

Analyzing Social Media Discourses of Domestic Violence in Promoting Awareness and Support Seeking: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract : Domestic Violence (DV) against women is now recognized to be a serious and widespread problem worldwide. There is a growing concern that violence against women has a global public health impact, as well as a violation of human rights. From the existing statistical surveys, it is revealed that there exists a strong relationship between DV and health issues of women like bruising, lacerations, depression, anxiety, flashbacks, sleep disturbances, hyper-arousal, emotional distress, sexually transmitted diseases and so on. This social problem is still considered as behind the closed doors issue and stigmatized topic. Women conceal their sufferings from family and friends, as they experience a lack of trust in others, feelings of shame and embarrassment among the society. Hence, women survivors of DV experience some barriers in seeking the support of specialized services such as health care access, crisis support, and legal guidance. Fortunately, with the popularity of social media like Facebook and Twitter, people share their opinions and emotional feelings to seek the social and emotional support, for sympathetic encouragement, to show compassion and empathy among the public. Considering the DV, social media plays a predominant role in creating the awareness and promoting the support services to the public, as we live in the golden era of social media. The various professional people like the public health researchers, clinicians, psychologists, social workers, national family health organizations, lawyers, and victims or their family and friends share the unprecedentedly valuable information (personal opinions and experiences) in a single platform to improve the social welfare of the community. Though each tweet or post contains a less informational value, the consolidation of millions of messages can generate actionable knowledge and provide valuable insights about the public opinion in general. Hence, this paper reports on an exploratory analysis of the effectiveness of social media for unobtrusive assessment of attitudes and awareness towards DV. In this paper, mixed methods such as qualitative analysis and text mining approaches are used to understand the social media disclosures of DV through the lenses of opinion sharing, anonymity, and support seeking. The results of this study could be helpful to avoid the cost of wide scale surveys, while still maintaining appropriate research conditions is to leverage the abundance of data publicly available on the web. Also, this analysis with data enrichment and consolidation would be useful in assisting advocacy and national family health organizations to provide information about resources and support, raise awareness and counter common stigmatizing attitudes about DV.

Keywords : domestic violence, social media, social stigma and support, women health

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