

# The Role of Social Media Podcast in Enhancing Gender Based Violence among Undergraduate Students

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## Abstract

In today's digital era, social media platforms have become major spaces for information sharing, social interaction and cultural discourse, with podcasts emerging as influential tools that shape listeners' attitudes and perceptions. This study investigates the role of social media podcasts in enhancing gender-based violence (GBV) among undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The research examines how podcast content on platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, X (formerly Twitter), and Facebook influences students' understanding of gender relations and tolerance toward GBV. A survey research method with the online questionnaire as the instrument for data collection was adopted, with 395 as the sample size. Responses of the quantitative data from structured questionnaires ensured comprehensive analysis. The study employed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to interpret the data, focusing on levels of awareness, perception and behavioural influence in relation to podcast exposure. Findings reveal that while many social-media podcasts foster awareness and advocacy against GBV, it may also inadvertently reinforce gender stereotypes and normalize violence through biased framing or humor. The study concludes that podcast content significantly affects students' gender perceptions and behaviours, validating theoretical frameworks such as Social Learning Theory, Cultivation Theory, and Spiral of Silence Theory. It recommends that podcast creators adopt ethical framing in gender discourse, while educators and policymakers integrate media and gender literacy programs into tertiary curricula to promote critical engagement with digital media and reduce GBV tolerance among undergraduates.

**Keywords:** *Gender Based Violence, Media Influence, Podcast, Social Media, University Undergraduates.*

## INTRODUCTION

Presently, social media is an influential platform for communication, education and entertainment among young adults, especially university students (Watson, 2022). Thus many Internet users, especially the younger generation have one account or the other on social media even as the world continues its current trajectory towards its global community ideology. Udeobasi, (2022) asserts the this digital space has over the years become the 21st century town hall global village where friendships are built, debate takes place, ideas are shared and solutions to problems are discovered and analyzed. However, while these digital space and tools offer benefits, there is also a growing concern over their potential role in promoting harmful ideologies, including those related to gender based violence (GBV) (UN Women, 2021). Undeniably, with the expansion of digital media, particularly social media platforms, new channels have emerged for the normalization and reinforcement of harmful gender norms and behaviours. Among the various forms of media/content, social media/podcasts have gained

immense popularity due to their accessibility, convenience and relatability (AWiM news, 2023).

Gender based violence (GBV), are harmful acts directed at individuals based on their gender and this form of violence includes: physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse which, disproportionately affect women and gender minorities (UN Women, 2021). It is often rooted in power imbalances and subjective societal norms.

Podcasts, often hosted by influential personalities, provide a platform for sharing perspectives on social, cultural and political issues. Podcasts are typically informal, engaging and easily accessible on platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, TikTok, and Instagram. While these podcasts may offer educational, entertaining, or empowering content, some have been criticized for promoting misogyny, toxic masculinity, victim-blaming, and other attitudes that can contribute to the normalization of gender-based violence (Bailey & Trudy, 2022). The concern is particularly relevant for undergraduate students, who are frequent users of social media and are at a formative stage of identity development and worldview construction. Social Media contents, including podcast, has been identified as a key contributor to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and the normalization of harmful behaviours, which may promote or justify gender based violence (Bailey & Trudy, 2022).

Statista (2024), notes that over 85% of young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 engage with digital content daily with a significant proportion consuming podcasts. These podcasts vary in theme, from personal advice and pop culture commentary to discussions on politics, relationships and gender dynamics. The nature of these conversations, and how they are framed, can have a strong impact on young listeners' perceptions of gender roles and interpersonal behaviour (Boyle & Decouteau, 2020). This impact is amplified by the parasocial relationships students often develop with podcast hosts and listeners may view these hosts as role models or credible figures, even if the hosts lack formal qualifications. Consequently, ideas shared on podcasts may shape attitudes toward relationships, consent, masculinity, femininity and power dynamics which can promote regressive gender norms or justify aggressive behaviour that may indirectly encourage gender-based violence among impressionable listeners.

Numerous studies indicate that GBV is prevalent within universities and colleges despite the fact that higher education institutions are expected to be safe spaces for intellectual and social development, a UNESCO (2019) report found that, approximately one in three women in higher education institutions globally had experienced some form of sexual or gender-based violence. These acts of violence are often underreported due to stigma, fear of retaliation, or institutional inaction UNESCO (2019). Meanwhile, the ubiquitous nature of social media provides space for both the survivors to share experiences and for perpetrators to find reinforcement or justification for their actions (Udeobasi, 2022). The influence of certain podcasts can blur the lines between opinion and advocacy, potentially legitimizing violence or dismissing its consequences (Watson, 2022).

However poor critical media literacy amongst users raises concerns about how such content may be shaping attitudes towards gender and violence (Olorunisola & Martin, 2013). Moreover, due to the lack of strict regulations and freedom afforded by social media, many podcasts host operate without accountability, often spreading misinformation or prompting harmful ideologies without consequences. This creates a digital ecosystem in which GBV related attitudes may flourish unchecked (Okonkwo, 2022).

Despite increasing concern over the role of social media in shaping youth behaviour, there is a paucity of empirical research that specifically investigates how social media podcasts influence gender based violence among undergraduate students (Flood, 2019). While the broader connection between media consumption and gender norms is well established, the specific medium of podcasting and its conversational peer-like style, requires focused attention together with understanding this dynamics is crucial for developing preventive strategies, media literacy campaigns and institutional policies aimed at mitigating Gender Based Violence in university environment.

Repeated exposure to GBV content can desensitize listeners, particularly impressionable undergraduates on the negative consequences of GBV (Keller, Mendes & Ringrose, 2018). Furthermore, the algorithm-driven nature of social media platforms often amplifiers controversial or sensational content, increasing its visibility and potential impact (Akinbobola, 2020).

Social Learning Theory, developed by Albert Bandura (1977), posits that individuals learn behaviours, attitudes and emotional reactions through observation and imitation of others, especially those perceived as authority figures. Podcasts, particularly those with large followings serves as modern-day teachers who can shape public discourse and behavioural norms. For example, podcasts that mocks survivors of sexual assaults, defend perpetrators, or present manipulative behaviour as acceptable, can serve as an indirect endorsement of gender based violence.

In Nigeria, the podcasting space has grown rapidly with youth- targeted platforms discussing gender relations, dating and cultural expectations (Ajawon & Adegbite, 2021). While many of these podcasts are progressive and foster important conversations about consent and respect, others reinforce patriarchal values and promote dominance-based masculinity (UN Women, 2021). These messages, when consumed by university undergraduate students, can either challenge or reinforce their attitudes towards gender based violence. Thus, this study seeks to investigate the extent to which social media podcasts contribute to GBV attitudes and actions among undergraduate students. Addressing this issue is crucial not only for academic inquiry, but also for the development of effective interventions to promote safer and more equitable environment.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The overarching aim of this study is to examine the influence of social media podcasts on the increasing incidence of gender based violence among university undergraduates.

- 1) To examine the level of awareness of social media podcasts in enhancing Gender-Based Violence among undergraduate students.
- 2) To assess the level of influence of social media podcasts in enhancing Gender-Based Violence among undergraduate students
- 3) To find out the perception of undergraduate students on the role of social-media podcasts in enhancing Gender-Based Violence.
- 4) To ascertain factors that encourage Gender Based Violence among undergraduates.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Concept of Social Media and Podcasts

Social media are internet-based platforms that enable users to create, share and interact with content and with one another in real time ranging from microblogging and image-based networks (e.g., X, Instagram) to long-form audio-video platforms (e.g., YouTube, Spotify) which facilitate participatory communication and user-generated content (McQuail, 2015). In higher education contexts, social media is both an information source and a social environment in which norms, identities and peer behaviours are negotiated (Livingstone, 2019). Scholars highlight that social media's algorithmic curation and engagement economies privilege emotionally charged content, which increases visibility but may amplify polarizing or sensational messages (Tandoc, Lim, & Ling, 2021). Podcasts are episodic digital audio (and increasingly audio-video) productions distributed over the internet for on-demand consumption (Berry, 2016). They combine serialized storytelling, conversational formats, interviews and documentary techniques, producing an intimate "sound culture" where listeners often develop para-social relationships with hosts (Perks & Turner, 2019). Unlike short-form content, podcasts allow extended narrative development, deeper contextualization and the sustained presence of hosts who become trusted voices for listeners (Quirk, 2020). This intimacy strengthens persuasive potential both for advocacy and where content is harmful, for the reinforcement of problematic norms.

### Issues in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) among Undergraduate Students

Gender-based violence (GBV) encompasses acts that inflict physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm on a person on account of their gender (UN Women, 2017). Contemporary understandings of GBV include offline forms (physical and sexual violence) as well as online/tech-facilitated forms cyber harassment, non-consensual image-sharing, doxxing and digital sexual coercion (Henry & Powell, 2018). GBV in tertiary institutions often shows a blend of campus-specific dynamics (e.g., sex-for-grades, harassment by peers/lecturers and rarely students on lecturers) and broader socio-cultural patterns.

Undergraduate students (typically aged 18–25) constitute a heavy-usage demographic for digital media and podcasts (Pew Research Center). They use platforms for entertainment, information-seeking, identity construction and political engagement and are likely to trust conversational hosts they follow and to integrate such voices into their social reasoning (Asemah, 2018). Given that university years are formative for personal values and relational norms, exposure to sustained media narratives through podcasts in particular can play an outsized role in shaping attitudes toward gender and interpersonal behaviour.

### Social Media Podcasts and GBV

Podcasts intersect with social media when episodes are distributed, promoted and discussed on social platforms thereby gaining visibility and becoming part of participatory public debate. Podcast episodes that include survivor testimonies, expert analysis, or legal guidance can increase awareness and support help-seeking (Ritchie, 2020). Conversely, episodes that trivialize consent, employ misogynistic humour or present domineering masculinity of feminism as normative can contribute to normalizing GBV-supportive attitudes (Jackson, 2021). Parasocial intimacy with hosts increases persuasive power: listeners may imitate or rationalize behaviours modeled or defended by influential podcasters (Perks & Turner, 2019).

Research suggests podcasts can raise awareness effectively because of their narrative depth and capacity to host survivors and experts (Ritchie, 2020). In Nigerian and African contexts, social media amplifies these episodes, enabling reach across campuses (Uduak & Ebong, 2020). However, awareness does not always translate into deeper understanding or behavioural change message framing and source credibility moderate outcomes (Ibrahim & Akintunde, 2022).

Media framing and modeling influence gender role perceptions because global cultural flows can introduce external frames that may be in tension with local norms (Nwogbaga & Nnamani, 2023). Podcasts that valorize traditional masculinity or use sexist or misogynistic humour may increase hostile sexist attitudes among listeners while conversely feminist and survivor-led podcasts can deepen critical consciousness and support pro-equality attitudes (Onah, 2022). Parasocial trust amplifies host influence, especially when hosts occupy aspirational or authoritative positions (Perks & Turner, 2019). Cultivation and desensitization studies suggest repeated mediated portrayals can normalise violence (Gerbner et al., 1986). Yet other long-form podcasts that center on consent education reduce tolerance by providing contextual information and survivor testimony (Ritchie, 2020).

The attention economy (algorithmic amplification) and creator incentives (monetization, audience growth) can also promote provocative content because students preferences for real-life storytelling, controversy and entertainment magnify the spread of GBV-related episodes (Onah, 2022).

Global and regional studies in Africa reveal parallel dynamics, Tadesse (2021) reported that in Ethiopia research indicated that podcasts with balanced gender representation reduced prejudice among listeners.

Perks and Turner (2019); Vilceanu, (2025), investigated podcast audience studies on parasocial relationships. They noted that listeners often perceive hosts as friends or mentors, which increases the persuasive effect of host narratives. This parasocial effect is echoed by contemporary podcast audience research that links trust and intimacy to attitude change and behavioural influence (Perks & Turner, 2019; Askar, 2024; Mayer, 2024).

Jackson (2021) content-analysed masculinity-focused podcasts and identified recurrent themes of dominance, entitlement and anti gender-equality rhetoric suggesting such shows can act as ideological incubators.

Adebayo (2021) surveyed Nigerian undergraduates and found that social media is the leading source of information on gender inequalities and GBV, but that depth of understanding depends on the source credibility and framing.

Uduak and Ebong (2020) reported that 62% of their female undergraduate respondents experienced some form of gendered cyber-violence, underscoring the digital dimension of GBV in Nigerian campuses.

Nwogbaga and Nnamani (2023) combined survey and focus group data in Nigeria and found that students often struggle to distinguish advocacy from sensationalism; they recommended media literacy interventions. Yusuf (2023) content-analysed comment threads on GBV episodes and found that audience responses can both challenge and reinforce sexist tropes depending on moderation and host framing.

## Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study integrates three major communication theories Social Learning Theory, Cultivation Theory and Spiral of Silence Theory to provide a multidimensional explanation of how social media podcasts influence undergraduate students' awareness, perception, and tolerance of gender-based violence (GBV). Each theory complements the others by explaining different but interrelated aspects of media influence, including behavioural modeling, attitudinal cultivation and silence in discourse.

### Social Learning Theory

The Social Learning Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura (1977), asserts that individuals acquire new behaviours, attitudes and emotional reactions through observation and imitation of others, particularly those they perceive as credible, authoritative or aspirational. In media studies, this theory explains how audiences model behaviours and attitudes displayed by characters or influencers in mediated content. Bandura (2001) further emphasized that observational learning occurs when such behaviours are rewarded or socially reinforced in the media environment.

In the context of social media podcasts, undergraduate students may observe and internalize gender-related behaviours or opinions expressed by podcast hosts and guests. Podcasts that glorify dominance or trivialize abuse may serve as "models" that normalize aggressive or discriminatory behaviour toward women. but podcasts that promote empathy, equality and respect can foster positive social behaviour.

This theory therefore explains Objective One of this study to examine the level of awareness of social media podcasts in enhancing gender-based violence among undergraduate students since exposure to such media content serves as a form of social learning. However, a limitation of this theory is that it focuses on immediate behavioural imitation and does not sufficiently address the long-term cultivation of attitudes resulting from repeated exposure to certain types of content.

### Cultivation Theory

The Cultivation Theory, developed by George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan and Nancy Signorielli (1960's), provides a complementary perspective by emphasizing the cumulative effect of long-term media exposure. It posits that consistent exposure to certain messages and narratives gradually shapes an individual's worldview or social reality. According to Gerbner et al. (2002), media do not simply reflect reality but rather construct and cultivate perceptions of it over time.

In the context of podcasts, if students consistently consume content that frames gender-based violence as humorous, acceptable, or exaggerated, they may begin to perceive such attitudes as normal or representative of real social interactions. Conversely, consistent exposure to podcasts advocating for gender equity and condemning violence could cultivate empathy and awareness among listeners.

This theory directly supports Objective Two of this study to assess the level of influence of social media podcasts in enhancing gender-based violence among undergraduate students. It helps explain how constant exposure to certain narratives cultivates tolerance for or resistance against GBV. However, Cultivation Theory's limitation lies in its generality, as it does not fully explain why some individuals resist these influences while others conform to them.

## Spiral of Silence Theory

The Spiral of Silence Theory, introduced by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1974), posits that individuals tend to remain silent when they perceive their opinions to be in the minority, due to fear of social isolation or backlash. This creates a feedback loop where dominant opinions become more visible, while opposing perspectives are suppressed (Noelle-Neumann, 1993).

In the context of social media podcasts, this theory explains why some undergraduate students may hesitate to challenge or speak against podcast narratives that appear to justify or trivialize GBV. When podcast hosts, guests, or majority audiences ridicule perspectives or support dominance, dissenting listeners might remain silent in comment sections or group discussions for fear of ridicule or exclusion (Kim, 2020). As a result, harmful narratives appear more widespread than they truly are a phenomenon amplified by social media algorithms that reward conformity and popularity (Hampton et al., 2014; Yang, 2021).

This theory aligns with Objective Three to find out the perception of undergraduate students on the role of social media podcasts in enhancing gender-based violence as it sheds light on how opinion climates influence the expression and reinforcement of attitudes toward GBV. It also supports Objective Four to ascertain factors that encourage gender-based violence among undergraduates by explaining how fear of opposition or social exclusion sustains silence and acceptance of harmful norms. Despite its strength in explaining opinion suppression, the Spiral of Silence Theory has been critiqued for underestimating the power of “counter publics” online communities that resist dominant ideologies and promote alternative views.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Design

The research design refers to the overall strategy that integrates the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way to effectively address the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study employed a quantitative research design, specifically a descriptive survey design. This design was deemed most appropriate as the study aims to quantitatively measure and describes the patterns of social media podcast consumption and its relationship with attitudes and awareness of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) among the student population. As explained by Nworgu (2015), a descriptive survey is suitable for collecting data from a sample of a population to describe the incidence, distribution, and relationships between variables at a specific point in time.

The research instrument was a structured online questionnaire, which ensured the standardization of responses and facilitated efficient data collection and statistical analysis. The questionnaire was distributed via social media platforms to a sample of undergraduate students. This method was ideal for reaching a wide and digitally-active segment of the population efficiently. The population of a study is the entire group of individuals or elements that possess the characteristics the researcher is interested in and from which the sample is drawn (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this study, the target population was the undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, is a premier federal university with a substantial and diverse undergraduate body. As of the 2024 academic session, the university had an undergraduate population estimated at 35,130 students across various faculties, including the Faculty of Arts which houses the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria (Source, Academic planning Unit 2024)

For this quantitative study, the sample size was determined using the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Sample Size Calculator, a recognized tool for ensuring statistical precision in survey research. From the target population, a sample size of three hundred and ninety-five (395) respondents was selected and surveyed using the online questionnaire.

The practical implementation of this technique involved creating a distributed online survey. The link to the structured questionnaire was disseminated widely across university-affiliated social media platforms, online student forums, and class groups. From the total population, 395 respondents were targeted. The first 395 completed responses received were taken as the final sample for the study. While this approach incorporates an element of volunteerism, its foundation in random distribution and equal opportunity for participation aligns it with the principles of simple random sampling for online survey research.

The sole instrument for data collection was a structured online questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed based on the study's objectives and a comprehensive review of relevant literature and utilized a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1), to quantify respondents' attitudes.

The online questionnaire was self-administered, allowing participants to complete it at their convenience. This method helped to reduce potential social desirability bias and ensured a wider reach among the digitally-adept student population.

To ensure the content validity of the research instrument, the draft of the structured questionnaire was subjected to review by a panel of three experts. Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted with 20 undergraduate students from a different federal university to evaluate the instrument's practicality and reliability. The data collected from the pilot study was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha to test for internal consistency.

The reliability analysis conducted on the pilot study data yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.81. A coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable. The obtained value of 0.81 indicates a high level of internal consistency, confirming that the questionnaire is a reliable tool for data collection in this study.

The data collection for this study was executed through a quantitative cross-sectional survey. The primary method involved the administration of a structured online questionnaire.

The finalized questionnaire was converted into a digital format using Google Forms. The link to the form was systematically distributed across various online platforms frequented by the undergraduate student population of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. These platforms included official university student group chats, social media pages, and online forums. This approach ensured wide reach and facilitated efficient data gathering from the target sample of 395 respondents.

A cover note attached to the questionnaire link detailed the purpose of the research, assured respondents of confidentiality and anonymity, and established informed consent as a prerequisite for participation. The online, self-administered nature of the instrument minimized interviewer bias and allowed respondents to participate at their convenience, thereby promoting candid responses, especially on a sensitive topic like gender-based violence.

The quantitative data collected via the online questionnaire were prepared for analysis by being coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25.

## Demographic Information of Respondents

**Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	194	49.1
Female	201	50.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Source: Field survey 2025

**Objective One:** To examine the level of awareness of social media podcasts in enhancing Gender-Based Violence among undergraduate students.

**Table 2: Exposure to GBV-Related Social Media Podcasts**

S/N	Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1.	I am aware of social media podcasts that discuss GBV.	125	160	40	35	25	3.86	Agree
2.	I often come across podcasts discussing GBV-related issues on social media.	120	170	45	35	25	3.85	Agree
3.	Most undergraduates are aware of podcasts discussing gender roles and violence.	110	165	55	40	25	3.67	Agree
4.	I understand the term “gender-based violence” through exposure to social media content.	130	175	55	40	25	3.90	Agree
<b>5.</b>	<b>Grand mean</b>						<b>3.82</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Source Field survey 2025

The findings reveal a high level of awareness of GBV-related podcasts among undergraduates at UNN (Grand Mean = 3.82). This suggests that students actively encounter and recognize GBV discussions in online audio spaces.

**Objective Two:** To assess the level of influence of social media podcasts in enhancing Gender-Based Violence among undergraduate students.

**Table 3: Influence of Social Media Podcasts in enhancing GBV**

S/N	Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Decision
6.	Podcasts discussing gender issues influence how students view gender relationships	125	165	45	30	20	3.87	Agree
7.	Some podcasts make violence against women or men seem normal or acceptable.	110	150	50	45	30	3.56	Agree
8.	Listening to gender-related podcasts affects my attitude toward the opposite sex.	105	170	50	40	20	3.71	Agree
9.	Students often imitate the attitudes and opinions of podcast hosts.	100	160	60	35	25	3.63	Agree
<b>10.</b>	<b>Grand mean</b>						<b>3.69</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Source Field survey 2025

Results show that respondents agree social-media podcasts influence their perceptions and possibly reinforce gender biases (Grand Mean = 3.69). Social Learning Theory supports this pattern, asserting that individuals learn behaviours and attitudes through observation of media models.

**Objective Three:** To find out the perception of undergraduate students on the role of social-media podcasts in enhancing Gender-Based Violence.

**Table 4: Influence of Podcasts on Students' Attitudes and Behaviour**

S/N	Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Decision
11.	Podcasts discussing gender issues are educational and promote awareness against GBV	130	160	55	30	20	3.86	Agree
12.	Some podcasts trivialize or make jokes about GBV.	110	155	60	40	30	3.56	Agree
13.	Students perceive podcasts as reliable sources of gender-related information	106	166	65	30	20	3.63	Agree
14.	Many podcasts lack balanced or factual discussions on gender issues	100	160	70	40	25	3.59	Agree
15.	Audience reactions in podcasts' comment sections sometimes promote gender stereotypes	115	150	60	45	25	3.59	Agree
	<b>Grand mean</b>						<b>3.65</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Source: Field survey 2025

The findings indicate that undergraduates generally perceive podcasts as informative yet inconsistently balanced on GBV issues (Grand Mean = 3.65). This dual perception mirrors the mixed influence identified by Nwogbaga and Nnamani (2023), who observed that Nigerian youths often treat GBV content as both activism and entertainment.

**Objective Four:** To ascertain factors that encourage Gender-Based Violence among undergraduates.

**Table 5: Factors Encouraging GBV-Related Podcasts**

S/N	Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Decision
16.	Peer influence contributes to GBV among students	135	155	45	30	20	3.90	Agree
17.	Media content and podcast framing can encourage GBV attitudes.	115	160	65	35	20	3.84	Agree
18.	Cultural beliefs and stereotypes promote tolerance for GBV.	130	150	60	35	20	3.73	Agree
19.	Alcohol and drug use increase the likelihood of GBV among undergraduates	120	155	60	35	25	3.74	Agree
20.	Lack of awareness or education on gender sensitivity encourages GBV.	125	150	65	35	20	3.77	Agree
21.	The entertainment nature of podcasts makes students less critical of GBV messages.	110	155	70	40	20	<b>3.64</b>	Agree
	<b>Grand mean</b>						<b>3.77</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Source: Field survey 2025

Respondents identified multiple social, cultural, and media-related factors sustaining GBV tolerance (Grand Mean = 3.77). This supports Umeh (2023), who found that peer discourse and online entertainment culture reinforce harmful gender narratives.

### 4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that social-media podcasts have become a powerful tool for shaping how undergraduate students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka,

engage with gender-related issues, particularly those connected to gender-based violence (GBV). Results show a high level of awareness of podcasts discussing GBV, indicating that students are active consumers of gender discourse across digital audio platforms such as Spotify, YouTube, and X. The grand mean score (3.82) across awareness items confirms this pattern. This outcome corresponds with Adebayo (2021) and Yusuf (2023), who found that social media and podcasts play a growing role in raising awareness about GBV among Nigerian youths.

From the perspective of Cultivation Theory (Gerbner et al., 1986), repeated exposure to GBV-related narratives through these podcasts cultivates perceptions consistent with the media's dominant messages. Consequently, students not only gain awareness but also internalize social meanings that define violence as a systemic issue rather than isolated acts. This finding reinforces the view of Bryant and Oliver (2009) that long-term exposure to thematic media content shapes audience understanding of complex social phenomena.

Moreover, the study found that podcasts significantly influence listeners' attitudes and perceptions of gender relations (Grand Mean = 3.69). Respondents agreed that such content affects their views toward the opposite sex and can sometimes normalize aggression or reinforce stereotypes. This aligns with Ibrahim and Akintunde (2022), who argued that podcasts function as informal learning platforms capable of shaping empathy and bias simultaneously. Within the framework of Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), this suggests that students learn behaviours and attitudes by observing and internalizing the verbal cues, emotional tones, and ideological frames used by podcast hosts and when such hosts trivialize violence or reinforce patriarchal ideas, listeners may unconsciously model those attitudes in social interactions.

Findings furthermore reveal that students perceive podcasts as both educational and entertaining (Grand Mean = 3.65). This dual perception reflects what Nwogbaga and Nnamani (2023) described as "mediated ambivalence" where young audiences consume activism-oriented content for entertainment rather than ideological engagement. This supports the Cultivation perspective that media narratives shape not only awareness but also normative expectations of gender relations. The perception that podcasts are credible sources of information underscores their growing influence in public communication, echoing Ekeanyanwu and Obianigwe's (2019) assertion that Nigerian undergraduates increasingly treat digital discussions as reliable sources of social learning.

At the same time, the Spiral of Silence Theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) explains the muted participation of dissenting voices in GBV discussions within podcast comment sections. As the study observed, online audiences often hesitate to express opposing views for fear of social isolation, thereby allowing dominant narratives sometimes misogynistic or biased to go unchallenged. Yusuf (2023) similarly found that user engagement patterns in comment sections tend to reinforce prevailing cultural attitudes toward gender and violence.

The analysis also highlights that peer influence, cultural beliefs, and entertainment framing remain significant enablers of GBV-related attitudes among undergraduates (Grand Mean = 3.77). This finding supports Okafor and Eze (2020) and Tadesse (2021), who emphasized that socialization, cultural tolerance, and uncritical media consumption sustain harmful gender ideologies. In line with Social Learning and Cultivation theories, these results illustrate how everyday exposure to biased narratives within informal peer groups and popular podcasts can normalize discriminatory behaviour. In sum, the findings collectively illustrate

that podcasts are a double-edged medium: while they contribute to gender awareness, they also risk perpetuating subtle stereotypes through humor, framing, and repetition.

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary

This study examined the influence of social media podcasts on students' perception of gender-based violence (GBV) among undergraduates of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The central aim was to understand how exposure to and engagement with podcast content shapes students' awareness, attitudes, and behavioural tendencies toward GBV-related issues.

The study was guided by four key objectives and the research was anchored on three interrelated communication theories Social Learning Theory, Cultivation Theory and the Spiral of Silence Theory — all of which collectively explain how continuous exposure to media messages can shape, reinforce, or silence individuals' opinions and behaviours within social contexts.

The review of related literature revealed that social media podcasts have become emerging spaces for discussions on sensitive topics like gender equality, consent, and sexual violence. However, studies also indicate that these discussions can sometimes reproduce stereotypes and normalize harmful gender narratives when handled insensitively by hosts or participants.

The study adopted a survey research design, using a structured questionnaire administered to undergraduates of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to reveal patterns of awareness, exposure, and perception among respondents.

Findings from the study revealed a high level of awareness of podcasts addressing gender-based violence among students. Many respondents reported regular exposure to such content and identified key podcast themes such as sexual harassment, rape culture, and domestic abuse. While most students viewed these podcasts as informative and awareness-raising, others noted that the tone, framing or comments of certain hosts sometimes trivialized or normalized GBV. Furthermore, factors such as peer influence, cultural norms and limited gender sensitivity education were found to amplify misconceptions and hinder progress toward a violence-free campus culture and these findings affirm the assumptions of the three guiding theories. Overall, the study highlights the dual role of podcasts as both educational and potentially harmful platforms depending on how they are framed and interpreted by their audiences.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that social media podcasts have a significant influence on students' perception of gender-based violence at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Podcasts serve as platforms for education and social discourse, shaping how students interpret issues related to gender equality and violence. However, when poorly moderated or sensationalized, they may unintentionally normalize aggression or reinforce gender stereotypes.

It was further concluded that while students generally appreciate podcasts as tools for awareness and learning, the framing of discussions, choice of language and tone used by hosts and guests greatly determine whether the message promotes equality or perpetuates bias. Cultural and peer influences also play crucial roles in moderating these perceptions.

Therefore, for social media podcasts to serve as an effective tool for social change, there is a pressing need for gender sensitivity training for content creators and structured media literacy education for students. Such initiatives can promote critical consumption of digital content and ensure that podcast spaces contribute positively to reducing GBV.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

- 1) Integration of Media Literacy into University Curriculum:** Institutions should incorporate media literacy and gender sensitivity modules into general studies programs. This will equip students with critical thinking skills to analyze podcast content objectively.
- 2) Ethical Guidelines for Podcast Producers:** Operators should adopt ethical communication standards that discourage victim-blaming, sensationalism and harmful stereotyping in discussions on GBV. Training sessions and partnerships with NGOs specializing in gender advocacy can enhance content responsibility.
- 3) Collaboration between Government, NGOs, and Student Bodies:** Government agencies and NGOs working on gender issues should collaborate with student associations to produce awareness-oriented podcasts that promote positive behavioural change and gender equity.
- 4) Strengthening Campus-based Campaigns against GBV:** Student affairs departments and campus media units should intensify campaigns against GBV using creative podcast series, drama and interviews featuring experts and survivors to humanize the issue and break the culture of silence.

### Limitations of the Study

This study encountered certain limitations. First, data collection was restricted to undergraduates of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other universities in Nigeria. Second, some respondents showed reluctance to provide candid responses on sensitive GBV-related questions due to social desirability bias. Third, the study relied primarily on self-reported data, which may not capture deeper psychological or attitudinal nuances. However, these limitations were minimized through the assurance of confidentiality, clear explanation of research purpose, and careful phrasing of questionnaire items. Future studies could adopt qualitative approaches, such as focus group discussions or content analysis of popular podcasts, to provide more context-rich insights into how GBV narratives are framed and received by audiences.

### Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly guaranteed to protect participants' identities. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Departmental Research Committee, Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria Nsukka. Participation was entirely voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all respondents

### Competing Interest

Authors declare that there are no significant competing financial, professional or personal interests that might affect the performance or presentation of the work described in this manuscript.

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