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**Witches and Ashewo's: An Autoethnographic
Exploration of Social Media Feminist Activism in
Nigerian Society, by a Daughter of Disobedience.**

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Disclaimer:

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List of Acronyms

SMF	Social Media Feminism/ Feminist Activism or / Social Media Feminist Movement
SM	Social Media
GBV	Gender based violence
VAW	Violence against womxn
WAG	Women And Girls
CEDAW	Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women
HR	Human Rights
Womxn	Women: an alternative spelling of the English word <i>woman</i> . It is used, particularly by intersectional feminists, to avoid perceived sexism in the standard spelling.

Abstract

This narrative autoethnographic study explores the ways in which Social Media Feminist Activism in Nigeria can be seen to be challenging problematic societal norms that have enabled and reinforced Violence Against Women in the country. Through findings gathered from multiple relevant case-illustrations, such as the #AbujaRaidOnWomen; Qualitative Interviews of four sample groups; Tweet excerpt archiving; and autoethnographic accounts it traces feminist discourses on Twitter in Nigeria, and argues that the recent burgeoning of feminist activism on the microblogging platform is educating and empowering women and girls engaged with it, and shaping and reshaping normative perspectives on Violence Against Women. Using concepts of Popular Misogyny; Rape Culture; Legal Translation; Agenda-Setting Theory; and Sociology Of Wired Generations as lenses of analysis, it seeks to establish Social Media Feminist Activism as a Human Rights Based-tool that can be utilised in efforts to achieve gender equality, and indeed development. Although, the changes it is inspiring are argued to be gradual, this thesis hypothesizes that through digital-activism, an agenda has been set that is allowing all kinds of Nigerians think about norms enabling Violence Against Women, and in instances, triggering processes of unlearning and learning.

Relevance to Development Studies

Human Rights Based approaches to development express that in order to truly achieve development, universal human rights must be implemented. Doing so would involve securing the rights of those most disenfranchised, including womxn. Gender equality is necessary for development, and gender based violence is a direct threat to this equality. This research will add to the bodies of literature discussing Gender Based Violence/ Violence Against Womxn, adding an autoethnographic perspective.

Keywords

Feminism, Social Media, Digital-Activism, Feminist Activism, Violence Against Womxn, Gender Based Violence, Social-Norms, Patriarchy, Ashewo, Witch

Chapter 1

Introduction

For decades, traditions, customs and norms in Nigerian society have been extremely repressive towards womxn, and characterized by gender inequality and patriarchy. Reinforced by a slew of customary, religious, civil and common laws, and even the Constitution, the marginalisation, oppression, and subjugation of womxn across the country is commonplace (Akeju 2020).

The rise and dominance of social media [SM] platforms in the last decade has seen increases in digital-activism globally. Wired-Generations (Herrera, 2012) have been using these new-media to challenge age-old societal structures that have enabled, perpetuated, and thrived-off the oppression of marginalised peoples. Popular examples include #BlackLivesMatter Campaigns and the Arab Spring. This digital-activism has also spread to Nigeria as evinced through the #BringBackOurGirls campaign for example which

“has impacted on the political space as the feminism discourse of educating women, and ending violence against womxn has forced the Nigerian state to have serious discussions about the safety of ...schoolgirls” (Akpojivi, 2019: 39).

In more recent years, there has been a notable increase in feminist-digital-activism on SM, especially the microblogging platform, Twitter.

Nigerian womxn have harnessed the power and energy of online-activism (Smith et. al, 2019), and are using these new platforms to educate others about, and speak-out against gender based violence. Given such relevance to social justice, this thesis seeks to explore the extent to which SM feminist activism in Nigeria influences patriarchal norms and views on VAW [violence against womxn] in the country. Through a largely descriptive and narrative autoethnographic study, this paper illustrates and traces the ways in which SM-feminism can be seen to be gradually changing norms that surround and enable VAW. It analyses rape-culture in the country, and gauges whether SM-feminism has the potential to empower womxn; how SM-Feminism might be shaping and reshaping perspectives and understandings of womxn's rights; and whether age plays a significant role in engagement with SM-Feminism. In doing so, I employ concepts of Rape-Culture; Popular-Misogyny, Sociology of Wired Generations; Intersectionality; Empowerment; and Agenda-Setting Theory as frameworks, and lenses of analysis where relevant.

The study is formed of seven chapters with ten autoethnographic inserts. The first chapter entails a more detailed introduction inclusive of the relevant background to the overall problématique, and details the methods adopted. The second chapter establishes SM-Feminism as an empowering support-mechanism for womxn, and as a tool for amplification of womxn's voices. The third chapter discusses the empowerment that reclamation of derogatory-terms has inspired, as well as the formation of feminist identity. The fourth chapter highlights the role SM-feminism has played in educating womxn and directly challenging norms around rape-culture, while illustrating the role of school institutions in doing the opposite. The fifth chapter highlights generational issues concerning SM-feminism, norms and institutions.

1.1 Contextual Background

While the Nigerian Government has ratified the CEDAW; the Optional Protocol to CEDAW; and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of womxn in Africa (the Maputo Protocol) , and tried to domesticate it through the passing of the 2015 VAPP Act, womxn's rights, all over the country are still being abused at alarming rates (Peace and Security in Nigeria Report ,2017). 21/36 states in the country have refused to domesticate the Act, many citing incompatibility with socio-cultural norms and beliefs (Odiaka, 2013). It's these problematic norms and beliefs that have seen the rights and lives of womxn across the country being cast aside with impunity for numerous years. In the relatively recent past, only few of these incidences of human rights infringements have unfolded on Social Media platforms, in turn stirring up controversy, garnering attention, and allowing for the birth of a movement of mainly young womxn who educate the masses on SM whilst fighting against the injustices.

In July 2019, a video surfaced online of Nigerian Senator, Elisha Abbo, physically assaulting a female shop-attendant at the shop where she worked. The unprovoked attack ended with him using his police-attaché to unlawfully arrest and jail her. The video sparked outrage amongst online-users, especially when it was uncovered that the victim had not been released. Feminists on SM campaigned for justice to be taken against Abbo, as they had done for similar incidents that were brought online. As was the case with past movements, this campaign for justice is taking a lot more effort and time than it should, hindered further by the fact that such behaviour in Nigeria is commonplace, and so many are complicit. Senator Abbo still holds his position, and has received awards and commendations since.

Similarly, in July 2020, on a day when SM-feminists on Twitter were sharing personal accounts of violence from men in the entertainment industry, Seyitan Babalope reported that popular musician, D'Banj, broke into her hotel room and raped her in December 2018. D'banj responded by having her kidnapped by plain-dress police and held captive in an unknown location, where she was refused access to phones, family, and lawyers. She was forced to delete and withdraw her accusations, publicly apologise, and effectively transform her profile to a fan-account. SM-feminists hired tech-analysts to locate and eventually rescue her. Backlash followed from Nigerians who accused her of lying about the rape and kidnap and others who victim-blamed her for the rape. One particularly outspoken user who could be categorised as a popular-misogynist and known-associate of D'Banj went ahead to describe SM-feminism as a cult and coven of witches with a misandrist agenda (FIG8).

These events are illustrative of how normalised VAW is in Nigerian society. They show the impunity with which men, especially those who are wealthy and powerful are able to abuse womxn's rights. Correspondingly, they exemplify the new rejection and intolerance that such behaviours are now receiving from feminists empowered by SM, and also demonstrate SMF's relative effectiveness in enacting change/ meeting goals. Corresponding with Figures 16, and 27, interviewee, FeministFati said

“the first-wave of feminism went on the streets, we instead come online... It's very on book for our generation and we get the results so quickly- by results I mean getting money, support, getting people free. Imagine going door to door trying to get these results?” (14/09/2020).

1.1.1 Justification

Human Rights Based approaches to development express that in order to truly achieve development, universal human rights must be implemented. Doing so would involve securing the rights of those most disenfranchised, including womxn. Gender equality is necessary for development, and gender based violence is a direct threat to this equality. This research will add to the bodies of literature discussing GBV/VAW, adding an autoethnographic perspective.

I was particularly driven by the desire to document the role of Social Media-Feminist-Activism in the lives of Nigerian womxn and girls, who would describe their engagement as leading to an emancipation and liberation within society. I personally attribute much of my personal development, and evolution to Social Media-Feminism, and thereby add depth and nuance through the series of autoethnographic inserts and personal interviews.

There exists a great deal of literature that refers to online-activism as ‘slacktivism’ because of how users tend to feel they have contributed to the solution of a problem by posting about it. (See: McCafferty, 2011). However,

“Those who argue online activism is ‘slacktivism’ fail to consider ways in which online activism contributes to the increased visibility of minoritized communities and provides unique opportunities for connection and solidarity... Not only does on-line activism amplify voices of many people historically ignored in mainstream media, it also provides an important counterspace for minoritized people to come together to share stories, feel less isolated, and begin to heal from their experiences with trauma” (Linder et. al, 2016: 233).

This relates to the motivating-factor behind carrying out this research. On Twitter, those opposed to feminism expressed that SM-feminists do nothing offline, (an untrue statement as will be shown in following chapters) I thought of how I always say that SM-feminism (SMF) liberated me, and I see feminism as emancipation. being exposed to feminism through SM encouraged me to be a feminist, and unlearn harmful norms. I knew this to be the case for several other womxn, and so began considering how online-activism can make a difference in the Nigerian context. Changing norms around VAW, could improve the protection of womxn’s rights, and take us closer to gender-equality/ increase development.

While there is an abundance of scholarly literature about digital-feminist-activism (See: Keller et al., 2018), there were few that particularly document transformations that take place as a direct result of SMF. More so, even fewer that looked into this in a Nigerian context. In the same light, I noticed literature tends to focus on offline manifestations of online campaigns, as opposed to online-activism being centerstage (See: Flores et. al, 2020), or focusses on scholarly discourses around digital-activism. Ray et al. (2017:1798) for instance talk about scholars looking into SM when studying social-activism as opposed to analysis of the activism being centerstage. This can also be seen in Bonilla et al (2015: 5). Likewise, I was unable to find literature that addressed first-hand feminist accounts of the transformative, and empowering effects of digital-activism (FIG16). This played a part in my choice to make this research an autoethnography, as Trott (2018: 119) phrased, “Feminist methodological researchers have long argued for the value of ethnography to shed insight into the lived experiences of women”.

I particularly learned and took recommendations from Smith et al (2019); Linder et. al (2016); and Keller et al., (2018) , who for instance suggested “This connectivity also makes possible an affective solidarity between girls online, but we know less

about how this impacted their relationships in and around school which we continue to explore” (30). This research therefore goes on to explore these topics with schoolgirls.

It was interesting to see the spurt in journalism surrounding this research topic during the research phase (See: Sanusi, 2020). A number of articles touched on many aspects of this research, but of course were journalistic as opposed to academic, and so only scratched the surface, thus still leaving the need for the research (FIGs5; 6; 7).

1.2 Methods

Social Media feminist-activism in Nigeria [SMF], against tremendous odds is gradually empowering, enfranchising, and influencing the way Nigerians engaged in online-spaces are understanding, and unlearning patrimonial patriarchal social-norms/ views surrounding gender based violence [GBV]. I adopted qualitative approaches to generating empirical data and findings for the study. This is owed to the research’s primary focus on social-relations. The research-questions aimed to understand social-phenomena in an explorative way as opposed to quantifying the effects of said phenomena, thus making qualitative approaches to data collection/analysis the most ideal. Data collected from case-illustrations, interviews, and tweets have been analysed using narrative analysis, which allowed for findings to be analysed within context of the research and objectives, and best suited the objectives of, as well as the research as a whole. Personal narratives are “suitable documents for illuminating several aspects of gender relations” and “are situated at the intersection of human agency and social structure” (Personal Narratives Group 1989: 5). Concepts of Intersectionality (Crenshaw); popular-misogyny (Banet-Weiser); Empowerment; Human Rights Translation (Engle-Merry); Agenda Setting Theory (McCombs and Shaw); and Sociology of Wired Generations (Herrera), have been employed in analyses throughout where relevant.

Autoethnographies

Additionally, throughout this paper, I’ve incorporated strong layered and narrative autoethnographic elements to enrich the research.

“Autoethnography is a form of qualitative research in which an author uses self-reflection and writing to explore anecdotal and personal experience and connect this autobiographical story to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings” (Ellis, 2004: 6).

The choice to incorporate an embodied method (Durham, 2017), came about, first and foremost, as a result of my own positionality as concerns the research. Being a victim of the upshots of problematic norms concerning GBV; a “complete member” (Adler and Adler, 1987) of the movement at the center of the study; along with being a self-confessed recipient of the influence, empowerment and enfranchisement it has disbursed, places me in both the position of the researched and the researcher. Crawley (2002: 6) describes studying autoethnography as witnessing, as readers are able to better understand problems and experiences, and “be a part of rather than distanced from the event”. In choosing to, as well as in conducting this research, I felt a strong sense of knowing with regards to both the issues and topics I was to be exploring, and what my findings might be. Much like my

interviewees, I too have accounts of being shaped by culture, and also being a part of the process of reshaping culture (Durham, 2017).

“When researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity.” (Ellis et al., 2011: 276)

Throughout this paper, I utilise my memories and lived-experiences as field-sites and sources of qualitative data, which I bolster with archival-findings collected from Twitter; case-illustrations; and interview-participant findings.

Case-Illustrations

In positioning my research problem, I cited the cases of Senator Abbo and D’banj to illustrate how normalized violence against womxn [VAW] is in Nigeria as evidenced by the event itself and corresponding actions and reactions surrounding it, as well as the role that SMF played in it’s unfolding and the discourse that surrounded it-(hence also the need for tweet gathering as a method). This embodies the utilitarian role that expository events and case-illustrations can play in communicating/ conveying understandings of and around phenomena with relative effectiveness. case-illustrations provide so effectively, “holistic and in-depth explanations of the social and behavioural problems in question” (Zainal, 2007: 1), and convey nuances in ways that other methods may not. A multiple case-illustration was therefore adopted “because the evidence of multiple case studies is considered more compelling and provides the potential for comparison and contrast that may provide greater insight into general patterns that exist” (Trott, 2018: 119).

Additionally, SMF discourse in the Nigerian context is mostly reactive. To a large extent, discourses take place, and relevant passions that inspire tweet conversations are typically incited when events- of different scales- that oppress womxn take place.

During the planning-stage of this research, there was an extensive list of relevant case-illustrations that I considered drawing on. I shortlisted and selected the three case-illustrations used based on the amount of times they were referred to on Social Media [SM], and especially the frequency with which they came up across in interviews. All three were mentioned in seventeen of the interviews carried out. This not only highlights their relevance to the study itself, but also placed them over and above other case-illustrations as emblematic of the situation in the country.

The case-illustrations selected include YabaMarketMarch; GucciPastor; and the #AbujaRaidOnWomen.

Interviews

Interviews of 26 participants were executed between August and October 2020. In addition to interviews being a staple form of qualitative methodology, I elected to use the method for the purposes of this research in order to gain detailed, first-hand insights into how SMF might be challenging patrimonial norms imbibed over time. The interviews conducted enabled me as the researcher to understand the subjective reality of participants. While the autoethnographic elements of the research allow for a unique/ personal navigation of the issues; the case-illustrations instantiate their problématique; and the archived Twitter excerpts display discourse for analysis; interviews provide the necessary and context-rich

support that each other method requires. The interviews proved to be a source of illuminating and comprehensive findings, and played a pivotal role in achieving research-objectives / answering research-questions. All interviews were conducted via Internet calls on Zoom, FaceTime-Audio, and WhatsApp, and lasted between 30 and 95 minutes. Each interview was also recorded with prior express consent of all involved.

Participants

Table1 below briefly summarises the Participant section of this chapter.

	Group1	Group2	Group3	Group4
Sample Selection	Southern SMF members	ArewaMeToo Members	Teenagers	Generation X (Aged 57 and 61)
Number of Interviewee's	9	6	9	2
Interview Format	Semi-Structured Interviews (+ Interview Guideline)	Semi-Structured Interviews (No Interview Guideline)	Unstructured Interviews	Unstructured Interviews
Positionality in Relation to Interviewee's	Insider	Outsider	Outsider	Outsider
Method of Recruitment	Targeted Recruitment	Snowball Recruiting	Advertisement	Targeted Recruitment

Table 1

In setting out to answer the research-questions optimally, I employed purposive sampling, and marked out four groups/ samples of interviewee's that would help hit targets set out in the objectives. These included nine "general" members of the SMF on Twitter [Group1]; six #ArewaMeToo / #NorthNormal Movements members [Group2]; nine teenagers [Group3]; and two members of 'Generation X' [Group4]. The logic behind selecting Group1 was clear, as in-depth interviews with actors within the SMF movement provided key first-hand insights that helped in meeting a number of research objectives and questions. Similarly, Group2 was chosen for the same reasons, and to explore the intersectional experiences of womxn in Islamic / culturally conservative Northern Nigeria, and their unique relationship with SMF. Interviewing teenagers [Group 3] allowed for a richer understanding of the role that age has played in SMF than could be provided by interviewing only members of the millennial generation. It gave room for insights into how youths who have been exposed to SM and a "more aware" society perceive society, VAW, SM, and the relationships between the three. In the same light, I hoped that interview- findings gathered from Group 4 would tell whether a generation largely off SM (Herrera, 2012) are being impacted in any way by SMF. I'd initially considered having a more varied /higher number of

sampling categories. These included relevant Non-Governmental-Organisations; Lawyers /Law Enforcement; and Government Officials. However, after commencing the research process, I found I'd be unable to interview all these groups due to a lack of sufficient time, and the limited space allowance for a thesis of this nature. As such, I employed purposive/selective sampling and abandoned those groups that, I felt, wouldn't necessarily have provided as much relevant data for the objectives of the research as others. As is the norm with qualitative methodologies, I didn't set out to recruit a specific number of interviewee's, but instead continued the recruitment process until I stopped gaining new insights, which coincided with time limitations.

Interviews for groups 1 and 2 were carried out in a semi-structured format, in that I had an interview guideline of 25 questions prepared that were in line with answering/meeting my research-questions and objectives, but still allowed room for subjective flexibility. Questions were both open-ended, funnel- formatted and biographical in nature. I noted that participants frequently rendered later questions redundant by answering them while giving responses to earlier questions. In the same vein, it was common for interviews to veer off the interview-guideline, as I tended to ask subjective follow-up questions concerning topics brought up in response to questions asked. Likewise, the conversational features-as will be detailed shortly- of the interviews meant that in-between the asking of questions, there was at times back-and-forth dialogue between the interviewees and myself.

With regards to the interviews for Group2, I decided not to create a separate interview-script and instead incorporated numerous questions from the Group1 interview-guideline into my line of questioning. Firstly, unlike the case with Group1, I didn't particularly enjoy the privilege of an insider positionality with members of Group2. Although Nigeria is formed of hundreds of tribes, there exists a harsh divide between the entire Northern region of the country, and the South. Northern-Nigerians tend to be more conservative due to the nature of their cultures, society, and religious dispositions . As someone not too familiar with their culture, I was keen to ensure I didn't offend them, or make assumptions/ give the impression that I'd made assumptions (as is often the case with Southerners concerning Northerners) about life /experiences in the North. Contrary to Group1, there was no immediate rapport, as I'd suspected, between the participants and myself, so I feared that questioning from a set guideline might make the interviews rigid, and not allow for a free-flowing exchange. The interviews, therefore, started off conversationally with the giving of pleasantries and the likes. Following these, in order to build some sort of rapport, I'd speak about current events in the country or on Twitter- allowing for dialogue throughout-; vernacularized often to establish commonality; and in some cases, even divulged details of personal events taking place in my life that were pertinent to the study. I'd say this technique was quite successful in establishing trust and ultimately in deriving qualitative interview-data. For instance, with an interviewee, 'FeministFati', I recounted the details of a story I'd just learned of that morning prior to calling her. This instantly dissolved the researcher-participant barrier, and immediately resulted in her relaying her own personal encounters with VAW.

As such, aside from the random incorporation of interview questions from the Group1 guideline in each interview, I asked open-ended questions like 'how'd you end up in ArewaMeToo?' or questions that could be answered broadly, and potentially open up several lines of questioning. Although these were not uniform. I also used keywords like 'arewa', 'haram' 'auray/awrah' 'hausa-fulani'; or generic feminist terminology; and what I refer to as "trigger words" which as the name infers, engendered reactions, which ranged from person to person, and revealed more about personal ideologies, opinions and experiences. Here, my firm background in Islamic Law and Jurisprudence was useful and functioned as an advantage.

For the latter two groups, I carried out informal conversational-interviews with no interview guide /predetermined set of questions. In the case of Group3, I selected this approach because unlike the first two groups, these participants were not expressly recruited as feminists. One of the purposes of that sample-group was to learn whether feminist ideas were picked up at younger ages by teenagers who have always been exposed in some way to SM. And so when recruiting I didn't disclose the topics of the interview. That being said, there was no way to ascertain, when commencing the interviews, whether or not they knew what feminism was, meaning there wasn't much sense in preconceived questions. Following that reasoning, I instead employed the same tactics used earlier with Group2 to disarm participants and create a sense of familiarity. I shied away from using feminist terminology and relatively complex words until I was able to discern if they were conversant with them. In cases where I believed they were not, I instead explained ideas, used illustrations and gave personal examples to deduce relevant findings. A pertinent example was of interviewee 'R16', who when asked if she knew what feminism was, requested that I turn off the recording, after which she disclosed she didn't know what it meant. I went ahead to explain, only to discover that she was in-fact very familiar with feminist ideas, and indeed engaged with SMF on Twitter and Instagram, and even cited the #ArewaMeToo Movement and the work they have been doing in terms of challenging rape-culture in Northern-Nigeria. Interview language used was very casual and colloquialized throughout, in a sort of mimic technique. I spoke using language, intonation and slang of the age-group being interviewed to remove barriers that may have existed due to age-gaps. It's important to note that Nigeria has a strong respect-culture that is based on age. Many of these teenagers would have been raised to not address someone my age by first name. This creates obvious power-imbalances and would have restricted their engagement with me, so it was important that they didn't feel like they were speaking with an elder / authority figure.

Recruitment of interview-participants for all four groups, I found to be straightforward because of how narrowly I'd defined the samples. This was especially the case with Group1 interviewees. This wasn't just because they could all be reached via Twitter, but because of my positionality. Some were friends, and friends-of-friends (Trott, 2018). My network and belonging to that community meant that I had access and obvious insider-status which made recruitment simple, and gave an advantage to the ease and fluidity of interviews. I'd describe the nature of the interviews as Interactive Interviews (Ellis, 2011: 279), in that they were idiomatic; I was 'one-and-the-same' with participants, and were thus able to 'probe together about issues that transpire, in conversation, about particular topics'. Three of the participants in Group1 were friends from the high school I attended in Lagos, who I reached out to solely because of their vocal and active membership of SMF. We thus shared specific experiences in addition to generic similar experiences associated with belonging to our society. This allowed for complete fluidity during the interviews, shared understandings, and an affinity that gave room for the sharing of otherwise sensitive information. The other six participants were recruited through Twitter, either by searching hashtags and observing level of online engagement [including those highly and minimally engaged]; or through snowball-sampling -by referral from previously interviewed participants. Similarly, even though there existed no personal relationship between myself and them, the interview processes were almost, if not just as harmonious and in-depth as the initial three. I trump this up to insider positionality, as even though they didn't know me, they acknowledged a shared identity and common belonging. This was evidenced in the language used, for example the use of 'we'; 'our struggle' etc., or also the labelling of collective others .e.g. 'you know how they are', referring to those opposed to SMF.

Conversely, I was unable to exercise the same sort of recruitment strategies for Group2. The next best thing was reaching out to a friend from the North, who introduced me to known members of the #ArewaMeToo movement. I did this firstly because I wasn't

sure how long it might take to approach them as I had limited time. Additionally, the friend in question, in addition to being a rooted member of the online Arewa community, is quite well known as a SM influencer with a high following in that community, so I guessed that she'd know exactly who to get in contact with, and would probably get swift positive responses. This was exactly the case, and within some hours, I'd begun the interviews. The four interviews went very well, so much so that I was actually able to establish a friendship with three of the participants, resulting in following them on Twitter, and engaging with them online (Leong et al., 2019). After doing this, I was able to observe their tweets and online associations, which was where and how I was able to recruit the last two participants. It was very much in line with existing literature, that I was told by them that a motivating factor/ catalyst for their responses to my Twitter messages was that they saw I had a mutual following with members of their online network (Keller and Ringrose, 2015). It was fascinating to see that I started off the interview process with a slight outsider-positionality, but by the end of it had shifted closer to that of an insider.

Recruitment of teenage participants for Group3 took longer than anticipated because I had to recruit through third-parties for ethical purposes. Initially, I asked friends/ acquaintances if I could interview their younger relations, and eventually placed an advertisement on Snapchat. The choice to use Snapchat for this purpose as opposed to Twitter was deliberate, as I felt strongly that interviewees expressly recruited from twitter would most likely be familiar with SMF, and so may not have been the best/ fair representation of the generational effects of SMF. The advertisement placed was reposted on Snapchat by the same friend who assisted recruitment of Group 2 participants, and again, her strong online-network / reach helped catalyse the process. All participants below age sixteen were interviewed with the approval-of, and at times the presence-of familial authority figures who in those cases were the friends / acquaintances that put me in touch with them. Regardless of this, the interviews were honest and free flowing, with participants being extremely open and honest about personal encounters with VAW and rape-culture, issues with family, school institutions etc. While other interviews ended on a high note, with friendships and networks being established or maintained, I observed that for the most part, the teenagers seemed to have been relieved / pleased to have been able to discuss these thoughts. This was confirmed firstly by some of them expressing that they didn't want the interview to end, and others texting me days after the interviews to create relationships. This included the only male interviewee, aged 17, who professed that the interview made him confront issues concerning VAW and his positionality.

Finally, Group4 interviewee's were recruited from within my home-network.

Participants backgrounds varied in terms of age, socio-economic class, tribe/ culture, religion and even feminist association.

Tweets

The principal SM site consulted for this study is the microblogging-platform, Twitter. This is predominantly because the SMF movement is almost entirely on Twitter. While other platforms such as Instagram are used at times, they function in a more supplementary or supportive role for the activism taking place on Twitter. For instance, one of the interviewees in this research founded an organisation, WeWillNotBeSilent, after an outing of high-school sexual assault incidents that took place on Twitter. An awareness march was soon organised as well as several other initiatives since. But while their main site of activism is Twitter, their Instagram account is used to publicize initiatives, post aesthetically-pleasing

educational materials etc. Because of the nature of Twitter, the abundance of discourse on the site, the unfolding of events (including the case-illustrations) that take place, and reactions to these, amongst others, tweet-excerpts function as a rich source of qualitative-data. Moreover, hashtag technology available on the platform made it easier to find tweets related to topics being explored, as well as the sum and substance of networks and connectivity. I as such employed observational analysis - observing what participants do over a length of time, as opposed to what they say they do. This involved using tweets as primary sources to illustrate and capture general and more specific opinions, beliefs etc. Both live and aged tweets were bookmarked, screenshotted, stored reviewed and selected based on the degree to which they were, using my discretion as researcher, illustrative of norms, phenomena, issues being explored. This observational approach allowed for a richer and more contextual understanding of tweet-data.

1.3 Ethical Issues, Considerations, and Actions taken to Mitigate

The results of this research cannot be generalised as there were relatively few research-participants from a narrow specification of sampling groups, and so this may function as a limitation of the usefulness of the study in development fields.

‘Unlike other kinds of research, biographical research by nature deals with a statistically small sample size and thus cannot claim representativeness or provide the basis for generalization. What this approach can offer is a means to arrive at a deeper understanding of “the ‘personal’ and its interlinking with the immediate and wider social context and political practices’ (Roberts, 2002: 31; in Herrera, 2012: 340).

In the same light, there was only one male interviewee, so the findings may not directly reflect opinions of male Nigerians on the subject matter. These were owed to time and space constraints that prevented a wider and more thorough research, and also means that there may be bias in the findings, as most participants were female, with access to Social Media. However, in an attempt to mitigate, I employed a form of triangulation, in that multiple methods were shown to support and reinforce arguments made.

Likewise, fallibility is a limitation of autoethnographic research, as validity is contingent on my memories and the unique perceptions, interpretations and associations I attach to those memories (Ellis et. al, 2011). On the matter of autoethnography, there are ethical issues concerning implicating others in my research. It was not possible to request the permission of all those whose stories were intertwined with mine. I thus tried to mitigate this by not naming names or being too specific and descriptive with events narrated. However, that being said, it wouldn’t be difficult to draw connections if a reader is able to identify me as the author. This is similar to my use of pseudonyms where interviewee’s were concerned, although for the most part, interviewee’s gave consent for their names to be used.

I also acknowledge that being unable to perform interviews in-person due to COVID might have placed the quality of findings at a disadvantage. In-person interviews might have yielded even more qualitative findings because I may have been able to read body language, emotions, and other such indicators. However doing them over-the-phone allowed for openness, especially as most interviewees were strangers. I considered mitigating this by using video-calls, but I decided against this as participants may not have been comfortable showing their surroundings or other reason. I also reasoned there would be fewer distrac-

tions, and we'd be able to imagine we were engaging with friends as opposed to a visual reminder that we were indeed strangers. I believe this was successful.

Chapter 2 SMF: A Tool

Introductory Autoethnography¹

I've always had a retentive memory, I feel. I owe it to having been a particularly observant and perceptive child with entirely too much time to reflect. I remember, quite clearly, two separate incidents of extreme domestic-violence, with two separate couples in my childhood home. I also remember that when they did happen, it didn't feel so new. Somewhere along the line, I'd become familiar with violence-against-womxn... I was three or four.

Both incidents gave me nightmares for weeks, which probably contributes to why I recall them so vividly.

There was screaming, there was begging, there was blood, there was intervention and intercession; then there was forgiveness, and finally, normalcy- business as usual.

Why would you batter your wife? What if she died? Could that be what you wanted? I wanted to ask these men why they did what they did. Why were they so open about it that neighbours and members of our gated-community bore witness to these things that seemed so sinful. Why COULD they be so open about it? Why did I fear so much for her life that I ran barefoot to grandma and grandpas house to get help? Why did they choose to 'settle' the 'couples quarrel'? Did they not understand that this was bad? That she could have been killed?

Like many things in life, these incidents, somehow gave way and opened the floodgates to my exposure to Gender-Based-Violence. I became accustomed to it from such an early age. It was everywhere. At school, at playdates at friends homes, at Church, on the streets, at home.

Normal.

“Social Media provides a platform for the voices of African women to be amplified in a way that our communities – which are primarily patriarchal and arguably misogynist – don't. Conversations about sexual violence are important in physical social spaces and they are also important on online, given the influence Social Media has had, and continues to have, on millennials.” (Sanusi, 2020)

This section will explore how Social Media [SM] has played a pivotal role in amplifying the voices of, and struggles faced by Nigerian womxn and girls [WAG] as concerns violence against womxn [VAW]. It will look into how engagement-with / connections formed-on

SM have provided a form of solidarity and distinctive support mechanisms for WAG's, and how this solidarity is creating safe-spaces online for WAG's to challenge gender based violence [GBV] and norms that perpetuate it. It will also be touching on rape-culture in the county, using Banet-Weiser's concept of popular-misogyny (2015) to analyse the data presented. Findings have also been analysed using Agenda Setting theory (McCombs and Shaw, 1972), but from a SM and popular-culture standpoint as opposed to the conventional sole focus on news media (Omoera et. al, 2016).

Autoethnography2

I was always conflicted as a child. I knew I wanted to marry, have children, and live in a big house- all the things that society had said would make me happy and fulfilled as a potential womxn. Just like my mother, aunties, and womxn I saw in all the Nollywood (GLOSS1) films I loved.

But why didn't these mothers, aunties, and film characters seem truly happy? Why was their happiness always contingent upon the whims of men? Why was my mother's say in the household worth much less than my fathers'? Why could he dictate her movements in the same way that she could dictate mine... she was a grown-up? As I got older, these questions only seemed to multiply and the answers I was supposed to just accept, were insufficient in explaining away the imbalances and malfeasance. Why could my older brother have so much authority over me? Why was domestic-abuse normal? Why was a womxn's ambition dependent on the benevolence of her husband? Good husbands were always men whose infidelities weren't notorious, whose anger wasn't always expressed with their fists. And if you didn't have a good husband, then you had a regular husband, and what could be done about it? Men will be men- that's just the way they are. It was taboo for womxn to leave their husbands. But when he brings in second, third, and fourth wives, we must embrace them with smiles and open arms, they are our sisters. And when he throws you of his home, not yours/ yours jointly-his, regardless of how much you have contributed to it- you must leave, quietly, then beg, together with your extended-family to return to him. Because as my godmother says, 'A terrible, useless husband, is better than no husband'.

Useless husbands, of course, referred to husbands who didn't provide financially-. But you wouldn't know it from looking at or interacting with them. These are the men whose wives are quiet breadwinners. They 'preserve' their husbands honour and protect his position, by performing and pretending he foots-the-bills (FIG35). I have a friend whose mother would give her father the children's allowance, only for him to be the one handing it to the children. These are some of the same male children, who have grown up now to boldly assert that womxn don't contribute to the family. Hardly do female children say this because their mothers have told them the truth. They have been prepared to potentially reproduce these performances, but the boys? The boys need to look up to their fathers so they mustn't learn the truth. And so we sacrifice again. Men are looked up to, so that we can be looked down upon.

Likewise, it's also a norm, as I learned growing up, for womxn to 'submit' their salaries to their husbands, even if he earns much more than her. It's a sign of respect to his position as head.

I understood men could do the things they do because God made men the head over the womxn, and that's the natural way of things. I imbibed that in the same way that an adult would chastise me as a child, a man could chastise a womxn. I'd learned that nothing would come of it, not only because nobody would take it up, but also because nobody would report it. I knew that we weren't supposed to speak of such things, and that if we did, we'd almost certainly be blamed for it .

I inherited that silence...

I'd say that the inner conflict I had began to wane at a family-dinner when I was 16. My father was talking about our society and its future, and how the rising divorce rates would 'ruin us'. Then he said 'The issue with young couples these days is that men haven't changed, but the womxn are not as patient as their mothers. They are too stubborn.' It caused a reaction within me that is difficult to articulate. But it was all I needed to hear.

2.1 SMF and popular-misogyny

The concept of popular-misogyny put forward by Banet-Weiser (2015), isn't only an adversarial counterpart to her concept of popular-feminism. It in itself denotes not just the newer forms of misogyny being performed, expressed, and implied in the later 20th and now 21st-century, but also embodies rape-culture, and the norms, behaviours and belief systems that perpetuate it in society. In its very basic sense, she discusses how the spread of feminism and its pop culture dominance is a zeitgeist that has effectively given way to another zeitgeist, a form of misogyny evolving and mutating in response to it - popular-misogyny.

She mentions quite a number of literal examples of both, with the article initially mentioning Beyoncé's endorsement of feminism as one of the catalysts in recent times for WAG'S to begin to embrace and identify with feminism. This notion was also reflected in my findings as four separate interviewees mentioned Beyoncé as one of the driving forces behind their feminism. Similar to the examples in the article, three teenage participants mentioned how 'revenge porn' was used against WAG's who didn't conform to normative rape-culture. One clear example that came up in the research comes to mind when thinking of popular-feminism having a "call and response connection" (Banet-Weiser, 2015) with, and causing a direct reaction in misogynist camps. The growing SMF in terms of apparent online-members, rampant feminist tweets and corresponding misogynist outrage led to one male user on Twitter creating an account and going as far as registering a domain and creating a website entitled 'Patriarchy FC' (GLOSS2). at the time, this account spurred a whole event on Twitter, with Nigerian men identifying as members of the Club, and even pinning it to their profiles. Activities included 'mimicking feminists' in manners they perceived to be humorous, denigrating causes that members of the SMF were working towards, trivialising and reducing feminism to arguments of who should cook and who should not, and essentially hurling out misogynistic material (FIGs1; 9). Beyond the digital realm, Another example of popular-misogyny could be seen in the above autoethnographic excerpt where I touched on the normalisation of wives performing and upholding the patriarchal norm of 'the husband as breadwinner', when the opposite is the case. As Banet-Weiser put it "hetero-femininity functions to reassure men of their dominant position" (2015:1).

Banet-Weiser's concept falls comfortably into the broader, more well-known concept of rape-culture. The term which has gained popularity in recent years was actually coined by second-wave feminists in the 1970's (Keller and Ringrose, 2015). Rape-culture has a very broad encompassing definition, including behaviours such as victim-blaming, trivialising sexual assault, slut-shaming, sexual-objectification of womxn and the entitlement to womxn's bodies- 'scholars have paid attention to the role of entitlement in rape-culture – where men not only feel they have a right to access womxn's bodies, but feel confident they can access them without fear of consequence' (Mendes, 2015 in Keller and Ringrose, 2015).

Nigeria has a very pervasive rape-culture that is reflected in social norms such as the routine shaming and assaulting of womxn for their choice of clothing (Keller and Ringrose, 2015: 23), or the widespread belief that prostitutes cannot be raped (See #AbujaRaidOnWomenMarch Case-Illustration); codified by the fact that until 2015, spousal rape wasn't recognized as a crime, or that child marriage is legal. As interview participant, "TamB [27]", fulminated,

It's like how dare you get raped, in Naij? (GLOSS3) Who do you want to report to? Your family? They'll ask why and how you were able to be so loose and careless to find yourself in that situation, then they'll police you. You report it to the authorities, they'll ridicule you right there, tell you that you've nice breasts, and command you to leave if you don't want a repeat.... We are a religious country, so you go to your pastor or Imam for counselling, but he's a rapist too, and somehow your assault makes you a more appealing target- you've been opened and stained so why not? You report the assaulter to your university, and you get suspended or expelled... and what everyone is wondering is why the hell you didn't conceal your shame, learn from it?' (29/08/2020) (FIG12).

She then explained that for the few womxn who have been 'strong enough' to talk about their experiences on SM, for most, like herself, it has been their only source of comfort, reassurance, and support. This interview excerpt constitutes almost a perfect reflection of rape-culture in Nigeria. Another participant, P5, when asked about the rape-culture in Nigeria, said,

'Nigerian culture is rape-culture'. (02/10/2020)

These display how every pillar of Nigerian society seems to reinforce ideas that womxn are to blame for sexual violence (FIG40), not necessarily for sending out signals (n.p), but for being womxn, and men being men- taking what is theirs. Often, womxn are not expressly or even impliedly blamed. Instead we are pacified and told to accept it, because that is just the way our lives have to be. Suggesting we carry around with us an inherent guilt, or sin that means that violence we experience is to be endured as our lot- our punishment. This is the same inherent guilt that we “inherited from Eve” (GLOSS4), or the same inherent guilt that has seen womxn from time till now being deemed witches (Quarmyne, 2010). Instead of directly addressing rape-culture, *Autoethnography1&2* convey how patriarchal ideals have normalised male superiority and so the inferiority and subservience of womxn, allowing the normalisation of different forms of violence from men towards womxn.

Autoethnography3

'Do. Not. Let. Any. Man. Or. Boy. Carry. You. Again. You. Hear. Me?' My mother said as she caught her breath in between the slaps she was passionately delivering to my rear. I was being punished for letting her nephew, my 20 year old cousin, lift me into the air.

I was 5.

To be fair, I'd been warned severally to never allow a man hold me in any way.

Exceptions limited to my father and brother only. But he'd lifted me off the ground without my consent, what was I supposed to do? 'Scream! You scream so loud that he drops you!' she responded. Even then I thought that was a bit awkward and ridiculous. Although, I suppose my giggling and clear enjoyment of the play didn't help my case. But it was fun! I'd enjoyed it. I was a child who was rarely lifted. I wasn't allowed to be alone with any sort of male at any age. Not a cousin, not a friend, and most definitely not male-staff. I didn't understand why. But I induced there was something creepy and slightly sexual /physical that men could do to girls. And so while I may not have understood her reasoning, I followed her stringent rules. I didn't think they were fair, but I knew on some level that it was for my safety. And so I became weary of all males. If I went to a friend's house who had a male cook (which was often the case), I'd be grilled upon my return- "Did anybody touch you? You know you can tell me if they did. No matter what they say they'll do if you tell me, they cannot do a thing. No? Good. Remember not to be friendly with them'. 'My dear, men don't think like us, they aren't normal like us, they only think with their third leg. So you mustn't do anything to provoke them. Don't worry, you'll understand when you're older'.

I was constantly paranoid when I was around men. I was afraid of what it was they might do to me, and even worse, what my mom would do if she found out I let myself be left alone with a man. I was conscious of my changing body and what this meant- I'd gone to an afterschool tutoring center and a man made a comment about my body. I was 7 years-old and wearing a skirt. I told my mom, who then asked "But he didn't touch you?". She didn't go back to ask who the man was, or tell him-off, she instead made me wear baggy kaftans for the remainder of the term. Probably because she figured that this was the life WAG's were resolved to, no sense in fighting it. Honestly, I really doubt that she even considered addressing him. And so, I began to be weary about my dressing /appearance. I began to conceal my body, because maybe it was the way I looked that would cause these enigmatic things to happen. That was what I was told anyway (FIG40).

2.2 Case-Illustration: #YabaMarketMarch

Retrospectively, there was only a slim chance that I'd have been comfortable reporting an assault to my mother. She's made it clear that a man touching me was a bad thing, so bad that it'd be worse than the beating I'd receive if I didn't mention it. And I understood that she'd try to defend me, but I felt she'd blame me, because it would have come about as a result of breaking her rules in some way. I'd have considered to what degree she'd be able to defend me from violence if she'd not yet been equipped to defend herself. And so I'd have remained silent. I'd have imbibed, performed and been a victim of rape-culture. The #YabaMarketMarch Case Study constitutes an ideal example of the general normative rape-culture in Nigerian Society, and provides an equally ideal segway into the role of SMF in challenging problematic-norms.

The Yaba Market is one of the largest, most popular open-markets in Lagos. Group 4 participants corroborated its status as an unsafe place for WAG's who patronise the hundreds of stalls owned and operated by men at the market and are routinely sexually harassed and assaulted by these men. Catcalling is common, as is groping as they walk by or do their shopping. The men enact behaviours indicative of rape-culture by doing these regardless of whether the womxn admonish them or not. It can even sometimes be seen to egg them on, especially when in the presence of male peers, where they seem to feel the compulsive need to perform their domineering masculinity- 'lad culture' (Keller and Ringrose, 2015: 23), which inadvertently means assaulting the womxn. In some cases, womxn have been stripped naked in public by crowds for what was perceived as indecent dressing (*Autoethnography*6), or flogged in public by soldiers for 'provocative' dressing (FIGs4; 12; 13; 14). The message this sends is that WAG's are guilty and deserving of physical punishment. By being guilty from the onset, it becomes easy to victim-blame womxn who've been sexually assaulted.

Damilola Marcus, a womxn who frequented the market and had had enough appalling personal experiences, took to twitter in October of 2018 to organize a protest march in Yaba (Iwenwanne, 2019). She established the Market March Organisation to "end the normalised sexual harassment & bullying of women in markets" (@MarketMarch, Twitter.com). The

hashtag ‘#MarketMarch’ was used as tweets and user engagement surrounding the topic poured in (analytics.twitter.com). Womxn talked about their similar experiences being harassed in Nigerian markets. This instantiates the establishment of groupism on the basis of common lived experiences and such, and contributes to the construction of feminism as identity, which will be explored in some detail in chapter 4. It’s one instance of activism taking place both online and offline, and was instrumental in the continuation and enlargement of the dialogue and discourse between Nigerian feminists in the online-sphere. It provided another opportunity for GBV and consent to be placed in the limelight and at the forefront of conversations being had on Nigerian-Twitter at the time. This not only spread awareness of these issues and injustices, and provided an opportunity to educate and inform the public, but also encouraged participation and incited many to join the SMF movement in some way shape or form (TamA [23]- Interview participant).

The march itself illustrated the issues being protested, as womxn were stoned, groped, called prostitutes as well as strings of other derogatory names. Videos were uploaded on the internet showing womxn raising their voices as they marched, telling the men who were screaming back and assaulting them to stop doing so, and showing the men in return carrying on with their actions and responding that they “must touch” what they see. This again, demonstrates the normalized status VAW holds. It shows not only that womxn's rights and autonomy to their bodies are intentionally impeded upon, but that men in Nigerian society are willing to fight to defend their behavior. This deliberate dehumanization is reflective of an entitlement to womxn's bodies that comes about as a result of viewing womxn as inferior/ subhuman (Puvia and Jeroen, 2015).

That being said, after the protest was concluded, womxn who have since been to the Yaba Market have attested that there has been an extremely noticeable decrease in catcalling and groping in the market, with some even reporting no incidences of these behaviours on visits. A particularly satisfying tweet even noted that when being catcalled by one marketman, another of his colleagues reprimanded him (FIG46). If these testimonies can be admitted as truth, they strongly evince that SMF is successfully setting an agenda by slowly changing norms concerning VAW and rape-culture, and triggering a process of unlearning. Firstly, by helping womxn to unlearn their inherited silences, reminding them of their agency and bodily autonomy, and giving them the support and affirmation that has been strongly lacking in Nigerian society for so long. Secondly, by teaching men to exercise restraint, even if only in the most basic form- as Interviewee H18 succinctly phrased it

“that there is a conversation even happening...that we are talking and there is some listening, is a huge step forward”. (17/09/2020)

2.3 The SMF Agenda

SMF is thus influencing the way Nigerians are thinking about VAW and related norms. Perhaps what seems to be fascinating is the rapidness with which an agenda can be pushed, as opposed to the ability of media forms to indeed push an Agenda. As Omoera et al commented,

“By the definition, one may infer that the Social Media is the perfect tool to use to spread an agenda due to its wide reach of audience” (2016: 4)

In *Autoethnography*², brief mention was made of Nollywood films and how they depict womxn and their “place in the home”. From seeing only men hold positions of power in films, and on the news, to the vilification of female characters who prioritise careers over

their men and families (Banet-Weiser, 2015);(Adewoye et al, 2014); the message is unmistakably clear, even to young girls.

“Sexist stereotypes perform a key factor in representations of gender in Nollywood videos. They validate and rationalize why and how women are marginalized in their roles in Nollywood stories” (Ukata, 2010: 44).

Indeed, studies disclose that womxn in Nigerian media are objectified and relegated to being “seen and not heard” (Anyanwu, 2001 in Okiriguo 2010: 3).

Agenda Setting Theory, developed by MaxMcCombs and Donald Shaw in 1968, suggests that media has a profound effect on what people think about, not what they actually think- “Most of what people know comes to them "second" or "third" hand from the mass media or from other people” (n.p: 176). Omoera and Ryanga adapted the theory for Social Media, aptly titling their study Can Social Media Set The Agenda in Addressing violence against womxn (2016). They used SM case studies to explore how Social Media has been utilised as a tool to form what people think about. Using the same departure point, this research, throughout, is tracing whether the agenda against VAW as set by SMF is actually making people think about / reconsider their positionality as it concerns norms surrounding VAW. This was certainly the case with the #YabaMarketMarch, as tweet content and volume indicate.

Gamson et al. (1992: 374) talks about referring to receivers of media as readers as opposed to an audience due to the nature of the way the information is received, interpreted, and consumed, as opposed to a simply homogenous reception. As such users on Twitter, will be referred to as readers for the most part.

Indeed, one could argue that global feminists movements, such as the #MeToo, #MuteRKelly, #HeForShe, #SayHerName movements amongst others, and the advent of popular-feminism have set the agenda on SM and other media forms on feminism and GBV. The mainstreaming of feminist ideas, and the growth and multiplication of relevant online activism testify to this. Womxn all over the world are beginning to speak about the injustices we face, and being empowered to change age-old narratives. As Nwabueze (2012: 222) said,

“The media play significant roles in shaping perceptions and understanding of gender and gender relations in any society. Media representations can either create new stereotypes or further popularize existing ones about a specific gender”.

For instance the feminist agenda being set on SM is changing the stereotypes surrounding Northern-Nigerian WAG’s, who were typically considered to be particularly docile and opposed to gender equality (FIG2).

The #MeToo movement which gained momentum in the United States in 2017 with female tweeters responding to other user’s sexual assault accounts saying #MeToo became a global phenomenon, with the hashtag being used thousands of times. Female survivors all over the world were being encouraged by other womxn’s testimonies to share theirs. In 2019, after the hashtag was no longer trending, all the way in Kano, Nigeria, a Northern [Arewa] womxn empowered by the SMF movement came on twitter to share how she survived a near death experience with a former partner. She was met with a barrage of hostility until, Fakhriyyah Hashim replied for the first time using the hashtag #ArewaMeToo. This opened the floodgates for Arewa WAG’S who began to pour out support to the survivor, and share their own accounts of encounters with VAW in the North. I was able to interview now, activist, Fakhriyyah, FeministFati, as well as other founding members of the #ArewaMeToo [now NorthNormal] movement. The movement has since grown exponen-

tially, with various dimensions and outreach programmes, and is the first of its kind in the muslim, conservative North.

“I couldn't believe how much support we were able to give each other, hundreds of us, speaking out against the same oppression we'd all been silent about...it was historic!” - FeministFati when asked about what witnessing the burgeoning of ArewaMeToo was like. (14/09/2020)

The themes of support and solidarity cannot be understated when talking about SMF and the fight against patriarchy, as an SMF member said in a magazine interview;

“Seeing yourself represented makes you realize you're not alone and you are not powerless... Seeing other women speak out about their experiences validates yours...it's how safe spaces are created... with one woman standing up for another woman and ten women standing up for them; from one woman to ten to a community that serves as a safe space for women” (Sanusi, 2020: 1).

The existence and strength of rape-culture in Northern-Nigerian society -where child marriage is legal, where raped and impregnated WAG's are forced to marry their assaulters, where blaspheming is met with swift death sentences and Islamic-extremism is the daily-bread- means that challenging these cultures/ norms could result in jeopardised safety and ostracism, support and solidarity make all the difference for womxn trying to break free. For the members of the ArewaMeToo/ NorthNormal movement unlearning the culture of silence hasn't had all the exact same hindrances as for those of us in the South. Each of the members interviewed admitted that they receive death threats against them or their family/ colleagues on an almost weekly basis. These womxn are often physically attacked, kidnapped and illegally detained by both the police and members of the Arewa community. When asked how she copes with such insecurity, FeministFati professed

“Feminism is freedom to me, and even though someone might be trying to harm me every other day, I'm still freer than I was, and freer than other Arewa women”. (14/09/2020)

Northern-Nigeria is far more underdeveloped than the Southern-Region of the developing country. With only 4% of girls finishing secondary-school, and one of the highest incidences of child-marriage in the world (Peace and Security in Nigeria Report, 2017), as well as the monitoring of/ restrictions placed on WAG's in the home, and society, only a miniscule percentage of WAG's in the region have the privilege of access to SM. Moreover, this means that the larger percentage of them cannot read, or even understand English. And so for the Arewa SMF members who have successfully been able to build a community online (Linder et. al, 2016: 237), making a difference for womxn in their community cannot be done only via SM. [This will particularly be explored in chapter5 where SM will be examined as a multidimensional translator of human rights {HR}]. FeministFati shared that after the movement gained momentum and their online network/ community was able to expand, they quickly began to find ways to spread that empowerment offline. For a Human Rights essay I wrote earlier on in the year, the starting point was a tweet about a group of Law-School students who went into villages in the North to try and educate womxn about their HR's (Akeju 2020). The students were threatened and chased away by male members of the community. Responses to the tweet revolved around readers expressing that the students should not have gone at all, due to the incompatibility of HR's with northern culture / religion. Other tweets, however, condemned the nature with which the students approached and conducted the outreach as opposed to the actual messages being communicated. These tweeters advised that the students should have 'gone through the

proper channels’, and spoken to community and religious-leaders prior, especially knowing what kind of community they were visiting. At the time, I wondered how that could have been possible, especially considering the famous 1999 Assata Shakur quote

“Nobody in the world, nobody in history, has ever gotten their freedom by appealing to the moral sense of the people who were oppressing them”.

As such, it was quite an interesting coincidence for FeministFati to tell me about her conversation with the former governor of Nigeria's Central Bank who also happens to be the Emir of Kano, the most powerful King and religious/ traditional leader in the North. She expressed that he told her ArewaMeToo were not “moving very smartly” as the only way to reach ‘the majority who are closed-minded and not westernised’ is to reach them through their local religious-leaders. Which they then followed up on successfully. She reported that some Imams began incorporating consent and the importance of speaking out about VAW into their sermons. She noted that this was very powerful because, for many Northerners, their Imam’s word is final, as she put it “*they only listen to their Imams, and not even Allah can come down and convince them otherwise*” (14/09/2020). So “*even online, and offline people are being educated*”, as put by another group 2 participant, S25 (13/09/2020). She went on to share about a male friend of hers who previously had ‘insanely misogynistic views’, but is now a self-proclaimed feminist, and attributes it to Twitter.

Similarly, an AlJazeera article (2019), depicts and reports on how ArewaMeToo members have been going to rural schools in the North and teaching children about consent. The article shows the feminists in schools in Maiduguri, where Boko Haram, the terrorist group who kidnapped hundreds of boarding-schoolgirls overnight and inspired the famous #BringBackOurGirls Campaign, are majorly encamped. Boko Haram, literally translates to ‘Against Western Education’ in a northern language, Hausa, and initially started out with locals supporting their agenda.

“While survivors and activists have welcomed the movement, critics have accused the campaigners of bringing “disrepute” to Islam and “executing a Western plot”, while others blamed survivors for dressing “indecently” (n.p).

And so, adding this to the compounding list of deterrents against SMF, really highlights how emboldened and empowered these WAG’s have become. These clear examples of going offline to continue to propagate the set online agenda against rape-culture in parts of the country where it's most pervasive, establish a causal connection between online-activism and offline influencing. “Because of its aggregative effect and speed, social media amplifies the voices of people otherwise isolated from each other and ignored by mainstream media and political organizations” (Linder, 2016: 240).

This chapter has set the scene for understanding rape-culture, and popular-misogyny as they exist in Nigeria. It has also established the role of SMF in contending these, by enabling womxn through support and community building, providing a platform and so a voice, and encouraging WAG participation. The very last point can be seen through ArewaMeToo’s development of the NorthNormal Movement, which is now lobbying and fighting to have the Northern states ratify the 2015 VAPP Act, which is effectively the domestication of CEDAW, that hasn't yet been ratified by 23 states. Success of this can be seen in Kaduna state’s recent laws stating castration and death penalties as punishments for rape. The section has shown that SMF can in fact change norms surrounding GBV, and as such take us a tiny step further in the fight for the attainment of equal rights. Although, this hasn't been an easy journey, especially for Arewa feminists, as Keller and Ringrose (2015) said, quoting Banet-Weiser, “a broader acceptance of feminism “stimulates fear, trepidation, and aggression for those who find feminism to be a threat.” “ (23)

Chapter 3 : Witches, Sluts and Ashewo's: Proudly Daughters of Disobedience

Introductory Autoethnography⁴

'So you've joined them? Those slay queens making noise all over the place' my brother interjected, breaking his silence. 'Those womxn won't find husbands! You better know what's good for you' -(of course, as a male in my family he felt licensed with the authority to dictate what was and what wasn't good for me)- 'That's what I've been telling her!' my mother echoed back. 'All these bitter bra-burners'. I was 17 and had been having a conversation with my mother about womxn having casual sex. 'A girl that has sex with just anybody who isn't her boyfriend is a slut!, and she is worthless damaged goods!, or [brother] would you marry that kind of girl? Please don't carry these radical ideas to your husbands house'. [Matrimonial homes are never referred to as that, they are always called the 'husbands home' regardless of actual ownership.] I wondered how she'd feel if she found out that many of the women and girls [WAG] she knew were sluts by her definition. Moreso, I wondered what she'd think if she knew that word didn't sting as much as it used to for the girls I knew. How would she feel about Slut Walks, and womxn reclaiming / identifying as sluts regardless of whether or not they're sexually active. How would my brother feel if he overheard me and my friends joking around and proclaiming to be slay queens?

*I then asked about men who have casual sex, because men must also be having casual sex, unless all womxn were lesbians. 'Men are different, you know that, don't be obtuse' Brother interjected, yet again. 'Well, I don't want to marry a man who cares about that anyway... and if there is no such man, then I don't need marriage' I responded. This was at first met with a gasp, then resounding laughter. I was infuriated, but it was regular in my home for my newly formed feminist ideas to be infantilised when expressed. My mom managed to ask in between guffaws, 'and what sort of life would that be?'. One better than the lives of most married womxn we know and don't know, I thought. I instead replied 'You wouldn't marry a white man or womxn you knew was a staunch racist, right?'. 'Right'. 'Okay, so why would I want to marry a man who believes fundamentally that he is superior to me, that I'm essentially subhuman- because if he doesn't recognise my equal rights then that is what it is- and it's his inherent right to lord over and control me?'.
Silence.*

Rosen (2017) talks about how womxn who effectively break out of patriarchally assigned gender-norms have been deemed to be witches throughout history – “Women were “worthy of honor” for being wives but deemed witches if they disrupted their functionality in society.” (n.p: 23).

“So, it was no surprise to learn that in Nigeria, the most outspoken group on Social Media – the feminists – have been labelled as a Coven for refusing to remain silent in the fight against sexual violence across the country.” (Sanusi, 2020).

This section of the thesis briefly explores the claiming of feminism as an identity for Nigerian womxn, especially in light of the negative upshots, connotations, and associations that the “F-word” carries (FIGs10-11; 41-43) - “...recognitions that feminism is on the cultural radar, that we are moving beyond a wide cultural resistance to the “F” word, especially among younger women” (Banet-Weiser, 2015). It will concurrently be tracing how these feminists have been empowered/ emboldened in the face of these misogynistic framings and associations, and have in fact reclaimed most, if not all, of the terms that have been used for years to shame and deter womxn away from empowering themselves and breaking the mould, again, displaying the rejection of popular-misogyny. Empowerment, as well as

Crenshaw's Intersectionality will be used as lenses to view and understand both the construction of feminism as identity in the Nigerian online-context, and also how these chosen/ ascribed identities have played a part in the reclamation of gendered slurs, and the power they hold. The concept of Intersectionality has been employed as a lens in understanding how feminist identity creates nuanced experiences for Arewa feminists when combined with other strong identities.

3.1 Empowerment through Reclamation

All over the world men have used derogatory words to shame womxn who don't fulfil patriarchal concepts of womanhood, by branding us as 'slut', 'cunt', 'bitch', 'witch' and others. And a part of third-wave popular-feminism has been reclaiming these gendered insults, as evidenced through the popularity of global "Slut-Walks". Although, there is much debate and controversy in feminists camps as to whether these terms should or should not be recuperated and reclaimed (Kleinman et al., 2009).

Autoethnography⁵

*'Ashewo!' (GLOSS5)-A prostitute, a whore, a dirty woman; shameful women.
Are they even women?*

I certainly didn't treat prostitutes like women when growing up. I don't think I'd actually ever taken the time to even think about womxn who were prostitutes. They were jokes.

Not women- unwomen (GLOSS6).

I was ashamed of and for them and didn't even know why. Somewhere along the line I'd learned to hate them, to be disgusted by them. So much so that my friends and I in the later parts of primary-school, and secondary-school would go to neighbourhoods where we knew they solicited and routinely roll our windows down to taunt and yell slurs at them. Truly Shameful. This is what being called an ashewo means in Nigeria. This is the power and baggage that it carries, so, typically, the Nigerian womxn doesn't want to be associated with that word. And so, naturally, it's the go-to word men use for any womxn that displeases them, or just any womxn at all. For us, it's a culmination of the terms 'bitch'; 'whore'; 'slut' that would be used in The West.

*I'd seen and heard women who were not prostitutes, 'indecently' dressed, or out late, be called that word but it wasn't till 2019 that someone said it to me. I worked as a recruiter and was returning a jobseekers call, he didn't recognise the number and so assumed I was a fraudster. But instead of calling me that, he called me an ashewo. My heart sunk then seemed to implode and all I could see was red. 'HOW DARE YOU?!'. After I got off the call I reflected on why I'd been so upset. Sex-work is work. Recruitment is work. But Fraud isn't. Would I rather have him call me a fraudster than an ashewo? I uncovered that it was more about the power he felt he had to call me a disgusting, dirty, shameful woman, just because he could. Just because he felt it'd sting. That was the day it lost power to me, because that's what it was about, the power he thought he had to sting me. And so it joined 'slay queen', 'slut', 'witch', 'bitch' and 'n*gger', as words that I'd stripped of the power I'd given to hold over me. And so, depending on the context with which one calls me any of those things, I might just say, yes, I am, next?-[It's a welcome bonus that I know being unphased by the "insults" will be met with confusion and then annoyance by my insulter]-. So, if it's the man on twitter who called me an 'ashewo and a shameful woman of disrepute' for criticising Fatoyinbo and religious hypocrisy/ patriarchy; Yes, thanks, I'm an ashewo and a shameful woman of disrepute... What else you got?*

3.2 Empowerment Through Identity Formation

Empowerment, as defined by Google, is the “authority or power given to someone to do something”; or “the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights”. Empowerment, as defined by Leong et. al, is a “mechanism through which a community gains mastery over its affairs” (2019: 176). I, therefore, assert that there is a cyclical process of empowerment happening to WAG's engaged in SMF [Social Media-Feminism] as a result of their participation in SMF. Mastery over affairs, as Leong said could be applied to many aspects of SMF's reclamation of power, but for the purposes of this research, the focus will be on empowerment resulting in the formation of identity and consequent collectivity, as well as how this in turn empowers others.

SMF can be seen to have grown exponentially in recent years, partially due to the rise in popular-feminism, and also as a result of it's amplification of voice highlighted in Chapter 2. 'Feminist' was regarded to be a dirty word, so much so, that WAG's with feminist ideals would rather have been called “humanists” or “womanists” than be called feminists, as two interviewees confirmed. Amongst many reasons, the most popular that interviewees cited were that feminists are deemed unattractive to men, attract a large amount of harassment and criticism from family and strangers, and are perceived to be “troublesome”. Indeed, many lose family and friends over choosing to identify (FIGs 44-46). As such, it's no small feat to see the amount of WAG's in Nigeria who now proudly identify as feminist, even having it pinned to their profiles. Feminism can be so repulsive to Nigerians that my friends and I often use it as a deterrent to men who make advances towards us. As inter-

viewee E23 put it, “*I’m a feminist is the new “I have a boyfriend”* (16/09/2020). This bold reclamation of the word, and branding of it as an identity is one of the reasons for the growth in SMF. E23 went on,

“All of a sudden, it’s not shameful to be feminist in Nigeria because all these cool womxn say they’re feminists, so you become confident to say you’re one too, next thing, you can now tweet feminist stuff... and now some other girl does the same thing because you’ve done it... and it’s like we are this whole community” (n.p) (FIGs44; 45).

This is similar to the powerful use of #MeToo, which sends a message to survivors that they are not alone, and indeed have a plethora of WAG’s who support and stand with them. Uses of the words “we” and references to collectiveness ‘gives common identity and purpose... and incites solidarity’ (Herrera. 2012: 348) . This is what Linder (2016: 238) refers to as community building.

As with most communities, not all members are the same, and not all members are equal (Rosen, 2017). Members have intersectional experiences that might differ from the next WAG (FIG22). This is certainly the case with the #ArewaMeToo / #NorthNormal feminists who must be carried along even though their experiences are different from that of many SM-feminists. For them, the building of this community was extremely important, because not only do they have unique experiences, but these unique experiences often marginalise them within the general SMF. As northern interview participants iterated, they see the online-feminist trends happening in the South, and topics being discussed there due to the larger number of Southerners and the relative homogeneity/ seamless blend of cultures and religion across the South. But it doesn't work the other way round as FeministFati remarked,

“Usually unless something big happens, like one of our notable members is attacked, we don't trend like our southern counterparts.. I think this is also because people [men on SM] like to pretend to be outraged when something happens to women in the South, but the north is seen as a write-off ...people expect bad things to happen to us because of our society, so they don't even feign interest or outrage, so the topics don't trend.... Although I'm noticing that this is changing as the feminist coalition is making deliberate efforts to include northern voices in their activism. And also we are expanding to Northerners in the South, which helps” (14/09/2020)

At the start of my interview with FeministFati, I asked whether she identifies as a feminist, to which she responded “yes, and no” (n.p). She expressed that she felt SMF had created a strict definition of feminism, which included “*championing every cause there is*”. Without disclosing exactly what she was referring to, she said that as a Muslim womxn, there were some things she could not profess she believed in, and this had caused a rift between her and other NorthNormal members. Indeed, a few interviewees mentioned that they felt third-wave feminism demands much more from feminists than the fight for gender-equality. For them, these ‘extra’s’ impede upon cultures that they hold dear. It is the need for appreciation of suppressed feminist experiences that led Kimberly Crenshaw to establish intersectionality. Likewise, many African womxn have gone on to establish forms of feminism that account for African cultures, experiences, and heritage. FeministFati’s explanation of feminism seemed to be particularly in line with Leslie-Ogundipe’s Stiwanism, as well as Nijafeminism that incorporates culture and encourages plurality (Olatokun, 2015). Fakhriyyah on the other hand, while being from the same region as FeministFati, when asked about her identification, answered that she used to see things from a Muslim lens first before all others, but now looks at everything first with a feminist lens. This, she said, is reflective of a shift in her identity, whereby she sees herself first-of-all as a feminist and womxn before considering her religion/ culture. A common thread across interviews in

Groups 1 and 2 was participants claiming feminist to be whom they are as opposed to what they are/ believe, hinting at a deep resonance with feminist identity. This rooted association with feminism, is also reported to be exacerbated by treatment from collective others.

3.2.1 Case-Illustration: SMF v GucciPastor

Up until the #ChurchToo matter, SM-feminists who identify as feminists were known only by their names and tweets. There was no official/ unofficial name. However, as of October 2020, many of the most well known SM-feminists established the Feminist Coalition. Their yellow feminist icon became the unofficial image of the #EndSarsProtest, with hundreds, if not thousands of SM users changing their profile-pictures to the icon in a show of solidarity and identification (FIGs24; 23; 25). It is hard for me as a Nigerian to imagine this being the case two-years ago. That being said, up until this happened, Feminists were referred to as cultists, witches and members of a coven (FIG11; 23). This became popular after the #ChurchToo protests against the #GucciPastor.

In July of 2019, a well-known photographer, Busola Dakolo publicly outed famous pastor, Biodun Fatoyinbo, popularly known as ‘GucciPastor’, as a rapist. She alleged that he raped her twice when she was a teenager under his mentorship. At the time, he’d only just started his small fellowship group now turned mega-church, COZA. She claimed that Fatoyinbo and other church-leaders apologised to her and her family at the time, which he fervently denies now. This caused outrage across the country amongst Christians and non-Christians. However, this was not the first time GucciPastor would be publicly accused of sexual assault and impropriety, as he’s had allegations from numerous female congregants over the years.

Fatoyinbo refused to step-down as head-pastor of his Church, while Busola faced attacks from religious and nonreligious Nigerians who accused her of concocting the story. SMF quickly organised protests outside of his churches across the country, with hundreds in attendance. COZA in turn organised counter-protests outside the Church. Feminist protesters were accused of being “satanic witches trying to besmirch a messenger of the Lord”. Indeed, many Christians viewed it as a spiritual-attack against the Body-Of-Christ, and so opposed it with as much force (FIG15). Religion being placed on the pedestal that it is in Nigeria meant that many Christians turned against SMF. The Christians Association of Nigeria, which COZA is not a member of, even went out of their way to show solidarity with Fatoyinbo. One protester called protesting feminists “daughters-of-disobedience”, and what was meant as an insult was almost immediately reclaimed by SM-feminists. Numerous problematic norms have more-or-less become culture in Nigerian society due to unquestioned, blind obedience. And so actions and beliefs of the SMF are considered disobedience. However, this disobedience is firmly rooted in identity, and so has been espoused vehemently.

Again, we see the strong use of popular-misogyny and rape-culture in attempting to shame women into silence. Tam23 asserted it was a combination of Nigerians’ love for wealthy men, and religion that saw the overwhelming level of support for Fatoyinbo (24/09/2020). He resumed preaching shortly after, and his congregation has reportedly increased in size. Thus reinforcing beliefs that perpetrators do not face justice. Nonetheless, these events provided another monumental avenue for SM-feminists to utilise their voices, strengthen collective identity, and demonstrate their opposition to patriarchy through identity activism (Linder et. al, 2016).

This chapter has illustrated the empowering effect that SMF has had on WAG's through slur-reclamation and consequent formation of collective-identity. It also provided an intersectional glimpse into non-mainstream feminist identity, and showed how such feminists reconcile their beliefs and other identities with feminism. Through reclamation, and construction of feminism as identity (Gamson, 1992), we see another aspect of how SMF is changing norms surrounding VAW, for example, by reclaiming, we challenge parts of rape-culture that normalise, justify and enable GBV.

Chapter 4 : Unlearning and Re-Education: The SMF's counter-Curriculum

This chapter argues Social Media-Feminists as educators and influencers empowering womxn through imparting feminist ideas, and vernacularising rights ideas. It carries on using concepts of empowerment and influence, while pairing these with legal translation as proposed by Engle-Merry. It discusses the unlearning of bias and harmful norms that feminists have had to undergo in their journey to feminism, showing how ideas are being shaped and reshaped. In doing so, it touches on school-institutions and the role that they play in reinforcing prejudices.

Autoethnography⁶

She was wearing a skirt and tight V-neck-top with high-heels. She looked gorgeous. I instantly wanted to be her, she was so confident. I traced her with my eyes from the backseat of my car, my driver was doing this too, and so was everyone else. I thought about how my mom would never let me wear my braids that long- it was indecent to have long hair. How she'd confiscate any clothes I had that might look like that, if she knew where I'd hidden them-[I was 14]. Then I got to her feet and saw her gold anklet, and thought of all the times I'd bought an anklet and my mom had burned or thrown it away.

Why?

Oh, only prostitutes wear anklets... wasn't that common knowledge? The same way only loose women looking for trouble have hair so long it sways below their waist. That's why most private-schools had banned extensions, and almost all public schools require that girls cut their hair an inch above the scalp. I remember when my favourite aunt told me God was thoroughly displeased with women who wore anklets, and that she used to love them until a "man of God" said it'd cause men to sin, and that she'd be to blame so her punishment would be twofold. She didn't listen, and on her way home, she fell off a commercial-motorcycle and sprained the ankle that had the anklet on it -
God had spoken.

I envied her. Not the fact that she could have an anklet. Her. How could she come out here looking like that? Didn't she know that's not how to dress here? Where did she think this was? London? Did she think she was better than the rest of us who exercise superior judgement and refrain- [we womxn love to proclaim it's our choice]. And I think most of the other women were thinking it too. And most of the men were thinking their own warped version of that. And that's when it happened, and I was snapped out of my shameful trance.

'ASHEWOOOOOOOOOOOO YOU NO GET SHAME?!' (GLOSS7)

'How you go take commot house for afternoon like this, dey wear pant and bra?'

(GLOSS8).

I didn't even have time to gather my thoughts before a group of men had swarmed round her and started tugging at her clothes and groping her. 'Shey na this you want? We go show you pepper! Oya naked am for here!' (GLOSS9). And the women looked on and sneered; they were happy that they could see the reward for stepping out-of-line; that balance was restored. Proof that no womxn was better than them. It quenched their envy. In broad-daylight we watched as a woman was stripped entirely naked outside a petrol-station in one of the busiest parts of Lagos-Mainland. I didn't realise I was crying until we drove off.

Just like that.

I was overcome with guilt. Guilt for not doing anything, or at least trying to. Guilt for thinking what I'd been thinking. Guilt for the words that refused to come out of my mouth.

Guilt for leaving her there.

I was new to Twitter at the time. About a month-old. But even then, the video had made its way there. I saw, again, as they forced her personhood from her. The woman behind the camera was yelling profanities and egging the assaulters on. The video didn't capture how beautiful she was; how confident she'd been. And while my heart broke, I began to feel angry, which I hadn't felt at the scene. Why did they immortalize this? Wasn't it enough what they'd done? What right did they have to attack her for no reason... this wasn't the North. Then I saw the comments and my anger turned to rage. It was full of men and women justifying this lunacy, with the usual nonsense about religion, morality, and culture (FIGs14; 15). Could they not see the hypocrisy in all this? These were supposedly "God-fearing" people. Some even called it "jungle-justice". Was everyone mad?

At the time of this incident, I'd been battling inner-conflicts. Fakkhriyyah also admitted in the interview that she too had struggled with such conflicts, and denial. There is a natural resistance we feel against accepting these unorthodox ideas that oppose everything we are a part of. She disclosed that she has tweets from not too long ago where she unambiguously rejected feminism, saying "*Islam inherently protects all womxn's rights, so what would I need feminism for?*". But, still, even then, she could see that things were unfair. Much like myself, we accepted and regurgitated the misogynistic term 'equity, not equality' as a way to pacify ourselves, but even that felt like fraud. History had been my favourite school-subject, so I'd learned about the suffragettes. But that seemed historic. All the things they fought for were now normalised, so feminism was an out-dated concept to me. I was unable to relate any of my experiences or conflicts to feminism because the only thing we were told about feminists in the 21st century was that they burned bras and bled freely, neither of which I found appealing whatsoever. Chimamanda Adichie came to my school to promote Purple Hibiscus around that time, and said she was a feminist... but she seemed so sane. And so I began to think more seriously about my conflictions. I started seeing WAG's on Twitter talking about the things that I'd been feeling. Questioning the same things as me, but with such conviction, like they were sure. As Keller et al. noted,

"In this sense, feminist digital content often serves a pedagogical function, where readers are exposed to feminist ideas and critiques they may have not encountered in their daily lives" (2018:24).

These WAG'S were relatable, and their content was entertaining. They didn't always tweet about feminism, but also had humorous content in addition to their refreshingly unique takes on both serious and frivolous topics. And when they did talk about feminism, it made sense- it wasn't academic and supercilious. So, in this way, they were able to make the ideas more palatable- easier to swallow. That is, they were able to map the gap, or map the middle, and translate these ideas in ways that girls like myself could understand (Engle-Merry, 2006). The evolution didn't happen overnight though, I had to begin to unlearn, and this took years.

Autoethnography7

At some level I knew it wasn't right, but for a long time, admittedly till just some years ago, I'd consider that womxn shouldn't provoke men so they wouldn't be abused. I definitely never thought it was okay, but I thought, hey, we know men can be violent, how about we just play safe and avoid unnecessary provocation. I'd think about how some womxn should not dress in certain ways so as not to provoke a man to sexually assault her. Not because I thought dressing or anything for that matter was deserving of any sort of abuse, but, again, why poke-the-bear.

Roots I had to unlearn.

I'd fight my mother for criticising my "revealing" clothes, and get upset with my brother for policing my mother's dressing, then in-turn be upset with my mom for raising a son that would police womxn's bodies. But all the while, harboring feelings every time I saw a "scantily" dressed woman, that she ought to be careful where she went looking like that. It's hard to articulate my ambivalence at the time. When so much of who you are, and who you think you are is attached to certain ideologies, and you feel strongly about holding on to your culture, it's fairly difficult to figure out what to think. Unlearning becomes an inward battle and it's hazy.

4.1 SMF Influencing and Cyclical Empowerment

Leong et. al (2019) discuss influence as an upshot of empowerment. They argue that "One is...empowered when... she is able to influence, i.e., to impose meaning, to shape how people think about community problems or to enable others" (177). In this light, this chapter uses this as a lens to view SM-feminists and what they inspire. As indicated in the above autoethnography, I was influenced into accepting feminist ideology and enabled to make the express decision to explore feminist ideas by following and engaging with certain Twitter accounts. Chimamanda also acted as an influencer in this regard. It was interesting to see how many times her name arose in interviews when WAG's talked about how they became feminists. But I was, admittedly, quite surprised to see the immense influence that the most vocal SM-feminists had on participants, most especially Group3. Interviewee's mentioned their names with a fan-like reverence, over-and-above the way they mentioned Beyonce or Chimamanda, and even quoted them multiple times. Interviewee R18 actually gushed when I mentioned knowing a few of them personally. These womxn are not celebrities, although amassing thousands of followers each, they have full-time jobs off SM, but hold so much sway over the young women who look to them for guidance and emulation. "Social media shifts power by allowing anyone to be an influencer" (n.p: 187). These are who Trott (2017) refers to as High Profile Activists.

Unlike Leong et al (2019), whose research maintains that there needn't be personal-relationships between online-readers for connective-action to be established, and no need for influencers to necessarily be good communicators to influence, Smith et. al (2019) argue quite the contrary. The findings of this research, nonetheless support the idea that online activists needn't have the traditional oratory or communicative skills of typical movement leaders to be persuasive. Nor has there appeared to be a personal-relationship element needed to achieve influence. As interview-findings indicate, it's the relatable element of influencers that allow other tweeters engage-with and follow them. These influencers enable, embolden, and ultimately empower WAG'S to exercise Human-rights (HR) that they may feel they'd never had access to (FIG30). Flores et al (2020) detail the role of SM in educating and empowering girls not otherwise exposed to feminist discourses, about Gender based violence (GBV)- "they got to the conclusion that... they are not powerless, and that, even though the situation has been accepted for centuries, it'sn't normal and it'sn't acceptable" (763). Actions of SMF in these situations could be regarded as legal translation.

4.2 SMF: Translators Mapping the Middle

Legal translation as the name implies, refers to the ways in which actors regard the law(s) around them. It falls into the wider topic of Legal Consciousness, which pertains to people's awareness and understanding of laws and Legal Culture in their given society. (See: Hertogh, 2004; 2018; Engle 1998). For the sake of understanding how SMF is shaping and reshaping perspectives towards women's rights [final research-question], I'll be demonstrating, using Engle-Merry's (2006) conceptualisation of HR translation, how SM-feminists can be understood to be legal translators. She talks about the concept of vernacularisation, which refers to the adaptation of transnational or perceived foreign ideas to local ideas. Likewise, she touches on a derivative; indigenization, which reframes and re-presents cultural values and norms such that they might now be interpreted differently and have new meanings. A clear illustration of this, as earlier detailed, would be in ArewaMeToo-members going to rural Northern villages and explaining HR's to local-women, but from an Islamic / traditional standpoint; a familiar standpoint. The drawing of parallels between global HR concepts and local concepts, as explained by interviewee's could be seen to be creating a sort of hybrid-HR model.

With regards to the bulk of SMF influencing that takes place online and at times manifests in offline activism [e.g. case-illustrations], SM-feminists are not actually trying to directly communicate legal rights ideas. While most, if not all, of these WAG's are educated and very aware of their rights, they don't directly aim to educate on rights. Instead, they address issues that affect womxn and happen to be breaches of various rights, therefore, communicating HR ideas, so in this way they are atypical translators, as described by Engle-Merry. That being said, I argue that this can be considered a useful approach to the framing of HR ideas. Engle-Merry (2006: 41), says that collective action frames need "to be resonant with cultural traditions and narratives to be appealing". Earlier, I touched on how SM-feminists' uses of colloquialisms, humour, relatability etc. were big factors in making feminism palatable and appealing to me, as well as interview-participants - "Translators refashion global rights agendas for local contexts and reframe local grievances in terms of global human rights principles and activities" (39).

Aside from introducing womxn's-rights in relevant local discourses, SMF are able to empower and achieve influence by being relatable in their delivery. Interview-findings, as well as tweet-findings, indicate that online-readers are not only able to relate with SM-feminists themselves [through the exposure they have to their private lives as a result of the microblogging nature of SM platforms, thus establishing the illusion of intimate knowledge/ relationship], and their lived experiences, but also relate to the way they speak and what they talk about [which resonates with readers] (FIGs27; 29). Giving validation to WAG'S experiences by recognising them and addressing them as wrongdoings and crimes directly and indirectly challenge the norms that enable VAW (44). This framing functions to bridge the gap between translators and local audiences.

In some ways, SM-feminists fall directly in the framework of translators defined by Engle-Merry (2006), and in other ways don't, as touched on in the above paragraph. Likewise, they can be seen to hybridise (45), and "replicate" (44) global movements actions in the way that they for instance organise offline protests, online hashtag-activism and awareness initiatives [eg #MeToo or #SayHerName etc]. However, they also don't fall into the framework of translators as described by Engle-Merry in that they are not placed in the middle of Sponsors and Targets, as they have no sponsors. While SM-feminists do find themselves in problematic situations where they suffer various forms of attack, and their safety jeopardised for challenging accepted norms/ practices, and 'westernising Nigerian culture', they are not at risk of being deplatformed because they were not platformed by any one-being. They owe no allegiance to any superior parties because they weren't installed in positions of influence by any organisations or persons in power. As such, by not being particularly accountable to anyone, they are able to focus on their translation without the imposition of arbitrary ulterior motives or agendas. In this way, they might even be perceived to be better than typical translators. Although, one should note that this lack of authoritative accountability, and individual sovereignty, could mean, hypothetically, they can use their platforms of influence to pass detrimental messages. Albeit, this has yet to be seen and is unlikely.

4.3 Unlearning School rape-culture

Having established that SMF functions as an educator on feminism and indirect translator for womxn's rights in Nigeria, I'd briefly like to juxtapose this with school-institutions that are meant to serve the same functions but do the opposite, and instead breed rape-culture. This will be explored in more detail in the following chapter. Kiki Mordi, an acclaimed journalist and popular SM-feminist had this to say about feminist discourses,

"It's very important to have these conversations in real life; it's also very important to have them on Social Media – to create awareness for people to be aware of their rights, their bodily autonomy and for people to be aware (and educated) of the implications of certain things."

Some years ago, there was an incident on Twitter that outed numerous secondary-school boys as sexual abusers, and rapists. I was shocked to see that many of them were young boys I'd known while in school myself. It was, however, no surprise to me that the school was silent on the matter, or that it's environment had enabled abuse. A few other alumni-friends and I went to the school to discuss with school-leaders what actions could be taken to educate children on consent and reduce the stigma and fear that surrounds speaking-up. School-administrators repeatedly assured us that they were aware of the issues

in question, and had taken measures to remedy. Interviewing Group3 participants who attended the school, however, revealed that the school had lied. Interviewee's said that no such actions had taken place, which actually reminded me, through examples, of how the school actually contributed to the problem (FIGs37-39).

Autoethnography8

*I was 15, and at an after-school debate club meeting. The topic was sexual assault and harassment in relation to dressing. I was at the back of the classroom, daydreaming when I heard my name 'Someone like Tife, for instance, look at her body, even if she wears a burqa, men will still harass her'
Everyone agreed. The teacher-in-charge laughed.
Apparently a point had been made.*

Ironically, I ended-up interviewing the womxn who made that comment all those years ago. In our interview, she spoke extensively about inner-conflict, struggles and imbibed ideas and beliefs that had normalised aspects of rape-culture for her, even referring to the inner conflicts as causing an 'existential crisis'. She talked about the school's 'toxic stance' on gender and expressed that teachers encouraged her to dismiss feminist thoughts, [and she did], so she'd be considered attractive to men. This was something she carried with her until her exposure to SMF. It was when she began to engage with feminism on Twitter that she realised she "*was a pick-me*". Pick-Me's are a colloquial categorisation of womxn who performatively oppose feminism and display/ support misogyny, seemingly for the approval of men.

"Movements to oppose women are not only populated by men; indeed, women are often positioned in the media as the most vocal opponents of feminism...in order to validate an anti-feminist argument and to simultaneously vilify the opposition-the "see? Even women are against it"" (Banet-Weiser, 2015).

She described her initial relationship with SMF as "*re-education*" and "*unlearning*", and is now working on an initiative to re-educate schoolgirls about silence and consent.

Once, popular-misogynists on Twitter took to attacking SM-feminists for not doing enough for womxn, and just 'noise-making' (FIG9). While, of course, as evidenced, this wasn't true, I thought, the noise-making is enough. This noise SMF makes is educating WAG's and translating womxn's rights, and that is empowering WAG's on SM and enabling them to unlearn problematic norms. "For, although Twitter activism is said to be fleeting by nature, it is also inherently aggregative"- (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015: 10). Furthermore, WAGs on SM then carry these ideas off SM and educate other WAG's, thus creating a sort of domino-effect from SMF, and illustrating the infectious nature of empowerment/ influence.

Autoethnography⁹

My mother called me some months ago. She'd been having an argument with a male member of the family, and was 'telling him that I'm not his subordinate just because I'm a woman!'. she'd gone on to repeat some ideas I shared with her which shocked me.

My mother, quoting a bra-burner. Unlearning and learning at almost 60.

Because I'd helped empower her. Because SMF had empowered me, and bestowed me with the power I needed to influence.

SMF is literally reversing the cycle of rape-culture.

This chapter has shown SM-feminists as translators helping WAG's unlearn rape-culture, and cultures of silence that enable VAW, while briefly illustrating the role of school-institutions in doing the opposite. It has demonstrated how SMF is shaping and re-shaping perspectives on violence against womxn.

Chapter 5 : Soro-Soke Generation : Why We Are Always “Pressing Phone”

Nigeria has what we refer to as a culture-of-respect (FIGs19; 21;) . This means that one doesn't address older persons by first-name, even if the age-gap might just be two-years. It means one must kneel or prostrate when greeting elders. It means one mustn't question elders, or speak to them too casually. This culture normalizes the notion that if an elder that if an elder insults you, you have to take it on-board as constructive-criticism. Youth/Millennials and Generation 'Z' [anyone born after 1981] have been subject to criticism by those older than us for decades. Whether it's the president calling us 'lazy youth', or elders constantly telling us our generation is ruining the country, we are constantly being attacked for living within the situations the elders created. Our elders have created cultures of bad-governance, gross gender-inequality, and oppression, but somehow have expected us to rise above the odds, and instigate change. As tweet and interview-data corroborate, we all grew up hearing our parents talk about 'the-good-old-days', but have never had the privilege to know a Nigeria that serves citizens. Our parents have allowed post-colonial respect-culture control them. They don't question culture and authority, but instead try to thrive in spite of it. One common insult most of us get is that we 'are always-pressing-phone'. This refers to our use of smartphones and digital-media. The elders see it as time-wasting, distractionary, and indeed reflective of a compulsive need for instant-gratification (See: Bauerlein, 2009). Smith et al. refer to Social Media [SM] as a “potential energy” that can be tapped into to achieve results” (2019: 190), as such, Chapter5, explores the youths harnessing of that energy for social-justice. This final chapter will analyse the generational aspects of Social Media-Feminism's [SMF] struggle against rape-culture, using Herrera's (2012) concept of Sociology of Wired Generations [research-question-2], and touching on some institutional issues that enable the normalisation of Violence against womxn [VAW], as well as SMF's approach to challenging said institutions.

5.1 SMF: Wired Generations

The term 'wired generations'

“Captures how communication behaviour in this high-tech era leads to a “rewiring” of users' cognitive makeup, which changes their relationship to political and social systems and their notion of themselves as citizens” (Herrera, 2012: 335).

Herrera explains that members of wired generations tend to be more mutually influential, collaborative and collectivist in their thinking (FIG27). She identifies eight characteristics of members of the wired generation; freedom, customization, scrutiny, integrity, collaboration, entertainment, speed, innovation. All of these characteristics can be seen to belong to SM-feminists. I have already touched on the 'speed' of action of SMF in responding to issues and events brought to their attention in earlier chapters, as also the entertainment feature, which makes them so relatable. One clear and extremely relevant example of how SM-feminists display all the qualities can be seen in the on-going #EndSarsProtest. Young Nigerians all over the country made the decision to protest decades of extreme police-brutality, initially against the advice of older-generations. The protests were not at all organised or planned in the early stages. However, the newly-formed Feminist Coalition [made up of the most notable SM-Feminists] decided to raise funds to help feed protesters. What started out as just feeding protesters ended up with organised peaceful protests across the

country, where there was food, drink, umbrellas, raincoats, shelter, transportation vehicles, hired private-security, medical-care, therapeutic-care, legal-aid, call-centres, and relief funds. This extremely organic organisation and collaboration was fascinating to witness, as each new element was added on daily by citizens at random. There was strong transparency and accountability with regards to how donations were spent, and in turn those receiving donations displayed commendable integrity in only taking what they needed so there would be more for others. More than anything, this showed the clear differences between older and younger generations' approaches to social-justice causes, where as opposed to accepting injustice as culture and status-quo, we exercise freedom and challenge problematic norms. These qualities can also be seen with the manner in which SMF responded to events surrounding all case-illustrations in this research. Herrera juxtaposes behaviours of the older-generation with millennials, expressing that we are not passive in the ways we receive and engage with media. This is very much in line with the unlearning of inherited silences that has been discussed. Tweets expressing that this young generation will not inherit our parents' silences and dogmatic respect culture-have been extremely popular and common in recent years (FIGs25; 21.28; 19; 18).

Herrera asks that generations be regarded as 'social-phenomena' rather than 'biological life categories' (2012: 336). By so-doing, we treat them as one would treat intersectioned members of a social class, race etc., and for them to reach the point of actuality, where they realise their commonality, there must be a trigger to consciousness (FIGs20; 17; 19).

"During such times the young become less reliant on the "appropriated memories" of the older generations—those transmitted, for instance, through schools, mass media, and the family—and become more reliant on their own directly acquired experiences... In these periods the young may cease to view the order of things as inevitable or desirable" (Herrera, 2017: 336).

This directly correlates with SM-Feminists expressing that we cannot relate to the fond nostalgic memories our parents have, and that we do not inherit cultures of silence surrounding VAW (FIGs18; 17;). I postulate that in the case of SMF, the trigger to consciousness was realising the potential of, and tapping into the energy that is Social Media. Interviewee's spoke about "waking-up" and "woke-culture" that was spurred on by engagement with SM and popular-feminism, and informed by socio-cultural and socio-legal injustices towards womxn.

Furthermore, Herrera mentions that one contributing factor to wired generations being the way we are is the failure of formal educational-institutions in preparing youth to deal effectively with the society we belong to. She goes on to assert that wired generations have gone on to educate and equip themselves through engagement with global networks. Schools and Universities in Nigeria have failed to educate WAG's on our rights, or at least how to chase and defend them in the society we live in. They haven't prepared us for how to stake ourselves politically and stand against socio-cultural-injustices. They fail to provide the support that we need, both as survivors, and potential survivors. Yet we have sought out this development and enriched ourselves through these global networks and communities built online. Illustrations of these include Chrisland School enabling a proprietor who raped a 2 year-old student (FIG3); Babcock University expelling a female student for being the victim of "revenge porn".

5.2 Institutional Issues

While Nigerian educational-institutions are a product of the society, the school as one of the major societal institutions, alongside religious-houses, hospitals etc, have a duty to use their platform as pillars of society to instigate and inspire progressive change. Instead, schools reinforce and reproduce norms that enable GBV (FIGs31-36). This was clear in interviews, especially those in Group3, who were still in formal schooling.

“Nigerian childrenbeing taught from an early age to see women as unimportant and inferior to men: primary school textbooks for teaching core subjects like Mathematics and English Language were characterized by sexism/stereotyped portrayal of women” (Okunna, 2002: 10, in Okirigbo 2016: 25). (FIGs37-39).

*Autoethnography*¹⁰

I was told by my school teacher that the only way into politics was through sleeping my way to the top- I was 16

One interviewee, L15, shared that particular girls with certain body-types have to wear different uniforms to hide their physiques so as to ‘prevent distraction’. Other interviewee’s mentioned that all-girl assemblies held at schools focussed on girls maintaining their virtue and dissociating from boys to avoid “mishaps”. These were all too reminiscent of my time in school. When conducting the interviews, I had expected that schools’ approaches to such matters might have changed, and that students themselves might generally be more aware due to their early exposure to SM. While they were all aware of SMF and its core messages, many still reproduced and performed norms that were slightly worrying. For instance, I happened to interview two cousins, separately, one female and one male, both aged 17. To sum up, it seemed that these children, even when they believe that a friend is an abuser, are not as moved, except they personally know the victim. Interviews revealed that this was because schools and families do not take action against perpetrators, and so it becomes easy to ignore. The messages these illustrations send is that girls can be to blame for “mishaps” or abuses as a result of their appearance, and that abusers are not punished ergo, there is little wrong with abusing, which in turn reinforces the stigma/ fear around victims making reports. What this shows is that while SMF may be making strides, educational and familial institutions still play a pivotal role in shaping the way youths relate with VAW.

Interviewee L15 also shared an account of sexual abuse committed against her. She explained that even though she guessed that her particular family might have been supportive, she was still unable to report it because she thought it was somehow her fault, and that she may be punished indirectly [e.g. by her outings being monitored]. This highlights that while one unit of society may be different, institutions necessarily have a role to play. This is why the SM-feminists are now lobbying for stricter laws concerning GBV. Other strategies include awareness initiatives and civil protests that directly challenge institutional malfeasance. Examples are #SexForGrades, the SMF’s legal battle against Senator Abbo [Chapter1], or the case of the #AbujaRaidOnWomen.

#AbujaRaidOnWomen

In April 2019, hundreds of womxn in the Capital city, Abuja, were illegally arrested from clubs, eateries and streets by state-police on grounds that they were prostitutes (BBC, 2019). This is very much commonplace in Nigeria, as were the events that followed. The difference between this incident and others like it, is that because of the growth of SMF, victims and families were not only empowered to make posts, but were able to capitalise on the attention/ momentum garnered from previous events such as the #YabaMarketMarch etc., and shed light on what was happening. Likewise, it was also easier to protest and demand accountability because actors were able to piggyback off networks and frameworks previously established. Womxn arrested were assaulted during and after arrests, as tweet-data/ victim accounts reveal, were refused access to lawyers/ family, had their personal belongings stolen by the police [money, phones, jewellery etc.], and were raped in exchange for posting bail. Victims eventually revealed that officers used empty sachet water packets in lieu of condoms when raping the womxn. Womxn who managed to escape the ordeal included those who managed to make bail and those who were able to prove marital status.

Responses to these accounts on Twitter were mixed. Many users communicated feelings of upset and disappointment at the general manner in which the arrests were carried out. Feelings of empathy were however not extended, in large part, to womxn who were believed to be prostitutes. Users indicated they felt prostitutes could not be raped due to the nature of their work/ that it was part of the territory of being a sex worker, or that they deserved it due to their presumed moral bankruptcy (FIGs12; 43). Such feelings are validated by the criminalisation of prostitution, and are not unique to Nigeria (See: South African NGO Gender Reports: 2020: 2). Some users even expressed that those womxn who were not sex workers should not have been out at night or dressed the way they were presumed to be dressing if they did not “want trouble”. The behaviour of the policemen was supported by the Assistant Commissioner of Police who put out a statement in that regard. Nevertheless, SM-feminists organised marches in different countries to raise awareness and show solidarity. “By publicizing our struggles, we have been able to see how our issues, though rooted in different cultural, racial, religious or sexual identities, still mirror each other” (Adaku Ufere, 2019).

Law-Enforcement Institutions are particularly problematic as evinced in the above case-illustration. Aside from themselves assaulting womxn, and turning victims/reports away from stations, they are also used as weapons by the powerful to oppress womxn- as seen in the D'Banj and Abbo Cases. ArewaMeToo Interviewee's gave accounts of abusers using the police to intimidate, harass and kidnap womxn who spoke out against them on SM. SMF has been able to draw attention to these human rights abuses, and challenge/ hold these institutions to account in ways that previous generations have failed to do. Outrage online and offline led to the dismissal of the Assistant Commissioner of Police who supported behaviour of the policemen, although no policemen have been seen to be charged for their crimes. This shows that although the progress is minimal, SMF of the Wired Generation are committed to transformation.

SexForGrades

Likewise SMF is also directly challenging rape-culture in University Institutions as evinced in the #SexForGrades BBC documentary, spearheaded by journalist and self-proclaimed

SM-feminist, Kiki Mordi. Mordi, and a few other journalists documented, undercover, the pervasive problem of Male Lecturers demanding sex in exchange for grades from female students. This is such a norm, that it is portrayed in countless Nollywood films, and is a common trope of the Nigerian University experience (FIGs31-36). Group4 interviewee's confirmed that this was a problem they had experienced while in university decades ago, and one that was a norm even then. The documentary whose hashtag became a trend across West Africa, resulted in the implementation of stricter relevant laws in Universities, and the immediate dismissal of Lecturers who were caught on tape. It is important to understand that these institutions have been aware of the endemic for as long as it has existed, as group4 interviewees, and the documentary corroborate. However, it was this generation's SM-feminists and WAG's who decided and were empowered, emboldened and enabled due to their platform to expose the corruption and insist on change/ hold Universities accountable (Linder et. al, 2016: 237) (FIG16). While one cannot say that this has resolved the problem, it has definitely sent a message that such behaviour is not normal, and is likely to have consequences. This in itself is a manifestation of transforming norms surrounding VAW.

This Wired Generations commitment to fighting against injustices has recently led to us being called the "Soro-Soke Generation", which translates to "The Generation that Speaks-Up". Recent SMF initiatives, as well as the #EndSarsProtests have shown older generations why we are always "pressing-phone", and that we can indeed impact change. These have even led to discourses on SM that womxn should be placed in more positions of leadership, as SMF has shown womxn's capabilities (FIGs47-51). Additionally, issues surrounding molestation at the #EndSarsProtests display that SMF is reshaping perspectives on VAW, for example, womxn reported having male protesters defend them when other males groped and harassed them.

This chapter addressed the research-question asking about the role age has played in SMF. It has argued that age/ generation has indeed played a role in SMF, showing that qualities of Wired Generations have led to an intolerance for the status quo that has seen the normalisation of VAW.

Chapter 6 : Conclusions

This study has argued illustrated and traced the ways in which Social Media-feminism (SMF) is gradually changing norms that surround and enable violence against womxn [VAW]. It subsequently claims SMF has the potential to empower womxn by showing how it might be seen to be shaping and reshaping perspectives and understandings of womxn's rights. Finally, it considered the ways in which SMF can be recognized generationally.

Pervasive rape-culture in Nigeria has meant that womxn have been disenfranchised and deprived of basic-human rights, especially as regards gender based violence and bodily autonomy. Chapter2 discussed rape-culture in Nigerian society, using Banet-Weiser's concept of popular-misogyny. Through interview and autoethnographic excerpts, and the #YabaMarketMarch case-illustration, it showed how SM-feminism is setting an agenda to challenge rape-culture by enabling and empowering womxn to speak out against gender based violence and educating men on the importance of consent. Juxtaposing incidents prior to and post the YabaMarketMarch, as well as the behaviour of male protesters at EndSars, indicate that SMF activism is encouraging men to at least think about consent and VAW, which is line with agenda-setting theory. Additionally, by illustrating online and of-line community building, Chapter2 establishes SMF as a safe-space for womxn in a society where womxn's voices are routinely suppressed.

The third-chapter shed light on the reclamation of gendered-slurs, arguing this as a form of empowerment for SM-feminists. It argued that by accepting to identify with these slurs, womxn are indeed disempowering them and taking away from the stigma associated with female agency, bodily-autonomy and feminism, in turn exercising these with reduced fear of reproach. Through this empowering formation of identity, SMF can be understood to be directly challenging norms that encourage silence around abuse. This was also considered intersectionally, in light of ArewaMeToo members whose choices to identify do not fall within mainstream specifications.

Through concepts of influence and legal-translation this study shows how SMF is managing to shape and reshape ideas around VAW. Interview accounts show how vernacularisation of feminist and rights ideas aided in the unlearning of norms that enable and reinforce VAW. I argued that engagement with SMF allows for a domino-effect influence on users and those who they relate with both on, and offline.

Although, there are still well founded widespread beliefs that perpetrators of VAW do not face punishment, these do not seem to be functioning as much of a deterrent as they once did for womxn who have been empowered through Social Media to disinherit the patrimonial culture of silence. Womxn are able to speak up now more than ever, which not only challenges the stigma associated with victims, but sends a message to perpetrators that their actions may no longer be ignored. And so while, SMF has not managed to challenge norms around gender based violence on a wide scale, this thesis purports that it is instigating foundational changes, and argues, ultimately, that prospects for womxn are better than they once were.

Annexe (GLOSS)

GLOSS1: Nollywood refers to films created in the Nigerian film industry, its popularity, releases and reach are second only to Hollywood and Bollywood. Consumption of nollywood films in Nigeria and some other parts of Africa actually supersede that of Hollywood's.

GLOSS2: FC is an acronym for Football Club. However, it's used colloquially to refer to any form of allegiance-based group.

GLOSS3: Moniker for Nigeria

GLOSS4: The Biblical story of Adam and Eve that expresses that all women will suffer for the first sin.

GLOSS5: Also "ashawo"

GLOSS6: "Unwomen" is a term used in the feminist dystopian drama *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, to describe women who were deemed unworthy to belong to men to; be women.

GLOSS7: Pidgin English (West-African Creole) for 'prostitute, have you no shame'

GLOSS8: Pidgin translation: 'How can you leave home on a bright afternoon and wear underwear (not actually underwear, but "revealing clothes")

GLOSS9: Pidgin Translation: 'This is what you were asking for isn't it? You're in big trouble. Come on, strip her naked now'

Appendix: Interview Guidelines

1. Do you consider yourself to be a feminist?
 1. Would you describe it as an identity, or a part of your identity?
2. What does feminism mean and represent to you?
3. How long would you say you have been a feminist?
 1. Would you say it's something you've always been or was there a change in ideology?
 2. And was this change sudden or was it a process?
4. Would you say that these ideas and beliefs are in line with how you were raised?
5. Arewa me too and north normal
6. What do you think are the attitudes towards violence against women in nigeria, be it sexual or physical violence?
7. Are there any examples, experiences or cases you can think of that illustrate this?
8. What is the association with feminists and feminism in nigeria?
 1. Are there difficulties with being a feminist in Nigerian society?
9. Would you say that there is an online movement of feminists in Nigeria?
10. Do you feel/ consider yourself to be part of this body of feminists in nigeria?
11. How are feminists received online in Nigeria?
 1. Do you think the reception is different from offline, or are online interactions and engagements representative of society as a whole
12. What would you say are the challenges that the feminist movement in Nigeria faces?
13. How do you think these challenges could be overcome?
14. Do you feel like the online feminist community is gaining momentum?
15. What do you think/ see are the results of its existence and growth?
 1. Is it changing people's opinions and views both online and offline?
 2. What does it mean and imply for the plight and lives of women across the country?
 3. What changes is it inspiring/ causing both directly and indirectly?
16. What difference has being a part of this movement meant for/ to you?
17. What do you expect, based on the trajectory of things, to be the long-term effects of the online movement?

List of Figures

Fig 1



Fig 2

Fig 3





Fig4

No I need that man arrested. Wth is that threat! & why was he so comfortable and so quick to get naked!?

Let this be your proof that rape is seen as justifiable punishment for "bad" women.

 @Kingbammy1 · 1d
Naija na cruise 😂😂😂
[Show this thread](#)



Fig5



Fig6



The NATIVE 
@NativeMag



In a society where we cannot depend on the law to protect women, women themselves are being forced to pick up the mantle.



The law doesn't protect, Nigerian women do.
thenativemag.com

Fig7



Fig8

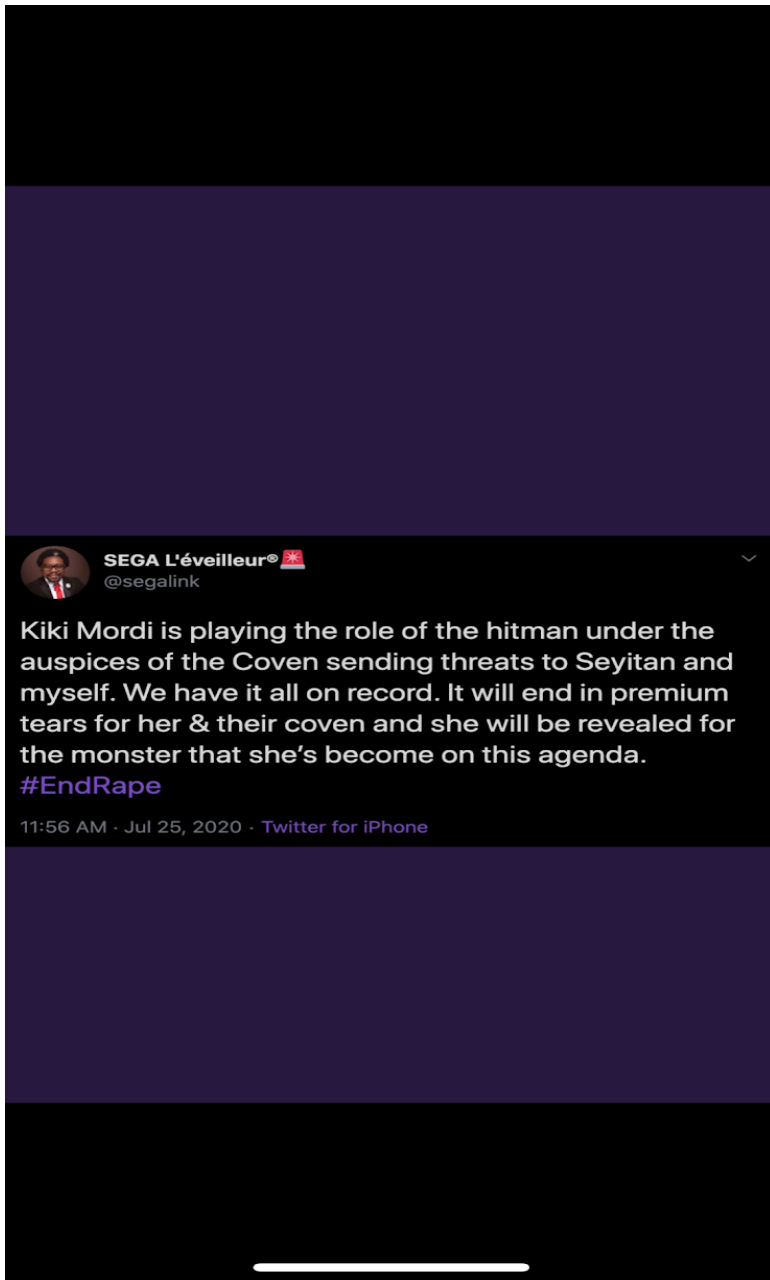


Fig9



Fig10



Fig11



Fig12



Fig13

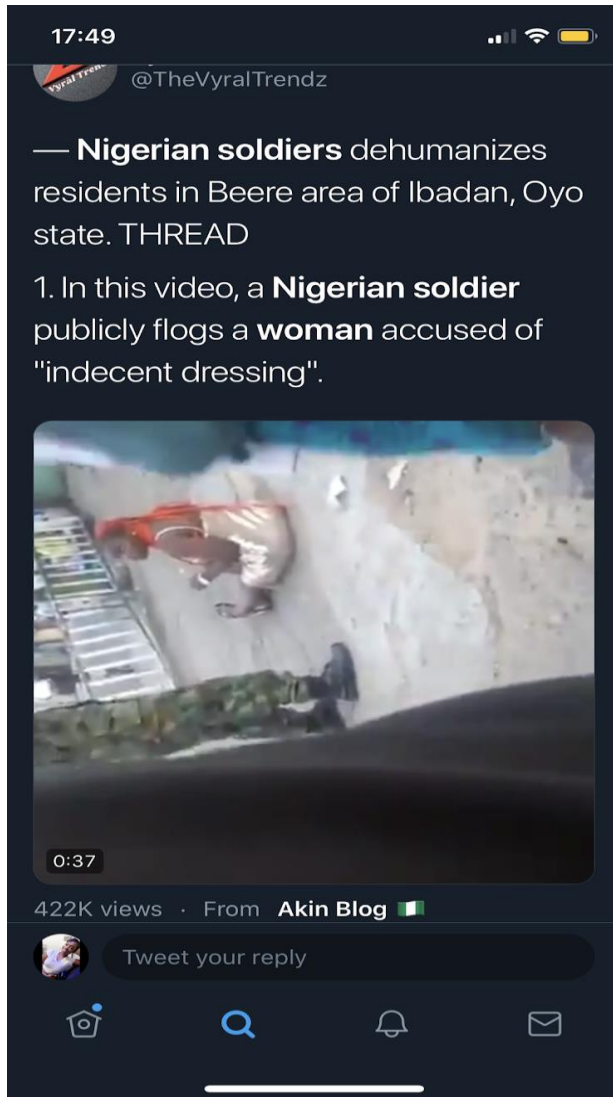


Fig14

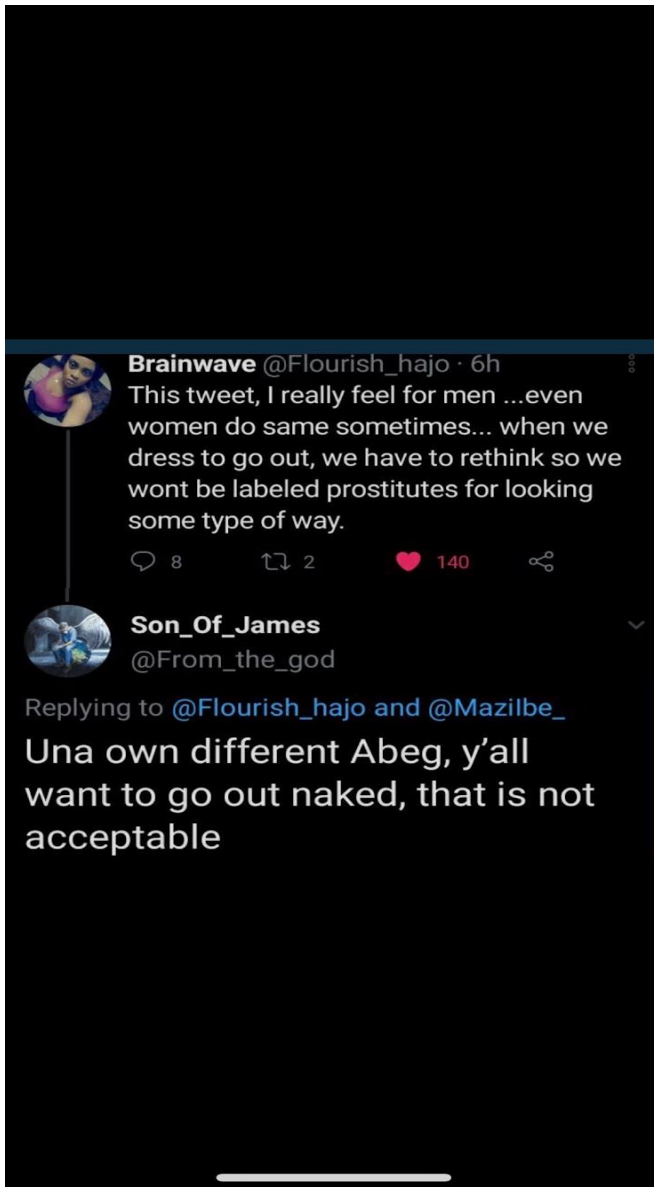


Fig15



FIG16



Fig17



Fig18



Fig19

10:00

Nigerian politicians have massively benefited off respectability culture, they became demi-gods off the obedience of the previous generation terrorized by their abuse of power. Their belief that this generation inherited the same fear is why they feel no urgency to change.

14:35 · 10/10/2020 · [Twitter for iPhone](#)

108 Retweets 2 Quote Tweets 102 Likes

💬 ↺ ❤️ ↗



✨ Doreen ✨ @DoreenGLM · 1h

Replying to @DoreenGLM

They have no idea that unlike the generation before us, we were raised in a more transparent world that made us more aware of our rights. And even before we knew the word "injustice", could tell even as kids that there was something very wrong with how we were told to live.

Fig21



Fig20



Fig22



Fig23



Fig24



Fig25



Fig26



Fig27



Fig28



Fig29



Fig30

♥ Nadine A. Audi liked



Ozzy Etomi
@ozzyetomi



Even more important than taking stances about things is living them through action. Our words have influence, but our actions have even more influence, esp in every day situations. It's great to reach a wider audience, but a true reflection is how we influence those around us.

16:49 · 24/08/2020 · [Twitter Web App](#)

15 Retweets 47 Likes



Ozzy Etomi @ozzyetomi · 18h
Replying to [@ozzyetomi](#)



This is especially important for those of us raising children. Children rarely



Fig31

Fig32



Fig33



Fig34



Fig35



Nadine A. Audi @iamnadinee · 7h

In my set, a female student got slapped by a male student and the female lecturer brought them both to the stage and asked the woman to apologize to the man because "that's what a good woman does".



6



90



42



Nadine A. Audi @iamnadinee · 7h

She used an example of what I assumed was her marriage and said "good women are meant to do these things. When a man comes home drunk and vomits all over the floor as a good woman you wipe it up and say nothing.

When he fails to pay the school fees, you pay it on his behalf...



2



40



25



Nadine A. Audi @iamnadinee · 7h

...and tell the children to thank their father for providing".

When the girl who got slapped tried to speak out against the outrageous teaching conditions earlier in the term, it was the students, not the lecturers, who mocked her and stood against her.



1



41



29



Fig36

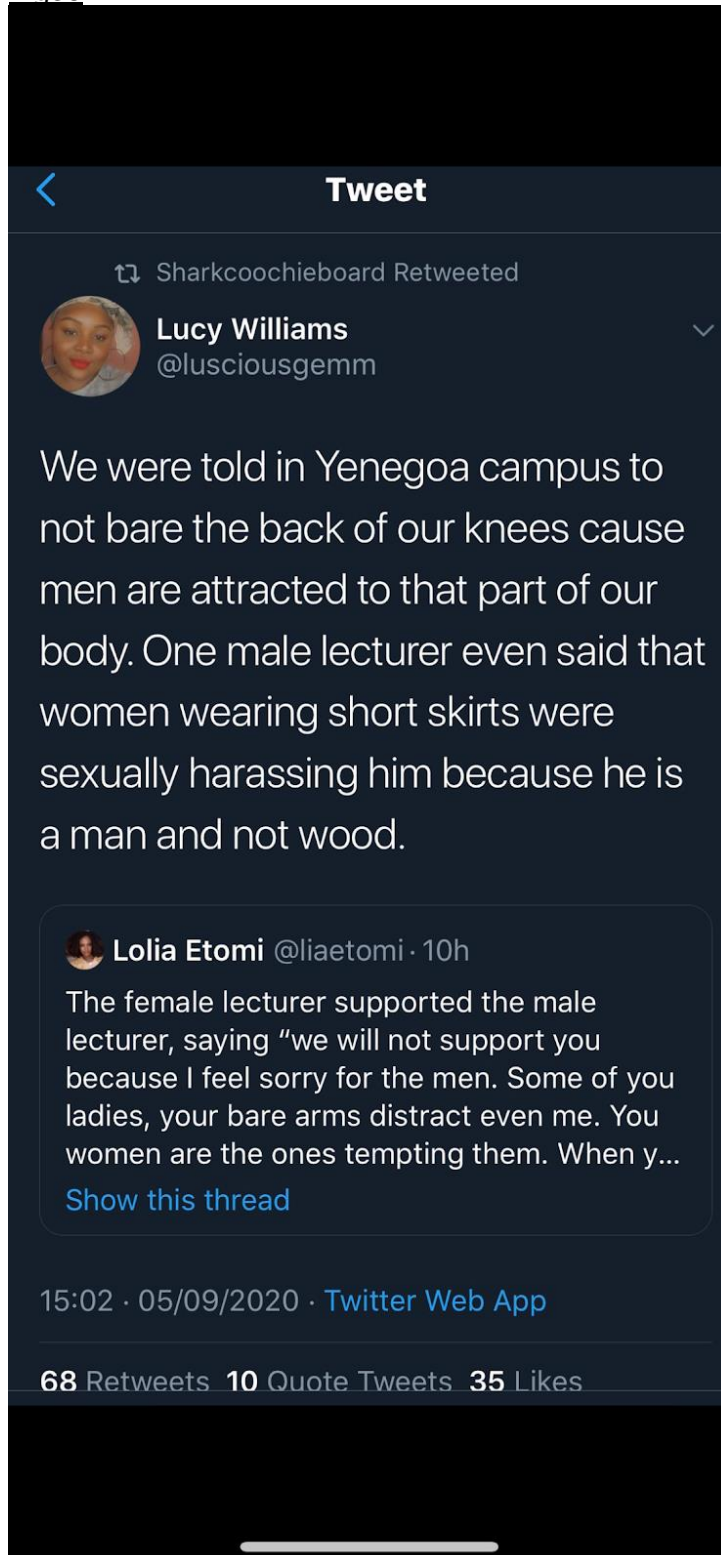


Fig37



Tweet



Olufunmilayo Ransome-kuti

@olafaramade_



When they told me, the head girl, that
the head boy was first in command,
then me.

Tears inna mi eyes



Feminist Voices Zimbabwe. @femin... · 1d

We want African Feminists to talk about their
first experience of patriarchy. What was
yours ?

14:06 · 26/08/2020 · [Twitter for Android](#)

Fig38



Fig39



Fig40



Fig41



Fig42



Fakhriyyah Hashim, interviewee and leader of #ArewaMeToo being cursed and called a prostitute for being on a conference panel



Fig43



Fig44

Fig45



Fig46



Fig47



Fig48



Fig49



Fig50



Fig51



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