UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM AND OFFLINE CAMPAIGNS IN THE FIGHT

AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN GHANA. A STUDY OF

SELECTED ACTIVISTS ON FACEBOOK

YOUSSIEF ABDUL-MALIK

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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A THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA
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# DECLARATION

## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Youssief, Abdul-Malik declares that this dissertation, with the exception of quotation and references contained in published works which have all been identified and acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE: ……………………………

DATE: …………………………………….

## SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: ANDY OFORI-BIRIKORANG

NATURE: …………………………………………

DATE: …………………………………………….

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I end by dedicating this thesis to my wonderful and lovely wife, Mawulorm Akpe Gbena, for her enormous support. God bless you
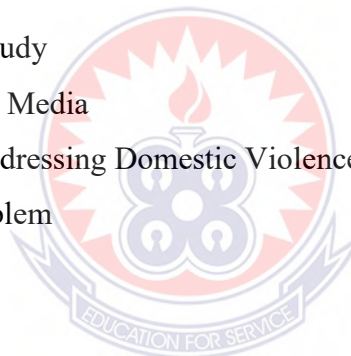
## DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece to my late mother, Margaret Fiadzigbe for her love over the years.

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# ABSTRACT

An emerging area concerning social media is how it can be used to champion a social cause through activism. Social media has demonstrated the potential for mobilising attention and accountability to women's right and challenging discrimination and stereotypes. Also, social media has proven to be a powerful vehicle for bringing women's right issues to the attention of a wider public. This study seeks to explore how social media activisms and "offline" campaigns can be used in the fight against domestic violence in Ghana. With the use of cyber ethnography, interviews and theories like the social capital, social network theory and the resource mobilisation theory, the usefulness of social media (Facebook) in amplifying the atrocities of victims of domestic violence was investigated. Purposive sampling and snowballing were the two major types of sampling used to arrive at seven activists who were interviewed and observed on Facebook. Social media was identified as an avenue for victims to vent, this offered them the opportunity to tell the whole world what they are going through. Also, the activists noted that the content of their posts on Facebook has been able to educate people on domestic violence. Facebook offers a ground for activists to network and share ideas on how to assist victims who reach out to them. Funding for activism was one interesting area that emerged in this study. This is when the activists can use SM space to raise money and other resources needed to boost the particular cause they are working on.
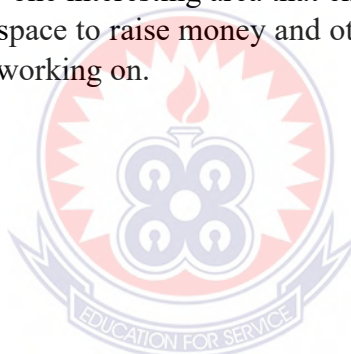
## CHAPTER ONE

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

This section of the study gives a general overview of the thesis. It focuses on the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, and research questions. The significance of the study, the scope and delimitation of the study and the organisation of the study are also included in this section.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Social media over the years is seen as an influential tool to reach and engage people around the world. According to Nielsen (2018), adults in the United States spend nearly a quarter (22%) of their overall weekly media time using social media. The use of social media is often facilitated by devices like laptops, tablets and smartphones. From the fourth-quarter of 2017 to the first quarter of 2018, daily time spent on these devices by adults increased by five minutes to about 40 minutes (Ibid). Different scholars like Gyampo (2017), Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), Mukherjee (2016), Kapoor, et al., (2017), and Young (2009) have given their meaning and interpretation of what social media is but generally, social media can be expounded to the ease to which anyone can use the internet to publish and access information, collaborate on a common effort, or build relationships (Murthy, 2013). An emerging area concerning social media is how it can be used to champion a social cause through activism. Gretzel (2017) noted that social media activism can be defined as a form of cyber-activism that takes advantage of social media affordances to reach its cause-related goals. Among the many causes, it can be used for tackling the issue of domestic violence.

Social media has demonstrated the potential for mobilising attention and accountability to women's rights and challenging discrimination and stereotypes. Also, social media has proven to be a powerful vehicle for bringing women's rights issues to the attention of a wider public, galvanising action on the streets of cities around the world, and encouraging policymakers to step up commitments to gender equality (Vardhan, 2017). Mukherjee, (2016) has also espoused that social media is very active in showcasing women related matters and issues and has also at times acted as strong advocates of women's rights and freedom. All these show how social media is vital in contemporary times.

Gyampo (2017) outlined some relevance of social media to its users,

> It can be used to represent the extent to which users reveal their identities, and communicate with others; share, receive, exchange and distribute information. It can also be used to represent the extent to which people can know if other users are accessible including knowing where others are, in the virtual world and/or in the real world, and whether they are available (189).

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), the use of social media as a communication mechanism is a common phenomenon globally in modern times because of its greater likelihood that users will re-share content received or posted. This is a major way of spreading the messages extensively within the shortest possible time. Internet and social media platforms are the new "amplifiers" that are used by citizens in raising their voices and enlightening others including government, academics, and other relevant organisations on contemporary issues (Elongué & Vandyck, 2019). Progressively, societies have understood the strength of social media hence its use as a means of activism.

Activism encompasses all the actions people take to bring about change (Bempong, 2014). Also, Keck and Sikkink (2014) perceived activism as an assembly of people coming together to accomplish a shared goal. The coming together of people has been made a lot easier with the emergence of the internet and social media specifically. Activism entails deliberate efforts, campaigns, and involvement to achieve some set goals, usually political or social (Bempong, 2014). Sheedy (2011) added that social media is a trend that is changing the face of activism all over the world. This means the gathering of people for a particular purpose can be done on a virtual platform before actual action is taken offline. The idea that activists are just people engaging in street protests and branding placards is a misrepresentation of what activism truly is (Bempong, 2014). Essentially, activism now involves more activities than what we previously perceived. The evolution of technology brought to light innovative forms of protest and activism that have emerged such as tweet-activism, hacktivism, among others. Technology is providing social movements spaces to develop counter-discourses that challenge and resist dominant ideologies (Elongué & Vandyck, 2019).

According to Bennett et al. (2004), activism can take the form of direct action undertaking civil disobedience, protests, occupations, campaigning, boycotts and demonstrations through to more conventional activism such as lobbying, writing letters, internet activism, petitions and attending meetings. It is imperative to know that even though cyber/internet/social media activism is gaining more grounds, there is always the need to combine it with offline campaigns. Elongué and Vandyck (2019) stated that cyber-activism will never replace traditional forms of protest (petition, rallies, mass mobilisation), but may complement them in terms of reinforcing solidarity and building collective identity. One phenomenon which has been linked to both the proliferation of new technologies as well as an underlying social change in

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human societies is the rise of social media (Sarrazin, 2011). Social movements in Africa use the internet beyond its mobilising capacity. They also use it to connect, network, fundraise and build global alliances. Africtivists used the internet to network with social movements in other parts of the world and support local cyber-activists in their advocacy campaigns (Elongué & Vandyck, 2019). The increasing penetration of the internet in Africa and Ghana precisely has made this a lot easier. According to Sasu (2021), as of January 2021, Ghana recorded almost 16 million internet users, up from 14.76 million reported in the year before. The percentage of the population using the internet has been increasing rapidly in the West African country. Similarly, as of January 2021, Ghana registered approximately eight million active social media users, up from six million in 2019 and Facebook tops with 48% (Sasu, 2021). The various types of social media have been used for social change within communities and the issues of domestic violence can be seen as one of these.

A lot can be achieved when social media is put to maximum use in different aspects of our lives and it is gradually gaining grounds in areas of the fight against domestic violence across the world. Abuses on women in the home come in various forms but mostly, literatures' attention is on the physical abuse; Gluck, (2016) noted that domestic violence can be physical, verbal or emotional. Almost every other day, there are stories of victim abuse being recorded on Facebook Live and images on Snapchat that lead law enforcement to the perpetrators (Ibid). Sarup (2005) identified a major fact that cases of violence against women have always been very sensitive and sensational and this is the area that demands more cautious and balanced coverage by media. With the advent of Web 2.0, the victims can go to the platforms available and publish the ordeals they are going through.

Over the years, it is evident that issues related to domestic violence, violence against women, quickly gain a lot of attention once published on social media. People tend to comment and share these posts. According to Smith (2014), social media and especially Facebook is one of the strongest platforms where amongst all global issues, violence against women related issues find the most supporters. Also, Chakrabart (2013) observed the efficacy of new media and the transformative potential of social media by affirming that in the post-Facebook world, the nature of involvement and engagement of people have undergone remarkable changes. The fact that everyone has the right to post issues on social media means there is freedom there.

People experience various degrees of abuse in one way or the other and at times, they take their anger to social media to make the public know about what they are going through. It is also through the use of these same social media platforms that concerns raised can attract attention. The attentions then can lead to various categories of people meeting outside the social media space to deliberate on the way out of their circumstances. A case here is the situation of victims of domestic violence.

**1.1.2 Overview of Social Media**

Social Media is defined as a group of applications basing on the ideology and technique of Web 2.0, enabling the creation and exchange of contents by users (Kaplan, Haenlain, 2010). Even though most scholars tend to describe Social Media differently, there is some aspect of the definition that runs through the majority of these definitions. Web 2.0 is one of the other terms used to define Social Media. According to Odabasi and Odabasi (2010), Web 2.0 can be defined as the software that allows social interaction, Social Media tools, and social networks and the internet environment that allows content to be shared and spread. For most people, social

media is about social (Bucher, 2016). This is mostly because of the opportunity that it offers for people from different backgrounds to be able to interact with one another. Another explanation of social media as given by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) is a group of internet-based applications that build on the conceptual and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. This definition explains the ''media'' as the generation of content and an internet-based set of technologies. Boyd and Ellison (2008) took a less technical line and defined social media as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Alavi, Borgatti, Kane and Labianca (2014) added that users should also be able to create and access digital content. These definitions enhance the technical definition of Kaplan and Haenlein by adding the ''connection'' element (list of interconnected users) and a ''human'' element (profiles).

Statista (2018) opined that the power of social networking is such that the number of worldwide users is expected to reach some 2.5 billion by 2018 from 1.96 billion in 2015. In 2020, over 3.6 billion people were using social media worldwide, a number projected to increase to almost 4.41 billion in 2025 (Tankovska, 2021). That is estimated to be a third of Earth's whole population. Social media include numerous websites that allow sending texts, photos, videos, opinion exchange, commenting on current news and so on. As stated by Wright and Hinson (2009), more than half of all internet users have joined a social network making social network to become the number one platform for creating and sharing contents and nearly 75 per cent of all internet users have read a blog (Young, 2009). More and more people are

understanding the need to stay connected and social media has made that possible. Social media has been defined by Boyd and Ellison (2008) as websites that allow profile creation and visibility of relationships, friendships or else between users. It also includes web-based applications which provide various options for sharing, relationships, group conversation and profiles (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Social media has been referred to as ''social media sites'' (Diga & Kelleher, 2009) or a set of information technologies that make easy interactions and networking (Kapoor, et al., 2017).

The roles played by social media in contemporary times is ever-evolving. Cohen (2011) indicates that social media consists of various user-driven channels like Facebook, Twitter, blog, YouTube etcetera these channels are mostly used by organisations in their marketing strategies. Although some may argue that the customer relationship is "everyone's" responsibility in the firm, the overarching responsibility rests with the marketing department as the champion for the customer (Cohen, 2011). Internet-based software and interfaces that allow individuals to interact with one another, exchanging details about their lives such as biographical data, professional information, personal photos and up-to-the-minute thoughts. According to Osterrieder (2014), the term social media refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue and to Nations (2018), it is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Social Media are web-based communication tools that enable people to interact with each other by sharing and consuming information' (Nations, 2018). The core principle of social media is the ability to share content with others. To upload content, users usually register and create a profile.

Depending on the platform and purpose, users are free to choose whether their whole profile or selected content will be publicly accessible or only visible to selected audiences (Osterrieder, 2014).

One of the most prevalent websites is Facebook, which was established in 2004 (Szwajca, 2017). Facebook enables the creation of groups and networks, the exchange of information and photos, as well as the use of applications accessible on the platform. Among the various Social Media sites, Facebook is the most popular and with most users. Facebook is the most preferred social network among Social Media tools. It has more users than any other social network and it is used throughout the world (Toprak et al., 2009). Facebook is not only aimed towards end-users but also provides useful tools to organizations, such as groups and pages, advertising, improving customer relationships, announcing campaigns. Social Media is one of the most important vehicles that make internet users a part of this two-way communication (Altunbaş & Diker, 2015).

Another trend that social media has followed is the marketing aspect attached to it. Most often, people use social media to advertise what they have to offer. Social media is a new marketing tool that allows you to get to know your customers and prospects in ways that were previously not possible. Social media is not a fad, it is the beginning of the marketing revolution; not the end (Cohen, 2011). When many people think of social media, they think of Facebook and Twitter. However, social media do not just include social networking sites but also blogs, forums, message boards, photo sharing, podcast RSS (Really Simple Syndication), search engine, marketing, video sharing, wiki, professional network and microblogging sites (Wright and Hinson, 2009).

Through Social Media, anyone with internet access can interact with millions of people online. It is not necessary to be a journalist, a politician, a CEO or to hold any other position that was traditionally necessary to be able to disseminate one's thoughts or ideas to a wide audience. Social Media has indeed brought about the democratization of information. The advent of Social Media is making many PR practitioners understand that there could be more ways of practising their PR activities; Social Media became increasingly important. As the internet taking a great deal of importance in our lives and as Web 2.0 applications gather interest from every communication discipline, the discipline of Public Relations also realized that it is necessary to take part in Social Media other than the Traditional Media (Özgen, 2012).

In today's global world, the internet broke all frontiers between countries; it created a borderless world in which everyone has access to everybody as soon as one gets on the web, social media has made this a lot easier. The uptake of social media websites by the general public increased rapidly with the emergence of websites such as MySpace and Facebook, which allowed people to 'connect' online with their friends and family, and encouraged the creation of online communities based on common interests, political ideologies or geographical locations (Wooley, Limperos, & Beth, 2010). Although social media are influencing the way many organisations and individuals communicate and several people are becoming active with these new channels, the description of social media is irresolute due to the rise of many different types. No two people are defining this media the same way (Gordon, 2010).

### 1.1.3 Social Media in Addressing Domestic Violence

The role Information Communication Technology (ICT) plays in the current generation cannot be taken for granted; according to Mirani, Pannu and Malhotra (2014), new ICTs have emerged as strong tools for social engagement. It plays a vital role in shaping social movements, raising awareness and ultimately giving rise to a voice-setting ground for activism and citizen journalism. Social media has transformed the landscape of how information is shared globally and the relationship between citizens and governments (Shirky, 2011). Also, its explosion and exceptional use by women represent vital prospects to convey gender equality and women's rights issues to the forefront of both policy-making and media attention (Loiseau & Nowacka, 2015). In the present times, we find the widespread use of blogs, social networking websites, Twitter and smartphones as highly powerful and extremely influential platforms where issues related to women injustices and atrocities as well as the violation of human rights, domestic violence and infringement of freedom of speech, thought and expression can be discussed or shared, thus contributing in building strong opinion groups or lobbyists with a very focused point of view and giving rise to people's movements (Mukherjee, 2016).

Hashtags tend to spring up now and then to address one issue related to domestic violence. This is often used as a medium to get people involved in the discussion and possibly proffers solutions to the problem. As noted by Kangerea, Kemitare and Lori (2017), a global wave of awareness and action on violence against women (VAW) is emerging from campaigns such as #EverydaySexism, #UrgentAction4Women, and #EndFGM (female genital mutilation), opening new opportunities for feminist movement building. Another hashtag that gained popularity a couple of years ago was #WhyIStayed. This according to Sharma (2017), started at the grassroots levels. It

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shows how the people of the world are refusing to sit idly and let anyone fall into blame-the-victim habits by showing just how many have been affected. With this medium, they can tell their respective stories to the world. Ultimately, social media can be seen as a norm to change against sexual assault and sexual violence by diffusing and disseminating ideas, attitude and knowledge among a large population or target audience (SATF, 2014).

Also, social media tools have helped female victims to share their experiences of violence with other victims, creating a space to exchange knowledge and information on their rights, legal processes and welfare services (Loiseau & Nowacka, 2015). This argument shows various views of researchers (Kangerea, Kemitare and Lori, 2017; Sharma, 2017; SATF, 2014 and Loiseau & Lori, 2017) on the fact that social media has given an avenue to the victims of domestic violence to make their stories heard.

The freedom and independence of social media have provided ample opportunity to stage and bring forth the various contemporary women issues and women movement dealing with gender issues like women atrocities and injustice (Chakrabart, 2013). Smith (2014) also added that social media and particularly Facebook is one of the strongest platforms where amongst all world-wide issues, violence against women related issues find the most supporters. Aside from gaining the most supports, social media can also allow the voices of the survivors and perpetrators to be heard. It can foster a safer place to share stories and engage in conversations that address the norms and attitude that endorse and/or encourage sexual violence (SATF, 2014) social media besides dealing with the various aspects of society and its issues and concerns has also been very active in showcasing women related matters and issues and has also at times acted as strong advocates of women's rights and freedom (Mukherjee,

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2016). These social networking sites not only pave a way for communicating across the globe but they have played a major role in empowering women, encouraging civic participation among women in Western, Middle East and Asian countries (Vardhan, 2017).

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

While some question the effectiveness of social media's ability to generate real-world change, over time we have seen social media play a critical role in movement-building. Online communities create a space for all voices, enabling visibility to those that have been historically overlooked or misrepresented (Haas, 2017). According to Compagny (2018), social media brings confidence to many people who are not scared anymore to say what they think. People are now able to tell their stories more than before. The stories told in most instances tend to be viral news with hashtags emerging around them but may not get results. Hashtags have the power to bring attention to and mobilize a large population. Petitions, protests, letters to politicians and those in power are disseminated through social media, but what brings attention to a movement or a hashtag is the high number of mentions of a hashtag, which is what brings it worldwide attention (Khan-Ibarra, 2015).

According to Mukherjee (2016), a term that is highly being discussed on various platforms is violence against women. The best example of growing usage of the social media platform for bringing social changes is the example of various cyber campaigns which have taken place from time to time to showcase violence against women. If going to the streets used to be the only way to protest, the rise of the Internet has changed the game. Today, 4.028 billion people are internet users and 3.196 billion are active social media consumers. This represents 53% and 42% of the world population,

respectively (Compagny, 2018). It is, however, important to note that even though we have a huge number of the world's population using the internet and social media, it is not all of them who can be categorised as social media activists. As noted by Khan-Ibarra (2015), people who are activists offline tend to use social media activism as online and offline organizing strategies. They are committed to a cause, part of a movement and stick to the issue until there is change. This category of people are activists who know the power of social media and use it as a tool to fight societal issues like domestic violence.

Domestic Violence has been seen to have different causes as manifested across cultures of the world. Oxfam International (2019), noted that one of the core causes of violence against women and girls are biased social norms that frequently leads to gender inequalities like male entitlement and domination. By ignoring violence, we are putting every woman we know at risk (Gender Studies & Human Rights Documentation Centre, 2018). The use of social media has, however, helped get what is happening in the home to the entire world for it to be discussed and with an appropriate solution given but are the social media campaigns enough? Times have changed and the present time is reflective of Social Media playing an instrumental role in changing the mindset of the people in various ways. It has been a major force behind many social changes, debates, mass movements and creating activist groups (Mukherjee, 2016).

Liou (2013) agreed that around the globe, social media tools have aided in fuelling social movements. Social media has been shown to strengthen social actors' ability to challenge and change power relations in society, providing platforms for debate, reflection, influencing and mobilizing people. Whether your objectives are uniting

your supporters, educating the public, amplifying marginalized voice for success, starting well-informed conversations, seizing public attention around these issues, or raising mounting efforts, social media can be an additional technique to further your organisation's mission (Haas, 2017). Some of the social media campaigns that have been successful over the years include #MeToo, #TimesUp, #HeforShe #WhyIStayed and #BlackLivesMatter, #MenAreTrash. Other groups like "PepperDem Ministries", "tell it moms", "tell it dads", "the StandPoint" et cetera, have also emerged in a similar direction so that the issues of violence in the home can be in the public domain and appropriate solution given. However, nowadays, social media and the internet are not adequate yet to create real changes; even though they are crucial for a worldwide movement. Without the protest marches, the intervention of experts on TV sets or during radio shows, and the intervention of other media, there are few chances of getting reactions (Compagny, 2018).

According to Shirky (2011), social media activism is effective when it is used as a tool to coordinate real-world action rather than as a replacement for it. Tan et al (2013), Liou (2013) and Theocharis et al (2014) have all investigated how social media can be used as a mobilization tool. Mukherjee (2016) and Linabary, Corple and Cooky (2019) have both looked at the activities of feminists in digital space. However, few studies looked at how online activities translate to offline events and how the two can work together to bring change. Also, the focus of these studies was in America, Europe and Asia with little attention on Africa and Ghana. Few studies done in Africa like Ajayi and Soyinka-Airewele (2018), Uwalaka and Watkins (2018), Loiseau and Nowacka (2015) and Pratt (2015) even though explored various issues related to social media mobilisation and activism, they have not fully addressed issues of domestic violence. This study, therefore, explores comprehensively, the

collaborative use of social media in activism and offline campaigns in the fight against domestic violence in Ghana.

## 1.2 Research Objective

The main objective of the study is to explore how the activists fight domestic violence with the use of social media and other offline means. Other specific objectives include:

1. To explore why social activists in Ghana use social media to bring awareness about domestic violence.

2. To identify how activists engage the audience on social media on issues of domestic violence.

3. To investigate the offline methods and strategies used by social activist in the fight against domestic violence in Ghana.
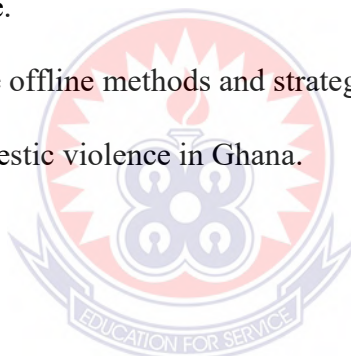
## 1.3 Research Questions

RQ1: Why do social activists in Ghana use Facebook to bring awareness about domestic violence?

RQ2: How do activists engage audience on Facebook on issues of domestic violence?

RQ3: What offline methods and strategies are used by the social activists in the fights against domestic violence?

## 1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is aimed at civil society groups to help in developing, implementing and monitoring communication campaigns specifically those aimed at domestic violence in Ghana that uses social media tools. Through this research, any project manager or

development communicator can harness the power of social media to develop effective campaigns aimed at empowering participants to take action to prevent domestic violence. Also, any other governmental and or development organization to fight domestic violence can refer to this study and get advice on the best practice that can be used concerning social media. Finally, a study of this nature can also be useful to any researcher be it a student or tutor who is researching in the field of domestic violence and the tools needed to fight it.

## 1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study was conducted in Accra. Attention was given to some selected domestic violence activists who use the social media platform of Facebook for their activities. In this regard, the activist's groups, PepperDem Ministries and The StandPoint were contacted to suggest a member be included in the study. Also, other social activists who do offline campaigns were included in the study. These were the bases for all materials that were included in the study. The study adopted a qualitative research approach and the theories guiding the study are the social capital theory, social network theory and resource mobilisation theory.

## 1.6 Organisation of the Study

The study is organised into five chapters. Chapter one includes the background of the study, the problem statement, the objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope and delimitations, and the organisation of the study. Chapter two deals with reviews of related literature and discusses the theories essential to position the research within context. Chapter three deliberates the approaches and procedure for data collection and analysis. In this chapter, the

research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling technique, data collection instruments, data collection procedure and method of data analysis are discussed. The fourth chapter is devoted to the findings and discussions of the research study. Chapter five summarises the findings arising out of the study, it also includes the conclusions and recommendations for further studies.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.0 Introduction

The objective of this section of the study is to explore how social activists fight domestic violence with the use of social media and other offline means. This includes how social media activism can be used in conjunction with offline activism for the prevention of violence against women. The literature of different scholars was analysed and critiqued concerning the topic under discussion Sub-theme to be discussed includes the history of social media, the relevance of social media, social activism, social media activism, and domestic violence/abuse, how social media is addressing domestic violence, domestic violence activism and other related fields including theoretical frameworks. Sources included in the study were from books, articles, reports and internet sources.
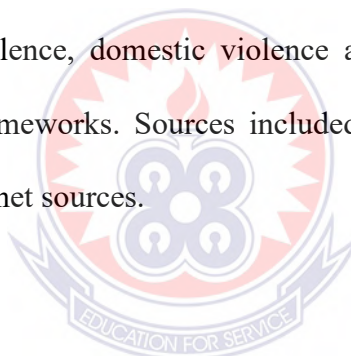
## 2.1 History of Social Media

As observed by Hendricks (2019), the earliest means of communicating across vast distances used written correspondence mainly delivered by hand from one person to the other. Typically seen as letters. To get messages through to another person takes a lot more efforts in the early years than now. Hendricks (2019) added that the earliest form of postal service dates back to 550 B.C., and this primaeval distribution system later became more widespread and streamlined in future centuries. In 1792, the telegraph was developed and it allowed information to be distributed over a long distance a lot faster than a horse and rider may perhaps carry them. Although telegraph messages were short, they were a revolutionary way to convey news and

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information (Hendricks, 2019). The history of social media is often linked to the advancement in communications technology since the end of the 19th century. A common starting point is Samuel Morse's first telegraph, which he sent in 1844 between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore (Keith, 2018). Currently, social media is an essential fragment of the lives of people around the globe. Entirely, about 2.62 billion people are social media users around the world, and this number will continue to grow to over 3 billion by 2021 (Miller, 2016).

The history of social media is comparatively brief in terms of time, nonetheless, it has not lost its influence and relevance as the modern channel for message delivery. Several innovations emerged in the media to better deliver information or messages and the advent of computers has made it better. As noted by Keith (2018), although it is stimulating to think of social media as being part of a much larger continuum of media evolution, the real history of social media starts in the 1970s with the emergence of the internet. Media developed to social media subsequently as internet technology is combined with computers, tabs and smartphones and so on (Vardhan, 2017). These two technologies have connected the whole world irrespective of time and space (Ibid). Another scholar, Kaplan and Heanlien (2010), gave different scenario leading to the advent of social media. Social media began in 1979 with Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis creating Usenet, which permits people to send and receive messages throughout the world (Ibid). Even though social media emerged that long ago, it was not until 2000 that many social networking sites emerged to ease interaction with people that share a common interest in music, education, movies and so on (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011). This implies that the traditional media has competition now; Lugaye and Slabbert (2014) opined that social media has taken over the diminishing circulation of traditional media such as

television, radio, newspapers and magazines. Another perspective about the birth of social media was given by Kaplan and Heanlien (2010), social media of contemporary times can be traced back to "Open Diary" which aimed to gather together the internet users who created online diaries, created by Bruce and Susan 20 years ago. The concept of the blog emerged with this. After the invention of blogging, social media began to blow up in popularity. To some people, social media are merely apps on their smartphone or tablet, however, it is more than that; social media started with computers first (Hudson, 2018). In current times, social media is the most popular among all other means of communication and information. 30 per cent of the World's population is active social media users whereas (Vardhan, 2017).

Websites like MySpace and LinkedIn gained prominence in the early 2000s, and sites like Photobucket and Flickr enabled online photo sharing. Edosomwan et al., (2011) added that in 2000 social media received a great boost. This witnessed the springing up of many social networking sites. This extremely boosted and altered the interaction of individuals and organisations who share a common interest in music, education, movies and friendship, bases on social networking. For example; six degrees, Cyworld, Ryze and Wikipedia. This was followed by a few others and in 2004, Facebook emerged. YouTube emerged in 2005 and created a distinctly fresh means for people to communicate and share across great distances (Hendricks, 2019). Two of the most widespread social networking sites became accessible to users all over the world by 2006 and their dominance as the most used sites continues to date. Additional sites like Tumblr, Spotify, Foursquare and Pinterest started popping up to seal specific social networking niches spaces (Hendricks, 2019).

The most outstanding changes are the revolutions in information technology and social media. Today, the use of social media is not only changing the whole sectors of society, but it also offers several potentials for modern, evocative and equal participation and deliberation. Progressively, campaigns done using social media by political organizations seem more striking to citizens at the expense of traditional party-political activism (Murthy, 2013). Social media is becoming an agent of change. It is changing the way information is communicated to and from people around the world. Its use is increasing day by day with a high rate all over the world (Vardhan, 2017).

## 2.2 Relevance of Social Media

Social media is media for social interaction beyond social communication. There are merits and demerits associated with the use of social media. One most noteworthy merit is the online sharing of knowledge and information among the different groups of people (Baruah, 2012). Web social media support a sort of knowledge and information "democratisation" transforming people from content consumers into content producers or producers (Paˇtrut & Paˇtrut, 2014). As explained by another scholar, social media serves as a platform whereby content and applications are no more created and published by individuals, in its place are unceasingly altered by all users in a participatory and concerted manner (Adubato, 2018). As the Internet gained currency, particularly among the younger generation, personal web pages, reference works like the Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, and the idea of content publishing became popular. Then, more interactive blogs and wikis emerged. As social media evolved further, it allowed the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Menon, 2018).

Social media is establishing itself as a dominant share of how we all communicate. Its online communities bear a strong and persuasive voice and there is much to be gained from engaging directly with people through these (Bell, 2014). The essential principle of social media is the capability to share content with other people. To upload content, users typically register and create a profile. Contingent on the actual platform and purpose, users are at liberty to select whether their entire profile or selected content will be openly accessible to all or only visible to certain audiences (Osterrieder, 2014). According to Sharma (2017), among the most powerful features of social media is that it offers a milieu and a medium for people to express themselves independently, and yet find community. This "hashtag unity," as a term, is equally real and powerful as a group of individuals physically assembled in the same space. It can instruct, settle and provoke change by sheer strength of vocal numbers (Ibid).

One important aspect of social media is the space that it offers for us to be able to interact across nations. Coyle and Vaughn (2008) opined that social media or social network is a giant virtual platform whereby people are connected via interactive links that form online communities. Among many others, the relevance of social media permeates just the interaction functions; it cuts across politics, education, health and so on. Social media and easy access to mobile phones enhanced people's enthusiasm across the health spectrum: access to supplemental research data, rapid and instant communication, pertinent health information (Dosemagen & Aase, 2017). People's interest in the internet as a health promotion tool has grown over the past decades (Korp, 2006). The internet has become a powerful global communication method for health interventions, providing public access to a wide range of health promotion programs, and opportunities for people to communicate with others and health professionals (Cassell, Jackson, & Cheuvront, 1998). Several people have adopted the

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internet as a health communication tool, and many argue it has a positive impact on life and also improves their health (Neuhauser & Kreps, 2003). Also, even though social media were not created for political use, politicians have swiftly found their way to connect with the public, particularly the youth through the use of various social media sites. In the 2008 election, Obama's utilization of social networking is often credited for his appeal among America's youth- even those who have not reached the age to vote (Dalton, 2009; Nagourney, 2008).

Nowadays the Internet and new technologies are playing a powerful role in informing, educating, and connecting people around the world. Through social media platforms (such as blogs, wikis, social network sites, video sharing sites, et. cetera) companies can spread news and messages quickly and inexpensively compared to traditional media (Vasquez & Velez, 2011). Access to people and companies is possible at any time and from anywhere and this affects how the interactions between individuals and companies occur (Brown 2009). The relevance of social media is also seen in the world of public relations. As expounded by Falls (2008), social media is essentially public relations in the online world. Falls (2008) further categorised this into; blogs, social networks, microblogging, podcasts/Web TV, wikis/collaborative software. Social media has altered how organisations communicate with their stakeholders; consequently, businesses must learn how to gain from this new media, particularly for communication purposes. Social network sites seem to offer great prospects for establishments to engage stakeholders in dialogic communication (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010).

Social media allows reaching a target audience, attracting potentials customers, securing the loyalty of clients, increase the number of people visiting the website. Social media support subscribing/following other social media users or pages to

automatically receive content. They allow tagging other social media users to bring them into conversations (Gretzel, 2017). The social media campaign is a powerful industry that is here to stay and will help people around the world (Baker, 2018). Simply put, the best social media campaign uses various social media channels: product/service promotion, brand awareness building, creation of a sense of community (Sukhraj, 2018). Rouse (2015), sees Social media is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Websites and applications dedicated to forums, microblogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curation, and wikis are among the different types of social media. This virtual life that one spends time following takes and distracts one from living his real life at the present moment (Emily, 2018). The power of social media lies in its interactivity and its strength to amplify the reach of content. At the same time, this has the potential to quickly turn into a pitfall. It is therefore essential to be aware of basic rules for using social media (Osterrieder, 2014).

Social media allow different forms of communication from other media. On social media, one-to-one, one-to-many, one-to particular others, few-to-few and many-to-many as well as synchronous and asynchronous conversations are all possible. Social media not only make it easy to create and post contents but also to share contents posted by others (Gretzel, 2017). The high level of internet penetration, availability of inexpensive smartphones and PCs and a wide variety of social media platforms present vast opportunities to consume global content and interact with local and foreigners alike (Kosnazarov, 2019). Social media such as Facebook, blogs, YouTube have become major sources of hiring. LinkedIn is another similar source used by recruiters, and about 80 per cent of companies use it for the recruiting process. Social

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media has also become one of the easiest ways to improve productivity and to generate a natural interest in the work carried out by the employees (Edosomwan, et al, 2011).

## 2.3 Social Activism

Social activism can be seen described as individuals and groups engaging in collective action to remedy perceived social problems (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016). Social activists operate through groups or social movement organizations (SMOs) characterized by varying degrees of a formal and informal organization (Ibid). Social activism according to Amherst College (2020) is a deliberate action to convey social change. Any cause that one feels strongly about and working in the direction of a change, anyone involved in this could be referred to as an activist. An activist is anyone who is fighting for change in society (Amherst College, 2020). Social activists consider the larger picture. This mostly includes how they can find means to end injustice and to create robust communities which encourage economic, social and psychological health. The rise of new information technology has both amplified traditional methods and introduced new methods of social activism. Social media provide an archive, a memory and a repository of text and audio-visual symbolic content relating to protests, tactics, organisations, and ideas. According to (Moyer, 2001), there are four diverse roles activists and social movements need to play to fruitfully create social change within the community. These are categorised as; the citizen, rebel, change agent, and reformer.

Moyer (2002) noted that social activists ought to be seen as responsible citizens. This is vital for their credibility and typically leads to earning the reverence and acceptance of the majority of ordinary citizens. This is essential for the success of the movement.

Subsequently, an active citizen should have the ability to adhere to those vital principles, values, and symbols of a good society that are also accepted by the general public. At the same time, activists must be rebels. They should be able to say "No" when necessary and protest against conditions that tend to oppress them. Moyer (2001) added that activists need to be change agents with aims to educate, organize, and involve the general public to actively oppose present policies and seek positive, constructive solutions. The final role that was identified by Moyer (2001) was reformers. In this role, they work with the political and judicial structures to integrate resolutions into new legislations and policies worthy of practice in society.

It is important to identify how important social activists are in bringing justice and influencing social change. According to Briscoe and Gupta (2016),

> Social activism as instances in which individuals or groups of individuals who lack full access to institutionalized channels of influence engage in collective action to remedy a perceived social problem, or to promote or counter changes to the existing social order. Social activists work to promote, guide, or impede changes in government or business policies and influence the actions of individuals and groups. They build connections among groups and communities and disseminate information on specific issues to create awareness and influence social change. (P.23).

## 2.4 Social, Hashtag Activism and Domestic Violence

Social media activism has been described and grouped into different categories and these categories are explained by different scholars in this section of the review. Vegh (2003) identified the following groupings: 1. Awareness/Advocacy; focuses on distributing information 2. Organisation/Mobilisation: involves the use of social

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media to recruit supporters and to coordinate online and offline events. It can also be crowdfunding campaigns and 3. Action/Reaction; describes the use of social media to encourage particular actions, ranging from harmless requests for likes or reposts to encouragement of so-called hacktivism. The emergence of social media a few years ago had mainly the purpose of keeping friends and family in touch but this has changed in recent times. According to Sharma (2017), the trivial means of keeping in touch with friends, sharing photos and jokes, has developed into a force for societal change which shines a light on subjects' previously unknown, deepening conversations and empowering citizens of the world to unite and effect change in several ways. Social media can now be seen as more powerful than it was perceived. Vardhan (2017) also added that social media has become so powerful today that in the face of any incidents social media becomes the voice of people. Everyone starts sharing, tweeting, '#hashtaging' their views, rage and demand for justice on social media. A shared post on Facebook can organize a protest in a matter of minutes. Documentary photos and videos can be distributed on Tumblr Pages, through Instagram and Vines. There have been innumerable instances where social media activities have been the root cause of social concern, widespread debate and discussion and social upsurge and where they have been the strongest tool behind all kinds of the social activism-based campaign (Mukherjee, 2016).

Activism mostly starts with one or a few people but social media has given it the platform to reach more people rapidly. Gretzel (2017) noted that the network ties visible in social media and the ability to identify and target like-minded others help activism spread more quickly. Also, Cammaerts (2015) maintained the fact that since social media has a wide reach, social media activism is extremely conspicuous to others and can rapidly spread beyond individuals and beyond local communities.

According to Peuchaud (2014), the unsettling prospect of activism should not be taken for granted, digital activism carries real risk and enormous potential. This is mostly through getting the word out to a very large networked population and also social media can aid activists to attract hefty crowds to a protest. Digital Activism is another way of describing social media activism and this according to Mukherjee (2016), has completely revolutionized the area of ICT and has created a platform that is more interactive, participatory, trackable and measurable and most importantly a very strong tool of mass sharing of ideas and viewpoints, resulting in the formation of very strong and active opinion groups or activists or advocacy groups.

Among the various meanings and interpretations given to social media activism is the one by Gretzel (2017); according to him, social media activism is a form of cyberactivism that takes advantage of social media affordances to reach its cause-related goals. Among other means of sharing information and gathering people's opinion on a societal issue, social media can be seen as an easier and cheaper way. Similar to Cammaerts (2015), it allows few-to-few communication, which is particularly pertinent for activists and social movements. Chatting, for instance, can occur on a one-to-one basis, but it can also be used to facilitate an online conversation between a few participants (Ibid). Miller (2017), also noted that social media helps to promote social change by producing a conversational environment on limited forms or expressive solidarity as opposed to an engaged content-driven, dialogic public sphere. Essentially, it involves numerous forms of activism than traditional, offline activism (Ibid). Also changing the profile picture of a particular social media account just to raise awareness of a cause or using a specific hashtag are all prevalent means of social media activism (Butler, 2011). This is similar to the view shared by Gretzel (2017) that suggests that social media activism offers people the opportunity to easily

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and affordably reach out to as many people as possible on an issue of social concern. Given that social media support subscribing/following other social media users' or pages to automatically receive content, it allows for more people to be brought on-board. Also, the tagging of other social media users brings them into conversations. They provide users with opportunities to curate contents and use hashtags to link their contents to other contents (Gretzel, 2017).

As stated by Gladwell (2010), faith in social media, activism runs the risk of replacing the hard, dangerous real-world work of boycotts, protests and feet-on-the-pavement organizing with virtual clicking, liking, and sharing. However, the fact that relatively uninvolved and uninterested individuals may moderate their weaker sense of civic obligation through social media sharing does not prevent activists from using the same tool effectively (Peuchaud, 2014). Among many other courses, social media over the years has been active for issues related to women empowerment. Mukherjee (2016), stated that social media and other online communities only create a platform for participation in major debates and discussions about gender discrimination and especially discrimination of women in terms of equality of rights and security but the real work happens outside the social media settings. To achieve some level of success with whatever campaign or project, it is important to merge online activities with offline activities.

Currie (2009) supported this assertion. The creation of a Facebook page or Twitter account for one's organization or campaign will not facilitate organizational goals; these actions must have a strategic purpose within overall goals. Similarly, without tangible metrics and an evaluation plan, the use of social media may be ineffective in achieving larger goals (Ibid). Likewise, Loiseau and Nowacka (2015) were of the

view that social media has shown to be an influential channel for bringing women's rights issues to the attention of a wider public. It does not end with the online activities; it leads to stimulating actions on the streets of cities around the world and encouraging policymakers to accelerate their commitments to gender-related issues and policies.

Over the years, the users of social media have engaged in several campaigns and activisms online but according to Kilgo, Lough and Riedl (2017), one of the most successful social media activism examples is the "Ice bucket challenge". This campaign asked user of social media to upload videos of themselves pouring a bucket of ice over their heads or having someone else do it for them to raise awareness of the disease ALS and encourage donations. This was in the areas of public health but the implication of social media activism can also include social and political engagements.
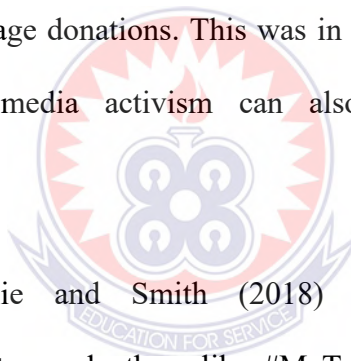
Anderson, Toor, Rainie and Smith (2018) added that the rise of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag and others like #MeToo and #MAGA (Make America Great Again) initiated a broader conversation about the efficacy and viability of using social media for political engagement and social activism. For Thorpe (2013), boycotts, marches, and mass protests are now coordinated online among unfamiliar persons across the globe through channels like Facebook and Twitter. This is often followed by images and videos that tend to describe the severity of the situation at hand. Hashtag campaigns and viral videos elevate awareness of social issues (Shirky, 2008). Images and videos advocating for social changes are now created and broadcasted using social media platforms that reach billions of people across the world for free. Miller (2017: 251) explains that social media "help foster social

change by creating a conversational environment based on limited forms of expressive solidarity as opposed to an engaged, content-driven, dialogic public sphere". Shirky (2008) share a similar view on the power of new technology to foster speedy assembly around causes and concerns. He contends that the main issue with social media activism is not just about the technology itself nonetheless, the technology can facilitate change in human behaviour.

Garcia-Albaceted et al (2014) also added that the declining cost of communication has permitted for the quicker and easier circulation of movement information, and has enabled people to stay in touch with more individuals, communities, and diverse causes. The internet has radically transformed two elements of traditional protest mobilization: participation costs and the need for co-presence. Besides, online dimensions of existing participation repertoires (petition signing or letter writing) have been developed, and new repertoires have been introduced (Van & Van, 2010).

Also, Garcia-Albaceted et al., (2014) argued that social media has shifted the balance of participation cost by individuals to virtually zero and this has resulted in an innovative model of flash mobilisation in which collective action is so inexpensive that small time and content investments by participants allow many individuals to participate quickly. Social media likewise has a feature that leads to an increase in the ability of social movements to organise across boundaries on a transnational level, to link up with other organisations. The implication is the building of large networks that overcome time/space constraints, potentially leading to movement spill-over Cammaerts (2015). Due to the evolution of technology, there are new forms of protest and activism that have emerged such as tweet-activism, hacktivism, among others (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016). Technology is providing social movements spaces to

develop counter-discourses that challenge and resist dominant ideologies (Elongué & Vandyck, 2019). Also, social media instigates a raise against an issue practically instantaneously via its rapid information sharing attributes but sometimes the causes behind the specific matter or issue remain unnoticed by the social media users (Thakur & De, 2016). Even though social media broadcasts real-time messages from any place instantly to anyone all over the world and thus connects people worldwide which enhances the mobilization factor widely (Clark, 2012), it will at no time replace traditional methods of protest like a petition, rallies, mass mobilisation. It may, however, complement them in terms of reinforcing solidarity and building collective identity (Elongué & Vandyck, 2019). This is mostly because it offers the opportunity for the voices of the marginalised to be heard.

Specifically, the internet empowers conventionally excluded people with the tools to create their own spaces for self-expression, movement-building, and grassroots-organizing (Fang, 2015). Digital platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube serve as networked communication spaces and are progressively becoming avenues for social mobilization and protest. Social media have been emerging as a significant tool to promote participatory behaviour, organise public discussion, disseminate information and connect new participants (Hermida, 2013). Most of the mass protests are born online, virtually gathering people on a social media platform and then float offline in recent times (Goswami, 2018).

One distinct feature of social activism is the fact that it is virtual– hence able to mobilise more people, and typically this mobilisation leads to participation in a less confrontational approach (Elongué & Vandyck, 2019).

Additionally, the use of social media helps to draw local and international attention to important activities that otherwise may have been shielded from public view, thereby isolating the participants (Gretzel, 2017). Another form in which activism is expressed online is through online petitions. Online petitions are frequently used way of trying to bring about change. This appeals to users to sign a specific petition often being automatically posted to the petition signer's social media pages (Ibid). Without getting people involved, social media activism cannot be successful. Genuine cyber-activism only succeeds through real participation and online deliberations by ordinary people (Elongué & Vandyck, 2019). For activism on issues of domestic violence to be successful, it is imperative victims and sympathisers are involved in the whole online movement.

It is projected that one-fifth to one-quarter of all women have experienced physical violence at least once during their adult lives and more than one-tenth have suffered sexual violence involving the use of force (Htun & Weldon, 2010). Violence is used to terrorize and subdue women's mobilization for social justice and women's rights. Domestic Violence (DV) is one specific type of violence against women that is increasingly being acknowledged in social media and academic literature. In addition to the increasing attention, there are good reasons to believe DV is becoming significantly widespread (Kohlman et al., 2014).

Kohlman et al., (2014) noted that DV exists in various forms in most societies throughout the world; undeniably it is a worldwide phenomenon. Nevertheless, the acceptability of DV differs across cultural groups due to a culture's perception of DV behaviour (Fernandez, 2006). It is imperative to appreciate that awareness about DV occurs through a variety of contexts. To make the issue of DV more visible beyond the micro-level, several institutions have developed campaigning strategies to

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uncover, discuss, and challenge DV in the meso and macro levels (Kohlman et al., 2014). To Thakur and De (2016), social media turn out to be a new media format that allows many voices to be heard and also provides unaltered video and pictures, without any major control and regulation. Social media has established the potential for activating attention and accountability to women's rights and challenging discrimination and stereotypes (Vardhan, 2017). It has proved to be an authoritative vehicle for conveying women's rights issues to the attention of a broader public, stimulating action on the streets of towns around the world and inspiring policymakers to step up commitments to gender equality (Ibid).

## 2.5 Overview of Domestic Violence/ Abuse

A plethora of terms has been used by feminists and scholars to describe gendered violence, including, violence against women, intimate partner violence, domestic violence, battered women, gender-based violence and family violence. These terms are however mostly used interchangeably and regardless of the form it is presented, it exists in every country, cutting across boundaries of culture, class, education, income, ethnicity and age (UNICEF, 2000). Also, according to Ajayi and Soyinka-Airewele (2018), there are different labels for the concept and this may include terms such as wife abuse, intimate partner violence, family violence, wife assault and the like. The terms seek to highlight varied dimensions of a collective reality. Intimate partner violence, for instance, focuses on the more restricted violence between partners in a sexual, marital or romantic relationship, while the more expansive notion of domestic violence can extend to children and non-kin individuals dwelling in a shared private space (Ibid).

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It is difficult for a society to claim to be free of such violence, the only distinction, however, is in the patterns and trends that exist in different countries and regions of the world. Various views have been given on what domestic abuse/violence is, one of such definitions was by Women's Aid (2018). They defined domestic abuse as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer. It is very common. In the vast majority of cases, it is experienced by women and is perpetrated by men (Women's Aid, 2018). Domestic violence as described by (Kaur, 2008) can be the power misused by one adult in a relationship to control another. It is the establishment of control and fear in a relationship through violence and other forms of abuse. Kaur (2008) further categorised it as physical assault, psychological abuse, social abuse, financial abuse, or sexual assault. The frequency of the violence can be on and off, occasional or chronic. Violence against women and girls continues to be a global epidemic that kills, tortures, and maims physically, psychologically, sexually, and economically. It is one of the most pervasive human rights violations, denying women and girls equality, security, dignity, self-worth, and their right to enjoy fundamental freedoms (UNICEF, 2000). In other scholars' view, domestic abuse between spouses or intimate partners is when one person in a marital or intimate relationship tries to control the other person. Benedictis, Jaffe and Segal, (2014) contended that the perpetrator uses fear and intimidation and may threaten to use or may use physical violence. This fear and intimidation are mostly done by males. UNICEF (2000) agreed that violence in the domestic sphere is usually perpetrated by males who are, or who have been, in positions of trust, intimacy and power. This includes husbands, boyfriends, fathers, fathers-in-law, stepfathers, brothers, uncles, sons, or other

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relatives. Rennison (2003) also added that domestic violence is perpetrated by, and on, both men and women. Benedictis, Jaffe, and Segal, (2014) shared a similar view that the victim of domestic abuse or domestic violence may be a man or a woman. Domestic abuse occurs in traditional heterosexual marriages, as well as in same-sex partnerships. However, frequently, the victims are women, particularly in the United States. 85% of all violent crime experienced by women are cases of intimate partner violence, compared to 3% of violent crimes experienced by men (Rennison, 2003). Even though it is recognised that domestic violence can be across gender, World Bank Report, (2019) identified one major characteristic of gender-based violence. That is, it knows no social or economic boundaries and affects women and girls of all socio-economic backgrounds. The report added that the issue needs to be addressed in both developing and developed countries. Decreasing violence against women and girls requires a community-based, multi-pronged approach, and sustained engagement with multiple stakeholders. The most effective initiatives address underlying risk factors for violence, including social norms regarding gender roles and the acceptability of violence (Ibid).

The mention of domestic violence typically implies the impression of physical attacks but Mouzos and Makkai (2004) found that domestic violence is not exclusive to physical violence. According to them, it includes other forms of abuses such as sexual, social, psychological, economic and spiritual. Different scholars have coined different terms to describe the act but essentially, it has its bases on the expression of control and dominance by one partner over the other. Domestic violence, also known as domestic abuse, intimate partner violence or abuse may start when one partner feels the need to control and dominate the other (Goldsmith, 2016). It is seen as a crime in most dispensations and its root is largely from the socially constructed roles given to a

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man and a woman. Women are generally victims. Domestic abuse is a gendered crime that is deeply rooted in the societal inequality between women and men (Ibid). Ellsberg and Heise (2005) have also contended that domestic violence has a tendency to be endured in societies where gender roles are austerely forced and accepted, and where masculinity is understood as dominance, honour, and toughness.

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. The results of a study by the Institute of Development Studies (2016) presented a strong correlation between exposure to domestic violence and mental health, particularly among women: women who reported serious mental illness were on average around 25 per cent more likely to have experienced at least one form of domestic violence than women who did not report the serious mental illness. The association between serious mental illness and domestic violence was generally lower among men. Only physical violence was associated with men's mental health status. Domestic violence was also found to have adverse consequences on people's daily life in terms of their ability to work, go to school or do domestic work, their ability to concentrate on daily activities, levels of confidence and feelings of living in fear, although few respondents answered this question. The effects were larger for women than for men, and for physical violence than for other types of violence (IDS, 2016). Although people of all ages and genders experience sexual violence, young women experience higher rates of sexual violence and young men are most often the perpetrators (Johnson & MacKay, 2011).

Over the years, the issues associated with domestic violence were seen as just between the couples involved and nothing beyond that; increasingly, it is now recognized as a violation of fundamental human rights and not a private matter outside the domain of the state, this, however, took many years for it to be realised (Ajayi & Soyinka-Airewele, 2018). United Nation Information Centre (2018) also acknowledged that violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive human rights violations occurring in the world. It happens in every country, including Ghana, in both public and private spaces. In Ghana, a significant number of women and girls continue to suffer violence and abuse, many of them in silence and this corroborate the view of Johnson and Mackay (2011). The mention of domestic abuse brings to light what women and girls have to go through in the hands of men. Ghana is not exempted from this global crisis of domestic violence otherwise known as intimate violence. Researchers and victim advocates show that one in every three women in Ghana is a victim of domestic violence. this may include physical, economic, emotional, and sexual violence (Ajayi & Soyinka-Airewele, 2018). UNICEF (2000) also conceptualizes domestic violence as involving acts of physical abuse such as beating, slapping, arm twisting, strangling, stabbing, burning, kicking, choking, murder, and threats with a weapon or object. It similarly comprises traditional practices detrimental to women such as female genital mutilation and wife inheritance (the practice of passing a widow, and her property, to her dead husband's brother).

Statistics from the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service, show that 30,408 assault cases were reported nationally between 2011 and 2016, almost but not all women. For example, out of 1,298 rape cases reported in 2014, eight of the victims were males (United Nation Information

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Centre, 2018). The extensive impact of domestic abuse reaches into all aspects of the societal landscape where victims have to function and seek remedies, including the legal and healthcare sector, housing, law enforcement, religious institutions, schools and social services, as well as the victim's workplace and finances (Soyinka-Airewele, 2016). These offences are everyday occurrences and many more go unreported. It is important to put policies and communication strategies that will bring these issues to light and able to liberate the victims.

Sarup (2005) suggested that by increasing access to confidential resources and information about sexual assault, dating and domestic violence and stalking and by improving law enforcement communication between jurisdictions, media are critical to ending violence against women and girls. This is very crucial due to the many implications of the violence on the victims who are mostly women and girls. Kaur (2008) noted that over both the short term and long term, women's physical injuries and psychological distress either interject or terminates their educational and career tracks leading to poverty and economic dependence. Family life gets disrupted which has a significant effect on children, including poverty and a loss of faith and trust in the institution of the family.

## 2.6 Causes of Domestic Violence

A deliberate attempt of one partner to show dominance of the other chiefly leads to domestic violence and or abuse. Benedictis, Jaffe and Segal (2014) believe that domestic abuse is not a result of losing control; domestic abuse is intentionally trying to control another person. The abuser is purposefully using verbal, nonverbal, or physical means to gain control over the other person. In some cultures, the control of

women by men is accepted as the norm. This article speaks from the orientation that control of intimate partners is domestic abuse within a culture where such control is not the norm. Today we see many cultures moving from the subordination of women to increased equality of women within relationships (Benedictis, Jaffe, & Segal, 2014). Violence against women is most often perpetrated by an intimate partner, but it takes many other forms: violence by a family member, sexual harassment and abuse by authority figures, trafficking for prostitution, child marriages, dowry-related violence, honour killings, sexual violence committed by soldiers during wars and so on (Heise & Gottmoeller, 2002). Differences in gender roles and behaviours often create inequalities, whereby one gender becomes empowered to the disadvantage of the other. Thus, in many societies, women are viewed as subordinate to men and have a lower social status, allowing men control over, and greater decision-making power than, women (WHO, 2009).

The degree or type of abuse experienced differs from one setting to the other and women are more likely than men to experience multiple incidents of abuse. Different types of domestic abuse (intimate partner violence, sexual assault and stalking) and in particular sexual violence are experienced by women (Women's Aid, 2018). It is important to note that the experience Any woman can experience domestic abuse regardless of race, ethnic or religious group, sexuality, class, or disability, but some women who experience other forms of oppression and discrimination may face further barriers to disclosing abuse and finding help (Women's Aid, 2018). The tradition, culture and norms guiding a particular society may also have an impact on what the man and the woman believe its' right with regards to being abused. Some people with very traditional beliefs may think they have the right to control their partner, and that women are not equal to men. Others may have an undiagnosed

personality disorder or psychological disorder. Still, others may have learned this behaviour from growing up in a household where domestic violence was accepted as a normal part of being raised in their family (Goldsmith, 2016). Notwithstanding, the aspect of tradition which determines who is the head of the house or who is more superior, the fact always remains that domestic violence is learned and has nothing to do with genetics. Domestic violence is behaviour that is learned through observation and reinforcement in both the family and society. It is not caused by genetics or illness. Domestic violence is repeated because it works. Domestic violence allows the perpetrator to gain control of the victim through fear and intimidation (The Advocate, 2018).

Goldsmith (2016) asserted that children who witness or are the victims of violence may learn to believe that violence is a reasonable way to resolve a conflict between people. Boys who learn that women are not to be valued or respected and who see violence directed against women are more likely to abuse women when they grow up. Girls who witness domestic violence in their families of origin are more likely to be victimized by their husbands (Goldsmith, 2016). Essentially, a lot of factors come to play in someone learning how to be violent and bee abusive to the other partner. Gluck (2016) added that most domestic abusers grew up witnessing domestic abuse and violence in their own homes. They learned to view physical and emotional violence as valid ways to vent anger and cope with their internal fears and self-perfection issues. Witnessing abuse as a norm, or being abused, destroys the child's ability to trust others and undermines his or her ability to control emotions. This produces hostile, dependant, and emotionally insecure people with a deeply impaired ability to develop and maintain healthy relationships (Gluck, 2016). Experiences during childhood, such as witnessing domestic violence and experiencing physical

and sexual abuse, have been identified as factors that put children at risk. Violence may be learnt as a means of resolving conflict and asserting manhood by children who have witnessed such patterns of conflict resolution (Benedictis, Jaffe, & Segal, 2014). Another subtle cause of domestic violence is substance abuse. For some people, the moment they are disturbed, they take to smoking, drinking and sometimes to the use of other hard drugs. Its implication is felt in the house with little provocation from their partner. Goldsmith (2016) shared the understanding that alcohol and drugs may contribute to violent behaviour. A drunk or high person will be less likely to control his or her violent impulses toward their partner, so keeping such drinking or drug use episodes to a minimum may be valuable for a person living in a domestic violence situation (Goldsmith, 2016).

In a study by the Institute of Development Studies (2016), low asset levels were established to be strong causes of psychological and economic violence among women, but high asset levels were associated with higher levels of social and sexual violence among men. This means that various issues can be identified as a trigger to domestic violence. Another issue that came to forth in the study was the connection between education and the predisposition to being a victim of domestic abuse. Also, IDS (2016) found that women with no education were normally (between 0.5 and 2.5 times) less likely to experience domestic violence than women with some level of education. More educated men were around three times more likely to experience economic or sexual violence than less-educated men. This result may be because women and men with more education may also be more likely to report domestic violence, as emphasised in previous studies conducted internationally and in Ghana

The scope of domestic violence is a never-ending one as it stretches over families, homes, cities, countries and even across different regions of the world. According to

Khan (2000), violence against women is present in every country, cutting across boundaries of culture, class, education, income, ethnicity and age. Even though most societies proscribe violence against women, the reality is that violations against women's human rights are often sanctioned under the garb of cultural practices and norms, or through misinterpretation of religious tenets

## 2.7 Other Related Studies

Several studies exist on the significance of social media in addressing social issues. The first study identified is about Activism in the Social Media Age. In this study, a survey of 4,594 U.S adults is conducted, some 64% of Americans feel that the statement "social media help give a voice to underrepresented groups" describes these sites very or somewhat well. Nevertheless, a larger share says social networking sites distract people from truly important issues (77% feel this way), and 71% agree with the assertion that "social media makes people believe they are making a difference when they are not" (Anderson, Toor, Rainie, & Smith, 2018).

In a study by Theocharis, et al., (2014), they investigated "Using Twitter to mobilize protest action: Online mobilization patterns and action repertoires in the Occupy Wall Street, Indignados, and Aganaktismenoi movements". They found that the most common purposes for using social media include distributing information about the movement (32% of all tweets) or discussing and commenting on the movement. The purpose 'call for action is almost at the centre of the triangle formed by the three countries in which the study was conducted; indicating that this purpose is shared equally by "twitterers" in each country. This, therefore, further strengthens their

conclusions that Twitter's organizational and coordination role in these mobilizations may not have been as extensive as frequently presumed.

In another study by (Uwalaka & Watkins, 2018), they also investigated the mobilisation functions of social media. Their study entitled "Social Media as the Fifth Estate in Nigeria: An Analysis of the 2012 Occupy Nigeria Protest" used two universities in Nigeria. 19 students were interviewed and content analysis of 13,031 from protesters Facebook page. Protesters' comments confirmed that social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp were indeed the media platforms that protesters used to plan, coordinate and mobilise for the 2012 Occupy Nigeria protests. The data from the interviews also highlighted the role of the mainstream media in the organisation of the protest. The participant's comments showed that the protesters used online media platforms to communicate the date of the protest, and its time and place. This interview participant's comments above show that Facebook not only helped in educating the protesters but also aided them in planning how to participate in the street protest.

A major observation of the study by (Mukherjee, 2016), "Role of Social Media in Showcasing Women Atrocities: A Study on Jaipur Youth" looked at how issues concerning women atrocities were portrayed on social media. The study done in India used a mixed approach and gathered data from 50 respondents between the ages of 18-28 years. One of the findings was that out of all social media tools a maximum number of respondents (38%) of the youth used WhatsApp as one of their most liked and preferred digital media tools, followed by (34%) using Facebook as the most preferred tool. The results indicate that youth of the age group of 18-28 years were mostly using WhatsApp and Facebook and the contents on these digital platforms were mostly noticed and talked about by the youth. The findings also exposed a major

fact that almost the entire sample of population which consisted of Jaipur Youth (96%) believed that social media is a powerful platform for influencing the viewer's mindset about women related issues. Social media in a way has emerged as a platform that has given voice to the voiceless and the very neglected and tortured women sections of society. Another major conclusion that emerged from the survey was that 96% of Jaipur Youth just did not consider social media as a strong tool for showcasing cases of women injustices but they also believed that many such cases of women atrocities highlighted on social media have even been highly successful in not only influencing the perception level of youth but also driving them to the extent of expressing their opinion in the form of mass protests and agitations thus demanding for women justice.

A study by Linabary, Corple, and Cooky (2019) on "Feminist activism in digital space: Postfeminist contradictions in #WhyIStayed" is another related study that highlights how social media is helpful n activism. The study explored how hashtags create space for feminist activism through an examination of the hashtag, #WhyIStayed, which emerged in response to an instance of domestic violence. The study draws on a dataset of 51,577 tweets tagged with #WhyIStayed and/or #WhyILeft, as well as semi-structured interviews with eight individuals who participated in the hashtag. Among the findings of the study include; the hashtag allowed for both victims/survivors to share stories that had previously gone unspoken and others to respond to those stories about domestic violence at the individual level. Similarly, many spoke to the desire to share information that could reveal the complexity of abuse to others and potentially prevent them from experiencing the same pain. Blaming victims for their abusive situations. For example, some tweets accused victim/survivors of being "too weak" to leave their abuser or not providing

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"good enough" excuses for why they stayed. The hashtag also raised awareness of domestic violence and provided a platform for the distribution of resources and services.

## 2.8 Theoretical Framework

## 2.8.1 Social Capital Theory

Social capital is the goodwill, such as sympathy, trust, and forgiveness, engendered by the fabric of social relations and which could facilitate action. The term "Social Capital" originated from the areas of sociology and political science and originally appeared in Hanifan (1916) study of rural schools' community centres. Putnam (1993,p167), for example, defines social capital as "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions". According to Adler and Kwon (2002 p23) "Social capital is the goodwill available to an individual or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor's social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor". Also, Social capital can be best thought of as the human elements, such as learning, trust and innovation that are created and enhanced during interpersonal interactions (McGrath &Sparks, 2005). According to Santerre, (2015), as opposed to pure capital, it is not money, possessions or goods; rather, it is acquaintances, colleagues or friends. It is a network of people who through accident, coincidence or will, have become linked to us in some way.

According to Coleman (1988), social capital is defined by its function and it is not a single entity but a variety of different entities consisting of some aspect of social

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structures, which facilitate the action of individual actors within the structure. Those actors could be persons or corporate. What makes social relations a useful capital resource for individuals are the three forms of social capital: (i) obligations and expectations, (ii) information channels, and (iii) social norms. The first form of social capital, obligations, and expectations depends on two elements, the trustworthiness of the social environment (the chances obligations for previous favours or actions will be repaid), and the extent of obligations held. Social capital is used to describe relational resources embedded in personal ties, which are useful in the development of individuals in community social organizations and has been conceptualized either as a set of social resources embedded in relationships or more broadly as including, in addition to social relationships, the norms and values associated with them (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998).

Also, Requena (2003) suggested that the importance of social capital lies in that it brings together several important sociological concepts such as social support, integration, and social cohesion. All these concepts have a particular role to play in bringing about the needed network and also in getting information to the people. The need for social change means there will also be a need for social support as will be offered by various members of the community. This support will go a long way to assist in adapting to any change brought about to the community. Social capital helps in building the desired link that is mostly based on common concern. Togetherness is not built through ideological ties and strong, thick networks, but through project acknowledgement, shared values and common concern. Since these relationships are situated around a common concern, they help "stimulate feelings of collective togetherness" (Halupka 2016).

**2.8.2 Social Network Theory**

Social Network Theory is a theory social scientist usually use to explore relationships among individuals, groups, organisations, or even entire societies (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Social Network Theory is the study of how people, organizations or groups interact with others inside their network (Claywell, 2018). It studies how people tend to relate with one another once they identify themselves as members of a common network.

The application of the theory has transcended to be used in media and communication research to determine relationships. It can be utilised for a multiplicity of levels of analysis from small groups to whole world-wide systems (Pratt, 2015). Social network analysis developed from the scholarly works of Emile Durkheim in 1893 and Ferdinand Tönnies in 1887 in their theories and exploration of social groups and relations (Kadushin, 2004).

With the social network theory, networks can be thought of as neighbourhoods, since networks are comprised of the actors and the relationships between those actors. These actors, referred to as nodes, can be individuals, organizations, or companies (Claywell, 2018).

A network comprises a set of objects and mapping or description of relations between the objects or nodes. The simplest network contains two objects, 1 and 2, and one relationship that links them (Kadushin, 2004). According to Kadushin (2004), social scientists have investigated three kinds of networks. He identified them as ego-centric, socio-centric, and open-system networks. Ego-centric networks are those networks that are connected with a single node or individual, for example, my good friends. Connections between children in a classroom, between executives or workers

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in an organization, are closed system networks and the ones most often studied in terms of the fine points of network structure. Open system networks are networks in which the boundaries are not essentially clear, they are not in a box. For example, the elite of the United States, or connections between corporations, or the chain of influencers of a particular decision, or the adoption of new practices (Ibid).

The network theory as explained above is manifested on social media platforms as well. Here, individuals can construct virtual representations of their social networks with all different kinds of ties (strong, weak, and even absent) extend these networks, and operate as information-carrying and disseminating ties (Spier, 2015).

### 2.8.3 Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT)

Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT) was developed during the 1970s when the scholars then sought to appreciate the emergence, import, and effects of the social movements of the 1960s (Edwards & Gilham, 2013). Spier (2017) also noted that RMT began in the 1960s and became popular in the United States during the 1970s. The theory focuses on the assets and capacities of aggrieved groups to explain the rise, development and outcome of social movements (Jenkins, 2001). Also, the theory puts resources at the centre of the analysis of social movement and stresses movement member's ability to acquire resources and mobilize people toward achieving the movement's objectives (McCarthy and Zald, 1977).

Resources here are defined generally as tangible and intangible. These can be cash and facilities, solidarities, cultural commitments, and identity networks of groups that facilitate their amassing of resources (Jenkins, 2001). Mobilisation on the other hand is the process by which a group secures collective control over the resources needed

for collective action (Spier, 2017). The major issues, therefore, are the resources controlled by the group before mobilisation efforts, the procedures by which the group gathers resources and directs them in the direction of social change, and the extent to which outsiders intensify the pool of resources (Jenkins, 1983).

The theory broadly addresses social movements in its varied form of words, which covers a variety of actions, beliefs, opinions, and strategies for societal change. "The RMT acknowledges that grievances are pervasive in society, but stresses the need of "social movement entrepreneurship" or other kinds of organizations transform uncoordinated masses and their demands into movements with goals and strategies" (Spier, 2017, p. 92). According to Edwards and Gilham (2013), individuals who share social change preferences are called adherents, whereas those who donate resources of numerous kinds to assist the movement to mobilize are constituents. Those who watch from the side-lines are bystanders. This is similarly the case of activists on social media. There is always a group of individuals who are keen on seeing changes in the status quo hence they work towards it. In achieving the group interest, there is the need for resources and that is when the constituents come in. These are categories of people who either donate tangible or intangible resources to see the social change they desire. According to Edwards and Gilham (2013), a key analytical issue for RMT is understanding how social movements turn bystanders into adherents and subsequently adherents into constituents and ultimately mobilize constituents to active participation.

## 2.8.4 Relevance of the Theory

Social Network Theory talks about how people interact within the network. It emphasised the type of ties that develop and the way weaker ties gain prominence.

Social media allows people to make friends they probably have not seen before and build some ties that effectually assist them in making sure their story is told. Unquestionably, social media platforms ensure that weak ties become more relevant. On such platforms, it is very easy to build weak ties (contacts, "friends," or "followers") and fulfil the function of an information-carrying tie. In this regard, information about cases of domestic violence can easily be shared among the ties and in some cases, connections between social networks that were previously unknown can be revealed with the help of the platform. Through the "friends" of "friends" or "followers", the activist may be able to see posts, images and or videos of a victim of domestic violence. Through this, the necessary support is then given.

Trust, reciprocity, mutuality, shared norms are what guide people within the Social Capital theory. Based on the relationships established on social media, members can trust each other and believe that they will assist them with their issues if they are in trouble too. For these reasons, they share their stories on social media to get members' attention. Once there is togetherness, an invaluable information platform upon which social movement can be championed and organised is provided. The social capital which emerges from social media as "networked collective action" (Anyanwu 2017) is its ability to influence public consciousness about issues that affect them. So as users of social media engage each other online, they can build some level of trust. Once this trust is established, the victims and activists are now able to work together to bring the justice the two parties want.

With posts and comments related to DV on Facebook, different categories of people who previously were not bothered about the issues of domestic violence are now drawn into the movement. Those who were previously unconcerned (bystanders) are progressively drawn into the movement and later become constituents or adherents.

Also, to Crossman (2020), RMT is useful in the investigation of social movements and contends that the accomplishment of social movements hinges on resources (time, money, skills, et cetera.) and the ability to use them. The success of any movement, however, is based on the effective utilisation of the resources. Furthermore, RMT theorists look at how an organization's resources impact its activities (Crossman, 2020).

## CHAPTER THREE

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.0   Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology adopted for the research work. Thus, it involves the procedures followed in realizing the goals and objectives of the study. As stated by Birley & Moreland (2014, p.28) "the mark of a competent researcher is to be able to respond to the data and change direction should the need arise". It is imperative to note that for any research-based project, methodology plays a very vital role since it can provide valuable assistance in identifying the right methods for collecting the primary and secondary data on the research topic. The section of the study provides a critical examination of the methodological process and issues encountered in this study, data collection and analysis. In conducting research, there is the need to gather data by using various tools to analyse them into useable information for decision making. This section also gives enlightenment into how the data gathering instruments were designed, administered and the various methods employed for the data analysis.

### 3.1 Research Approach

According to Sudeshna & Shruti (2016), a research approach is a plan and procedure that consist of the steps of broad assumptions to the detailed method of data collection, analysis and interpretation. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations. Qualitative Research is also used to uncover trends in thought and opinions, and dive deeper into the problem (DeFranzo, 2011). Based on this, this study made use of the qualitative approach.  The qualitative

research approach has its main attention to the narrative of the investigation. It is an examination of a variable or phenomenon in a deep comprehensive manner (Rhodes, 2014). The qualitative research method addresses the researcher's process of self-awareness and self-reflection and capturing meanings, opinions and experiences of respondents (Dery & Diedong, 2014).

With the nature of the study, a qualitative approach was adopted. This is because the study seeks to describe how activists on social media make use of Facebook in engaging their audience on issues of domestic violence that they experience in their daily lives. Data was collected by examining posts (text, images, videos and links) of activists on Facebook through cyber ethnography and analysing qualitative interviews gathered from respondents. This latter led to the creation of themes that furthered the analysis. These qualitative research approaches help to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). Similarly, various studies like Ajayi and Soyinka-Airewele (2018), Butler (2011), (Heise, Ellsberg and Gottmoeller (2002), Linabary, Corple, and Cooky (2019), Mukherjee (2016), Thakur and De (2016), and Uwalaka and Watkins (2018) on mobilisation functions of social media and domestic violence made use of qualitative studies and this offered the opportunity to identify, explore and explain the attitudes, actions and perceptions of people on the subject matter hence, this current study also seeks to use the qualitative approach.

Also, for a study of this nature, feminist scholars (Jayaratne and Stewart 1991) have argued that the quantitative research approach will not be an ideal approach to use. According to the scholars, the quantitative approach over-generalises research findings, hence, its failure to sufficiently interpret and solve social phenomena. Thus,

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it fails to fully comprehend the complex socio-economic and cultural contexts that shape lives and, in particular, ignores local people's perspectives and understanding. Qualitative research methods are utilised by feminists to study social and cultural phenomena and assist researchers to understand people and their social and cultural contexts. Qualitative data analysis involves the identification, examination, and interpretation of patterns and themes in textual data and determines how these patterns and themes help answer the research questions at hand. At the basic level, a descriptive account of data is done, that is, indicating what was said without reference to theories as to why or how. The qualitative approach places great emphasis on the methods used to collect or generates data. However, it places less emphasis on the analytical techniques for the interpretation of data. Also, it is an inductive approach that primarily uses the detailed reading of secondary data to derive concepts, themes and models. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2000), qualitative analysis relies mainly on the analysis of visual data (observations) and verbal data (words) that reflect everyday experience. The use of qualitative methods will therefore deepen our understanding of the dynamic and specific nature of social realities being investigated and this enables the study to capture the qualitative nuances and other important elements peculiar to individuals and groups in the study (Dery & Diedong, 2014).

## 3.2 Research Design

According to Welman and Kruger (2002, p.107), a research design is defined as "a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research problem". The main function of the research design is to enable the researcher to anticipate what the appropriate research decisions should be to maximize the validity of the eventual

results. Ogula (2005) describes a research design as a plan, structure and strategy of investigation to obtain answers to research questions and control variance.

Every study follows a specific design and this serves as the blueprint for the collection and analyses of data. Research design is a plan for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings (Grove & Burns, 2010). Research designs refer to the procedures or strategies of inquiry and some factors determines this. According to Creswell (2014), significantly, the selection of an appropriate design depends on the nature of the research, the research problem and questions, personal experiences of the researcher, and the type of audience for the study (Creswell, 2014).

The design used for this study is cyber ethnography. One of the new designs used in contemporary times is cyber ethnography. As people conduct more activities online and leave digital tracks (pictures, blogs, emails, and such), researchers have begun to study human behaviour in cyberspace (Keeley-Browne, 2011). The significance of cyber ethnography in present-day research cannot be overstated as Akturan (2009, p.14) argues, "cyber ethnographic research is a helpful research tool and it is thought that it will be used as an increasingly important research method in the future mainly because cyberspace has accelerated development. As the information technologies spread all over the world, communication will change its pace". It is also referred to as online ethnography or nethnography (Catterall and Maclaran, 2001). To develop insight into virtual communities, cyber ethnography has emerged as a methodology for the internet only within the past decade as a significant research method (Akturan, 2009).

There are two major sources of deriving data for cyber ethnography. Firstly, one can copy the data straight from the communication happening among the particular community or individual of interest, secondly, the researcher can inscribe data through his observation within the posts of the individual or the virtual community (Kozinets, 2002). As observed by Keeley-Browne(2011), cyber-ethnographers participate in and observe blogs, web sites, and chat rooms. They analyse how people form social networks or groups online and establish cultural identity.

## 3.3 Population

The population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that are the main focus of a study. It is for the advantage of the population that studies are done. Conversely, due to the huge dimensions of populations, researchers frequently cannot experiment with all individuals in the population since it is too expensive and time-consuming. Also, according to Majid (2018), the population of interest is the study's target population that it intends to investigate. In a scientific study, it is often not apt to recruit the entire population of interest. In its place, researchers will recruit a sample from the population of interest to include in their study. In selecting a population for study, the research question or purpose of the study will suggest a suitable definition of the population to be studied, in terms of location and restriction to a particular age group, sex or occupation (Banerjee & Chaudhury, 2010).

The target population comprises all the memberships of a group whom the study is targeting or connected to. Consequently, the members of the population should meet certain suitability criteria to be considered for the study. Based on this, the population of this qualitative study was all social activists and feminists who are active on social media with particular attention on the Facebook user. Since the study cannot cover all

the activists and feminists in Ghana who use Facebook, a few or a subset of this population was selected as a sample for the study. Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of the population and then generalizing it to a much larger population (Babbie & Rubin, 2008).

## 3.4 Sampling Strategy and Size

A sample is a subset of a population selected to participate in the study, it is a segment of the whole selected to participate in the research project (Brink, 1996). Generally, the larger the sample size, the better (Wrench, et al, 2015). Since the study cannot take into consideration all the domestic violence activists and feminists using Facebook in Ghana, there is the need to design a sample. A sampling design is studied instead of all the individuals who fit into the researcher's criteria, that is, the population of interest or target population. The non-probability sampling method of purposive sampling was used for this study. The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites (or documents or visual material) that will best assist the investigator to comprehend the problem and the research question. This does not unavoidably suggest random sampling or selection of a large number of participants and sites, as typically found in quantitative research (Creswell,2013).

In qualitative data collection, purposeful sampling is used so that individuals are selected because they have experienced the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2009) Those who were purposively sampled were chosen because of the knowledge they have about the relevance of social media in creating a platform for women to showcase their atrocities. This type of sampling is where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, their knowledge on the subject matter and their willingness to participate are included in

the study (Dörnyei, 2007). This type of purposive sampling involves finding instances that are typical of a particular type of case on a dimension of interest (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Facebook posts that made particular reference to the topic of domestic violence was the main focus of the study. With this, activists and feminists who are actively using Facebook to do activism on domestic violence were Identified and contacted for interviews, also, their posts were gathered. For a qualitative study of this kind, a total of seven respondents sharing the described characteristics were involved in the study. The ideal number of respondents for a qualitative study was stated by Proctor (2003:529), He noted that qualitative research "usually involve small samples, which attempt to elicit descriptive information about the thoughts and feelings of respondents' on a topic of interest to the research". The selection of participants is based mainly on their knowledge, experience of and role in the phenomenon under investigation. According to Whittaker (2009), there are no set rules about the sample size in a qualitative study, but smaller sample sizes are usually used. Also, Cresswell (2013) noted that for qualitative studies, interviews with six to eight respondents is enough to elicit views and opinions from participants.

## 3.5 Data Collection Procedure

This study made use of two major data collection procedures; cyber-ethnography which led to the collection of Facebook posts of the sampled respondents and interviews. Creswell (2013) observed that the data gathering in case study research is characteristically extensive, drawing on numerous sources of information, for instance, observations, interviews, documents, and audio-visual materials. The qualitative design dealt with the face-to-face interview of respondents within the research scope. This led to the design of an interview format. This interview format

had details that streamline the interview process to ensure that only relevant questions are interrogated according to the research questions. Interviews are typically face-to-face conversations between a researcher and a participant involving a transfer of information to the receiver (Cresswell, 2012).

Data collection procedures are the techniques through which relevant data and information are sought for analysis. No research can be completed without appropriate data collection. Accurate and systematic data collection is critical to conducting scientific research. Data collection allows us to collect information that we want to collect our study objects (Abawi, 2014). According to Business Jargons (2017), data collection is a process by which the researcher collects the data from all the appropriate sources to find answers to the research problem and evaluate the outcomes. While collecting the data, the researcher must identify the type of data to be collected, the source of data, and the method to be used to collect the data. This study used primary and secondary methods of data. The primary data were collected from the field at first hand and the secondary data involves data collected from already researched topics that are published in various ways. This may be in books, journal articles, reports and on the internet. Secondary data offer several advantages as it is easily available, saves time and cost for the researcher (Surbhi, 2016).

The primary data collection method employed by the study helped in gathering relevant raw data from the field of study through interviews conducted and the posts gathered. It also enhanced the credibility of the study and its outcome since every research would need authenticity to make it credible without any reservation whatsoever. Primary data collection exposed the researcher to the actual source of information to avoid all doubts in the minds of his or her readers.

### 3.5.1 Cyber Ethnography

In this study, post by the various activists and feminists who were interviewed were gathered for onward analyses. These are posted in various forms that are related to the study. Also, the study gathered posts that are related to domestic violence from the social media activist groups like the PepperDem and The StandPoint. Notwithstanding how useful ethnographic research can be, it also has its challenges. Catterall and Maclaran (2001) noted that copying directly from the posts of a virtual community or an activist, in this case, can lead to information overloads as there may be over one hundred postings each day. The authors, however, suggested that the researcher can either restrict the period covered or follow specific conversations or specific themes. In this study, a specific theme related to domestic violence were used to extract data on Facebook posts. For this study, a six-month cyber ethnographic study was carried out on all the seven respondents sampled for the study and also, the group pages of The StandPoint and PepperDem Ministries were also observed for the same period. Within this period, a total of 2,281 posts consisting of pictures, texts, pictures with texts, videos and links were gathered from the respondents' Facebook accounts. To achieve this, the various posts of the activists were observed for the period of study. This included monitoring, through observation, on a daily bases the nature and content of posts by the activists and checking if they correspond with the study. Weinstein and Ventres (2000) suggested that ethnographic studies can be conducted within a few weeks or months depending on the nature of the research.

### 3.5.2 Interviews

In-depth interviews are a qualitative data collection method that involves direct, one-on-one meeting with individual participants. In-depth interviewing can take place

face-to-face, or in some cases over the phone (Steber, 2017). In modern times, several other methods are used in conducting interviews; the use of mobile applications is top on this list. The use of qualitative techniques like the in-depth interview was employed to achieve the objectives of the research. The use of this type of qualitative data gathering method has some advantages as outlined by Steber (2017). He acknowledged that Interviewers can establish affinity with participants to make them feel more relaxed and at ease, and this often leads to more insightful responses, especially concerning sensitive topics. He also added that Interviewers have much more opportunity to ask follow-up questions, probe for additional information, and circle back to key questions later on in the interview to generate a rich understanding of attitudes, perceptions, and motivations. A face-to-face interview is no doubt going to capture verbal and non-verbal cues, but this method also affords the capture of non-verbal cues including body language, which can indicate a level of discomfort with the questions (DeFranzo, 2011). This was done to solicit their views and opinions on the subject matter.

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2010:170), "the qualitative interview is an event in which one person (the interviewer) encourages others to freely articulate their interests and experiences". Wimmer and Dominick (2011) also defined an in-depth interview as an extensive one-on-one personal interaction in which much more information can be obtained. Nevertheless, in-depth interviews are quite time-consuming, as interviews must be transcribed, organized, analysed and reported. Also, the process can be relatively costly compared to other methods (Steber, 2017).

To achieve the purpose of this study, an interview guide was developed to collect data from the selected sample. The questions were designed in such a way that it

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incorporates all the research questions. In gathering interview data for this study, various approaches were used. Firstly, there was telephone interviews, voice recording over WhatsApp and face-to-face interviews. These methods afforded the study the needed data and since data was gathered during the existence of the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the respondents were uncompromising about observing the required distance and contact. With the telephone interviews, a voice recording mobile application was installed on an android phone (Samsung Galaxy S9 plus). This offered the opportunity for the calls placed to the activists to be recorded. After the interviews were concluded through this mean, it was later listened to and transcribed for further usage in the study. The second approach used in the interviews was through WhatsApp voice notes. There were cases where the respondents were out of the country and to gather data from them, a more adaptable method was used. The interview guide was sent ahead of time for the respondents to read and know what it contains. On the day scheduled for the interview, each question was read out to the respondents to which a voice note was sent. These voice notes were gathered for each question and later transcribed. The final method used in the interview was a face-to-face interview. With this, an introductory letter was taken from the department and sent to the respondent. This led to the scheduling of a particular date for the interview. Again, the interview was recorded and transcribed.

## 3.6 Sources of Data

There are two major sources of data used for research and these are primary and secondary. Primary sources of data are those where you or someone else collects information from respondents for the specific purpose for which a study is undertaken. These include interviewing,    observation    and    the    use    of    a

questionnaire (Kumar, 2011). According to Surbhi, (2016), primary data is data originated for the first time by the researcher through direct efforts and experience, specifically to address his research problem. Also known as the first hand or raw data. Primary data collection is quite expensive, as the research is conducted by the organisation or agency itself, which requires resources like investment and manpower. The data collection is under direct control and supervision of the investigator. Another meaning given to primary data is by (Mehta, 2018).

The primary data was collected using a mixture of in-depth interviews and questionnaires administered to the respondents. The primary data was used because it is the only source of data that could provide accurate and up-to-date information that was required for the study. An advantage of using primary data is that researchers are collecting information for the specific purposes of their study. In essence, the questions the researchers ask are tailored to elicit the data that will help them with their study. Researchers collect the data themselves, using surveys, interviews and direct observations (Institute for Work and Health, 2015).

The other source of data used for this study is secondary data. Published data and the data collected in the past is called secondary data (Imdadullah, 2014). Data that has already been collected by someone, maybe sorted, tabulated and has undergone a statistical treatment (Ibid). Secondary data implies second-hand information which is already collected and recorded by any person other than the user for a purpose, not relating to the current research problem. It is the readily available form of data collected from various sources like censuses, government publications, internal records of the organisation, reports, books, journal articles, websites and so on. Secondary data offer several advantages as it is easily available, saves time and cost

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for the researcher (Surbhi, 2016). For this study, secondary sources of gathering and collecting information such as already researched materials on related topics, relevant publications, credible internet sources, books, journals were referred to for credible information. To ensure validity and reliability, the data collected through these secondary sources were scrutinized to confirm that they possess the required credentials for the study.

## 3.7. Method of Data Analysis

What precedes data presentation is data analysis. Data analysis is the process of inspecting, cleaning, and transforming materials collected from the field to highlight useful data for positive conclusions and compilation of accurate results to form the basis of decision making (Piesie-Anto, 2012). Data analysis is the procedure that involves the inspection, cleaning, and transforming of data gathered from the field to highlight useful data for positive conclusions and compilation of accurate results to form the basis of decision making (Aggarwal, 2008). The process of data analysis involves making sense of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data (some qualitative researchers like to think of this as peeling back the layers of an onion), representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data (Creswell 2009). After the various interviews were conducted, step by step data analysis was done and these included transcriptions and editing following the issues under discussion in each of the categories. The transcription is vital as that is the only way the interviews can be included in the study. This is followed by editing to ensure accurate information and to also check for consistency with the responses given by the respondents. The data entry stage was coupled with interpretation and

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summary of information gathered by other qualitative data. The discussion is then done based on a thematic presentation of sub-sections in the interview format.

Qualitative data analysis involves the identification, examination, and interpretation of patterns and themes in textual data and determines how these patterns and themes help answer the research questions at hand. This is a procedure for the categorization of verbal or behavioural data for purposes of classification and summarization. At the basic level, a descriptive account of data is done, that is, indicating what was said without reference to theories as to why or how.

### 3.7.1 Thematic Analysis

Once the sample of data was accumulated, the repeated process of reading and re-reading of data brought about the formation, familiarisation, and refinement of a chosen theme. After the themes were identified, the underlying meanings were explored. This provided a detailed, descriptive account of the representations of domestic violence (Isaacs, 2016).

Through the analysis, the study sought to gain both breadth and depth in our understanding and interrogation of the Facebook posts related to domestic violence activism.

Furthermore, the study chose to supplement Facebook posts with interviews to provide deeper insight into issues of domestic violence raised by activists and feminists in Ghana. This  allowed for a better understanding of why they post and the overall impact of their posts. Feminist scholars have suggested this approach to investigating the actions of feminist activists. According to Mendes, Ringrose and Kelle (2014), exploring the involvements of those who are partaking in such

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initiatives enables us to appreciate the fuller picture and long-term impacts of such feminist activisms. During this process, different thematic categories such as activists' understanding of domestic violence, Feminists on Facebook, sensitisation on DV, importance of SM in addressing DV, Nature of posts and so on were identified. Joffe and Yardley (2004) suggest that thematic analysis can be applied to social representations research because themes that are shared within social groups may lead to the emergence of social representations.

### 3.7.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

According to Palmquist (2005) content analysis is a way of objectively examining the presence of certain words, phrases, characters, themes, concepts or any communicative language in a body of the text. Also, Luo (2019) sees content analysis as a research method used to identify patterns in recorded communication. To conduct content analysis, data is collected systematically from the text which may be either written, oral or visual. The main aim of content analysis is to offer knowledge and comprehension of the phenomenon under study. Hallet and Barber (2014) are of the view that cyber ethnography is a type of qualitative content analysis since the idea is to understand and analyse the content of online materials such as post gathered from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Flicker. Data used in content analysis varies and comes from different sources. Text data might be in verbal, print, or electronic form and might have been obtained from narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations, or print media such as articles, books, or manuals (Kondracki & Wellman, 2002). This study made use of data gathered from posts of activists on domestic violence. These posts were either in texts, pictures,

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videos or links. With the use of a cyber ethnographic log sheet designed, various themes were identified and gathered.

## 3.8 Ethical Issues

According to the Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching (2017), ethics are the norms or standards for conduct that distinguish between right and wrong. They help to determine the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. In research, ethics are equally important. First, ethical standards prevent the fabrication or falsification of data and therefore, promote the pursuit of knowledge and truth which is the primary goal of research. Ethical behaviour is also critical for collaborative work because it encourages an environment of trust, accountability, and mutual respect among researchers. The importance of ethics in research cannot be taken for granted (CIRT, 2017). To address the ethical considerations aspect of this particular dissertation, the following ethical consideration was given critical attention.

Inform Consent and voluntary participation of respondents. Informed consent is one of how respondents' right to autonomy is protected. Autonomy means the freedom to decide what to do. Verbal consent was obtained from the participants. Participants who did not give their consent opted out of participating in the study. Even when any of the respondents have consented, they were still made aware that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. They can also request that the data they have given be removed from the study. The privacy and anonymity of respondents are of paramount importance to this study.

The use of offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language was also avoided in the formulation of the Interview questions. With regards to confidentiality,

according to the professional code in research, no researcher can reveal confidential information not even to the members of the research team. This was made known to every respondent during the data gathering. Potential research participants need to know what will happen to data that is collected about them so this also was made known.

Also, the pre-test was undertaken to test the questions in the interview guide for reliability and validity. This is vital to ensure that the data gathered in the process meets the highest credibility possible and also helps in ensuring the validity and reliability of the data collected. A valid question would allow accurate data to be collected whilst a reliable question would aid inconsistency in collecting data. To ensure this, a lot of time was spent reconstructing the questions for easy understanding of questions by respondents and answers understood by the researcher in the way the respondents intend.

Acknowledgement of works of other authors used in any part of the dissertation with the use of the APA referencing system. All the works which were consulted to achieve various sections of this study were duly acknowledged. Within the text, it can be seen as the in-text citation and other details were given in the reference listing. After consulting credible books, journals, articles and other reliable internet sources, the APA referencing is vital to avoid plagiarism of any form; all sources were duly acknowledged. Finally, the maintenance of the highest level of objectivity in discussions and analyses throughout the research was also ensured.

**3.9 Summary**

This section of the study gave the various methods and techniques that were used to arrive at the findings of the study. This is one of the most important aspects of the

study as it stipulated that research design, the research approach, the population and sampling procedure and other important aspects of the study. As described above, a qualitative method was used and data was gathered from seven domestic violence activists and feminists. With the use of an interview guide, they provided data which was later transcribed and included in the subsequent chapters. Posts of the above-identified respondents were also gathered from Facebook through the use of cyber ethnography.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.0 Introduction

The focus of this study is to investigate how feminists and or activists make use of SM in combating cases of Domestic Violence (DV) in Ghanaian communities. Attention was given to DV activists on Facebook. Facebook is one of the most broadly used SM network sites in Ghana. According to a study by Ocansey, Ametepe, and Oduro (2016), 93.5% of the respondents preferred Facebook to any other type of social media. This chapter mainly focused on the findings based on the various methods as described in the previous chapter. A combination of methods was used; the interviews with the activists brought out their views and opinions on how SM has helped curb DV and the data collected through cyber-ethnography also showed how these various activists make use of posts to drum home their messages on DV. Together with related theories as discussed in the second chapter and other related literature, the study brought out the major issues regarding how SM can be used in telling stories of atrocities faced by women at home due to DV.

To achieve the objectives set out for this study, seven different interviews were conducted. In other to ensure the anonymity of the respondents, particular codes were used to label them. These codes are elaborated below. R1 (Respondent 1, Gender equality Officer at GAWU of TUC, Feminist and DV activist); R2 (Respondent 2, Journalist, Member of The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), SDG 5 activist); R3 (Respondent 3,  Secretary of PepperDem Ministries, DV activist, Feminist); R4 (Respondent 4, Feminist, DV activist, member of PepperDem Ministries); R5 (Respondent 5, Feminist, Activist, Vlogger host of a Talkshow), R6 ( Respondent 6, a Corporate communication specialist, DV activist

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and member PepperDem Ministries, mommy hoods, veils of women and ladies of action), R7 ( CEO of The StandPoint, affiliate of FEMNET, Matron of PepperDem Ministries, DV advocate, Feminist).

The research questions that guided the study are as follows:

RQ1: How do social activists in Ghana use SM to bring about awareness about DV?

RQ2: How do activists engage the audience on SM on issues of DV?

RQ3: What offline methods and strategies are used by the social activists in the fights against DV?

## 4.1.0: RQ1: WHY DO SOCIAL ACTIVISTS IN GHANA USE SM TO BRING ABOUT AWARENESS ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

This section of the study focusses on the reasons social activist tend to use SM in their fight against DV. The avoidance of SM has been helpful in all spheres of our life and its usefulness is now clearer in the field of activism as well. From data gathered, various issues were raised on why SM is now one of the preferred means of fighting DV.

### 4.1.1 Activists' Understanding of DV

Violence against women is a tenacious worldwide public health problem. Globally, the most common form of gender-based violence is the abuse by an intimate person (Heise, Ellsberg & Gottmoeller, 2002). Domestic Violence (DV) is one specific type of violence against women that is increasingly being acknowledged in SM and academic literature. In addition to the increasing attention, there are good reasons to believe DV is becoming significantly widespread (Kohlman, et al., 2014). According

to Ajayi and Soyinka-Airewele (2018), it is often difficult to define what DV is as the concept has varied labels. These labels including wife abuse, intimate partner violence, family violence, wife assault among others. These terms try to point out the various dimensions of what reality is. It is imperative to note that violence does not victimize just women; for some categories of violence, the rates of male and female perpetrators are similar (Black et al., 2011).

Various meanings have been given to what DV is and the study also sought out the views of some SM activists. Understanding the meaning of DV in its various forms means that once an individual is experiencing something similar, they would be able to seek the needed assistance to rescue themselves from the situation. Also, the knowledge of the activists of what the concept means will assist them in situating cases of DV shared with them and thereby suggesting solutions to liberate victims.

DV is violence that takes places in a domestic setting like a home, it could also be the workplace for other people like domestic workers. When issues of DV are raised, attention is mostly given to the beating of the wife or women by their partners. In essence, all forms of violence that are inflicted by an intimate partner can be referred to as DV. In elaborating what DV is respondents R2 and R5 gave these meaning respectively:

> "I understand DV to be a situation where one partner whirls physical, psychological, sexual, financial, emotional power over the other. it can either be the husband wielding that kind of power over the wife or the wife over the husband. So, for me, it is not only the physical part but the sexual abuse, psychological abuse and emotional abuse as well"

> " I know physical version where there is beating and hitting then there is the psychological one with the name-calling, the gaslighting; the emotional blackmail, the marathon rape cases as well as the …. yeah, the financial aspect as well when finances are withheld or when one partner is prevented from working to earn independence and has to depend on the abuser"

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There are different types of DV and this is mostly determined by the situation one tend to find him or herself. Johnson (2008) opined that types of violence differ extensively, with some patterns including pushing, throwing, and name-calling, and others consisting of ongoing control, degradation, and assault. Various types like physical, psychological, emotional, financial, sexual and spiritual abuse were all identified as types of DV. DV which are physical can take numerous forms as stipulated by (Slabbert and Green, (2013:237), "physical abuse can either be controlled or impulsive and consists of physical assaults. These assaults result in injuries ranging from bruising, scalding, burning and stabbing to internal injuries, cracked ribs or broken bones". Physical abuse is mainly seen in instances where one partner tends to be exerting some level of attack or force on the other. when there is beating, hitting and other forms of physical attacks, they are generally categorised as physical abuse. Another respondent throws more light on the fact that DV is not only experienced by females even though generally, but victims of DV are also females. She also pointed out that DV can be seen in two folds; physical and emotional violence. Physical abuse includes the attack of a man or a woman where there is the hitting of the partner or throwing them against an object. The list of abuses considered as physical abuse in interminable; to Sanderson (2008 p.23), "physical abuse includes throwing things, kicking, slapping hitting, pushing, shoving, grabbing, choking, strangling and inflicting head injuries, to name but a few. Death due to physical injuries is the atrocious consequence for some women who are in an abusive relationship".

Another type of DV identified was psychological abuse. This is also seen as emotional abuse and according to Slabbert and Green (2013), it can be verbal or non-verbal. The severity of this type of abuse is often underplayed. Leone et al (2019) see

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it as aggressive behaviour that is envisioned to cause physical or emotional impairment life-threatening enough to necessitate medical attention or to cause death. It is persistent and damaging, it further destroys self-worth and self-esteem. This sort of abuse typically comprises the use of ridicule, invectives, allegations, infidelity and snubbing of one's partner, all of which leads to the breakdown of the victim's self-esteem and self-worth. From the data gathered, emotional abuse was described as verbal utterances which are insulting and demeaning. Sanderson (2008) is of the view that emotional abuse is more frequent than physical abuse and more difficult to detect even though more pervasive. Below are responses by two respondents (R3, R6) on the types of DV.

> …the physical abuse to me is not as painful as the emotional or psychological one. the insults can be lingering in my thoughts for many days, weeks and even for months. It often makes women feel worthless in the relationship"
>
> even though I have not experienced it myself, the narratives I get in my DM at times makes me so sad. It is often difficult to believe people go through such situations

This is what was summed up by the definition by Women's Aid, (2018); they defined domestic abuse as an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer. Mostly, attention is drawn only to physical abuse as the only type of domestic violence with little mention of other forms like emotional abuse. Upon further probing, it was clear that respondents who previously said they had not experienced DV latter categorised what they experienced as emotional or psychological abuse. This corresponds to the study by Walker's (1984) (cited by Slabbert & Green, 2013). In his work, emotional trauma experienced dues to DV was characterised by degradation and humiliation and it was also described as the most painful type of

abuse women suffer. Also, from the various interviews conducted, this type of abuse was top on the list of abuses experienced. In an interview with R5, she mentioned that she has experienced some level of DV as well. She described what she experienced as psychological and emotional.

> "Yes, I will say have experienced it before but mine was not physical. I was not abused physically but it was more psychological. In my previous relationships, I was insulted and demeaned. Most women in Ghana, however, do not see this as domestic abuse"

The study did not only show how psychological abuse is more pervasive but also the fact that the cultural setting of Ghana tends to promote this form of DV. Findings here corresponds with the study by Adjah and Agbemafle (2016) who noted that the majority of women have experiences of psychological abuse which includes threats, insults and destruction of property. All probably related to structures of domination and exploitation aggravated by the robust existence of patriarchal norms.

Sexual abuse is another type of DV that was identified in this study. Various meanings were given to sexual abuse but it can simply be explained in terms of a partner demanding sexual intercourse and or activities from the other without his or her consent. Slabbert and Green (2013) opined that sexual abuse occurs when the perpetrator demands sexual activity without the woman's consent. The flaw of this definition can be seen in their limiting of the experience to just one gender; female. Interestingly, data gathered also confirms this as most of the respondents who identified sexual abuse as a type of domestic abuse only referred to when a woman is forced to have sexual intercourse by her partner. One respondent (R7) shared her understanding.

> … there are times when women are forced to have sex even when they are not ready, this is another type of abuse that is happening in most homes. Thank God I have not experienced that

Many other types of DV were identified in this study; chief among them are financial violence and spiritual violence (through spiritual manipulation). Financial abuse was described as situations where the perpetrator is denying the partner the needed resources and money to cater for himself or herself. Abusers often try to establish financial control over victims. Victims who are financially dependent on abusers have fewer resources for escape. Synonymous to financial abuse is economic abuse. This is withholding economic sustenance and keeping tight control of the family's economic resources, such as money and transport.

The wrong discernment often is that the woman in the relationship is solely responsible for all the housekeeping and child-rearing tasks with the minimum financial assistance and that she must also work a full day to pro ide for the family's financial needs (Slabbert & Green, 2013). Also, spiritual abuse otherwise referred to as spiritual manipulation by one of the respondents comes in ways where extracts from the Bible or the Quran is used to subdue the other partner into believing all the other ways in which they are treated. R1 shared an experience she had with how the Quran can be used to oppress women. Also, R7 gave her understanding of spiritual abuse.

> There was an instance where I and another feminist had a serious problem with some of the Muslim boys on Facebook because we were discussing how Surah in the Quran that talks about domestic violence. One lady was saying the Quran enables domestic violence because it is said that the husband can beat the wife so our discussion was around that... The point is that even if it is stated like that in the Quran is it acceptable or do you all believe that the Prophet and God would say that another human being should be beaten by another human being.

> Spiritual manipulation; using the bible or the Quran or the traditional religion to intimidate the other person, to put some form of fear or to put that person in harm's way. And some people subject their partners to spiritual attack. You know, they take them to "mallams" and fetish priests to do them things.

Gender issues are not a contemporary phenomenon. Banerjee and Kakade (2015), observed that our society is patriarchal and women have been suppressed for centuries in numerous forms. Women are more likely than men to experience several incidents of abuse than men. Any woman can experience these forms of abuse regardless of their race, ethnic and/or culture (Womensaid.org, 2020). The way we define it, however, is dependent on the cultural setting that we find ourselves in. The cultural settings determine how cases of DV are experienced. According to Hopkins and Ostini (2015) taking DV seriously at a systemic and cultural level should contain interrogating the hegemonic masculinity and neoliberal values that now flow seamlessly across both public and private spheres (Hopkins & Ostini, 2015). This has allowed the men to be more dominating in domestic affairs and the implication of this is subduing of the female partner.
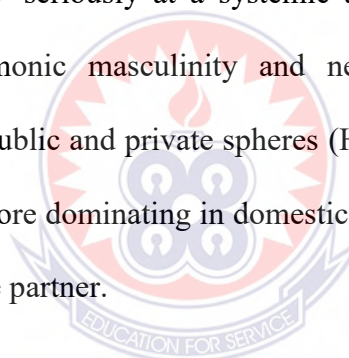
### 4.1.2 Feminist on SM

The study found that there are various feminists and feminist groups on Facebook and the activists are identified as either members or affiliates of these groups. Most of them tend to be actively involved in women empowerment so will take any opportunity to discuss issues that are related. Various groups and organisations were listed by the seven respondents as groups they belong to. Among the those mentioned are PepperDem Ministries (PDM), FEMNET, The Domestic Violence Coalition of Ghana, International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Alliance for Women in Media, Africa (AWMA), African Women Communication and Development Network

(AWCDN), Coalition Against Sexual Abuse, The African Women Development Funds, Ark Foundation, DOVVSU". Even though most of these groups exists as an organisation doing some part of their works offline, they also understand the importance of reaching out to others on SM. Sutton and Pollock (2000) stated that women's rights activists have recognised the value of the internet and online presence hence are creating new resources and technology networks to organize and empower their communities. Being a member of one or more of these groups or networks means you can seek assistance in your work and also learn. R3 mentioned how her network and membership of groups have been helpful

> …it takes a whole team to get results so you reach out to your network to see who is available, who is willing to put in the work, then we move on from there.

Respondents mostly listed more than one groups or network that they belong to. R6 added that she is a member of a couple of SM activist groups. At least for the past year, she has been active on "PepperDem Ministries". Even though she has not experienced DV herself, she argued that these groups bring together women from all backgrounds who have a story to tell. The important aspect of SM in this regard is how it can bring people from all across the globe together to deliberate on one particular issue. This is one key tenet of the social capital theory that is seen to be more vital than other types of capital. As opined by Santerre (2015), social capital, as opposed to pure capital, is not money, possessions or goods; rather, it is acquaintances, colleagues or friends. It is a network of people who through accident, coincidence or will, have become linked to us in some way. The data from R6 and R2 corroborate the usefulness of social capital in linking people of diverse background and in creating a network.

> I am a member of PepperDem Ministries, Mommy Hoods, Veils of Women, Ladies of Action, Women Empowerment, there are these foreign one's called Humans of New York, Women of Bombay. They are made up of women who have experienced violence in their life one way or the other

> I was still an activist but as you grow, you need to belong to a bigger body so you can make a bigger impact, so you can learn from other activists who have been here long before you. Also, it's a pool of tools, right, because the more we are the stronger we are;

Additionally, what was clear from the data gathered is that most of these activists started doing their activism works long before they become members of a network. Also, the study showed that not only do the activists participate in online works, they are also involved in some level of activism offline. To most of them, the SM allows them to reach out to a much broader audience, most especially, people who were previously unable to tell their stories.

The respondents, even though belongs to a group or the other online, will rather want to be referred to as a community of feminist on SM. When there is an issue of interest, these feminists talk about it together, share posts, discuss the way forward together. Through the various kind of posts, they put out, others experiencing similar conditions also tell their stories and, in some circumstances, they can get the needed support to get liberated. This according to them is mostly done on their Facebook timelines and comments session. Members of PDM, FIDA, AWMA, FEMNET, Tell It Moms and so on are part of this same community as well, even though they have an identifiable group.

### 4.1.3 Sensitisation on DV

The need to create significant consciousness about DV has been discussed in public spaces for many years before it gained popularity on SM. "The DV Bill was passed by

the Ghanaian Parliament in 2007 with the charge to initiate outreach and awareness creation programmes under the Protective Model of the Community Policing programme. Public seminars and radio talk shows were held nationwide as a means of shielding women and children from abuse" (Bawa, 2012 p.44). However, over the years, SM has become more pervasive in sharing information and leading discussions on issues happening within society. SM is one of the most significant components of media which has been serving as a pedestal for people to exercise their freedom, to express their speech and gain valuable insights (Banerjee & Kakade, 2015). Even though other traditional media exists, the ubiquity of SM offers prompt sharing of information, which generates dialogue in a way print media or scholarly journals cannot (Whiting, Olufowote, Cravens-Pickens, & Witting, 2019). The best case of increasing usage of SM platform for conveying social changes is the example of numerous cyber campaigns which have taken place frequently to showcase violence against women (Mukherjee, 2016).

To Smith (2014), Facebook is considered as one of the strongest platforms where global issues are discussed and where issues related to DV finds a lot of supporters. From the data gathered, respondents made it clear that SM has allowed more people to tell their stories. More often, women are unable to tell what they are going through in their home due to the fear of losing the support they get from the perpetrators. However, Facebook has given more women the chance to vent what they are going through for the whole world to know. This correlates with Mukherjee (2016) who argued that SM has remained very active in showcasing women associated matters and issues and has also from time to time acted as solid advocates of women's rights and freedom.

Also, Crocket (2017) and Rentschler (2014) added that SM can be supportive for topics such as violence since it can give voice to the powerless and hold perpetrators accountable. Through the use of SM, the predicaments of the victims of gender-based wrongdoings can come to the limelight and can be of enormous assistance to the public who view those contents (Banerjee & Kakade, 2015). Members of some of these SM groups experiencing DV tend to post on the group platform because of the level of trust they have developed with the members of the group and also due to the personalities involved. This conforms with the social capital theory on trust and making good use of the existing acquaintances built. According to Santerre, (2015), social capital, as opposed to pure capital, is not money, possessions or goods; rather, it is acquaintances, colleagues or friends. It is a network of people who through accident, coincidence or will, have become linked to us in some way. Also, Requena (2003) opined that the relevance of social capital lies in the fact that it brings together several important sociological concepts such as social support, integration, and social cohesion. The social supports that the various individual activists and SM groups tend to offer is what victims look out for as they share their experiences on Facebook. One respondent (R7) shared her experiences on the type of Facebook posts she observes on her platform. Another respondent (R3) shared how the victims of domestic violence reach out to her and her group for assistance in dealing with some of their atrocities.

> ... For me, it's a platform for people to vent. Yes! It helps people to vent and pour out their heart and tell their stories. I don't think some of or most of them will even go back and read the comments but the fact that they have an avenue to pour out their heart and their stories… or some of them can reach out to me in my inbox and say "mummy I'm the one who put the story out there and I'm dying of this and I need help. How can you help me?

> In most instances, we do get feedback from people who, one, are afraid to share their stories but they think that they can trust us to share with us in our

> "DMs"...Some people might also need some sort of help so for those who need help we do connect them to the appropriate places.
>
> I have referred a lot of people to Women in Law and I have referred some people to the Federation of Women Lawyers. It depends and then if there is something to be made, maybe if it's DOVSUU we do also refer people to those places as well.

From what was gathered, it is clear how vital SM can be in addressing issues happening within our communities. As argued by Whiting, Olufowote, Cravens-Pickens and Witting (2019), the aptitude of SM to promote awareness can turn negative situations around. The findings of the study by Banerjee and Kakade (2015) shows that SM has projected the whole world with its instant news and messaging services. News or social events are not the only elements of attention but also individuals can express their view on everything without hesitation and let it be heard. The usefulness of SM has been revealed as dynamic. "Not only have social networks been found to influence public movements and elections, but they have also changed how violence and victimization are discussed. News of sexual harassment and abuse gets amplified and transformed by SM, as in the example of victims using hashtags such as #whyIstayed, or #metoo" (Whiting, Olufowote, Cravens-Pickens, & Witting, 2019 p.81).

In a picture post by R3 on PepperDem Ministries' Facebook page with the caption, "victims of domestic violence in Pakistan. Most of them were attacked for reasons like rejecting a marriage proposal or trying to divorce a husband". This shows that the nature and content of posts by the activists tend to start conversations around peoples' experiences of DV hence they share what they are going through with the hope of getting assistance. Also, these contents sensitise victims who previously did not consider what they were going through as DV to now know what it is and seek the needed support.

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one victim shared her experience:

> Please I'm facing the same thing now. Please my case is in court and I urgently need help. The man seems to know people in high places including the judge, who later confirmed he knows the man very well so she can't hear the case. It's been three weeks now and still nothing.. please my messenger isn't working, so kindly call 0557214784. Really appreciate your help.



**Fig 1: Post by PepperDem Ministries on DV**

Also, the nature of the post together with its content can spark further discussions on the issues of domestic violence. In a post by two of the respondents interviewed (R2 and R7), they both raised issues of abuse during the COVID19 lockdown and this got a lot of people talking and sharing experiences. According to R2 "Imagine being quarantined with your abuser? That's the story for many women in this crisis. call your friends. Silence is not golden". Also, a post by R2 on the situation of DV being

experienced by women, another victim shared her situation  Below are the Facebook posts.
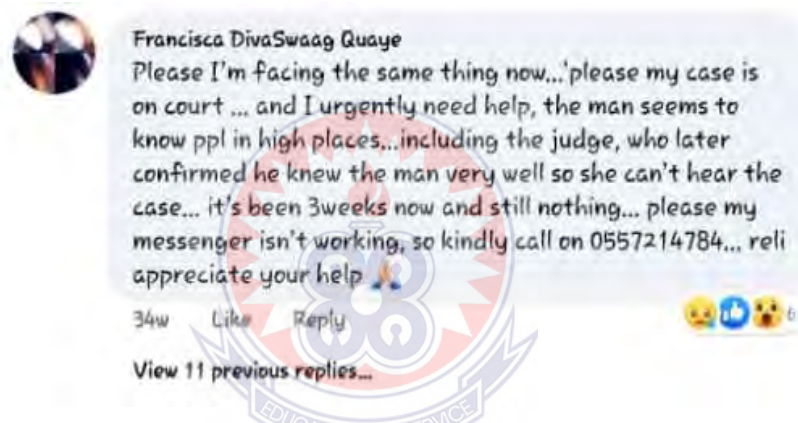


**Fig 2: R2's post on quarantine and DV**



**Fig 3: Reply to a post by PepperDem Ministries**



**Fig 3: R6 encouraging victims to speak out**

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### 4.1.4 Importance of SM in Addressing DV

As opined by Haas (2017), organizations can benefit from SM by using digital channels to reach broad and diverse audiences directly, drive meaningful, two-way discussions, and mobilize people to act, all without relying on mainstream media and traditional communication channels. Undoubtedly, the role of SM in mobilising individuals with a common agenda cannot be overemphasised and this was discovered in this study as well. Harfoush (2009), has stated that SM has aided in mobilising grassroots citizens. Members of the community who were previously not interested in the issues being discussed progressively get involved and then moved from being observers of posts to become active members.

The core tenet of the social network theory has a similar view of how people who previously were not concerned about happenings in the community increasingly gain interest. The respondents mentioned that they can start whatever discussion they are dealing with on a small scale with just a few people showing interest but after a while, a lot of other users of Facebook get involved. This helps in building a stronger network as there is strength in numbers. The more people are involved in the activism process for a course, the more likely their cases would be heard. A study by Carlyle, Guidry, and Burton (2018) examined how Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) was portrayed on the SM (Pinterest). Based on their findings, the authors argue that Pinterest has the potential to be an effective pathway to disseminate bystander interventions, connect IPV victims with resources, and foster a supportive environment for victims. Also, Carlyle, Guidry, Dougherty and Burton (2019) claimed that the advent of SM, largely, signifies an imperative turning point, both in culture and technology, where survivors of IPV may be able to tap into online communities to find people who support and believe them, as well as information that

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can help them. This means that more people can share what they are going through in their respective homes for others to read and be advised hence building a network. R6 showed how the involvement of more people in championing the cause will be useful in eradicating DV.

> the usefulness of social media in this fight is that we can bring onboard more people who previously did not care about issues of domestic violence. As I post, another person also posts, it gets to a lot more people. This means all of us experiencing a similar thing can come together and fight for a common interest.

The strength of a social movement is demonstrated by the aptitude of organizers and other participants to mobilize resources and convert bystanders into participants. The implication of this is seen in how activism is approached in contemporary times. Tan et, al. (2013) noted that the advent of new-age SM has the potential to alter the mobilization, strategies, tactics, and outcomes of social movements (Tan et al, 2013). Responses from the informants showed that social media has been very helpful in not just linking one activist to the other but also in linking the activists to the victims of DV, this was not easily achievable with the traditional types of media. According to Moghanizadeh (2013 p.15),

> SM tools and new communication technologies in such societies, in the
>
> absence of open media, and democratic political sphere have the potential to
>
> play a significant role in terms of facilitating communication among individual
>
> and recruitment networks and increase the speed of mobilization, decrease the
>
> cost of participation and reinforce motivations to participate.

Victims who are interested in establishing a network that will be supportive of them are now able to do it more easily and faster than before. The study also revealed that since some of the posts and comments on Facebook can be done anonymously, it

presents victims more flexibility to express themselves swiftly. The major result of the SM on the social movements in contemporary times is the speed which accelerates the dissemination of news, ideas and opinions widely and instantly (Baily, 2012). Whatever information on DV being shared here are not just done by an individual; a whole lot of others who have experienced similar situation are also able to share their atrocities. This means mass participation on issues of common interest leading to collective action. More importantly, when issues are discussed on social media people get to know what the situation is because several views are shared unlike the traditional mass media (Thakur & De, 2016).

One of the principles of social network theory as seen in the study here is the open system networks. These are networks in which the boundaries are not essentially clear, they are not in a box hence more people can observe what is happening on the SM and later become active members in doing the activism on DV. Social media, therefore, can be seen as a better platform used mostly by women in telling their stories. The findings of a study by Mukurjee (2016) in India revealed a similar trend. 96% of the respondents believed that SM is a powerful platform for influencing the viewer's mindset about women related issues. No doubt we see that all those cases concerning women whether it is regarding women rights or various types of atrocities against women, primarily rape cases that go unnoticed in the mainstream media, find a place for them in SM, where people immediately voice their opinion, share it with many more, give rise to debates and discussions and create a strong network of victims and activists.

The network created by the SM gives room for users to interact and seek assistance when necessary. The role played by SM in this direction is vital.

Online groups can have a strong sense of common identity or common purpose, and that the norms in online groups may be as potent as those found in other contexts. Thus, in the right circumstances and conditions, strategic and cognitive processes may transform the internet from a potentially individualistic environment to a platform for highly involving social events (Postems, Burnsting, 2002 p.295).

SM's impact on social movement has many angles; Thakur and De (2016) opined that SM's numerous features such as speed, instantaneous nature, open-ended design, accessibility and reduced cost help it becoming a mediated platform of communication for everyone devoid of any class and social differences. Also, when there is a need to bring a significant number of people together for a purpose, the internet has demonstrated to be helpful. A similar view was shared by R2 and R6.

> There are a lot of people to reach online also. I mean if you are trying to teach something, you can't only teach it physically you have to go online because there is a lot of audiences there that you can reach...

> It is very easy to reach a vast number of people in Ghana and elsewhere...What matters is the numbers and we do get them sometimes so social media is a wonderful tool even though it has its disadvantages that we keep fighting against".

**4.2.1: RQ2: HOW DO ACTIVISTS ENGAGE AUDIENCE ON SM ON ISSUES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?**

To answer the research question in this section of the study, data was gathered on Facebook posts by the activists. The activists here are various individuals who campaign to bring about social change. They put efforts to promote, impede, direct or intervene in social and/or political reforms through the use of SM. The particular social issue of interest to the activists here is DV and the major SM of interest to this study is Facebook hence the posts gathered are from Facebook.

**4.2.1 Through Facebook Posts**

**Table 1: Facebook posts related to Domestic Violence (January 2020- June 2020)**

| Respondents | Total posts | Posts related to DV | Per centage |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| R1 | 487 | 67 | 13.8 |
| R2 | 384 | 44 | 11.5 |
| R3 | 388 | 41 | 10.6 |
| R4 | 322 | 54 | 16.8 |
| R5 | 188 | 64 | 34.6 |
| R6 | 102 | 39 | 38.2 |
| R7 | 410 | 89 | 21.7 |
| | | | |
| **Total** | **2281** | **398** | **17.45** |

**Source: Cyber ethnography on Facebook**

The significance of posts on SM cannot be taken for granted; what is shared by activist or feminists goes a long way to enlighten others on the topic under discussion. Through the sharing of messages, some activists can achieve their aim of creating awareness. Ofori-Parku and Moscato (2018), noted that activists can broaden their

reach through message gathering, modification, rebroadcasting, or replying within the context of more extensive conversations. The study, therefore, gathered data through cyber-ethnography to know the frequency of posts by the seven activists interviewed. Also, a comparison was made between the total posts made and the percentage related to DV. As seen in the table, R1 had the most post; a total of 487. These posts were seen in various forms including just texts, pictures, texts and pictures, links and videos. Out of the total of 487 posts only 67 of those posts, representing 13.8% are related to DV.

These are posts either rebuking the act as done by someone or educating Facebook users on the causes and effects of DV. R7 also made a lot of posts within the period of study. As seen in the table above, 410 posts were made and only 89, representing 21.7% are posts related to DV. Even though R1 had the most posts within the period of study, posts by R6 had more contents related to DV. As seen above, out of a total of 103 posts, 39 are related to DV. This represents 38.2% of the entire posts. The percentage here is quite higher than that of R1 even though 487 posts were recorded. This was closely followed by R5 who made a total of 188 posts with 64 (34.6%) being DV-related posts. R4 had 322 with 54 being DV-related, 388 posts were made by R3 and 41 of them were related to DV, R2 made 384 with 44 related to DV.

In total, 2281 posts were made by the seven respondents throughout the investigation and only 398 of these posts are related to DV. This is representing 17.45% of the posts. The implication of this is that, even though the activists may be active in mobilising people on Facebook to champion the cause of DV, their posts alone does not give a clear indication of their activities. Also, due to the existence of COVID-19 within the period of data collection, most of the posts by these respondents were around the global pandemic.

The Facebook posts go beyond just messages and or images but also include the sort of feedback given. The nature of posts used by feminist and activist on SM is varied as the current study shows. Depending on the information that is being shared, various contents can be developed and posted by the activist. From the study, it was gathered that most of the posts on DV on Facebook tend to be in the form of texts. These texts are to give women some information about what others are experiencing and also how to identify DV once it starts in their respective homes.

Also, there are instances where the posts are beyond the normally written texts to include images, videos and links. Contingent on the particular activist and also the issues under discussion, the content of the post might differ. Also, the nature of the post will determine the actual platform that it should be posted. Based on what was gathered from one of the respondents (R5), it is clear that she has been doing a lot of works in bringing the issues of domestic violence to the limelight through various types of posts on SM. Due to the sharing features on these SM sites, whatever is posted on one site can be shared on several other sites and this was what was mentioned in her response.

> "I do a lot of writings and videos; I have a blog that I post my longer writings on also, I have a vlog on which I make videos and share on Facebook. I also have an IG (Instagram) account where I post. In the past, I have done campaigns. I did a major campaign called "walk a mile in her shoes" and "the role of men in achieving gender equality" and one of the main things we talked about was domestic violence, rape, any form of violence or abuse against women…"

In replying to posts that are in form of images, she stated that images are used to throw more lights on the issue and in a similar manner when the posts are in form of videos, they are used as a rebuttal. R1 mentioned how she goes about her Facebook posts.

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"ooh, sometimes we do attach pictures depending on what the post is about if the post is in response to maybe a video that has been in circulation or the post is in response to a flier...Like recently there was one that I brought to the attention of others on Facebook, an organization was having a discussion around rape and all ten members of the panel were men…. And I picked it and took it to Facebook and Twitter and I only said that the most affected have been neglected so that is an opportunity to talk about domestic violence".

Below is a screenshot of the post:



**Fig 4: All male panellist on DV discussion**

Also, depending on the activist group, the nature of the post can differ. While some focus just on the text and images, others go a step further by providing empirical materials for people to read and understand better the issues of DV being discussed. From the study, The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) has its website which gives priorities to some of these issues. Also, for SM, there is the regular publication of papers for anyone that visits the Facebook page to read. Also, FEMNET makes use of animations and other images in sending out messages on DV.

> Personally, the nature of my post on domestic violence is generally about condemning the act and anything why it is wrong and the implications thereof and also calling on responsible agencies to take action. So, ermmm generally talk about nobody has the right to physically abuse anybody, why that will be an infringement on the person's right

From all that was gathered from the respondents, it can be deduced that posts on SM, Facebook particularly, have a significant role to play in the fight against domestic violence in Ghana. It allows voices of the voiceless to be heard and also serves as a platform for unadulterated messages to be conveyed. This is consistent with what Clark (2012) argued that SM is now a type of new media format which permits countless voices to be heard and likewise offers unaltered video and pictures, et cetera. deprived of any major control and regulation. Besides, SM broadcasts real-time messages from any place instantly to anyone all over the world and thus connects people worldwide which enhances the mobilization factor widely (Clark, 2012). Facebook has given a new dimension to a woman's identity by serving the purpose of being the most widely used platform where women can post their feelings in the form of Facebook status, pictures, comments, likes and shares, and thus enabling them to stage their opinion in a very strong manner amongst the masses which was earlier unnoticed and unheard (Mukurjee, 2016). According to R3,

> I mean we get the inbox stories and some of them give us the right to share without their details. yes! Just so it serves as an indication to people. In other instances when you share a story or when you make a write up about domestic violence or any form of it you have people even sharing experiences even at the comment session

There are other instances where the activists have to come together as a network to make their opinion on one issue or the other known to the general public or the right authorities. From what was gathered, when there is a pressing issue in the public domain that goes contrary to the values of the activists, they come together and

constantly share posts about it till the attention of those needed is reached. In a case involving a popular comedian who uses Facebook for most of his videos, a network of feminists and activists were able to get authorities involved to get him punished when he shared a post trivialising the issue of DV.   Similarly, when a well-known councillor and panellist on TV passed a comment incinerating that victims of rape also enjoy it, activists were quick to act. Respondents mentioned that in cases like these, they make various posts on Facebook and other platforms and encourage others to share them as well. In the process, the attention of the authorities was brought to the issues being discussed and the culprits were sanctioned accordingly. Acknowledging the positive impact that was made in the latter, R1 shared a post on her Facebook status indicating the importance of activism online.
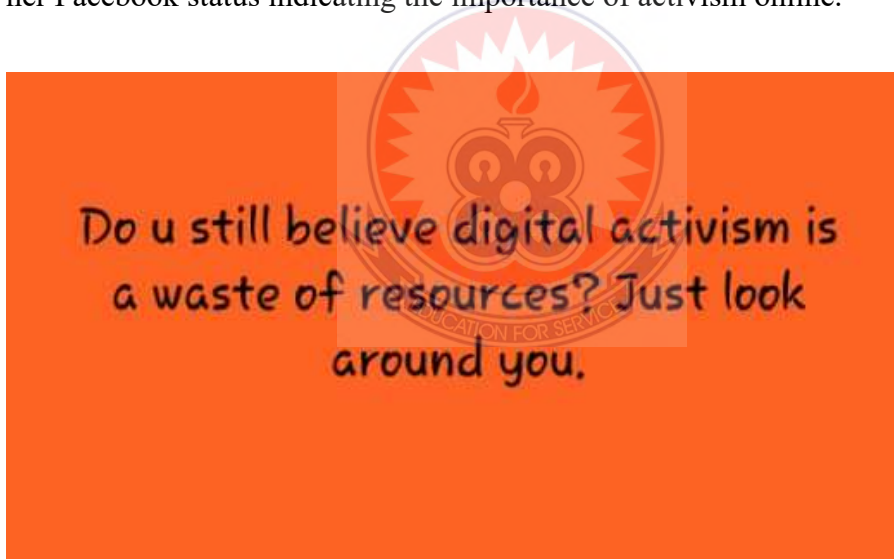


**Fig 6: Result of online activism**

### 4.2.2 Activists Networks

In the data gathered, it was evident that most of the activists tend to build some sort of a network on SM. With this network they create, they leverage the numbers and can advocate for one cause or the other. Even though all the respondents are active on

Facebook by putting outposts on regular bases, they also identified the need to work together as a team and that is the reason behind the formation of the network. This aligns with Banerjee and Kakade (2015) as they argued that from the onset, SM networking sites had the intention of bringing several people together and connecting them based on certain characteristics. Progressively, the value of networking sites is now beyond that to include a platform to communicate and share information, opinion, thought, values and expressions. The data gathered from R3 also shows the reason for a network to be built in fighting DV online. According to her, she has been an activist for many years but as she grows in it, there is the need to belong to a bigger body so one can make a bigger impact. Also, she mentioned that she can learn from other activists who have a lot of years of experiences. She finally added that the more they are, the stronger they can be as there is strength in numbers.

The need to work together as a bigger body was made known by all the respondents included in this study. They all acknowledged the fact that as an individual, they can make some degree of impact. They all called for collective work in building networks of activists. This to them makes it possible for more women and victims online to reach out to them, tell their stories and get empowered in various ways. Also, the respondents made it clear that once the numbers are bigger in the network, various activists tend to be specialised in one area of DV or the other. With this, when victims reach out, they are directed to the particular activist who can be of the utmost assistance. R1 stated that when there is the need to assist with pro-bono lawyers, they know who among the group to contact and in the case of the need to provide shelter for victims, Ark foundation is mostly contacted to assist. A study by Mourtada and Salen (2011) had similar findings; the majority of the respondents believed that SM

had the potential to serve as an empowering and engaging tool for women, whether in social, economic, legal, political or civic spheres.

### 4.2.3 Identifying a Cause

Social media has been identified to help make social causes that were otherwise unknown get into public discussion and eventually bringing more people on board. According to Akhlaghpour and Vaast, (2017), proponents of digital activism contend that social media are influential in raising awareness about social causes and community building. In working with victims of DV there is the need to, first of all, identify them either online or offline before the activism is taken to Facebook. From the data gathered, it is clear that the activists do not just choose a case to work on randomly, it has to be dear to them and one they can relate with. One of the respondents (R7) shared that various people reach out to her due to the kind of messages that she put out on Facebook but the challenge for her is how to differentiate people with real stories from fabricated ones. She also made it known that in many instances, she and her network are unable to assist all those who reach out to them so they mostly consider the pressing cases. Two of the respondents interviewed, (R1 and R7) shared their experiences with victims that reached out on Facebook.

> People that reach out to me on Facebook, do follow-ups. There's one who stayed married to a very abusive pastor, we still talking and I am counselling her the best way I can. They don't want to go for professional help, it takes a lot for you to convince them.

> I was talking about how Muslim communities enable violence on Facebook and a young lady sent me DM (direct messages) so I asked her to tell me her story and she said she doesn't know what to do with herself because she was raped at the age of nine, three times by an uncle. I have decided to support her. If she is ready for us to take the case on then we go ahead with it.

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**4.2.5 Posts that Demystifies DV**

As noted by Shirazi (2013), SM has made it possible for the oppressed and marginalized groups to voice their demands to bring changes in the legal, political and social scenario through intense citizens' participation. In the Ghanaian context, patriarchy is visible as an underlying factor encoded in the various ways in which female victims of domestic violence have sought to explain the abuse they have endured (Ajayi & Soyinka, 2018). Patriarchy prescribes roles and power within the domestic setting, authorizes and legitimizes the use of violence. The patriarchal system trains women and men from birth on how to behave and it socializes women into clichéd roles of submissiveness. The relationship between such constructs and the normalization of domestic violence is quite obvious. Masculinity is often used to refer to features that are ascribed to being a man, such as assertiveness, aggressiveness, authority and leadership. Data gathered showed that most victims of DV have understood it as the norm because the man is allowed to behave in a certain manner considered as acceptable. This can be blamed on the cultural settings that we find ourselves in. In most communities of Africa, the husband is seen as the head of the family and the wife seen as a subordinate so the wife is not supposed to report the husband regardless of the abuse at home.  Hopkins and Ostini (2015) shared a similar view that, in dealing with issues of DV, there is the need to also address the broader cultural, gender and class-based predisposition that covertly blames and shames some victims for the "choices" they make in their real and virtual personal lives. Ellsberg and Heise (2005) have also argued that DV tends to be tolerated in societies where gender roles are harshly imposed and accepted, and where masculinity is conceptualised as dominance, honour and toughness. Also, the study revealed that families tend to encourage women to stay in the marriage as it is seen as a status

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earned hence must be maintained. In another post gathered from Facebook of R4, parents were encouraged to stop asking their daughters to endure the abuses they are faced within their homes.



**Fig 7: Demystifying DV**

Husbands can assault their wives and to the wives, it is misinterpreted as the depiction of affection hence they do not see the need to report it. Most often, practices and opinions around marriage that make women subservient to men go unopposed so the physical or sexual abuses of women within matrimonial relations are not considered as uncommon (Ajayi & Soyinka-Airewele, 2018). From data gathered from R5, when she asked a victim that confided in her for support why she has not reported yet, her response indicated that she initially saw the abuse as an expression of affection and her need to be submissive. In the victim's response to R5:

> that is how some men show they love you if a wife does something wrong and the man does not show it by refusing her money or hitting her, there isn't enough love in that relationship. He is my husband Afterall

Indications from the data gathered showed that most of the victims are not able to identify when they are experiencing DV in their home. To many, DV is only when your intimate partner physically attacks you. The way forward is to sustain the conversations as people often learn by repetition. This was made clear from all the respondents interviewed. According to them, the most significant way that SM can help in eradicating DV is when the conversation is sustained so that women will understand what truly constitutes DV and also recognise that the dominance of masculinity does not translate to DV. Gender awareness is the immediate concern of our society, where the shackles of the hegemony masculinity can be broken. Gender stereotypes thrive in society and are reinforced via several institutions and media stereotypes (Banerjee & Kakade, 2015). This situation is worsened by the institution of marriage which is perceived as a desirable and essential societal status in Ghana (Ampofo Adomako, 2008). One of the respondents (R3) indicated that some people are not informed enough on other forms of DV and R7 also showed how marital rape was considered a norm.

> Some people didn't know about emotional violence, emotional domestic violence and they got to learn that from some of our post, my post and especially. So yeah, people's interactions with the post make you know that they are learning things that they didn't know prior and so it is important to keep the conversations going.

> I have had people ask questions about the post I make and say how they didn't know some of the things I said happened. Like marital rape, a lot of people didn't know that marrying a woman doesn't automatically give you access to her body 24/7. So, if your wife doesn't want to have sex and you force it on her it is marital rape and it is some form of physical violence.

Another aspect of DV worth discussing is how religion can be used as a reason to initiate abuse on an intimate partner. From the interviews with the advocates, they cited various incidences where victims have to remain in the marriage due to their

faith and or religious orientation. From what was gathered, various types of religion do not subscribe to divorces in marriage hence they entreat couples to stay together regardless of what they are going through at home. Responses from most of the respondents show that separations and threats of divorces have been reasons for some of the victims to stay in marriages that are not working. The reason for this is mostly due to the status associated with being married. The implication of this is worsened by the type of religious leaders we have. They often advise couples to stay married. Data gathered from the interviews with the advocates shows that some of the women are still in the marriage because they describe themselves as "Christians" and their faith does not encourage that. The findings of a study by Levitt and Ware (2006) confirms this. They posit that religious leaders possibly deter a woman's decision to leave an abusive relationship. Another study by Kohlman et. al, (2014) which interviewed 22 religious' leaders (Christian, Jewish, and Islamic) finds that most of the religious leaders do not accept divorce as an appropriate resolution to an intimate partner violence relationship. Rather, some leaders reported that divorce should only occur in the case of infidelity or desertion (Kohlman, et al., 2014). In a post of one of the social media activist groups shared by R3, the issue of divorce linked to domestic violence was raised. The post also raised how DV is enabled through religion.

**Fig 8: Religion and domestic violence**

R2 also noted how her work on social media has helped make people know what DV

is for them to seek the needed assistance.

> "I have noticed that apart from the work that I have to do from the office
> which is the physical one, social media one has also been very helpful for me
> in the workplace like in terms of reaching more people and changing mindset
> and letting people understand some of the things that constitute violence and
> harassment".

DV has been shown to exist in various forms in most societies throughout the world;

indeed, it is a global phenomenon. Nonetheless, the acceptability of DV varies across

cultural groups due to a culture's perception of DV behaviours (Kohlman, et al.,

2014). The findings of this study were also in this direction. Most of the respondents

shared their views on how the Ghanaian culture has kept women in abusive marriage

and relationships. To some married women, they will rather stay in an abusive

marriage than to be a divorcee. The stigma associated with a failed marriage is often

too devastating for them to handle so parents will rather encourage their daughters to remain in the marriage. According to Ahrens, Rios-Mandel, Isas and del Carmen (2010), the predisposition for several cultures to value family secrecy and prioritize the good of the family above that of the individual, denoted as familism, leads to the continued acceptance of abusive behaviour. In the interview conducted with R1, she shared the feedback she got from a victim.

> "a Muslim victim once asked me to drop the case of abuse I was pursuing with her because she does not want to be divorced and disgrace her family. She said after speaking to her Iman, she now wants the case to be solved at home"

### 4.2.6 Funding Activism

SM has offered means of mobilising the public on a particular cause or the other. This study showed how aside from the mobilisation function of social media, there is the need to do offline campaigns to achieve the set-out objectives of each activism. The need for funds and resources is identified as vital in making sure that online activities translate to offline events. This is well explained by the Resource Mobilisation Theory (RMT) which puts resources at the centre of the analysis of social movement. It also stresses the movement member's ability to acquire resources and mobilize people toward achieving the movement's goals (McCarthy and Zald, 1977). There is therefore the need to use SM to connect not just with the victims of DV but also with resourceful people who can offer human capital, social capital and financial capital. RMT also assists in understanding how social movements turn bystanders into constituents (donors of resources), and subsequently constituents into adherents who are active participants of social change. As opined by Mundt, Ross and Burnett (2018), social media can be used as a platform to connect with better-resourced

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groups and to put out appeals for donations or requests for precise resources desired for their events.

The finding of this study also highlights a similar issue as most of the respondents mentioned the usefulness of SM in assisting them to raise the resources necessary to organise events and or campaigns. Through the posts that are made by the activists, other interested people can reach out to them and offer the kind of support they can give. These supports according to the respondents comes in the forms of money and other pro-bono services. According to a respondent (R3), SM has helped raise funds.

> …this is how we can reach out; this is how we can build and ensure that what we do online translate offline. So, yea, SM is great for communication but it is also very important for the raising of money because the raising of money and raising of logistics is huge when it comes to dealing with DV cases.

A study by Sommerfeldt (2011) shows that activist groups utilize digital media to generate monetary donations for their work. This agrees with the responses derived from some of the respondents who are members of PDM. They made it clear that the group make use of social media to solicit funds for their works. Activists over the years have identified the role SM plays in raising funds and this has pushed individuals and groups to leverage on this. The emergence of funding website like GoFundMe.com has made this a lot easier for activists. GoFundMe is a donation-based crowdfunding platform that permits individuals and/or groups to raise money for events ranging from life events such as celebrations and graduations to challenging circumstances like illnesses and emergencies (Akhlaghpour & Vaast, 2017). This is generally referred to as e-funding. According to George and Leidner (2019), e-funding comprises an extensive range of revenue-generating options, which may start with just a button created for donations on websites that provide direct monetary assistance.  The result of this is often overwhelming. Data gathered shows

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that a significant number of the respondents can make good use of these options provided by SM. Some can use Facebook to raise the funds directly or they share the links to the websites from which donors can contribute to the cause they are working on. Respondents are often able to list what the funds raised through this medium has been used for and are constantly acknowledging its value in the activism against DV. According to Mundt, Ross and Burnett (2018), some groups have now formalized fundraising platforms on their profiles through the introduction of "donate now" buttons and links to other donation sites. Below is the response from R6 on how social media is used for fundraising. Also, in a response by a respondent (R3), she explained how they made use of the funds they raised through SM.

"Social media is a great way to bring people to donate money towards the issue of DV. Also, this is how you know a lot of people online are getting involved in what we do as activists. When there is a particular issue that we want to do something further about, this is how we can raise money, this is how we can reach out, this is how we can build and ensure that what we do online translate offline"

"We discuss the topic via a multiplicity of posts that address the issue and break it down from the various angles. We have also used our platform to raise funds towards supporting the reopening of the Ark Foundation's Ark Shelter".

Another method of soliciting funds from users of Facebook is through the use of mobile money. This is when a particular phone number is given out to people who are willing to send their contributions. Monies gathered in this manner are then used for the particular cause identified. In a post by a respondent (R1), she reached out to users

of Facebook to donate to the support of a particular victim of DV. This is seen in the extract below.



I am back again to ask for your help. This woman's situation has gotten worse and she is asking for your help via donations so that she can get her family to safety. No donation is too small.

Please share. ❤️

A mother of 4 facing increased abuse and violence on herself by her partner during this period is asking for the public's help in getting herself and her children to safety.

Kindly donate to momo # 0593790380. Account name is Majida Amadu.

Thank you!

Update: We have reached our target of 2400 cedis. We received 29 donations today. All these donations when added to the donations from the previous drive helped us reach our target. Thank you all for donating. 💜💜💜

**Fig 9: Activist mobilising funds on Facebook**

## 4.3.0: RQ3: WHAT OFFLINE METHODS AND STRATEGIES ARE USED BY THE SOCIAL ACTIVISTS IN THE FIGHTS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Activities online alone have been identified as not sufficient to get the needed outcome in any activism and the case in the fight against DV is no exemption. While works are going on online in mobilising people and resources, there is always the need to move a step further to make sure that the activities online manifest on the ground. Aside from getting the communication on DV out there, the SM space offers anyone the opportunity to make their case and call for action in a form of change especially for those who were otherwise silent on the issue. According to Rees (2020), online activism often enjoys magnificent success only when it is used as a complementary tool to offline action or is used as the introductory methods to

encourage people to engage in offline action, also, an important feature of online activism is that it is seen as a non-violent form of protest. Essentially, the online and offline methods are to be used hand in hand.

### 4.3.1 Collaborations and Advocacy

The role SM plays in bringing issues of DV to public discussion is often not enough; there is the need to make sure that online activities translate to events offline. Some of the most effective movements utilised social media and online actions to amass support and combine it with "leg work" on the ground, not just talking the talk, but also walking the walk (Rees, 2020). According to Mourtada and Salem (2011), while "virtual" participation might be the first step towards women's empowerment, it may not necessarily translate into real-life participation in mainstream political, civic and public arenas (Mourtada & Salem, 2011). There is, therefore, the need to make extra efforts to achieve more. Based on the data gathered from this study, it was evident that the works of the feminists and activists do not end on Facebook. They do a lot more outside the SM space. Most of the respondents mentioned that they meet either as a member of a group, an affiliate or a member of a feminist network. Through these meetings, they discuss pressing issues regarding the way women are enduring DV, strategies needed to help victims and generally to share ideas on the way forward to empower oppressed victims of DV. Also, due to the nature of the work of some of the respondents, they use their respective platforms to give the issues of DV better attention. According to two of the respondents who are journalist and talk show hostesses, through their online activities, they are being invited to other traditional media like the radio and television alongside other experts to discuss issues of DV. According to R5,

> Through recognition of our online relevance, we've been able to convene meetings and host radio shows as well as engage traditional media and serve on panels aimed at addressing these and other issues of concern to women

Another respondent (R7), who has a talk show with a huge following mentioned how her platform has been helpful for a lot of activists and feminists in empowering women on the issues of DV and other related matters.

> I give them a platform on my program "The Standpoint" to come and share whatever it is they do and some of the challenges they are facing in terms of groups that they need to reach out to

Aside from the kind of supports and collaborations the activists have with the media, they also work with other organisations and government institutions in assisting the victims of DV. It was established that for the works of these activists and feminist to be more effective, they cannot work as an island hence the need for collaboration with other organisations. From what was gathered, there are a lot of organisations that are interested in issues of DV and as such they come in to assist the activists in achieving their goals. The role of these organisations is considered to be very significant in the fight against DV. The interview with one of the respondents (R5) showed the kind of success her network was able to achieve through collaborations with other organisations. According to her;

> We have joined forces with groups like the Coalition Against Sexual Abuse (CASA) in furthering various campaigns notable being the campaign to obtain justice for a victim who was raped and had her attacker exonerated supposedly by the gods in their town. We joined CASA in petitioning the Attorney General to step in the case to ensure justice is delivered while also raising funds to support the survivor and her family.

There is a tall list of organisations and groups that the respondents have been collaborating with on several causes related to DV. Among those stated are PepperDem Ministries (PDM), FEMNET, The Domestic Violence Coalition of Ghana, International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Alliance for Women in Media, Africa (AWMA), African Women Communication and Development Network

(AWCDN), Coalition Against Sexual Abuse, The African Women Development Funds, Ark Foundation, DOVVSU". All these groups and organisations also have social media presence hence monitor the works of these activists. According to data gathered, respondents made it known that some of these organisations reach out to them when there is the need to carry out a campaign. This according to them is done because of the huge followership the various activists have on SM. In making sure that the issues of DV are eradicated, the activists, in turn, work with these organisations too. In an interview with R4, she shared how she can work with some other organisations together with her group.

> We do work with DOVSSU because we know that in as much as creating the awareness is important, we also know that we have to ensure that this translates to actions on the ground as well so we work with DOVSSU, Ark Foundation. So PDM works with Ark Foundation and DOVSSU to help victims. We also have a support base of lawyers that we touch base with especially when the rape victims need legal assistance, and they need it pronto. So, for the past three years, PDM has been able to build quite a network of resources and logistics that we can lean on when we need to help someone.

In working with other organisations, the respondents also suggested that there is a need to equip them with the needed skills for them to be more effective in their work. From what was gathered, some people are passionate about DV but are not having the needed training. R5 identified that activists on social media equally contribute to eradicating sexual and gender-based violence but might not have the technical know-how. She contributed her opinion on the way around this.

> Agencies and organizations that have the resources, technical resources, technical know-how on the subject can identify very active activists and train them if they think they are not knowledgeable enough. I mean they can have programs training workshops and all of that to train activist who they have identified as people who are doing well in advocating, fighting for the cause.

The role of religious and community leaders was made clear in the data gathered for this study. Respondents were of the view that DV can be eradicated when opinion leaders and religious leaders are all involved in the activism process. According to

them, even though they do a lot of activities online, there is also the need to include the respected members of the society in the view that whenever they talk and offer advice, members of the community listen. R1 emphasised the role of Iman in a Muslim community.

> imagine if an Imam comes talking about domestic violence and its dangers and how it is not good, you can imagine the change of mindset people are going to have other than just me walking up to a Zongo community and just talking about domestic violence.

Adding to this, almost all the respondents shared the view that more people are needed to be involved in the fight against DV. Their responses suggest that there is strength in numbers. They made it known that once influential people in the community are involved, it helps in getting the message to everyone. According to R1,

> More people who are in power, people who are at the top who can effect changes should be involved in this fight because if it is just me who is a nobody, we will just talk and talk and it doesn't go up but once we get people at the top, people who make decision involved in these activities, even when it is discussed, they pick it up to higher authority, I think it will help.

Also, once they can identify individuals within the society who are helpful, they collaborate with them. From the works of Mundt, Ross and Burnett (2018), they discovered that groups receive grants, venue space, ride-sharing, or additional services, all enabled via social media pages and communication tools within. Doan and Toledano (2018) similarly explain the potential for mobilising funding through digital crowdfunding campaigns. A respondent (R4), shared her experiences with how the group she belongs to was able to raise funds through SM.

> Sometimes, we work with individuals that are willing to finance us in this situation. We have a lot of victims who cannot even finance the legal case, we work with everyone.

Through recognition of the online relevance of most of the respondents, they have been able to convene meetings and host radio shows as well as engage traditional media and serve on panels aimed at addressing DV and other issues of concern to women. R1, R3, R5 and R7 all mentioned several programmes they have been guests on. These are programmes that discuss general issues of women empowerment of which DV has always been part of the discussion. Also, D7 mentioned how she uses her platform to assist other feminist and activists with their work. She mentioned that her talk show has allowed several people to come and talk about what they do, raise awareness and share some of the challenges they face. This according to her is beyond the activities that are done online. Meeting with other activists through her talk show creates room for more networks to be built.

### 4.3.3 Meetings

As contended by Valenzuela (2013), social movements need to make a connection between online and offline environments to realize the desired social change. One of the major ways in which this connection is made is through intermittent meetings held by the activists. These meetings come in various ways and their implication is enormous. It can be meeting among activists, meetings with victims or those in need of assistance, meetings with the general public or with other agencies and organisations that they collaborate with. For individual activists who work with other groups or are members of a group, there are instances that they need to meet in person to deliberate on issues concerning their activism. However, due to the global pandemic; Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), most often, these meetings are done on the same SM space as Facebook. From data gathered from some of the

activists (R4) who are members of PeeperDem Ministries, they made it clear that their

meetings are no more regular due to the global pandemic of COVID-19.

> At least before COVID-19, we have various meetings offline as well. At PDM we meet periodically, every once in a while, to touch base and see if we are doing okay. Activism is not easy work so we need to meet every once in a while, to make sure we are doing okay.

In a different interview, one of the respondents (R7) made it clear that whatever is

done online does not end there. According to her, there is a need to meet offline and

take strategic steps in achieving their goals.

> I'm not one of those who believe that SM groups work just online you know you will have to transfer from SM to the physical meetings and all those things.

In trying to understand the importance of meeting offline, a respondent made it known

that the activists meet normally to have discussions on a lot of issues. When they

meet, pressing issues with the group offline and online are discussed. Also, from the

respondents, some lingering issues that refuse to die, like rape culture and how it can

be best discussed and as well as building alliances with feminists across the continent

form the major benefits of the offline meetings.  adding to what is achieved through

the offline meetings, a respondent (R4), shared this:

> There is a lot of talking and strategizing as well as what we can also do to make an impact offline and how we can also especially meet with younger women in their 20s and get them educated on issues of DV.

Another form of meeting done offline comes in ways of assistance offered by the

various organisations that collaborate with the activists and feminists. Among the

organisations mentioned by the respondents are DOVSSU, FIDA, Ark Foundation,

AWCDN and the rest. With DOVSSU, the study shows that cases of abuse are

eventually reported to this police division for the needed steps to be taken. Also, the

Ark foundation works with women and children. Women in an abusive environment

are helped with shelter and all that they need while they work on the legal aspects as well. In sorting out the legal aspect, that is when FIDA comes in as it has been established in this study that it is not all the victims who can afford the services of lawyers. Narrating the case of a victim that was assisted through her network of activists, a respondent (R4) showed how meetings with organisations offline can be useful.

> Recently there was one lady whose husband used to abuse her and the husband ended up divorcing her. For her, I went with her to FIDA office in Kumasi and we got the case sorted out with the lawyers so now she is free from the marriage and the abuse that she was going through the right way according to the legal system.

## CHAPTER FIVE
## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**5.0 Introduction**

This study seeks to explore how social media activisms and "offline" campaigns can be used in the fight against domestic violence in Ghana. The following objectives of the study like to explore how social activists in Ghana, use social media to bring awareness about domestic violence, to explore how activists engage the audience on social media on issues of domestic violence and to investigate the offline methods and strategies used by the social activists in the fight against domestic violence in Ghana, various findings were made. These findings have been discussed in the previous chapter. This concluding chapter, however, offers summaries of the prominent matters that stand out of the study. Also, this chapter draws suitable conclusions and makes recommendations for the most appropriate ways to maximise the impact of SM on DV. Finally, this section suggests areas for future research.
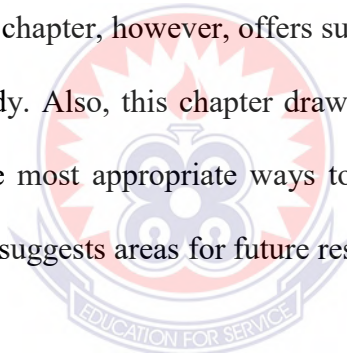
**5.1 Summary**

This study sought out to find the usefulness of SM in bringing to light the atrocities faced by victims of DV and how to explore how activists make use of the space provided by social media to get to victims or educate the public. To achieve this, the study made use of a qualitative approach and cyber ethnographic design, data was gathered using two major methods. The use of cyber ethnography allowed the study to gather posts from activists and feminists who are campaigning against DV and other gender-related issues. Also, data was gathered through interviewing seven selected DV activists who were either purposively sampled or derived through referrals. In analysing the findings of the study, the Resource Mobilisation Theory, the Social

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Capital theory and the Social Networking Theory were used as the main theoretical foundation to put the study in context.

## 5.2 Main Findings

The first research question that was used as a foundation for the collection of data for this study is to know how social activists in Ghana use SM to bring about awareness about DV. The interviews and data gathered through the cyber ethnography were themed according to the most recurring issues in the data. Based on this, feminists' understanding of DV, Feminists on SM, sensitisation on DV, the importance of SM post in addressing DV, building network were the main themes identified.

From the data gathered, it was clear that the respondents have a varied view of what DV is and this view varies from one society and culture to the other. Respondents mainly mentioned physical abuse as the main type of DV that most people can identify. To most victims, the only thing that counts as DV is when they are physically abused by their partners. This to most of them is only situations that include throwing things, kicking, slapping hitting, pushing, shoving, grabbing, choking, strangling and inflicting head injuries, to name but a few. The study brought to light different types of DV that were hitherto not given enough consideration. These types of DV are psychological, emotional, financial, sexual and spiritual abuse. From what was gathered, psychological abuse is closely related to emotional abuse. It is generally seen as the sort of abuse that typically comprises the use of ridicule, invectives, allegations, infidelity and snubbing of one's partner, all of which leads to the breakdown of the victim's self-esteem and self-worth. Respondents mentioned that this type of abuse can be more damaging than physical abuse as the implication last longer. Aside from the other types of abuses listed above, the most interesting one

discovered in this study is spiritual abuse. This is when a particular partner uses aspects of religious and spirituality to threaten the other partner, in the process, suppressing the victims or making her or him do things contrary to their principles and beliefs.

The study identified feminists on SM as one of the themes. This shows a wide array of people who are on social media and are championing the cause of women. To most of these people, the Ghanaian community is a patriarchal one hence the need to make sure the views, opinions and voices of the other gender well-known. There are different feminists on Facebook who are constantly bringing to light stories of victims of DV. In the process, they build networks. Data gathered revealed that these activists consider themselves feminists first and foremost and for them to achieve significant impact, they had to work together in a virtual network formed online. This is one of the major principles of the social capital theory that emphasizes the importance of building networks. The networks created among the feminists and activists only helps them to bring more people on board in the creation of awareness on DV. One very significant role of SM as identified by this study is the creation of awareness on DV. The study showed that every single post on social media on DV goes a long way to let people know what DV is and in other instances, leads to the liberation of victims out of their woes. SM was identified as an avenue for victims to vent, this offers them the opportunity to tell the whole world what they are going through. Also, through the activities of the activists, other organisations get in touch with them to further assist in awareness creation on issues related to the empowerment of women in society.

The second research question that guided this study is how do activists engage the audience on social media on issues of domestic violence? In exploring this research question and analysing the data gathered through the interviews and cyber

ethnography, the following themes were determined; Facebook posts, activists' network, identifying a cause, demystifying DV. These various themes were discussed in the previous chapter. What came clear with regards to Facebook posts is the fact that even though the activists and feminists are frequently posting on Facebook, it is not the majority of their posts that are related to DV. The Facebook posts were seen to be mainly in response to what is happening within the community or what is being discussed on different media outlets. Even though Facebook posts were seen in various forms, (texts, images plus texts, images only, links and videos), the majority of the posts were in texts, followed by images and texts. These were mainly used to share views on ongoing discussions on DV or just to create awareness and get people talking about it. Also, there are cases where the victims only use the Facebook space to vent out their anger on what they are experiencing in their various homes.

Another issue identified in this research question was related to the various activist networks that are made on social media. Facebook has offered the opportunity for diverse groups and organisations to meet and deliberate on pressing issues like the perpetual cases of DV. Among many others, the network of groups and organisations like PDM, FIDA, AWMA, FEMNET, Tell It Moms, DOVVSU has been helpful in either assisting a particular activist or victim get results. It came clear in the study that regardless of the number of organisations and or individual activists ready to work, there is always the need to identify a particular cause to work on. From the data gathered, it was revealed that the activists tend to get a lot of direct messages of victims, narrating what they are going through intending to get assistance. It is not the task of the activist to identify a particular cause to work on. The narrative of a victim of DV who needs assistance in arresting the partner may be identified and taken up or it can be the case of individuals who do not know what constitutes DV. Another

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theme identified was demystifying DV. As the study revealed, it is not every victim of DV that knows what they are going through that can be categorised as such. To some of the respondents interviewed, some of the victims they work with do not know they are suffering from DV until they enlighten them. Some cultures and religion also do not talk about DV. They see it to be normal hence trivialising it. Posts from Facebook showed various instances where people go on Facebook to put out texts or images that show that they do not understand what DV is or they think it should be considered normal.

The Ghanaian cultural context can also be blamed for this as the data gathered suggests that many Ghanaian women in intimate relationships see only physical abuse as the only form of DV that exists. Even though SM has been useful in awareness creation about DV, it has also offered a platform for people to enable DV. The study shows that with the least provocation, people can go on Facebook and put out demeaning texts, images and videos about their intimate partners. Also, when there are cases of DV being discussed on social media, some users rather put out posts to show that it is not worthy of discussion. The last theme identified here was language barriers. Language is important in getting out the messages on DV to everyone in the social media space. The challenge, however, as identified in this study is that a significant number of people who experiences DV may not be able to read and write hence may not be able to benefit from activism on SM. Also, the interpretation of the messages and posts may differ from one person to the other.

Funding for activism was one interesting area that emerged in this study. This is when the activists can use SM space to raise money and other resources needed to boost the particular cause they are working on. Most of the respondents mentioned how SM has been helpful in this direction. Once there is the need to raise funds and or resources,

they go online and start appealing to the users of Facebook. Through the posts which are shared repeatedly, interested people reach out and donate funds for the individual activist, network of activists or an organisation. The use of GoFundMe.org has also made appealing for funds a lot easier online. Another method of soliciting funds is through the use of Mobile Money. In this case, a particular phone number is given out for money to be sent into.

In analysing the third research question which is "what offline methods and strategies are used by the social activists in the fights against domestic violence?", the following themes were identified; collaborations and advocacy and meetings. The study discovered that virtual activism on SM is not the only way to go in achieving impactful results. From data, most of the online activities are further continued offline through collaborations with organisations, authorities and individuals who are interested in issues of DV. The activities of the feminists and activists online have also allowed them to serve as panellists on several other traditional media. This has given them the chance to further put into action what they do on Facebook. Due to the followings, these activists have online, they can work with organisations like the Ark Foundation, IDA, AWMA, FEMNET, DOVVSU who sometimes make the activists lead campaigns for them.

Finally, the study discovered that activists often conduct meetings to share ideas on how to deal with issues of DV. Meetings are organised frequently either to train or to share ideas but due to the COVID-19, most of the meeting which was otherwise done face-to-face are now done online; making use of various online meeting applications.

**5.3 Conclusion**

The objectives of the study were to explore how activists fight domestic violence with the use of social media and other offline means. The study further explored social activists in Ghana, who use social media to bring awareness about domestic violence, how they engage the audience on social media and the offline methods they use in the fight against DV. Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

The study concludes that issues of DV are pervasive in our Ghanaian community, however, most of the victims do not identify what they are experiencing as DV. The study shows that aside from physical abuse, other types of DV as identified in this study are not seen by victims as DV. Activists on social media have, however, been able to increase the level of awareness of the users of SM through their posts. Those who previously did not identify emotional, psychological, sexual abuse as a form of DV are gradually identifying them as such hence seeking assistance when necessary.

The study also concludes that there are several activists on Facebook and they have identified the usefulness of Facebook in creating awareness about DV. Different activists and feminists across the globe can connect on Facebook and share ideas on how to deal with the issues of DV. Also, based on posts by one or two activists, they can bring other users of SM together to fight for the same or similar course. This is one of the principles of Social Network Theory which explores the relationships among individuals, groups, organizations, or even entire societies (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). SM offers a sort of network for various activists to meet and work together regardless of the location they find themselves. Described as the open system

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networks, these are networks in which the boundaries are not essentially clear (Kadushin, 2004).

The works of the activists have brought them into contact with a lot of victims of DV online. With this connection being established, the victims tend to develop some level of trust for them and therefore share their challenges with the activists with the hope of getting the sort of assistance that they need. Social Capital Theory suggests the importance of creating a network that is mostly built on trust and reciprocity. The bases of the victims reaching out to these individuals, groups and organisations is the fact that they believe they can be of help to them.

## 5.4 Suggestions for further studies

Future researchers could explore how outsider reactions affect victims' well-being, sense of self, and decisions to seek help, disclose, or leave the relationship. Does online blame have a similar impact on victims as face-to-face blame? A study can, therefore, be conducted to investigate the effects of social media users' comments on the victims of DV.

Similarly, it possible that online stories and accusations around DV increase information or help-seeking from support services. The number of posts by users of SM can in one way or the other offer some amount of education to victims of DV hence a study can be conducted in this direction. A study of that nature will explore the role of SM posts on DV in educating and informing users on the causes, effects and solution to the menace of DV

A future study could also explore the continuing trend and general impact of SM discourse on those who participate and witness it. It would be useful to understand the

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motivations of online negativity as well as the characteristics of those who tend to be most aggressive Also, what are the implications of online argument on specific topics of DV? Do they further polarize and expand social divides? Are ethically laden topics more probable to incite certainty and blame than less controversial issues? What is the impact of online debating on participants' mental health and relationships? An exploratory study with the use of document analysis and or cyber-ethnography can be employed to investigate the above-related fields.

Funding for activism is another area of research interest. This study revealed that activists tend to use Facebook to solicit funding from the general public and users of SM sites. Aside from that, other methods are used to gather the needed resources to assist a victim or to embark on a campaign. A study can therefore be done into exploring the success of online means of soliciting funds and resources for the activities of activists.
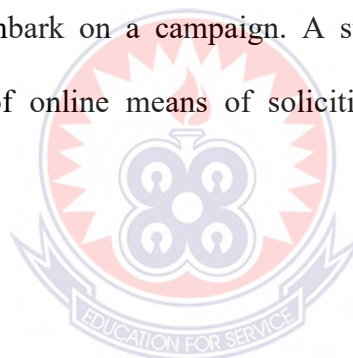
## 5.6 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the research questions and objectives findings, discussions and conclusions of the research in the area

Activists using Facebook as a mobilising tool should put more efforts into their activities so that they can get the attention of influential people within the society. The study showed that through the activities of a few of the activists online, organisations reach out to them for their programmes and they also serve as panellists on other traditional media. With more efforts into making themselves credible online, a lot of other organisations can reach out and, in the process, the issues of DV will reach out to a lot more people who are not making use of SM for one reason or the other.

As noted by Banerjee and Kakade (2015), initially, several social networking websites had the sole intention to connect people. But, as it progressed, it became a platform to communicate and share information, opinion, thoughts, values, expressions (Banerjee & Kakade, 2015). Activists and feminist who are passionate about matters of DV should use the channel to further educate and inform the users of social media on what DV is, what the causes are, what the effects are and also for them to know what to do if they are ever victims of DV irrespective of the form that it may present itself.

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**APPENDIX I:**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

I am a graduate student at the University of Education, Winneba. As part of the requirement of my Mphil Degree in Communication and Media Studies, I am conducting a study on the topic "Social media activism and offline campaigns in the fight against domestic violence in Ghana". I respectfully require your responses to the following questions in aid of data for the progress of my study.

Every information derived from you shall be treated confidentially.

Thank you.

Kindly give me a descriptive response to the following questions.

1. What is your understanding of domestic violence?

2. Have you experienced any form of domestic violence before or do you know someone who has? Kindly share the experience

3. What are the forms of domestic violence that you know?

4. Are you a member of any domestic violence or women empowerment activist group?

5. Which social media activist group(s) are you a member of?

6. How long have you been a member of these groups, the ones you are most active in?

7. How does the group use social media to bring awareness about domestic violence?

8. What is the nature of posts related to domestic violence posted?

9. Do you think through these posts, can bring awareness to other people reading it about what domestic violence is?

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10. How do online activities translate to offline events and campaigns that you do?

11. Do you believe that your page or Facebook has allowed more people to tell their stories now than before?

12. Aside from online activities, do you meet physically offline?

13. Does the group work with other authorities like DOVVSU in their activism and how is this done?

14. How often does the group meet and what are the kind of offline activities they do?

15. What do you think is the way forward to make this social media activism in Ghana assist in making sure that we eradicate domestic violence from our communities?

16. Finally, in what other means do you think social media can be used aside from bringing people together to talk about their issues, what other means do you think social media or your outfit can do to help with this issue.
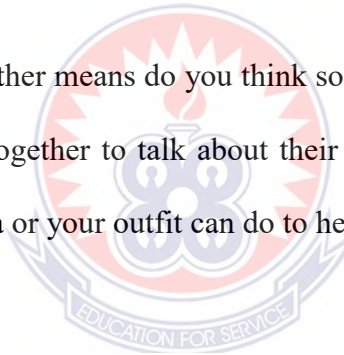
**APPENDIX II**

**CYBER ETHNOGRAPHY LOG SHEET**

Name of respondents…………………………………………………………..

| Nature of posts | |
|---|---|
| **Text** | |
| **Images and text** | |
| **Images only** | |
| **Videos** | |
| **Links** | |
| **Total** | |

| Nature of posts | R1 | R2 | R3 | R4 | R5 | R6 | R7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Text** | | | | | | | |
| **Images and text** | | | | | | | |
| **Images only** | | | | | | | |
| **Videos** | | | | | | | |
| **Links** | | | | | | | |
| **Total** | | | | | | | |