PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ON THE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM: THE CASE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN KENYA

EVELYNE WANJIKU NJUGUNA

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS, (GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES) OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

DECEMBER, 2017
DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented in any other university for consideration. This thesis has been complemented by referenced sources duly acknowledged. Where text, data, graphics, pictures or tables have been borrowed from other sources- including the internet, these are specifically accredited through referencing in accordance to anti-plagiarism regulation.

Signature _______________________                        Date ___________________
Evelyne Wanjiku

SUPERVISORS

We confirm that the work reported in this thesis was carried out by the candidate under our supervision.

Signature _______________________                        Date ___________________
Dr. Casper Masiga
Department of Gender and Development Studies
Kenyatta University

Signature _______________________                        Date ___________________
Dr. Pacificah Okemwa
Department of Gender and Development Studies
Kenyatta University
DEDICATION

To all the women who have suffered in the hands of online bullies, anonymous or known to them; women who have been afraid to enjoy social media for fear of the dangers lurking within; women who have suffered in silence with no knowledge of who turn to for justice.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BPFA–Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women
CID – Criminal Investigation Department
CCRC- Criminal Cases Review Commission
CCK – Communications Commission of Kenya
DEVAW- Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women
DPP- Director of Public Prosecutions
G.A.M- General Aggression Model
GBV – Gender Based Violence
GPS- Global Positioning System
GK- Global Knowledge Conference
EAC- East Africa Community
EU- European Union
ID- Identity
ICT - Information and Communication Technology
ISP- Internet Service Provider
IP – Internet Protocol
NACOSTI – National Commission for Science and Technology and Innovation
NCS - The National Communications Secretariat
NGO – Non-governmental Organisation
SOA - Sexual Offences Act
SEP- Stanford Exploration Project
SMS – Short Message Service
UNGA- United Nations General Assembly

USA - United States of America

UK- United Kingdom

UAE- United Arab Amirates

VAW – Violence against Women

WSIS - World Forum on Information Society
ABSTRACT

The growth of social media has provided a powerful, widespread and global communication platform. Its growth has had an impact on the opportunities for the perpetration of violence against women. Though violence against women did exist before, social media is presenting new ways in which women experience violence. This study sought to address the perception of violence against women on the social media platform as experienced in Kenya by answering questions regarding the types of violence that are experienced, the cause of such violence, the impact of such violence, as well as strategies for overcoming such violence. The research was based on the general aggression model. The theory was used to explain how whatever that is consumed through social media influences behaviour and thoughts, shapes ideas and how eventually individuals turn violent and use social media as a platform for their aggression. The research was conducted virtually on the social media platforms, with Facebook being used as the main platform for the study. The study employed an explorative design and convenient sampling technique. Key informants were targeted using purposive sampling. They were expected to respond to questions on strategies already in place to handle VAW in online spaces and the challenges they experience in implementation. This was achieved through a scheduled interview. The information they provided was used to compare their strategies to those proposed by researchers and those practiced in countries where progress has been made in the fight against VAW in social media. The research used online questionnaires, secondary sources, social media resources and interview schedules to collect data. Data was analysed both descriptively and statistically. Qualitative data was analysed using the thematic method, while quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies. The research revealed that women experienced violence in various ways across the social media platforms. Key among the forms of violence being violent video sharing 63%, unsolicited pornographic content 63% and disclosure of personal information or images at 40%. Anonymity, easy access to social media and lack of online policing were some of the key causes identified by the respondents. The effects of violence on the victims were identified as disturbing and shameful thoughts and having to change physical and online behaviour. Some also mentioned feeling afraid of real physical harm. The respondents suggested ways to stop such violence which includes: relevant laws to punish perpetrators, campaigns to educate women on their rights while on social media platforms as well as making known the proper avenues of reporting such violence when it is experienced. Based on the findings of this research, the researcher concluded that violence against women on the social media platform is a real issue that is being experienced by Kenyan women in various forms. Due to the impact that such violence can have on the freedom and ability of women to fully participate in social media, it is important that such violence be addressed. This can be done by increasing avenues of reporting violations and putting in place laws that adequately punish perpetrators.
OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Adobe Photoshop  a popular programme for creating and modifying images for the web

Blog Comments and Forums - Online forums that allow members to hold conversations by posting messages.

Cyber stalking: Repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm, highly intimidating or engaging in other online activities that make a person afraid

Denigration: Sending or posting cruel gossip or rumours about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships

Flaming: Online fights using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language.

Morphing is the attaching of a photo to another photo to make one image. For example, a face may be attached to a naked body or a pornographic situation. The soft wares used are so advanced that it is difficult to tell that the image is not real.

Outing: Sharing someone’s secrets or embarrassing information online. Tricking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information which is then shared online.

Sexting: The use of communication technology to send or receive sexually explicit messages and photos

Social media: This refers to the wide range of Internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities.

Social Networks - Services that allow you to connect with other people of similar interests and background. Usually they consist of a profile, various ways to interact with other users, ability to setup groups, etc.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The digital revolution, spurred by the internet and mobile phones has led to a global revolution in communications, access to information and media delivery, tremendous increase in the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), the internet and social media (Hughes, 2007). Devreese (2010) describes social media as media transformed by digitally interactive tools of ICT and based on online social networking platforms as well as open source tools. These tools are ‘social’ in that they are created in ways that enable users to create and share content and information.

Puddephatt, Hawtin, Zommer, Brant, Attala, Nagla, Bhat, Lim, Githaiga and Zausmer (2011), observe that social media has decentralized the making of information and also made it easier to share the information. Everybody is now a potential broadcaster, able to create, modify and share content with a global audience. Before the internet and social media, information was filtered by editors, publishers or even journalists. The era of social media has given power to the people and everyone can easily express themselves in the public domain. The same authors further opine that, internet now allows people to interact with one another through, blogs, comment forums, sending in videos and images as well as crowd sourcing activities.

Across the globe, social media sites are increasingly becoming a key point of reference in people’s lives. Worldwide, there are about 2.8 billion internet users out of which about a third are in developing countries. It is now estimated that there are more than 170 million blogs online, over 600 million Facebook users, and 175(M) million users on Twitter creating over 200 million tweets a day and over 3,000 photos
uploaded on Flickr every minute. There are also over 48 hours of video uploaded to YouTube every minute and over 2 billion video views every day (Puddephatt, et al., 2011).

In Africa, a study by the Internet Society in 2012 indicates that out of the 1 billion people living in Africa, 167 million of them have access to the internet and connectivity is on the rise. Regionally, the importance of ICT is underscored in the treaty of the establishment of the East African community (EAC), which Kenya is a party. The treaty for the establishment of EAC, 2014 highlights the importance of promotion and development of ICT within the community and a need to end practices that are discriminatory towards women. According to i-hub research, the fibre cable framework has enhanced aggressive campaigns by the mobile network operators which have greatly helped internet penetration in the East African region. In their 2012 study, Kenya led in the region with 14.3 M users (36.3% penetration) compared to 4.9M users (2.5% penetration) in Tanzania and 4M users (12%) in Uganda (I-hub infographic, 2012). The Kenyan regional leadership in ICT could be explained by Kenya having taken advantage of its strategic geographic location in the East African coast, as well government support for ICT to increase her fibre optic capacity and thus achieving her ICT goals in a relatively short time (Kenya National ICT Master Plan, 2103/2014, 2017-2018). This observation is further supported by Msimang (2011) in his studies on broadband in Kenya.

Africans are using their cell phones with a more recent and massive interest in social media. When Africans go online (predominantly with their mobile phones) they spend much of their time on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube among others) (Africa renewal, 2014). The most visited social media platform in Africa is Facebook. The number of African Facebook users is now over 17 million, up from 10
million in 2009 (Africa renewal, 2014). Politicians, companies and famous personalities are engaging the population through social media and it has become a popular way of interaction (Ibid)

Ngwa, Kudi, Shu, Mbarika and Mbarika (2008) argue that the growth of the internet and social media has brought about some unintended consequences such as cyber-crimes, sexual harassment and cyber stalking. Equally, Maxwell (2001) contends that there is an increase in violence against women as a result of social media growth but observes that the true prevalence is currently unknown. Similarly, the UN General Assembly (UNGA, 2006) estimates that 95 per cent of aggressive behaviour, harassment, abusive language and denigrating images in online spaces are aimed at women, most often carried out by a current or former partner.

A study by UNICEF in South Africa in 2012 showed that one in five secondary-school learners have experienced some form of online violence (Connected dot com, 2012). However, it is not clear if this replicates itself in the rest of the continent. While studies on this phenomenon are abundant in the developed world, they are still scarce in Africa, with the exception of South Africa, where several studies have been conducted and they have even implemented laws to deal with online harassment.

The Kenyan government recognizes some of the dangers of ICT. Section 74 of the constitution of Kenya, provides for protection from inhumane treatment, torture or degrading treatment. (Mbote, 2000). The Sexual Offences Act, Kenya, Act No: 3 of 2006, addresses sexual offences that are experienced by women. It also addresses issues such as child pornography and trafficking of persons for purposes of sexual exploitation (Sexual Offences Act, Act No 3 of 2006). Further, the Kenya Information and Communications Act (2009), addresses computer aided crimes such as hacking.
Additionally, section 84D of the Act creates the offence of publishing obscene content.

Despite the legal provisions of the Kenyan constitution mentioned, VAW on the ICT platform continues to mutate, increase and go undeterred and unpunished. This leaves potential victims at risk, to direct as well as intangible victimization and vulnerability. VAW on social media involves legislative indistinctness in that it is not directly addressed by most of the current Acts that seek to protect women from violence. This explains Mbote’s (2000) observation that the Kenyan law is still inadequate when it comes to dealing with issues of VAW.

In the current Kenyan law, it is not clear how the various forms of violations against women that arise from the use of ICT and social media can be adequately addressed. It is also not clear whether most of the acts under research in this study are recognized as violations against women. For example, while the Sexual Offences Act (S.O.A 2006) is clear on physical trafficking, it does not appear to be explicit on the new avenue of trafficking which is virtual trafficking through the use of ICT and social media.

The importance of ICT in economic growth and development is widely acknowledged and indeed underlies infrastructural projects taking place in many parts of the world (Puddephatt, et al., 2011). Its importance is equally captured in the *Kenya Vision 2030 Development Plan*. While there are countless benefits to this technology, it has the potential to expose women to many risks including what Ngwa, et al.(2008) describe as sex terrorism, prostitution, trafficking, identity theft and pornography.
Women can use social media and the tools of ICT for development, but in order to tap into this potential, an enabling environment for ICT production, diffusion and use is necessary. If the role of ICT and social media in enabling VAW is not curtailed, the degradation, humiliation and belittling of women will continue and it will prevent women from participating and utilizing social media and other tools of ICT for development. Addressing the relationship between ICT, social media and VAW is necessary in understanding the role it plays in enhancing gender inequalities which eventually foster violence against women. (Hughes, 2007)

It is against this background that this study sought to analyse the and reality of violence against women on the ICT platform in Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As noted in the background, Kenya has experienced an increase in proliferation of ICT and social media due to the affordability, easy availability and accessibility of gadgets such as computers and internet enabled mobile phones. This has however, come without the necessary checks in terms of litigation and ICT policies to help mitigate the negative impacts that the growth may have on gender relations.

The available documented evidence points to a deficit in knowledge and understanding of the new and sophisticated permutations of VAW as experienced on social media. In the Kenyan context, some of the acts of aggression were seen as isolated cases and reported as incidents that are not gendered. This points to a lack of appreciation of the harm that social media and the tools of ICT pose to women. With the mentioned growth in the ICT sector, the researcher deemed it necessary that the enabling role of the social media be surfaced, made visible and challenged.
The researcher noted that a gendered legal and policy framing of the intersection between social media and VAW had not yet been clearly established in Kenya. The constitution, penal code and various ICT policies are still deemed inadequate in addressing the emerging forms of VAW on social media. In the absence of these precedents specifically relating to ICT and social media, VAW on these platforms continues to suffer from legislative indistinctness in that it is not directly addressed by most of the current Acts that seek to protect women from violence. For this reason, this researcher sought to highlight the link between social media and violence against women and the need for it to be addressed with a view to protecting women.

In addition, the researcher noted that VAW on social media in the Kenyan context was previously unknown. It was assumed that the lack of knowledge could be attributed to the fact that there was little research conducted in the Kenyan context regarding the negative effects of ICT and especially the negative use of social media to harm women. Moreover, studies of cyber risks had not kept up with the proliferation and ever mutating nature of ICTs and social media in Kenya. This study was a step forward.

1.3 General Objective

This research investigated the various facets of violence that women experience on social media.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

i) Identify the forms of violence against women perpetuated through the use of social media platforms

ii) Establish the causes of violence against women as manifested in social media.
iii) Examine the effects of violence against women as experienced through social media on the victims.

iv) Find out the best strategies for addressing violence against women as experienced through social media platforms.

1.5 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

i) What are the forms of violence that are perpetrated against women with the help of communication technology as used in social media?

ii) What are the causes of violence against women on social media?

iii) What are the effects of violence against women as experienced through social media by the victims?

iv) What are the best strategies for handling violence against women as meted out through social media.

1.6 Research Premises

The study derived the following premises:

i) That women are experiencing various forms of violations as they use social media.

ii) That VAW on social media has several causes.

iii) Women experiencing VAW on social media platforms face varied consequences or effects.

iv) That there are good practices that can be put in place to mitigate VAW on social media.
The study assumed that the respondents in the study would identify and recognize the acts under study in this research as violations against women and despite the issues falling on an area that may be deemed private, they would be willing to share their experiences in an anonymous questionnaire. In this regard, questionnaires were used and were deemed to have been successful in obtaining information from the respondents. Their responses are herein analysed and presented.

1.7 Justification of the Study

Because sexual violence associated with social media is an emerging area of exploration in the Kenyan context, there is still little Kenyan data on the frequency and intensity of such violence. Being an area of research that is relatively new, it was expected that the research would contribute knowledge to this regard. This was deemed important because VAW is one of the factors that keep women from fully participating in development. ICT is seen as a necessary tool for development and as long as women are being derailed from fully participating in online spaces by threats of VAW in social media, then it means that a section of the society will not be fully participating in development. This is in line with International instruments that Kenya has ratified to ensure women are equal participants in development by countering the issues that hinder women from active participation. They include CEDAW (1992), DEVAW, the Kenyan constitution and national gender policy that seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and eliminate violence against women.

Therefore, it was important that this study be conducted urgently in the event that various efforts have already been put in place to end all forms of VAW in offline spaces. However, in the online spaces, policy makers around the world are simply
playing catch up to the rapidly evolving nature of social media and other tools of social media.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This research was conducted with a view of informing policy makers on the various new ways that women were experiencing VAW in social media, the effects this had on them and on best practices which can be put in place to end VAW on social media.

The research provided data to map key trends and prove that such violence is on the increase and that women in Kenya are experiencing it, in its various forms.

The findings of the study could also inform the development of policies aimed at mitigating the use of social media to carry out violence against women. This means that they will be able to understand the nature of VAW on social media and make policies that are cognizant of the nature of these violations while keeping in mind the inherent nature of social media that makes it a tool of choice for the would be perpetrator. To this end, the study complements the efforts made so far to finding effective ways of eliminating all forms of violence against women, in consonance with numerous international instruments like CEDAW (1992), DEVAW, the Kenyan constitution and national gender policy. This is important so that women can participate in ICT and social media which are considered important tools of development.

The study also provides researchers and practitioners of gender and development with suggestions on new areas that may require further study as they seek ways of ending all forms of VAW in all platforms.
1.9 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study built on responses provided by women on social media and key informants drawn from the cybercrime unit of the CID headquarters. The researcher limited the study to the Kenyan social media users.

The researcher recognized that literature on the issue at hand in Kenya was limited. This therefore posed challenges of comparison of frequency of occurrence, nature, impact and trends. The researcher overcame this by considering other international studies conducted on VAW on social media.

In designing this research, it was noted that the respondents who may be victims of social media related violence may feel that their story is a secret and they may have great difficulty sharing facts with anyone. Equally noted was the concern that, access to formal information was hindered by the fact that most social media cases related to violence went unreported. There were few alternatives for obtaining information about VAW on social media platforms as most of it happen in private and virtual realms and thus collation of evidence is highly dependent on self-reporting. Self-reporting on the other hand relies heavily on the victims’ awareness and estimation of victimization and perpetration. These limitations were overcome by use of questionnaires which assured the victims of anonymity and offered explanation regarding VAW.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section reviews literature relating to the forms of violence that are perpetrated with the help of communication technology as used in social media, the causes of violence against women on social media, the effects of violence against women as experienced on social media as well as the best strategies for handling violence against women as meted out through social media.

2.2 Forms of Violence against Women Experienced on Social Media.

There are various ways in which violence on social media is carried out. Burton (2009) lists texts messages, picture and video clips, email, chat rooms, websites and blog posts as some of the main methods. The forms of violence vary as discussed below.

2.2.1 Denial of Privacy and Cyber Stalking

Fascendini and Fiavola (2011) outline various ways in which privacy is denied to women through the use of social media. They include: remotely listening to phone conversations using special software’s installed in the victims phone or computer, keeping track of web browser history, mobile text message/incoming calls monitoring, mobile phone tracking using GPS locators and email/ social networking site account control.

Abusers have also been found to use weak passwords for computers, email accounts, instant messaging applications and mobile phones to access private information about
Cyber stalking is whereby a perpetrator tracks his/her victim’s whereabouts, activities and friends using the social media platforms. Ellison and Akdeniz (1998) indicate that cases of physical stalking of adults that began with conversations in chat rooms have led to physical meetings that have turned into physical stalking or sexual assault.

Cyber stalking is made possible by the ease at which the stalker can obtain their victim’s contact information through social media, then track their activities and even install a system which alerts them whenever their prey is online (Hitchcock & Page, 2006)

The prevalence of studies in this area in Kenya is yet to catch up with the more available studies on physical stalking. As a result, it is not yet captured under cybercrimes or even the penal code.

2.2.2 Outing and Image Circulation

This is done by sharing secrets or images (image circulation) of the victim on social media platform.

Social media platforms are used to transfer small files, still images and short movie clips. In some instances, some inappropriate photos are taken by a current boyfriend or girlfriend or some women are pressured or tricked into taking inappropriate pictures by another person. After the couple breaks up, the sexual photos may be shared and circulated widely through social media. Nude or suggestive photos are routinely posted, traded and sold. They can be altered, misused and remain in circulation forever. (Hughes, 2007)
In other instances, it involves a personal breach of trust, some lack of knowledge by the person filmed, in some cases, it is a deliberate placement of devices in obscured locations specifically for peeping, others could be accidental clips which turn out to be sexually titillating for a section of society, hence circulated and so on (ibid, 2007). Hasinoff (2014) indicates that inappropriate images taken by a current or ex-boyfriend maybe used to blackmail a woman or as leverage for other forms of harassment and intimidation.

In Kenya, studies on this phenomenon are still in the initial stages. Mukhongo (2013) is a pioneer in studying how outing is taking shape in Kenyan social media. She concentrates particularly on how images are shared for social capital. The violation in non-consensual image sharing and information outing is yet to receive as much attention.

2.2.3 Virtual Trafficking

According to UN women statistics, women and girls make up 80 percent of the estimated 800,000 people trafficked across national borders annually, with the majority (79 percent) being trafficked for sexual exploitation (Maltzahn, 2012). Trafficking has taken a new shape in the age of social media. Studies by Hughes (1999) indicate that pimps and traffickers use social media to advertise availability of women and even children to be used for prostitution, making of pornographic films and other forms of sexual exploitation. They also advertise their brothels to attract foreign businessmen or tourists. Often their websites will portray pictures of women who are nude (Maltzhan, 2012)
Photographs of women are widely being distributed on pornographic websites. Some women may not have intended their photos to be used in this way and some may not even know that their photographs are on the web identifying them as prostitutes. These women whether they are prostitutes or not suffer the stigma of being exposed to the public as prostitutes (Hughes et al., 1999)

Virtual trafficking may also present itself in the form of trickery that takes place in the form of fake/misleading job and marriage advertisements. In their report, Fascendini and Fialova (2011) found that many websites advertise fake marriages, work or study opportunities to attract women into forced marriages. Their study in Colombia and Argentina found cases of missing women that had been contacted by unknown people via chat or Facebook before disappearing. They also found evidence of online mail-order bride services and social networking sites being used as a means of recruitment for victims/survivors of human trafficking in the Philippines.

These cases no doubt are VAW in that women are being forced into marriages and work that they would otherwise not have chosen. The trickery used lures them into situations where they are exploited.

In Kenya, the Sexual offences Act (SOA 2006) addresses issues of sex trafficking but it has yet to capture this new avenue that is virtual trafficking. There have been newspapers reports of fake job agencies, advertised on social media, that lure women into job opportunities in the Middle East countries where they end up being abused and exploited either physically or sexually. Equally, a report entitled “How can technology disrupt illicit networks shows a growing concern among key stakeholders” for example, Microsoft Research and Google Ideas both held conferences in July
2012 to highlight the role of technology in facilitating sex trafficking. However, there seems to be no consolidated study that gives aggregate data on the frequency of occurrence of these virtual trafficking incidents in Kenya. It therefore remains to be seen what role stakeholders in the Kenyan context can play in addressing this issue.

2.2.4 Online Harassment and Virtual Attacks

Lacey (2007) and Burton (2009) describe online harassment as repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm or are highly intimidating or engaging in other online activities that make a person afraid for his or her safety.

In one example, Burton (2009) identifies flaming as a form of online harassment, describing it as online “fighting” which involves sending electronic messages using angry and vulgar language. Studies by Laughren, (2000) and Ellison and Akdeniz, (1998), examine the use of electronic communication to bully, threaten, harass and intimidate a victim. Online harassment includes making rude or nasty comments, or intentionally embarrassing others based on their gender.

Online harassment may also include distressing incidents where a woman receives unwanted sexual solicitations and approaches to engage in sexual activities, sexual talk/sexting, or giving personal sexual information. It also includes unwanted exposure to sexual material. (CCRC, 2012)

Burton (2009) and Lacey (2007) also identify denigration as a form of online harassment. They describe it as sending or posting of cruel gossip or rumours about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships. The main purpose is to
humiliate the victim (Mullen et al., 2009: 153). According to Bocij (2004:14) and Mullen (2009: 154), the perpetrator may even go as far as contacting their victims’ family or colleagues with the false information.

The prevalence of these incidences remains under researched in Kenya and as a result, the Sexual Offences act (SOA) of Kenya 2006, falls short of recognizing the above mentioned acts, as acts of harassment, and confines itself to describing sexual harassment as solicitation of sex by people in authority or holding a public office (SOA, 2016). Equally, the new realm of online harassment is not captured in article 23 which describes sexual harassment and its confines as well as punishment for the offenders.

2.2.5 Violent Video Sharing

Another form of VAW that is experienced on social media platforms is “happy slapping” which is explained by Burton (2009). It is a youth craze in which groups of teenagers armed with camera phones slap or mug unsuspecting victims while capturing the attacks. Some images and videos are emailed to peers, while others are published on video sharing sites and other social media platforms.

In South Africa, this type of violence has been experienced by young women who are raped while their rapists record the violations using mobile phones and send these offensive videos online (Radloff, 2013)

Video sharing has presented itself in the recent spate of women being stripped naked in the streets of Nairobi. The prevalence led the government to put in place a law to stop such acts, however, studies as to the reasons behind such behaviour are
still scarce. Different theories have been advanced in social media and mainstream media, but academic research on the Kenyan situation is still lacking.

2.3 Causes of Violence against Women on Social Media

This section looks at some of the reasons why perpetrators of VAW are using social media platforms as tools for victimizing women.

2.3.1 The Gender Divide in ICT

In the 1980’s, ICT was thought to be gender neutral in that the tools of ICT were equally accessible to both men and women. Further, notions were limited on the question of relevance or potential benefits or harm to women. However, later years saw an increase in concern on gender gaps in technology (Rathgeber&Adera, 2000). As interest continued to grow, the Global Knowledge Conference, held in Toronto in 1997 (GK97), focused on the gender gap in the use and access to ICT. The issue was also addressed at the fourth world conference on women in Beijing, 1995, (BPFA, 1995) as well as its follow up in 2000 and most recently by the World Forum on Information Society (WSIS) where it was acknowledged and affirmed that ICT development affects women and men differently. Their reports highlight a gender divide in access and participation in ICT which constitutes a new source of inequality for women (Hafkin, 2002).

Women have been reluctant in embracing ICTs-based professions worldwide and as a result they are largely excluded from designing and shaping the tools of ICT. Where women are employed in this sector, they tend to hold low-paying and less prestigious positions. Traditionally, gender differences and disparities have been ignored in policies and programmes dealing with the development and dissemination of improved technologies. Consequently, women have benefited less and have been
disadvantaged more by the technological advances of ICT and its tools (Hafkin, 2003).

The role of social media in advancing VAW also raises an important question on the way women’s expertise can be used to address the violence that is targeted to them. At the same time, concentrating on social media as an agent of VAW poses a risk of diminishing women’s expertise on stopping violence meted against them, while repackaging the counter measures of VAW as a high tech exercise, in which only ICT experts (who are mainly men) can engage in (Maltzahn, 2012).

ICT experts are predominantly men and the victims of social media aided violence are predominantly women. The continued persistence of VAW stems from unbalanced power relations and structures that are heavily weighted in favour of men and from millennia of perceived feminine inadequacy (Ulrich, 2003).

2.3.2 Convenience of Social Media Platforms to the Perpetrators

For those engaging in criminal activity or sexual exploitation, anonymity and disguise are critical. Internet technology creates possibilities for anonymous communications which may lead to heightened aggression. This fluidity of identity over social media is what makes it one of its chief attractions to offenders (Ellison et al., 1998).

Kee (2005) observes that the development in areas of information technology and the uptake of social media has also made it hard to track syndicates and has also created ripe spaces for perpetrators to network and communicate. It makes everyone a potential victim or aggressor.

Maltzahn (2012) adds that the tools of technology provide an affordable and easily accessible platform to anonymously harm or exploit women and allow users to carry
out these activities in the privacy of their homes. As new technology applications emerge, so do the means of the predators to reach their victims. Chat rooms, instant messaging and similar ways of communicating through social media create relatively private spaces for offenders as most of them offer services where no messages are archived or stored and no log files are maintained making it a safe space for offenders to talk to each other or their victims (ibid)

Social media also presents difficulties in policing. “Even with the most carefully crafted legislation, enforcing a law in a virtual community creates unique problems never before faced by law enforcement agencies” (Jensen, 2014).

2.3.3 Sanitization of Violence in Social Media Platforms

Violent online content is also to blame for the VAW on social media. The sanitization of VAW through music videos, virtual games and music lyrics encourages violence as it contributes to the hegemonic masculinity that encourages misogynistic attitudes toward women (Linz, Donnerstein & Penrod, 1984; Dietz, 1998 and Donnerstein, 1980).

The exposure to degrading representations of women in video games, music videos, lyrics and other online content such as misogynistic pornography can result in expression of attitudes that are more supportive of rape by systematically desensitizing the audience to violence and its real-world consequences (Linz, et al., 1984; Dietz, 1998 and Donnerstein, 1980).

The existence of hegemonic masculine discourse in the way women are portrayed online enhances the continuation of gendered power relations (Hald, et Al., 2009; Dietz, 1998 and Jensen et. al, 2004) as it can normalize the view of women as passive, sexual objects (Maltzahn, 2012).
Violence against women on social media is glamorized, the perpetrators are attractive; hence, the violence is sanitized and portrayed as socially sanctioned (Donnerstein, et al., 1984).

There are games circulating in the market which are used to objectify women. For example, BenkiKuosuko, the players are encouraged to introduce different objects into a woman’s vagina and anus (Kee, 2003). Of equal concern are music videos and lyrics laden with violent content. Experimental studies by Berkowitz (1993) and Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerstein, Huesmann, Johnson, Linz, Malamuth and Wartella (2003) indicate that exposure to the latter leads to a higher likelihood of aggressive behaviour. The two are subject to question in ways in which they can contribute to hegemonic masculinity that encourages misogynistic attitudes toward women.

Hughes (2007) indicates that a lot of the pornography available is extremely misogynistic and largely produced for the heterosexual male. In this kind of pornography, women are portrayed as seeking and enjoying every type of humiliation, degradation and painful sex act imaginable. He states that aggression against women by distribution of these humiliating acts usually goes unpunished. A study by Kee (2005) states that in terms of content, there doesn’t seem to be anything new apart from the ease at which the average person with access to social media can find violent and degrading content and be able to distribute it.

Kee (2005) further observes that discriminalist attitudes usually intersect within these images and serve to amplify the already problematic gendered, sexual relations. The “misogynistic porn” involves degrading images, such as ejaculation on the woman’s
face, real pain and violence against women that results in physical and emotional injuries (Hughes, 2007).

2.4 Effects of Violence against Women on Social Media

Given the lack of literature on the effects of violence against women on social media in the Kenyan context, international findings may pinpoint some important effects on victims.

According to Ybarra, Diener-west and Leaf (2006), cyber bullying causes distress but its impact relative to traditional bullying is uncertain. Willard (2006) reports that cyber bullying has led to suicide, school violence (including one school murder), school failure and truancy. Research by several authors such as Sheridan, Davies and Boon (2001) and Maxwell (2000) have shown that victims of violence on social media also feel ashamed and tend to change aspects of their lifestyle as a result of the harassment.

Bauman (2007) and Burton (2009) observe that, when images and comments of a victim are distributed on social media and reach a wide audience, it affects the everyday reality of the victim’s physical environment.

Bauman (2007) further adds that because insults and comments via internet can be preserved and reread several times, the effects of online harassment on the victim become exacerbated. He points to reported suicides, murders and school drop-outs as a result of online harassment.

Ybara (2007) is yet another reference. He suggests that victims of cyber bullying are significantly more likely to report depressive symptoms, emotional distress and
become perpetrators of cyber bullying themselves. In another study by David (2007), experiences of online violence have been linked to bad conduct in school and weapon-carrying to school.

Kowalski, Limber and Agatson (2008) and DeWet (2005) mention delinquency, aggression, substance abuse, loneliness and isolation, anxiety and fear of being humiliated and impaired concentration as some of the consequences of violence on social media.

These reviewed studies show that VAW against women as experienced on social media platforms can have a lasting effect on the victims.

2.5 Strategies for Overcoming GBV on Social Media

The rapid evolution, growth of use and access to the tools of ICT in conjunction with a strong consumer market, demands vigilance if the rights of the individual are to be protected. It is important that content available online stays within the law while at the same time respecting the rights of the consumer and freedom of expression (Summary of E.U legislation, 2014).

Across the globe, countries have used various measures to curb VAW. They include legislation and restriction/blocking of offensive sites.

The United States of America (U.S.A) have some of the most sophisticated regulations for internet use, including abuse through social media. Some states have anti-stalking laws that include electronic harassment. They include Michigan, Arizona, Alaska, Connecticut, New York, Oklahoma and Wyoming (Ellison, 1998). Acts such as sending and receiving pornography are also criminalized. In 1995, there were 66 convicted cases (FBI Searches Internet in Child Porn Probe, 1996).
The USA law, Section 113 of the VAW Act of 2006 amended the telecommunications harassment statute that is rooted in the Communications Act of 1934. It criminalizes the use of any device or software that can be used to originate telecommunications or other types of communications that are transmitted, in whole or in part, by the internet, without disclosure of the aggressor’s identity and with intent to annoy, abuse, threaten or harass any person who receives the communications. Such acts are punishable by imprisonment not more than two years, a fine or both. The VAW Act responds to adult and youth domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. The act itself also addresses training of judicial staff on handling VAW, maintenance of a stalker database and legal representation of victims. It also covers women with disabilities and women in old age (VAW Act, 2006).

In the U.K, the Communications Act 2003, Section 127 deals with improper use of public electronic communications network. Section 127(1) (a) relates to a message that is ‘grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character’ (DPP v Collins, 2006). The section also extends to cover issues such as hate crime (including race, religion, disability, homophobic, sexual orientation and transphobic crime), hacking offences, cyber bullying, cyber stalking, amongst others. A person guilty of an offence under section 127 CA 2003 shall be liable, on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine or to both. This offence is part of the fixed penalty scheme.

In England and Wales, The Protection from Harassment Act 1997, specifically states that; “a person must not pursue a course of conduct which amounts to harassment of
another, and which he knows, or ought to know, amounts to harassment of the other” (The protection from harassment act of 1997).

The Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011 of South Africa, recognized cyber stalking as a threat to women and criminalized it.

In Singapore, the Singapore Broadcasting Authority (SBA) is charged with the regulation of the Internet (Hogan, 2014). Local Internet Service Providers (ISPs) are required to route all their traffic through one of three official government computers/proxy servers. The servers block all access to government-banned sites and screen all requests by users (Richardson, 1996). The Singaporean law goes ahead to define the restricted undesirable acts. They include: contents which are pornographic or otherwise obscene; those which propagate permissiveness or promiscuity; content which depict or propagate gross exploitation of violence, nudity, sex or horror and sexual perversions such as homosexuality, lesbianism and paedophilia.

In South Korea, the Minister of Communication can order an ISP to delete and restrict content that may harm youths' character, emotions and the sense of value (Kim, 1996). In Hong Kong, a law regulating internet use existed as early as 1997. It included the consultation paper issued by the Broadcasting, Culture and Sport Branch “Regulation of Obscene and Indecent Material through the Internet”. The paper called for an industry code of practice and a complaints handling system (Hong, 1990). ISPs in Hong Kong are also encouraged to come up with a code of practice and enforce it themselves.

In the Kenyan context, the current legal framework and its supplements as contained in the 2010 CCK regulations, does not explicitly deal with issues of violence as
experienced in ICT. Such a legal framework is necessary to discourage would be perpetrators.

The respondents in this study recommended various other ways that can be put in place to curb VAW on social media. Besides the reviewed ones, chapter five of this research has recommended various measures. While these may not be exhaustive, future research can continue to inform the development of these measures.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This research called for a wide repertoire of theories and concepts with which to critically examine the link between ICT and VAW. It would have ideally been conducted based on a theoretical model that would incorporate the complex interactions among various levels of analysis including factors that relate to the sociological, biological and psychological levels. This is because studies have shown that the perpetrator of VAW on the internet has different characteristics from the traditional physical violence perpetrator.

In this regard therefore, the researcher looked at several theories that were deemed to be useful in showing the link between social media and violence against women. The theories used were the theory of social learning as developed by Bandura (1977) and the General Aggression Model G.A.M. as developed in 1995 by Anderson, Deuser, and DeNeve.

The social learning theory provides a useful framework for guiding research on the effects of media on various aspects. It contends that people learn by observing other people, directly or even through media. This theory says that observations of what is portrayed in media or even what is left out (mutual respect, consent) have an effect on
the recipient. This aspect of Bandura’s theory is further researched and explained by studies by Gunter (2002), Huston, et al. (1998) and Linz (1993) who contend that exposure to violent media affects perceptions, acceptable norms and other socially acceptable behaviours.

It is noted in Bandura’s theory that learning does not always lead to a change in behaviour. This explains why many people consume violent media every day and do not mimic the violent media images they see. Research also shows a difference between the physical aggressors and the virtual world aggressors. Online aggression is often carried out by people with no previous criminal record.

For this reason, the researcher also anchored the research at hand on the General Aggression Model (GAM) which helps to understand how seemingly ordinary citizens become perpetrators of violence. GAM tells us that chronic exposure to violent media, for example, can increase aggressive attitudes, beliefs and desensitization to future violence (Gunter, 1994).

GAM suggests that predisposing people to many forms of violence and instances where the violence seems rewarding encourages people to become aggressive. A lot of exposure leads to a desensitization to the horrors of violence. If the target of the violence is also dehumanized, the violence becomes justifiable and in turn makes the aggressor more likely to act violently in a real life situation. Drawing from the two theories, one can conclude that one’s peer groups, TV shows, books, news media, social media and personal experience can make their way into a person’s thinking and behaviour and lead them to learn new things and behave in certain ways. They show
that viewing violent media has an imitative influence on aggressive behaviour when the individual gets the opportunity.

With regard to this research, the GAM was helpful in explaining how VAW becomes normalized, a sentiment that was expressed by a lot of the respondents as will be explained further in chapter 4. In relation to the theory, the position that violence is learnt through observation was used to demonstrate how viewing VAW on social media platforms, violent video games and music lyrics that are shared on social media as well as other violent media, can and do encourage VAW on social media. Based on this theory, the observation in itself does not lead to acts of aggression. G.A.M suggests that the opportunity has to exist and that is where the various characteristics of social media that were identified by this research come in. The anonymity, privacy and ease of access accorded to perpetrators by the tools of ICT make it the perfect avenue for acts of VAW. These research findings are explained based on this theory in Chapter 4 and 5.

**Figure2.1: Simplified model of causation effect of social media on VAW**

Source: Author’s Model, 2014
The model above shows that technology breeds false familiarity, blurs fantasy and reality and provides a virtual realm that mediates conscience. The more gender violent media a person consumes, the more dulled the person’s sensitivity to gender violence becomes. This can contribute to aggressive behaviour by reducing the recognition that aggression and violence are behaviours that should be curtailed.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.2: Model of the conceptual framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of Social media and the Presence of women</td>
<td>Violence against women on social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moderating Variables. ICT policy, Existing Laws, implementation strategies</td>
<td>Desired outcome: Safe online spaces for women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s Model, 2014

The dependent variable examined in this research was the tools of ICT, while the independent variable was violence against women. Variables such as the National ICT policy, existing laws and implementation strategies moderate the independent variables.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
This chapter discusses the research design, the population under study, the sampling procedure and data collections procedures. It gives an explanation on the tools and techniques that were used to analyse and present data. The reliability and validity of the research instrument are also addressed. Lastly, ethical considerations pertaining to the research are also discussed.

3.2 Research Design
The research employed an exploratory design to address the research questions. Exploratory design was used as the area under study is relatively new in the Kenyan context.

3.3 Site of the Study
The study was conducted in Kenya on the social media platform but solely incorporated views of women who identified themselves as residing in Kenya at the time of the study.

3.4 Study Population
The study used both a virtual population and a physical population. The physical population comprised of key informants drawn from the criminal investigation department, while the online population targeted women aged 18 years and above.

3.5 Sampling Technique and Sample Size
The researcher adopted convenient sampling. A sample of 150 women was selected for use in this study. Facebook was the main social media platform that was used
because it has been found to be the most popular platform in Kenya (I-hub infographic, 2012)

3.6 Research instruments

The study made use of contemporary strategies while implementing traditional methodology. It combined cyber technology with traditional methods in order to reach the targeted population.

This research study chose to use questionnaires which were distributed online, as the primary research instrument for the collection of data. The questionnaires were distributed online by the aid of a computer software known as survey monkey. Survey monkey enables a researcher to create an online questionnaire, distribute it and collect responses.

A key informant interview schedule was used to get information from the law enforcement officers in the CID headquarters who deal with cybercrimes.

3.7 Instrument Validity and Reliability

The test retest technique was used to check the adequacy, reliability and validity of the research instruments. The questions were made consistent to the subject of study. Items that were found to be ambiguous in eliciting relevant information were modified and restructured to ensure that they would yield the kind of responses that the researcher expected. It also helped to check on any unforeseen problems respondents may have when interacting with the research instruments. The initial test was conducted on MySpace, a social media platform that was not be included in the main study.
3.8 Data Collection Procedures

The data was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was obtained by use of online questionnaires while secondary data was obtained from previous research, published books and online and social media resources. The online questionnaire was introduced through social media pages using online software called survey monkey. The responses were collected by the same software.

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation Procedures

Data collected was edited to identify and eliminate errors made by respondents. Coding was done to translate questionnaire responses into specific categories. Data was then analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, and percentages with the aid of computer software MS Excel the results were presented in form of tables, pie charts and figure formats. Qualitative data was analysed according to themes and patterns formed and was presented in narrative and verbatim form.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The research dealt with matters that were deemed to be very private by the respondents. If this privacy was not upheld, the respondents may have felt that they had been duped and unjustly exposed to public scrutiny. This could have had its legal implications. In this regard, the respondents were not asked to give names or any other information that may identify them. Their right to privacy was explicitly explained in the questionnaires.

The researcher also sought research permission from the National Council of Science and Technology (NACOSTI) in order to be able to conduct research within Kenya.
4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysed data, its interpretation and discussions based on the objectives and research questions of this study. The chapter has five sections. Section one presents demographic characteristics of the study participants. Section two presents information on forms of violence against women through the social media platform. Section three presents information on causes of violence against women as manifest in social media. Section four presents information on effects of violence against women as experienced through social media and lastly section five presents information on the best strategies of addressing violence against women on the social media platform.

4.2 Rate of Return of Data Collection Instruments

The study utilized two types of data collection instruments: online questionnaire for women and Interview schedule for ICT authorities and law enforcers and supported by secondary sources. The data was collected over a period of seven days. Table 4.1 presents the response rate of questionnaires.

Table 4.1 Response Rate of Questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Number of Questionnaires Filled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After the online distribution of the questionnaire, 227 responses were obtained. The highest number of respondents being those that filled in the questionnaire on the first day it was posted. Responses dwindled as the questionnaire grew older. The response rate achieved was considered satisfactory since the study aimed at 150 women respondents. An elimination was conducted to arrive at 150 women. Those eliminated included the ones who indicated they were outside Kenya, men and those below 18 years. Also eliminated were the incomplete questionnaire responses.

4.3 Demographic Information

To understand the characteristics of the respondents in the study, the researcher sought information on their gender, age, country of residence and the type of social media network they had used in the past six months prior to this study. Given that this research aimed at getting 150 respondents, the respondents who did not meet the desired qualities in terms of age, gender, country of residence were eliminated from the study. The findings are presented below.

4.3.1 Gender of Respondents

Distribution of respondents by gender was necessary in order to make the results of this research aggregate. Figure 4.1 presents distribution of respondents by gender.
Figure 4.1 Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Source: Author, 2016

Figure 4.1 shows that majority (70%) of the respondents were women. This is because the questionnaire was targeted at them. Six percent (6%) of the respondents did not identify themselves with either sex. The males who responded were 24%. The males and those who did not identify their gender were left out of this study.

NB For purposes of this research, it was taken that the perpetrator is male and throughout the research is mainly referred to as he. This is does not mean women are not abusers, however several studies including those by Maxwell (2001) and Working to Halt Online Abuse (2000) statistics have shown the main perpetrators of VAW online to be male.
4.3.2 Respondents Distribution by Age

The targeted age of respondents was between 18 years to 34 years. Figure 4.2 presents the distribution of respondents by age.

![Bar chart showing distribution of respondents by age](chart.png)

**Figure 4.2 Distribution of Respondents by Age**

Figure 4.2 shows that majority of the participants were between ages 30 to 39. The rest of the participants belonged to ages below 17 years and those above 40. These categories of respondents were not included in this study. This indicates that the study involved the intended sample size in terms of age which was between 18 years to 34 years. This finding agrees with the Kenya infographics survey (2015) which puts majority of social media users at between the ages of 18-34.

4.3.3 Distribution of Respondents by Country of Origin

This study was targeting women in Kenya. Figure 4.3 presents the distribution of respondents by country of origin.
4.3 Distribution of Respondents by Country of Origin

Figure 4.3 shows that majority (91%) of the respondents were Kenyan and only a small percentage (9%) of respondents were from other countries. Being an online study, it was difficult to keep respondents outside the country from responding despite the title indicating that the study was being conducted in Kenya. Ninety one percent responses from Kenyans was considered sufficient for the study. Responses from outside Kenya were not considered in this study.

4.3.4 Distribution of Respondents by Use of Social Media Networks

The study targeted women who are active on the social media platform. Figure 4.4 presents the distribution of respondents by type of media network used for past six months prior to this study.
Figure 4.4 Distribution of Respondents by Use of Social Media Networks

Figure 4.4 shows that all the respondents had used Facebook in the past six months prior to the study and majority (91%) had used YouTube. More than half of the respondents had used twitter (59%) and LinkedIn (53%) while less than half of the respondents had used Instagram, Google+, WhatsApp and Pinterest. Few of the respondents had used Tumblr, Snap chat, Reddit and Foursquare. None of the respondents had used Flicker and Myspace. This finding indicates that at least all the respondents had used at least one type of social media network indicating the sample for the study was appropriate.

These findings further indicate that Kenyans are active across many social media networks. These results echo the results of a research carried out by Digital Rand Kenya, who found that about 4 million Kenyans use social media. Of the 4million, 3.8million use Facebook, LinkedIn comes second with 1million users and twitter third
with 650,000 users (Digital rand, 2015). The current research however sampled more social media networks than those indicated in the Digital rand report.

4.4 Forms of Violence Perpetrated against Women through Social Media Platforms

The first research objective sought information on forms of violence perpetuated against women through the social media platform. To identify the forms of violence, the participants were asked to tick as many experiences as possible they may have come across while using social media. The researcher simplified the terms so that the respondents would understand the question better. Table 4.2 presents the type of experiences and the number of respondents who had encountered them. The final classification used in this table is aligned to the available literature discussed in the literature review.

Table 4.2 Frequency of Forms of Violence Experienced on Social Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of VAW</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage of the total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsolicited pornographic content</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwanted sexual advances</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has anyone sent you a sexual image of himself against your consent?</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked for information of a sexual nature against your will</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos/clips/games where women were harmed, undressed, beaten or humiliated?</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats of physical harm</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats to disclose personal information on social media</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You know someone whose private information/photos have been disclosed on social media</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisements for brothels, escort services and pornography</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry/shameful comments to something you posted online</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persistent contact from someone you didn’t want to get in touch with</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwanted access to your social media accounts/hacking</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumours about someone being spread online</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Multiple responses applied
4.4.1 Outing and image Circulation

The above Table (4.2) shows that almost half (50%) of the respondents reported having known someone whose private information and or photos had been disclosed on social media. This type of experience according to Hasinoff’s (2014) classification constitutes violence in the form of outing and image circulation.

This outing and image circulation is a kind of violence that includes everything from what has come to be popularly known as ‘revenge porn’, where images of women involved in sexual activities are released online by their partners after relationships go sour.

It also involves vulgar photo manipulation such as ‘morphing’, where images of women are manipulated to show the victim in a rape, pornography or consensual sex situation. Further, it involves creating degrading drawings of rape or sexual assault with the target’s likeness. This can be achieved through use of Photoshop and other digital photography tools. These harassment images are then sent as messages to the victim through email, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook or any other online service with messaging capabilities. The perpetrator may also make these images appear in search results for the target’s name as a way to attack their online reputation. (Women, action and media, 2013)

The cases in point being those of a popular Kenyan female politician, a female Kenyan musician and a prominent media personality. The naked images of the three are still available online and they are still spread through blog posts and social media platforms. They are also available through Google search and on several social networking pages and blogs. (The names of the three have been left out of this research, despite being in the public domain, for ethical considerations).
The popular Kenyan musician had her naked photos leaked online by an enraged boyfriend. They are still available for viewing on social media and several blogs run by local bloggers. When she recently sought to raise funds for her education in an online campaign, Kenyans on twitter, who go by the twitter handle #Kenyans on twitter, mocked her because of her leaked photos as illustrated below by an extract from a twitter handle #Dear K** 12/12/2015

@dud***: #DearK**Mathare Secondary Polytechnic University College is admitting. Nude applicants gets scholarship.

@crazyn***: #DearK**From nudity to college? Won’t work. JusLike parkin a wheelbarrow in a garage can’t make it a Ferrari.

(***) Indicates that names have been altered to avoid easy identification of the victim and the perpetrators. The perpetrators however appear to have used pseudonyms, but the ethical considerations of this research require a guarantee of anonymity. However, the information is available in the public domain.)

Elsewhere on the internet, the phenomenon of outing appears to affect women across the globe. On twitter, these are some of the reactions that follow outing and circulation of nude photos showing that it’s a common violation affecting women.

In another tweet, #jenniferlawrencewesupportyou an anonymous tweeter says,

“The happening is just a way to promote entertainment girls. There are no leaks.”

‘Fappening’ is slang for an event that occurs when someone on the internet releases a large amount of nude/semi-nude pictures of famous people. The writer of this ‘tweet’ feels that women leak their photos intentionally to attract attention to themselves. This appears to be the case in some instances for example, the daughter of a world
famous actor who went topless on Twitter under hashtag #Topless on twitter in protest against Instagram’s restrictive policy on nudity.

The Kenyan Socialite trend is a new phenomenon that has not received a lot of academic attention. However, Mukhongo (2014) is a pioneer in this regard and she looks at how young women in Kenya are constructing their own gendered narratives online. Her study is inspired by the Kenyan trend where young girls, perhaps inspired by world renowned socialites like Kim Kardashian and Paris Hilton, have posted their naked photos online in a bid to gain popularity. She questions whether the posting of nude photos by women is a bid to feed into a culture dominated by patriarchy and which exploits the female body or a method to exploit that very patriarchal culture that draws its life from visuals that exploit the female body. She contends that the latter is used as ‘social capital’ and mentions a case of a Kenyan Socialite Huddah Monroe, who claims to have been able to utilize her huge social media following for financial gain.

With such views being rampant across the social media platforms and elsewhere on the internet, Hassinoff (2014) argues that it is important to distinguish between consensual and non-consensual image sharing via social media. The researcher observes that given the above trends, it is important to clearly identify cases of outing, in order not to miss or trivialize incidences of outing where women get hurt when their images are circulated. Creating sexual images is not in itself harmful, but the malicious distribution of such images certainly is. This is a delicate area that calls for more careful consideration of what people do not consent to or what
they consent to when they engage in such digitally enabled/mediated sexual practices such as nude image exchange.

**4.4.2 Virtual Trafficking**

A significant percentage of respondents (57%) reported having come across pages advertising brothels, escort services and pornography business. This form of violence falls under virtual trafficking.

A perusal of Kenyan websites and social media pages reveals several ‘shops’ of sex workers ready to offer home, hotel and escort service. On Facebook, a closed book calls itself Kenyan prostitutes, by visiting its home page, Facebook it auto-generates results that suggest another page, prostitutes of South Africa. This suggests that those in need of such services have easier access via social media.

A Google search revealed several pages advertising themselves on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. The pages advertise the availability of girls for adult services, escort services and all manner of pornographic activities. They include, Kenya raha.net,

“kenyaraha.net is the premier Escorts Directory for Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania - Elite escorts, Escort agencies, call girls and Massage parlors in Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru, Arusha, Dar-es-salaam, Zanzibar and the Whole of East Africa. Specialised in first class escort services, tailor made arrangements, dinner dates, VIP escort services and personal companionship services in Nairobi and Mombasa Kenya. This site targets mainly to business people, travellers, tourist in need of companionship from Kenyan, Uganda, Tanzania, Escorts."
The virtual trafficking is visible in that they advertise girls from various locations. www.Kenyaraha.com advertises Ethiopians, Somalis, Arabs, Indians and Caucasians. This kind of advertising reveals that there is a possibility of women leaving their countries to come to Kenya for prostitution and other pornographic work. The pages are also seen to advertise teenage sex. This could lead to cases of child trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation as anyone below 18 years in Kenya is considered a child. These findings agree with Hughes, et al. (1999) study which reveal that social media is used to advertise availability of women to be used for prostitution and making of pornography. Additionally, the findings also support the view by Hughes, et al. (2007) who point out that while a lot of international law enforcers attention is directed at online child pornography, the online pornography of adults and post-adolescent teens has been under-researched and there is little information available on this topic.

In the case of virtual trafficking, it is important to note that the women’s consent or lack thereof is irrelevant and cannot be used as defence. This is due to regulations adopted by the United Nations in 2010 entitled ‘Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children’. The protocol identifies sexual exploitation as a violation and holds that a person’s consent is not absolute –where someone’s consent is secured through threats, deception, abuse of power, or other ways of securing control over another person.

Based on these findings, the researcher concluded that virtual trafficking is undermining efforts being made to end all forms of trafficking of women and
children. It is clearly happening in Kenya and across the borders. This affects the wellbeing of women as they are transported for exploitation.

### 4.4.3 Sexual Harassment

Again, Table 4.2 shows that majority of the respondents (67%) had received unsolicited pornographic content, 37% reported that someone had sent them sexual images against their consent, 30% of respondents had received unwanted sexual advances, 7% had been asked to reveal information of sexual nature about themselves and 6% had received threats of physical harm. All these experiences are constituents of online sexual harassment. They can leave the woman feeling harassed, unsafe and disturbed. The large number of respondents identifying with this form of violation indicates that is very common.

Barak (2005) identifies both passive and active ways that sexual harassment is delivered online. In terms of active verbal harassment, he identifies offensive sexual messages, sexual remarks and the so-called dirty jokes. On passive aggression, he identifies actions that are less intrusive, as they do not refer to one user communicating messages to another. They include messages targeted to general recipients for example photos of a female marked ‘cute tits’

Chawki and Shazly (2013) quote a study by several scholars conducted on undergraduate students in the United States of America. The studies compared traditional face-to-face forms of harassment to online harassment. They established a difference on how women and men respond to online harassment. They found that women found online dirty jokes to be more harassing than the same behaviour in a face-to-face environment, while males rated the traditional face –to-face jokes as more harassing.
Based on the findings of this study, we can conclude that online sexual harassment of women is prevalent across the borders not just in Kenya. The effects (discussed later in 4.6) are harmful to women and they can be used to keep women away from using social media and thus from participating in development because ICT and its tools, including social media are an important part of modern day development.

4.4.4 Cyber Stalking and Denial of Privacy

Table 4.2 also shows that 37% of respondents received persistent and unwanted communication from someone they did not want to stay in touch with.

Still on the same Table 4.2, 10% of respondents reported having encountered threats to disclose personal information on social media and 6% had encountered someone accessing their social media account against their will. Such experiences as outlined by Fascendini, et al. (2011) constitute denial of privacy. This kind of violence can be perpetrated by monitoring someone’s whereabouts with GPS or other tracking systems and conducting video voyeurism. Denial of privacy is also perpetrated when a victim’s account is hacked and the victim then receives threats to disclose whatever is in the account. Equally, the perpetrator could use the hacked account to post offending things using the victim’s name. This leaves the victim feeling ashamed, unsafe, distressed and intimidated.

According to Lacey (2007) and Burton (2009) description, this experience constitutes cyber stalking. This can leave the victim feeling as if they are being watched and thus feel unsafe.
Bocji (2004) further identifies cyber stalking as a group of behaviours where the use of ICT and its tools is intended to cause emotional distress to another person.

Schenk (2008) categorizes such behaviours as: making threats, false accusations/victimization, abusing the target/victim, attempts to gather information about the target, ordering goods and services on behalf of the victim, impersonating the victim, arranging to meet the victim and physical assault.

Goodno (2007) illustrates how distressing this can be, by using the following example, “Female International Author, no limits to imagination and fantasies, prefers groups macho/sadistic interaction... stop by my house at [insert current address]. Will take your calls day or night at [insert current telephone number]. I promise you everything you’ve ever dreamt about. Serious responses only”

In the above advertisement, the woman is falsely identified as a prostitute, and because her contacts and whereabouts were made public through social media, she constantly receives calls soliciting her services.

Goodno (2007) observes that cyber stalkers are similar to traditional stalkers in content and intent. He points out that the intention of both is to exert control on the victim, by threatening and harassing. He goes on to indicate that the traditional stalker is different from the online stalker as he requires effort on the part of the stalker, however, cyber stalking harassment can happen automatically after only one action has been performed by the stalker. For example, an email that automatically and repeatedly gets sent to a victim.
While there are measures that can be used to block unwanted contact from unwanted people, in some instances, it is not possible to tell who the perpetrator is. It is also not possible to tell who is spending too much time on your social media page and what kind of information they are looking for.

With this in mind, it can be concluded that social media has opened up a new platform for the would-be stalker. It is now easy to reach a victim even across borders. The stalker does not have to put in a lot of effort as compared to offline stalking. This increases chances for women to be stalked online. The fear of stalkers can keep women from using social media and thus from participating in ICT and development.

4.4.5 Flaming and Denigration

The results on Table 4.2 also showed that seventy five (75%) percent of respondents reported having encountered angry, shameful or violent comment(s) to something they had posted online. This experience according to Burton (2009) constitutes a form of violence known as flaming. It is used to try and intimidate, scare and silence women by creating an online environment that is too hostile, toxic and disturbing to endure. Similarly, Scott, Semmens and Willoughby (2001) note that flaming is used to make online spaces very hostile to women. Barak (2005) goes on to contend that most of the flaming is initiated by men, with women being the main targets.

It can be seen as a mob attack organized through various social media platforms and perpetrators try to recruit others to join the harassment campaign. A case in point being that of a popular Kenyan Radio personality illustrated below:

ONE LIKE = ONE PUNCH.
LETS SEE HOW MANY PUNCHES SHE WILL GET.
Source: Facebook
(The above information is available in the public domain)

The presenter’s case shows how flaming happens in Kenya. The renowned media personality made a comment on social media that targeted youths who are idlers. In the wake of her comment, several social media pages were opened to attack and insult her. They include:-

-R.I.P ca*** Mu*** a page with close to 25,000 members (last accessed, May 2016)
-Ca*** Mu*** is cocky and self-righteous 53 members (last accessed May 2016),

This shows how flaming can be used to keep women from expressing their views on social media platforms. The cyber mob in this case is seen to participate in an assassination of the journalist’s character and spread rumours of her death and link her to shameful crimes.

Another form of violation evident was denigration. In this research, 6% of the respondents reported having witnessed it. Denigration is described by Burton (2009) and Lacey (2007) as form of violence that could damage ones reputation.

One of the comments on this page says:-

“So MissMu*** was Mu***’s sidekick. Due to fact that Mu*** was in a "semi menopause" he used viagra. They say he died from an overdose of it but who knows she (Mu***) might have been paid by "someone" to poison the senator”

(https://web.facebook.com/RipCarolineMutoko/?fref=ts)

The poster here insinuates that the presenter could have
been the murderer of a Kenyan politician who had died mysteriously. The comment was shared 23 times, receiving 9494 likes and elicited lots of others hateful comments.

Rumours of her death were also spread. A case in point is the image shown here.

![Image of a gravestone with a derogatory message]

Source: Facebook

The comments following this post said:-

- Ma** Jo**: posted “haha funny”
- Bo** Mc** Mu**: “Good 4 her hehee”

On a different occasion, a well-known blogger accused the same presenter of stealing a baby from a hospital and incited the public to attack her based on this allegation. The posts cited show how denigration happens in Kenya. It also shows a growing lack of empathy on the violation committed against the victim.

Similarly, denigration in online spaces was also identified in the case of a popular Kenyan female politician and woman representative who withdrew from using social media after photos of herself together with a popular male politician were
manipulated to show them in seemingly compromising situations, alleging an affair between them, were splashed all over the internet, with innuendos to her immorality.

She is quoted in a YouTube broadcast saying “Cyber-crime (and bullying) is targeting everybody. I am a politician and I know we get targeted and that is why I keep off social media.”

The effects of such a violation may be more lasting than those of offline denigration because social media is far reaching and once something is posted online, it stays there for long as a reminder to the victim. In this case for example, two years after they were first posted, the posts are still online and every so often, the discussion is awakened when someone posts or comments on the said page.

4.4.6 Visual Misogyny and Violent Video Sharing

Still on the same Table (4.2), 63% of the women reported having encountered images and clips of women being undressed or being beaten. The high number of respondents identifying with this kind of violence could be because this research was conducted at a time when matatu (public transport in Kenya) operators had taken it upon themselves to undress women whom they felt were scantily dressed. At that time, video clips of the woman being beaten and undressed were taken and spread through social media.

This kind of violence is equated to ‘happy slapping’ a phenomenon first encountered in the U.K where groups of youth would find a woman on the street, slap her, take a video and share it on social media (www.bullying.co.uk)
In summary, the discussions in section 4.4 indicate that women in Kenya are experiencing many forms of violations in their daily use of social media platforms. Key among these violations being outing, visual misogyny (such as online sharing of acts of VAW, trivializing it and encouraging others to join in and support as discussed), flaming and denigration. The prevalence of such violations cannot be ignored as they are an obstacle to free use of social media since they drive women away and cause significant harm to those who remain users either because of the nature of their jobs or for their own enjoyment (The effects are further discussed in 4.6)

4.5 Causes of Violence against Women as Manifest in Social Media

4.5.1 Introduction

The second research question sought information on causes of violence as manifest in social media. In this regard, the respondents were asked to write their opinion(s) on why people use social media as a platform for aggressiveness towards others. The findings are presented on Table 4.3

Table 4.3 Causes of VAW on social media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Respondent</th>
<th>Respondents answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>“When you open a social media page, you do not need to use your real name. So you can use a fake name to do the things you want”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>“When you are online, it is a private space, nobody can see you or stop you from doing what you want”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>“The internet allows these bigots to hide, it requires less courage and they know that it is hard to get caught.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>“Everyone has internet access nowadays so it is easy to access social media and do what you want wherever you are.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Unlike in the past, the internet is everywhere and it is easy to access even on phone. In the past, you had to go to the cyber.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>“I think some people harass women online because they think it is funny and it will make them popular. If you post something ‘bad’ and people like it, they will share it and your popularity on social media that day will grow.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the above sampled responses, there were five main themes emerging: anonymity, availability, affordability, acceptability and aloneness/privacy. Together, these causes make five ‘A’s that Barak and Fisher (2002) call the ‘Penta-Aengine’. Secondary sources reveal more causes which are also in line with the mentioned five. Hertlein and Stevenson (2010) add three characteristics of the internet that make it a convenient platform for the would be perpetrator: approximation, ambiguity and accommodation. These causes are discussed below.

4.5.2 Anonymity

Sample responses A, B and C point to the importance of anonymity to the would be perpetrator. Citron (2011) points out that the internet, due to its anonymity, has become the new frontier for hate, where people can express misogyny with little personal cost. She says that unlike offline spaces where identities are obvious, on the internet, people are anonymous and can thus act with no fear of being identified.

Anonymity means that it is not easy to expose perpetrators of violence. These findings agree with the studies of Ellison, et al. (1998) that identified anonymous communication on the internet as a chief attraction to offenders. They also support findings by Jensen (1996) who says that enforcing a law in a virtual community creates unique problems never before faced by law enforcement agencies. This is because it becomes difficult to track the offenders. In social media platforms where offenders can hide behind fake names with no way of identifying them, it is a daunting task for the victim to identify the offender or even report to authorities as they have no idea who could be behind the offence.
4.5.3 Accessibility and Availability

Responses C,D and E point to accessibility and availability as major causes of VAW on social media. As Citron (2011) points out, social media violations call for very little personal cost on the part of the violator.

One needs only to access the internet which has become quite cheap and easy to access to everyone with any device that connects to the internet including mobile phones and other Wi-Fi enabled devices. In the past, one needed to put in effort to visit a cyber café but now internet can accessed anywhere. The entry of the fibre optic enabled internet has led to higher accessibility within Kenya. The Alliance for affordable internet Affordability Report (2014) estimates that two-thirds of Kenya’s 22 million Internet users have access to broadband wireless Internet.

This means, the would be perpetrator does not have to inconvenience himself to commit a violation. He can do it from wherever he is using a simple device like a mobile phone or a camera.

In terms of availability, the victims are also likely to be using the internet due to its affordability and are thus easily available and accessible to the would be perpetrator.

4.5.4 Affordability

Internet is now more affordable than in the past. The Alliance for affordable internet Affordability Report (2014) indicates that affordability has been made easier by better internet infrastructure, enhanced competition, better broadband strategies among others. In the same study, affordability in the emerging economies and the developing economies was compared and Kenya ranked 7th in Africa, with an overall 44% affordability (Ibid).
This is not surprising as with costs as low as 30 cents for Safaricom subscribers, this is quite affordable for most Kenyans (Safaricom is Kenya’s leading mobile phone services provider).

Free Wi-Fi is also available in many coffee shops, restaurants, offices and hotels. http://wifispc.com/kenya/nairobi-province/nairobi.html is a website that offers a listing of places where one can access free Wi-Fi in Nairobi.

A sample list of places in Nairobi with free internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point type</th>
<th>Point name</th>
<th>Network name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La Mesa / none</td>
<td>No address</td>
<td>Wi-Fi without password</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven Seafood and Grill / none</td>
<td>A 104</td>
<td>Free Wi-Fi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Bobbes Bistro / none</td>
<td>No address</td>
<td>Wi-Fi without password</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakumatt Ngong Road / none</td>
<td>Prestige Plaza</td>
<td>Free Wi-Fi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avanti, Prestige Plaza / none</td>
<td>Prestige Plaza</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.5: Availability of free WIFI within Nairobi
Source: http://wifispc.com/kenya/nairobi-province/nairobi.html

It is also worthwhile to note that free Wi-Fi is also available in public transport (Matatu) where some acts VAW have been committed (Refer to Table 4.2 for violent image circulation)
The above is a free Wi-Fi sign found inside a matatu. The internet connection is provided by Safaricom at a fee to the matatu operator, and it is free to commuters.

What this means to a would be perpetrator is that the personal cost of accessing internet is very low. This enables him to commit his violations without the worry of investing too much money.

4.5.5 Aloneness/privacy

In the sample response B presented in Table 4.3, indicates that privacy is an important factor for the would be perpetrator. The internet presents a private space where one is not afraid of being recognized or seen by others as he commits a violation.

Such privacy provides a safe haven for the would be perpetrator as his risk of being detected are low.

4.5.6 Acceptability

Respondents also cited the normalization of violence on social media as a cause of VAW. Some respondents were of the view that VAW on social media is rampant.
because people trivialize violence against women online and think it is normal and sometimes funny. For example, one respondent said:

“...If it is medical reports or financial reports of someone that has been leaked online, people will see it for the crime it is, but when it is a woman’s naked photos, people think it is funny and share it.”

Respondents appeared to agree with this views when they said:

“VAW is normal it happens every day”

The normalisation of violence on social media could perhaps be a result of what Linz, et al. (1984), Dietz (1998) and Donnerstein (1980) call sanitization of violence, where perpetrators are made to look attractive and their crimes made to look normal. They explain that this is usually achieved by using videos games, music lyrics and videos. Their views are further supported by the Beck, Boys, Rose and Beck (2012) who lament that lack of adequate research in this area despite the continued growth of video game sales and the resulting growth of sexual objectification and VAW in some video games abates VAW. Gabbiadini,andrighetto and Volpato (2012) also add that exposure to violent video games increases moral disengagement among players.

As indicated earlier, over half of the respondents, 63%, had encountered violent videos, violent music and images of women being violated, beaten and harmed. The normalisation found in the studies mentioned could perhaps explain why respondents in the current research noted that perpetrators do what they do because they think it is funny and normal.
A perusal of the internet supports these studies by revealing that games in the market are used to objectify women. For example, ‘Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas’ which positions sex workers as objects of aggression and murder; the player, after paying for the services of a prostitute gets his money back by beating her to death. It is worth noting that while this game is widely available in Kenyan movie/game shops and is easily accessible via the internet, it has been widely condemned in other countries such as Britain, Germany and France due to its use of excessive violence. In fact, in Brazil, it is banned. In USA, several lawyers have attempted to link it to acts of violence committed by their clients. With this in mind, it is important to note that violent games, videos and music are subject to question in ways which they can contribute to hegemonic masculinity that encourages misogynistic attitudes towards women.

The researcher also found violent pornography being promoted online. In one example, www.slavefarm.com is an open website that displays images of women being subjected to sexual torture, bondage and fetish sadism on its home page. Its slogan brags of having “world’s largest collection of real life amateur slaves.” On its home page, a wide array of stories are told by women in sexual slavery and men are encouraged to submit their own images and stories of their experiences in torturing women. Another website http://rapetube.org/ in its slogan offers ‘tons of videos full of teen rape, lesbian rape, hentai rape, gay rape and any other rape sex video you could imagine’. It allows people to become members for free (instant registration) and to submit their own videos, rate the videos they watch and join the community. The images on their home page are of women tortured, some covered in blood and clearly hurt. Another site named ‘Rape sex tube’ has a header that says “We welcome you in
the world of violation, extreme abuse and ravishment, become a premium member and get access to full and uncensored rapesex movies!!” The page also goes on to add “This is a must see for all visitors who like abused sex and movie clips with brutalized and violated women!” Also, the page goes ahead to encourage members to recommend it on Facebook and on twitter.

These portrayals of VAW can skew how society perceives and treats women, entrenching hateful attitudes and discrimination. Kee (2003) draws a causal link between misogynistic pornography and sexual violence against women in that such pornography often objectifies and reduces women to passive bodies that exist solely to satisfy men and as such, may influence real violence in real life.

The threat of pornography has been discussed in the Kenyan parliament as a matter of grave concern. While laws such as The Films and Stage Plays Act, Cap.222, exist to curb pornography, mechanisms of their implementation have failed (Hansard, 2011)

Due to violence being normalized in the various ways mentioned here, it would appear that perpetrators might violate women for the sake of it or because they think it is normal. In order to show how VAW on social media has been normalized, the following tweets have been reproduced from twitter. They are tweets that followed posting of videos of women being undressed and beaten in the streets of Nairobi. They are derived from Robert Alai’s Facebook page as well as the twitter handle @Robert Alai (https://twitter.com/robertalai?lang=fr) a

(The author, Robert Alai is one of Kenya’s leading and influential bloggers with a large social media following across his various social media pages. His identity has not been disguised as he writes for purposes of public consumption and he positions
himself as a public informant. As such, the information used in this research is available in the public domain. N.B, By contrast, the public who have commented on his blogs have been disguised for the same ethical considerations, as they don’t position themselves as public informants, and their posts may have been targeted to Alai and not the general public.

He goes on “…The women who are stripped for being scantily dressed must also equally blame themselves for being careless to what the society thinks about how they carry themselves…. If you want to blame those ‘conductors and the public’ for stripping the ‘scantily dressed’ woman, also try to ask why focus was on her while other women were not targeted…. The woman was wrongly handled but she contributed to it by insulting and being arrogant to people who were peacefully complaining on how she was behaving.”

The bloggers views elicited comments that show apathy towards women:

Cal***Odh*** “The woman wanted to be naked so those guys just accelerated the process”

Ren***Gë*** “One thing is for sure, the lady apart from being indecently dressed, she must have done or said something that made those guys react the
way they did, i mean-she ain't the first to dress like that, most girls are wearing stuff you would only wear past midnight in your own house to work, I don't support what those goons did but the truth of the matter is that chick said something that must have offended them, and in mob justice people act without thinking”

Was*** Osso*** “Robert Alai ..I SUPPORT. Why do people close their doors. So that nobody enters unnoticed. Why should ladies wear suggestively. I SUPPORT.”

Mke*** Mza*** “When you rattle a snake then be ready to be bitten. Women have taken their so called freedom of dressing way too far. washikadabu!!!”

(They should learn manners)

(The above comments have been reproduced exactly as they appear on Facebook and twitter. The real names of the authors despite being available on the public domain have been distorted for ethical considerations of this research.)

The issue of scantily dressed women is a controversial issue in Kenya where the culture is generally conservative. However, what is worrying is the lack of empathy with the women in the videos and the lack of inhibition exhibited in sharing these videos. Both men and women participated in spreading the videos particularly through Whatsapp and making shameful comments on the women in the clips. Looking at these, one might want to investigate whether women are also becoming apathetic to violence being meted on their fellow women, or if the women feel that there are instances where violence against them is justified.
The posts also propagate the myth that when a woman dresses provocatively, she’s asking for trouble. This is a kind of thinking that says women provoke attacks against them by the way they dress. It transfers blame from the perpetrator to the victim. Perhaps the reason why some women also contributed to sharing of the posts is because this kind of thinking helps some women feel better about themselves because they think that such VAW couldn’t happen to them since they feel that they dress better. Such views as expressed in the posts reinforce what studies by SEP (2013) identify as the group-based subordination of women to men by making women fearful and enforcing patriarchal dictates about how women should dress or conduct themselves.

The normalization of violence and acceptance that violence is something women should live with seems to have also encouraged the tweet below from a Kenyan tweeter.

(The above is media personality who runs a show on a national radio station known as Nation FM in Kenya. She tweets for public consumption, as such, her tweets are available in the public domain)
The above sentiments coming from a woman appear to be a resignation to a fate that places women as passive recipients of violence. It propagates stereotypical, prejudicial and generally false beliefs that people have about VAW. In this post, it appears that there are women who are buying into these false beliefs that place men as uncontrollable beasts who harm women when they are provoked.

When such views are posted online, they trivialize and normalize VAW on social media platforms. They make perpetrators of VAW on social media feel that whatever they are planning to do is nothing unusual and women should be ready to deal with it since it is normal for them to encounter violence. It is perhaps why some perpetrators feel uninhibited when they create content on social media to promote VAW. For example this post on Twitter, under (hash tag) #Reasons to beat your girlfriend. People were invited to give reasons to beat women. This shows that the normalization/trivialization of violence on social media does happen. The comments under the twitter handle are shown below.
The above campaign reveals a core dynamic of patriarchal sexuality which involves normalizing and sexualizing male control and dominance over women. A dynamic that finds expression in beliefs about what is natural, acceptable, and/or even desirable in male to female relations. In this case, it normalizes men beating their girlfriends, and in the earlier cases presented herein, men undressing women, raping them and circulating videos of such violations on social media platforms.

Such pages encourage the view that VAW is normal or acceptable that it is something women should get used to and that men should enjoy engaging in. In this regard, the perpetrators view VAW on social media platforms as normal and thus go ahead to violate their victims. It cannot be said to be an excess, an accident or a mistake, but simply an embodiment of sexuality as the patriarchal culture we live in defines it in online spaces.

4.5.7 Accommodation of VAW on Social Media

Whereas it is expected that social media pages would be keen to prevent abuse of their users, they seem to be facing a challenge in regulating offensive content.

Whereas the social media companies may not technically be the purveyors of such VAW, their failure to adequately monitor the content and remove offensive content means that they are implicitly encouraging the continued VAW on their sites. Despite statements on their privacy pages, VAW abounds in their pages. Below is a sample of various social media pages privacy policies:

“Facebook has a strict policy against the sharing of pornographic content and any explicitly sexual content where a minor is involved. We also impose limitations on the display of nudity”(www.facebook.com)
Instagram states that users "may not post violent, nude, partially nude, discriminatory, unlawful, infringing, hateful, pornographic or sexually suggestive photos or other content"
(www.instagram.com)

Twitter is the most permissive of the large social networking sites. "You may not use obscene or pornographic images in either your profile photo, header photo, or user background" (www.twitter.com). Twitter however allows users to post pornography in their feed.

Google+ "Do not distribute content that contains nudity, graphic sex acts, or sexually explicit material. Do not drive traffic to commercial pornography sites. Your Profile Picture cannot include mature or offensive content. For example, do not use a photo that is a close-up of a person's buttocks or cleavage"(www.google+.com)

Despite all these, offensive content still abounds on these sites. Twitter has handles such as

# free the nipple,

On Facebook, there is page called pornographic studios, which indicates where such studios can be found. Another Facebook page, titled “punching Rihanna” the photos of a popular female musician Rihanna, who had been beaten up by her boyfriend are posted making light the whole issue.
A sample of Facebook pages that have in the past encouraged and made fun of violence against women include: (some have since been brought down after complaints to Facebook)

- Seeing a pregnant woman smoking and just wanting to punch her in the face a fan page with 45,840 members.
- I like Chris Brown more after you beat Rihanna
- Home Wreckinbitches should get their heads kicked in
- Join if you think all sluts need a good kick in the guts haha!!!!!
- Raping a pregnant bitch and telling your friends you had a threesome
- Fly kicking sluts in the uterus

The researcher opines that as long as social media platforms continue encouraging the generation and continued existence of such pages on their platforms, perpetrators continue having more opportunities of VAW. Equally, the normalization of such VAW will persist and the victims may have more difficulties reporting such incidences for fear that it is a normal thing that they should put up with.
4.5.8 Ambiguity and Approximation

Due to the normalization of VAW, it may not be clear to some people what constitutes acts of VAW. As pointed out earlier, some do it thinking that it is a joke. To others, for example in flaming, may think they are just expressing themselves.

VAW on social media has also become so easy and rampant that to many, it is meaningless and many feel that expressing alarm about it is foolish and unnecessary. In the face of its normalization, it would appear that women who are harassed online are expected to get over it themselves and keep quiet. Citron (2009) summarized these sentiments by observing that internet harassment is usually seen as “harmless locker-room talk,” the perpetrators as “juvenile pranksters,” and victims as “overly sensitive complainers.”

Defining an act of VAW thus presents difficulties in estimation. When is it a violation and when is it a joke? The normalization has led to such ambiguity that a perpetrator may not even know that he is engaging in an act of VAW.

Take for example the following ‘jokes’ forwarded to the researcher on Whatsapp
Rape jokes have become popular with several comedians including American Daniel Tosh who has made a name for himself by making jokes on controversial issues such: racism, rape and misogyny. In July 2012, he made a rape joke and a woman in the audience shouted at him “Rape is not funny” he responded to the crowd saying, “Wouldn’t it be funny if that girl got raped by, like, five guys right now? Like right now?” This ‘joke’ went viral on social media. This and many others by Daniel Tosh share available for viewing on YouTube (which over 91% of respondents in this research acknowledged using) and other streaming media.

He defends himself by saying,

“…But I'm not a misogynistic, racist person. Yet I do find those jokes funny, so I say them. And I try to say everything kind of in a good spirit.”

In another example, a popular Kenyan politician, then a cabinet minister made a remark that suggested rape can be consensual

"…like raping a woman who is already willing…” (followed by his own laughter).
‘Jokes’ like this can easily be found on the internet. They are easily spread through social networking sites. To the sender, they may look as jokes, but the recipient may not see it as such and may feel disturbed by the images.

This presents a case of blurring reality presented in the theoretical framework of this research which indicates that constant viewing of violence leads to acts of VAW. The constant lacing of acts of VAW with humor as found in media changes the perspectives of people and they are thus not attuned to recognise when their actions are offending others.

4.5.9. Lack of Adequate Policing and Reporting Mechanisms.

Based on findings of this research, the researcher also derived that there exists lack of policing and reporting mechanisms and concluded that this could also be a trigger for VAW on social media. A small percentage of the respondents reported the violations that they encountered online. Of these, 78% had reported to the social media administrator and 22% to the police. The small number of people reporting to the police could indicate lack of faith in the police to handle the matter. This view is also supported by the fact that 90% of respondents in this study thought that committing offences on social media is not punishable. The few (10%) who were aware of punishments for VAW on social media felt that the regulations and the punishment was inadequate. (A discussion of these findings follows later at 4.7)

One respondent said:-

“I cannot bother reporting to the police. Even when you report serious things like rape they take forever to act. It is a waste of time to seek justice from the Kenya police”
Another respondent cited that most social media pages just indicate that offending material is normally removed by saying the following:

“I know that most pages have rules regarding what cannot be posted. But there is very little they can do to keep someone from posting because they are not monitored” (primary respondent)

“Yes, offending content is sometimes removed, but just having offensive content removed is not enough because in most times the site administrator takes a long time to act on the offensive material and by that time, a lot of people have already seen the offending content and shared it online. Things spread very fast on social media.” (Primary respondent)

The views expressed reveal some state of hopelessness when it comes to seeking justice on violations committed online. They also show some form of despair in that the respondents seem to feel that reporting an incident once it has already happened has no effect since by the time authorities act, the violation will have already reached a wide audience and the offending material cannot be recalled. The general feeling one gets from the respondents’ views is that, like spilt milk, once a crime has been committed on social media platforms, it is done.

This lack of credible resolution of VAW on social media once a violation has been committed is not lost to the perpetrators. They are aware that it is hard to get caught, and even if they are caught, they will have achieved their objective. Take a look at this popular meme found on Instagram,
Based on these findings from the respondents and secondary sources, the researcher concluded that VAW on social media is caused by the incentive of anonymity, easy access and privacy offered by social media platforms. Due to these, whatever courses of action victims may have are frustrated by the fact that they cannot find their assailants. The researcher also found that VAW on social media persists because of issues such as accommodation, approximation and ambiguity.

The researcher’s findings and conclusions are supported by the theory used to frame this research. That is, the General Aggression model. The eight (8) factors discussed combine to prime the potential perpetrator to act violently. He is first exposed to violent media which then provides a blur between lines of fantasy and reality and thus reducing his approximation of a violation. Then, he is provided with perfect opportunities and incentives to commit the crime, which are privacy, anonymity, accessibility and affordable means of committing his violations.
In conclusion, social media provides many opportunities for people to connect and relate with one another however many people who use social media sometimes end up engaging in problematic internet behaviour which harms others. The various reasons for this have been outlined. It is important that such reasons are dealt with and users of the internet are made aware of internet characteristics that make it easy for VAW on social media to be committed. This would be in line with mitigating VAW which keeps women from actively participating in development.

4.6 Effects of Violence against Women as Experienced on Social Media on the Victim

The third research question sought information on the effects of VAW experienced through social media. To establish the effects of violence, respondents who reported having been violated were asked to give an account of how the experience(s) made them feel and how they reacted, as well as whether they reported the violations.

4.6.1 How Victims Felt after Being Violated

All respondents expressed negative emotions associated with encountering the said violations while using social media.

Table 4.4 How victims felt after violation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Sampled Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>“At first I was very angry. Then after I realized I could do nothing about it, I felt defeated and humiliated”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>“it is very dehumanizing to receive insults from people you don’t even know... I started doubting myself wondering if I was really a bad person, or if I was wrong for posting my views online... These people on social media do not realize that their comments hurt the person they attack... maybe because they are typing on a computer or phone they do not realize that the recipient of their comments is a human being with feelings. It was very bad”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>“Angry and ashamed”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some of the common words and phrases that the respondents used to describe what they experienced after being harassed online include: anxiety, fear of being humiliated and impaired concentration. They also experienced emotional distress and fear of physical harm.

Themes emerging from the respondents’ accounts of the experiences includes: feeling dehumanized, objectified and ashamed.

4.6.2 How Victims Reacted to Violations

The research also sought to learn whether the respondents changed the way they interacted with other people online and in real life and in which ways they changed.

A sample of the respondents’ reactions is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.5: Reactions to violations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respondent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Majority of the respondents recounted that had to change their behaviour after encountering violation(s). Ways in which respondents reported having changed after being violated includes: installing stronger passwords for their social media accounts, filtering pages with offending contents, becoming more vigilant on who they allowed in their online social circles, becoming cautious on their photos being taken and
posting their images of themselves online, and blocking contact with the offending person.

These findings agree with studies by Sheridan, Davies and Boon (2001) and Maxwell (2000) whose findings reveal that victims of violence on social media tend to change aspects of their lifestyle as a result of the harassment.

Cohen (2000) contends that when a victim stops using social media to their best capacity, their creativity could be hindered. In turn, they could lose opportunities to build a strong online presence which could enhance their careers. (Citron, 2009)

In addition, Hinduja and Patchin (2010) indicate that several publicized suicides have been linked to bullies’ attacks through social media. Their studies also indicate that depression and feelings of anger are also experienced by victims of VAW on social media. Ybarra, Mitchell, Wolak and Finkelhor (2006) indicate that victims of cyber bullying may feel distressed, become delinquent and experience other psychosocial problems as the result of negative online interactions.

Given the mentioned findings, the researcher found that encountering VAW on social media does affect how women behave on social media. The violations have severe implications on women’s status on the Internet. It shapes how they behave and interact in online spaces, thus curtailing their ability to act as they would like to. It is worth noting that abusers tend to operate anonymously or under pseudonym but the women they target usually have their real names and are usually in the context of their real lives. Women are thus forced to live in fear of irritating people who might retaliate in the online space.
In the light of the intimidation experienced by women in online spaces, the researcher concludes that it is likely that women will be unable to fully utilize social media for their own advancement if they find the platforms as being unsafe environments to express their views.

4.7 Strategies for Addressing Violence against Women as Experienced Through the Social Media

4.7.1 Awareness of Available Laws

In this section, the researcher sought to establish whether the respondents were aware of any laws that protect them against VAW on social media. The analysis of the responses showed that the majority, 90% of respondents were not aware of any laws that protect them from VAW on social media. The findings are presented in figure 4.5 below.

Figure 4.7: Awareness of laws

Source: Primary data
The results of this study also indicate that 90% of respondents thought that committing offences on social media is not punishable. The few (10%) who were aware of punishments for VAW of social media felt that the regulations and the punishments were inadequate. Therefore, it can be concluded that, it is for this reason that most of the respondents indicated that they had not reported the violations they had encountered online.

While social media pages have regulations, majority (90%) of the respondents reported lack of knowledge of these regulations. Only 10% of the respondents indicated that they were aware of social media regulations on what cannot be posted online. One respondent said:

“I was banned from Facebook for some hours for posting a naked photo of a woman. I thought it was just a nice, beautiful photo, but apparently Facebook regulations are against nudity.” (Primary respondent)

The above statement also presents a case of ambiguity as has been discussed in section 4.5.8 of this study. In cases of ambiguity, the perpetrator is not even aware that he has committed an offence, it also likely that many that come across such an offence may not report it as they are not aware that it presents a case of VAW.

Based on the findings, the researcher is thus of the opinion that a lot of acts of VAW are still going unreported as people are neither aware of the available laws nor the actions that are punishable on social media.

**4.7.2 Reporting of Incidences of Violations.**

In this section, the researcher sought to establish whether incidences of VAW on social media were being reported.
Majority (72%) of the respondents who suffered violence did not report the incident while (28%) did report the incident. The results are presented in figure 4.6 below.

**Figure 4.8: Reporting of incidences**

The researcher was also able to establish that of those who had reported the violations, majority (78%) had reported to the social media site administrators and only a small percentage (22%) had reported to the relevant law enforcers in Kenya. The small number of people reporting to the police could indicate lack of faith in the police handling the matter.

The researcher further interrogated why the respondents had not reported the violation. Their sampled views are presented below.
Table 4.6: Reasons for not reporting violations to authorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample respondent</th>
<th>Sample response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>“Filing a case like this in Kenya is a very expensive and it is a time-consuming process. It can also be very emotionally draining.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>“The cop I reported to asked me, “What is twitter?” I gave up right there!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>“I went to the police station where I was told to write a statement and wait. When I called for follow up, I was informed that there is nothing they could do until I identified the person who had threatened me”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In sample response B and C, one is able to deduce that, those that had reported to the authorities had experienced frustration by the law enforcers. Sample response A and C express frustration with comes with the whole process of reporting a case in Kenya and the judicial officers.

In light of the statements, those that reported to law enforcers felt that no action or inadequate action was taken. Bocij, (2004) Drahokoupilová, (2007) and Pathé, (2002) point to a possibility of secondary victimization when professionals/authorities charged with helping victims of VAW fail to grasp the seriousness and the effect of such violence on the victim.

To see how secondary victimization could occur, the researcher gives the example below: Take the example of a lady who presents herself at a police station to report a
case of outing where her images have been circulated online. In Kenya, it is most likely that the police officer she has to report to would be a male. Then she would perhaps have to show the offending photos to this man. This does not present a very comfortable position for the woman as she has to become a victim once again in order to put her case across.

The law enforcers interviewed in this research also explained their frustration in handling matters of VAW on social media platforms. Their views are presented in Table 4.5 below:

**Table 4.7: Responses of law enforcers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Sampled response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>“There are some measures in place to punish wrong doers, however, we do not receive many cases of such kind because many women are still not aware of the available laws. Some women also fear that we will not take them seriously.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>“I have handled such a case, where a woman was being abused by anonymous people. I wished I could do something, but I did not have the capacity to investigate the perpetrators. I just advised her to go offline for some time until the abuse stopped”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>“We normally advice such women to wait it out, go offline until the abuse stops and people forget about it. The abuse usually stops after sometime”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>“I am aware of a handful of ways victims can address their attackers through the legal system, both civilly and criminally. Unfortunately, many of them are costly and also require the victim to reveal a lot of private information which they may not be comfortable with. For example if naked photos were posted a woman might feel ashamed to keep showing the evidence.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The views presented here indicate that the officers feel that despite not having all the technology and ability to handle some of the cases of VAW, the victims of VAW do not trust them to handle their cases even where they have the ability to help. The law enforcers also agree that the judicial process in Kenya is long and tiring and may not be easy to follow for victims of VAW on social media.

Additionally, another law enforcer opined that while he does understand that women can be harmed online, such issues usually take a back seat because the police force is already hard pressed dealing with other conventional crimes and thus, it is difficult to dedicate personnel to deal with issues of VAW on social media.

The law enforcers indicated that they were aware of VAW on social media. In terms of persecution, they said that they had only successfully dealt with a few that involved social media. They indicated that a lot of the cases that had been successfully persecuted and the perpetrators punished involved use of text messages sent through phones and emails sent using the offender’s name. One officer explained:

“With text messages, it is easy to track the wrongdoer, because we can call the service provider and identify the registered owner of the number used. However, with social media platforms, anonymity makes it difficult for us and even the victim to identify the offender.” Source: Primary respondent

Based on the above findings, the researcher observed frustration on both the women who are the victims and the law enforcers charged with the responsibility of investigating and maintaining law and order. On one hand, the victims who may be
aware of existing laws feel that the police need to do more, while the police feel that they do not have the ability to do more.

Knowledge of the existing laws is also scanty and this could explain why fewer women are reporting to the police. If only a few women are reporting, the police force may feel that the VAW on social media is not a rampant issue that requires their urgent attention. This means that such issues will continue to take a backseat while police concentrate on other ‘tangible’ crimes.

The researcher finally sought the respondents’ views on how they thought VAW on social media could be tackled. The following views were expressed:

**Table 4.8: Sample Responses recommending how to handle VAW on social media**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Sampled Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>“... The cop I reported to asked me, “Twitter ninini” (“What is Twitter?”) .... How can someone who doesn’t even understand technology help me?...The Police need to receive modern training...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>“There are laws that I am aware of, but that is because I am in the legal profession. I am sure many Kenyan women are not aware and so maybe they do not use such laws to their benefit when they are violated. We need to educate the public”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>“Women should be careful what they post online and what they share....they should know that if they send naked photos, people can share them”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the above statements, it would appear that the police force has been left behind when it comes to catching up with technological advancements. The technologically advanced female victims are thus left with the burden of dealing with law enforcers who are still deeply rooted in the analogue ways of yonder that victimization in online spaces does happen and its effect on the wellbeing of women. Lack of awareness expressed by the respondents is also captured by 2015 report on the State of Blogging and Social Media in Kenya. This report indicates that lack of awareness of existing laws is not only apparent in the general public, but also extends to bloggers who influence a lot of the content that goes into social media. (State of Blogging & Social Media in Kenya, 2015 Report)

In order to handle VAW on social media, a variety of suggestions were obtained.

**Table 4.9 suggestions of handling VAW on Social Media**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Sample Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>“Women should stay off social media”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>“The police should be trained on how to handle such issues”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>“we need stricter internet laws”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the researchers view, the recommendation given by some of the respondents, in line with sample respondent A above, agree with popular myths of VAW which say that women are violated because of what they do. It is a recommendation that can keep women in fear and keep them from fully exploiting the full benefits of social media. The researcher therefore argues that this would only further marginalize women and keep them from fully benefiting from gains that can accrued by use of internet and social media.
The major recommendations coming from the respondents involved the use of law enforcers and the making of strict laws to protect women in online spaces. This is in line with the sampled response B and C.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher found that there is need for law enforcers to acknowledge the seriousness of VAW on social media and put it on the agenda. In order to do so, the police would require training on matters of technology and ways in which VAW on social media is perpetuated. This calls for an investment on the part of ministry of internal security and that of Information Communication Technology (ICT) to improve internet and social media literacy among the law enforcers.

Equally, addressing VAW on social media calls for drafting of laws that would deter the would-be perpetrators. It will be worthwhile to conduct a study aimed at the development of legal definitions of VAW, targeted at Kenyan ICT policy. In Kenya, a look at events that follow any attempt by the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) to regulate the use of the tools of ICT and other mainstream media reveal a very strong civil rights movement bent on protecting the right of freedom of speech at all costs. Demonstrations by journalists and bloggers almost always follow any attempt at CCK regulation. Perhaps due to the Kenya history where media voices were silenced during the one party rule, the media practitioners feel a need to fiercely protect the gains they have made through hard struggle.

In this regard, the researcher agrees with views presented by Citron (2009) who roots for a need for a cyber-civil rights agenda to complement the more prolific offline civil
rights. The researcher proposes that the CCK should be at the forefront supporting NGOs that deal with matters of ICT and VAW to form an online civil rights agenda so that people are more aware that online harassment and discrimination go against the freedom of speech as expressed in offline spaces.

Consequently the researcher opines that making of laws to protect women from VAW on social media should involve restricting how the internet is used and this is likely to elicit reaction from civil rights groups protecting the freedom of speech. However, it is important to note that most perpetrators of VAW on social media usually hide behind this powerful right to free speech even as they work to suppress the speech of women. While freedom of speech is a fundamental human right, it cannot be absolute when it oppresses the ability of one section of society (women) to express itself. Women rights are also human rights and outlawing online expression that consists of defamation, threats of physical harm, misogynistic expressions and intentional infliction of emotional distress is thus not in any way denying anyone their just right to freedom of speech.

In regard to controlling how the internet is used, the researcher recommends that internet service providers (ISP) and website hosts should be compelled to a certain level of care that would include what Citron (2009) calls ‘traceable anonymity.’ This is to say that ISP would be required to retain the IP addresses of posters for a certain period of time, so that should a dispute occur, it would be easy to trace the perpetrator. The traceable anonymity would allow posters free expression that anonymity facilitates, but still eliminate the dark side of complete anonymity which is what encourages people to harm others online because they know they cannot be
traced. Traceable anonymity would not betray commitment to anonymous speech if site operators and ISPs refuse to reveal a poster’s identity unless a court order demands it.

In South Africa, this traceable anonymity has been implemented by introducing the Anti-harassment Law. This law allows South Africans to approach the courts for protection from sexual harassment via SMS or email and compels the service providers to give the addresses and ID numbers of offenders when asked to do so by the courts (SouthAfrica.info, 2013)

In this research, respondents said that they mainly reported violations to the social media page administrator. They usual action taken may be to delete the offending content after sometime. In some cases, the report is not acted on and the offending content remains.

Majority of the respondents felt that the punishment was not adequate. Reporting to administrators is thus a mechanism that has failed, perhaps due to the large numbers of people and content in social media or complacency on the part of the administrators. With this in mind, it might be necessary for social media platforms and blogs to be compelled to desist from complacency in dealing with VAW by being treating them as distributors of the offensive material and as such parties to litigation in case a victim chooses to sue.

Earlier on in the literature review section of this study, the researcher also looked at how other countries have responded to VAW on social media and recommends that Kenya could learn a lot by emulating or learning from models such as those found in
the UK, USA, UAE and China to protect women from violation on social media platforms. In the USA and the UK, measures mainly lean towards legislative actions, while in China and the UAE, they are mainly restrictive (Refer to literature review for further discussion of the various laws of the various countries).

On the international level, governments should consider inter-governmental cooperation that allows for offenders in one country to be traced in other countries and persecuted for their actions.

The researcher also recommends that women who are victims of violence on social media should be encouraged to report to the relevant authorities who include site administrators and police in order to obtain justice.

In conclusion, to objective 4 of this research, it can be said that there are several methods that can be used to curb incidences of VAW on social media. The extent to which they have been applied successfully in other countries could not be established in this study, however, Kenya could learn from studying the various models and laws and selecting what could be applied. In addition, a need for technologic training of law enforcers was established. This is in addition to training the public on the various acts that constitute VAW on social media. The various authorities that would be charged with this responsibility are also identified in the preceding discussion.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction
This chapter gives a summary of the study findings, its conclusions and recommendations as well as suggestions for further research.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of violence against women on the social media platform in Kenya. Specifically the study sought to identify the forms of violence perpetuated against women through the social media, the causes of such violence and the effects of the violence on the women victims. Finally, it sought to find out best strategies to address VAW on social media.

The study utilized exploratory research design. The target population comprised of women drawn from the online population and the law enforcers. Simple random sampling was used to arrive at the sample. Data was collected using two types of instruments; questionnaires and interview schedules and complemented by secondary sources. Collected data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

5.1.1 Forms of Violence Perpetrated against Women through The Use of Social Media
The first objective of this study sought to identify the forms of violence perpetuated against women through the use of social media platform. Findings from this study revealed that trickery, denial of privacy, outing and image circulation, virtual trafficking, online harassment, cyber stalking, flaming, denigration and violent video sharing as the forms of violence perpetuated against Kenyan women through the
The most rampant form of violence was flaming where a majority of the women reported having encountered angry/shameful responses to something they posted on social media platforms.

These forms of violations relate to the GAM theory used in this research as they are acts that are learnt by observation and social media then provides the opportunity for the would-be perpetrator to act.

5.1.2 Causes of Violence against Women as Manifest in Social Media

The second objective sought to establish the causes of violence against women as manifest in social media. Majority of the respondents reported provision of privacy and anonymity in social media as a major cause of violence against women since it allows perpetrators to use pseudonyms, fake names and even impersonation. Other causes of violence that emerged from the findings included: a lack of awareness of rules that regulate online posting of contents, lack of well-known legal provisions for handling violation and ease of access to social media as a tool of perpetrating violence. The normalization of violence on social media spaces is enhanced by the availability of violent games, videos, music lyrics and social media posts trivializing VAW.

Based on the theoretical framework applied in this research, it follows that VAW against women on social media is influenced by normalization of violence in online spaces. Studies by Bandura (1977) indicate that the observation of specific aggressive behaviours around children increases the likelihood of children behaving emulating what they see. The observation of violence can have an imitative effect on people in the short term and in the long term their tendency to be aggressive increases.
With repeated exposure to violence, the negative emotional response associated with violence habituates, and the observer becomes desensitized/insensitive to violence. It is this desensitization that leads to a person regarding violence as normal and increases their likelihood to be aggressive.

The general aggression model GAM (1995) argues that for a violation to occur, there must exist opportunity. This is where social media comes in. With its inherent characteristics such as the anonymity and the privacy, it provides the desensitized perpetrator an opportunity to become aggressive. It also follows that while some people may not act aggressively in real life, anonymity and privacy brings about a “dis-inhibition”, where perpetrators shed the inhibitions they would normally have in face to face interactions and act aggressively.

It is therefore noted that it is the desensitization to violence brought about by exposure to violent media, and the availability of the opportunity to act that leads perpetrators to online aggression.

5.1.3 Effects of Violence against Women as Experienced through Social Media on the Victims

The third objective of the study examined the effects of violence against women as experienced through social media on the victims. As reported by the respondents who suffered violence on social media, some felt dehumanized, objectified, ashamed and helpless. All the respondents reported changing the way they interacted with other people on social media by filtering certain pages and people attempting to reach them, becoming cautious when adding persons on social circles, practising caution when posting pictures and when their photos were being taken.
Based on the theories applied in this research, it would follow that the perpetrator who has been exposed to violent media seeks to impart the same feeling on his victims as he has seen on the violent media. As already discussed in preceding section 2.3.3 and in 4.5.6, victims are shown as people with minimal agency who should be ashamed, beaten and humiliated. This is what the perpetrator learns to do by observing the violent media.

5.1.4 Best Strategies for Addressing Violence against Women as Experienced through the Social Media

The fourth objective sought to establish the best strategies for addressing violence against women as experienced through the social media platform.

Study findings indicated that anonymity on social media was a huge factor encouraging perpetrators as the fear of getting caught is absent. It was found that if anonymity is not absolute and posts can be traced using IP addresses, then perpetrators may be deterred or traced for purposes of litigation.

The study also outlined some of the best practices being used in other countries to deter perpetrators. They include preventative, litigation and legislative measures. The study established that majority of the women did not report the violence due to lack of knowledge of the existing laws that protect them and facing a police force that is ignorant of the technological advancements in social media. This presents an opportunity for double victimization on the victims. To counter this, it was expressed that law enforcers needed to be trained on matters of VAW on social media so that they know how to handle cases presented to them. Equally, the government, i.e. the ministry of InteriorSecurity in collaboration with that of ICT needs to invest in
technology that is used by law enforcers to tackle VAW on social media. The women also needed to be made aware of what constitutes a violation on social media.

5.2. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was established that women in Kenya are experiencing violence on social media in the various ways outlined in this research. The effect such violence has on their wellbeing and ability of women to utilize social media to their best ability cannot be underestimated.

As social media continues to permeate all areas of our daily lives, the way women use or benefit from social media will be greatly shaped by how well their cyber rights are protected and integrated in the more recognized civil rights and human rights. It is therefore paramount that the causes of VAW on social media be addressed as a matter of urgency. The study has pinpointed some of the ways in which such violence can be addressed which include legislative and restrictive measures.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the research findings of the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

(i) The first objective of this study was to identify the forms of violence perpetrated against women through the use of social media platforms. Based on the identified forms of violence, the researcher recommends that all social media site administrators should acknowledge the forms of violence perpetuated against women through the social media platform and set up more effective mechanisms to educate
all social media users on what constitutes violence against women on social media. They should also step up measures by filtering posts likely to be offensive to women, and the ones likely to encourage violence against women. They should also consider maintaining records of the IP addresses of their users.

(ii) The second objective sought to establish the causes of violence against women as manifest in social media. Based on the findings the researcher recommends that site administrators should come up with an effective way of unveiling the true identity and location of all the users of social media. Campaigns also need to be carried out in order to familiarize people with what constitutes VAW on social media. This will help counter some of the causes of such violence including ambiguity, approximation and the acceptability and normalization of VAW on social media.

(iii) The third objective of the study examined the effects of violence against women as experienced through social media on the victims. It was established that VAW on social media affects women emotionally and psychologically. Victims should thus be encouraged to seek professional counselling if they feel adversely affected to enable them cope with the situation.

Further, the CCK and the police should seek to educate women on the various channels that can be used to report such violence. The punishment for such violence should also be made adequate for the kind of offence committed so as to ensure victims feel a sense of justice obtained.
(iv) The fourth objective sought to establish the best strategies for addressing VAW on social media platforms. Based on the findings, the researcher recommends that site administrators should come up with more rigorous conditions of admitting new members other than merely requiring new recruits to agree to the set of terms and conditions. Social media administrators should be obliged by the government to stage campaigns on awareness of what constitutes violence against women, laws governing violence against women on social media, where violence should be reported and the due process of obtaining justice. They should also be required to maintain the IP addresses of all those that log in to their sites.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the findings of this research, the researcher would suggest the following areas be further investigated:

a) Replication of the same study, research on the impact of violence against women on a different age group other than the one targeted in the current research.

b) The current study focused on violence against one gender of social media users and thus it is recommended that further studies focusing on violence against men on the social media platform be carried out. It might also prove important to study women offenders, whether their aggression is addressed towards men or fellow women. This could produce aggregate data that would help see whether both genders are equally engaged in the vice.

c) Further research could also help to determine the nature and character of likely perpetrators of social media violence against women. An investigation into the modus operandi of perpetrators of VAW on social media could help gain
insights into their behaviour, character and motivation. This would ideally be conducted with self-confessing offenders.

d) It would also be helpful to research on characters and behaviours that predispose women to violence so that adequate ways of avoiding such violence can be obtained.

e) A quantitative study of the frequency of occurrence of the various forms of violence outlined within this study might help to produce aggregate data on the same.

f) Further research on policies and frameworks that may be put in place to regulate the use of social media and how to best implement it Kenya can be done.
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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Questionnaire

Dear respondent,

My name is Evelyne Wanjiku, a master’s student from Kenyatta University. I am conducting an academic research on “gender based violence and emerging forms of information and communication technology in social media”

You have been selected as a respondent to assist in providing information. The information you provide will be treated with full confidentiality and will only be used for academic purposes.

violence against women on social media

1. Are you male or female?

☐ Male
☐ Female

2. What is your age?

☐ 17 or younger
☐ 18-20
☐ 21-29
☐ 30-39
☐ 40-49
☐ 50-59
☐ 60 or older

3. In what country do you currently reside?

☐ Kenya
☐ other
Other (please specify)

___________________________________________________________________
4. In the last 6 months, which of the following social networks have you used? (Please select all that apply.)

☐ Facebook
☐ Flickr
☐ FourSquare
☐ Google+
☐ Instagram
☐ LinkedIn
☐ MySpace
☐ Youtube
☐ Pinterest
☐ Reddit
☐ Snapchat
☐ Tumblr
☐ Twitter
☐ Whatsapp
☐ None of the above

5. Have you experienced any of the following issues while using social media? tick as many as applied to you.

☐ Unsolicited pornographic content
☐ Unwanted sexual advances
☐ Has anyone sent you a sexual image or message against your consent
☐ Asked for information of sexual nature against your will
☐ Videos/clips/games where women were harmed, undressed, beaten or humiliated?
☐ Threats to physical harm?

☐ Threats to disclose your personal information on social media
☐ You know someone whose private information/photos have been disclosed on social media
☐ Advertisements for brothels, escort services and pornography
☐ Angry/shameful/violent comments to something you posted online
☐ Stalking/unwanted and insistent contact from someone you didn’t want to get in touch with
☐ Unwanted access to your social media accounts/hacking
☐ Rumours about someone being spread online
Others (please specify) ____________________________

6. Respond in the text box

If you have experienced any of the issues described in question 5 above, did you report to anyone? yes/no ____________________________
To whom did you report? ____________________________
What action was taken? ____________________________
Was the action taken adequate? ____________________________
If not, why didn’t you report? ____________________________

7. If you have experienced any of the above, did you report it?

☐ yes
☐ No
☐ If not, why didn’t you report?
Others (please specify) ____________________________

8. Please fill in your response in the text box

If you experienced any of the above, how did it make you feel? ____________________________
Has experiencing any of the above issues forced you to change how you interact with others online and in real life? ____________________________
In which ways did you change? ____________________________

9. Please fill in your response in the text box

Why do you think people use social media as a platform to be aggressive towards others? ____________________________
In reference to the social media pages that you frequently visit; Are you aware of any rules that regulate posting of content deemed to be humiliating to women? ____________________________
Do you think that a violation of the regulations on social media is punishable? ____________________________
If not, why do you think the violation is not punishable? ____________________________
If Yes, do you think the punishment is adequate?  

10. Please respond in the text box  

Are you aware of any laws that protect you from gender based violence on social media? yes/no  
Do you feel that the government is doing enough to protect your rights as a woman when you use social media? yes/no  
If yes, in which way  
If not, why  
What are some of the ways that can be implemented to make social media safer for women?
Appendix II

Questions for the interview schedule.

1. Have you ever experienced harassment on social media?
2. Are you aware of any ways in which women are being harassed through social media?
3. Are you able to give reasons why women are being harassed online?
4. What would you say is the frequency of occurrence of gender-based violence related to social media?
5. What do you think can be done to stop this kind of gender-based violence?
6. Are you able to guide me to any of the people that have made reports of being harassed on social media?
Appendix III

Research Authorisation letter from Graduate School.

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke
Website: www.ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 8710901 Ext. 57530

OUR REF:C50/CTY/PT/24726/11

Date: 7th June, 2016

The Director General,
National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation
P.O. BOX 30623
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FOR MS. EVELYNE Wanjiku REG.NO. C50/CTY/PT/24726/11

I write to introduce Ms. Wanjiku who is a Postgraduate Student of this University. She is registered for M.A. Degree programme in Department of Gender & Development Studies in the School of Humanities & Social Sciences.

Ms. Wanjiku intends to conduct research for M.A. thesis entitled, “Context & Reality of Violence against Women on the Information and Communication Technology Platform: Case of Social Media in Kenya”

Any assistance given will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

MRS. LUCY N. MBAABU
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

KMU/cso
Appendix IV

Approval of Research Proposal.

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

FROM: Dean, Graduate School

TO: Ms. Evelyne W. Njuguna
C/o Department of Gender & Development Studies
Kenyatta University

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

We acknowledge the receipt of your revised Research Proposal entitled “Context & Reality of Violence against Women on the Information and Communication Technology Platform: Case of Social Media in Kenya” as per recommendations raised by the Graduate School Board of 27th January, 2016.

You may now proceed with your Data collection, subject to clearance with the Director General, National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation.

As you embark on your data collection, please note that you will be required to submit to Graduate School completed supervision Tracking Forms per semester. The form has been developed to replace the progress Report Forms. The Supervision Tracking Forms are available at the University’s Website under Graduate School webpage downloads.

Thank you.

KEVIN MURIUKI
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

C.C. Chairman, Department of Gender & Development Studies

Supervisors:

1. Dr. Casper Masiaga
C/o Department of Gender & Development Studies
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

2. Dr. Pacifica Okemwa
C/o Department of Gender & Development Studies
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

RM/cgo
Appendix V

Research Authorisation from NACOSTI.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Evelyne Wanjiku Njuguna
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on “Context and reality of violence against women on the Information and Communication Technology platform: The case of social media in Kenya,” I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in all Counties for the period ending 5th December, 2017.

You are advised to report to the County Commissioners and the County Directors of Education, all Counties before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of the research report/thesis to our office.

[Signature]
BONIFACE WANYAMA
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioners
All Counties.

The County Directors of Education
All Counties.
Appendix VI

Research permit from NACOSTI.