

# Breaking The Silence: The Role of Social Media in Supporting Survivors Gender Based Violence in Nigeria

Reuben Indiri

Department of Mass Communication

Faculty of Communication And Media Studies

Taraba State University, Jalingo

correspondent author: [reubenindir@gmail.com](mailto:reubenindir@gmail.com): 08107463786

## Abstract

This study explored the role of social media in supporting survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria, focusing on how digital platforms are used for disclosure, awareness, and solidarity. The research adopted a qualitative design using in-depth interviews with three GBV survivors and two counsellors actively involved in survivor support and advocacy. Findings revealed that social media platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, and Instagram have provided survivors with safe spaces to share their experiences, access emotional and informational support, and connect with others facing similar challenges. However, participants also identified challenges such as online harassment, fear of exposure, stigma, and limited privacy protection as major concerns. Counsellors emphasised that while social media has amplified advocacy and public discourse around GBV, there is still a need for stronger digital safety measures, ethical content moderation, and survivor-centred online interventions. The study concludes that social media plays a dual role as both an empowering and risky space for survivors. It recommends the development of safer online environments, digital literacy training, and collaboration between social media companies, government agencies, and NGOs to enhance protection and support systems for survivors in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** *Gender-Based Violence, Social Media, Survivors, Digital Activism, Nigeria*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) has long been a major human rights concern across the world, with devastating effects on the physical, emotional, and social wellbeing of survivors. In Nigeria, cases of GBV remain widespread, cutting across age, class, and cultural backgrounds, despite ongoing awareness campaigns and policy interventions (Eze et al., 2021; Ajayi & Akinola, 2023). Survivors often face challenges such as stigma, victim-blaming, and inadequate support systems, which make speaking out and seeking justice difficult. In recent years, social media has emerged as a powerful platform where survivors can share their experiences, gain solidarity, and access information on support services (Adeyemi & Olagunju, 2022; Mordi, 2024).

Scholars have argued that platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram provide survivors with alternative spaces for expression, particularly where traditional systems of justice and community support fall short (Oduguwa & Chukwuma, 2021; Uche & Ogbonna, 2023). Through hashtags, online campaigns, and survivor-led movements, social media has helped break the silence around GBV by creating visibility and encouraging collective action. For instance, global and local campaigns like #MeToo and #ArewaMeToo gained traction in Nigeria, drawing attention to hidden cases and forcing conversations in both online and offline spaces (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2022). However, while these platforms offer hope, they are not without risks, as survivors may still face cyberbullying, exposure, or further stigma (Nwachukwu & Adebayo, 2024).

The researcher sees this topic as very important because social media has become an everyday tool for communication, activism, and community-building in Nigeria. Survivors of GBV who may have once remained silent are now finding courage through digital spaces where their stories are validated and amplified. As a writer on this subject, I believe that understanding how social media contributes to supporting survivors is crucial, not just for academic purposes, but also for shaping practical strategies that strengthen survivor-centred interventions.

The relevance of this study lies in its focus on Nigeria, where cultural norms and weak institutional responses often discourage survivors from seeking help. By examining the role of social media, the research highlights both its potential and its challenges in addressing GBV. Furthermore, it sheds light on how digital platforms can complement legal, medical, and psychological interventions to provide a more holistic support system for survivors (Okoro & Anya, 2023; Mordi, 2024). This work therefore contributes to ongoing debates on gender rights, digital activism, and social justice, while emphasising the importance of safe and inclusive online spaces for survivors in Nigeria.

### 1.2 Objectives of the study

- i. To examine how survivors of gender-based violence in Nigeria use social media platforms to share their experiences and seek support.
- ii. To assess the role of social media in raising awareness and mobilising public discourse around gender-based violence in Nigeria.
- iii. To identify the challenges and limitations survivors face when using social media as a

support mechanism against gender-based violence.

### 1.3 Theoretical Framework

This research adopts Queer Theory as its guiding framework. The theory emerged in the early 1990s through the works of scholars such as Judith Butler (1990) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990), who argued against rigid and socially constructed categories of gender and sexuality. Queer Theory challenges the dominance of heterosexual and patriarchal norms by showing how such frameworks exclude or silence individuals who do not conform to accepted gender roles or sexual identities (Butler, 1990; Sedgwick, 1990). In essence, it calls for questioning the cultural and institutional systems that produce inequality, stigma, and violence.

The theory is very relevant to this study because gender-based violence in Nigeria often thrives on silence, discrimination, and strict societal expectations of gender roles. Survivors, especially women and those from sexual minority groups, are frequently silenced due to stigma, fear of shame, or cultural taboos (Odeyemi & Olayinka, 2022). Social media offers an alternative platform where survivors can challenge these silences, share their stories, and build solidarity with others. By applying Queer Theory, this study frames social media not only as a communication tool but also as a space where dominant narratives about gender and violence are resisted and redefined. This perspective helps explain why survivors increasingly turn to digital platforms to reclaim their voices and seek justice (Nwachukwu & Adebayo, 2024).

However, Queer Theory has been criticised for being highly theoretical and less practical when addressing real-life issues. Some scholars argue that it is often abstract, focusing on

deconstructing identities rather than offering clear strategies for change (Ogbu & Eze, 2023). Others suggest that its emphasis on sexuality sometimes overshadows broader social, economic, and political dimensions of gender-based violence (Okoro & Anya, 2023). Despite these limitations, the theory remains valuable for this research because it pushes for a deeper understanding of how cultural norms reinforce silence and how survivors can resist these pressures through social media.

## 2. REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Silva et al. (2023) conducted a study titled “*Gender-Based Violence Narratives in Internet-Based Conversations in Nigeria*” using computational social-listening methods to analyse public online conversations between 2017 and 2022. The objective was to examine how discussions around GBV, including consent and slut-shaming, emerged and evolved on digital platforms. Their findings showed that social media has become an arena where both harmful norms and survivor solidarity are expressed, highlighting its double-edged role. However, the methodology focused on large-scale text mining rather than the lived experiences of survivors, which left out important details about how individuals navigate online disclosure for support. The gap here is the lack of survivor-centred insights on how and why people use social media for help. This present research fills that gap by focusing on how survivors share experiences and access support through online platforms, directly addressing the first objective of this study.

Okafor et al. (2023) explored knowledge and attitudes towards media campaigns on gender-based violence in South-East Nigeria using a cross-sectional survey design. Their objective was to assess awareness, belief, and receptivity to

anti-GBV campaigns. The findings indicated that while awareness of media campaigns was relatively high, the campaigns did not always translate into behavioural change or increased help-seeking among survivors. Although valuable, the study was quantitative and population-wide, meaning it did not go deeper into how survivors themselves use social media to find solidarity or practical support. The missing link is how online campaigns influence survivors directly, not just the general population. My research addresses this by investigating how social media mobilises public discourse and how survivors themselves respond to such awareness initiatives, thus contributing to the second and third objectives.

In another study, Onianwa (2021) analysed sexual and gender-based violence during the COVID-19 lockdown in Nigeria through a mixed methods approach that combined documentary reviews with key informant interviews. The objective was to capture how the pandemic affected GBV and the role of civil society in response. Findings revealed that social media became a crucial tool for reporting abuse and mobilising activism during the lockdown. Yet, many survivors could not turn this visibility into actual support because of barriers like lack of access to resources and weak institutional responses. The gap in this study is that it emphasised the perspectives of policymakers and activists, leaving out survivors' voices on how social media disclosure shaped their experiences. The present research bridges this gap by centring survivors' stories, thereby addressing the first and third objectives, which focus on disclosure practices and the challenges faced when seeking support.

Okonofua (2024) examined the role of mobile and digital technology in responding to gender-based violence in Nigeria, using case studies and

interviews with service providers. The objective was to evaluate how digital tools can improve survivor support services. The findings showed that helplines and online platforms offered new possibilities for information sharing and assistance, but barriers such as poor digital literacy, privacy risks, and unequal access limited effectiveness. Because the study leaned towards the perspective of service providers, it overlooked survivors' own accounts of how social media awareness and online activism impact their decisions to seek help. The gap, therefore, is a survivor-focused analysis of the relationship between digital awareness and actual help-seeking. This research addresses that gap by studying how survivors in Nigeria use social media not only for awareness but also for accessing practical and emotional support, which aligns with the second objective.

Vahedi et al. (2024) carried out a qualitative study using interviews with GBV service providers and stakeholders to explore the digitalisation of GBV services across different contexts. The objective was to understand how providers adapted to online tools and the risks that emerged in digital support delivery. The findings highlighted the usefulness of online channels in expanding access but also pointed out significant safety concerns and power imbalances. While insightful about provider perspectives, the study did not centre on survivors' own experiences of disclosure and peer support online, especially within the Nigerian context. The gap lies in the absence of survivor-centred narratives about using digital spaces to manage GBV challenges. This research fills that gap by directly documenting survivors' experiences with online support systems and the risks they face, thereby addressing both the first and third objectives of the study.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative research design that relies solely on in-depth interviews to explore how survivors of gender-based violence in Nigeria use social media to share their experiences, seek support, and contribute to raising public awareness, as well as the challenges they encounter in doing so. In-depth interviews are considered appropriate because they allow respondents to provide detailed, personal narratives in their own words, offering rich insights into sensitive issues that cannot easily be captured through quantitative methods. The researcher used interview guide in order to tailor in the interview coherently. The population of this study consists of survivors of gender-based violence in Nigeria who actively use social media, alongside key stakeholders such as counsellors, NGO workers, and activists who engage in advocacy and support for survivors. Nigeria's total population is projected at 237,527,782 in 2025, according to United Nations estimates reported by Worldometer (Leadership, 2025), which provides a broader national context for situating the study, even though the focus will be on survivors and stakeholders who meet the inclusion criteria within this larger population.

### **3.1 Data Presentation of In-Depth Interview Responses**

This section presents the voices and experiences of the five respondents who participated in the in-depth interviews conducted for this study. Three of them were survivors of gender-based violence, while the remaining two were counsellors actively involved in supporting GBV victims both online and offline. The purpose of the interviews was to gain insight into how survivors use social media to share their experiences, the kind of support they receive, the challenges they encounter, and the ways in which counsellors view the role of digital platforms in supporting

victims. The narratives below capture their personal experiences and reflections in their own voices, providing a deeper understanding of the lived realities behind gender-based violence and online advocacy in Nigeria.

#### **1.7.1 Responses from Survivors**

Question 1: Can you describe how you have used social media platforms to share your experiences as a survivor of gender-based violence and what motivated you to do so?

##### **Survivor 1 (28 years old)**

I started using Twitter to talk about my experience with sexual abuse in 2022 after struggling for years with silence. At first, I was scared, but I found courage when I read stories from other women using hashtags like #ArewaMeToo and #SayNoToGBV. I realised that if others could speak out, then maybe my story could also help someone. I shared a detailed thread about how my ex-boyfriend assaulted me and how I faced blame from friends and family. I didn't post it for pity but for healing I wanted to reclaim my voice. The reaction surprised me; many people sent messages of support, some even sharing similar experiences privately. It made me see that social media is not just for entertainment but also a space for awareness and solidarity. It gave me strength and helped me realise I was not alone.

##### **Survivor 2 (32 years old)**

For years, I kept everything bottled up because I was terrified of being judged. Anytime I tried to speak, I felt shut down, especially by family members who constantly told me to "forget what happened" and pretend nothing was wrong. It was in 2023, after I joined a Facebook group for women who had survived different forms of

abuse, that I finally began to open up. At first, I only shared small pieces of my story because I was still afraid. But the more I spoke, the lighter I felt.

Social media gave me a kind of freedom I never experienced offline. Nobody could interrupt me, dismiss me, or make me feel ashamed. I began using Instagram reels to talk about the trauma, the endless nights without sleep, and the long struggle to rebuild myself. What truly kept me going was the thought that my story might help someone else feel less lonely. When women started commenting and messaging me, saying my posts gave them courage and hope, it made me realise that speaking out wasn't just for me, it was for others too.

### **Survivor 3 (24 years old)**

I started sharing my story on TikTok and Twitter in 2024 after a local NGO launched an online GBV awareness campaign. The campaign encouraged survivors to speak out, so I created short videos where I talked about my experience with intimate partner violence. At first, I was scared of being judged or attacked online, especially because people can be very harsh on social media. But honestly, the amount of support I received surprised me. Many people sent kind messages, counselling links, and prayers, and that made the healing process less lonely.

What motivated me most was the desire to show that life doesn't end after abuse — survivors can still rise, rebuild, and find their strength again. Over time, I even started volunteering with an NGO focused on GBV awareness. For me, social media became more than a place to post; it became a space where I found healing and also a platform to support others going through similar experiences.

### **Question 3: What kind of support have you received through social media after sharing your experience?**

#### **Survivor 1**

The emotional support I received online meant more to me than I can explain. After I shared my story, hundreds of strangers reached out with encouraging comments and private messages. Many told me they had gone through similar experiences, and hearing that made me realise I wasn't alone. Some people shared helpful links to organisations that support survivors, and a few therapists even offered free virtual counselling, which I never expected.

I also joined an online women's community where we discuss healing, mental health, and our legal rights. It became a safe space for me, especially on nights when everything felt overwhelming. Even though the support wasn't always physical, the emotional comfort and validation I received online helped me regain a sense of belonging and hope.

#### **Survivor 2**

The support I got through social media was both emotional and practical. Many people connected me with NGOs that offer free counselling for GBV survivors. I also joined some WhatsApp groups created from these contacts, where I learnt about mental health services, legal procedures, and self-defence tips. Emotionally, strangers sent me comforting messages and reminded me that healing is possible, even when the journey feels heavy.

Before social media, I felt trapped and alone. But through these connections, I gained the strength to take back control of my life. I even found the confidence to return to school. Social media

helped me break out of the silence that was drowning me.

### **Survivor 3**

I received different forms of support after sharing my experience online. When my TikTok video went viral, a women's organisation contacted me and linked me with professional counsellors. I joined virtual support sessions on Zoom where survivors discussed coping strategies and mental health. Some people even donated money to help me move out of the abusive environment I was living in.

But what stood out the most was the information I gained — things like how to document abuse, where to get legal support, and which organisations could help with counselling or emergency shelter. Social media introduced me to resources I didn't even know existed, and that knowledge helped me take practical steps toward healing and safety.

Question 4: What challenges or risks have you faced when using social media to speak out about gender-based violence, such as stigma, cyberbullying, or privacy concerns?

### **Survivor 1**

Speaking out online came with a price. Some people accused me of lying or seeking attention. Others mocked me, saying I should be ashamed of bringing 'private matters' to the public. I even received threats from people who knew my abuser. At one point, I had to deactivate my account for a while because the cyberbullying became too much. Privacy is also a concern because once you post something online, you lose control over it. I've seen my story shared on pages without my permission. Despite these risks, I still believe it's important to keep speaking out.

### **Survivor 2**

*Breaking The Silence: The Role of Social Media in Supporting Survivors Gender Based Violence in Nigeria*

One big challenge is the stigma. Some family members and friends stopped talking to me after I went public. They said I brought disgrace to our name. Online, there were people who said I was lying or exaggerating to gain sympathy. It hurt deeply, especially coming from other women. I also faced trolling from anonymous accounts. Sometimes I question if speaking out was the right decision, but then I remember the people I inspired. That gives me comfort.

### **Survivor 3 (Ngozi)**

The hardest challenge I faced after speaking out was the cyberbullying. Once my story started gaining attention, people I had never met began posting hurtful comments, calling me degrading names, and even sending threatening messages. It felt overwhelming, and I eventually had to tighten my privacy settings and block several accounts just to protect my peace. I was also constantly worried about my safety because, at one point, my location was accidentally exposed, and I feared my abuser might track me. On top of that, talking about my experience repeatedly was emotionally draining reliving the trauma in front of strangers takes a toll. Even with these challenges, I still don't regret sharing my story, because it helped me feel stronger and more in control of my own voice.

### **1.7.2 Responses from Counsellors**

Question 2: In your opinion, how effective has social media been in raising awareness and creating public conversations about gender-based violence in Nigeria?

### **Counsellor 1 (Mr. J, NGO counsellor)**

Social media has been transformative in raising awareness about GBV in Nigeria. In the past, many survivors suffered in silence because

traditional media rarely covered such cases with empathy. Today, hashtags like #SayNoToRape and #JusticeForUwa have sparked national conversations and policy responses. From my experience as a counsellor, I've seen how survivors now reach out to organisations through platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram. These platforms have made it easier for NGOs to share resources, mobilise support, and advocate for change. However, awareness is not enough; there is a need to link online activism to real-life counselling, legal aid, and safe shelters for survivors.

### **Counsellor 2 (Mrs. B, clinical psychologist)**

Social media has completely changed how Nigerians perceive and talk about gender-based violence. It has given survivors visibility and made it harder for society to ignore the problem. Through online campaigns, even people in rural areas have become more informed about their rights. For instance, my organisation receives daily referrals through Facebook messages from women seeking counselling. However, social media is a double-edged sword; while it creates awareness, it can also spread misinformation or retraumatise survivors if not handled sensitively. Still, its role in shaping national awareness and empowering survivors cannot be underestimated.

Question 5: From your perspective, how can social media platforms and online communities be improved to better support survivors of gender-based violence in Nigeria?

### **Counsellor 1**

One major improvement is the need for better privacy and reporting features. Many survivors hesitate to share their stories because of fear of exposure or trolling. Platforms should introduce specialised 'safe spaces' where survivors can

share anonymously and still access support. Also, partnerships between social media companies and local NGOs can help channel survivors to verified counsellors and legal support. Another improvement should be content moderation — harmful comments or hate speech should be swiftly removed. Finally, digital literacy campaigns are needed so survivors understand how to protect themselves online.

### **Counsellor 2**

Online communities can be strengthened by training moderators who understand trauma-sensitive communication. Survivors need empathy, not judgement. There should also be a system where verified NGOs and mental health professionals are easily accessible through dedicated portals on social platforms. Social media companies must collaborate with Nigerian agencies to curb online harassment and ensure confidentiality. I also believe there should be funding for digital empowerment programmes so that survivors, especially in rural areas, can access the internet safely. When survivors feel safe, they are more likely to speak and heal.

## **4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

**i. Objective One:** To explore how survivors of gender-based violence use social media to share their experiences and seek support. This objective examined how survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) utilise social media platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram to narrate their personal experiences and find support. Findings from the in-depth interviews showed that survivors use social media as a safe outlet to share their pain, break the culture of silence, and connect with others who have faced similar experiences. Most of the survivors explained that online spaces allowed them to express emotions they could not

share openly in their physical communities due to fear of stigmatisation. They also revealed that writing or speaking about their abuse online helped them regain confidence, find empathy, and draw emotional strength from comments and messages of encouragement. However, a few survivors admitted that while social media gave them a voice, it also exposed them to criticism and judgement from some users. Overall, the findings indicate that social media serves as both a coping mechanism and a tool for empowerment, providing survivors with a sense of community and belonging that traditional support systems often fail to provide.

**ii. Objective Two:** To examine the effectiveness of social media in raising awareness and creating public conversations about gender-based violence in Nigeria

This objective focused on understanding how effective social media has been as a platform for awareness creation and public discussion of GBV. Counsellors interviewed agreed that social media has significantly expanded the visibility of GBV issues across Nigeria, especially among young people. They observed that online campaigns, hashtags, and survivor stories have encouraged open dialogue and increased advocacy for justice and victim protection. According to the counsellors, social media has made it possible for more people to understand GBV as a serious social issue rather than a private matter. They also noted that the interactive nature of platforms like X (Twitter) and Instagram enables users to engage directly with counsellors, activists, and NGOs, promoting community-based education and collective activism. However, some counsellors highlighted challenges such as the spread of misinformation and the lack of proper psychological guidance for survivors who share their stories online. Despite these limitations, the findings suggest that social

media remains a powerful tool for awareness creation, amplifying voices that would otherwise be unheard and encouraging societal discussions about GBV prevention and response.

**iii. Objective Three:** To identify the challenges and risks survivors face when using social media to speak out about gender-based violence.

This objective aimed to uncover the dangers and barriers that come with online advocacy and disclosure of GBV experiences. Data from survivors revealed that while social media can be liberating, it also exposes them to secondary victimisation. Many respondents spoke about experiences of cyberbullying, online harassment, and victim-blaming comments from users who questioned their credibility or motives. Some survivors also mentioned fears of privacy invasion, as abusers or acquaintances sometimes traced their posts. In addition, counsellors confirmed that the emotional toll of reliving traumatic experiences through online storytelling often leads to anxiety, depression, and self-doubt among survivors. Another challenge identified was the absence of strict online regulations to protect survivors from harmful content or digital attacks. Despite these challenges, survivors maintained that social media remains essential for advocacy and awareness. The findings highlight the need for digital literacy, psychological support, and stricter online safety measures to ensure that survivors can speak out without fear of re-traumatisation or discrimination.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study conclude that social media has become a crucial tool in supporting survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria by providing a platform for expression, awareness, and solidarity. Survivors use digital spaces to share their experiences, find emotional

support, and challenge societal silence surrounding GBV. The study further revealed that while social media promotes advocacy and drives public conversations on GBV, it also exposes survivors to risks such as cyberbullying, privacy breaches, and emotional distress. Counsellors play a vital role in guiding survivors through online engagements and promoting safe digital practices. Therefore, while social media remains a powerful instrument for empowerment and awareness, there is a pressing need for stronger digital protection mechanisms, psychological support systems, and inclusive online policies to ensure that survivors can share their stories and seek help without fear or harm.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

### i. Strengthen Digital Safety and Privacy Measures:

There is a need for stronger online safety policies to protect survivors of gender-based violence from cyberbullying, harassment, and data breaches. Social media platforms should implement stricter content monitoring, improve reporting mechanisms, and ensure confidentiality when survivors share their stories. Government agencies and digital rights organisations should also collaborate to enforce privacy laws that safeguard vulnerable users online.

### ii. Enhance Counselling and Support Services through Social Media:

Counsellors and NGOs should establish verified social media pages or helplines dedicated to offering psychological support, guidance, and referrals to survivors. Integrating online counselling with offline services would help bridge the gap between digital disclosure and access to real-life assistance. This approach will

ensure survivors receive continuous emotional and professional support in a safe environment.

### iii. Promote Digital Literacy and Awareness Campaigns:

Survivors and the general public should be educated on the safe use of social media, including how to identify reliable platforms, protect personal data, and avoid online victimisation. Regular awareness campaigns, workshops, and school-based digital literacy programmes can empower users to use social media responsibly while supporting survivors effectively.

### iv. Encourage Policy Reform and Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:

The government, NGOs, media organisations, and social media companies should work together to develop comprehensive policies that address online gender-based violence. This collaboration should include establishing national frameworks for digital reporting, victim protection, and public education. Policymakers should also ensure that survivors' voices are included in the design of these interventions to create more inclusive and effective digital support systems in Nigeria.

## REFERENCES

- Adeyemi, T., & Olagunju, R. (2022). *Social media advocacy and the fight against gender-based violence in Nigeria*. *Journal of Media and Society Studies*, 8(2), 44–59.
- Ajayi, O., & Akinola, F. (2023). *Gender norms and media representation of violence against women in Nigeria*. *International Journal of Gender and Communication*, 5(1), 21–34.

- Asuquo, R. U. (2025). Contributions of Facebook, WhatsApp and X posts on creating awareness on domestic violence against women in Abuja, Nigeria. *Abuja Journal of Humanities*, 6(1), 55–69.
- Bukola, O. O., & Odunola, A. H. (2024). Social media framing of domestic violence against men and its influence on affective attitude of married individuals in Ogun State, Nigeria. *BOUESTI Journal of Humanities & Management Sciences*, 1(1), 33–47.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
- Eze, C., Okoli, J., & Madu, K. (2021). *Cultural norms and silence in the reporting of gender-based violence in Nigeria*. *African Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(3), 71–88.
- Ibrahim, S., & Yusuf, L. (2022). *#ArewaMeToo and the digital resistance to gender-based violence in Northern Nigeria*. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 14(4), 633–650.
- Leadership. (2025, May 13). *Nigeria's population hits 237 million – UN report*. Leadership Newspaper. <https://leadership.ng>
- Mordi, C. (2024). *Digital activism and survivor support networks on social media in Nigeria*. *Media and Gender Review*, 7(2), 88–104.
- Nwachukwu, A., & Adebayo, S. (2024). *Online stigma and survivor vulnerability: The paradox of social media disclosure in Nigeria*. *Gender and Digital Studies Journal*, 12(1), 40–58.
- Odeyemi, P., & Olayinka, B. (2022). *Silencing survivors: Culture, patriarchy, and gender-based violence in Nigeria*. *Journal of Gender and Society*, 11(2), 23–39.
- Oduguwa, K., & Chukwuma, T. (2021). *Social media and gender activism in Nigeria: A study of online resistance movements*. *Communication and Media Research Journal*, 5(1), 15–28.
- Ogbu, J., & Eze, A. (2023). *Queer theory and gender discourse in African societies*. *Journal of Contemporary Humanities*, 4(3), 50–66.
- Okafor, B., Nwosu, C., & Chidera, O. (2023). *Media campaigns and gender-based violence awareness in South-East Nigeria*. *International Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 11(2), 72–88.
- Okonofua, A. (2024). *The role of digital technology in responding to gender-based violence in Nigeria*. *Nigerian Journal of Social Innovations*, 3(1), 99–117.
- Okoro, E., & Anya, P. (2023). *Cultural silence and survivor support in Nigeria: The intersection of tradition and technology*. *Women and Development Studies*, 6(1), 12–26.
- Onianwa, F. (2021). *Sexual and gender-based violence during COVID-19 lockdown in Nigeria: The role of social media*.

- Journal of Social Policy and Digital Society, 8(3), 45–61.
- Sedgwick, E. K. (1990). *Epistemology of the closet*. University of California Press.
- Silva, M., Anaba, U., Tulsani, N. J., Sripad, P., Walker, J., & Aisiri, A. (2023). Gender-based violence narratives in internet-based conversations in Nigeria: Social listening study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 25, e46814. <https://doi.org/10.2196/46814>
- Vahedi, S., Godin, K., Sabo, J., & Friesen, C. (2024). *Digitalisation of GBV services: A qualitative exploration of online survivor support*. *Global Journal of Gender and Health*, 9(1), 78–95.

### **Appendix I: The Interview Guide**

Faculty of Communication and Media Studies,  
Department of Mass Communication,  
Taraba State University, Jalingo  
September, 2025.

Dear respondent,

I am a Postgraduate (M.Sc) student of the above-mentioned faculty and department. I am carrying out a research on “*breaking the silence: the role of social media in supporting survivors’ gender-based violence in Nigeria*”. This research serves as part of the School of Postgraduate Studies requirement in the course Advance Communication Theories of Mass Communication Department, Taraba State University.

I solicit cooperation in attending to this questionnaire in view of helping me complete my research. Please, kindly note that the information you will provide will be used for no other purpose than for this research.

Thank you for your understanding as I look forward to your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Reuben Indiri

(Researcher)

08107463786

#### **Interview guide questions**

1. Can you describe how you have used social media platforms to share your experiences as a survivor of gender-based violence and what motivated you to do so?
2. In your opinion, how effective has social media been in raising awareness and creating public conversations about gender-based violence in Nigeria?
3. What kind of support (emotional, informational, or practical) have you received through social media after disclosing your experience?
4. What challenges or risks have you faced when using social media to speak out about gender-based violence, such as stigma, cyberbullying, or privacy concerns?
5. From your perspective, how can social media platforms and online communities be improved to better support survivors of gender-based violence in Nigeria?