

Celebrities Campaign on Social Media to Get Justice for Rape Victims: A Study on Two Rape Incidents in Nigeria

Kourtney Oluwakemi Sunday, Dr. Amodu Lanre, Dr. Olusola Oyero, Opeyemi Olaoluwa Oredola
Covenant University, Nigeria

Abstract: The world is acquainted with social media revolution. It is no longer news that social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Telegram, Skype and many more are used as a tool for airing our opinions and sharing our views pertaining to various trivial issues around the globe. Celebrities on a daily basis use social media for lots of things and they have the power to influence or provoke change on any matter of social interest.

Most times victims of sexual assault tend to shy away from seeking justice due to the fear of being stigmatized; and when they voice out and celebrities go on social media to push for justice, it's only a matter of time before the hype for justice dies down and victims are left shattered while their abusers go unpunished. This has been a trend for sometime now where at the beginning there's so much hype to get justice and then it all dies down.

This study aimed to explore the outcome of celebrity campaign on social media to push for justice for two rape victims - Uwa and Barakat.

Questionnaire and content analysis methods have been used for this study. Questionnaire was used to determine the most used social media while content analysis was used to analyze posts with the hash tags #justice for Uwa and Barakat on the most used social media platform. Findings have revealed that celebrities push for justice for the case of Uwa and Barakat has tremendously led to the arrest of culprits involved in less than few days since the incident occurred.

However, the use of social media by celebrities as a tool in following up cases of rape is not popular in literature as it should be an important factor in fighting against sexual assault and getting justice for victims. Not much has been done in regards to celebrities using social media as a tool for social change particularly on the issue of sexual assault. It is imperative that celebrities utilize social media in following up cases of sexual assault and see it through till the very end as this will not only change the norm but will eventually serve as an eye opener to sex offenders that they won't go unpunished.

Key Words: Campaign, Celebrity, Justice, Social Media.

I. INTRODUCTION

Series of events have been unfolding around the globe; the recent crime trending in Nigeria in particular is that of sexual harassment and rape; whereby men are forcefully having carnal knowledge of the girl child and women. One of such crimes is that of Vera Uwaila Omozua, a 22-year old student of the University of Benin who was raped and

murdered by a group of men inside a church building. This incident happened on the 27th May 2020; she was rushed to the hospital but gave up the ghost on the 31st May 2020. This led to the outrage of several Nigerians on social media. Nigerian Celebrity, Genevieve took to her Instagram and Twitter pages to seek for justice and the hashtag #JusticeforUwa started trending; in no time, other Nigerian celebrities such as Rita Dominic, Don Jazzy, Falz, Toyin Abraham, Funke Akindele, Nse Ikpe amongst others joined the campaign to seek for Justice (Olowoyo, 2020).

Less than three days after the case of Uwa, another 18-year-old student by the name Barakat Bello was raped and murdered in her home in Ibadan. While Nigerians were yet to get over the death of Uwa, this sparked even more outrage as Nigerians continued to seek for justice on all platforms and hashtag #JusticeforBarakat started trending as well (Toromade, 2020). These cases kicked up a storm on social media and have been able to penetrate through the corridors of power and gained the attention of President Muhammed Buhari as he urged the Nigerian Police to take action. Uwa's case gained the attention of the Senate where a motion was raised to condemn the increasing cases of rape and brutality against the girl child in Nigeria. After days of continuous outrage by Nigerians on social media, a suspect involved in the rape and murder case of Uwa was apprehended. Meanwhile, the trend of #JusticeforBarakat has since died down even before a suspect was apprehended.

The Internet being the latest means of communication has risen above every other channel of communication (Sobowale, Amodu, Aririguzoh, & Ekanem, 2015). Often times, social media is referred to as new forms of media that brings about interactive participation among users. With the rise of digital and mobile technology, now more than ever, increase in interaction on a large scale has become easier for individuals and that placed interaction at the center of new media functions as individuals now have the luxury of speaking to many people and instant feedback is now possible as well. Before now, individuals used to have limited and somewhat muted voices, now social media made it possible for them to share their opinions with many (Manning, 2014).

Oregon (2014) Indicates that the use of social media can be a powerful tool that can change our attitudes and everyday

norms that endorse sexual violence. It is imperative to get acquainted to the use of social media for social change, as it would foster the current agenda in fighting against sexual violence epidemic around the globe.

Celebrities are referred to as famous people or people in the spotlight of entertainment. They have the power to bring more attention to important issues concerning social injustices; they have such a broad platform with so many people following them on all social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and the likes (Chang, 2019). As such; they have the potential to influence the outlook of the general public; it's important that they speak out when they are passionate about an issue and use the power of their voices to effect positive change (Gonzalez & Phillips, 2018).

Sexual harassment has been a reoccurring event in our society as victims have been silent over the fear of being stigmatized and most cases go unreported. The emergence of social media has made it possible for victims to voice out. Celebrities also understand the importance of social media platforms in fighting against issues related to social injustice and are constantly making use of social media in order to change the norm and get justice for victims of sexual assault. Overtime, celebrities in following up on both cases made no effort.

It is important for celebrities to continue to follow-up on the progress of rape related issues till justice is served; as the use of social media platforms for campaign is beginning to yield some positive results as victims now get justice and sex offenders do not go unpunished (Akinbobola, 2011).

In times past, several research has been done on celebrities using their influence to express displeasure on issues of social injustice but no research has been done pertaining to celebrities using their influence in following up on cases of sexual assault and seeing that justice is truly served. This study seemingly sets out to investigate celebrity use of social media in campaigning for justice and following up rape cases of Uwa and Barakat and it seeks to identify the outcome of celebrity campaign in getting justice for Uwa and Barakat.

Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is about Peace, Justice and Disabilities. The goal is to promote peace and combat injustice at all levels [UN], 2015). Which indicates that in order to be able to transform the world, issues such as this must be addressed.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media and technological determinism

Choosing online media to offline media is essential as regards to a campaign as it yields swift result. However, technology as a whole has the capacity to influence formation and cause change in human activities (Oyero, 2009). It greatly affects the scale of human interactions and socialization (Oyero & Jegede, 2011) but it does not have absolute control over human activities. Instead, technology is a tool used by humans for human activities that could either yield positive or

negative results; either ways, the outcome of its usage depends on the purpose to which it was used in the first place (Thitivesa, 2017). Also, it depends on the individuals using them and what they aim to achieve. Technological innovations are neither good nor bad. It cannot function and bring about any effect or change without human participation; it only works and brings about the needed change we desire when human engagement is involved in it (Thitivesa, 2017). Therefore, technology should not be regarded as the only thing that completely determines change in society; because on its own without human effort would not be able to determine change. It is the combination of human activities that gives them the power to determine or effect change. In relation to this study, it is up to celebrities to constantly use social media as a tool to express their displeasure on rape and gradually change the norm by ensuring that they use their social media platforms to campaign against such acts in the society.

Importance of celebrities using social media platforms

Celebrities can now bypass traditional news media and tailor messages the way they please. This does not only give celebrities a voice, it enables them decide what they want to disclose, it puts them in control of responding to whatever it is they decide to post and it allows them connect with their fans on a deeper level (Wright, 2015). With the rise and power of social media, anyone including celebrities can decide to use any social media platform for news information and campaign against issues of concern in the society. This is crucial for celebrities because they are constantly in the spotlight with media glued to watching their every move and that means they are at advantage to instantly getting words to higher authorities about rape related issues due to their position in the society.

(Wright, 2015) argues that celebrities can use their social media presence to shape public opinion of an individual or group. This ability makes celebrities great for brand endorsements; it gives them upper hand to campaign for justice against trivial issues such as rape or sexual harassment and other lesser-known issues. This is true as their displeasure on trivial issues such as rape can provoke their fans to agree and support their fight against rape.

Social media also allows celebrities to interact with their fans at various levels. Social networks such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Telegram and the likes are used by celebrities in relating with their fans and this in turn makes their fans feel connected to them; it makes them feel they know them via the updates and it gives them this feeling of being important to their favorite celebrities (Christman, 2011). Celebrities can definitely use social media to effect positive change in the society and based on their influence it is of utmost importance that celebrities continue to use their influence on social media to follow up on cases of rape and social injustice; if they all come together with the aim of positively changing the norm and not letting these cases die down like previous cases; they

will definitely effect the needed change in our society. Constant use of social media by celebrities in campaigning against issues of sexual assault and demanding justice for victims will raise the bar and serve as a constant reminder to higher authorities that the people would not relent until justice is duly served. This is crucial in order to gradually put an end to the act of rape.

Technological determinism

Any attempt to explain or create a representation of an aspect of reality is a theory (Littlejohn, 1989). According to Kaplan, (1965) theory is a group of related generalizations that breeds new observations, which can be empirically tested for the purpose of explaining or predicting. The composition of ideas from an observed phenomenon has been described as theories (McQuail, 2010). Overtime, development in technology has played a role in improving and shaping the ways in which certain things are done, particularly the aspect of human activities. The advent of technology has drastically influenced the societies norm; values and it gave rise to development at various levels. The theory of technological determinism is built on the effect technology has on the lives of individuals. (Kline, 2001) describes technological determinism as a set of claims made about the relationship between technology and society.

Technological determinism theory simply believes that technology is the principal initiator of the society's transformation (Hauer, 2017).

Technological determinism theory based on research is coined in such a way that it determines the changes in our society. Primarily, it is linked to the community or our society at large. (Davie, 2010) declares computers, gadgets and other interactive media have superseded television and radio. They are no longer the dominant media of our culture. This clearly indicates that technology sure has a way of dominating our lives. This theory posits that media technology shapes how we as individuals in a society think, feel, act, and how society functions as we move from one technological era to the other (Griffin, 2010). The theory argues that in each cultural era the medium in which information is recorded and transmitted is determined in the character of that culture. Hence, the linking of electronic information media overtime has created an interconnected global village.

It is always necessary to consider the existence of technology and its use in relation to human activities. Digital technology must be seen as a product of the human culture and technology partly forming the contemporary society and the life of all people and life in schools as well. Technological, social and cultural transformations in recent decades have led to suggestions on what should be the competences of twenty-first century man (Hauer, 2017). Technology has turned a formerly complex diverse fragmental society into a family hood society. Facts are being linked together through theory while technological determinism points out that each new technology changes the way of life of people, their

behaviours, beliefs and norms. Technological determinism hammers on how the society functions and how people function within a society as technology advances (Talabi, 2016).

Technological devices will continue to shape the culture, while cultural forces and circumstances will choose what technologies are to be developed. This process eventually will continue to effect change, for example; mobile phones have increased communication through the media in no time. People can contact other people anytime and anywhere (Wiryanta, Setiyawati, & Haryanto, 2017). Currently, Internet is the main channel that aids distribution of goods and services across various platforms. It brings individuals together by bridging the gap between space and time. Therefore, due to its growth there's been increase in the flow information and communication as a result of networks that were formed digitally (Drucker, 1999).

These scholars have been able to prove without a doubt that advancement in technology has brought about the exchange of information, knowledge and diversity across time and space. For this study, social media platforms are a product of technology and as technology advances; more platforms will spring up and will continue to bring people closer to one another. Technology cannot be ruled out as bad if it can be used as tool that will effect positive change in humans. Celebrities being aware of the kind of influence they have can effectively make use of technology such as mobile phone and social media to campaign against rape and seek justice for victims. That would be using social media for a good cause; then the constant use of technology to consistently following up on cases would yield results as technology has proved to create an interconnected global village where information and knowledge can be exchanged in no time. Thereby, making it easy for celebrities in their push for justice to get the attention of the appropriate authorities.

III. DATA AND METHOD

Research Method: Content Analysis was used for this study. Content analysis is a type of research method that is systematically used to identify patterns in a recorded communication. It involves collecting data from a set of texts in either oral or written form; texts such as books, newspapers, web contents and social media posts. In addition, for this research method you code or categorize words or themes within the texts and then analyze results (Luo, 2019). Content analysis was duly applied, as it is the ideal research method for analyzing contents on social media as this study is centered around celebrity campaign on social media.

Population Size: the population used for this survey is 166 posts in total; this was derived from 7,400 hash tags used by both celebrities and other interactions between 31st of May to 7th of June 2020. This was the period both cases trended for. Out of 7,400 posts that was analyzed; 166 posts were from celebrities with the hash tag for both #JusticeforUwa and #JusticeforBarakat. The number of posts used by celebrities

with #JusticeforUwa came to 109 and that of #JusticeforBarakat came to 57. And that’s how a total of 166 posts became the population size. Also, 200 copies of questionnaire were distributed to respondents in order to determine the most used social media network to be analyzed and also get the views of people on their own definition of a celebrity in this context.

Sampling Technique: the systematic sampling technique was applied in order to get the sample size for this study. Instagram posts appear as three posts on a line, out of the 166 posts by celebrities, on each line a post is systematically picked. Systematically picking a post per line brought the sample size to 55 posts in total. This technique was also applied in order to determine the most used social media network to be analyzed for this study. For every two copies of questionnaire, one is systematically picked. This brought the questionnaire analyzed down to 100.

Sample Size: for every three posts, one post is systematically picked and that brought the sample size to 55 posts in total. Out of the 55 posts to be analyzed, 36 posts were for #JusticeforUwa and 19 for #JusticeforBarakat, making 55 in total. In addition, 100 copies of questionnaire were analyzed at the beginning of this research in order to find out the most used social media network to be analyzed for this research and also get the views of people on their definition of a celebrity in this context in order to know what to look out for when analyzing posts by celebrities.

Instrument: Instagram posts by celebrities with hash tag #JusticeforUwa and #JusticeforBarakat were analyzed.

IV. RESULTS

Table 1 gives an idea of how Instagram amongst other social media networks became the one used for analysis in this study. It also gives an idea on the context of a celebrity. The above table clearly shows that Instagram is the most used social media network by most people and that is why it was used in this study for analysis. Celebrities are categorized into Actors/music artists, public figures and influencers and so for the second part of this survey that is the content analysis, only post under those categories will be analyzed.

TABLE 1

QUESTIONS	OPTIONS	PERCENTAGE
What’s your most preferred social media network?	Twitter	36.4%
	Instagram	45.5%
	Facebook	18.1%
What’s your definition of a celebrity?	Actors/ actresses/ music artists	40%
	Public figure	41.1%
	Influencers	18.9%

Table 2 indicates the number of celebrities that used the hashtags #JusticeforUwa and #JusticeforBarakat between 31st of May to 7th of June 2020. The duration falls within the period both rape cases occurred.

TABLE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF INSTAGRAM HASHTAGS ANALYZED

Duration	#JusticeforUwa	#JusticeforBarakat	Total
31 st May 2020	4	-	
1 st June 2020	7	-	
2 nd June 2020	12	-	
3 rd June 2020	7	7	
4 th June 2020	3	2	
5 th June 2020	1	6	
6 th June 2020	1	2	
7 th June 2020	1	2	
Total	36	19	55

Table 3 clearly explains the industry all the celebrities that used both hashtags belong to. Like indicated earlier, celebrities are classified as people in the entertainment industry, public figures, and influencers. Taking a closer look at all the hashtags analyzed, it shows that 47.3% of celebrities in the film industry used the #JusticeforUwa; 11% were public figures; 5.4% were music artists and 2% were media influencers. That clearly indicates that majority of celebrities that used this hashtags within the stipulated time were from the film industry (actors and actresses). For #JusticeforBarakat 9% were from film industry, 18.1% were public figures and 7.2% were influencers. That means this hashtag was mostly used by public figures within the stipulated time.

Table 3: Industry Classification Of Celebrities That Used The Hashtag

Classification	#Justicefor Uwa	Percentage	#JusticeforBarakat	Percentage
Film	26	47.3%	5	9%
Music	3	5.4%	-	-
Comedy	-	-	-	-
Public figures	6	11%	10	18.1%
Media influencers	1	2%	4	7.2%
Total	36 = 65.7%		19 = 34.3%	100%

Table 4 shows the reaction of celebrities while posting and using these hashtags. Under the classification of #JusticeforUwa 55% of the hashtags analyzed support the movement while 10.7% were neutral. #JusticeforBarakat 27.1% support the movement while 7.2% were neutral.

Table 4: Classification Of The Celebrities Reaction While Using The Hashtag

Reaction	#JusticeforUwa	#JusticeforBarakat
Supportive	30 = 55%	15 = 27.1%
Opposite	-	-
Indifferent	6 = 10.7%	4 = 7.2%
Total	36 = 65.7%	19 = 34.3%

Table 5 indicates the outcome of celebrity campaign on the general outlook of the public on both rape cases. 55% of the hashtags #JusticeforUwa calls for action while 10.7% indicates its an unacceptable norm. #JusticeforBarakat shows #27.1% calls for action while 7.2% indicate rape is an unacceptable norm.

Table 5: The Outcome Of Celebrity Campaign On The General Outlook Of The Public On Both Rape Cases.

Perspective	#JusticeforUwa	#JusticeforBarakat
A Call for action	30 = 55%	15 = 27.1%
Acceptable norm	-	-
Unacceptable norm	6 = 10.7%	4 = 7.2%
	36 = 65.7%	19 = 34.3%

V. DISCUSSION

This study proved that celebrities make good agents of change as their presence in the society gives them the power to be change agents. Just by using social media in expressing their displeasure on issues such as rape, they get instant support from their fans. For the fact that their fans are people who look up to them, they are provoked to fight the good fight along with their favorite celebrity and that brings about more engagement and push for justice to be served. In the case of Uwa and Barakat, the interactions on both hash tags were over 63,000 and that is to say that the presence of celebrities drew more attention to both cases. According to Wright, (2015), celebrities can use their social media presence to shape public opinion of an individual or group. This ability makes celebrities great for brand endorsements; it gives them upper hand to campaign for justice against trivial issues such as rape or sexual harassment and other lesser-known issue. Hence, this study agrees with Wright's study on celebrity campaign. This study also agrees with Chang, (2015) which states that because celebrities are famous people, they can easily bring lots of attention to any issue and they also have the capacity to evoke the needed change. Celebrities were therefore able to bring the attention of people in power to both cases due to how engaged their fans and followers were on the matter and so therefore, they have the power to influence the general outlook of the public and evoke change.

Meanwhile, this study differs from previous studies on celebrity use of social media as it focuses on the results of celebrities following up on the rape case of Uwa and Barakat. Previous studies focused on the dangers associated with the use of social media as it can endorse sexual harassment and assault. According to Fansher & Randa, (2019), the increase in online connection amongst individuals has without a doubt created an environment where individuals can engage in harmful or antisocial behaviors, such as stalking, online harassment and even sexual harassment. Fansher & Randa argues that the invention of social media has negative consequence of creating new pathways to victimization and opportunity for perpetration. Thereby indicating that social media can be a powerful tool that supports or advocates sexual violence. But this paper differs as it proves that celebrity use of social media in following both cases of rape yielded results and positively caused change.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has found that the use of social media by celebrities to campaign on follow up cases of rape cannot be overemphasized. Social media is an essential tool for social

change as it creates an avenue for interaction amongst users, thereby making campaigns against trivial issues around the globe possible. Celebrities using their social media platforms to campaign against sexual assault are changing the general outlook of the public as they are calling for immediate action of the appropriate authorities to put an end to this barbaric act of sexual assault and declaring that the act of rape will not be acceptable in our society. In addition, the public are pushing for the constitution to review the sentence for rape; ensure offenders serve appropriate punishment and make the sentence stiffer for perpetrators.

The incessant follow-up on the case of Uwa and Barakat prompted the appropriate authorities to act fast and by so doing the suspects were apprehended. Celebrities need to understand the importance of social media campaign on follow up cases of rape such as the case of Uwa and Barakat. Appropriate authorities acted fast in both cases as celebrities were constantly following up on social media in order to ensure perpetrators don't go unpunished and that victims get justice. This is important in our fight against sexual assault.

REFERENCES

- [1] Akinbobola, Y. (2011). *Social media stimulates Nigerian debates on sexual violence*. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from un.org
- [2] Chang, M. (2019). *Social media for social justice: the role of celebrities*. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from laloyalan.com
- [3] Christman, C. (2011). *Celebrities and social media*. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from www.pages.drexel.edu
- [4] Davie, G. (2010). *Technological determinism: media theory*. Retrieved July 17, 2020
- [5] Drucker, P. F. (1999). *Beyond the information revolution*. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from theatlantic.com
- [6] Fansher, A. K., & Randa, R. (2019). *Violence and Gender*. 6 (2), 115-123.
- [7] Gonzalez, S., & Phillips, A. (2018). *Celebrities have the right to take part in social justice causes*. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from queensjournal.ca
- [8] Griffin, E. (2010). *A first look at communication theory*. Retrieved July 17, 2020
- [9] Hauer, P. T. (2017). *Technological determinism and new media*. *International Journal of English, Literature and Social Science*, 2 (2), 4.
- [10] Kaplan, A. (1965). *The conduct of enquiry: Methodological for behavioural science*. 44 (1), 126-127.
- [11] Kline, R. R. (2001). *Technological Determinism. social and behavioural sciences*, 15495-15498.
- [12] Littlejohn, S. (1989). *The concept of a theory*. Retrieved July 17, 2020
- [13] Luo, A. (2019). *What is content analysis and how can you use it in your research*. Retrieved January 21, 2021, from scribbr.com
- [14] Manning, J. (2014). *Social media, definition and classes: Encyclopedia of social sciences*, (K. Harvey, Ed.) 1158-1162.
- [15] McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory*. Retrieved July 17, 2020
- [16] Olowoyo, G. (2020). *#JusticeforUwa: Genevive, Falz, Don Jazzy and others demand justice for victim*. Retrieved June 4, 2020, from Premium Times
- [17] Oregon, S. (2014). *Using social media for sexual violence prevention*. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from oregonsatf.org
- [18] Oyer, O. (2009). *The new media technologies: Challenges for development in Africa*. In Simpson, A. & Akinsola, E. F. (eds.). *Culture, Media, Technology and Psycho-social Development in Nigeria*. Lagos: Interlingua. Pp. 161-17
- [19] Oyer, O. S. & Jegede, A. E. (2011). *Patterns of Facebook utilization among students of tertiary institutions in Ota, Ogun*

- State, Nigeria. *Journal of Communication and Media Research*. Published by Delta State University, Nigeria. Vol3, No2, pp107- 118
- Raychuk, A. (2020). *Framing, agenda setting and priming in the media*. Retrieved July 18, 2020, from academia.edu
- [20] Sobowale, I; Amodu, L; Aririguzoh, S; & Ekanem, T. (2015). The Internet as a tool for information and education: The case of ta community in Nigeria. Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies (pp.8232-8240). Barcelona, Spain.
- [21] Talabi, F. O. (2016). *Technological determinism and its implications for Africa media consumers*. Retrieved July 17, 2020
- [22] Thitivesa, V. (2017). *Technological determinism and the media*. Retrieved July 17, 2020
- Toromade, S. (2020). *Rape, Murder of teenagers refuels national outrage against rapists*. Retrieved July 2020, from Pulse.ng
- [23] UN, United Nations. (2015). *#Envision2030: 17 goals to transform the world for persons with disability*. Retrieved July 17, 2020, from un.org
- [24] Wiryanta, M., Setiyawati, S., & Haryanto, B. (2017). Technological Determinism in Patterns of Communication and Social Behaviour change in Indonesia society. *Asian Social Science*, 13 (1911-2017), 12.
- [25] Wright, K. (2015). *Social media and celebrities: the benefits of social media presence*. Retrieved July 17, 2020