



## **Netnographic insights in Twitter posts by women in situations of violence**

### **Insights netnográficos em postagens no Twitter de mulheres em situação de violência**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

There is growing recognition that violence against women is a legitimate concern for governments, violates human rights and is a social and public health problem, with magnitude, complexity and significant impacts on countries' economies. In this scenario, cases of violence against women persist in different cultures, societies and periods of history (PAHO, 2017; WHO, 2018; MAGALHÃES, 2016; KRUG et. al., 2002).

**Keywords:** Twitter, Women, Violence.

#### **RESUMO**

É crescente o reconhecimento de que a violência contra a mulher é uma preocupação legítima dos governos, viola os direitos humanos, é um problema social e de saúde pública, com magnitude, complexidade e impactos importantes na economia dos países. Nesse cenário, persistem os casos de violências contra a mulher, em diferentes culturas, sociedades e períodos da história (OPAS, 2017; OMS, 2018; MAGALHÃES, 2016; KRUG et. al., 2002).

**Palavras-chave:** Twitter, Mulheres, Violência.

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

There is growing recognition that violence against women is a legitimate concern for governments, violates human rights and is a social and public health problem, with magnitude, complexity and significant impacts on countries' economies. In this scenario, cases of violence against women persist in different cultures, societies and periods of history (PAHO, 2017; WHO, 2018; MAGALHÃES, 2016; KRUG et. al., 2002).

Violence against women originates in social, economic, political, cultural and environmental structures, strongly associated with gender differences and social inequalities. Recognizing the challenge posed to global public health, governments invest in policies and programs to tackle it, due to the growing number of victims and the presence of serious sequelae (GARCIA et al., 2016; HOLANDA et al., 2018; PERUCCI et al., 2019).

It is indisputable that the spaces for discussion in contemporary society have transposed the concept of distance, face-to-face, physical constructions and delimited spaces, among other paradigms and thoughts, and have "gone viral" on digital platforms. In this virtual scenario, connections and interactivity can be



divided into paradoxical functions and meanings;

at the same time as it is a powerful space for information and knowledge production (research networks, work groups, continuing education...), it also becomes a place that is polarized between the visibility and invisibility of profiles and posts on sensitive and complex topics (LÉVY, 1999).

Among them, violence against women stands out, which has reached various platforms and fostered the creation of support networks, as well as webs of disagreements and "stages of judgment", anchored by social constructions and gender inequalities (BEZERRA et al., 2017).

In this nexus, language production, socio-cognitive science, the social and the cognitive are part of the same process, and when reading a text, cognition systematizes understanding (Koch, 2002). As we reach the third millennium, the world has developed a reciprocity at a distance with its imagery possibilities, because with the implementation of cyberspace, language has become established in the virtual dialog of interactivity. From Kozinets' (2010) perspective, our social worlds are becoming digital, and consequently, social scientists and researchers around the world are realizing that in order to understand society, it is necessary to follow people's social activities and interactions on the Internet and through other means of communication mediated by technology. So we understand that our social worlds are becoming digitalized, with perhaps hundreds of millions of people interacting through many online communities and their associated cybercultures, and to stay current, our research methods must keep up with this reality.

The concept of discourse is any situation that involves a set of utterances in a given context forming a discourse. According to Foucault (1960), discourse is a network of statements, and it is possible to understand statements through their meanings. Foucault (1960) also points out that each society, based on its cultural purposes, establishes discourses, in which the institutions of these societies insert rules of control to consolidate general laws, such as the school institution that manages the learning of social regulations. Also included in Foucault's (1960) concepts is the concept of discursive practices, which are the link between discourse and its practice, bringing together elements of the manufacture of discourse, as well as the application of their production. In this way, discursive practices make it possible to determine functions and forms of behavior in an era through discourses, which have reached social media.

In this sense, Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICTs) correspond to transmission and telecommunications systems, software, telecommunication services (wireless, mobile, fixed), computer hardware, content production and management of multimedia systems, networks and services, mobile device applications and Internet technologies. These tools have had a significant impact in the health sector, according to the publication of the report "Crossing the quality chiasm" by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in 2001, showing greater development and dissemination of the use of information and communication technologies, improving health conditions and patient safety. This has been done by reducing human error, improving clinical outcomes, effectively coordinating care and securely storing data over the



years (ALOTAIBI; FEDERICO, 2017; ALTURKISTANI et al., 2018).

In this way, social media can also be a great ally in assisting health, understanding them as a new communication format, an important source of social interaction, in addition to disseminating health knowledge, as highlighted by the study by Paulino *et al.* (2018). The authors state that strategies for using media make it possible to bring the theoretical content of books and scientific articles closer to professional practice, in a way that is welcoming to the reality of the population, making it possible to build ethical, critical and cooperative knowledge in a networked ecology. In this construction, sensitive issues have reached ICTs, such as the topic of violence against women. Recognized on the global stage as a serious social problem, it is part of the field of public health and challenges governments to confront these events, which have shown cruel manifestations of the usurpation of human rights.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

A descriptive, exploratory study, with data collected on the twitter platform using the search tool provided by the application to find tweets that comply with the selection rules. Searches were carried out on the application platform between August 2022 and May 2023. In addition, a search was carried out in the Scielo database, prompting a review of netnography to support the research.

The twitter social network is available both as an application for smartphones and as a website that can be accessed by computers. It is a social network that is configured as a microblog. It was founded in 2006 and has undergone a number of reforms and updates to its services.

As for the results, from a netnographic perspective we can describe the violence portrayed in the dialogues and *threads* between followers (a); identify divergences and controversial developments in the interactions established (b); map the repercussions of the testimonies and their interfaces with theoretical, political and/or legal frameworks that guide strategies for dealing with violence against women. The research will use a qualitative approach, which aims to consider the meanings and intentions inherent in acts, relationships and social structures, the latter being taken both in their advent and in their transformation, as significant human constructions. The choice of this approach is based on its ability to delve into a particular social reality, while respecting the specificity of the culture that marks the trajectory of events (MINAYO, 2013; HINE, 2004).

To select the tweets, "*closed*" accounts were excluded and only tweets from open personal accounts were selected; the search tool was used with three key words as a method of exclusion: those that did not have these words in the body of the post, "*violence against women*" "*machismo*" "*aggression against women*". Within this analysis of the tweets, 30 tweets were analyzed, as well as the accounts that republished the posts and commented on them, so that an ethnographic construction and analysis of the platform could



take place. In this article, the authors chose to focus on three tweets which, using the saturation method, brought together the most common discussions on the platform.

In relation to the brief literature review, we searched the Scielo database for literature focusing on netnography, considering the Portuguese language, with the book "Netnografia: Realizando pesquisa etnográfica online" by Robert Kozinets being the pioneer on the subject.

### 3 RESULTS

The twitter platform has its own specific format for how its interactions take place, and is currently a social network that dictates its own way of working, obeying its specific rules of operation. From this and from a netnographic perspective, it was possible to see that it has unique characteristics that allow it to be perceived as a new community and its unique culture. In relation to *Twitter*, the platform has a specific language with codes specific to the community, people avoid putting their own identities on the platform as well, this makes people feel more comfortable expressing themselves and posting personal accounts, but it also makes the environment difficult to read due to the codes, memes and other resources that only those who appropriate and truly approach the virtual application can understand. The fact that many don't use their own photos or real names also makes it easier for them to feel invited to report without having to identify themselves and to be able to talk openly about situations they've experienced, advice, but when it comes to asking for help, this anonymity creates a duality because it's comfortable for them not to expose themselves and prevent aggressors from finding them, but it also makes it difficult to use this virtual report as evidence or for people who have access to report these reports of violence. This community has various tools, the "twitter wheel" being one in which people feel more comfortable describing situations they have experienced, as it allows a pre-selection of who can view it, and it is also a form of security for people who report cases of violence to prevent their aggressors from having access to their reports.

As soon as we began to analyze and catalog the posts we found, we could see some patterns and how the posts and responses were configured; we could also see that there is an intrinsic political party connection in the forms of support we found. We identified a number of posts by people with political party affiliations giving a kind of manual of routes for women in situations of violence, routes that are configured as *Trends*, giving step-by-step information on how to seek help.

We also noticed that most of the time these posts are linked to people with a "left-wing political" stance, as well as socialists and communists. We infer that these posts reflect a broader social vision and the way in which the trajectories of violence are constructed, but that they should not necessarily imprison and perpetuate these contexts.

Another finding is that in the majority of posts there are comments from followers of the person who is reporting that welcome the victim, but if the posts go viral, there are several comments that are not



restricted to welcoming.

Most of the posts that had *haters* - people who go against what is being commented on - were linked to right-wing, extreme right-wing and neo-fascist political positions. It was noticeable that people are very interested in this type of content, whether it's reports, cases that are being discussed when they go viral, everyone has something to comment on and talk about, or hate messages - which were very present in most of the posts, whether they are directed at the offender or the victim themselves who is reporting the case. In this context, it is essential that non-violent communication and the urgency of exercising peace in the media are widely debated in academic training spaces, in work environments and in civil society as a whole (ROSENBERG, 2021).

It is also necessary to look at who these women who report violence are and which of them are best received. In the research, it is very clear that middle-class women, and especially white and cisgender women, receive an unparalleled welcome, even when it becomes a viral publication, people become more welcoming even when they have right-wing political party connections, the entire social construction of the country is also perpetuated in virtual environments.

Figure 1 - Print 1 of a twitter post.



In this tweet, a viral case of a report of violence, a white, cisgender woman makes her report, and it is possible through the comments and even by analyzing the profiles of these accounts that made reports and comments that there was a great reception and agreement with the tweet, this woman received several comments of support, although it is also possible to see comments with harassment content.



Figure 2 - Print 2 of a twitter post.



In this tweet, the viral potential was much lower. It was a trans woman reporting a case of violence suffered by a black trans woman. It is possible to see that this report had a much lower viral potential, and that there were also welcoming phrases and comments, but also comments blaming the victim, and by analyzing the account of these types of comments it was possible to see that there were several personal posts supporting right-wing political thoughts.

Figure 3 - Print 3 of a twitter post.



Twitter in thread format, which shows that the platform also has an informative characteristic that aims to promote information and ways in which women who are victims of violence can resort to help, when analyzing the account that made the post, it is seen that it was a post developed by a cis woman, black, a socialist political activist.



## 4 DISCUSSION

By analyzing the entire form of communication established, it is essential to understand how the network works in order to see the functionality of the social network. It is important to recognize it as a community of its own that can welcome women in situations of violence, as well as providing crucial information that can help these women and also bring benefits to their mental health, which is vulnerable when they are in cases of violence. It is essential to analyze these social networks in order to develop specific policies for these communities and also to understand the vulnerabilities that still occur, especially among specific groups of women such as transsexuals and black women.

In 2021, there were a total of 1,319 femicides in the country, a 2.4% drop in the number of victims recorded compared to the previous year. In total, there were 32 fewer victims of femicide than in 2020, when 1,351 women were killed. In 2021, on average, one woman was a victim of femicide every 7 hours, according to data from the public prosecutor's office. It is essential to analyze reports of violence on the platforms in order to reduce these cases, because the reception and ways in which referrals are made and information disseminated can reduce cases.

It was also possible to surmise that there is a certain political party "connection" in the various forms of welcoming reports of violence in the posts. Several posts by people with political party affiliations were identified, providing a kind of manual of routes for women in situations of violence, which are configured as Trends showing step by step how to seek help.

## 5 CONCLUSION

They show that the white and cisgender population receives better reception and validation of their reports, especially when focused on the political axes of people with center-right political party ties, most of whom already show greater resistance to recognizing reports of gender violence. When we go deeper, we see that the majority of posts narrated by black women and, above all, trans women and transvestites are rejected and discredited. On the other hand, when focused on left-wing political groups, these reports are better received, but it is still clear that trans women and transvestites suffer marginalization, even in this political group that "defends" equity policies. Violence against women is an issue that requires constant debate and confrontation, and it is important to pay attention to virtual environments, such as twitter, which construct and disseminate discourses. From a netnographic perspective, it is necessary to take a closer look at women who have social and identity demarcators of vulnerability.



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