

Gender Inequality: Male Victims' Responses to Social Media Framing of Domestic Violence Against Men in Nigeria

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Abstract:

Domestic violence affects both men and women, crossing boundaries of race, education, and ethnicity. It has evolved from a social issue into a public health concern. While much attention has been paid to violence against women, less focus has been placed on women as perpetrators. This study examines how new media, particularly social media, frames domestic violence against men in Nigeria, addressing the limited research on this topic. Anchored on the media framing, agenda setting, and muted group theories, this paper adopts a qualitative research design, using a phenomenological approach and homogeneous purposive sampling technique to gather empirical data. Data was obtained from an in-depth interview with six male victims of domestic violence in Nigeria using Braun and Clarke's (2006) multistage thematic analysis. This analysis incorporates data from interview transcripts based on the research objectives. Findings reveal that social media framing of domestic violence against men in Nigeria perpetuates gender inequalities, marginalizes male victims, and reinforces harmful stereotypes as well as lack of support which discourages them from seeking help or engaging in social media discussions. The paper then recommends the promotion of inclusive narratives that validate male victimhood alongside female victimhood, thereby balancing narratives of domestic violence, as well as increase in awareness through advocacy campaigns which should be aimed at educating the public on the realities of domestic violence against men.

Keywords: domestic violence, framing, gender inequality, male victims, social media

Introduction:

Domestic violence is a global phenomenon of a pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. It has become a severe problem that disrupts the peaceful coexistence of individuals in relationships, particularly close partnerships (Kolbe & Büttner, 2020). According to Ekweonu (2020), domestic violence is widespread, yet, arguably, the most underrated offense in the history of human rights, which could be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or

psychological actions or threats of actions that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound the other person. According to CLEEN (2019) cited in Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2019), traditionally, domestic violence, which includes rape, acid attacks, molestation, spouse beating, and corporal punishment, is mostly committed against women, although men are recently abused. This corroborated the opinions of Kolbe and Büttner (2020) that more emphasis is

placed on domestic violence against women even though no one is immune to the risk of domestic violence, whether male or female, rich or poor, black or white, and old or young.

Enakele (2019) emphasized that the challenge of domestic violence against men is that “it has remained largely unreported because of the shame and fear amounted to silence” (p. 32). Hence, men are reluctant to report violence from their intimate partners. Hine et al. (2022) found 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 emphasize 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-defense (Hine et al., 2022). They also argued that the failure to view men as victims has limited experiences, visibility, and support for male victims. This explains why domestic violence against women receives more attention than domestic violence against men and may also explain why the victim status for men does not carry as much weight or credibility as for the opposite gender.

Wallace et al. (2019) further argued that these detrimental stereotypes hinder men’s attempts to leave abusive relationships. They also stated that men often report disbelief, ridicule, and how organizations that were meant to help mocked them for their experiences and even suggested that they somehow, were responsible for the abuse. This is why Hine (2019) argued that men tend to take the blame for their victimization. That explains why men do not report abuse because it is most often not labeled as what it is, domestic violence (Bates et al., 2019).

The media are one of the most powerful agents of socialization on the planet today and are widely believed to play a part in the early socialization of children and the long-term socialization of adults (McQuail, 2005). In addition, the media can pass

information to half the population in a short while through newspapers, radios, and social media pages like WhatsApp, Twitter (X), Instagram, and Facebook (Meta); this attribute can be harnessed to spread the dangers of domestic violence and report worldwide cases. This is why Metaj-Stojonova (2017) stated that the media is responsible for increasing the public’s knowledge of violence and challenging its stance in society. Kim et al. (2016) stated that the media, particularly new media, have so much influence that they can determine how news consumers perceive critical societal issues. This implies that, how the media report problems determines the public’s perceptions of and reactions to such problems. This underscores the power which the media hold over the public. Coverage of domestic violence against men in Nigeria, particularly by electronic media, is inadequate. Most people learn about this issue through non-governmental seminars, individual activism, and increasingly through new media. According to Gado (2023), electronic media often fails to include discussions of men as victims, perpetuating the belief that such cases are rare. This lack of representation contributes to stigma and silence, reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes.

George and Yarwood (2018) noted that traditional media struggles to recognize male victims due to persistent stereotypes. They argue that new media provides an inclusive platform that allows male victims to share their stories and seek help, reducing stigma (Huntley et al., 2019; Morgan & Wells, 2016). Ekweonu (2020) mentioned that media can shape public opinion on violence, raising awareness of such issues. However, if cases of domestic violence are presented casually, they may be overlooked. Emphasizing the impact on victims and societal dangers can draw necessary attention. Despite this, Anisur and Najuwu (2022) found that cases of domestic violence against men do not receive enough media traction, often leading to the perception that men are primarily perpetrators. Media framing typically diminishes male victimhood, framing female perpetrators’ actions as self-defense.

Gender inequality in discussions of domestic violence, particularly regarding male victims, is an issue that has garnered increasing attention in academic literature. In Nigeria, societal norms play a significant role in framing domestic violence, with a predominant focus on female victims, often neglecting male experiences (Nwalozie & Atuma, 2021). This gender imbalance is further exacerbated by how social media shapes public discourse on domestic violence, where men's experiences are frequently underrepresented or even mocked (Hine et al., 2020). Hine et al. argue that the issue of gender inequality in the portrayal of domestic violence against men in Nigeria is complex and multifaceted. While the prevalence of domestic violence against women justifiably attracts significant attention, the marginalization of male victims perpetuates harmful gender norms and reinforces inequality. To address gender inequality—both in online discourse and broader societal responses—it is essential to shift the framing of domestic violence. Nwalozie and Atuma (2021) suggest this requires acknowledging male victimization and challenging the stereotypes that prevent men from being recognized as legitimate victims.

Domestic violence is a widespread issue that affects both men and women, evolving from a social problem into a serious public health concern (Thomas, 2015). However, Asekun-Olarinmoye et al. (2019) found that most research has focused on violence against women, while female perpetrators receive limited attention. They also discovered that many male victims are underreported, leading to a skewed narrative that often frames women as acting in self-defense. This study, therefore, aims to explore how male victims in Nigeria respond to social media portrayals of domestic violence against men through in-depth interviews, seeking to provide a better understanding of this issue.

Objective of the Study:

1. To determine how social media framing of domestic violence against men in Nigeria contributes to gender inequalities.

2. To investigate the perspectives of male victims on social media framing of domestic violence against men in Nigeria.
3. To examine the responses of male victims to the social media framing of domestic violence against men in Nigeria.

Research Questions:

1. How does social media framing of domestic violence against men in Nigeria contribute to gender inequalities?
2. What are the perspectives of male victims of domestic violence in Nigeria on social media framing of domestic violence against men in Nigeria?
3. What are the responses of male victims to frames of domestic violence stories against men in Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework:

Media Framing Theory:

Propounded by sociologist Erving Goffman in 1974, the Media Framing Theory posits that individuals interpret events and phenomena in their world through specific frameworks that shape their understanding (Marra & Myer, 2020). In this context, a "frame" refers to the particular perspective or lens through which information is presented and perceived, influencing how audiences engage with various issues. This highlights that framing theory involves individuals utilizing their primary frameworks to interpret and reframe their environments from multiple perspectives. According to this theory, media outlets wield significant power in presenting events or subjects within specific "frames" that can enhance public interest and shape public opinion (D'Angelo & Shaw, 2018). For instance, the portrayal of domestic violence in the media, as either a serious societal issue or a private concern, can significantly influence the responses of individuals and communities.

Another essential assumption of media framing is its capacity to filter and limit the scope of information shared before it reaches the public, thereby guiding audience perceptions of the issues

at hand (Magnusson et al., 2021). Moreover, effective news framing can mobilize social movements recognized by diverse communities, including both literate and illiterate audiences. For example, campaigns advocating gender equality or raising awareness of domestic violence illustrate how media framing can galvanize public sentiment and action (Teresa, 2022). Thus, how domestic violence is framed is crucial in determining the seriousness with which society views and addresses it.

Additionally, frames can be both positive and negative, influencing perceptions of the different demographics involved. Through the lens of media framing theory, this study posits that negative portrayals of domestic violence against men, especially in Nigeria, often lead to the neglect of male victims, who are frequently depicted solely as perpetrators. As a result, this framing reduces the attention and resources allocated to addressing domestic violence against men, perpetuating a cycle of underreporting and misunderstanding of the issue

Agenda-Setting Theory:

The Agenda Setting Theory, proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972, has become a key communication theory widely accepted in the media industry (Luo et al., 2019). According to Auwalu (2018), this theory suggests that the media influences public perceptions by creating a hierarchy of news importance. Essentially, the media's focus on specific events determines which topics gain prominence in public awareness. If the media views an issue as urgent, the public will likely pay more attention to it (Auwalu, 2018).

The theory operates in two stages: the transmission of issue salience and the transmission of attribute salience (Luo et al., 2019). The media can present the significance of an issue either accurately or in a way that serves their own interests. Both stages support the theory's goal of identifying which issues deserve more attention. This concept remains relevant despite the rise of the internet and changes in the media landscape.

Considering the agenda-setting theory, it can be inferred that domestic violence against men in Nigeria lacks the same level of attention as domestic violence against women. The media's influence on public perceptions is evident in the case of women's issues, while men's issues receive far less focus. As a result, there are few efforts to address domestic violence against men. This study argues 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, it could lead to an increase in public awareness and shift it from a minor concern to a significant priority.

Muted Group Theory:

The Muted Group Theory explains the differing attention given to men and women in discussions about domestic violence. Developed by Edwin Ardener and Shirley Ardener in 1975, the theory highlights sociolinguistic power imbalances that suppress certain social groups, particularly women. Meares (2017) describes this theory as focusing on cultural groups that are traditionally muted, meaning they have less access to public discourse. Mahrukh et al. (2019) identified a key aspect of this theory by saying that the muted group theory highlights a muting process, which is "a socially shared phenomenon that presupposes a collective understanding of who is in power and who is not" (p.165). This suggests that the muting process is operating and causes the non-dominant group to be muted or marginalized by the dominant group. Furthermore, Mahrukh et al. (2019) stated that those who are muted often know that they are muted, which is why they frequently resort to using specific communication strategies such as using significantly respectful communication to deliberately avoid being perceived as a threat or being too assertive, while others decide not to.

In this context, the muted group includes men whose perspectives on domestic abuse are often overlooked. Although men are less frequently victims of domestic violence, they face challenges in asserting their rights and speaking out. Mahrukh et al. (2019) argue that if societal

perceptions are predominantly male-oriented, the narratives surrounding domestic violence will reflect that dominance—leading to the marginalization of male victims.

The dominant group does not actively silence the muted group; it is society itself that perpetuates this dynamic. It, therefore, makes sense to reason that in a society where patriarchy is a part of the culture, individuals would find it very difficult to relate to men being victims of domestic violence from women who are presumed to be the weak victims. This explains why men are muted and not given a discourse opportunity.

Empirical Review:

The Use of Social Media Framing in Addressing Societal Issues:

The concept of social media framing has been explored extensively across various disciplines, demonstrating its effectiveness in connecting individuals and fostering public discourse to achieve more defined and anticipated outcomes (Rabadan, 2021). This is particularly evident in its application to a range of societal issues. Consequently, scholars have devoted significant attention to examining the role of framing on social media platforms. Rabadan's study provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of social media framing, highlighting its strengths and limitations over time. However, his work lacks a focus on specific societal issues discussed through social media framing, such as gender inequality and domestic violence in Nigeria. This research seeks to address this gap.

Societal issues remain a central topic of discussion on social media, where individual preferences, shaped by various factors, influence engagement. Users tend to focus on content that aligns with their interests, inadvertently exposing themselves to social media framing. This framing emphasizes particular preferences over other pressing issues within their environment. Valenzuela et al. (2017) examined the mechanisms by which social media frames are created and their impact on users. Their study identified emotions, life motivations, and individual psychology as critical factors,

alongside the role of journalists in shaping and disseminating information. These frames often prioritize popular topics over others, presenting them in ways that spark widespread discussion, drive user engagement, and facilitate the dissemination of information.

Similarly, Guran and Ozarslan (2022) concur with Valenzuela et al., asserting that social media framing enhances information dissemination by fostering discussions, interpretations, and evaluations by audiences. They further highlight its role in raising awareness through their review of existing literature, focusing on framing within social media communities and social movements. In the Nigerian context, Uchenunu and Ngonso (2021) explored how framing draws public attention to critical issues, shaping perceptions and emotions. Their study, which analyzed television and social media content during the COVID-19 pandemic using a content analysis approach, emphasized conspiracy theories surrounding China at the pandemic's peak. However, their research did not specifically address domestic challenges such as gender issues or domestic violence, nor did it focus exclusively on social media as the primary medium of analysis. This research aims to build on these studies by addressing the intersection of social media framing, gender issues, and domestic violence in Nigeria, thereby filling a significant gap in the literature.

Effect of Social Media Framing of Domestic Violence against Men:

Adekoya and Olaseinde-Fayomi (2020) conducted research that aimed 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 as the perpetrators and the social media platform which such news is disseminated from. This research focused on the

perception of social media users in cases of domestic violence against men. The lackadaisical attitude of society towards domestic violence against men 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 above question of societal perception of masculine responsibility.

Olaseinde and Adekoya (2021), analyzed the 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 that 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) conducted media research on intimate partner homicide (IPH) to understand how men are perceived as victims of domestic violence by 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

analyzed 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 & Lysova, 2021, p.1). These findings reflected that despite being the victims of female-perpetrated IPH, they were often blamed for their victimization, and the population of male victims was represented as illegitimate and non-ideal victims in the news media. The reasons for this attitude is mostly embedded in deep-rooted cultural and religious beliefs.

Social Media Framing of Domestic Violence against Men in Nigeria and Gender Inequality:

The framing of domestic violence against men on social media in Nigeria frequently reinforces gender inequality by perpetuating narratives that dismiss, ridicule, or marginalize male victims. These portrayals often align with patriarchal norms, suggesting that domestic violence is predominantly a women's issue and that male victims lack masculinity or bear responsibility for their abuse. Such stereotypes deter male victims from seeking support and reinforce traditional gender roles, limiting societal acknowledgment of men as legitimate victims (Ali et al., 2016).

Research indicates that when male victimization is addressed in Nigerian media, it is often accompanied by tones of incredulity or trivialization, portraying men as inherently capable of defending themselves. This narrative minimizes serious public discourse on domestic violence against men, diminishes societal empathy, and perpetuates the notion of women as victims and men as perpetrators (Nwachukwu & Affen, 2022). As a result, male victims remain silent, and public policies continue to focus on female-centered interventions, neglecting the needs of male victims (Ali et al., 2016). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter amplify these stereotypes by shaping public opinion through selective representation and shared narratives. These platforms often lack balanced portrayals, rarely recognizing male victimization as a legitimate form of domestic abuse. This biased framing reinforces gendered

perspectives on domestic violence, obstructing progress toward inclusive and equitable approaches to addressing intimate partner violence (Vermeer et al., 2020).

Studies examining male victims' responses to social media framing of domestic violence in Nigeria reveal the detrimental impact of negative portrayals and gendered stereotypes on victims' experiences and public perceptions. Male victims are frequently stigmatized and portrayed as complicit in their abuse or deficient in masculinity. This discourages reporting and perpetuates silence around domestic violence against men, thereby contributing to the broader imbalance in addressing gender-based violence (Adebayo et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2016). Although social media provides a platform for some victims to voice their stories, it simultaneously reinforces patriarchal views that question male victimization, influencing audience perceptions and policymaking (Magnusson et al., 2021).

Scholars suggest that reframing media narratives to emphasize male vulnerability and equal rights within intimate relationships could foster greater empathy and broaden societal support for male victims. Such reframing could help promote gender balance and inclusivity in addressing domestic violence (Nwachukwu & Affen, 2022; Vermeer et al., 2020).

Men's Responses to Social Media Framing of Domestic Violence against Men in Nigeria:

Recent studies reveal that men in Nigeria face substantial challenges in addressing and responding to the social media portrayal of domestic violence against them. This is largely due to sociocultural norms and media-driven biases. Social media framing of domestic violence involving male victims often reinforces stereotypes that depict men as inherently strong and invulnerable, thereby marginalizing their experiences. This framing discourages men from reporting abuse due to fears of stigma, ridicule, or dismissal, perpetuating the silence around male victimization in abusive relationships (Dala, 2021; Magnusson et al., 2021).

Patriarchal norms in Nigerian society significantly influence audience perceptions of male victimization. Cultural expectations that men should remain stoic and self-reliant complicate their ability to respond to narratives of abuse and reduce the likelihood of seeking help. In response to these portrayals, some men engage in counter-narratives and advocacy on platforms like Nairaland and Facebook, sharing personal stories and leveraging support groups to raise awareness of their struggles. Despite these efforts, such responses are often marginalized within broader media discourses, reinforcing the imbalance in how domestic violence is perceived and discussed across genders (Gado, 2023).

This dynamic highlights a critical tension: while social media offers a platform to amplify individual voices, dominant framing frequently silences male victims. Consequently, men are compelled to seek alternative channels for support and advocacy. Addressing this issue requires media reforms aimed at promoting balanced portrayals of all victims of domestic violence. Additionally, further academic inquiry into the effects of media framing and the social challenges it poses for men in Nigeria is essential. These findings emphasize the necessity of a more equitable media agenda that represents domestic violence cases involving both men and women. Such an approach could reshape public perceptions, reduce gender biases, and improve access to support systems for male victims (Ayodele, 2017; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Methodology:

A qualitative, phenomenological approach was used for the study. This approach seeks to understand and describe the essential components of a phenomenon by examining real-world experiences to discover more about how people interpret them (Ugwu & Eze, 2023). In other words, phenomenological research design is used to investigate the perceptions of individuals who have experienced a phenomenon or an experience to gain a deeper understanding of its universal character. Kirkwood (1993) asserted that research needs to "bring forward the position and experiences of men that are often ignored or

misinterpreted in a culture where information is controlled by women". In this study, the voice of the male survivors who have left an abusive relationship is heard. In order to properly operationalize this research approach as well as actualize the stated research objectives, an in-depth interview is employed.

Total enumeration sampling was used to select six male victims of domestic violence who have records with two agencies in Lagos state. These agencies are the Gnosis Help Initiative, a non-governmental organization that helps victims of domestic violence get needed assistance, and the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency (DSVA). Findings for the research were gathered from in-depth interviews with six Nigerian male victims of domestic violence from their partners, who are willing to share their experiences of domestic violence. A homogeneous purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the six men who had experienced domestic violence from their partners for an in-depth interview. This is a process of selecting a sample based on specific characteristics or qualities (Creswell, 2012). The characteristics used for determining the population of this study include Nigerian men who have experienced domestic violence from their partners, who have records with two agencies in Nigeria, and who are willing to share their experiences of domestic violence. Results were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis which involves six steps - familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing the report. This analysis incorporates data from interview transcripts, coded based on the research objectives. This analysis choice is suitable because it helped the researcher to identify the framing used in social media representation of domestic violence against men and how it affects the perception of men.

Analysis of Results:

Objective 1: Contribution of Social Media Frames to Gender Inequalities in Nigeria

The study found out that social media framing of domestic violence against men upholds traditional gender roles, undermining efforts to recognize and

support male victims. This contributes to persistent gender inequalities by denying men visibility and empathy in discussions about domestic violence. Major frames identified from the interview with the six male victims include men being portrayed as weak or perpetrators, and not as victims, the predominance of women-centered narratives, the reinforcement of patriarchal stereotypes by social media, and poor representation of male victims.

Perpetuation of Gender Bias: This paper discovered that social media framing often portrays men as the cause of their abuse, thereby reinforcing societal biases. Participant 1 stated, "They always believe that before a woman will do something to a man, that man must have done something to her." This assumption aligns with patriarchal norms, positioning men solely as aggressors.

Limited Support for Male Victims: Another discovery from this study is that male victims are frequently dismissed or ridiculed, and this further marginalizes them. Participants reported seeing posts that were dismissive or ridiculed men's victimhood, making it difficult for men to access empathy or support. According to Participant 6, "The society doesn't offer the man that adequate support compared to women. Even when I explained my case to the police, it took time for them to realize I was the victim."

Amplifying of Gender Stereotypes and Patriarchal Norms: This study also discovered that social media posts predominantly frame men as perpetrators and women as victims, aligning with traditional gender roles. This one-sided framing perpetuates stereotypes, as seen in comments such as "Men should be able to defend themselves." The study also discovered that social media narratives reinforce the broader societal perception that men are strong and invulnerable. This framing contributes to gender inequality by perpetuating a cultural narrative that denies men the space to seek help or be recognized as victims. Participant 3 shared, "People will laugh at you, saying, 'So you can't control your home?'" This framing discourages men from seeking help, perpetuating silence.

Objective 2: Perspectives of Male Victims to Social Media Framing of Domestic Violence against Men in Nigeria:

The study revealed that male victims perceive societal and social media narratives as dismissive and harmful. They often feel unsupported and stigmatized, leading to prolonged suffering and emotional distress. The framing of their experiences as unworthy of attention exacerbates their reluctance to seek help, resulting in prolonged suffering and a lack of access to necessary resources. The narratives, according to the male victims, create an environment where victims feel trapped, silenced, and unsupported. Key frames identified from the in-depth interview with the six men include stigma and shame; fear of disbelief or ridicule and emotional and psychological impact.

Stigma and Fear: Male victims frequently face societal stigma and ridicule, which inhibits them from speaking out. Participants highlighted the fear of being labeled "weak" or "incompetent" for failing to "control" their partners. Participant 4 explained, "The society makes men feel ashamed that they cannot control their wives." This stigma perpetuates silence and inaction.

Mistrust in Support Systems: Many of the male victims expressed skepticism toward institutional and societal support structures, citing instances where their accounts were dismissed or met with disbelief. This lack of trust often forces victims into secrecy. Participant 5 put it this way, "Even when I reported to the church, they wanted to hear from my wife first before believing me. It felt like I had to prove my victimhood."

Mental Health Impact: The psychological toll of abuse is significant. Participants reported feelings of helplessness and long-term mental health challenges, such as trauma and anxiety. Participant 2 shared, "Even if you are a strong man, this kind of experience will confuse you totally. It's what you never expected."

Objective 3: Responses of Male Victims to Social Media Framing of Domestic Violence against Men in Nigeria.

This study shows that male victims' responses to social media framing reveal a deep mistrust of

online platforms as safe spaces. However, they recognize the potential of social media to amplify their voices and advocate for equitable representation and systemic reforms. Major frames include avoidance of social media discussions, fear of public judgment and advocacy for balanced representation.

Non-Engagement with Social Media: Most male victims avoid participating in social media discussions about their experiences due to the fear of ridicule as the public nature of these platforms discourages open engagement. Participants described social media as a space where men are often judged or dismissed. Participant 3 stated, "I won't put my business out there because it will just become a gist thing."

Advocacy for Balanced Narratives: Male victims called for systemic changes, including the establishment of male-centered support structures and advocacy groups, emphasizing the need for NGOs and government policies to address domestic violence inclusively. Some victims advocated for equal representation in domestic violence discussions. Participant 4 emphasized, "There is no balance in the reporting of domestic violence against men in Nigeria. If there was, men would get the recognition they deserve as victims."

Calls for Systemic Change: Victims highlighted the need for institutional reforms to address gender bias. Participants suggested that increased representation of male victims could shift societal perceptions and foster empathy. Participant 5 remarked, "Social media should post more reports of abuse against men so that the world can know more about domestic violence against men."

Discussions of Findings:

The six men selected were all willing to share their experiences of domestic violence. Hence, six respondents' views were used for the analysis in this study. Results showed that the respondents are from different cultural backgrounds and engaged in different life endeavors, spread across the country, of Nigeria.

The first objective sought to determine how social media framing of domestic violence against men in Nigeria contributes to gender inequalities. All the respondents acknowledged that social media framing of domestic violence against men in Nigeria contributes to gender inequalities as it is believed that women always have the attention of society, the law, and online people than men. Precisely, social media framing of domestic violence against men upholds traditional gender roles, undermining efforts to recognize and support male victims. This contributes to persistent gender inequalities by denying men visibility and empathy in discussions about domestic violence.

This point of view is further validated by Nwalozie and Atuma (2021) who opined that societal norms in Nigeria shape the narrative of domestic violence, primarily focusing on female victims and often sidelining male victims. It also corroborated Hine et al. (2020) that social media exacerbates this issue by neglecting, underrepresenting or ridiculing men's experiences while giving attention to domestic violence against women, thereby perpetuating harmful gender norms and reinforcing inequality. These submissions confirm the Agenda Setting theory that domestic violence against men in Nigeria lacks the same level of attention as domestic violence against women in the sense that the media's influence on public perceptions is evident in the case of women's issues, while men's issues receive far less focus.

The second objective which seeks to investigate the perspectives of male victims on social media framing of domestic violence against men in Nigeria revealed that societal and social media narratives on domestic violence against men in Nigeria are dismissive and harmful, as male victims are not usually seen as victims but as abusers, and when presented as victims, get blamed for the abuse because it is believed that a woman can not violate the man. All the respondents, in different ways, confirmed this point of view. While 5 respondents stated that men are always portrayed as being weak due to the

societal belief that a man should be stronger than a woman; 1 respondent opined that men are usually labeled guilty in cases of domestic violence between partners, due to the belief that a man should be able to endure and manage whatever pressure a woman gives him because he is stronger. The findings also show this as one of the reasons men are slow to talk about or report their experiences.

This finding is in line with previous research that indicates that male victimization is often addressed in Nigerian media with the accompaniment of tones of incredulity or trivialization, portraying men as inherently capable of defending themselves, thereby minimizing serious public discourse on domestic violence against men, and diminishing societal empathy towards male victims (Nwachukwu & Affen, 2022). This also supports Ali et al. (2016), who stated that male victims remain silent, and public policies continue to focus on female-centered interventions, neglecting the needs of male victims. These findings fit the Muted Group theory which highlights a muting process, which is "a socially shared phenomenon that presupposes a collective understanding of who is in power and who is not. In this context, the muted group includes men whose perspectives on domestic abuse are often overlooked since individuals would find it very difficult to relate to men being victims of domestic violence from women who are presumed to be the weak victims. This explains why men are muted and not given a discourse opportunity.

The findings from the third objective which sought to examine the responses of male victims to the social media framing of domestic violence against men in Nigeria reveal a deep mistrust of online platforms as safe spaces. All respondents agreed that they avoid participating in social media discussions about their experiences due to the fear of ridicule as the public nature of these platforms discourages open engagement. Participants described social media as a space where men are often judged or dismissed. These views by respondents support the opinion of

Ayodele (2017) and Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) which emphasize the necessity of a more equitable media agenda that represents domestic violence cases involving both men and women, as such an approach could reshape public perceptions, reduce gender biases, and improve access to support systems for male victims. It also complies with the tenet of the Agenda Setting 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, it could lead to an increase in public awareness and shift it from a minor concern to a significant priority.

Conclusion and Recommendation:

This study reveals the pervasive influence of social media framing on the societal understanding of domestic violence against men in Nigeria. Social media framing of domestic violence against men in Nigeria perpetuates gender inequalities, marginalizes male victims, and reinforces harmful stereotypes. The study also reveals that male victims perceive societal narratives as dismissive and stigmatizing, and often face stigma, disbelief, and a lack of support which discourages them from seeking help or engaging with social media discussions.

To address these challenges, therefore, social media platforms should promote inclusive narratives that validate male victimhood alongside female victimhood, thereby balancing narratives of domestic violence. Also, there should be an increase in awareness through advocacy campaigns which should be aimed at educating the public on the realities of domestic violence against men. Finally, the research recommends that reports on domestic violence against men in Nigeria should be framed exactly as it is; without giving excuses for the abuser when it comes to the men being victims. This would increase awareness of the fact that men also commonly experience domestic violence and may motivate more individuals to speak since their chances of gaining support triggered by correct information properly framed increases. Through these measures, social media can evolve into a platform that fosters

empathy, awareness, and systemic change towards issues of domestic violence against men in Nigeria.

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