Social Media And Mean World Syndrome: Effects Of Violent Facebook Posts On Women

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Abstract

Facebook is the most widely used platform across the spectrum of social media, which are interactive technologies that make it easier to create and share information, ideas, and other kinds of expression. Facebook gives users the freedom to upload any kind of information, and today's increasing use of content with violent themes is causing criticism. As the consequences of violent content have come under debate, it has altered viewing habits. The objective of the study is to explore whether exposure to women's violence-based content on Facebook creates mean world syndrome. To explore the problem, a quantitative research methodology has been opted. This study used survey as a research technique and a purposive research sampling technique has opted. Data has been collected from women Facebook users from the five most populated cities of Pakistan. According to the findings violent content makes women feel insecure, fearful, and distressed and they feel the world is a nasty place to live in. The findings are consistent with the cultivation theory's concept of 'mean world syndrome' because people have promoted violence, hatred, and negativity on social media without any basis in truth and authenticity.

Keywords: Mean world syndrome, Facebook, violent posts

Introduction

Social media especially Facebook, is the fastest growing platform and it becomes more prevalent in everyday life, it is pertinent to know and understand that people especially women are spending multiple hours a day watching Facebook posts. In other words, social media provides women with a safe environment where they can interact with each other without worrying about penetrating their privacy. It leads to their perceptions of women's violence. In addition to its largely non-selective use by the majority of viewers, social media differs from earlier media in its ever-centralizing mass production of a cohesive collection of pictures and messages for huge and diverse populations.

The rapid increase in technology is one of the greatest achievements. The majority of the women in the world and Pakistan have the access to the internet and use different gadgets. Studies by (Perrin, 2015; Muscanell, & Guadagno, 2012; Kimbrough, et al., 2013 & Bell et al., 2013) concluded that women use the internet more actively than men and there is a significant difference in their internet usage. Romito and Beltramini (2011) stated that women excessively use SM and watch violent content. This is an age of technological innovation, diversity, change, and communication which plays a crucial role in altering the usage behaviors of women. A study explored that females use social media to socialize and provide opinions while males use it to collect information (Al-Kandari et al, (2017). Facebook is becoming one of the most favorite social network sites. All over the world women regularly uses it and develop different communication with various cultures. Moreover, Facebook is becoming popular because of its various features like online shopping, marking, and sharing or posting that influences the viewer to use it. All over the world, more than two billion women use it extremely. It is considered that Facebook is becoming a daily activity for everyone. It is also mentioned in the study that it plays an integral part to develop different networks (Boyd, 2007) and also at national and international levels (Kofoed, & Larsen, 2016).

Social media is used by billions of women around the world and women don't rely on television news to get their daily information or news, now they can get it through any social network site (Akram& Kumar, 2017; Harper, 2010 & Mwangi, 2012). Internet use in Asia is higher as compared to other parts of the world. According to the Internet World Stats till June 30, 2022, in Asia, internet usage is (53.6%), Europe (13.7%), Africa (11.9%), Middle East (3.9%), Latin America (9.9%), and Australia internet usage is (0.6%). According to Adobe Express by

July 2022 that Facebook is also widely and largest used platform in the world (almost nearly 3 billion monthly users) as compared to other social media platforms like Twitter (345 million), Tiktok (1 billion), Snapchat (494 million). With the excessive use of social media, violence against women picked up in society. Survey research was conducted which stated that Facebook usage is (79%) while Pinterest (31%), Linkedin (29%), and Twitter (24%). This study shows that women's usage of social media especially Facebook is higher than on other social media platforms (Sheldon, & Bryant, 2016).

Social media has become a primary and common source of socialization. Research on different media especially TV effects has already been done but research on the Cultivation effects of SM needs to be expanded. This study establishes that new media exposure and its cultivation effects on women are more supportive of current research than others. Oppliger (2007) has examined that an important relationship exists between media exposure and perceptions of women about violence-based content. He says that for regular heavy women users, it is impossible to escape content presented on FB on daily basis. This social network site plays a significant role in developing their social and psychological emotions, behaviors, and perceptions. In the process of creating the perceptions, this study has given importance to the women's voice and added an understanding of women's violence-based content on Facebook.

When the system is poorly organized then it hurts society. Now in young adults, the addiction to media users excessively has increased and became a habit whether it is good or bad (Schou et al., 2014 & Zaremohzzabieh et al., 2015). A study conducted in 2016, showed that addiction to Twitter is higher in males as compared to females (Kircaburun, 2016) but another study highlighted the fact that female students use Facebook excessively as compared to their male

counterparts (Biernatowska, A., Balcerowska, J. M., & Pianka, L. ,2017). As Andreassen et al., (2017) explore that females are one of the most significant elements of social networking site addiction. Additionally, another research shows that social media used by women is (68%) and men used (62%) on daily basis, women spend 46 min, and on the other hand, men spend (31 min.) on social networking sites (Hawi & Samaha, 2017).

All these studies prove that women use the internet, especially Facebook for satisfaction, information, and awareness. These studies provide evidence that social media is crucial in raising public awareness of women's abuse. Social media especially Facebook is an umbrella that includes practices, activities, and behaviors. The researchers investigated that Facebook still leads the phenomena because the majority of the world community especially women use it for socialization. Many types of research demonstrated that the influence of social media provides specific understanding and insights into women's perceptions.

Few researchers concluded that the effects of social media on women are very deep regarding body perfection. They explored that women use social media for fitness and beauty. They demonstrated a connection between social media use among women, social anxiety, smartphones usage, age, gender, and self-esteem (Tiggemann, & Zaccardo, 2018; Tiggemann, & Anderberg, 2020 & Tiggemann, et al., 2018). According to research, it is considered that new technologies bring innovation which provides different opportunities while improving global communication at all levels but on the other hand it also creates some threats for individuals especially young women (Hamid et al., 2015).

Violence is an undesirable scenario that should be avoided at all costs. Violence is a phenomenon that neither society nor the smallest member of it wants or accepts. Violence is once again one of the first referenced ways in social upheaval, despite all the negatives. This instance demonstrates once again that violence continues to be a cause for shame despite living in the so-called "era of information and technology" and having access to a wealth of advancements. Societies around the world have searched for solutions to the social problem of violence. It is a phenomenon that has impacted daily life, established a presence, generated controversy, and caused unrest (Mathews, & Abrahams, 2001, Rakoczy, 2004 & Morrow et al., 2004). All facets of our social, cultural, and political lives have undergone radical change as a result of the emergence of social media and Web 2.0 more generally.

Gerbner was aware that because technology can reach huge audiences, it has the potential to alter cultural perceptions. Additionally, it might give customers a distorted idea of what reality is like. This idea of changing attitudes and behaviors is referred to as cultivation effects. The process of integrating messages across media and sustaining ideas is referred to as "cultivation." The homogenization of attitudes and viewpoints brought about through media cultivation is referred to as mainstreaming and resonance (Morgan, 2009).

Facebook is a crucial source of both specific assumptions, beliefs, and pictures as well as general values, ideologies, and viewpoints because of the recurrent "learning" we receive from it starting in infancy (Shaw et al., 2000). We refer to this as the "mean world" syndrome. Long-term exposure to SM, where frequent violence is practically unavoidable, tends to foster the perception of a world that is relatively nasty and dangerous (Gerbner et al., 1980 & Signorielli, 1990). Additionally, it has been noted that many young women and girls experienced significant partner harassment during COVID-19. They were very likely to suffer violence from family

members. Nearly 30% of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual abuse at the hands of their partners, and 18% of them have done so in the past 12 months. Globally, there is tremendous violence against women; every three days, 137 women and every sixth woman are killed by their spouses or family members (Widders, A., Broom, A., & Broom, J. (2020). Because of Covid, this problem is somehow not being recognized as a "global pandemic of femicide." Reports of various types of abuse against women and girls, notably domestic violence, started to emerge as doors closed and isolation got under way.

There has long been an epidemic of violence against women. Globally, 243 million women and girls had experienced intimate partner violence in the years prior to COVID-19. The COVID-19 epidemic made it harder to get help and caused support services to fail, which led to an increase in violence (Henriques, M., 2020). Numerous studies on this subject have been conducted up to this point in order to examine violence. Notably, internet forums and social media have created new opportunities for peaceful protest. Victim-survivors might use social media platforms as a counter-public or countercultural venue to express their experiences in their own words.

In the rapidly changing media and educational environment, the influence of the cultivation may be seen less on women but many research investigations show that still strong cultivation effects on media audiences are present (Saini et al., 2020; Lai et al., 2015 & Ruddock, 2020). Few studies show that women disclose more private information on social media than men by giving more insight into their personal life. Women are more outspoken, vocal, and willing to divulge as they did in the cases of Qandeel Baloch's Murder case, Khadija murder case (daughter-in-law famous journalist Ayaz Amir), Minar-e-Pakistan case and Noor Mukaddam murder case. Every woman raised her voice against these issues on Facebook and other social media platforms. In other words, women are predisposed to using social media (Hogue & Mills, 2019; Barth, 2015; Lin & Wang, 2020, Muscanell & Guadagno, 2012 and Bashir et al., 2021).

The struggle of society's weaker groups, particularly women, has gone ignored for far too long and is now being heard on social media, particularly Facebook. As it was done for Khadija Akbar, the Noor Mukaddam case, and the Motorway-II case, small sounds, and comments about their concerns and rights are coming together and producing an uproar that is resonating throughout the entire world. The importance of this medium is demonstrated by the fact that all of the traditional media have made it accessible. On the one hand, social media is raising awareness of important issues and encouraging young people to take action, while on the other, it is empowering people in general and women in particular for their fundamental human rights.

Pakistan is a patriarchal society where women are surrounded by the negative ideology of social biases, traditions, and cultural practices. Men see women as inferior and fragile mentally and physically. So, they are treated as weak. Women are considered an underprivileged section of society; they are scarcely allowed to enjoy their social lives and other rights. Women are not given complete opportunities to obtain education and are victimized by men (Isran, S., & Ali Isran, M., 2012).

Moreover, the rapid increase in violent cases like the Sara Inam, Noor Mukadam case, Minar-e-Pakistan case, Motorway case-II, and many others and the projection of these violent cases on social media motivated the researcher to study the perceptions of women after exposure to violent content on Facebook. Due to this

situation, they are likely to be abused and victimized without having the right to obtain justice. They fail to get justice if they face any type of violence. Most cases of violence had not been reported in past but now the exposure to social media especially Facebook has allowed the women Facebook users in Pakistan to talk that how their beliefs and perceptions are being cultivated about violence-based content (Hadi, 2017; Bhatti, et al., 2011 & Chowbey, 2016). Heavy exposure to social media cultivates their perceptions about this issue because they feel more insecure about their surroundings (Phiri, 2019; Calisir, 2015; Harlow, 2012 & Fergusson, & Molina, 2019).

This situation needs to be addressed that how social media usage is affecting women and bringing changes in their perceptions. The study has also created an understanding that exposure to women's violence-based content on Facebook is making their opinions, creating world view, constructing perceptions and beliefs, and affecting their lives at a broader level, as after conducting pilot study, the researcher comes to the point that the Facebook usage is cultivating their beliefs and perceptions about violence-based content. They feel fear, mistrust people and think the world is nasty place to live in. The researcher aims to investigate the perceptions of women Facebook users about violent content. The objective of the study is to explore whether exposure to women's violence-based content on Facebook creates mean world syndrome or not (the feelings of fear, mistrust, insecurity, and perception that the world is a nasty place to live in).

According to Gerbner and Gross (1976), fear is a universal emotion that can be exploited by television or other media content that cultivates exaggerated perceptions about the danger in the real world and increases fear of insecurity and risk among women which leads them to demand protection and use of force from

authorities. Due to high internationality, Facebook's universe and communication material are not representative of the actual world. In general, cultivating effects can result from media dissemination and exposure to communication content (Gerbner et al., 2002). Around the world, traditional journalism has moved to social media, and violence has successfully seized control of the news that is revealed to people. To achieve this, news stations frequently repeat their stories and devote more than half of their airtime to negative content. Women may experience a condition known as "mean world syndrome" as a result of this kind of negative information exposure (Wilkinson & Fletcher, 1995; p.2). According to the cultivation hypothesis, the world portrayed through television is different, in some parts of the world from the real world. So, specifically, women who are heavy television viewers have a distorted perception of reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Many studies proved television is a source of cultivating fear of violence and violence in its viewers (Gross & Gerbner, 1976; Seymour, 2020; Lett et al., 2004 & Morgan, & Shanahan, 2010). Women upload pictures, videos, and other content related to women harassment and such posts may cause Mean World Syndrome in the females about their surroundings (Gerbner, et at., 2010; Sayimer, & Derman, 2017; Winter, et al., 2021; Stephenson, et al., 2018; Dyson, 2011 & Perloff, 2014).

The early studies on cultivation were primarily concerned with television, but they quickly broadened to include many other facets of life, such as gender roles, health, science, family, education, and a host of other topics (Morgan et al, 2015). The broad fundamental aspects of content have always been the cultivation's concern. They pointed out that the substance is more important than the technology used to deliver it (Morgan et al, 2015, p.201). Some researchers even investigate how forms of media besides television can promote violence

growth (Lai, Chung, & Po, N. S. 2015; Vingilis, et al., 2017 & Gilbert, Giaccardi, & Ward, 2018). So, the researcher has applied cultivation analysis to the current study because it is the more relevant theory that covers violence-based content on mass media specifically on TV. Although theories on social media are under study, there is an overwhelming body of research on various types of media like radio, TV, film, video games, newspapers, magazines, etc but not related to the current topic in recent. This study is going to explore the cultivation of mean world syndrome among women through consistent women violence-based content on social media (Facebook). This study addresses the following question and hypothesis.

RQ: 1. Does the exposure to women's violence-based content on Facebook create fear, mistrust, and insecurity among women users?

RQ: 2. Do the women Facebook users feel the world is a dangerous place to live in?

H1: Women feel fearful, and insecure and do not trust people after watching violent content on Facebook.

Literature Review

Violence is the intentional use of physical force to harm, maltreat, or destroy. It is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation. Some of the research studies observed that abuse or violence is mental torture and a few feels that it is body insecurity. According to recent research studies conducted during Covid-19, females faced a lot of violence in their homes. As the world faces infection and lockdown, many areas report for help and protection for domestic violence. In many countries like Canada, Argentina, France,

Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, different government authorities, women's rights activists, and many non-governmental organizations also reported domestic violence. It is also noticed that 30% of helpline calls in Singapore and Cyprus had been reported in Covid-19. Similarly, in Australia (40%) of frontline workers survey reported that a lot of women requested help to avoid violence (Malathesh, & Chatterjee, 2020; Malik, & Naeem, 2020; Bouillon-Minois, et al. 2020; Ali, Rogers & Heward-Belle, 2021; Bettinger-Lopez, & Bro, 2020 & Das, M., Das, A., & Mandal, 2020).

During Covid-19, many cases were observed continuously. Violence is witnessed by their partners and women became helpless due to quarantine and getting help from other members of society. Before Covid-19 occurred, domestic violence is considered to be one of the biggest issues and violations in society. Last year, (243) million women who are 15 to 49 aged ranges in the whole world have subjected to physical and sexual violence by their loved ones or their partner. As Covid-19 continues, the system of violence is increasing and affecting women in multiple ways, their sexual health, mentally ill, physical health, and especially their ability to participate in different activities of daily life (Ngcuka, 2020). As well as it is also observed that during Covid-19, many young women and girls faced many harassment issues by their partners. They were at high risk of experiencing violence from their loved ones. Globally, almost (30%) of women experienced physical and sexual violence from their partner, (and 18%) have experienced this in the last year. At an extreme level, violence is observed against women at a global level, and 137 women are murdered by their partners or family members (Roesch, et al. 2020).

According to Broom, it is estimated that every sixth woman is killed by their loved ones every hour, another study shows that women are

killed by every three days. This issue is becoming a "global pandemic of femicide" somehow not highlighted due to Covid. A recent study shows that 137 women were killed by their partner and their family member (Widders, Broom, & Broom, 2020). They said that if the topic of violence in the media needs to be addressed, a search of the literature reveals that several research on the subject has been conducted up to this point. But there is an increase in violence on Facebook. Technology-mediated violence against women is increasingly an element of how women experience violence and interact online. We confront risks offline just like they do online. Because technology influences how women perceive violent content, these types of violence may be committed using it (Widders, Broom, & Broom, 2020).

Research revealed that an increased ratio of online violence has been observed in girls and women in almost 20 countries. They were exploited by messages, nude photos, cyber stalking and other kinds of misuse. According to plan international, mostly different attacks were frequently seen on Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp. A survey showed that in 22 countries which includes Canada, Australia, Brazil, Japan, Benin, Zambia, and the US, this simply shows equality for girls and young women whose range is from 15 to 25. Results show that (58%) of women faced online violence, but compared to the global value poll also described in Australia (65%) of respondents have been observed to face violence. As more than half of the respondents faced harassment; and suffered from mental illness, health disorders, and emotional stress in their lives. Likewise, due to online threats, some women and girls experienced dread and safety concerns (Kebede, et al., 2021).

According to Rawsthorne, (2020), online platforms provide a wide variety for youth and it also plays a destructive role for humanity. She

also claimed that violence is increasing day by day, many girls were subjected to faced brutality, and every time facing harassment, they do not go alone in street due to a stressed environment, and she stressed that bullying is a kind of violence and that because of this system, no female is safe. Moreover, as a result, she recognized that many girls or women have faced long-term health issues and some left such platforms. According to Hawkins, (2021), the campaigns for change to force the government and other organizations to protect all the citizens. She added that harassment causes girls and women to develop mental illnesses, and in some circumstances causes them to stop using social media altogether.

Moreover, (27%) of youth agreed that social media is the main activity of bullying or leading to the spread of rumors among other groups. Likewise, it is also shown in the survey that (17%) of youth feel that these social media apps affect relationships and also lessen interaction among individuals. As teens have a mixed view about it, the reality is disturbed, they don't bother about the effects of usage, some showed bullying, violence, and harassment and some said it helps to communicate with others (Graf, Brown, & Patten, 2018).

As Lanson, (2020), women's violence is a human rights issue and it can be solved by identifying the main cause, this is how online harassment would be avoided and women will be protected to feel safe and happily live in society without any stress. Lanson claimed that online platforms like Facebook, and Instagram need to pay attention wisely and perform an action when violence is reported. With the help of a preventive approach to avoid online harassment, we should educate young men about respectful and appropriate communication. Another recent study based on gender-based violence online was carried out in Covid-19. Most of the research demonstrates that there is a high rate of domestic

violence against women on online platforms, which leads to a hostile climate against internet users (Jatmiko, Syukron, & Mekarsari, 2020).

Similarly, co-founder of World Wide Web and Intrupt.com, Tim Berners-Lee argued earlier this year that women are not safe while using the internet. According to him, nearly (52%) of young women and girls had dealt with or suffered online abuse, harassment, and violence, including texting and sexual abuse, as well as the posting of various images and videos without their permission. Additionally, (87%) of women claimed that things are becoming worst daily (Berners-Lee et al., 2001). According to Kebede, et al., 2021), most of the females faced harassment and various cases of abuse on an online platform.

The social framework is firmly ingrained with violence against women. The cultivation theory builds and interprets how we act and perceives the social world. How violence against women is growing, nurturing, and affecting the view of female social media users is crucially important. Although there has been a noticeable growth in studies on violence against women since the 1970s, there is no social media theory that can account for all the facets of women's violence-based material on Facebook.

Studies on Fear, Mistrust & insecurity (Mean World Syndrome)

A survey conducted in the United States by Barry et al., (2017) whose research indicated that social media usage is related to individuals' fear; loneliness and parents also explained the hyperactive behaviors, uneasiness, and unhappiness in their nature. Additionally, another national survey conducted by the United States by Primack et al., 2017 study shows that individuals who used one or two social media sites and on the other hand who used seven to eleven social media platforms have a high level

of sadness, anxiety, and many other psychological symptoms. Another research shows that in adolescents social media usage is related to various personality disorders (Ra, et al., 2018). Moreover, other research shows that social media usage and health-related problem becoming significant health concerns and the observed pieces of evidence remain unresponsive (Andreassen, 2015; Berryman, Ferguson, & Negy, 2018 Pantic, 2014). Furthermore, other research also reported that due to excessive use of digital media or any gadget, didn't decrease reality-based interaction, mental health-related concerns, and well-being (Berryman et al., 2018 & Hall et al., 2018). According to Smith and Anderson (2018) research shows that social media is widely used in all age groups, but most studies focused on youth and adults (Booker, Kelly, & Sacker, 2018; Ellison et al., 2007 & Kross et al., 2013).

Frison and Eggermont's (2015) study shows that the use of social media affects differently to the individual according to the use actively or passively. From this research, it is estimated that those who are active users of Facebook have a lot of knowledge and information and have a positive effect on it, on the other hand, those who are not active user faces many health problems and hurt it. Moreover, another research conducted by Berryman et al., (2018) concluded that Facebook usage not only affect an individual's health but he gives another concept which is vague booking in which an individual post or share a blur or half a picture which as result shows some suicidal thought. Another research also shows that at night time individual who uses Facebook have also emotional consequence person's health as well as he or she also shows sleep issues and well-being (Woods & Scott, 2016). According to research the addiction to social networking sites among students shows that in Singapore and India was reported (29.5) and (36.9%). Another research

conducted in 2018, shows that among medical students the habit of using social media is 30.1% in the whole world. Similarly, another research conducted in 2017, shows that in Iran social media use is at a moderate level (Modara et al., 2017). These effects are noticeable when it is related to some kind of risks and threats (Kapuściński, & Richards, (2016).

Mean world syndrome is a proposed cognitive bias where people may overestimate the risk in the world as a result of long-term moderate to intense exposure to violence-related information in the media. Supporters assert that viewers who are exposed to violent content may feel more dread, anxiety, pessimism, and attentiveness in response to perceived threats. This is so that audiences' perceptions, perspectives, and opinions of the world can be directly influenced and informed by the media they consume, particularly television.

The present study focuses on women's violence-based content on Facebook and explored that the newer media can influence women's perception, and they form their homogenized reality by excessively watching violent material. Due to such content, their perception of the world reflects anxiety, feelings of fear, and mistrust (Salomon, (2012); Yang, & Oliver, (2010); Shrum, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch (2004); Lenka, (2014) & Khom et al., (2012). The results of the study are also aligned with many other studies conducted on social media and cultivation (Romer, Jamieson, & Aday, 2003; Riddle et al., 2011; Morgan and Shanahan (2010).

Additionally, it is also mentioned in previous research that media studies use two major tactics one is active and the second is a passive audience's perspective (Morley, (2005) & Valkenburg, et al., 2022). In cultivation theory, the audience is considered passive but the results of this study show that social media users are active as its content affects both heavy and light

users equally (Morley, (2005) & Valkenburg, et al., 2022).

Women's Violence in Pakistan

Pakistani women are unable to adequately defend themselves against assault because they live in a strongly patriarchal society where violence against women is institutionalized in the social, political, and judicial systems. There is no easy fix for the current predicament. The government of Pakistan, civic society, and institutional organizations must actively assist women in reducing their vulnerabilities and enhancing their capacity to address the underlying causes of violence against them (Hadi, 2007; Ali, & Gavino, 2008; Qaisrani, Liaquat, & Khokhar, 2016 and Tarar & Pulla, 2014).

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, half of the women faced physical and sexual violence by their partners, and in the Middle East side almost (45%) of women were harassed by their husbands. Furthermore, (32%) of cases were in North America, (and 22%) in Western Europe were reported by this report (Richardson, et al., 2021). Furthermore, different NGOs in Pakistan also worked on women's violence. Similarly, Aurat Foundation also conducted a project in which many social activists, parliamentarians, and other media persons were the participants (Imran & Munir, 2018). From research, the finding shows that (57%) of cases were from Punjab, (27%) from Sindh, (8%) from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and (6%) from Gilgit Baltistan and only 2% reported from Baluchistan (Imran, et al., (2021). From this data, we concluded that the majority of the cases were from Punjab, usually involving rape, sexual and physical violence, crime, forced marriages, and property issues. Violence occurs in all places and the abuser and violator belong to all socioeconomic backgrounds.

The new research was conducted on sexual violence in Pakistan. This study examines

that many cases were registered related to violence and especially related to rape cases, this causes disturbance all around the country. On the other side, it is also estimated that the majority of the cases were not recognized and registered due to fear. It is noticed that women did not want to mention the name of the abusers. Moreover, due to the patriarchal system, the majority of the females experienced fear due to authorities, they less interacted and feel the anxiety to report in a police station (Bari, Siddiqui, & Ali, 2021). Globally, according to a recent study, it is estimated that Pakistan ranked at 6th number because of the women's sexual rate, and crime issues. Similarly, violence is increasing day by day, and this creates terror for females. Some social activists considered this problem because of male dominant society (Riaz, 2020; Shah, et al., 2022; Patel, & Gadit, 2008; Welle, 2020; Sohail, 2014; Hussain, 2009 & Zarar, 2018). According to statistics by White Ribbon Pakistan, an NGO working for women in which, 4734 women experienced physical violence between 2004 to 2016. Moreover, 15000 crime cases were registered. 1800 cases were registered for domestic violence and 5500 kidnapping cases (Jacob, 2021).

This study has applied one of the core concepts of Cultivation theory, "Mean World Syndrome" to study women's violence-based content on Facebook. Few studies explored that the debate fueled long-growing concerns about the ability of social media to have an instant and direct impact on audiences and audio perceptions and behavior. It is the power of media that injects fear among its users. Social media may be even more important in influencing perceptions than traditional media, which still has a major impact (Klinkenberg, (2015); Dyson, 2011); Jorgensen, & Ha, Y.,2019; Chandler, (2013); Nabi et al., (2013); Morgan, & Shanahan, (2009); & Tsoy, Tirasawasdichai, & Kurpayanidi, (2021).

Cultivation theory continues to attract researchers continuously, according to Morgan & Shanahan (2010), and more than 500 studies were added to cultivation literature until 2010 in different fields. Cultivation theory is dynamic meant that the daily depiction of a topic in the media has the power to foster the impression in audiences that the problem is the same in the real world on a broader scale (Hammermeister, et. al., (2005); Dainton & Zelley, 2005; Morgan & Shanahan, 2010; Hetsroni, & Tukachinsky, (2006) & Tsfati, Tukachinsky, & Peri, (2009). The above-mentioned statement supports the present study as it has applied this theory on Facebook to examine the newer media that how it influences women's behavior and forms their reality by excessively watching violent material.

Research Methodology

The quantitative approach using Survey as a research design has been used to explore the problem. A questionnaire containing 14 items was distributed among women Facebook users of Pakistan for gaining an understanding of the individual's experiences, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and feelings that influence behavior about women violence based content (Frith, 2000: 276 and Folch-Lyon & Trost, 1981) The study's targeted **Population** is Pakistani female Facebook users. A **sample size** of 1000 females was used to collect data. This research has opted **purposive** sampling technique. Through the use of a self-structured and close-ended questionnaire, the data was gathered.

Women Facebook users from major cities of Pakistan have been targeted to collect survey data. The reason for choosing major cities is the largest population size including Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi and Peshawar. The reason behind selecting women Facebook users of these cities is to get data in variety because their socio-cultural status may help in diversifying results. The reliability of the

instrument has been checked through Chronbach alpha which is 0.735 which shows that the instrument is highly reliable.

Discussion & Analysis

Table 1: Testing of the Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Statement	Conclusive	Inconclusive
H1	Women feel fearful, and insecure and do not trust people after watching violent content on Facebook.		Conclusive
H0	Women do not feel fearful, or insecure and do not trust people after watching violent content on Facebook.		Inclusive

The introduction of new media has significantly altered how people view the world and its realities. People utilise media not only to find information and enjoyment, but the media they consume also shapes their perceptions (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). WikiLeaks, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms have altered global communication norms, and numerous studies have shown that in the age of social media, we are all major media consumers (Ruddock, 2020). According to Gönenli (2012), social media is a practical tool in the modern society. Social media, in today's world, highlights various serious issues prevailing in any society. This exposure of media to certain issues sensitizes the masses to not only think about that issue but also influence people's beliefs and perceptions significantly about the social realities (Bevillard, 2018).

Even in this world of globalization, the women's violence issue does not abate. It is still there somehow with more intensity and severity. Today, the modern media is more vocal and louder about this sensitive issue as compared to the past (Calisir, 2015). Technologically advanced media has further brought this issue into the limelight, giving more awareness to the people by highlighting incidents of women violence while simultaneously playing a crucial role in building perceptions of females about the world around them (Kuyucu, 2016) & Kuyucu, (2013). The more dynamic, interactive, and technologically advanced social media platforms are massively used by people around the globe, creating a stronger and deeper impact on people and their perceptions and beliefs about their social surroundings (Lim, & Putnam, (2010) & Bevillard, 2018). It is easy to foresee that media have a disastrous effect on the real-world even a person does not experience violence in real life. Media exposure has same effects on perceptions and beliefs of people (Riddle, et al., (2011); Huesmann, (2007); Williams, (2006); Uslaner, (1998); Lowry, Nio, & Leitner, (2003) & Alotaibi, & Mukred, (2022). This study intends to explore the cultivation effects of women's violence-based content posted on Facebook pages. The aim is to explore how females' perceptions and beliefs are shaped and influenced by Facebook exposure to content related to women's violence. The study focuses on the major concept of cultivation theory i.e. mean world syndrome. A survey method is

employed in this research to explore the cultivation effects of violence-based content on Facebook and its impact on females. Other concepts of cultivation theory are mainstreaming which refers to the homogenization of opinions of divergent groups due to heavy exposure to media content. Whereas, resonance refers to the reliability of media content to your personal experience. In this study, mean world syndrome is focused.

The concept of mean world syndrome refers to the perceptions of people about the real world as a more dangerous and scared place than it actually is. It happens due to media exposure to violence-based incidents. It is explored that media have significant cultivation effects on female users of social media. For this purpose, this study has selected four violence-based incidents i.e. Qandeel Baloch Murder Case,

Motorway Case II case, Minar-e- Pakistan Case, & Noor Mukaddam Case. The data demonstrated that the Minar-e-Pakistan case is `viewed by women significantly (7.8%), followed by the Motorway II case which is viewed by (22%), in comparison Noor Mukaddam case was viewed by (7.7%) users and the Qandeel Baloch Murder Case is viewed significantly less by only (3.5%) users, whereas (59.1%) viewers viewed all above-mentioned cases.

Regression Analysis

H1. Women feel fearful, and insecure and do not trust people after watching violent content on Facebook.

H0: Women do not feel fearful, or insecure and do not trust people after watching violent content on Facebook.

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis: Effect of Exposure to Women Violence Based Content of Facebook on the Perceptions and Beliefs of Women Regarding the Real World

	B	SE	B	t-test	p-value	R	R^2
Exposure to women violence-based content of Facebook	.119	.014	.249	8.61	<.001	.249	.062

Table 2 shows a summary of the regression analysis. Simple linear regression was applied to find the Effect of Exposure to women's violence-based content on Facebook on the perceptions and beliefs of women regarding the real world. Results show that there was a statistically significant effect of Exposure to women's violence-based content on Facebook on the perceptions and beliefs of women regarding the real world **(β=.249, p<.001).** The correlation between Exposure to women's violence-based content on Facebook and MWS is statistically significant **(r=0.249, p<.001)..** Women feel

fearful, and insecure and do not trust people after watching violent content on Facebook is accepted while H0 rejected.

The study revealed that various indicators supported that mean world syndrome is cultivated among users due to media exposure to violence-based incidents and they feel insecure, and started considering the world as a far more insecure and nastier place than it actually is. Women watching incidents related to women victimization by rape, murder, or any physical harassment they start feeling frightened, insecure, and mistrustful. Significant numbers of females who are exposed

to violence-based media content are reluctant to meet strangers and significant numbers of females avoid traveling alone. Overall, the concept prevails among females that the world is a dangerous, scary, and insecure place to live in. The result supports Gerbner's ideas presented in cultivation theory that heavy viewers are more fearful, and insecure (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). A study revealed that heavy viewers are having a high probability of being in danger and fearful (Gerbner et al., 1979). The same was reinforced by Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, (2015); Sparks, (2015); Pelzer, (2021); Odgers, & Jensen, (2020); Gómez-Ibáñez, et al., (2020); Gerbner et al., 1980; Shrum, Wyer, & O'Guinn, (1998); Shrum, 2001) and many others.

Tripathi (2017) asserts that while the phenomenon of violence is not new, it is now prevalent in a new medium known as social media. On social media, many women use it to propagate violence like gang violence, harassment, and bullying while hiding their genuine identities. Social media is a hostile environment that young women discover has a negative impact on their day-to-day lives. Social media has even evolved into a tool that encourages women to harm themselves, such as by committing suicide. More psychological than physical violence occurs online. It can be considered a new type of weapon that can kill women because it has the power to end the lives of women (Bridge et al. in 2013).

Another study by Amedie (2015) emphasized the negative effects of social media on society, arguing that it weakens social cohesion and has a harmful impact on society. It contributes to despair and women feel scared. Out of all the media outlets, it was shown that just 12.3% of respondents used the internet as their main news source. They looked at how the fear of violence was affected by all media news sources. People who mostly get their news from the internet more afraid than people who primarily

get their news from local television (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004). Due to the Internet's quick development as a source of information, it is crucial to think about how it may affect people's fear of violence (Rainie, 2010).

In order to achieve this, news stations frequently repeat their stories and devote more than half of their airtime to negative content. Women may experience a condition called as mean world syndrome due to negative content (Wilkinson & Fletcher, 1995, p.2). on the other hand, many studies also proved television as a source of cultivating fear of violence and violence in its viewers (Gross & Gerbner, 1976). Another study by Becker, Alzahabi, & Hopwood, (2013); Andreassen, et al., (2016); Heimberg, et al., (1992); Foroughi, et al., (2022); Lee-Won, Herzog, & Park, z2015) & Reid, & Reid, (2007) showed that there is a relationship between social media usge among women, and social anxiety.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of women's violence is very crucial and sensitive. It has been an issue of debate and research for many years. Even in this technologically advanced era when women are empowered, educated, and financially strong, this issue is not abated and is present with more intensity and severity. The emergence of social media has transformed the world in many aspects and the effects of social media are also an area of interest for many researchers. The present study uncovers the cultivation effects of women violence-based content on Facebook on female users of Pakistan. The study used triangulation methods (survey and focus group) to explore the cultivation effects of social media. It is explored that social media is generating cultivation effects in three major dimension i.e. mean world syndrome which verifies the presence of cultivation phenomenon on social media. It is explored that the frequency of light users is more than heavy users of social media. And unmarried

females feel more frightened, insecure, and threatened by watching violence-based content on social media than married females. Thus, the mean world syndrome effect is significantly present in heavy social media users.

The study further revealed that violence is everywhere and so absorbed in our society and the presentation of women's violence on social media enhances mean world syndrome among women. Female users are influenced by social media content to a large extent and they feel fearful and insecure. Along with this, women are experiencing violence around them and the role of social media in this regard, doubles the dose and they feel too fearful, and insecure and consider the world a nasty and dangerous place to live. These results create cultivation effects aligned with George Gerbner's theory.

The results are encouraging. Generally, women don't speak themselves out in a society like ours, which is patriarchal, polygamous, and male dominating, where women are subordinate, submissive, and face various societal, religious, ethical, and cultural pressures. Our society is holistic and conservative where women are not encouraged to break societal taboos, social values, norms, and customs. Due to these reasons, they are not encouraged to talk about violence. Any woman who shares her violent experiences fears backlash and social shame. Women do not have awareness of violence-based laws and due to lack of information, they feel insecure to express their violent experiences. It was further investigated that both heavy and light users were having somehow same opinion about women's violence. Thus, it is explored that the power of social media in creating cultivation effects is quite visible, supportive and verifiable.

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