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A Closer Look at Victims of Sexual Assault and Abuse Through Facebook Groups (1966 words)

1. Introduction:

Facebook has become an integral part of modern communication, connecting billions of users worldwide. With over 2.8 billion active users, Facebook has become an essential part of many people's lives, enabling them to stay connected with family and friends. Facebook users can share their thoughts and opinions, post photos and videos, and join communities of like-minded individuals.

Sexual assault and abuse are devastating experiences that have a profound impact on survivors' physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. While sexual assault and abuse have been recognized as significant societal issues, victims continue to face numerous barriers in accessing support, such as shame, guilt, fear of retaliation, and lack of resources. However, Facebook groups have emerged as a powerful tool for survivors of sexual assault and abuse, providing them with a platform to connect, share their experiences, and access support.

In October 2017 millions of women shared their experiences with sexual assault and harassment (Smith, Katelin A. (2020)) via social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, etc., as part of the #metoo movement. What started out as a way for survivors of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual bullying to bond and share their stories has become a global movement that has sparked significant changes, both social and legal. Using content analysis, online disclosures of sexual assault social and legal. Using content analysis, online disclosures of sexual assault are examined for variations of sexual explicitness (Deal, B.-E., Martinez, L. S., Spitzberg, B. H., & Tsou, M.-H. (Ming). (2020).)

This paper will discuss about demographic factors of the survivors and victims of sexual assault/ abuse by exploring pages and groups in Facebook. We will have a look at what type of user's are posting and how other users are reacting to posts. A content analysis was conducted on the individuals, posts, and comments within a selection of Facebook groups that are focused on supporting victims of sexual abuse. The study's limitations and opportunities for further research will also be addressed.

2. Research Question:

1) How do user's demographics, such as age, gender, location, marital status, race, employment break down.
2) What types of users are actively participating in the discussions and how other people react to the user's posts.?
3) What percentage of women disclosed their personal experiences of sexual assault and abuse before and after the #metoo movement?

3. Method:

To analyze the content related to sexual abuse and sexual assault, my first step was to search for relevant online groups that discuss these issues. I have used certain words and phrases like "sexual assault," "sexual abuse," "rape victims," and "me too movement" to help me find these pages. After identifying relevant pages, I proceeded to carefully analyze them, ultimately selecting eight groups to study based on their level of engagement. To answer my research questions, I required a

sample of 50 user-generated posts, as well as one post that contains at least 50 comments. To ensure a diverse dataset, I manually collected this data in a random manner, with the condition that each user must share their personal story and include at least five demographic factors. Additionally, I categorized 50 comments according to four types of responses: testimony, advice, personal experience, and empowering, all of which would help me better understand how other users react to these posts.

3.1. Data:

I began collecting data, with a focus on understanding the demographic factors and personal stories of the users. The time frame which I have chosen to collect data is from 2015 to 2023. To select users from specific Facebook groups, I have decided to use a weighted random selection sampling method that considers the level of activity of each user within the group. To accomplish this, I reviewed over 100 user profiles and ultimately selected 51 that met my requirements or came very close to meeting them. While not every profile met my exact criteria, I am confident that the sample I collected will provide valuable insights into the topic of sexual abuse and sexual assault. Specifically, I needed users to share their personal stories and include at least five demographic factors, so I could analyze how different factors impact experiences with sexual abuse and sexual assault.

However, I'm also including users who may not be very active, but who have shared their story on the platform. These stories can provide important information about different types of people who use Facebook. So, even if some users don't post much in the group, their stories can still be valuable for understanding different types of people on Facebook. By including a variety of users, I can get a better idea of what's going on in the group and what different people are experiencing.

To analyze the user's reaction to posts, I looked for a post with many comments, ultimately choosing one with 503 comments. I then filtered out the most relevant

comments, selecting a total of 50 to include in my analysis. By categorizing these comments based on their content, I hope to better understand how people react to posts related to sexual abuse and sexual assault. Overall, I believe that my data collection process was thorough and comprehensive and will provide valuable insights into a critical social issue.
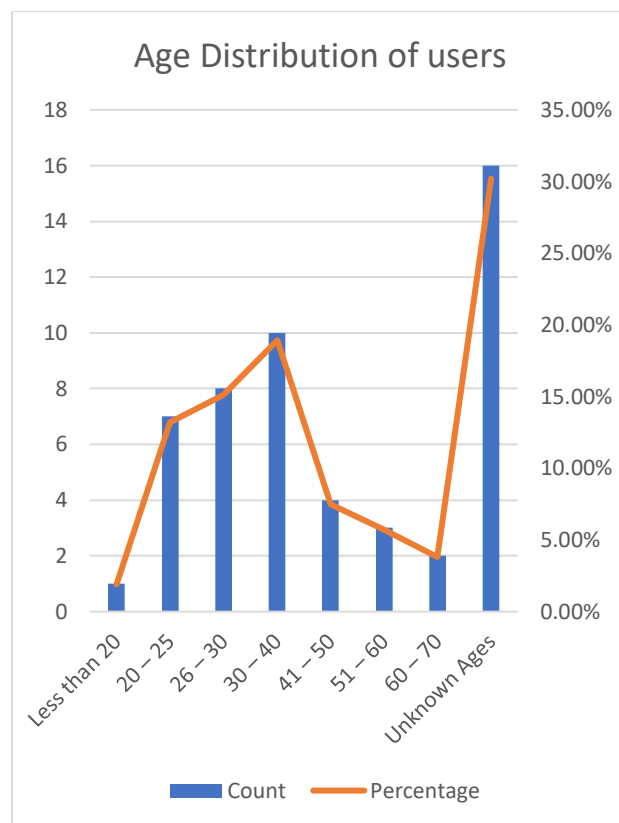
3.2. Analysis:

The table A provides information about various support groups for survivors of sexual abuse, rape, and domestic violence. The groups differ in their number of followers, types of posts, and activity levels. Some groups, such as the #Whatifwealltold Victims of Sexual Assault who have not told!! have relatively few followers but still manage to share videos and victims' stories. Other groups, such as the Me Too. Movement - #metoo group, have a much larger following and conduct live events to raise awareness about sexual abuse and assault. Of the groups listed, As the group with the most user stories is present, "No Shame: Rape/Abuse Survivors Speak Up," and the "survivors-of rape, sexual assault, abuse and more", groups are chosen for further analysis as it has a high number of followers, a recent creation date, and a high level of activity, with 161 posts in the last month. This group also allows survivors to share their stories in posts and comments, which provides valuable insights into the experiences of survivors and the types of support they need.

Based on the above conclusion, I have taken 50 posts from the groups collectively "No Shame: Rape/Abuse Survivors Speak Up" and "survivors-of rape, sexual assault, abuse and more" and analyzed the demographic factors of the users which includes the following:

• Name	• Gender
• Age	• Marital
• Location	Status
• Educational	• Work
background	• Abused by
• Race	• Age when
	faced
	assault.

To address the second research question of identifying the types of users who are actively participating in the discussions the primary focus has been on analyzing the age groups of the users involved in the discussions.

The bar graph shows how many people of different ages shared their stories. Out of 51 people, I was able to gather 70% user's age whereas the rest of the 30% user's age is unknown. The bar graph shows that most of the stories were shared by people between 30 and 40 years old, and not many stories were shared by people younger than 20. The graph gives us a better understanding of the ages of the people who shared their stories.

Graph A: Age Distribution of user's

To answer how others are reacting to posts, I have analyzed 50 comments from a selected post, the post selection has been done using Qualitative content analysis. The method involves examining and categorizing data based on themes and patterns. I have used this method to categorize the comments into 4 categories namely testimony, advice, personal experience and empowering.

There are many comments in the personal experience category, where people describe their experiences with sexual assault and abuse. There are also some comments in the advice category, where people share tips and strategies for coping with sexual assault and abuse. The testimony category contains comments where people share their stories of sexual assault and abuse. Finally, there are some comments in the empowering category, where people encourage others to speak out and act against sexual assault and abuse. Overall, the comments in this Facebook post provide a space for people to share their experiences, receive support, and learn from others.

In relation to the third research question, I established a total of 12 groups, with 8 groups formed before the "me too" movement and 4 groups formed after the movement. While the sample size is limited, I observed that even in the groups formed before the "me too" movement, victims were more likely to share their stories of harassment and assault after the movement became popular. However, given the small sample size, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions. To answer this research question accurately, a larger dataset would be necessary.
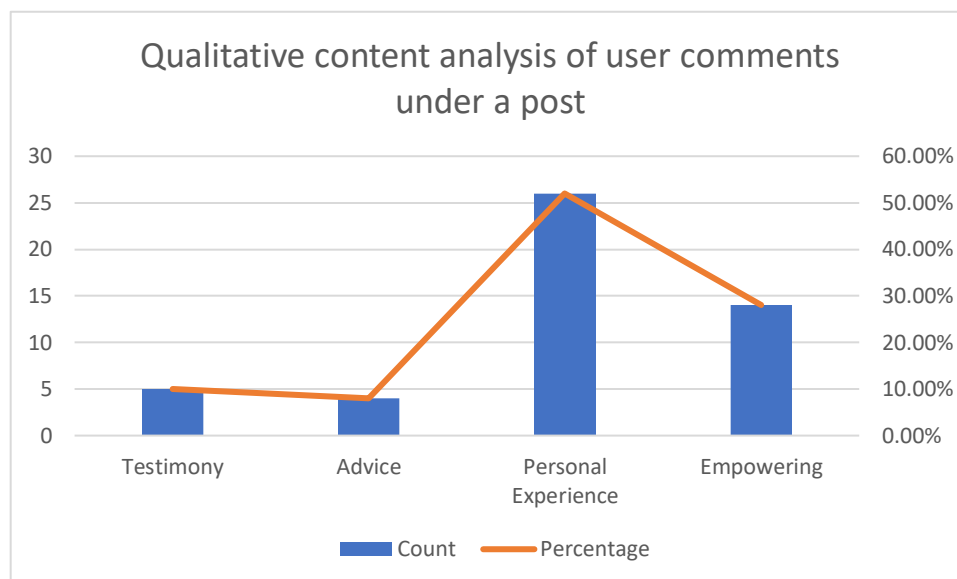
4. Results:

Sno	Group Name	Date Created	Type of group	Followers	Types of Posts	Activity
1	Male/Female Survivors of Sexual Abuse Speak Out To Spread Awareness.	3-Oct-18	Public	1.4K	Posts about their personal experiences and provides support to others	5 posts in last month
2	Sexual Assault Survivors Support Group	5-Apr-17	Public	3.7k	Mainly posts quotes, posts and there are more than 10 shares nearly for each post	Last post in September
3	Survivors-Of Rape, Sexual Assault, Abuse And More	1-Dec-20	Public	7.0K	Survivors share their stories in posts and comments	161 posts in the last month
4	#Whatifwealltold Victims of Sexual Assault who have not told!!	28-Sep-18	Public	221	Videos about Sexual Abuse and Assault are shared and victim's stories	13 posts in the last month
5	Survivors of Sexual Assault Support Group	24-Jan-08	Private	907	People share their stories anonymously and support is provided by the group	19 posts in the last month
6	No Shame: Rape/Abuse Survivors Speak Out	19-Aug-14	Public	8.9k	It's no longer in use, but the highest number of stories were shared in this group	Last post in October, 2020
7	Child Abuse Rape and Domestic Violence (CARADOV)	29-May-20	Public	9.4k	Contains posts, pictures and videos related to child abuse, rape	197 posts in the last month
8	Me Too. Movement - #metoo	23-Oct-17	Public	109K	Live events are conducted, posts about awareness and stories are posted	10 posts in last month

Table A: Analysis of the Facebook groups which are related victims of sexual abuse.

Gender	Geographic region	Race	Education	Marital status	Career	Age when abuse started
Females: 42 Gay: 1 Males: 6 Non-Binary: 1 Queer: 1	East Coast: 12 West Coast: 6 North: 12 South: 8 Out of US: 5	American: 37 Australian: 1 American - Indian: 1 Chinese - American: 1 Italian: 1 Canadian: 2 Russian: 1 Japanese - American: 1 Unknown: 5	College: 20 High school: 6 Unknown: 21	Single: 8 Married: 17 Engaged: 2 Relationship: 5 Divorced: 2 Unknown: 17	Working: 30 Unknown: 18	Below 10 – 22 11 to 20 – 24 21 to 30 – 3 Above 30 - 1 Unknown - 1

Table B: User's Demographic factors breakdown

Graph B: Analysis of comments from a Facebook post using Qualitative content analysis.

The graph represents a set of data with four different categories, namely Testimony, Advice, Personal Experience, and Empowering. The "Count" represents the number of occurrences of each category. The graph shows that the category with the highest count is Personal Experience with 26 occurrences, which represents 52% of the total data. Testimony has the next highest count of 5, representing 10% of the total data. Empowering and Advice have the lowest counts with 14 and 4, respectively, representing 28% and 8% of the total data.

The "Percentage" represents the percentage of each category in relation to the total data. The graph indicates that Personal Experience is the most commonly occurring category in the data set, while Advice and Empowering have the lowest occurrence.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis has shown that the selected groups are highly active and provide consistent support to their users. The number of users sharing their stories has been

increasing steadily, especially after the #metoo movement, which saw numerous female users coming forward to share their experiences. Although these groups were established prior to the movement, their post engagement has since increased significantly.

It was observed that individuals between the ages of 30 and 40 were the most frequent storytellers, however, it was distressing to note that most abuse incidents occurred when the victims were under the age of 10. Several groups were established to aid and prevent sexual assault, rape, and domestic violence, especially against children.

When reviewing the sentiment of the comments on a post, it was found that more than 60% of users shared their personal experiences. While it is encouraging to see people opening and sharing their stories, it is equally disheartening to realize that so many individuals have had to endure rape and sexual assault in the first place.

The study showed that support groups are essential for those who have experienced sexual abuse and violence. They provide a safe space for people to share their experiences, access help and guidance, and learn about the issue. It is important to recognize and continue supporting these groups.

6. Limitations:

As for the limitations of this analysis, it is important to note that the data collected represents only a sample of 50 posts and 50 comments under a post. The findings, therefore, provide a limited perspective of the experiences of individuals who have suffered from sexual abuse and violence.

Furthermore, the results may not be generalizable to a larger population, and the conclusions drawn from this analysis may vary based on different sets of 50 posts and comments. Therefore, while the findings provide valuable insight into the role of support groups for survivors of sexual abuse

and violence, it is important to recognize the limitations of the study's sample size and scope. Future research may be needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of individuals affected by sexual abuse and violence and the effectiveness of support groups in aiding their recovery.

7. References

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