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Social Media and Women Empowerment in Nigeria: A Study of the #BreakTheBias Campaign on Facebook

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Social Media and Women Empowerment in Nigeria: A Study of the

#BreakTheBias Campaign on Facebook

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how the March 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign on Facebook was used as an empowerment platform in Nigeria, where women experience gender disparity. Research on the role of social media in women's empowerment in Nigeria is an area that has not been fully studied. Previous studies have looked at women's empowerment mainly through an educational or political lens. Other researchers have studied how women utilize social media platforms for leisure, entertainment, and media sharing. In the present study, non-probability sampling was used to identify 20 posts that convey empowering messages on Nigeria's Facebook feeds during the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign. Here, I define "empowering" as the process of bringing someone into a state of power or control by increasing their potential, ability, choice, and confidence through the transference of knowledge. I looked for recurrent themes in the exemplar texts, pictures, and videos that illustrate economic and social empowerment messages. The empowerment messages were analyzed using feminist textual analysis. I argue that social media are instrumental for women's economic and social empowerment in Nigeria through entrepreneurial empowerment, philanthropic initiatives, financial inclusion, online communities, psycho-social support, and Facebook therapy. The over-arching themes of empowerment include feminism, economic empowerment opportunities, resilience, self-confidence, self-awareness, and motivation. In the context of this study, transnational feminism informs an inclusive paradigm for marginalized women to think critically about feminist activism and empowerment campaigns on gender inequality that is intersectional in practice.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Boasting over 33 million active social media users, a number projected to increase to 103 million users by 2026, Nigerians are ranked as the most addicted social media users in Africa (Statista, 2022). Social media have become a global space for expression for a broad online audience irrespective of culture, class, or geographical location. In Nigeria, the use of social media has become an inevitable mechanism of empowerment for women through accessing new knowledge and opportunities and contributing to society's economic and social development (Aina & Olayode, 2012). Social media also have become an online platform for women's activism where local issues become a global concern through hashtags and campaigns. As such, women activists have taken advantage of social media's social and economic empowerment potential. Financial empowerment is the new feminism, and women's economic empowerment will not be complete if they are not financially empowered (Blair, 2022). Hence, economic empowerment and financial security for women are critical to their holistic development.

Nigerian women have been exposed to information and ideas that have not only changed their self-image but also led to a resistance to gender inequality and bias through different empowerment campaigns and activisms for change. Thus, empowering women through social media has become a frequently cited goal of development interventions for Nigerian women (Aimua, 2021).

While there are several approaches to the scholarship on empowerment, this study examines the relationship between social media and women's empowerment in Nigeria using the

2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign on Facebook. In chapter one, I provide a brief introduction to the study to show that Nigerians are among the most active social media users in Africa and that social media have now become a platform for women's activism ad empowerment. Chapter two examines the background of the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Campaign on Facebook as a trending theme on the Facebook feeds of Nigerian women activists, feminists, Nigerian women-owned NGOs, and corporate/private organizations, including Geely Motors, and Union Bank of Nigeria. In this chapter, I also defined the key terms used in the study, which include women empowerment, economic empowerment, social empowerment, and gender inequality. Chapter three is divided into three sub-sections. The first section examines scholarly literature on the use of social media by Nigerian women as a social and economic empowerment platform and a 21st century experience. The second section shows that gender bias in Nigeria is pervasive. In this section, I also provide a brief overview of how Nigerian law criminalizes individuals with gender and sexual identities outside of the binary categories of "man" or "woman." The third section describes intersectionality and the implication for women's empowerment campaigns. In chapter four, I examine the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign on Facebook by introducing two research questions that this study aims to answer: 1) What does economic and social "empowerment" look like on Nigerian 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Facebook feeds/posts? 2) What are the dominant economic and social empowerment themes in the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* discourse on Facebook in Nigeria? In chapter five, I argue that transnational feminism provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding intersectionality as essential in feminist activism and empowerment campaigns. Chapter six describes the feminist textual analysis methods I use to conduct the present study. In chapter seven, I present what economic and social empowerment look like on Nigeria's 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Facebook feeds/posts as *entrepreneurial*

empowerment, philanthropic initiatives, financial inclusion, online communities, psycho-social support, and communication platform/Facebook therapy. I also found that the dominant economic and social empowerment themes in the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* discourse on Facebook in Nigeria include *feminism, economic empowerment opportunities, resilience and self-confidence, as well as self-awareness and motivation*. Chapter eight uses a transnational feminist lens to discuss the economic and social empowerment of women in terms of women's different and unique experiences of gender inequality globally. In chapter nine, I conclude by arguing that social media are instrumental in women's economic and social empowerment in Nigeria. I do this work as a well-educated, able-bodied, cis-gender, Nigerian woman from Edo State, educated in the West but who has worked on promoting girl-child education and women empowerment programs in Nigeria for over 10 years.

Facebook's 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Campaign in Nigeria

The internet has provided a social space for social interaction, and the use of social media has become important for establishing strong relationships and networking (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Over the years, social media have proven to be a powerful means of communication, a viable tool for raising awareness on various issues and promoting campaigns (Amrouche & Hababou, 2021). Communication is an essential part of human living. Through social media, individuals have been able to engage in various activities, sharing content and opinions with a global audience. Thus, it has provided opportunities for communication and collaboration among individuals irrespective of age, class, socioeconomic status, and geographical location (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media have transformed the communication system, making information creation and dissemination effortless and efficient (Amrouche & Hababou, 2021).

Different social media platforms are commonly used in Nigeria; however, among all these platforms, Facebook is one of the most popular and widely used platforms for Nigerians (Statista, 2022). Research shows that there are over 36 million Facebook users in Nigeria, of which 40.9% are women (Statista, 2022). Nigeria is regarded as Facebook's biggest market on the continent of Africa, with over 16 million daily active users (Statista, 2022). The use of social media platforms like Facebook, which were commonly used to enhance a close form of communication among friends and families, have now been put to other uses, including political, economic, social, health, and religious purposes. Feminists and women's rights activists in

Nigeria have recognized the importance of social media and used it to promote gender equality and women empowerment (Pereira, 2009).

Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society, and its local cultural practices and traditions place great importance on men as heads of family and worthy leaders in society (Jaiyeola, 2020). This is evident in the cultural practice of sending boys to school while girl-child education is often deemed unnecessary and a waste of scarce resources (Nwaigwe, 2020). Also, there is the general assumption that women are expected to marry and become full-time wives and mothers. Moreover, while growing up, girls are often taught by their family and society that their roles primarily revolve around domestic duties at home, including childbearing.

Although there have been actions and measures to curb Nigeria's gender disparities, unemployment for women keeps rising in the face of decreasing economic growth and development (Onyenechere, 2009). The latest data on unemployment in Nigeria indicate that women ranked the highest in unemployment, showing that 12.2 million women are unemployed compared to 9.5 million men (Statista, 2022). Research also shows that women's access to paid employment is very low while men have access to more high-paying jobs and stable employment (Statista, 2019). This is further reflected in the workforce in government institutions; 76% of civil servants in Nigeria's Federal Civil Service are men, while 24% are women (Oti, 2013). This implies that Nigerian men are often given higher priority in job placements and employment opportunities. Such statistics establish the fact that Nigerian women are marginalized even in the labor force.

As life challenges Nigerian women, they tend to spend more time on social media as the next available option (Anyanwu et al., 2021). Nigerian women have taken advantage of Facebook more specifically to draw attention to their concerns and seek ways to create

opportunities for empowerment (Darma et al. 2018). In Nigeria, the fight against gender inequality using Facebook demonstrates the priority of Nigerian women who yearn to be active in the affairs of society (Anyanwu et al., 2021).

One of the top women's rights activists and feminist scholars, Lola Omolola is also the founder of the popular Facebook group "Females in Nigeria" (FIN). She argues that Facebook has been a source of empowerment for women by reducing their vulnerability and dependency in all aspects of life (Richardson, 2021). The FIN group, for example, explores issues facing Nigerian women and promotes the vision of the group: women's empowerment. Today, FIN has over 1.7 million members and is managed by 28 volunteer moderators. This is one example of how Facebook has made an impact in helping women find their voices and offering ways for empowerment (Darma et al., 2018).

Part of the difficulty in defining empowerment is its link to "power," which is a highly controversial concept. Empowerment is an essential part of feminist theory that involves the transformation of marginalized person(s) who have been denied the ability to make choices to acquire power and knowledge (Turner & Mashti, 2014). Empowerment thus revolves around change and transformation. Faizah and Husaeni (2019) argue that women's empowerment does not necessarily imply that women are taking over control previously held by men; rather, empowerment indicates the need to change the power structures. Changing power structures and relations that deny women choices in different areas of their lives is essential for achieving gender equality. Gender equality involves an assessment of the existing power structure and a change of the traditional patriarchal narratives in order to give women a voice (Malhotra et al., 2005). Women's empowerment involves active participation in all aspects of life and society without bias or discrimination.

One of the empowerment programs that has received attention internationally among women is the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign, which was held globally on social media platforms on March 8, 2022, in celebration of International Women's Day. The International Women's Day began in the United States with the Socialist Party in February 1909 (Olcott, 2017). During the second International Conference of Working Women in Copenhagen, Denmark, women's rights activist Clara Zetkin saw the need for international inclusivity of all women's voices to strengthen their collective demands for equal rights. A century later, the theme *#BreakTheBias* was penned to reflect the vision of women who longed for a gender-equal world free from stereotypes, bias, and discrimination against women (Bunch, 2012). Subsequently, March 8 has been marked as the official date for the celebration of women all over the world.

In March 2022, *#BreakTheBias* in Nigeria became the trending theme on most social media platforms, as it had been set aside to celebrate women's achievements and call out inequality or bias while acting in several ways to empower them in all aspects of society (Whiting, 2022). Through the International Women's Day, *#BreakTheBias* has urged people to call out Nigeria's gender bias against women (Anyanwu et al., 2021). Thus, *#BreakTheBias* aims to promote awareness of gender bias so that all genders can thrive in a world of fairness and inclusion. As women celebrated *#BreakTheBias*, the goal was to continue to work toward women's empowerment, gender equality, and equity. With this hashtag theme, Nigerian women organized diverse programs to address gender stereotyping, inequality, and discrimination. It was a popular campaign as some popular Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as Women For Women International, and private-owned organizations, such as Geely Nigeria, joined in on the campaign to foster women's economic and social empowerment in Nigeria. Different Facebook publicity materials were used in celebrating the day and preaching the message of

breaking the bias alongside the unique *#BreakTheBias* pose, made using one's arms to form an

X-shape over the chest as a sign of commitment and support for ending gender bias.

Figure 1. The *#BreakTheBias* pose marking the 2022 International Women's Day.

*Information provided by the student for the purpose of this study.

     Striking the International Women's Day #BreakTheBias pose with arms crossed shows

commitment to calling out bias, stereotypes, and discrimination against women. It also shows a

rejection of actions that promotes gender inequality.

Definition of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, I have adopted the following definitions of "women empowerment," "economic empowerment," "social empowerment," and "gender inequality."

1. Women empowerment: Women empowerment can be defined as **"**attempts to balance a short-term objective of improving the quality of life for women with the long-term goal of challenging patriarchal and political-economic inequality, resulting in large-scale social transformation" (Shah, 2011. pp. 23-24)**.** Nwaigwe (2020) also defined women empowerment as women having control, power, and the choice of decision making, especially regarding issues that affect them. Women's empowerment describes the "capability of women for self-determination, to take control over their own circumstances and to realize their aspirations in order to live a life they have reason to value" (Galiè & Farnworth, 2019, p. 13).

2. Economic empowerment: Economic empowerment refers to the support of individuals who have historically been economically disadvantaged so they can engage in economic activities that benefit themselves and society (Renzetti et al., 2017). By doing so, those who would otherwise remain dependent actively become part of economic growth.

3. Social empowerment: As individuals become socially empowered, they have the ability to decide what to do in their social relationships, e.g., mobility, association with other people, reproduction, health, and education (Herrmann, 2015).

4. Gender inequality: Refers to "a gender hierarchy that advantages men over women" (Ridgeway, 2011, p. 3).

CHAPTER THREE:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media As Empowerment For Nigerian Women

Historically in terms of gender relations, Nigerian women have generally been marginalized, oppressed, and treated unfairly, both publicly and privately (Onyenechere, 2009). One of the Millennium Declaration Goals 2020, which is a set of measurable targets designed by the United Nations, is to improve "developing" countries like Nigeria, by promoting gender equality and empowering women. However, most Nigerian government policies still encourage and infringe on women's rights (Jaiyeola, 2020). The very normality of gender bias, discrimination, and stereotypes in patriarchal societies often goes unnoticed. The adverse effects of such actions are evident in the limitations women are subjected to (Ekpe, 2011). One of the most glaring inequalities is the difference in income based on gender. Women are seen as less deserving of earning than men, despite doing the same job with similar responsibilities. The gender difference for income is always tilted in favor of men over women.

At the same time, Nigerian women are virtually nonexistent in jobs like mining and quarrying due to society's perception of the gendered construction of labor (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The above examples of gender disparity in Nigeria highlight the importance of a more realistic approach and commitment to end gender bias, especially where patriarchal practices are based on religion and cultural traditions (Halkias et al., 2011).

Dosekun (2022) writes that the marginalization of Nigerian women is further visible in the "mundane sexist attitudes that ambitious women may be considered morally loose" (p. 3), but men are naturally designed to be overly ambitious. The mindset imposed by gender socialization thus has a significant effect on Nigerian women. The implication of this assumption is the effect it has on the attitudes of Nigerian women, self-limiting them from making efforts to strive, work towards breaking the bias, and change the patriarchal narrative. As such, most Nigerian women have been made to believe that men are inherently designed to occupy certain auspicious societal positions and have access to some incontestable social and economic privileges. Nwakanma et al. (2021) write that since people are shaped by what society expects of them, it is becoming increasingly common for Nigerian women to internalize and incorporate their limitations into their belief systems, which further influences their behaviors and reinforces gender stereotypes.

However, in recent times, Nigerian women are becoming conscious of the gender gap due to the marginalization and social injustice they face. The narrative is changing as women are gradually coming into the spotlight to become active players in society, often by taking advantage of social media. The internet and social media technologies have evolved rapidly and have recently witnessed exceptional growth (Amrouche & Hababou, 2021). Previously, social media were primarily used to enhance a close form of communication between and among friends and families. Nonetheless, as time passed, social media use has accrued many benefits. The relevance of social media platforms includes more areas of social networking that were not envisioned a few years prior (Lawal et al., 2022). Social media are now used for political and social movements, including women's rights (Darma & Kurfi, 2018). Different timelines and groups on social media platforms are dedicated to communicating with other users while finding feeds or people with interests similar to one's own. Through this networking, Facebook has

contributed to the ease of creating awareness and diffusing information across borders and among people. In Nigeria, Facebook online groups and forums are one of the most popular types of online communities on social media formed by women (Nwagbara, 2019).

Social media have made communication more accessible with a wider reach and become a virtual world where reality is combined with efforts to motivate women who have lost hope due to the gender bias experienced in society (Lawal et al., 2022). Social media have also increased the flow of information, enabling women in Nigeria to work together irrespective of age, class, culture, and religion (Oyesomi et al., 2014). That is one of the many benefits of social media. Social media have transformed women's communication about the issues they face in society. Jacob et al. (2012) argue that despite all the criticisms of feminism in Nigeria as misandry and irrelevant, the fight for women's rights and gender equality is growing. The vitriol directed at social media and women's "empowerment" in Nigeria might be due to the obvious ways women's participation in these campaigns is gradually changing the narratives of traditional patriarchal power structures and gradually reducing women's dependence on men (Lawal et al., 2022). In this sense, digital activism is a powerful tool that cannot be understated. It has unlocked opportunities for innovation and fuller awareness of feminism through events and campaigns like the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign in celebration of International Women's Day (Whiting, 2022).

Anyanwu et al. (2021) write that "social media impacts both a woman entrepreneur's social efficacy and her social capital, ultimately resulting in feelings of empowerment that enable productivity gains in the entrepreneurial world" (p. 46). This impact happens because most social media "empowerment" campaigns focus on changing how women view themselves and build individual competencies and confidence in entrepreneurship and social networking. For example,

Lawal et al. (2022) write that social media have become a global village of individuals

networking for different purposes, and Nigerian women are using social media to express

themselves, boost their confidence through social networking, grow their businesses, and

"empower" themselves economically.

Richardson (2021) also argues that Nigerian women's dependence on men for financial

support in starting businesses has been reduced as social media have provided marketing

platforms, entrepreneurial training, and credit sources for small and mid-sized business startups.

In this way, the social media marketplace in Nigeria is booming; Nigerian women are cashing in

on the abundant online opportunities on social media and contributing substantially to the

nation's economic development (Oyesomi et al., 2014). Forbes listed the Nigerian feminist and

women's rights activist Linda Ikeji as the most popular and wealthiest blogger in Nigeria, with a

net worth estimated to be over $40 million, and women entrepreneurial activists are joining the

list (Maikudi, 2021). Different aspects of blogging such as fashion, food, music, fitness, comedy,

entrepreneurship, gossip, careers, and lifestyles have become a trending and lucrative business

for Nigerian women on social media (Maikudi, 2021). Having businesses on social media is

advantageous because it attracts millions of consumers regardless of the geographic as well as

the social distance to various products and services (Fabian et al., 2022).

Social media platforms are fast becoming a game-changer for Nigerian women in

business operations and have played an essential role in Nigerian women's economic

"empowerment" by providing access to financing for their businesses and other family needs

(Pereira, 2009). Women are supporting each other by lending capital to start-up businesses and

making connections through social media platforms such as peer-to-peer lending. Lending has

helped make loans available to people whom the traditional banks might not otherwise serve due

to discrimination by gender, age, class, and educational status (Profatilov et al., 2014). For instance, with the development of technology and the expansion of social media, lending facilities like crowdfunding have recently emerged as a potent substitute for conventional financing methods. Crowdfunding supports a project or business venture by soliciting modest contributions from many people, generally online (Profatilov et al., 2014). The platforms for crowdfunding and other online loan services that "empower" women economically would not exist without the presence of social media, and these platforms are more commonly used by women (Darma et al., 2018). Nigerian women have used the loans as a means of early-stage finance and a source of capital for small and medium enterprises (Fabian et al., 2022).

Oyesomi et al. (2014) argue that in Nigeria, "organizations are drawn to thinking that women are only talking about shoes and babies on social media; little do they know that social networks are giving women entrepreneurs a place to nurture and grow their ideas and businesses" (p. 5). Virtual businesses, shopping e-sites, and online trading operating on social media are becoming increasingly popular among Nigerian women. For example, Marketplace Nigeria is an online Facebook market where buying and selling different products and services occur. The benefits to Nigerian women engaging in such online business range from networking with other women in business and harnessing information for decision-making in business to participating in "empowerment" programs and learning how to manage virtual relationships (Richardson, 2021). Moreso, the small capital requirement to start an e-business is also an added advantage for Nigerian women because being involved in an online business can improve their economic and social status, as well as help to alleviate poverty (Richardson, 2021). This has prompted Nigerian women to participate in online financial training and also skill acquisition

development programs, which are usually offered for free or for a nominal registration fee and cover a wide range of subjects on how to grow their businesses (Darma et al., 2018).

Lawal et al. (2022) argue that "social media empowers entrepreneurial women in Nigeria through self-efficacy and social capital" (p. 50). The feeling of self-efficacy has made Nigerian women believe in their capabilities including the potential to overcome gender-related bias. Through social media, Nigerian women are exposed to messages and social interactions that have helped boost their confidence and belief in their competencies (Aimua, 2021).

Similarly, Anyanwu et al. (2021) argue that one of the most important features of social media for women's "empowerment" is communication and self-expression, which leads to self-confidence, choice, and social change. Omang et al. (2022) further argue, "changes in the ability to exercise choice can be thought of in three interconnected dimensions: resources, which form the conditions under which choices are made; agency, which is the hub of the process by which choices are made; and achievements, which are the outcomes of choices" (p. 3). It is on this premise that Nigerian women are seen as valuable contributors to Nigeria's economic growth and development as social media have given women a platform for their voices to be heard and to make choices through the opportunity of different "empowerment" programs (Halkias et al., 2011). However, this can only happen when women are supported and encouraged to take advantage of the many benefits accrued to social media.

In analyzing the nature of "empowerment" messages on social media, Darma and Kurfi (2018) argue that a characteristic that distinguishes an "empowerment" message on social media is the style of language being used. The messages are coined in a way to inspire and give women confidence, especially those of marginalized groups excluded because of their class and ethnicity. Dosekun (2022) argues that "the solution to patriarchy is women's empowerment" (p.

4). "Empowerment" messages on Nigerian women's social media are usually motivating, inspiring, and thought-provoking to boost women's confidence to speak up against bias and discrimination (Omang, 2022). In other cases, the message being communicated on the pages of Nigerian feminists, women activists, and organizations supporting women are primarily entertaining, persuasive, and engaging, intending to capture the reader's imagination (Anyanwu et al., 2021). Generally, the messages are designed to change Nigerian women's attitudes, opinions, and perspectives on their outlook on life. Oyesomi et al. (2014) argue that Nigerian women, due to these "empowerment" messages, are now acting with poise in connecting and collaborating on issues about women on a local or global level.

Gender in Nigeria

Nigeria is a gender-segregated society influenced by patriarchy, and where individuals are separated physically and culturally based on their biological sex assigned at birth as either male or female (Egbue, 2012). The segregation also implies that females are seen as inferior to their male counterparts. The implication is the gender inequality, marginalization, oppression, and injustice against women (Egbue, 2012). According to Nigerian scholars Aina and Olayode (2012):

> …the roles of men and women in societies are not only treated differently but are often given unequal weight and value. The age-long restrictions placed on women's life choices and opportunities hinder not only their growth but the development of nations. No wonder, countries with wide gender gaps are found to exhibit poor indicators of growth and well-being, poor nutrition, high maternal mortality rate; high infant mortality rate; high poverty rate; low life expectancy; low level of education. (p. 21-22)

Moreover, Nigerian culture permits only "men" and "women" as the approved gender identities and highly stigmatizes those with different sexual orientations and those who identify outside the gender binary of men and women (Ajayi-Lowo, 2018). This

tradition is further enforced with the backing of the law, which forbids any cohabitation between same-sex sexual partners and bans any public show of same-sex relationships. Nigeria makes these relationships illegal and punishable by law with 14 years of imprisonment under the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act, 2014 (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.1999). The criminalization of same-sex relationships informs a system of body policing that criminalizes individuals who do not identify within the heteronormative gender binary. In terms of social media and advancement, lesbians, and bi-women, and transwomen are left out of social media "empowerment" initiatives for fear of the consequences of revealing their identity. Social media is a public platform, and coming out or transitioning via such a platform will attract public discrimination and marginalization in addition to the punishment of the law. A further implication for these individuals is an infringement on the basic rights of expression, association, and privileges that the Nigerian constitution provides to other citizens in the heteronormative gender binary.

Intersectionality and Gender Discrepancy of Social Media use in Nigeria: Implication for Women's Empowerment.

The term intersectionality was conceptualized by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to explain the interlocking systems of oppression and bias that Black women face in the United States. Carastathis (2014) argues, "Intersectionality has become the predominant way of conceptualizing the relation between systems of oppression which construct our multiple identities and our social locations in hierarchies of power and privilege" (p. 1). Thus, women's lives are constructed by multiple, intersecting systems of oppression and privilege depending on their social locations (Carastathis, 2014).

Darma et al. (2018) argue that although social media have been a source of "empowerment" for women in Nigeria, "gender, tradition, culture, religion, and other factors have continued to widen the disparity between Nigerian women" (p. 9). Nigerian women are also affected by the intersection of class, age, geographical location, ethnicity, and educational and socioeconomic status, which form their social positions and hinder their access to social media tools. Similarly, Ayevbuomwan et al. (2016) argue that even though social media serve as an "empowerment" tool for women in Nigeria, the reality remains that some women, especially those who are poor, of minority ethnic groups, and who reside in rural areas in Nigeria continue to face marginalization due to illiteracy and poverty. A survey conducted in Nigeria reveals that rural women are ignorant of modern methods of improving agricultural production to boost their economic growth and of other ways of self-development (Omang, 2022). Additionally, most Nigerian women in rural areas still do not have access to information technologies, internet infrastructure, mobile phones, or laptops, which hinders their access to social media platforms (Dosekun, 2022). This is because many parts of the rural areas in Nigeria often lack social infrastructure facilities, and even when they do, the infrastructure deficit overlaps with gender as it is only used by a small percentage of the population who are usually men (Ugondo, 2020). Moreover, English language is Nigeria's most used social media language, which serves as another barrier for some rural women who might not speak English.

Lawal et al. (2022) argue that the diffusion of important information through social media platforms and the ability to understand and employ such messages could assist rural women in "improving" themselves. However, research shows that rural women in Nigeria are predominantly illiterate and are mostly unaware of ways to empower themselves through social media platforms (Halkias et al., 2011). The illiteracy level makes it difficult for rural women to

read and understand these messages. This results in poor access to information and non-participation in empowerment campaigns on social media. Thus, the probability of a rural woman being empowered by social media is low due to geographical location. Also, the socio-economic status of rural Nigerian women limits their ownership of mobile phones or computers to access social media.

Dosekun (2022) argues that "while women empowerment campaigns on social media may be seen as the solution to patriarchy and breaking the bias, these campaigns are elite in their horizons and betray a lack of intersectional consciousness" (p. 1). Dosekun (2022) further argues that these "empowerment" campaigns "are unrepresentative of the experiences and stories of the overwhelming majority of Nigerian women, and thus came to function as a further site and enactment of their marginalization" (p. 2). This implies that although social media are paving the way for some Nigerian women, others are on the sidelines due to their intersectional identities and social locations.

In analyzing the structure of "empowerment" campaigns on social media, Halkias and colleagues (2011) argue that these campaigns rarely include minoritized women such as poor native-speaking rural women in Nigeria. Dosekun (2022) proposed an intersectional approach to women "empowerment" campaigns as one that should be "concerned with the overlapping and conflicting dynamics of race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, and other inequalities among women" (p. 5). Oyesomi et al. (2014) argue that including all women in "empowerment" campaigns on social media would help empower more women in Nigeria economically and socially, leading to the nation's growth and development. Women "empowerment" campaigns could be intersectional if they included all women in Nigeria irrespective of age, class, socio-economic status, ethnicity, religion, geographical location, and other interlocking identities.

CHAPTER FOUR:

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Empowerment Defined on Facebook 2022's *#BreakTheBias* in Nigeria

Gender disparity is one of Nigeria's most prominent social issues, especially in the 21st century (Ekpe, 2011). The gender gap is the visible difference in the social, economic, political, emotional, cultural, and intellectual acquisitions between women and men. Women have become easy prey to oppressive and exploitative conditions. Although there have been measures to curb gender disparity, such as the implementation of inclusive strategies in socio-economic and political settings, the gender bias against women in Nigeria persists (Onyenechere, 2009).

While there are several aspects to the scholarship on "empowerment," this study examines the relationship between social media and women's "empowerment" in Nigeria. I examine how the #BreakTheBias discourse on Facebook has served as a platform for women's economic and social "empowerment" in Nigeria. In doing so, I identify what economic, and social "empowerment" looks like on Nigerian women's Facebook feeds using a transnational lens to tease out the dominant economic and social "empowerment" themes in the #BreakTheBias Facebook feeds. I also discuss the challenges of using social media as a platform for women's economic and social "empowerment" in Nigeria.

Research on the role of social media in women's "empowerment" in Nigeria is an area that has not been fully studied. Previous research has looked into women's "empowerment" mainly through an educational or political lens, neglecting how social media have also been effective in empowering women socially and economically. Other researchers have studied how

women utilize social media platforms for leisure, entertainment, and media sharing. This paper, thus, examines and analyzes how social media are linked to being a social and economic empowerment platform in Nigeria, where women are affected by gender disparity. I do this by analyzing the 2022 Nigerian *#BreaktheBias* campaign on Facebook.

Research Questions

1. What does economic and social "empowerment" look like on Nigerian 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Facebook feeds/posts?

2. What are the dominant economic and social "empowerment" themes in the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* discourse on Facebook in Nigeria?

<center>**CHAPTER FIVE:**</center>

<center>**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**</center>

Transnational Feminist Theory

Valuing diverse forms of agency, transnational feminist theory highlights the diversity of experiences of women living within, between, on borders of nation-states around the world (Enns et al., 2021). These perspectives go beyond national boundaries to a broad scope of interacting forces that affect gendered relationships and experiences across cultural borders and spaces. Feminists recognize that women's "empowerment" must be anchored within women's experiences when "examining the effects of oppression and domination and power and powerlessness in our society" (Turner & Maschi, 2014, p. 1). It also becomes important to consider the role of the economic, social, political institutions, and structures across cultures and borders that perpetuate varied forms of gender inequality that women experience, leading to their disempowerment. Transnational feminist theory emphasizes the concepts of intersectionality, social activism, and collaboration while subverting the idea that women around the world experience the same forms of oppression, exploitation, and privilege (Enns et al., 2021). Women are universally marginalized, but the particulars of their marginalization are specific to their social location in specific nation-states and geopolitical contexts.

Adams and Thomas (2010) argue that transnational feminist activism has become the dominant modality of global sisterhood used to highlight women's experience of marginalization and oppression while working to achieve gender equality in law and practice. Thus, recognizing its potential for creating a solidarity network of women globally to effect sustainable changes is

<center>22</center>

critical. However, Mohanty (2015) points out the problem of universalizing the notion of "global sisterhood" as a Western feminist logic that reduces women into a single homogenous category. She critiques this approach to feminism, arguing for more nuanced scholarship from the West. She criticizes the idea of sisterhood for the assumption that the struggles and experiences of women in the global North and global South are the same. Grouping women into one category only further strengthens the divide between women.

Similarly, Kaplan and Grewal (1994) argue that the term sisterhood promulgates a one-way feminist viewpoint that flows from Western cultural imperialism. Acknowledging global power differences involves centralizing the concerns and strengths of feminists from multiple world regions, especially the global South and marginalized women of color. A dominant feature of transnational feminists' "empowerment" perspective is the focus on promoting transnational solidarity and collaboration between feminists from different countries who understand the significance of group efforts in feminist activism despite the differences (Enns et al., 2021). For example, the 2022 *#BreakTheBias*-themed campaign aimed at "empowering" and educating women globally about gender bias/equality and encouraging them to lend their voices and efforts to effect global change.

However, as contemporary realities of gender inequality and bias become increasingly complex around the world, a transnational feminist perspective is of growing relevance to feminist activism and "empowerment" practice in many settings. Bunch (2012) argues that the reason for most unsuccessful transnational feminist movements was not because they were political, but rather they failed to consider issues from an intersectional perspective and how this specifically affected women. As a result, they fail to recognize the dynamics of women's issues

across transnational borders. For example, "to talk feminism to a woman who has no water, no food, and no home is to talk nonsense" (Bunch 2012, p. 216).

An effective transnational feminist activism thus requires "cultural humility on the part of feminists from the global North as also necessary for creating productive transnational collaborative frameworks that dislodge power dynamics that have often resulted in unequal relationships between feminists from wealthy countries and women from many other regions around the world" (Enns et al., 2021, p. 4). Enns et al. (2021) also argue that applying an intersectional lens in the feminist and social justice approach, as well as valuing diverse forms of agency and resistance, are core themes in transnational feminist practices. Consciously recognizing the differences in women's experiences of gender inequality and bias while affirming the commonality in the struggle against gender bias, can be an effective strategy for social change. Mohanty (2015) argues that there are connections between the social locations of the marginalized and their experience; hence, "if we pay attention to and think from the space of some of the most disenfranchised communities of women in the world, we are most likely to envision a just and democratic society capable of treating all its citizens fairly" (p. 510). In recognizing the space and experiences of marginalized women, feminist practices are likely to be more inclusive.

In the context of this study, transnational feminism informs an inclusive paradigm for marginalized women in the global South and allows for critical analysis of feminist activism and "empowerment" campaigns on gender inequality that is intersectional. Transnational feminist theory allows for a more intersectional and broader understanding of feminist activism and universal "empowerment" initiatives for women. It also informs how marginalized communities of women in Nigeria are taking steps to struggle against gender inequality while fashioning new

ways to "empower" themselves via social media. At the same time, the transnational critique

remains relevant here, that Western global North feminist discourse very often does not account

for the particularities of women and gender minorities in geopolitical contexts such as African

nations generally and, here, Nigeria specifically. Such critiques can be illustrated by United

Nations development logics that tie improving the lives of women and girls not for their own

sakes but to benefit nation-states. This can be witnessed in logics that encourage women to

"improve" themselves for the sake of their children as future citizens, to seek economic

advancement to help the economy, and to declare their participation in capitalist endeavors. The

United Nations commemoration of International Women's Day, the *#BreakTheBias* campaign,

and Facebook are all subject to the critical lens of transnational feminism, which points out their

neoliberal, neocolonial, and imperialist origins and impulses. Yet to deny Nigerian women

access to these tools that have proven to offer material improvements to their lives is to

reproduce the same imperialist thinking that transnational feminism eschews. Thus, a

transnational feminist lens encourages honoring local feminist practices and interpretations, even

those that appropriate and indigenize what comes from the Western global North, while also

seeking political coalition with feminist movements elsewhere.

CHAPTER SIX:

METHODS

Purposive Sampling and Feminist Text Analysis

This study examines Nigerian women's Facebook posts, timelines, photos, and videos that convey "empowerment" messages for the *#BreakTheBias* campaign in March 2022. The *#BreakTheBias* campaign in Nigeria was chosen because it was a popular campaign on gender inequality and women's "empowerment" movement. Thus, it becomes a productive place to look at this discourse. Non-probability sampling was used in this research. In non-probability sampling, the choice of sample to be included in the study is decided by the researcher based on the relevance of the sample to the study (Vehovar et al., 2016). That implies that the sample selected by the researcher is based on the defined characteristics that fit the study's objectives.

First, 20 Facebook posts from the pages of famous Nigerian women activists, feminists, and popular organizations from the *#BreakTheBias* campaign in March 2022 were selected. Nine Nigerian women-owned NGOs, six Nigerian women activists and feminists, and five corporate/private organizations were chosen for this study. The women were chosen purposefully based on their popularity in Nigeria and their unwavering efforts in supporting and addressing issues of Nigerian women. This category of women also has a large number of followers/friends on Facebook and is prevalent in Nigeria. The posts selected from the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and corporate and private organizations were based on their history of showing particular concern for women. They also organized 2022 *#BreakTheBias* "empowerment" programs to celebrate International Women's Day. The rationale behind the

selection of these groups' specific posts is based on their text that portrays themes of women's "empowerment" focusing on advancing gender equality. For the purpose of this study, my operational definition of empowerment is the process of increasing the potential, ability, choice, and confidence of an individual through the transference of knowledge.

The Facebook posts under analysis are listed in Table 1 on pages 28-30.

The 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign and Facebook posts in Nigeria were all communicated in English language. Next, I analyzed these Facebook posts using feminist textual analysis. Analyzing a text from a feminist perspective "explores issues that are central to women's lives" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007, p. 234). Feminist textual analysis examines texts through a feminist paradigm on issues of inequality, power, sexism, intersectionality, marginalization, discrimination, and oppression (Gonzalez, 2019). One advantage of using a feminist perspective in textual analysis is that it transforms and expands the scope of the text using a feminist epistemological standpoint (Rhody, 2016). Feminist textual analysis is also important "because when looking through a feminist lens, researchers are likely to ask different questions, approach the data differently, and use their resulting knowledge to effect intellectual, social, and political change" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007, p. 236).

This research mainly focused on user-generated texts via Facebook pages/groups, timelines, photos, and videos. In analyzing the Facebook feeds, first, the videos were transcribed, and then feminist text analysis was applied, which highlighted aspects of the conversation regarding women's "empowerment." This kind of analysis includes the "subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Next, the texts were also categorized into recurrent themes, keywords, and concepts about women's economic and social "empowerment."

This was followed by interpreting the underlying context in which these texts were used to depict women's "empowerment," and the results were analyzed.

Table 1. Exemplars of Facebook posts conveying "empowerment" themes during the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Campaign in Nigeria.

Category	Post Date and Link
Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) owned by Nigerian Women	
Women For Women International	https://www.facebook.com/womenforwomeninternationalnigeria/posts/pfbid02vGEQ8tcmHE4t4EdTCtMwBc4f4gFQto1ynVSjFvjMefr7VfyrfwykrPoL1SK34Mg1l 3/1/2022
Pathfinder Justice Initiative	https://www.facebook.com/pathfindersji/posts/pfbid0ot1Zu4xwYEHgmve7NkisvwUNwGVSL83Fv2Y7GwiYLLGyxBQdHA11pfP8ZoowjQGHl 3/24/2022
Widows Empowerment Initiative for Africa	https://fb.watch/ezRxjvDZYJ 3/21/2022
Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Lagos	https://fb.watch/eyu-mIrAsQ/ 3/30/22
Federation Of Colleges Ex-Students Christian Association (FECA) Nigeria	https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=657111358873883&external_log_id=d8186284-f2e7-4021-95d7-cc8fcffe921d&q=%23breakthebias%20nigeria 3/7/2022
Courageous Girls Women and Children Initiative (CGWCI	https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02sG8PtNffxtJHcg9RAud6EymUFcFuczd1m6pXQGSzpiWbQVCoUnbcLPeJv928hTdwl&id=970034530053871 3/1/2022

Table 1. (Continued).

Women's Technology Empowerment Center (W.TEC)	https://www.facebook.com/wteconlinepage/photos/a.215083191865726/7342445445796096/ 3/8/2022
Pathfinder Justice Initiative	https://www.facebook.com/pathfindersji/posts/pfbid032CzDLByL1F5La611YiKz6mt56i72emKssrfdW7EDsV4Qzh3QPckb5qiBrqyqLCGkl 4/3/2022
She Leads Africa	https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=saved&v=498089281890084 3/8/2022
Nigerian Women Activists/Feminists	
Lily Asia	https://www.facebook.com/adex.omoby/posts/pfbid02FtqNffUrQ4965UjWyKhP9k5qSVUDkctNxvqaUMsJZ4mb4jHtvwLhTdS7nvKkXcSWl 3/24/2022
Roseline June	https://www.facebook.com/groups/herownmoney/permalink/5330891240297014/ 3/22/2022
Louisa Omo	https://www.facebook.com/theLolaOmolola1/3/10/2022
Zoe Adams	https://www.facebook.com/groups/3941592545893564/user/100000587113297 3/4/2022

Table 1. (Continued).

Felicia Gaby	https://www.facebook.com/groups/1880577885501259/search/?q=march%202022 3/23/2022
Linda Chris	https://www.facebook.com/groups/femaleing/permalink/4105549249670767/ 3/10/2022
Geely Nigeria- Mikano Motors	https://www.facebook.com/GeelyNigeria/videos/990028644952825 3/8/2022
Corporate/Private Organizations	
Union Bank of Nigeria	https://fb.watch/ezG-_xklNO/ 3/10/2022
Jacobs-Abbey Global Institute for Leadership Studies	https://www.facebook.com/watch/?ref=search&v=644612810147796&external_log_id=9942da66-da3b-4533-bc63 80eb9de3a2f9&q=march%202022%20nigeria%20break%20the%20bias 3/14/2022
Fidelity Bank Plc	https://fb.watch/ezH8mgh0Ou/ 3/20/2022
Releaf Nigeria	https://www.facebook.com/releaf.africa/posts/pfbid0uitYjwucGjbnb1zjdZCoDzN23bLPkiTnXsHUvtfc9ryR7ZgcVkCd3u2ukg9FHFvil 3/1/2022

This table was provided by the student for the purpose of this study

CHAPTER SEVEN:

RESULTS

The Axis of Social Media and Nigerian Women's Empowerment

Two guiding questions organized the findings of this study: 1) What does economic and social "empowerment" look like on Nigerian 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Facebook feeds/posts? 2) What are the dominant economic and social "empowerment" themes in the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* discourse on Facebook in Nigeria? To answer the questions, I analyzed the Nigerian Facebook posts, timelines, photos, and videos that convey empowering messages for the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign using. The findings were transcribed in themes, including direct quotes from posts. The links to all Facebook posts used for this study can be found above in Table 1.

RQ1: What does economic and social "empowerment" look like on Nigeria's 2022 #BreakTheBias Facebook feeds/posts?

On Nigeria's 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Facebook feeds/posts, *economic* empowerment looks like Nigerian women's access to economic resources, opportunities, financial assets, and services that create financial stability and independence. On the other hand, *social* empowerment can be seen in the way Nigerian women are gaining resources and power to take control of their lives and make personal choices and decisions.

Overall, six themes emerged in response to the above research question. In terms of *economic* empowerment, these themes include *entrepreneurial empowerment, philanthropic initiatives, and financial inclusion.* Regarding *social* empowerment, the three themes include *online communities, psycho-social support, and communication platform/Facebook therapy.*

RQ1 Economic Empowerment Theme 1: Entrepreneurial empowerment: Basic literacy and numeracy skill

The Facebook posts analyzed revealed that "entrepreneurial empowerment" is one of the most visible themes of economic empowerment on Nigeria's 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Facebook feed. Here, posts show women learning skills to support them as self-employed entrepreneurs building successful businesses. This form of empowerment is visible in creating new ventures and entrepreneurial skills training to help Nigerian women improve their knowledge of economic and business transactions. For example, in a post by Women for Women International in the category of Nigerian woman-owned NGOs, Nigerian women participate in literacy/numeracy training to help them in carrying out business transactions. This is important because numeracy literacy is a key requisite for involvement in small- and large-scale business.

In the post by Pathfinder Justice, another Nigerian woman-owned NGO, Nigerian women receive entrepreneurial skill training during the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign on the use of *Ankara craft* (Nigerian local print fabric) in making bags, head bands, hibiscus flower juice *(Zobo),* coconut candy, liquid washing soap, and hair shampoo and conditioner. This form of entrepreneurial empowerment is important because it helps them start up personal businesses, earn money for a good livelihood, and become financially independent.

RQ1 Economic Empowerment Theme 2: Philanthropic initiatives: "I was empowered with fifty thousand naira"

Posts from this economic theme portrayed how Nigerian women are being provided philanthropic financial support as a means of economic empowerment. Nigerian women in need of finances for an already existing business or a new business startup receive financial support from philanthropic initiatives from individuals or Non-governmental organizations (NGOs). For

example, the Facebook post of Widows Empowerment Initiative for Africa, in the category of

Nigerian woman-owned NGOs, featured a video of one of the beneficiaries who received 50,000

naira in cash to start up a business during the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign. In the post the

widow commented:

> I want to say thank you to Widows Empowerment for the benefit and all I have benefitted
> from them. I was empowered with fifty thousand naira, and here are the goods I bought. I
> want to say a big thank you, and God will bless the foundation. Blessing me with this
> money has changed my life and helped me a lot.

The philanthropist commented:

> It's not every day you get to impact someone's life. On the days that we do, we do so
> with joy and with pride. So proud of our survivors for their vulnerability and courage in
> putting one foot in front of the other. We are with you all the way!

Still on philanthropic initiatives, a picture post by Pathfinder Justice, in the Nigerian woman-

owned NGO category, shows how Nigerian women received philanthropic support in the form of

tailoring and hairdressing materials to start up new business ventures.

RQ1 Economic Empowerment Theme 3: Financial and gender inclusion:"Having a woman who

dominates in a man's world"

Financial and gender inclusion was one of the themes that emerged from the findings.

Here, financial and gender inclusion refers to providing access to women in the form of

employment opportunities and in industries dominated by men where they can earn money and

have access to financial services for savings and investments. These posts show the inclusion of

Nigerian women by creating new ways to earn income for their businesses and showing women

participating in industries deemed male-dominated. An inclusive working environment creates

more sustainable opportunities for women to thrive in any industry, earn a wage, and become

financially independent.

For example, the post by Geely Motors in the category of corporate/private organizations praised women working in traditional men's jobs. Here women encourage and support other women in breaking this glass wall of gender-segregated work.

One woman commented:

> Celebrating the amazing women who continue to #breakthebias in a male-dominated automotive industry by challenging themselves to be better and creating an enabling environment for other women to succeed. Having a woman who dominates in a man's world is something special. There is a certain grace, strength, intelligence, and fearlessness needed to never back down from such a challenge. Yet we still stand strong. To all the women out there, Keep Winning and Be Your Own Driving Force.

Another woman technician at Geely Motors commented:

> I encourage other women because some people think a woman working in the automobile industry is a man's job, but it is not. So, I encourage other women to do the same, and they will enjoy it.

A post by Omotoyossie, in the category of Nigerian women activists/feminists, shows Nigerian women cashing in on the use of Piggyvest, a local thrift savings platform. Founded by the Nigerian woman Odunayo Eweniyi, Piggyvest, previously known as Piggybank, is a leading online personal saving and investment platform in Nigeria (Nairametrics, 2022). This online savings platform is important because it helps Nigerian women save and invest money to start or grow their businesses. The savings scheme is popularly called *"esusu," "ajo,"* and *"adashe"* by the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa ethnic groups. Once again, this shows an emphasis on women networking to help other women. One woman wrote: "Piggvest to the rescue. This helped me a great deal." Another woman wrote: "I run a thrift savings. It has helped me greatly in my personal savings too because I make sure to partake in it."

In sum, economic empowerment in the Nigerian 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Facebook posts show that Nigerian women are receiving economic support in the form of entrepreneurial empowerment, philanthrophy initiatives, and financial inclusion to increase women's access to

economic resources and opportunities, including formal and informal employment, business skill development, numeracy skill trainings, financial support for new business startups and access to financial services. The above results answer the research question of what economic empowerment look like on Nigeria's 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Facebook post.

I next look at what social empowerment looks like on Nigeria's 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Facebook post. Three themes emerge in the findings. They are online communities, psycho-social support, and communication platform/Facebook therapy.

RQ1 Social Empowerment Theme 1: Online communities (women supporting women): "I am not alone in the quest."

In this social theme, Nigerian women use Facebook groups to form supportive online communities to empower themselves socially during the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign. Through these online groups, Nigerian women take advantage of the platform to come together and discuss particular topics of interest, share life experiences, and support one another with a common goal of collaborating and learning. In addition, the online community provides a safe space for women to lend their voices to issues and support each other. In a Facebook video post in the category of the Nigerian woman-owned NGOs, for the Academy for Women Entrepreneurs Lagos, several Nigerian women who are beneficiaries of these online communities during the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign express their excitement being part of a supportive online community of women. For example, in one Facebook post, a woman commented:

> Coming to Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE), having this amazing sisterhood, going through all those lessons, coming here, meeting women who are working hard, getting all those lessons, and making all those connections has really changed and repositioned me for the future. Now I am fearless. Now I am excited about the future, and I am looking and geared toward achieving all my dreams.

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Another woman commented:

> When you keep pushing for success, you almost feel like you are alone. Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) made me feel that I am not alone in my quest to become the person that I can be: it is intensively transformative in force because it is a moving force that moves women, hundreds of women together, and it counts because we go make money. (spoken in Nigerian pidgin language and translated in English as "we will all make money.")

In another Facebook post by Jacobs-Abbey Global Institute for Leadership Studies, a Nigerian corporate/private organization, Nigerian women express gratitude for being part of the online community of women that is supporting each other and brainstorming ways to break the bias collectively as women. One woman commented:

> We work together as women and support as one because we are one. Keep that in check. You can't seat at home in isolation, come out, join the forces of women out there. In my state I am in charge of women. So, if you want my women, you come for me first. We are a team.

Another woman commented:

> This has been an amazing platform of women supporting each other I just love how personal we are with our conversation. It speaks to me a lot. I am learning more than I thought I know. I have learned, unlearned, and put into action all these things. So, thank you women for your support and this platform.

The feedback from these posts shows how Nigerian women are creating relationships online. Online communities come with a system of support. This is important because it allows for social networking and exchanging knowledge from like-minded women.

RQ1 Social Empowerment Theme 2: Psycho-social support: "So inspiring and your words are always motivating."

This social theme depicts how Facebook serves as a site of psycho-social support for Nigerian women. Interacting with other Nigerian women has provided a safe place to uplift and motivate each other. Some Nigerian women expressed how hearing other women's achievements despite the gender bias has motivated them to take bold steps. Others commented how being able

to talk about their issues or experiences has inspired them to deal with fear and anxiety while

taking up boldness in every circumstance. For example, in a Facebook post by Lola Omolola,

founder of Female In Nigeria (FIN), in the Nigerian woman activist/feminist category, one

woman commented:

> So inspiring and your words are always motivating. I take the bold step today past all limits, yes, I'm scared and terrified, but I will confront and also conquer. I break free from fear. I take that BOLD step today.

Another woman commented:

> Everything that scares me, I must confront and conquer.

Also, in communicating their various problems and issues, some Nigerian women find

psycho-social support by listening to the experiences and advice from other women. In another

post in the Nigerian women activist/feminist category, Florence Olayinka shares her experience

of the inspiration she received from listening to other women's experiences in the Facebook

group. One woman responded to Olayinka's post: "I keep reading people's writeups, and I am

left inspired always." Here, we see that psycho-social support is significant for facilitating social,

mental, and emotional wellbeing for Nigerian women in the face of gender bias and

discrimination.

RQ1 Social Empowerment Theme 3: Communication/Facebook Therapy: "I am able to share my

story and get healing."

This social theme shows how the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Facebook posts function as a

platform for Nigerian women to communicate as a "talking line." Several of these posts show how

Facebook groups function as a quick platform that helps Nigerian women to express their emotions

more intensely and to rely on others for advice or other help. In one post in the Nigerian women

activist/feminist category, a post by Funmito, she shared a painful experience of losing a family

member and asked the opinions of other group members about how to heal from the death of a

loved one. She wrote:

> Till now her death still shocks me
> Can one ever heal from the death of a loved and close one?
> How do you heal from the death of a close one to you?
> I want to hear from you.

In a post in the Nigerian Women Activists/Feminists category, another woman wrote:

> This must be one of the most emotional things I've had to share but sharing it here has
> relieved me. I am glad for this group to be able to share my story and get healing in the
> process.

Nigerian women being able to enact open and authentic self-disclosure might serve a therapeutic

purpose that helps improve their mental and psychological wellbeing. There can be mental and

emotional healing in storytelling.

The six economic and social themes identified answer the first research question of what

economic and social empowerment looks like on Nigeria's 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Facebook feeds.

Results shows that Nigerian women Facebook users experienced economic and social

empowerment during the #BreakTheBias campaign in the form of entrepreneurial empowerment,

support from philanthropic initiatives, financial inclusion, the feeling of sisterhood from being

part of an online community, psycho-social support in terms of being motivated and inspired by

listening to other women's life experiences, as well as using Facebook as form of

communication and therapy. If these themes represent economic and social empowerment, then

my next question looks at the themes themselves for further key themes represented in the 20

posts:

RQ2: What are the dominant economic and social "empowerment" themes in the 2022

#BreakTheBias discourse on Facebook in Nigeria?

Four dominant or over-arching themes of economic and social empowerment in the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign emerged from the findings of this study. The themes include *feminism, economic empowerment opportunities, resilience and self-confidence, as well as self-awareness and motivation.*

RQ2 Over-arching Theme 1: Feminism: "Imagine a gender-equal world."

The Facebook feeds of Nigerian women during the *#BreakTheBias* campaign were consistently framed in feminist messages. Feminist messages can be defined as political ideas on the advancement of women. Feminist themes in these Facebook posts mostly contained words about gender equality while defining, establishing, and defending women's equal political, economic, and social rights. Some posts also talked about the ills of patriarchy and sexism, and supported women's fight against violence, as well as women's reactions to discrimination, stereotyping, gender bias, objectification (especially sexual objectification), and oppression. In a long post, FECA Nigeria in the category of Nigerian Woman-owned NGOs wrote:

> The struggle for fairness to the female gender has transcended through the years. While a noticeable difference has taken place, we must continue to set the pace for women to thrive. Our approach to women must be free of bias that threatens to break down equality. As the world commemorates the 2022 International Women's Day with the theme #BreaktheBias, we, FECA Nigeria, pledge to continue setting the standard and creating the springboard upon which our women rise to their full potential.

She Leads Africa, another Nigerian Woman-owned NGO, posted:

> *Imagine a gender-equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination world that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated. Together we can all #BreakTheBias.*

These two posts include a call to Nigerian women to resist gender inequality. The posts use vocabulary such as "free of bias," "equality," "inclusive," and demonstrate determination to strive for women's participation in society.

RQ2 Over-arching Theme 2: Economic empowerment opportunities: "Help them to become financially independent."

The 2022 #BreakTheBias Facebook posts contain advertisements of online business initiatives, employment and job opportunities for women, and enterprise development to increase women's ownership, use, and control of assets and property. Some posts offer financial services, including loans and microcredit opportunities, so that women can open their businesses or improve their existing ones. The posts also show how women are helping women with financial tips to start and manage their businesses. For example, Courageous Girls Women and Children Initiative (CGWCI), in the category of Nigerian Woman-owned NGOs, made a post on entrepreneurial and skill acquisition trainings by educating women on basic skills for several business initiatives such as production of daily body products like petroleum jelly, liquid soap, balm, bleach, and hair cream. Courageous Girls Women and Children Initiative (CGWCI) posted:

> Skill acquisition for 100 vulnerable girls in Wamdeo, Askira/Uba LGA, Borno State. The trainings and empowerment they receive will help them to become financially independent and be able to provide for their family's economic needs which is aimed to positively impact the whole society.

In another example, Fidelity Bank, Nigeria, a private organization in a Facebook video post shows the provision of economic empowerment opportunity offered by Nneka Onyeali-Ikpe, the CEO of Fidelity Bank Nigeria. Nneka Onyeali-Ikpe is one of the most influential women in the

Nigerian banking industry (Ebatamehi, 2023). Such economic opportunity comes in the form of start-up capital for businesses for unemployed Nigerian women. The CEO of Fidelity Bank in Nigeria in a Facebook video commented:

> Fidelity bank is investing in their business, supporting them to enable them to train other women. Fidelity Bank is also supporting Dream Catchers with the sum of 10 million naira.

In these two posts, Nigerian women received economic empowerment in the form of skill acquisition to start up cottage businesses and capital for new start-ups. This is important because the essence of this kind of economic empowerment is to provide a source of livelihood for women, raise their financial capacity on the home front, and contribute to the society's economic growth and development.

RQ2 Over-arching Theme 3: Resilience and self-confidence: "The best thing a women wears is her confidence."

Analyzing the Facebook posts during the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* posts revealed resilience and self-confidence as over-arching themes. In a society where women are constantly reminded of their inferior positions as women, the Facebook feeds of Nigerian women were graced with nuggets imploring women to have confidence in themselves and their abilities as women. These posts also appreciated women's resilience and achievements despite the harsh dictates of patriarchy. Such posts illustrate ways that Nigerian women can break bias, discrimination, and stereotypes. Women's Technology Empowerment Center (WTEC), in the category of Nigerian women-owned NGOs posted: "Never think less of yourself; the best thing a woman wears is her confidence."

In other posts by Releaf Nigeria, a corporate organization, different Nigerian women offer tips on how Nigerian women can break bias, discrimination, and stereotypes:

Woman 1:

> I break the bias by being resilient, putting my best forward, and aiming for excellence in everything I do.

Woman 2:

> I am breaking the bias by allowing myself grace when I am imperfect and embracing myself holistically as a woman, mother, friend, employee, and so much more.

Woman 3:

> I am breaking the bias by changing the stereotype limiting women from rising.

Woman 4:

> I am breaking the bias by speaking up in the workplace and ensuring mutual respect for women and my community/organization members for sustainable change.

Here, Nigerian women receive tips for boosting resilience and self-confidence, which are important as a protective factor to overcome the challenges of gender inequality that they face in society.

RQ2 Overarching Theme 4: Self-awareness and motivation: "Defy the odds and be you."

Nigerian women are faced with gender limitations that can be hard to control. Self-awareness, however, is one thing that they can try to control. Self-awareness is important because it is fundamental to succeed in any endeavor. Through networking with other women, the Facebook posts showed that Nigerian women are motivating each other through encouraging and positive words of affirmation. In the post by Union Bank Nigeria, in the corporate/private organization category, Nigerian women affirm their self-awareness and motivate other women to break the limits to achieve any goal without considering the limitations of self or societal stereotype.

For example, one woman wrote:

> I am beautiful.
> I am a woman, and I have a voice.
> I am strong.
> I am a woman; I am a communicator, and I break the bias.
> I am a fulcrum, I am confident, I am strong!
> I am a woman, and I am smart.
> Where there are women, there is magic.

Another woman wrote:

> You can be anything you want to be. Don't let the world limit or determine who you should be. Don't accept the stereotype. Defy the odds and be you.

To summarize, the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign on Facebook served as a tool for the economic and social empowerment for Nigerian women. The answer to the first research question on what does economic and social "empowerment" look like on Nigerian 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Facebook posts shows that women's empowerment is about entrepreneurial empowerment, philanthropic initiatives, financial inclusion, online community, psycho-social support, communication, and Facebook therapy. Similarly, the over-arching economic and social empowerment themes in the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* discourse on Facebook in Nigeria include feminism, economic opportunities, resilience and self-confidence, as well as self-awareness and motivation.

"Empowerment" in this context is about transferring knowledge, power, and control to Nigerian women in order to increase their potential, abilities, choices, and confidence. Results suggest that "economic and social empowerment" ties women's education and training to the purpose of financial independence through business and employment, often self-employment. These messages are delivered by women for women and framed in rhetorics of self-help disguised as feminist politics. Women literally are being exhorted to help themselves, their families, and their societies by gaining training, saving, receiving philanthropic and corporate

funding, and working to earn money. Granted this study and the research questions focused on economic and social empowerment. But social empowerment was not limited to women offering each other encouragement. Conspicuously absent is evidence of social empowerment as political power. Nor does 2022 *#BreakTheBias* in Nigeria address the Nigerian political climate. This might be because Nigerian "women face a double hurdle to political power with formidable obstacles not only to obtaining access to decision-making positions and processes but also have to having influence with them" (O'Neil & Domingo, 2016, p. 10). The patriarchal framing of the Nigerian political system totally undermines women's inclusion and participation in political spaces.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

DISCUSSION

On Economic and Social Empowerment: A View from Transnational Feminism

In a society where women historically have been excluded and discriminated against, Nigerian women have resorted to using social media as a tool of self-empowerment. Although the Nigerian Constitution provides for gender equality and non-discrimination of women, unfortunately, Nigerian women have continued to suffer different forms of inequality and marginalization. This paradox has often resulted from discriminatory laws, cultural norms, religious beliefs, and institutions perpetuating patriarchy (Ekpe, 2011). However, despite these limitations, Nigerian women have continued to empower themselves at least economically to become relevant in society. Transnational feminism acknowledges the dissimilarity in gender inequality and marginalization women face globally and highlights women's socio-economic empowerment as key priority. It also informs the significance of intersectionality in feminist activism and empowerment campaigns on gender inequality.

. The findings of this study reveal that social media function as a social and economic empowerment tool for Nigerian women. The 2022 *#BreakTheBias* theme in celebration of the International Women's Day was designed to celebrate the achievements of women and reflect on ways to keep breaking the bias amidst gender inequality. This campaign offered Nigerian women the opportunity to inspire and encourage one another to envision an equitable, inclusive, gender-equal society free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. The 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign

was also an opportunity for the economic and social empowerment of Nigerian women and to rise above the patriarchal limitations of gender inequality.

Analysis of the texts from the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign on Facebook reflect ideas of economic and social empowerment in the feeds of Nigeran women. This includes empowering women as entrepreneurs through philanthropic initiatives and by financial inclusion. Women as entrepreneurs, even in cottage industries, empower themselves by participating in skill acquisition and operating new businesses in their own homes. But in online community, they also find psycho-social support and motivation. Further analysis shows that they use Facebook as a form of group therapy. Fabian et al. (2022) argue that using Facebook as an entrepreneurial training platform significantly impacts and boosts women's economic well-being in Nigeria. A segment of this training is sometimes centered on the experiences of the host trainer providing tangible, material results on how they have used Facebook platforms to grow their businesses. The result of the entrepreneurial empowerment is seen in the engagement of Nigerian women who were previously unemployed in new vocations and business setups that render them financially independent (Fabian et al., 2022). Ekpe (2011) argues that Nigerian women form the backbone of a thriving entrepreneurial system. Providing women with entrepreneurial skills and tools is essential in moving their business and the Nigerian economy forward. Of course, although this becomes a win-win for Nigerian women and the Nigerian economy, it still ties women's self-determination to not only the nation-state's wellbeing but also to capitalism. Additionally, offering women entrepreneurial opportunities tie into broader politics and women's issues.

Another aspect of economic empowerment that Nigerian women received during the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign is the opportunity of being beneficiaries of philanthropic

initiatives. Nigerian women were supported with either cash or other material incentives to get started in business ventures. Lawal (2021) argues that one of the advantages of women's economic empowerment is that Nigerian women have the opportunity to have multiple streams of income and can support and relieve their partners' financial burdens in the event of any financial crises. Again, this ties women's success to home and family as a Western two-income household, another strong link to capitalist enterprise.

Regarding social empowerment, the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* was an opportunity for Nigerian women to support each other as members of an online community. The Facebook online community served as a safe space for social networking, mentoring, and psycho-social support. One of the benefits of Facebook online communities and social networking is providing Nigerian women with more opportunities to get to know diverse people and places regardless of restrictions tied to borders, time, and space (Oyesomi et al., 2014). Nwagbara (2019) also attributes the power of social media interactions to building community with other women who support each other to advocate for gender equality, women's rights, and other global issues women face. Furthermore, through online social interactions, women are building global networks, coached on being self-reliant, becoming more independent and resilient. From a transnational feminist perspective such social empowerment boosts sisterhood by offering women opportunities to be visible, heard, and empowered (Duce, 2021). By achieving visibility, transnational solidarity is improved as women feel a sense of belonging through the networks of support they receive. Transnational feminism acknowledges the creation of social network and community as significant to the social empowerment of women (Lewis, 2010).

However, the 20 posts examined here did not address global issues and aspects of women's empowerment or tie the Nigerian women's approaches to empowerment to

transnational women's issues. What is more, Nigerian women encouraging self-reliance, independence, and resilience, while motivational and affirming of Nigerian women's experiences, continues to suggest individual women cannot, should not, need not expect broader support from Nigerian society. Thus, the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign in Nigeria reproduces the neoliberal subject while simultaneously addressing very real material economic inequalities for Nigerian women.

Additionally, as a platform for communication, social media help to generate awareness about gender inequalities that Nigerian women face. Omang et al. (2022) write that gradually Nigerian women's ideology is shifting from being confined to specific societal roles due to the limitations of patriarchy to being active members in all aspects of society. The increased awareness as a result of being part of an online community "empowers" women to seek ways to push for inclusion in both formal and informal spaces. Women see "empowered" women online, and they receive advice on empowering themselves. Thus, this platform is motivating Nigerian women to fight against processes that directly or indirectly discriminate against them. Jaiyeola (2020) argues that rather than discriminating against women based on gender in employment, "capacity" should be a prominent factor in organizations, decision-making positions, and professional development. By "capacity," Jaiyeola (2020) means developing and improving women's abilities, and skills needed to excel in an organization. This implies that organizations play a considerable role in increasing women's engagement in leadership and decision-making processes. The assumption is that mentoring and motivating women to aspire for top leadership positions will lead to women's inclusion in leadership roles This can be achieved by raising awareness about opportunities that are available to women while making intentional efforts to build women's knowledge and capacity through professional development and training in key

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organizational issues. In addition, the support from Facebook online communities builds

Nigerian women's self-confidence as a member of a sisterhood (Dosekun, 2022). The phrase

"*women supporting women"* became a popular phrase used in Nigeria during the 2022

#BreakTheBias campaign that challenges women to make conscious efforts to help other women

to explore their potential. All these positive thinking asks women to do the heavy lifting. Such

thinking does not call on Nigerian business and industry to make changes to its "doing business

as usual," and this continues to reproduce the patriarchal culture that fails to enforce Nigerian

women's constitutional equality on paper but not practice.

A second part of this study was to identify the dominant themes of economic and social

empowerment in the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* discourse on Facebook in Nigeria. The dominant or

over-arching themes I identified are feminism, economic opportunities, resilience, building self-

confidence, increasing self-awareness, and motivated self-interest. The 2022 *#BreakTheBias*

Facebook posts analyzed present feminist-themed messages against women's economic

discrimination. Feminisms and women's movements have a long history of resisting all forms of

gender-based discrimination. hooks (2014) defined feminism "as a movement to end sexism,

sexist exploitation, and oppression" (p. 1). Dibia (2020) defined feminism as the movement of

equality between men and women as far as economic, political, and socio-cultural opportunities

are concerned. However, I argue for a Nigerian definition of feminism as a political ideology that

interrogates gender inequalities and identifies forms of intersectional oppression in order to

effect changes and inclusion of women in all aspects of society. Nigerian feminists are mostly

concerned with restructuring patriarchal structures that oppress, discriminate, and marginalize

women and girls in society. The 20 posts emphasize economic and social power, less so political

power.

In terms of economic empowerment for women, the posts present how Nigerian women's engagement on Facebook has provided a wide range of economic opportunities while helping Nigerian women address issues such as poverty, economic insecurity and financial dependence. Darma et al. (2018) argue that most gender-based violence in Nigeria is deeply rooted in financial dependence caused by the inability of partners to meet the necessities of life based on their economic status. Thus, the economic empowerment of women is essential. Similarly, Blair (2022) writes that women's "financial empowerment is the new feminism," (p. 1) because it is an opportunity for women to make progress in efforts to address issues such as inequality, income insecurity, and financial abuse as a result of poverty. Thus, women's financial empowerment and economic security are critical to a holistic life.

Further, analysis of the Facebook feeds of Nigerian women during the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign presents the themes of resilience and self-confidence. Nigerian women appear to be socially empowering each other online to inspire the virtues of resilience and self-confidence. Jayeola (2020) argues that several of Nigeria's cultural practices and traditions infringe on women's rights, and these practices exclude women from society's economic, social, political, and critical decision-making processes. One of the qualities that feminist campaigns emphasize is the power and dynamic connection of a mutual relationship, which becomes a means for women to be motivated by other women and build resilience in the face of challenges (Ugondo, 2020). For example, one of the posts during the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* states "Never think less of yourself; the best thing a woman wears is her confidence." Turner and Maschi (2014) argue that "the concept of mutuality expands the concept of resilience from a one-directional perspective (where an individual gets support from another person) into a two-way relational dynamic in which the relationship itself becomes the vehicle to

engender resilience" (p. 152). In a society where women's voices are not valid, and everything reinforces that idea of an inferior gender, these Facebook groups seem to offer a safe space for Nigerian women to voice their concerns, become resilient, develop self-confidence, and be motivated by listening to other women's experiences. The empowerment message is that if she can do it, I can, too!

Using the transnational feminist theory as a lens for this study, one might view the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign as a form of transnational feminist initiative by the United Nations in celebration of the International Women's Day to raise international awareness in the fight for gender equality and women's empowerment. However, it is important to state that there are different kinds of feminisms: radical feminism, liberal feminism, cultural feminism, etc. Transnational feminism can ameliorate conflict between Western feminism and other feminisms because non-Western women's inequalities have historically been overlooked (Henry-White 2015). Transnational feminisms are particularly important for women of color because while Western feminism highlights shared interests among women living across nations, transnational feminism acknowledges the inequalities that exist among different groups of women globally (Enns et al., 2020). Although, globally, both Western and non-Western women all identify as women, the reality is that all women have their different experiences of gender inequality and oppression, and the effects of their experiences are also different. Enns et al., (2020) further argue that:

> …transnational feminist theory and practice emphasizes intersectionality and seek to destabilize notions that women around the world share the same types of experiences, oppressions, forms of exploitation, and privileges; they explore differences and inequalities between women, such as different priorities and ways of understanding gender issues and different ways of conceptualizing agency (p. 2).

In essence, transnational feminisms address particular issues that concern women globally recognizing that these movements cannot be seen as one singular movement because the ways in which global issues affect women are dissimilar across national boundaries.

Mohanty (2015) argues that an effective transnational impact means acknowledging the differences in the culture of the global North and global South. Development in the global North and global South are unequal, and issues of gender inequality are dissimilar. Collaboration and solidarity between women from the global North and global South despite their differences becomes crucial for an effective feminist transnational activism. Nigerian women are part of the global South, and their experiences of gender inequality and other interlocking forms of oppression are entangled in the patriarchal realities of the Nigerian society, which makes Nigerian women's lives different from women in the global North. Hence, the ineffectiveness of most transnational feminist networks is because "too often in the global North, we can lose sight of what women are enduring in the South and get caught up in a discourse of the North advocating unworkable solutions for the South" (Mohanty, 2015, p. 87). Transnational feminists believe that it is essential that women globally should coordinate their efforts and collaborate in gender inequality initiatives, but sometimes these campaigns are not intersectional in practice (Adams & Thomas, 2010). This is because most campaigns fail to recognize the unequal power differentials that exist among women and how unequal power relations can overlap and reinforce class, gender, and racial inequalities. Intersectionality highlights the interlocking systems of oppression that women face (Crenshaw, 1989). For example, in Nigeria, some women are left out of the so-called empowerment campaigns because of the existence of class-based tensions, and ethnic and geographic location-privileges (Dosekun, 2022). Although the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign on Facebook might be a tool for the economic and social

empowerment for Nigerian women who use Facebook, this study observes that not all Nigerian women have access to communication technologies.

The Facebook posts analyzed for this study featured mainly women in urban areas. Nigerian rural women have less access to technological infrastructure, which includes access to computers, phones, and internet facilities (Darma et al., 2018). A majority of Nigerian rural women are not literate, and this may also limit their comprehension of social media messages even when provided access to social media (Halkias et al., 2011). Hence, they are excluded from all forms of social media empowerment initiatives. Dosekun (2022) argues that while women empowerment campaigns on social media in Nigeria have been effective in the campaign against gender inequality, nonetheless, these "empowerment" campaigns lack intersectional consciousness because they "are unrepresentative of the experiences and stories of the overwhelming majority of Nigerian women, and thus came to function as a further site and enactment of their marginalization" (p. 2). Rather than being an effective tool of "empowerment" that lifts everyone, the campaigns seem to have impacted a few Nigerian women. Thus, women's "empowerment" campaigns should be "concerned with the overlapping and conflicting dynamics of race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, and other inequalities among women" (Dosekun 2022, p. 5). Embracing diversity in feminist activism might serve as an essential political resource for the struggle against gender bias by making visible those invisible positionalities left out of monikers such as "empowered Nigerian women." More inclusive and encompassing strategies could mobilize diverse groups of women for organizing an effective empowerment campaign.

An intersectional empowerment campaign entails an understanding that women have social identities that combine to include and exclude, bring privilege and/or oppression. Recognizing that women have different needs based on their unique intersectional identities and

addressing these needs is important for social change to occur. For example, the needs of

Nigerian women with communication disabilities are unique. Thus, organizing empowerment

programs that provide sign language interpretation, captioning, or communication aids are

essential. Furthermore, while economic empowerment is necessary to reduce the poverty among

women across Nigerian ethnicities and urban /rural and literacy/illiterates divides, Nigerian

women's movements must consider political power as well.

Finally, an annual Transnational Women's Day, rather than an International Women's

Day, would underscore common issues of women's *disempowerment* around the globe while

remaining sensitive to the particulars of inequalities emerging out of climate, ethnicity,

poverty/wealth, educational opportunities, language barriers, religious exigencies, political and

legal canon, quality of healthcare and so much more. This is a more complex approach than

international feminisms emerging from the West and global North that concern themselves with

stabilizing "developing" nations in a geopolitical context by exploring Western logics of

capitalism and neoliberalism that enlist women's minds and bodies in reproducing the state and

its wealth. At the same time, I argue that Nigerian women taking advantage of the occasion of

International Women's Day to network, celebrate and share information by deploying their

uniquely Nigerian use of Facebook—a nevertheless self-interested Western enterprise—remains

a hopeful and inspiring phenomenon for feminist movement in Nigeria and everywhere.

CHAPTER NINE:

CONCLUSION

In Nigeria, patriarchy and gender inequality have been a major limitation for women's growth and advancement in all aspects of society. Despite the bias that Nigerian women face, the fight against gender bias using social media has become popular. The findings of this study provide insight into the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign as a tool for the economic and social empowerment of Nigerian women. The results yield a glimpse into the ways Nigerian women are empowering themselves and other women. The 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign provided Nigerian women the opportunity for entrepreneurial empowerment through basic numeracy and literacy skill, skill acquisition, and development training to create sustainable financial independence. Some Nigerian women received philanthropic support for new business startups, access to loan and savings facilities, as well as inclusion in industries considered male-dominated, as a way to increase their access to financial livelihood. The 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign on Facebook also served as a platform for Nigerian women to form an online community of *women supporting women* through frequent communications that functioned as a form of psycho-social support and mentorship. The online platform also functioned as a safe space for Nigerian women to share their stories and experiences of gender bias, which served as inspiration and motivation for other women.

In view of the portrayal of economic and social "empowerment" in Nigeria's 2022 *#BreakTheBias* Facebook posts, four over-arching themes emerged: feminist movement, economic opportunities, surviving as a source of self-esteem, and self-awareness as a

motivational force. Feminist messages addressed issues relevant to Nigerian women's experiences of patriarchy, stereotyping, gender bias, oppression, discrimination; fewer messages promoted women's rights and interests. The economic empowerment opportunities provided during the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* were designed to help Nigerian women become financially independent through financial support, entrepreneurial training to drive the growth of businesses, and skill acquisition for self-empowerment and engagement in cottage industries. Blair (2022) writes that the new feminism is financial empowerment, so women's holistic development depends on their economic empowerment and financial security. The 2022 *#BreakTheBias* posts served as motivation and inspiration to build women's confidence, in the face of gender bias and discrimination from society. The posts also featured nuggets to help Nigerian women to celebrate resilience and self-awareness in the struggle against gender bias.

From the 20 Facebook posts analyzed for this study, I observed that during the 2022 *#BreakTheBias* campaign, empowerment programs only provide for women in areas where they have access to technological devices like internet, mobile phones, and computers. Also, all the communications for the campaign and Facebook posts were in English language, which reproduces another intersectional privilege moment for some Nigerian women and oppression for others. Thus, this study recommends a more intersectional approach to women's empowerment programs in Nigeria. A transnational feminist framework helps to create a better understanding of the significance of intersectionality in feminist activism and women's empowerment initiatives. The transnational lens also highlights conflict between Western feminism and other feminisms.

While some progress has been made in addressing the challenge of gender bias and inequality, some women remain marginalized and invisible in matters of economic development.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, evidence suggests when coupled with the existing socio-economic and structural inequalities, Nigerian women have been most affected by increasing unemployment rates and loss of opportunities to earn income, leading to emotional and psychological distress. The implication of this study is to harness the power of social media to drive women's empowerment agenda that will focus on enhancing the economic and social positions of all Nigerian women through the participation and visibility of women in society. Although this study is limited to 20 posts selected purposively for analysis, even this limited analysis reveals the complexities of global and local feminist analysis, politics and "empowerment" for women. I argue that in this Nigerian context, the feminist call to "empowerment" continues to be a uniquely Nigerian women's call to feminist action. Despite the critiques offered here and elsewhere, "empowerment" carries implicit understanding of the Nigerian experience for women from the perspectives of Nigerian women. Thus, by virtue of feminist text analysis, I argue that yearning for "empowerment" becomes a sign of raised consciousness that has already empowered the women who write or other it. Future research might ask the questions regarding transnational flows explaining how Nigerian women and feminists are using western ideas of gender bias and empowerment campaigns and making it indigenous.

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APPENDIX A:

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