed they know how to call the police or other resources to assist victims. On social media platforms such as Snapchat, refuge services were

provided for those fleeing abusive relationships. Other features of Snapchat such as user-to-user interactions also allows users to send each other brief messages either through videos, photographs, or text dialogues. Hence, domestic violence uses these features to either anonymously provide evidence or reach out for assistance. Panyandee (2022) also notes that due to fear, many victims of domestic violence find it hard to report to authorities. Hence, many have turned to social media sites to seek help and they have received help while remaining anonymous. This mode of helping domestic violence victims is further facilitated by features of social media platforms such as Instagram, specifically the "Vanish Mode," which allows users to exchange messages without the risk of detection or tracing.

Empirical Review

The Use of Social Media Framing for Societal Issues

The concept of social media framing has been in existence in several fields. Its use across all fields has proven to be very useful in connecting people and stimulating public debate into achieving a more defined and expected result (Rabadan, 2021). Societal issues are present in every community. Some of the most widely known challenges include drug abuse, human trafficking and domestic violence. There are countless societal issues, depending on the environment and culture. However, as opined by Uchenunu and Ngonso (2021), the use of social media is a powerful tool today, which can shape people's understanding of the social issues and problems surrounding them. In addition, social media frames can bring out the crucial details of a problem to the attention of the public, instigating their perceptions and feelings (Uchenunu & Ngonso, 2021).

The importance of the use of social media framing as a facilitator for societal issues has been repeatedly emphasised by varied research. According to Heijkant, Selm, Hellsten, and Vliegenthart (2022), a frame draws the public's attention to a selected aspect of a social issue, at the expense of others, by enlarging the key aspects and making them more salient for understanding. In other words, social media framing plays a role in advocating either for the support of the audiences in solving a societal problem or raising awareness of the public towards the dangers of neglecting key societal issues like domestic violence.

Further highlighting the use of social media framing for societal issues, Venezuela, Pina, and Ramirez (2017), ascertain that framing allows for the construction of news content through specific features that provide clues about the meaning of a text of social connotations, suggesting certain attributes or judgement of the particular topic. In essence, while framing is widely used in social media platforms, its main goal is to get public attention on a particular issue, (which in this case is problems in society), which in turn will ignite discussion, casual interpretation, and evaluation by the audience (Guran & Ozarslan, 2022).

Effect of Social Media Framing on Domestic Violence against Men in Nigeria

Several pieces of research have been conducted on the effect of media framing on the audience's perception of domestic violence against men. Among such studies is one from Adekoya and Olaseinde-Fayomi (2020) which aims to understand the kinds of meaning the public attaches to social media frames of domestic violence. Using secondary data from domestic violence stories on social media pages found using hashtags, the research confirmed that framing affected how the audience interpreted and made meaning of domestic violence issues. It found that social media frames were positively associated with the negative ramifications for male victims, the perpetrator, and the social media platform which such news is disseminated from.

The lackadaisical attitude of the society towards domestic violence against men is one which is highlighted by Asekun-Olarinmoye et al. (2019) in a quantitative research, *Myth and Reality of Domestic Violence against Men*. Their research posited that public awareness on domestic violence against men is not widespread; therefore, many are in the dark on the issue. Although there is an increase in awareness, it has not become an acceptable one. The reasons for this are not far from the societal perception of masculine responsibility.

Nwachukwu and Affen (2019) also opine that the media plays a paramount role in shaping audience perception of domestic violence against men in Nigeria, using women in Port Harcourt, Rivers State as a case study. The research focused on entertainment media and suggested that the way domestic violence is framed in Nollywood movies in Nigeria often portrays men as violators and oppressors of women. This explains why there is an increase in the defensive-aggressive behaviour of many females who are the audience of Nollywood moves (Nwachukwu & Affen, 2019). A sample population of 384 residents of the Port Harcourt City Local Government Area with an estimated 3,171,076 residents was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan table. The findings of the study revealed that women who were significantly exposed to domestic violence content were more likely to display aggressive behaviour which increases the risk of the men facing domestic violence.

In different research, Olaseinde and Ogwuche (2022) analyse audience perception of how television media portrays domestic violence against Nigerian men. Employing qualitative methods, the researchers obtained data from 200 participants using the multi-stage sampling technique from four local government areas of Abeokuta in Ogun State Nigeria with a total population of 793, 681. From the findings, the respondents were significantly exposed to domestic violence content on television and as a result of this level of exposure, there had been a shift from men being perpetrators of domestic violence to women violating their husbands. Furthermore, the research found that there is an inadequate portrayal of violence against men in television media. Therefore, this form of mass media played a significant part in the negative representation and perception of men despite being victims of domestic violence.

Asekun-Olarinmoye et al. (2019) also reveal in a quantitative research that many people were unaware that men experienced domestic violence in Nigeria. The research further posited that domestic violence against men was a reality in Nigeria through scrutiny of media content. The research found that in as much as there were cases of domestic violence against men in Nigeria, public awareness of the issue was scanty. Chuka and Ngwube (2018) note that the media can positively affect the fight against domestic violence in Nigeria as they can spread news rapidly and to a large portion of the population at once. Using the descriptive survey design (Key Informant Interview and Domestic violence questionnaire) to collect data and the qualitative content analysis method to analyse collected data, the researchers recommended numerous ways that media could help with a focus on its rapidity and outreach.

Godfree (2022) reveals that in Nigeria, a general perception that is propagated by both religion and culture is that women are weaker and lesser than men who are viewed as superior, hence, men are likely to turn to employ the use of force. However, the research highlighted that more recent dynamics are contradicting these long-held ideologies. It was revealed that many women are now dominating men in Nigeria and men have gradually lost the so-called dominance that society has bestowed upon them for ages. The research aimed to provide proof that domestic violence against men was very much in existence in Nigeria (Godfree, 2022). It also took cognisance of third parties besides spouses and the role they play in perpetuating domestic violence against men.

Olaseinde and Adekoya (2021), analysed cognitive disposition of individuals from Ogun State, Nigeria based on the social media framing of domestic violence against men. Their work, *Social media framing of domestic abuse and cognitive violence among couples in Ogun state*, was carried out using methods which encompass descriptive analysis and regression analysis of surveys and questionnaires. This was administered on 813 young couples selected out of the 3060 couples registered in the three senatorial districts: Sagamu, Abeokuta South, and Yewa South in Ogun State. Their research found "that increase in social media framing of domestic violence using conflict frame, morality frame, and economic frame lead to increase in young couples' cognitive disposition towards domestic violence… (and) increased social media framing of domestic violence using thematic/episodic/attribution of blame frame and human-interest frame will reduce young couple cognitive disposition towards domestic violence". However, their research was focused on a single state in Nigeria. Therefore, necessitating the need to interrogate the other 35 states as well as the Federal Capital territory.

Hanson and Lysova (2021) conduct a media research on intimate partner homicide (IPH) to understand how men are perceived as victims of domestic violence from their partners. The research used systematic review methods to select 203 English-language news articles that highlighted cases of IPH where males were victims and females were perpetrators in 2019. Data were analysed using thematic analysis and the research identified two major themes; "doubting the victim (who is the victim?) and victim recognition ("he didn't deserve this")" (Hanson and Lysova, 2021, p.1). These findings reflected that despite being the victims of female perpetrated IPH, they were often blamed for their victimisation, and the population of male victims was represented as illegitimate and non-ideal victims in the news media.

Gender-Based Audience's Response to Domestic Violence in Nigeria

It is noteworthy that another factor that affects audience perception of and response to domestic violence in Nigeria is gender. The gender of the victim and perpetrator would affect how the audience perceives the violence and the outcome for both parties. In Bates, Klement, Kaye, and Pennington (2019), it was revealed that gender stereotypes affect the way victims of domestic violence and sexual violence are perceived which ultimately affects the outcomes for the victims and perpetrators. The researchers argue that intimate partner violence (IPV) is positioned under the Violence Against Women and Girls strategy in the United Kingdom and is more commonly framed as a gendered crime. Hence, such framing excludes men as victims. Furthermore, they opine that such framing "perpetuates the stereotypes that exist about men and women and about what IPV perpetrators and victims look like, (and) renders male victims,

female perpetrators, … as hidden or marginalised in some way" (Bates et al, 2019). As a result of such gender stereotypes, policies and practices in terms of victims' and perpetrators' services are biased.

In essence, gender stereotypes already define which gender is more likely to be the victim and the perpetrator, hence, when the gender expected to be the perpetrator is the victim, response may be slow, or help may not be as readily available. Nwafor, Guanah, and Okowa-Nwaebi (2022) also investigate the effect of gender on the perception of domestic violence victims, specifically men, by Facebook users in Imo state, Nigeria. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, the research find that many users had high exposure to domestic violence against men because of marital infidelity through posts by Facebook friends and other online media platforms. It was also found that there was a largely negative perception of domestic violence against men as many participants condemned the act. All the same, the research reported that because these cases on social media were against men, "social media … has not succeeded much in raising awareness on domestic violence against men as it is only reported when the husband has been killed, attempted to be killed or battered," hence, exposure does not translate to awareness (194).

Perles, San Martín, Canto, and Vallejo (2022) in their research titled, "The Role of Gender in the Perception of Different Forms of Psychological Violence in Young Couples," identify the role of gender in how psychological violence among young couples is perceived. The research discovers that the perception of violence is different based on the sex of the aggressor, the victim, and the type of psychological violence that has been experienced, where, when the female gender is the aggressor, there is likely to be an attempt to justify the aggression, however, for the male aggressor, there is no justification whatsoever.

Acquaye (2022) also examines gender stereotypes and how it affects the portrayal of domestic violence in television. The researcher posits that media platforms often portray women in negative ways and as possessing more negative qualities that the male gender. Unfortunately, this affects how viewers think about and act towards females, thereby affecting their perception when this gender experiences domestic violence. Using qualitative content analysis to analyse content obtained from three purposively selected movies, it was found that the portrayal of domestic violence against women in Ghanaian movies reflects both realities in the social structure and reinforces violence against women in the Ghanaian context.

Domestic Violence Media Reportage

Among other societal issues, domestic violence is the most rampant, impactful and negligible by people as noted by previous research. With the extent of its consequences on women and men who are subjected to any form of the act, it is paramount that the issue receives as much recognition as possible. Media coverage is arguably the most effective route through which the disturbing acts of domestic violence can be made known to the audience and the outside society. This media coverage can come in any form, be it newspaper, radio, television, or social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. In emphasising the importance of media reportage of domestic violence, Cullen, O'Brien, and Corcoran (2019), indicate that the media depictions of sexual violence and domestic abuse are crucial in determining how the public understands the issues, and how well corresponding agencies can devise strategies to advocate for the victims.

In line with the postulations of Cullen et al. (2019), it is important to note that the media can offer a simplistic and accurate representation of a domestic violence incident or a distorted view of what really happened, especially when it comes to violence against women. In addition, media reportage of domestic violence serves as a voice for victims. As opined by Metaj-Stojanova (2017), most people in society do not always want to interfere in matters relating to domestic violence, as some may conclude that the issue is a "private thing." More so, as stated by Delcambre (2016), other depictions in the media associate domestic violence with a private and individual problem, thus leaving no room for possible intervention. However, as highlighted in that same article by Metaj-Stojanova (2017), the silence of the victims and the people near the victims is always an enemy, as it prevents help, encouragement and support from getting to the victims.

Thus, this fact points to media as the only way through which victims can receive help from far and near. The media in this case can serve as the means through which the public gets to understand the violence and challenges women are facing around them. Furthermore, media reportage does more than project domestic violence cases to the public because, as highlighted by Sutherland, Easteal, Holland, and Vaughan (2019), it has the power to shape the public's opinion. In their research article, it was confirmed that the way news is presented, especially how an individual or an event is portrayed, can influence personal, political, and social justice responses from whatever vicinities of the audience. Hence, if the media has the possibility to influence the audience's responses, then it is crucial that the reports from the media are the right representations of what really occurred.

Owusu-Addo, Owusu-Addo, Antoh, Sarpong, Obeng-Okrah, and Annan (2018) explain that irrespective of the representations of domestic violence that the media portrays, the most important is that it is carried out in a repetitive manner, as it is the only way through which the issue can get the desired recognition, and ultimately shape the public's view.

Dissanayake and Bracewell (2021) also opine that lack of media reportage can allow a case of domestic violence to remain hidden, reinforcing the dominance and control of the perpetrators. In essence, while there is the availability of various forms of media, it is paramount that this provision is used in the way it would be used assuming it was other social or political issues. Without the power of the media, society will keep breeding abusers and attackers, which in turn will put the life of their victims in jeopardy.

In addition, another factor recognized by Jukic (2016), which leads to the flawed media reportage of domestic violence is the unethical reporting of sensitive cases. Not all aspects of domestic violence issues are supposed to be portrayed by the media, in regard to the victim's life. While it is important that the media serve as a voice for the victims, it is important to understand that the victim's life should not be placed on the line in the process. Doing such will negate any positive impacts that the media reportage of the acts is supposed to generate.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper examined social media framing of domestic violence against men and how it impacts society, making Nigeria a focal point. Domestic violence is well recognised as a pervasive global issue. Among other societal issues, domestic violence is the most rampant, impactful and negligible by people as noted by previous research. With the extent of its consequences on women and men who are subjected to any form of the act, it is paramount that the issue receives as much recognition as possible.

It was also gathered from this study that the stereotypical gender roles which depict men solely as perpetrators and never as victims, as well as the portrayal of male victims of domestic violence in Nigeria, significantly influences the reactions of the audience, with a majority tending to stigmatise or shame the men for their abuse. This often leads to a phenomenon known as "spiral of silence" among male victims; where they are perceived as being in the minority and are therefore hesitant to express their opinions on the matter.

Also, media coverage is arguably the most effective route through which the disturbing acts of domestic violence can be made known to the outside society.

Hence, social media reportage of domestic violence serves as a voice for victims. Unfortunately, there is deafening silence in domestic violence against men as opposed to women. These gaps call for the need to investigate this trend and pursue means of increasing media viability of anti-domestic violence campaigns against men.

Considering the extensive findings in literature regarding domestic violence and its impact on both the victims and society, this paper therefore recommends that while the right portrayal of a domestic violence case is important, it is also vital that the media repeatedly cover and talk about the issue, so as to prevent the issue from going down without producing the desired results. Thus, by doing this, the right bodies like the policymakers, governmental officials, and agencies in charge of domestic abuse cases can proffer support and melt out the due punishment to the perpetrators irrespective of gender. If domestic violence is not framed well in the media, it will most likely alienate popular opinion than influence it.

Furthermore, seeing that the social media can offer a simplistic and accurate representation of a domestic violence incident or a distorted view of what really happened, media professionals in Nigeria should take the advantage of the social media to disseminate proper reports and information about domestic violence against men in Nigeria, giving it appropriate framing. There should also be more media reportage of domestic violence cases against men in order to shape the public's opinion seeing that media reportage, especially on social media, does more than project an issue or a topic to the public, it has the power to shape the public's opinion on such issue or topic.

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[1] First Author
[2] Second Author
[3] Third Author

[4] Affiliation of the Fist Author
[5] Affiliation of the Second Author
[6] Affiliation of the Third Author