

SOCIAL SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE PRACTICED AGAINST WOMEN THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA." FACEBOOK AS A MODEL"

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Abstract: *This research aims to uncover the behavioural patterns practiced through social media platforms, especially Facebook, as the most subscribed site, it provides users with freedom of expression that may deviate from its humane origin into various forms, such as symbolic social violence against others and specifically against women, through mechanisms of symbolic violence to control them. One of the findings of this research is that the virtual world merely reflects what exists in the real world, as individuals seek to control women in the virtual world through demeaning and marginalizing actions. This negatively impacts their personality dimensions and subjects them to presumed legitimacy.*

Keywords: violence, symbolic violence, social symbolic violence against women, social networking sites.

1. Introduction

The Information Revolution and modern technologies in the field of communications have brought about many changes, not only in the field of media but also in the relational aspect between members in the virtual community. The inevitability of virtual communication has led to the widespread proliferation of violence, a phenomenon that is difficult to define in terms of its dimensions, factors, and various forms. According to the Marxist perspective, violence represents a declared aspect of social change in a binary relationship between domination or power and submission, through the transition from the material level—means of production—to the abstract level—ideas. Particularly when violence is associated with communication processes, as Marshall McLuhan believes through the theory of transitions and technological determinism, considering the medium as the conduit to social reality. Agriculture led to an agricultural society, industry produced an industrial society, and communication technologies also produced a communicative society. From visible physical violence to hidden symbolic violence that gives legitimacy to the dominant and flows through multiple meanings and symbols, and used as a means to impose harm on others, symbolically aligning with media—especially new media—as a reinforcement of dominance and submission to power. It's noteworthy that the youth are the most active users of social media, expressing prevailing societal values, especially in adolescence, characterized by enthusiasm, innovation, and rejection of constraints, unraveling those subconscious repressions and a state of rejection of living reality.

This aligns with the efforts of modern communication technologies in embedding the communicative message or idea in a way that the youth can only comprehend after it penetrates their minds, potentially committing violence against others without being aware of the action they have taken or the risks it poses to themselves and those around them. (Fazia, 2021).

Social violence is considered one of the most dangerous manifestations and forms of violence, as it involves the actual use of force or threat to achieve social goals, with political connotations and dimensions taking various individual or collective, secret or public, organized or unorganized styles. It results from pressure factors on the individual that render them incapable of accepting societal norms and regulations. It may direct deviant behavior towards women despite their status as half of society and their role within human societies. After experiencing violence in real life and public spaces, it has shifted to the virtual realm through

entertainment motives and idea exchange. Users hide behind aliases and fake accounts, providing ample opportunity for abuse with ease and freedom. If not overt, it becomes covert and gains legitimacy, becoming part of life and even a means of entertainment and venting for others at times. With the freedom afforded to users across various social media platforms, this study aims to shed light on this phenomenon by answering the following questions:

- What is meant by symbolic social violence against women?
- How does symbolic social violence against women manifest on Facebook?

1. Concepts of Study

- **Social Networking Sites:** Social networking sites are a fundamental aspect of new media and signify the transformation of society from industrial to knowledge-based, by enabling individuals and groups to communicate through this virtual space when face-to-face communication is not feasible (Al-Deehi, 2016: 438). These sites aim to establish virtual social relationships and even go beyond to facilitate the emergence of communication media. It is « a network where individuals with similar interests and inclinations gather to form friendships using the internet ». (Mouzid, 2012).

The Web Encyclopedia "Obidia" defines social networks as "a term used to describe any site on the World Wide Web that allows its users to display a public personal profile. It also allows the formation of personal relationships with other users who access that profile page. Therefore, social networking sites are used to describe socially oriented websites, live discussion groups, chat rooms, and other social realities" (Kanaan, 2014: 170).

- **Facebook:** Kenkuff Kyunt, a researcher in social networking sites, defines Facebook as one of the social networking sites where an international online community gathers to interact by exchanging photos, videos, and other information, connecting with friends, family, colleagues, and classmates. Facebook aims to create an environment where individuals can regularly log in to track the activities of friends and colleagues, exchange their own activities, interact around common interests or hobbies, send messages, and join other groups and networks. (Hattimi, 2015).

Facebook is considered one of the most important social networking sites, launched by Mark Zuckerberg in February 2004 when he was a student at Harvard University. He named it Facebook, which means "book of faces that goes beyond the known printed directories known as face books," which were distributed to students to help them identify their classmates' names. It's worth noting that there was an important idea behind Facebook. Its members would use their real names, and the authenticity of their identities would be confirmed by the fact that their profiles as students were linked to school-issued email addresses. The site initially did not allow the use of pseudonyms or fake names, making its members accountable for their actions (Al-Saadi, 2016: 163).

- **Definition of Violence:** According to Ibn Manzur in his book "Lisan al-Arab," violence is described as the violation of order and the extreme of gentleness, and it is against gentleness. It is violent if it is not gentle in its matter. And to "incapacitate the matter" is to take it forcefully. In a saying: "God gives to gentleness what He does not give to violence." It is from intensity and hardship (Manzur).

In English and French, it is derived from the Latin word "Violence" and "Violentai," which denote the illegitimate use of force. Violence is the use of force without legal sanction, rejecting law, justice, and submission to any authority. It encompasses punishing, raping, interfering with the freedoms of others, and is also "a violent force exercised against a specific person" (semestre, 1993).

As for terminology, scientists have varied definitions of "violence," but they generally agree that it is a complex social phenomenon and a mechanism for self-defense against the risks humans face for survival and continuity in life. This defensive mechanism is one of the

instinctual energies latent in living beings that awaken and activate in defensive or aggressive situations, where humans and animals are considered equal.

Adler defines violence as "a compensatory response to a sense of inadequacy or weakness (Al-Zain, 1986)."

Because we are born into a social world, we accept a number of norms and assumptions that impose themselves on us automatically and easily, almost without instruction (Bourdieu, 1992: 141-143).

Levinas states: "Every act in which the individual behaves as if he were alone, as if the world around him exists only to receive this act and perform violence" (Lévinas, 1948: 20).

According to the Dictionary of Social Science Terminology, violence is defined as: "A strict expression of force exercised to compel an individual or group to perform specific actions desired by another individual or group. Violence manifests physical force (such as beating, imprisonment, or execution) or takes the form of social pressure, with its legitimacy based on society's recognition of it (et al., 1985)."

- **Symbolic Violence:** Pierre Bourdieu defines symbolic violence as any influence that succeeds in imposing specific meanings, and in imposing them through legitimate meanings that obscure the power relations that underpin its power, adding power relations to this specific symbolic self, meaning the specific symbolic self. (Bourdieu, 1994).

According to Bourdieu, the purpose of symbolic violence is to impose domination and control over others, while the response of the other party is voluntary based on belief in the legitimacy endorsed by the individual.

Bourdieu also views symbolic violence as "invisible, subtle violence that affects the ideological and mental level, successfully imposing social representations by giving them legitimacy of domination" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970). Naturally, practiced violence is invisible and unseen, imposed on individuals through these social representations, which serve to legitimize dominance and control by forcefully imposing meanings with legitimate authority.

- **Symbolic Violence via Facebook:** Symbolic violence is present in various forms of media content in all its types and levels. Violence manifests in all forms of communication in modern life, including mobile phones, video games, and the internet, all of which have become carriers of violence infiltrating us as the predominant element in the content of older forms of communication. (Al-Ousi, 2012).

- **Concept of Violence against Women:** It is any violence related to gender that likely cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering for women. (Ahmed, 2017).

- **Definition of Media Violence:** Media violence is defined as the depiction of overt physical harm that harms, kills, or threatens to do so. Some acts are defined as involving violence by using it to spread fear and express a stance, usually political. (Berger, 2012).

Media violence is also considered psychological, intellectual, and moral violence, including any media act containing aspects, behaviors, words, symbols, relationships, values, and morals that contradict the smooth behavior and sound nature of human beings. It has been defined by the Canadian Centre for Media Studies in a study on violence on Canadian television as any psychological or moral assault or any act that causes an unwanted psychological state such as anxiety, fear, insult, mockery, loss of value, or affection, harm to reputation, or feelings of guilt... any condition that generates non-physical pain (Fadil, 2015).

2. Symbolic Interactionism from Pierre Bourdieu's Perspective

Pierre Bourdieu is a renowned French sociologist known for his work in sociology and philosophy. He was particularly interested in studying media and symbolic interaction in various contexts. Bourdieu views symbolic violence as: "a gentle and subtle violence, imperceptible to its own victims, practiced through purely symbolic means, such as communication, knowledge transmission, particularly through processes of recognition, or at the utmost borders of emotions and intimacies."

Bourdieu elaborates on this in his book: "I want to unravel a series of mechanisms showing that the media practice a kind of symbolic violence that is harmful and damaging. Symbolic violence is violence exercised with the complicity of those subjected to it, as well as those who practice it, to the extent that those subjected to it, as well as those who exercise it, are not fully aware of this violence or of their submission to it." (Bourdieu, 2004: 46)

His perspective on symbolic interactionism in media, as outlined in his book "On Television and the Manipulation of Minds," can be summarized as follows:

A. **Social Context:** Bourdieu believes that media is not just a neutral tool for information transmission but reflects power structures and social inequalities in society. He sees media as part of the field of power and influences the shaping of symbols and codes that are associated with culture and identities. Hence, the dominance of power over individuals and the acquisition of legitimacy therein lead individuals to submit obediently to this dominance, considering it as the status quo. In his view, the media becomes a means of exerting control over individuals by conveying ideas or images and explaining them in a way that aligns with the interests of the upper class. This is due to the low cultural level of individuals. Therefore, Bourdieu calls for raising the educational level of individuals and granting the media more freedom for media democratization.

B. **Symbolic Capital:** Bourdieu uses the concept of "symbolic capital" to describe the economic and social forces that own and control media and symbolic production. He believes that individuals and institutions with strong symbolic capital can shape and direct symbols and codes according to their interests.

This aspect parallels Bourdieu's Marxist framework, which believes that those who own the means of production or the infrastructure are the ones who assert themselves, their opinions, and control over the superstructure.

C. **Reproduction of Power:** Bourdieu emphasizes the importance of studying how power and domination are reproduced through media. He considers that media can contribute to reinforcing the dominance and cultural superiority of certain social classes over others.

D. **Journalistic Field:** Bourdieu sees media as a kind of "journalistic field," where various parties and individuals compete to control the production and dissemination of information and symbols. There can be tensions between news content and the political and economic inclinations of media owners.

E. **Representation and Symbolism:** For Bourdieu, media is not just a conveyor of information but engages in a process of representation and reality-shaping. Media can significantly influence how events and phenomena are portrayed, thus shaping public awareness.

In general, Bourdieu's perspective on symbolic interactionism in media highlights the role of media as a means of conveying and shaping symbols and representations within social, economic, and political structures.

The image presented by the media, amplified and endowed with dramatic qualities, does so using grandiose words. Ordinary words fail to surprise anyone, and thus, words dominate the image, rendering it meaningless without the interpretation it requires to be read.

4 . Media Content and Manifestations of Symbolic Violence via Facebook Against Women:

Social media platforms such as Facebook have become prominent players in human life and constitute a significant part of its social interactions. Symbolic violence and its practices are notably influenced by the presence of social media platforms, which can have a significant impact on human relationships and life stances.

Humanity has embraced modern life and entered the indicators of the knowledge society as a culture dominating social life, and Facebook has become a prominent aspect of human life. This is reflected in media content on Facebook through patterns and behaviors practiced by individuals within a socially diverse life characterized by diverse cultures. This is

reflected in the practice of symbolic violence, with individuals subject to symbolic violence in cultural and educational practices prevalent in our lives.

Factors related to the impact of social media platforms on the practice of symbolic violence include:

a) Dissemination of negative symbols and content: Individuals can use social media platforms to disseminate negative and abusive symbols and content, which can be part of practicing symbolic violence against others.

b) Reinforcing discrimination and bias: Social media platforms contribute to reinforcing discrimination and bias against certain categories of individuals, including women, minorities, and marginalized groups.

c) Social pressure: Individuals may experience social pressure to share their opinions or behave in certain ways on social media, which can be a source of symbolic violence.

d) Proliferation of media: Social media platforms enhance the rapid spread of content, which can increase the impact of offensive symbols and words.

e) Influence of digital identities: Social media platforms can contribute to building digital identities that include practices of symbolic violence and encourage them.

Therefore, there is encouragement to promote awareness of the importance of using social media platforms positively and responsibly, and to promote healthy digital culture and combat practices of symbolic violence. It is important to understand that the impact of social media platforms on the practice of symbolic violence requires critical thinking and efforts to encourage respect and mutual understanding across these platforms.

Symbolic violence against women on social media refers to the use of symbols, ideas, and symbolic language to promote and reinforce bias and violence against women. This type of violence can take various forms and shapes, but it can be psychologically, socially, and culturally devastating for women. Here are some examples of symbolic violence against women on social media:

a) Incitement of hatred and violence: This phenomenon involves using social media to incite hatred and violence against women. This can be done through posting abusive comments, threats, or inciting physical violence.

b) Linguistic bias: Symbolic violence against women can manifest in the use of racist, derogatory, or offensive language towards women. This includes using derogatory and arrogant words and phrases.

c) Sexual objectification and harassment: Symbolic violence can also include posting unwanted sexual content or sexual harassment on social media.

d) Portrayal of women in exceptional or negative ways: Portraying women in exceptional or negative ways on social media can reinforce stereotypes and misconceptions about women's roles in society.

e) Spreading false information: Social media can be used to spread false information targeting women and tarnishing their reputation.

f) Gender stereotyping: Symbolic violence can also result from categorizing women based solely on their gender characteristics, without considering their individual abilities and talents.

g) Cyberbullying: This includes sending hurtful messages or derogatory comments to women's accounts on social media. This can be regardless of the subject - whether it's because of their appearance, opinions, or success.

h) Online harassment: This may include sending unwanted sexual messages or threats online. This is sometimes referred to as online sexual harassment and can be disturbing and harmful to victims.

i) Promotion of pornographic images and videos: This includes posting pornographic images or videos of women without their permission or filming them without their knowledge, which violates their privacy and dignity.

j) Use of vulgar language and insult: This includes using vulgar words or insulting expressions towards women on social media with the aim of defamation or harm.

k) Spreading negative gender ideas and beliefs: This may include spreading negative gender ideas and beliefs that diminish the value and dignity of women or portray them negatively.

l) Promoting violence against women: This can include encouraging physical or psychological violence against women on social media, which increases the risk of real violence.

These examples illustrate how social media platforms can be used as a tool to spread symbolic violence against women. This type of violence can be significantly harmful and can lead to reinforcing discrimination and shaping public opinion negatively. Communities and social platforms need to direct their efforts towards combating this type of violence and promoting awareness of its importance.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the preceding discussions, we can infer that symbolic violence in the virtual environment is an extension of symbolic violence in the real world. Its contents vary, employing methods such as belittlement, mockery, insults, and it permeates with both verbal and non-verbal symbolic load to convey a reading of a reality that carries hidden harm to the other in symbolic connotations embraced by the virtual space.

The inevitability of virtual communication that we are subjected to in our daily lives has led to the emergence of a state of chaos and endless exploitation of images of violence. Social symbolic violence against women is particularly evident when re-examining a concept oriented to both the real social situation and the virtual world. We find that what is available in the real world shapes and reflects on the virtual reality. Violence against women in its various forms also manifests in virtual life, and symbolic violence, despite the novelty of the term, has existed since ancient times. However, it has evolved in terms of media and channels that feed it, making it more covert through its embodiment across social media platforms.

Many previous studies have confirmed that social networking sites (Facebook in particular) help in the production and reproduction of symbolic violence in all its forms and manifestations. The confrontational narrative used by social media platforms contributes to dehumanizing and distorting specific groups, polarizing them.

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