A THEMATIC AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS
OF UNREPORTED SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT:
UTILIZING SOCIAL LISTENING IN THE TWITTERSPHERE

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A thesis submitted
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE (MANAGEMENT)

in

MARKETING

Dhillon School of Business
University of Lethbridge
LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA, CANADA

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Date of Defense: November 30, 2020

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ABSTRACT

Sexual harassment is one of the most underreported crimes despite its seriousness and prevalence. This thesis aims to (1) fully understand why people do not report sexual harassment by analyzing Twitter posts sharing the survivors' lived experiences; and (2) discover factors that can help the victim's messages garner more attention from the public. Social listening was used to collect sensitive information through scrapping data on Twitter using the hashtag #whyIdidntreport generated during the Me Too movement. The thesis employed a mixed-methods approach to address the research topic. Using the theory of planned behavior as a theoretical framework, the qualitative study applied the thematic analysis to analyze the data and identified nine themes that factored into victims' decision to not report. The quantitative analysis utilized negative binomial regression and discovered that tweets with high authenticity and expressing strong negative emotions were more likely to engage the audience with the writer's message.

Keywords: barriers to reporting, me too movement, negative binomial regression, thematic analysis, affective elements, social marketing, unreported crimes, tweet engagement, theory of planned behavior, sensitive information

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Tanya Drollinger, for providing me with extensive personal and professional guidance throughout my thesis journey. Her invaluable insights, continuous encouragement, and compassion helped me to keep going and achieve my goal.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. Katie Lafreniere, my committee member, for her helpful and constructive comments and suggestions. I would not have developed my thesis to this final version without her dedicated involvement.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my German supervisor, Dr. Sebastian Ullrich, for his guidance and assistance from afar. My sincere appreciation goes to my external examiner, Dr. Virginia Weber, for her valuable comments, as well as to my German examiner Dr. Wiebke Störmann for her assessment.

I also extend my thanks to Tammy Rogness, Joshua Lindemann, and my colleagues in the program for their help and support.

I would like to appreciate Elizabeth Downey's contribution for helping me in performing the professional editing of my paper.

Finally, I wish to express my profound gratitude to my parents and my brother for providing me with unconditional love and continuous support throughout my years of study. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them.

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment is a pernicious and detrimental social issue that results in harm and impacts victims' physical, psychological, and social health (Fitzgerald, 2017; McDonald, 2012; Pina, Gannon, & Saunders, 2009). Despite its seriousness, sexual harassment and assault remains one of the most underreported crimes (Morgan & Oudekerk, 2019; Rennison, 2002). According to the World Population Review (2020), one out of three women experiences sexual harassment at some point in their lives, and more than 20 percent encounter sexual assault; however, less than 10 percent of rape survivors report it to the police. Sexual harassment has been well documented and realized as "one of the most familiar patterns of human subjugation" with a millennial-long history (Philipose & Kesavan, 2019; Sundén & Paasonen, 2019).

The Me Too movement, with the mission of raising awareness of sexual harassment and assault, has brought renewed attention to this detrimental social issue (Philipose & Kesavan, 2019). The movement has facilitated millions of conversations online, connecting people from different backgrounds as well as different cultures—including some cultures that consider sexual harassment a taboo topic (Lin & Yang, 2019; Philipose & Kesavan, 2019). Through empathy, the support of a great number of people, the ability to post anonymously, and a sense of community, the movement has empowered people who have previously endured abuse and harassment to speak out about their stories. Its impacts have led to high-profile lawsuits, resignations, and reviews of workplace regulations and procedures (Nikunen, 2018).

Many studies and social marketing campaigns have been conducted with the aim to understand and, hence, advance a solution to empowering victims to report abuse. (Boehm & Itzhaky, 2004; Brooks & Perot, 2016; Hanson, Resnick, Saunders, Kilpatrick, & Best, 1999; Patterson & Campbell, 2010; Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006; Tillman, Bryant-Davis, Smith, & Marks, 2010). However, research on sexual harassment and assault is limited by difficulties in data collection, as human subject reviews protect subjects from the potential harm caused by answering questions on a painful subject, and because it is difficult to gather reliable data from secondary sources (Attar-Schwartz, 2014; Johnson, 2012; Ruiz-Pérez, Plazaola-Castaño, & Vives-Cases, 2007). Given the sensitivity of the topic, deconstructing the issue requires discussing the most private and intimate contexts of a person's life, and unpleasant emotions and memories surface; hence, the victims of sexual harassment and assault rarely talk openly about the incident. Another barrier is the dearth of victims reporting incidents of harassment and assault to the authorities, which results in a lack of data. Many studies on sexual harassment have maintained that small sample sizes are a major limitation (Graham, Bernards, Abbey, Dumas, & Wells, 2017; Heath, Lynch, Fritch, & Wong, 2013; Wasti & Cortina, 2002), as are convenience samples from a single community (Graham et al., 2017; Konradi & DeBruin, 2003) or participants responding based on hypothetical situations rather than on their own experiences (Foster & Fullagar, 2018; Konradi & DeBruin, 2003; Sable et al., 2006). Methodological issues also arise in studies on sexual harassment, as many of these studies carry out convenience sampling to get data that are highly vulnerable to selection bias and sampling error (Attar-Schwartz, 2014).

Social listening is a relatively new and innovative way to collect data, by examining people's posts on social media and other forums. Social listening is defined as an "active process of attending to, observing, interpreting, and responding to a variety of stimuli through mediated, electronic, and social channels" (Stewart & Arnold, 2018). Social listening was originally used by corporations to monitor customers' comments and discussions in order to assess their attitudes, opinions, perceptions, and engagement regarding the corporations' brands, products, and services (Pomputius, 2019; Rao, 2016; Stewart, Atilano, & Arnold, 2017). However, social listening has recently been adopted by policymakers, health researchers, and social marketers to access and monitor people's responses on newly published law (Krishen, Raschke, Kachroo, LaTour, & Verma, 2014; Wen & Zhao, 2018), disease treatment (Keller, Mosadeghi, Cohen, Kwan, & Spiegel, 2018; Seifert et al., 2017), and the introduction of alternative cigarettes (Cole-Lewis et al., 2015). Social media has become a common platform in which virtual community members seek advice, discuss ideas, share their stories, and show support for others. Given the breadth of topics covered on social media and the ability to maintain some degree of anonymity, social listening as a means of gathering data on sensitive topics appears to be a promising method of collecting data on sensitive topics such as addiction, abuse, and sexual harassment.

One of the benefits of social listening is that researchers are able to monitor and track people's discussions and online activities. Social listening can also provide great insight into not only what people talk about, but also how others react to what people are talking about. The Me Too movement went viral thanks to the ease of information diffusion when stories of sexual harassment posted by survivors on social media were

disseminated and supported across social media by other users sharing and retweeting them, which consequently encouraged other victims to break their silence and engaged millions of people in the matter. Being able to track how people react to other tweets allows the researcher to gain an understanding of whether certain factors exist that help a tweet garner more attention and to thereby uncover a way for victims to tell their stories that increases support for the victim.

In this thesis, the theory of planned behavior (TPB)—a social psychological theory—will be used as a theoretical framework to guide the analysis of data extracted from social media in a structured and systematic way. The thesis seeks to investigate factors that impede an individual's intention to report sexual harassment/assault by looking into the individual's personal and social beliefs. TPB has been utilized in several studies addressing sexual harassment and assault as well as in social marketing research (Byrne & Arias, 2004; Foster & Fullagar, 2018; Lemay Jr, O'Brien, Kearney, Sauber, & Venaglia, 2017).

To summarize, the purpose of this thesis is to (1) explore a new method of collecting highly sensitive information through scraping data from the social media platform Twitter; (2) utilize thematic analysis to examine the data in order to determine if there are linkages between the TBP and stated reasons for not reporting sexual harassment and assault; (3) discover emergent themes that affect victims' intention to report; (4) examine factors that influence tweet engagement; (5) make recommendations for social marketing campaigns that will accurately inform social marketers with regards to the barriers that victims face when developing behavioral intentions toward reporting sexual assault, and the factors that make a social message more believable.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual Harassment

Definition

There has so far not been a single universal definition of sexual harassment that is accepted among researchers, legal scholars, and policymakers. For the purpose of the thesis, this paper uses the definition of sexual harassment proposed by Till (1980) and then advanced by Fitzgerald (1988). According to the authors, all sexual harassment behaviors fall into the following five categories:

> *1. Gender harassment: Generalized sexist remarks and behavior not necessarily designed to elicit sexual cooperation, but to convey insulting, degrading, or sexist attitudes about women.*
>
> *2. Seductive behavior: Inappropriate and offensive sexual advances. Although such behavior is unwanted and offensive, there is no penalty explicitly attached to the woman's negative response; nor does this category include sexual bribery.*
>
> *3. Sexual bribery: Solicitation of sexual activity or other sex-linked behavior by promise of rewards.*
>
> *4. Sexual coercion: Coercion of sexual activity or other sex-linked behavior by threat of punishment.*
>
> *5. Sexual imposition: Sexual imposition (e.g., attempts to fondle, touch, kiss, or grab) or sexual assault.*

This definition describes a wide spectrum of sexual harassment behaviors, varying in level of severity. It covers all forms of sexual harassment including verbal and nonverbal forms; physical forms; psychological forms; and sexual assault, which is the most severe form. The definition is specific, though it is not limited to nor does it specify any particular environment. The current study uses sexual harassment as an umbrella term addressing a range of sexual misconduct, from mild transgressions to sexual abuse and assault.

Characteristics of sexual harassment victims and perpetrators

Research has shown that most occurrences of sexual harassment are by men against women (McDonald, 2012; Pina et al., 2009). According to the World Population Review (2020), around 35 percent of women worldwide have been a victim of sexual misconduct in their lifetime. A study conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in 2014 also found that one out of every three women in the 28 European Union member countries was affected by physical and/or sexual violence (Nevala, 2014). This pattern was also observed in many earlier studies, such as in a national survey in the United States in 1981, 1987, and 1995 (Timmerman & Bajema, 1999).

Victims of sexual harassment are generally in more vulnerable and insecure work positions or in the state of lacking power such as young women, women with disabilities, or women in non-traditional jobs or temporary/short-term contracts (McDonald, 2012; Pina et al., 2009). Eighty-five percent of females aged 18–24 had received unwanted sexual attention and 45 percent had experienced unwanted sexual touching according to a more recent study conducted in the European Union (Nevala, 2014). According to the World Population Review (2020), young women worldwide are three or four times more likely to be victims of sexual assault, and those with disabilities are twice as likely. Similarly, women and men belonging to a socially marginalized group (such as those who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual) are more likely to experience sexual harassment (Kearl, 2018; McDonald, 2012).

As discussed above, the majority of sexual harassers are likely to be male. Research suggests that perpetrators generally have a higher social status than the victims,

such as being older, richer, and more educated, or are hierarchically superior to the victims and hence hold more power than the victims (Fitzgerald & Weitzman, 1990; Sev'er, 1999; Tangri, Burt, & Johnson, 1982). Studies have shown that in a workplace environment, it is more common that the harasser is a colleague of the victim; however, when the abuse is more severe, the perpetrator is much more likely to be a direct manager or a supervisor than a peer or co-worker (McDonald, 2012). Many studies share the proposition that sexual harassment is inextricably linked with power. Abusers use their position of power and harass someone they see as less powerful (Tangri et al., 1982); or, if the perpetrators are in a lower position, they use sexual harassment as a means to gain influence and power over the victims. Research shows that sexual harassment is more common in male-dominated or heavily segregated workplaces (Lafontaine & Tredeau, 1986; McDonald, 2012).

Theories explaining sexual harassment

The literature offers several explanations for why sexual harassment occurs, but the three models that dominantly guide research in sexual harassment are the natural/biological model, the organizational model, and the socio-cultural model.

According to the natural or biological model, sexual harassment is simply an expression of how people pursue their natural sexual attraction with no intent to harass. Unequal sex drive, more specifically men's stronger sex drive, leads inevitably to stronger sexual feelings and hence could result in men carrying out aggressive acts towards women (Pina et al., 2009; Tangri et al., 1982). Meanwhile, the organizational model focuses on opportunity factors, meaning that harassers perform the behavior because they have the opportunity to do so (Tangri et al., 1982). A strong argument the

model delivers is that of organizational structure in terms of an organization's climate, hierarchy, or authority relations: Given the nature of an organization's vertical stratification, superordinates take advantage of their power and status to extort sexual favors from subordinates. As a result, women, who tend to be employed in low-power organizational positions and suffer from disadvantages such as being economically dependent and thus vulnerable to the psychological, physical, and social consequences of this, tend to be the victims of sexual harassment (McDonald, 2012). Other organizational and occupational characteristics such as the skewed ratio of males to females, required teamwork, overtime, visibility, and close physical contact between males and females in sex-integrated jobs also facilitate sexual harassment.

The social-cultural model stresses society's unequal distribution of power and status between males and females (McDonald, 2012). The model seeks an explanation for the phenomenon by breaking down traditional social beliefs that are rooted in the patriarchal system, in which men's ruling is legitimized. It is a socially rooted belief that males are taught and rewarded for aggression and should be dominant in sexual behaviors. Females, on the other hand, are expected to be submissive and to seek their self-worth through the evaluation of others, especially men. Considering the traditional perception that women are taught to look after their appearance in order to be sexually attractive to seek male attention, sexual remarks or provocation directed at them are somehow considered as flattery, and sexual harassment is thus less likely to be seen as harmful. According to the socio-cultural model, sexual harassment acts as a mechanism to maintain male dominance over women within the workplace and in society in general.

It is undeniable that none of the above models can fully capture and explain all cases of sexual harassment. The models might not be comprehensive on their own, however they complement each other in helping to explicate and lead to an understanding of the phenomenon. Studies about sexual harassment employ the model that is the most suitable for tackling the relevant research topic. However, it is essential to acknowledge and be aware of each model's limitations. While there are indeed some clumsy, ill-performed behaviors acted honestly out of natural sexual attraction, the first model remains too simple and inflexible, neglecting undeniable evidence on same-sex harassment and differences in harassment incidents according to work characteristics or atmosphere (Tangri et al., 1982). The organizational model fails to explain harassment from peers or juniors (Brant & Too, 1994). In addition, there is contradictory evidence in the literature that counters the arguments of the socio-cultural model, especially on how women are supposed to react towards sexual harassment (McDonald, 2012; Welsh, 1999).

Consequences of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment has been shown to have severe individual, organizational, and societal consequences. Besides physical injury, sexual harassment victims might face negative psychological outcomes such as anxiety, rage, stress, shock, fear, and depression, which can lead to serious long-lasting and life-changing effects such as post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidality, disturbance of self-esteem and self-efficacy, and negative impacts on held beliefs and values (Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabral, 2009; Cohen & Roth, 1987; Irish, Kobayashi, & Delahanty, 2010; Koss, 1990). The aftermath of sexual harassment incidents has been shown to be consistently linked to negative impacts on the victim's daily life, including negative educational consequences (Duffy, Wareham,

& Walsh, 2004) and a decrease in work productivity (Gruber & Bjorn, 1982; Laband & Lentz, 1998; Munson, Hulin, & Drasgow, 2000b).

Research indicates that experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace decreases job satisfaction, increases various stress-related illnesses, leads to psychological distress, and lowers co-worker and supervision satisfaction, which in turn affects productivity and organizational commitment and leads to increases in sick leave, greater turnover intentions, and higher rates of absenteeism (Gruber & Bjorn, 1982; Laband & Lentz, 1998; McDonald, 2012).

Sexual abuse and harassment present a tremendous burden on society, given it intersects various areas including health care, social services, policing, courts, and public insurance. The cost of child sexual abuse is estimated to be CA$3.6 billion dollars annually in Canada according to Hankivsky and Drake (2003), and rape in general costs US$127 billion annually according to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center.

Reporting sexual harassment in a timely manner would significantly assuage its consequences. Firstly, reporting should reduce the likelihood of future assault for the victims (Bergman, Langhout, Palmieri, Cortina, & Fitzgerald, 2002). Secondly, reporting would give assault victims access to the necessary medical care and protection, which might ameliorate the trauma and enhance their well-being (Bergman et al., 2002; Campbell, 2008; Munson, Hulin, & Drasgow, 2000a). Organizations that recognize and take appropriate means toward facilitating sexual harassment claims would strengthen their employees' trust, and improve both the working environment and employee job satisfaction, hence increasing the organization's productivity and employee commitment, etc. (Bergman et al., 2002).

Responses to Sexual Harassment

Classification of victim's responses to sexual harassment

Although in theory reporting sexual harassment can benefit the victims and the broader community, this response to harassment is commonly found to be the least frequent and least preferable option that victims adopt. Victims of sexual harassment generally choose different strategies for coping with the situation. To shift victims' preference to reporting, it is pertinent and essential to understand why and how victims choose different strategies.

A study done in 1988 classified responses of victims into 10 strategies, including internally focused and externally focused strategies (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). Internally focused strategies refer to how the victims manage their cognitions and emotions associated with the incidents. These strategies include *endurance* (do nothing or do not know what else to do), *denial* (refuse to accept that the situation happened and/or that it has had any effect to them), *detachment* (emotional disconnect to the incidents), *reattribution* (making excuses for the abusers, not label the behaviors as harassment), and *illusory control* (blaming themselves for what happened). Externally focused strategies refer to how the victims attempt to solve the problem, including *avoidance* (avoid interactions with the harassers, avoid discussing the incident with the hope that the harasser will leave them alone), *appeasement* (attempt to stop abusers without confrontation), *assertion (*ask perpetrators directly to stop, threaten to expose them to the authorities), and *seeking social support* in friends and family. *Seeking institutional or organizational relief*, the last externally focused strategy, is referred to by the study as the last resort for victims, one they would engage only if all other means failed to yield

results. Victims can change and employ different strategies if another solution fails to yield positive outcomes, for instance if the incident continues to happen or becomes more severe. Blackstone, Uggen, and McLaughlin (2009) proposed the following typology of responses and suggested that victims adopted a response represented early on the continuum, which is more passive and more informal, before moving to the later stage, which is more active and more formal.

Ignore -> Avoid -> Self-help -> Tell friends/family -> Tell equal -> Tell superiors ->
Tell attorney/agency
(McLaughlin, 2010)

Research has found that victim responses are complex and multidimensional, and are collectively influenced by the individual and by contextual, social, and cultural factors. Fitzgerald, Swan, and Fischer (1995) proposed that victims engage in a two-step cognitive-behavioral appraisal when dealing with sexual harassment. Primary appraisal refers to how the individuals evaluate the situation with regards to its relevance and severity (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Some surveys have shown that some women view unwanted attention or sexual remarks as an expression of humor or flattery, while others consider it offensive (Graham et al., 2017). This difference in assessment leads to different responses. The more severe the victims deem the situation, the more assertive the response strategies they are likely to implement (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Gruber & Smith, 1995; Livingston, 1982).

Secondary appraisal decides how the victims respond to the situation by considering all available coping strategies and evaluating the possible outcomes of each option (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Gruber (1995) argued that women's responses to sexual

harassment also reflect their attempt to manage social relationships, especially since women tend to empathize with others and evolve around social interactions (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Miller, 1986). Less assertive responses are carried out to avoid embarrassment, save face, and prevent the disruption of social relationships (Gruber & Smith, 1995). Women perceivably have a wider range of response options if the harasser does not have higher power over them (Gruber & Smith, 1995; Livingston, 1982). Organizational factors such as an organization's characteristics, legal environment, workgroup characteristics, and structure also influence victims' decision-making process (Blackstone et al., 2009; Gruber & Smith, 1995; Knapp, Faley, Ekeberg, & Cathy, 1997). A flat organization generally encourages more direct responses (Blackstone et al., 2009). Cultural aspects might also have an impact on victims' responses. Wasti and Cortina's study (2002) suggested that women in patriarchal and collectivist cultures are more likely to adopt indirect and unassertive strategies such as avoidance and ignorance. However, the findings also show that no matter what the culture settings are, filing a formal complaint is reported to be the least preferable and least chosen option (Cortina & Wasti, 2005; Wasti & Cortina, 2002)

Sexual harassment and rape myth acceptance

Sexual harassment myth acceptance or rape myths are suggested to be another factor that influence victims' responses (Johnson, 2012). Sexual harassment mythology refers to "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to justify male sexual harassment of women." This myth has four subdomains, including *fabrication/exaggeration*, *ulterior motives*, *natural heterosexuality*, and *women's responsibility* (Lonsway et al., 2008). These subdomains

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enact as an excuse to help men to rationalize their misconduct, reduce the responsibility of the perpetrator by attributing blame to victims, and minimize the seriousness of the incident or even denying its existence (Dawtry, Cozzolino, & Callan, 2019). Some common myth themes include: "*this kind of girl asked for it*" (Briere, Malamuth, & Check, 1970), *"she did not fight so it was not rape"* (Feild, 1978) (women's responsibility), "*he did not mean to"*, *"it does not sound like something he would do"*, *"it is not a big deal*" (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999) (fabrication/exaggeration), *"she falsely alleged rape out of spite or for attention"* (Martin, Reynolds, & Keith, 2002) (ulterior motives), *"men cannot control themselves once they become sexually excited"* (Brush, 2007; Martin et al., 2002) (natural heterosexuality).

Rape myth adherence, directly and indirectly, influences a victim's decision to report (Heath et al., 2013; Johnson, 2012). Heath at al.'s study (2013) found that people who hold a higher level of rape myth acceptance are less likely to report sexual harassment. Furthermore, women who accept the myths are less likely to label their experiences as sexual harassment because rape myth acceptance affects how victims perceive and interpret their experience and sexual harassment in general (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004). Since rape myths define rape quite narrowly, victims who adhere to rape myth do not acknowledge their experience as rape if the perpetrators are their husband or their boyfriend, or if they did not fight back or explicitly say no. Furthermore, they even blame themselves and think that they are the ones at fault (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004).

The widespread acceptance of these prejudicial beliefs and the negative attitudes among the general public towards women who report sexual harassment also contribute to

the social stigma, the shame, and the blame that victims face when they speak up (Johnson, 2012). The victims who report are criticized and judged for their ulterior motives, such as being accused of using the claim as a manipulation to extort money or seek attention, or being blamed for their part in what happened because of factors such as their style of dress, lifestyle, etc. (Johnson, 2012). People who hold rape myths are found to be more likely to be hostile toward women who report and less likely to be empathic and supportive toward the claim (O'Donohue, Yeater, & Fanetti, 2003). They tend to believe that people get what they deserve and hence assume that victims are partly to blame for what happened (Hayes, Lorenz, & Bell, 2013). In general, widespread rape myth acceptance influences how the victims are treated and how their claims are handled (Johnson, 2012).

Me Too Movement and #whyIdidntreport

The Me Too movement is a global social movement against sexual harassment and assault that has had unprecedented social reach and impact. While the hashtag #metoo was initiated in 2006 by Tarana Burke, it had a resurgence and became a widespread and powerful trend when it was used by high-profile stars, many of whom were accusing Harvey Weinstein of sexual abuse. Actress Alyssa Milano encouraged women and men around the world who had been the victims of sexual harassment and abuse to use the hashtag to raise awareness of the magnitude of this social issue. The tweets with #metoo have had a phenomenal effect, as they have a remarkable level of engagement from the public. The movement has consequently led to some positive changes addressing the issue, such as the foundation of new legal defense funds, the

introduction of new protections to workers, and additional sexual harassment laws in some states (Vox, 2019).

The #whyIdidntreport movement emerged in September 2018 as a continuum of the Me Too movement, with the focus on helping to raise awareness of the reasons why victims of sexual harassment and abuse are reluctant to disclose the crime and to file official complaints to the relevant authorities. With the anonymity of the social media environment, victims were offered an open and convenient setting for disclosure where they could choose to stay anonymous and tell their stories without fear. With the enormous support shown by the public and other victims, millions of posts revealing survivors' experiences as well as the different reasons why they did not report circulated on the Internet. These tweets have offered an unprecedented opportunity to investigate victims' silence on a large scale and among a broader population. The stories shared in these tweets reflect victims' current stance on disclosing sexual harassment. The decision to not report could be based on their perception of the incident or on their previous experiences attempting to report it. Data from the #whyIdidntreport could help explain why sexual harassment is so underreported—it could explain why there are way fewer recorded cases of sexual harassment and abuse in the legal system compared to the number of cases in reality.

Social Marketing

Social marketing is an approach used to promote social change for the benefit of individuals and society as a whole. Andreasen (1994) defined social marketing as "*the adaptation of commercial marketing technologies to programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences to improve their personal welfare and that of the*

society of which they are a part". Social marketing campaigns are designed to influence behaviors, whether through accepting a new behavior (classifying waste), modifying a current behavior (choosing healthy food instead of fast food), abandoning old behavior (littering), or discouraging a behavior (compulsive shopping). It is important to understand that voluntary behavior change is the main focus and the "bottom line" of social marketing, which differentiates social marketing from other strategic tools such as education or legal solutions.

While many social marketers communicate information to help the target audience gain knowledge and skills, change beliefs and attitudes, and increase motivation to act, these means are only effective and useful if they lead to an actual change in behavior patterns (Andreasen, 1994). Furthermore, even though compulsion employed by law and policymakers is shown to be effective in influencing lifestyle change, social marketing that aims for voluntary behavior change is also effective (Andreasen, 1994; Rothschild, 1999). The beneficiary of a social marketing campaign can be the target individual and his/her family, such as in the case of promoting physical exercise or the immunization of children (Andreasen, 1994); however, the primary purpose of social marketing, in general, should always be directed toward promoting the well-being of society (Kotler & Lee, 2008).

Research has shown that the majority of social marketing intervention campaigns lead to significantly positive short-term change, and many of them induce long-term change (Firestone, Rowe, Modi, & Sievers, 2017; Stead, Gordon, Angus, & McDermott, 2007). Social marketing has become a very popular tool used by social workers, policymakers, legislators, and nonprofit organizations. Some examples of social

marketing include promoting physical activities to improve health (Beech et al., 2003; Brownson et al., 1996), encouraging the cessation of smoking (Biglan, Ary, Smolkowski, Duncan, & Black, 2000; Botvin, Griffin, Diaz, & Ifill-Williams, 2001), encouraging the use of condoms (Adams, Neville, Parker, & Huckle, 2017), promoting sexually transmitted infection testing, and reducing domestic violence (Keller & Otjen, 2007). Social marketing has also been used to increase reporting crime (Greenberg & Beach, 2004), encourage victims to be examined and receive treatment following sexual assault (Boehm & Itzhaky, 2004; Konradi & DeBruin, 2003), and empower bystanders to prevent sexual violence (Potter, Moynihan, Stapleton, & Banyard, 2009).

Social marketing campaigns are diverse due to the various social issues they address; however, social marketers commonly adopt certain strategies and steps in developing a social marketing plan. It has been shown that social marketing campaigns are more likely to succeed if they follow the principles of commercial marketing (Andreasen, 1994; Kotler & Lee, 2008; Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). As in commercial marketing, identifying the target audience and market research are two vital steps in the social marketing planning process. Market research helps marketers to gain insight into the audience's real and perceived barriers (What prevents them from performing the behavior? What do they give up?), the potential benefits for the audience (What do they want/need? What will motivate them?), and—if applicable—the competition (competing behaviors). Only by having a deep understanding of the target market can social marketers develop effective social marketing strategies.

In a project led by Konradi et al. (2003), a social campaign was developed with the purpose of encouraging female college students to use the Sexual Assault Nurse

Examination (SANE) service as a health service and "an arm of prosecution". Market research informed the campaign with regards to some common attributes of the target group, the majority of whom were young female adults: financially dependent on their parents, lifestyles that included alcohol and/or drug consumption, and more likely to accept rape myths. Based on this, a printed message was developed to highlight the description of SANE, provide educational information about sexual harassment (rape is a crime), and emphasize the confidentiality of the service and exemption from drug or alcohol tests. The campaign was a success, as the students who were exposed to the message and able to recall it reported a higher level of intention to use SANE and, in general, were more knowledgeable about SANE and sexual harassment.

Social marketing campaigns have also been developed to encourage reporting of and treatment for sexual assault. Boehm and Itzhaky (2004) designed a social marketing campaign using marketing strategies to increase reports of sexual assault in an ultra-orthodox Jewish community in Israel where tradition has typically silenced matters such as sexual harassment and assault, as, culturally, these are taboo topics. After identifying and segmenting different target groups among the audience and researching the community, the religious aspect was found to be the focal point to address. Therefore, social marketers aimed to impart new knowledge and values in a respectful way; for example, sharing the message that being a victim of sexual harassment is not a disgrace and that reporting it is fulfilling a moral duty. The messages were conveyed in schools and synagogues and employed an educational and religious approach. The whole campaign turned out to be a success, as there was a considerable reduction in fear in the

victims and their family and a change in the mindset of community leaders. Initiatives in reporting and seeking treatment were ignited.

Although the two campaigns conducted by Konradi et al. (2003) and Boehm and Itzhaky (2004) produced positive results, both studies expressed the difficulty and limitations in collecting reliable, fruitful data. In the study done by Konradi et al. (2003), the advertising message was developed based on the attributes of the college student population. However, these attributes were identified by the researchers' experience in working with students over the year and by preexisting research rather than current data from the students themselves. On the other hand, in the market research phase, Boehm and Itzhaky (2004) only managed to do in-depth interviews with social workers, community leaders, ordinary citizens, and representatives of victims' families and assailants' families—not with the actual victims. Therefore, this study hopes to inform future social marketing campaigns addressing sexual harassment and assault using information from the first-hand experiences of a large number of victims.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theory of Planned Behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), a social psychological theory, is one of the most widely used theories in social marketing research that seeks to understand and predict human behavior (Kotler & Lee, 2008). The premise of the theory is that action can be predicted by the intention to perform that behavior. In turn, the intention is determined by attitude toward the behavior (influenced by behavioral beliefs), subjective norms (constituted by normative beliefs), and perceived behavioral control (decided by control beliefs). In other words, these three factors are theorized to strongly influence an individual's intention to perform a behavior that is under consideration and, thus, indirectly affect the actual execution of the behavior.

Attitude toward the behavior refers to the extent that people evaluate the behavior as positive or negative, and favorable or unfavorable. The affective component of attitude refers to the emotions and drives generated by the potential of performing the behavior, while cognitive information refers to how people think of and perceive the behavior and how they evaluate the outcomes (French et al., 2005). The cognitive class of information might be the result of analyzing the cost and benefit of performing the behavior. Attitude is developed from the individual's beliefs about the behavior in combination with outcome evaluations (Ajzen, 1991). If performing the behavior is believed to lead to desirable consequences, the attitude toward the behavior is favorable. If undesirable consequences are expected, the individual forms an unfavorable attitude toward the behavior. Since there are normally several attributes associated with a specific behavior,

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an attitude may consist of a combination of negative and positive evaluations. In this case, the attitude is the weighted sum of a series of evaluative beliefs about the object: Attitude = Sum(b_i*e_i) where e is the subjective evaluation of attribute i and b is the strength of that attribute (Ajzen, 1991). For example, when considering the act of recycling, the individual believes that the behavior is good for the environment; however, recycling takes time. In this case, the overall attitude toward recycling depends on what the individual values more: the benefit to the environment or their own benefit.

Subjective norms as a social factor indicate the perceived social pressure to engage or not engage in the behavior. More specifically, it refers to the extent to which important others (referent individuals or groups) would approve or disapprove of performing the behavior. Subjective norms = Sum (m_i*n_i) where m is the person's motivation to comply and n is the salience weigh of that normative belief (Ajzen, 1991).

The third determinant of intention is perceived behavioral control. This factor refers to the individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the behavior. These beliefs are developed based on the evaluation of the presence or absence of required resources and opportunities, as well as the obstacles or impediments the individual anticipates would prevent them from performing the behavior. Another possible element is the past experience of the individual or the individual's friends/family.

Perceived behavioral control was added to the theory later and was believed to contribute significantly to the original theory—the theory of reasoned action. According to the theory, if an individual perceives a behavior as positive, the behavior aligns with

social norms, the individual's family and friends want the individual to perform the behavior, and the individual believes that he has the ability to carry out the behavior, then his intention to engage in the performance increases and hence finally results in actual behavior. Three factors collectively influence the individual's intentions and thus indirectly affect behavior. However, the factor of perceived behavior control, along with intention, can be used to directly assess behavioral intentions (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). With the same level of intentions, people who are confident in their ability are more likely to carry out the behavior than those who doubt their ability. In turn, people who believe in their ability to perform the behavior tend to have stronger intentions towards performance achievement. However, the relationship remains relative to some extent, as the intention is also determined by attitudes and subjective norms. Another consideration is to use perceived behavioral control as a substitute for a measure of actual control. However, the possibility of that substitution depends on how accurate people perceive their ability. People may not be familiar with the conditions that carry the behavior or may not have enough information about the behavior. The extent to which each factor influences intention and the extent to which intention contributes to actual behavior vary across behaviors, individuals, and cultures.

To summarize, the three factors of attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are theorized to strongly influence an individual's intention to perform the behavior under consideration. And as intention is perceived to be one of the most important antecedents influencing the actual behavior, understanding the impact level of these three factors can lead to a better understanding and prediction of human behavior.

The TPB model is illustrated below (Figure 1):
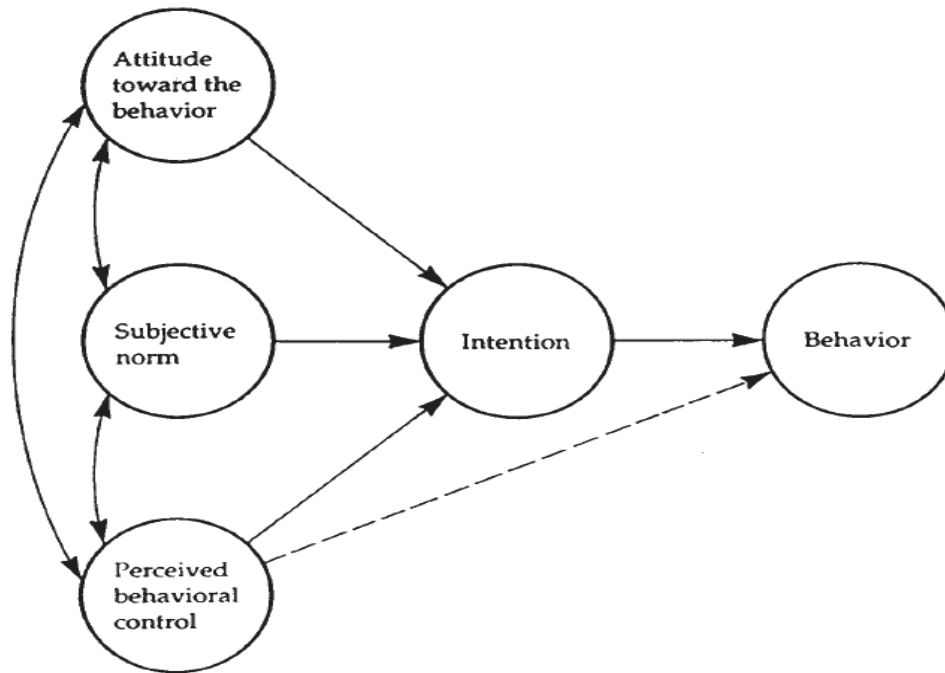
Figure 1. The Theory of Planned Behavior

(Ajzen, 1991)

TPB has been used as a theoretical framework for many behavior change

interventions. According to the theory, behavior change happens when there is a change

in the target audience's behavioral, normative, and control beliefs or the three

determinants mentioned above. Social marketing campaigns are then created to increase

positive attitudes by developing new positive beliefs or increasing the salience of the

benefits and decreasing the salience of the consequences, increasing the perception of

social approval, or adding new facilitators to enhance control beliefs. Much meta-analysis

and many reviews have garnered support with regards to the effectiveness of TPB in

designing behavior change interventions (Montanaro, Kershaw, & Bryan, 2018;

Steinmetz, Knappstein, Ajzen, Schmidt, & Kabst, 2016). The majority of TPB-based

interventions produce significant effects. Also, the most effective approach to facilitating

behavior change is to boost all three factors including attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Cabaniss, 2014; Montanaro et al., 2018). Greenberg and Beach (2004) used social, cognitive, and affective determinants to predict property crime victims' decision to notify the police and found that the best predictor is social influence. Meanwhile, in a study to understand why people do not report sexual harassment, attitude towards the behavior was established as playing the most important role in influencing the individual's intention to report (Foster & Fullagar, 2018). Cabaniss (2014) also used TPB as the theoretical framework to develop a social marketing message that encourages household hazardous waste program participation. She designed four different social marketing ads, three of which presented information targeting behavioral, normative, and control beliefs, and one of which included all three factors. The results displayed a significant increase in the participation rate in the condition involving perceived behavioral control and the condition combining all three factors. This once again confirms the effectiveness of TPB in guiding social marketing campaigns.

TPB was used in this study as the theoretical framework to help understand the reasons why victims don't report sexual harassment and the barriers to reporting it and subsequently serve as a guide for developing an effective social marketing message that helps to increase both reporting and victims' level of empowerment.

RQ1: What are the themes from #whyIdidntreport data that affect victims' intention to report?

Three Determinants of TPB and Barriers to Reporting Sexual Harassment

In accordance with TPB, the current study examines an individual's behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs in relation to the intention and decision to not reporting sexual harassment. Theoretically, individuals are more likely to report if they possess a positive attitude toward the behavior; receive approval and support from their family and friends; and perceive the act of reporting to police, doctors, and others as feasible. The three variables of TPB separately have been confirmed by previous research to have an impact on reporting sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Foster & Fullagar, 2018; Sable et al., 2006).

Attitude toward the behavior

As mentioned earlier, as the primary appraisal, the victim must first identify and label the misconduct as sexual harassment and evaluate its severity. The appraisal of the situation is largely influenced by the victim's attitude toward sexual harassment and assessment of the degree of severity of the harm (Bergman et al., 2002; Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Many people might hold misconceptions about sexual harassment, for instance that it is a trivial event, or that it is a normal occurrence and happens daily, or that it cannot be harassment if it occurs within a dating relationships or marriage. In these cases, the chance of reporting is rather low. It is found that women with low self-esteem, who think they deserve what happened to them, tend to not report or act assertively in response to the incident (Gruber & Bjorn, 1982). The same conclusion is drawn when victims hold traditional beliefs that men have power over women and that attracting sexual attention is just a part of being a woman in this society (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Gruber & Bjorn,

1982; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Similarly, the perceived offense also affects the victim's attitude and, consequently, the decision to report it (Brooks & Perot, 2016).

Furthermore, people who have negative attitudes about reporting sexual harassment are less likely to report. The most significant barriers to reporting for college students found in Sable's research (2006), including shame, guilt, concerns about confidentiality, and fear of not being believed, belong to the attitudinal dimension. Feelings of shame and self-blame make victims feel that they are not worthy of help, or that somehow they are partly to blame. The expectation of reporting costs, such as retaliation and losing a job, also influences attitudes toward the behavior (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Sable et al., 2006).

Subjective norms

Halbesleben's study (2009) found that if the individual has a misconception that the majority of his friends have a light attitude towards sexist remarks, the individual will suppress his own idea or even change his opinion to align with the majority's opinion. Besides this, people who hold negative attitudes toward reporting sexual harassment, such as doubting the victim's motives and blaming the victim, generally act hostilely and criticize those who report (Cowan, 2000). Blackstone, Uggen, and McLaughlin (2009) highlight the importance of having close work friends to promote mobilization—filing formal complaints, telling supervisors, confiding in friends and family. In many cases, close coworkers will likely believe the victim, and can warn and protect one another from harassment. With support and approval from colleagues, victims are more likely to report the incident.

Perceived behavioral control

Perceived behavioral control is also hypothesized to be an important predictor of reporting sexual harassment: People are more likely to report if they believe that they can perform the behavior if they want to.

A study on migrant women in agriculture pointed out that economic insecurity makes women feel vulnerable and leads them to doubt their capability of pursuing a sexual harassment claim, and they are therefore less likely to report (Weaver, 2017). How the victims perceive the ease of difficulty in filing complaints influences their level of perceived behavior control, too. Many victims were reported to doubt that police and other officials could help them. (Patterson, Greeson, & Campbell, 2009; Sable et al., 2006; Tillman et al., 2010). Moreover, they reported that they did not believe the social system could help them to recover from an assault or protect them from further harm (Patterson et al., 2009). Health care systems, social service systems, and law enforcement agencies do not have a reputation of providing safety to those who seek help from them. (Tillman et al., 2010). More importantly, victims perceive reporting sexual harassment as highly difficult since the procedures elicit painful memories; on top of that, they feel that they are treated like criminals (Tillman et al., 2010). Some victims have even described the experience of reporting as a "second rape" (Campbell, 2008). In the work environment, organizational climates that do not tolerate sexual harassment are found to be associated with lower levels of sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Knapp et al., 1997). If the organization conveys to its members that it takes sexual harassment seriously, has clear anti-sexual harassment policies and a grievance procedure, and emphasizes that those who engage in inappropriate behaviors will have to face the

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consequences, it can have a positive effect on the attitudes of its employees. It can help to prevent sexual harassment and at the same time encourage victims to speak up.

Fear of not being believed is also commonly found to be one of the barriers to reporting (Sable et al., 2006). Many victims have reported that even when they have spoken up, many people, even those in positions of authority, did not believe their stories. Instead, they questioned the victim's motives, and criticized and put blame on the victims. The prejudiced, stereotypical belief in rape myths affects not only the attitudes of persons in authority and the victim's friends and family, but also the attitude of the victims themselves. It is alarming that rape myth adherence is highly prevalent among the general population. The current study examines the examines the association of the three variables of TPB and the role of rape myth acceptance with reporting sexual harassment

Twitter and Tweet Engagement

Twitter is a social networking platform that allows its users to post 280-character-limit messages known as "tweets" and to interact with others by retweeting, replying, or liking posts. Twitter is one of the most popular social network sites with more than 330 million monthly active users (Statista, 2019). It is estimated that 24 percent of all male Internet users use Twitter, whereas the figure for female users is 21 percent (Perrin, 2015). Of Twitter users, 38 percent are between the ages of 18 and 29, whereas 26 percent of users are between the ages of 30 and 49 (Statista, 2019).

Twitter is an important platform for information publishing and dissemination, offering a very rapid form of communication with the inclusion of hashtags within tweets, which can facilitate efficient searches and communication about a specific topic (Liu, Liu,

& Li, 2012). People use Twitter to get news; seek information or advice; and share their ideas, opinions, and beliefs. Twitter has shown to be a means of seeking social support and social connections and of voicing opinions for people who have mental health problems (Berry et al., 2017) or have experienced sexual harassment (Lin & Yang, 2019).

The engagement of a tweet is an important indication of how influential that tweet is (Hwong, Oliver, Van Kranendonk, Sammut, & Seroussi, 2017; Ma et al., 2013). It also demonstrates user commitment and popularity with the post by measuring interactions with others via actions of support such as liking and retweeting. People like or share a tweet to publicly endorse its content and show support to the original tweeter (Chung, 2017), as well as to spread that information they deem worthy to new audiences (Chen, Liu, & Zou, 2017; Chung, 2017). Previous studies have examined different factors that might influence tweet engagement (Chen et al., 2017; Chung, 2017; Lahuerta-Otero, Cordero-Gutiérrez, & De la Prieta-Pintado, 2018; Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2015; Liu et al., 2012), and it has been found that content features such as the inclusion of hashtags, URLs, and images were found to possibly influence a tweet's retweetability (Chung, 2017; Lahuerta-Otero et al., 2018). Tweets that are highly informational or highly emotional, such as those containing controversial news, unexpected outcomes, and humor, appear to have a higher engagement rate (Chen et al., 2017; Hansen, Arvidsson, Nielsen, Colleoni, & Etter, 2011). Individual-level content also tends to garner more attention. Hansen, Arvidsson, Nielsen, Colleoni, and Etter's study (2011) suggested that tweets with negative sentiments generate more interaction and reactions in news segments while tweets with positive sentiments are more popular in non-news segments.

In the sexual harassment context in general and in the context of the Me Too movement in particular, other users show empathy and sympathy towards the original tweeters through likes and retweets. If they believe in the posted stories, they like or share the tweets to show agreement publicly, show support, and raise awareness about the matter. Conversations, interactions, and reactions generated by retweets help to spread the news, which not only brings the issue into the light but also empowers other victims to break their silence by showing them their voices can be heard and believed. Many victims who share their stories via tweets feel empowered and have a sense of community after receiving positive interaction and reactions from others (Lin & Yang, 2019). Understanding how messages circulate on social media can uncover a new way for victims to tell their stories, a way that can increase support; furthermore, it provides information that could help in crafting an effective social marketing message that is well-received by the public. Given the value of tweet engagement, it is essential to discover how different factors of a tweet, such as content categories and effective elements, might help some sexual harassment stories garner more support than others.

RQ2: How do the different characteristics of a tweet with the #whyIdidntreport influence its reader engagement?

OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

To answer the two research questions, the thesis employed a mixed-methods approach implemented in two studies. Study 1 utilized the thematic analysis methodological approach in order to gain an in-depth understanding of barriers to reporting sexual assault. Study 2 used the negative binomial regression data analysis method to examine the correlation between tweet engagement and the different characteristics of a tweet.

Further, this thesis incorporated social listening as a data collection method in both studies. By monitoring social media, where people share ideas and experiences on various social topics, social listening serves as a valuable tool in digging into sensitive and controversial topics and offering rich data that cannot be collected otherwise. Social research using data scraped from Twitter has many advantages. Firstly, it has the ability to capture real-time data of the phenomenon and allows the researcher to track the timeline or search for data or data change within a specific period of time. Secondly, it offers a more convenient way to collect data compared to traditional social science research in terms of respondent recruiting, time, and cost. Twitter's privacy feature allows the researcher to collect data without asking for additional permission. Even though Twitter users do not represent the general population, it is safe to say that in most cases, this type of research has a higher level of representativeness and generalizability compared to traditional qualitative research using purposive sampling. Furthermore, using data from Twitter for research also minimizes social acceptability bias and recall bias (Miller & Duffy, 2014). Another advantage of data scraping is that it involves no interaction with the respondents, which minimizes any influence the researchers might

have on them. Lastly, given the anonymity afforded to a person while posting comments, it is expected that victims of sexual assault are less inclined to be hindered by barriers that traditional forms of research may present.

The most common way to gather information from social media sites is through data scraping. This is the process of importing information from a website, blog, or other site into a spreadsheet or local file. This paper utilized data scraped from Twitter conversations using the hashtag #whyIdidntreport. Once the data had been gathered, it was cleaned and then analyzed in various ways.

STUDY 1

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine if perceptions of individual attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control were obstacles to reporting. The researcher was interested in understanding the subjective perceptions and experiences of the actual victims by collecting and analyzing their words and phrases as to how the victims interpreted and described their rationale for not reporting. The study aimed to find richly descriptive, comprehensive patterns or themes that could best explain why victims of sexual harassment and assault did not report the incidents.

Data Analysis Method

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was selected as the method for analyzing data from Twitter conversations of #whyIdidntreport. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that aims to identify, analyze, and report patterns/themes within data. The researcher pursues themes that are established as being a priori or emerge as data is examined and are recognized as being important to the description of the phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Even though there are other analytic methods that aim to describe themes across qualitative data, such as grounded theory, phenomenology, and thematic discourse analysis, thematic analysis was identified to be the most suitable method for this study.

Firstly, the researcher needed to set the focus and the outcome of the analysis as a guideline for choosing the analytic method. Thematic discourse analysis aims to explicate how languages are used in building social relationships. The researcher focuses on the

purposes and effects of different types of language at various levels, such as vocabulary, grammar, structure, and even some non-verbal communication (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It is necessary to establish the social and historical context before delving into analyzing the materials. While both the phenomenology approach and grounded theory seek patterns in the data, they are theoretically bounded (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The phenomenology approach focuses primarily on the experience itself, aiming to find "an essence or essences to shared experiences"—the basic underlying structure of the meaning of an experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In order to do so, the researcher must necessarily conduct phenomenological interviews to delve into the direct experience of the phenomenon. The researcher usually needs to involve themselves in the process of exploration to understand the dimensions and become aware of personal prejudices and assumptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Grounded theory, on the other hand, ultimately seeks to propose a theory explaining the relationships among variables related to the phenomenon. Data in grounded theory are collected through theoretical sampling, which means the researcher collects and analyzes data and then goes back to the source to collect more data in order to develop a theory as it emerges (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Because the final outcome of some methods is not compatible with what the current study seeks, and especially because most of these approaches rely heavily on primary data, they are not suitable as the data analysis method for this study.

Thematic analysis, on the other hand, can capture the important elements of the phenomenon on two levels: finding the dominant themes within a theoretical and emergent context and providing a more detailed and informed conceptualization of each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the context of the current study, thematic analysis

would help to define which determinants—attitude toward the behavior, subjective

norms, or perceived behavioral control—play the most important part in explaining the

behavior of not reporting. At the same time, the researcher gets a comprehensive look into

each dimension; for instance, the factors within the attitude dimension that prevent

victims to speak up or the factors within this dimension that are more prevalent.

Secondly, while some methods such as grounded theory and phenomenology

generally are limited to inductive analysis, thematic analysis is highly flexible in using

inductive and deductive methodologies (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using the data-driven

approach, the codes and themes that emerge naturally come from observing and analyzing

the respondents' words, phrases, and stories without trying to fit them into any pre-

existing coding frame—ensuring that the findings are strongly linked with the data

(Alhojailan, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2006). At the same time, theory-driven analysis helps

to compare and match those codes and themes into theoretical dimensions according to

TPB.

Lastly, thematic analysis is considered to be highly useful for summarizing key

features of a large data set and for examining the perspectives of different respondents,

highlighting similarities and differences and discovering unanticipated insights (King,

2004). Furthermore, it can be used to identify themes within the explicit meanings of data

(semantic themes) but also to discover the underlying ideas, assumptions, and ideologies

embedded within the data (latent themes) (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis process

The analysis process for this study was driven by Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodological procedures for thematic analysis.

Step 1: Familiarization with the data

As this study used secondary data, it was important for the researcher to become familiar with the data by repeatedly reading it (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After synthesizing all tweets into one written form, the researcher first became familiar with the data by reading all the tweets, filtering out the non-relevant tweets, and keeping tweets that addressed the research topic. By immersing herself in the data, the researcher gained a sense of the depth and breadth of the content, and thereby gleaned a first impression of the meanings and patterns of different barriers to reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As the process of repeatedly reading the data might be time-consuming, the researcher started with an adequate subsample of 400 tweets (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the immersion process, the researcher recorded any ideas or potential codes that arose and were related to the research questions.

By the end of this step, the researcher gained a general idea of what the data entailed. Furthermore, an initial list of ideas about coding and some other interesting aspects was created in preparation for the subsequent steps.

Step 2: Generating initial codes

This phase involved the generation of initial codes from the data. Coding meant highlighting a section of data and identifying a label or a code name that best described its content (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This was a synthetic way to organize and analyze meaningful parts of the data as to how it related to the research question. While going

through the data, the researcher highlighted and coded everything that was perceived to

be relevant or potentially interesting (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this

step, the coding was flexible, which meant the researcher could generate as many codes

as possible, and one data extract could be fit into different codes. All the initial codes

were then categorized based on their similarities, preparing for the next step of emerging

themes.

The result of this step was a list of comprehensive codes of how the data helped to

answer the research question (Figure 2). The researcher also noted the rationale that

guided in categorizing codes and how the codes might be related.

Data extract	Coded for
#WhyIDidntReport: I felt guilty. I had no evidence. All of it happened when I was in elementary and didn't realize the severity of my abuse until I was sexually active. I was abused by married men (one of them was my uncle) and I didn't want to destroy their marriages.	1. Guilt 2. No evidence 3. Too young 4. Did not understand what happened 5. Abused by family member 6. Did not want to destroy the harasser's life

Figure 2. Example of Data Extract, with Code Applied

Step 3: Searching for themes

Looking over the codes, and the categories created in the previous step, the

researcher sought to identify patterns among them and generate any emergent themes

(Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). All the codes were analyzed and the researcher

considered where they could be combined with different codes to form an overarching

theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this process, many codes that appeared to be too

vague or not relevant were discarded. It was also important to think about the relationship

between themes and between different levels of themes, such as main themes and sub-

themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This step ended with a list of candidate themes and sub-themes and all data extracts that had been coded in relation to them (Figure 3). The researcher began to have a sense of the significance of individual themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
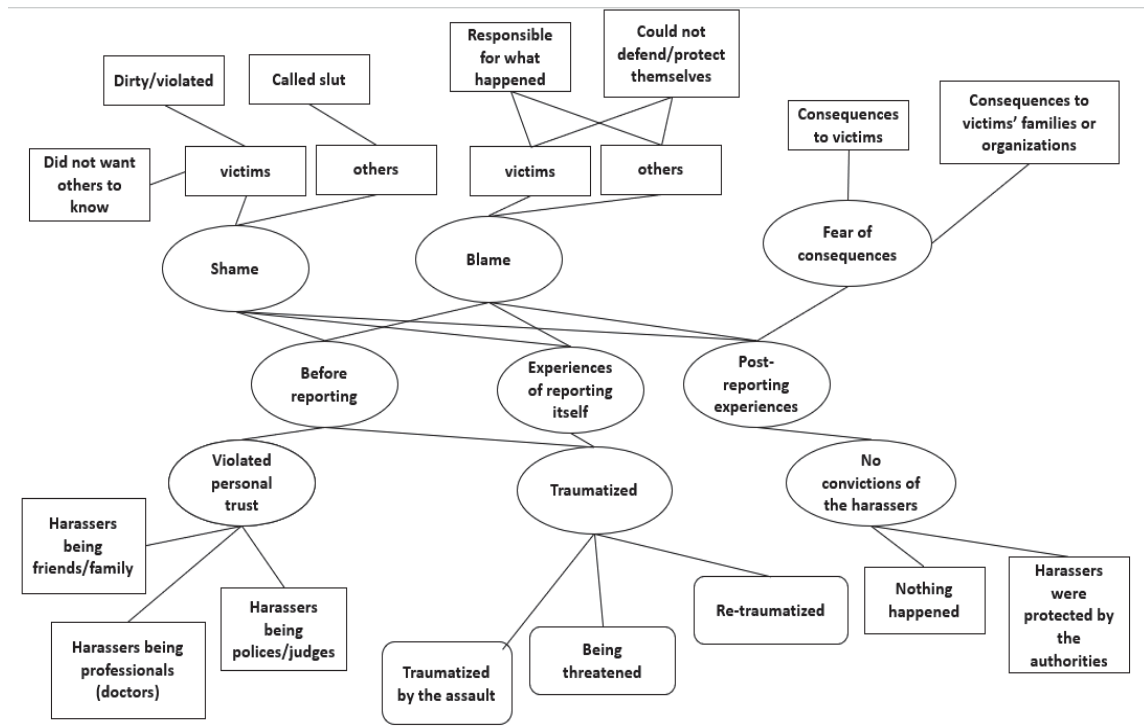
Figure 3. Extract from the Initial Thematic Map

Step 4: Reviewing themes

This step focused on reviewing and refining those candidate themes within and across themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher needed to read all the references that were coded to each theme and evaluate whether they formed a coherent pattern. If some themes did not have enough data to support them or the data were too diverse, they were discarded. For instance, the researcher decided to drop the "violated personal trust" theme since its definition was not specific enough and it overlapped with other existing themes. Each tweet of this theme could be coded or deduced into other themes.

Additionally, the fact that the harassers had violated victims' trust did not directly answer why the victims did not report.

The researcher also considered whether some themes might be combined into one or whether others might need to be separated into different themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, two themes, "shame" and "blame", were merged into one—"shame and blame"—since the data addressing those two themes was often intermingled. Many victims felt ashamed ("*shame*") because they felt responsible for what happened or for not being able to defend themselves ("*blame*").

The themes were reviewed and refined based on Patton's (2002) dual criteria: internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. Data within themes should cohere meaningfully, while different themes should be distinctive.

The result of this step was a refined list of different themes that were useful and accurate presentations of the data (Figure 4). Also, these themes were defined clearly based on the three criteria:

"1. The name of the theme
2. The definition of what the theme concerns
3. A description of how to know when the theme occurs"
(Boyatzis, 1998)
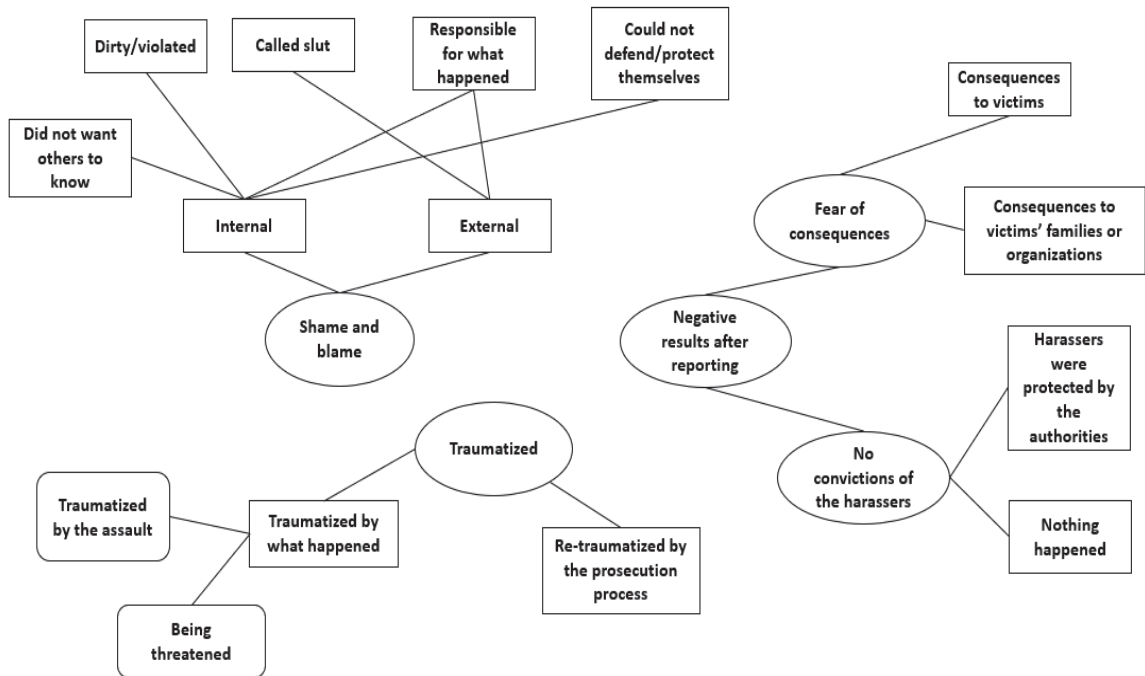
Figure 4. Extract from the Developed Thematic Map

Step 5: Defining and naming themes

In this step, the TPB framework was applied to structure the themes in relation to three theoretical dimensions, namely, attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Boyatzis, 1998). The researcher realized that the discovered themes could not be distinctly organized into the three dimensions of TPB. Many themes were present in multiple dimensions rather than just one. Therefore, TPB was used to categorize each theme into sub-themes. Fitting themes into the theoretical framework resulted in an articulate conceptual thematic map of the data, illustrating the relationships between themes in explaining the research questions. Any themes that were not fit into the TPB were also determined here.

Another researcher participated in coding at this step, to help to determine whether the themes were coherent and consistent and whether the data truly reflected the theme descriptions and answered the research question.

At the end of this step, the researcher possessed a reliable, comprehensive analysis of what the themes contributed in understanding the data and research topic, as well as a theoretical map with TPB as the underpinning framework. Once again, the themes were refined and re-defined to best portray their position in the theoretical framework.

Step 6: Producing the report

Based on the outcomes of the previous five steps, the final report was written in the sixth step—the final stage of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As TPB served as the underpinning theoretical framework, the findings helped to identify whether the theory helped to explain the barriers of not reporting, which determinants played the most important role in the intention and the behavior performance, and whether any other factors complemented the theory in understanding why victims did not report. When interpreting the results and writing up the report, it was important to ensure that the research provided sufficient evidence of the themes, such as providing sufficient data and particularly vivid examples; that the story told by the data was concise, coherent, and logical; and that there was no repetition among the themes and dimensions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Ensuring rigor in qualitative data analysis

When undertaking thematic analysis, it is crucial to avoid potential pitfalls, such as failing to actually analyze the data, unconvincing analysis, mismatches between the data

and the analytic claim, and mismatches between theory and analytic claims (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, the current study used the 15-point criteria checklist for good thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) to ensure rigor in data analysis (Figure 5).

Process	No.	Criteria
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
Analysis	7	Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done – ie, described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as *active* in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

Figure 5. 15-point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic Analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006)

In particular, the researcher followed 14 criteria to guide their coding, analyzing process, and report write-up; the first criteria was excluded since the researcher did not need to transcribe the data. After the coding and analysis, another researcher participated in the process and verified whether the coding and analysis were diligent and whether the emergent themes were internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive, with illustrative and relevant data. Furthermore, the written report was examined by four researchers to ensure it satisfied the four criteria regarding the last phase of the thematic analysis process. The objective researchers provided comments and feedback, and the final written report was revised accordingly.

Data Sample and Technique

During the Me Too movement, many conversations about sexual harassment were generated on Twitter. Especially, the hashtag #whyIdidntreport was generated to directly address the topic of this paper—why people do not report sexual harassment. Therefore, the data for this study were collected by scraping Twitter posts using the hashtag #whyIdidntreport from September 2018 until April 2020. A total of 1,894 tweets were collected, of which 80 percent were posted in September 2018 when the hashtag was first generated and went viral in the light of the Me Too movement. The purpose of all the tweets using this hashtag could be divided into different types: to share the user's personal stories, to share somebody else's story, to show support to people who speak up, to share a link/photo/attachment relevant to sexual harassment. To ensure quality and relevance, the data were cleaned by removing duplicates and retweets, and then filtered based on the following criteria: (1) the tweet is written in English; and (2) the tweet explicitly addresses the experiences, opinions, and perceptions of sexual harassment and reporting sexual harassment from a first-person perspective. Twitter usernames were also omitted, to protect anonymity (Berry et al., 2017). The final set of data consisted of 813 tweets.

The final data were then entered into Nvivo software to help organize the data and assist in the analysis process (Moloney & Love, 2018). Nvivo is computer software designed to help researchers organize, code, and analyze qualitative and mix-methods research data. The software is more advanced compared to manual coding, especially in dealing with a large amount of data, as it offers a single location where the researchers can store all materials (interviews, surveys, audio files, and pictures) (Bergin, 2011). The

software is easier, more accurate, and more efficient in coding and retrieving data

(Hoover & Koerber, 2011). It also assists in data analysis by enabling more complex,

adaptable, consistent, and extensive coding schemes (Feng & Behar-Horenstein, 2019).

Nvivo also offers a transparent analytical process, more readily demonstrating validity,

rigor, and trustworthiness, as it is easy to track how the data were collected and analyzed

(Feng & Behar-Horenstein, 2019; Hoover & Koerber, 2011). Furthermore, Nvivo also

provides various useful functions such as auto coding, word frequency, text search, and

matrix coding, which either helps speed up the coding process or helps the researchers

determine and visualize dominant themes, prevalent phrases, etc. (Hoover & Koerber,

2011).

Results

A total of 813 tweets posted by 792 different users were analyzed. Of the 813

tweets, 47 were not coded into any themes because their content was too ambiguous and

general (e.g., "*He was my best friend of 11yrs*" and "*because THEY were my advisor, my

colleague, my friend's parent, my classmates*"), meaning the researchers could not decide

to which themes they belonged. The researcher analyzed the data to find repeating

patterns that led to specific themes. The TPB was then applied to categorize the themes

into three dimensions: attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived

behavior control (Ajzen, 1991). TPB helped to explicate different barriers concerning

behavioral beliefs, control beliefs, and normative beliefs and how they separately and

collectively elucidate a victim's decision to not report.

Attitude toward the behavior (behavioral beliefs) refers to the victim's beliefs

about the aspects of the behavior and their evaluation of the outcome of the behavior

(Ajzen, 1991). In the present study, this referred to the elements of the Twitter post that indicated negative feelings from sexual harassment or assault as well as the writer's beliefs about the likely outcome of reporting (n_{att} = 428). The posts were very explicit with regards to feelings and anticipated outcomes for reporting. However, the posts could also be somewhat ambiguous, and it was up to the researcher to determine the presence or absence of feelings based on the context of the post. Feelings ranged from sadness to rage, and perceived outcomes ranged from a lack of being believed to fear of being blamed.

Subjective norms (normative beliefs) demonstrated the individual's perceptions about the normative expectation of other people concerning the behavior of reporting sexual assault or harassment (Ajzen, 1991). Subjective norms were identified when the victims mentioned the disapproval, discouragement, and unsupportiveness towards reporting from their inner groups, including families, friends, groups/clubs/organizations, teachers, advisors, and faculty at schools/universities, as well as the community and the society as a whole (n_{sn} = 294). These beliefs were made clear in the Twitter posts, as the tweets mentioned the actual reaction or perceived reaction of friends, family, and associates. Tweets were also categorized into this dimension if the victims addressed the perceived obstacles to reporting posed by societal norms, or if the victims cited cultural beliefs as the reason for not reporting. The predominant views expressed by the writers were that they believed they would be unsupported and discouraged to report, that their stories would automatically be dismissed and disbelieved, and that they would be blamed and shamed regardless of whom they talked to or even what their stories were.

Perceived behavioral control (control beliefs) illustrates how easy or difficult the individual perceives the act of reporting sexual harassment or assault to be (Ajzen, 1991). This dimension often reflects the victim's perceived inability to report due to a lack of resources and knowledge, as well as the difficulties in interacting with legal, medical, and social service systems including police, mental health professionals, and the criminal justice system (which will henceforth be called "the authorities"). The Twitter posts were replete with accounts of not being taken seriously by the authorities or even being discouraged to report sexual harassment or assault (n_{pbc} = 271). Some posts also pointed to earlier incidents of sexual assault that were reported but never pursued by the authorities.

The core difference between the impact of two external groups—"important others" in subjective norms and "the authorities" in perceived behavioral control—on victims' decision to not report lies in the very distinct nature of the two relationships. The relationship between the victims and the authorities is a formal one. It has certain rules and regulations that are well defined and managed by the legal system or the responsible institutions (Burns & Stalker, 1961). The authorities, therefore, are expected to follow a certain standard, merits, and processes while dealing with the victims. All parties in this relationship are supposed to communicate in established channels. The victims come to the authorities when they seek a credible and legitimate source of help. Meanwhile, the relationship the victims have with their friends, family, and other community members is informal. It is ungoverned and voluntary among people (Burns & Stalker, 1961). People involved in this type of relationship do not follow any rules, but they share certain things in common such as being relatives, friends, colleagues, or living in the same community.

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They interact more frequently, and in a more personal context. The victims seek emotional support and acceptance from these informal relationships.

According to the analysis in Nvivo and the thematic analysis, the barriers to reporting sexual harassment were found to be influenced by nine main themes: *(1) shame and blame; (2) fear of not being believed; (3) dismissing the seriousness and suppressing it; (4) belief that reporting will have negative results; (5) desire to protect others; (6) too scared or traumatized; (7) inability to understand what happened; (8) powerlessness;* and *(9) lack of evidence* (Table 1). Some themes were found to present in more than one dimension of the TPB, such as the barrier of shame and blame, which presented in all three dimensions; therefore, those themes were divided into sub-themes, equivalent to different dimensions. As victims could state more than one reason in their tweets, 262 tweets were categorized into multiple themes/sub-themes. For instance, the tweet below was coded into three different themes: *shame and blame* (attitude toward the behavior), *fear of not being believed* (subjective norms), and *desire to protect others* (subjective norms).

"#whyididntreport because no one ever believed Alternative women, because 1st assault was in the 1970s, because no one believed someone like me could be assaulted, because I was told not to in case the reputation of the band suffered, because I was ashamed."

Attitude toward the behavior is the most predominant dimension, with 428 tweet references, followed by the subjective norms dimension, with 294 references. *Shame and blame* are the most common barriers to not reporting, followed by *fear of not being believed*, while *lack of evidence* and *powerlessness* are the least prevalent reasons mentioned in the Twitter posts. The themes are described below and illustrated with relevant quotes.

Table 1
Categorization of Twitter Posts

Theme	Attitude	Subjective norms	N Perceived behavioral control	Total
Theme 1: Shame and blame	208	105	44	321
Theme 2: Fear of not being believed		145	26	167
Theme 3: Dismissing the seriousness of the assault and suppressing it	65	54	19	136
Theme 4: Belief that reporting will have negative results	93	7	7	107
Theme 5: Desire to protect others	52	14	12	76
Theme 6: Too scared and traumatized	116		17	132
Theme 7: Inability to comprehend what happened			98	98
Theme 8: Powerlessness			42	42
Theme 9: Lack of evidence			33	33
Total	428	294	271	

Theme 1: Shame and blame (n = 321)

This theme reflects the barrier to reporting of shame and blame attributed to the victims. Shame is one of the most prevalent barriers to reporting sexual harassment (Patterson et al., 2009; Prochuk, 2018; Sable et al., 2006). Shame is a negative, intense emotion that arises when an individual perceives themselves to have failed to live up to certain standards, norms, social, and moral expectations of others (Lewis, 1971; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991). With regard to sexual harassment, shame and blame often go together.

I felt ashamed and I blamed myself. (Attitude towards the behavior) (n = 208)

Being sexually assaulted, the victims viewed their whole body as shameful and filthy. They thought they were "*ruined*", and they felt "*violated and dirty*". Expressions of internal shame were found persistently throughout the theme (e.g., "*I was ashamed*").

Victims of sexual assault suffer from not only a physical violation but also a violation of their dignity, which damages their sense of self. As a result, people

experiencing shame may wish to hide, to disappear, and to keep others from knowing

about it (Nussbaum & Nussbaum, 2004). This is illustrated by victims who expressed the

following:

> *"Silenced by shame. Locked away, secrets became demons. Ugly, but contained. I was only disgusting on the inside. A pretty smile hid my humiliation. I buried my truth hoping it would fade away. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Down into my hell where it belonged."*
>
> *"He made me feel like I was damaged and I was ashamed of what people would think of me"*
>
> *"I still wanted to try to be a "normal" teenage girl. I wasn't comfortable letting people see a vulnerable or sad side of myself."*

The data revealed that the victims frequently blamed themselves for what

happened. They felt responsible for the assault/rape or criticized themselves for not

having done something differently to prevent it, as illustrated by the following tweets:

> *"I drank. I got in his car. I entered his apartment. I thought that, bc some of the decisions made were mine, I bore the entirety of the blame."*
>
> *"with a gun in my face all I wanted was to live. afterwards I felt like a coward. I felt like I didn't fight hard enough because I was afraid. After telling I felt like people would've been less ashamed of me if I had of fought back and taken the bullet."*
>
> *"I was drunk and I let him come home with me; I willingly allowed him into my space. I didn't realize what happened to me until a few days later. I felt like it was my fault"*

Many victims believed that they were responsible for the assault, which led to

feelings of shame about their actions. They felt ashamed for letting the assault/rape

happen or for not being able to protect themselves.

> *"I was so embarrassed for even putting myself in that situation. "*
>
> *"I was ashamed as a man that I couldn't or wouldn't defend myself."*

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"I was young and ashamed and felt like I had somehow asked for it even though I said NO and STOP multiple times."

Some victims pointed to their own behavior rather than acknowledging that the assault was immoral and illegal and that they were not culpable. Feeling ashamed and blaming themselves made the victims feel unworthy of help, which prevented them from seeking help or made them think that they deserved what happened.

"I thought I deserved it"

"At the age of 19 and being an evangelical Christian, I felt like it was punishment for the sin of drinking too much."

My important others would shame and blame me. (Subjective norms) (n = 105)

External shame or being shamed is when others judge a person negatively for failing to meet certain standards, rules, or norms. Many victims chose to share their sexual harassment stories with the people they trust, but they did not receive support and encouragement but rather shame and blame. Many victims were judged negatively, even called names and insulted by their own parents:

"my whole family would have shamed me and called me a slut"

Parents of some victims also put blame on the victims instead of the perpetrators and therefore concluded that the victims might have deserved the assault.

"I didn't report the boy because my parents had already taught me that ... That it was somehow my fault. That I must have deserved it, asked for ..."

"I didn't tell because I was afraid my parents would blame me. When they finally found out 10 years later, they did blame me. My Mom asked, "What did you do to make him do that to you?"

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Some victims also sought consolation from their peers, boyfriends, or religious leader but they were again met with criticism, humiliation, and accusation:

"it happened at a party when I was 16. I immediately told my 'friends'. The next day at school I was called a whore in the hallways.

"Because my boyfriend at the time told me it was my fault for putting myself in that situation."

"I lost my virginity to date rape at the age of 17. I went to my religious leader the next day and told him what happened. He told me that I deserved it for putting myself in that situation, and that I needed to marry my assaulter."

Furthermore, some victims expressed the belief that the prejudices ingrained in the society would lead everyone in their community and society, in general, to shame and blame the victims by default.

"Bc knowing our society, no matter the story, I'd be told it was my fault."

"Fear I'd be blamed, shamed, hated, stalked, called a liar, a slut, & a homewrecker. "

"i didn't want to be on the news or in the paper having people label me a stupid slut or easy."

The authorities would shame and blame me. (Perceived behavioral control) (n = 44)

Many victims either believed or experienced that they had been shamed and mistreated as a criminal by the authorities when they tried to report. Some were afraid that instead of focusing on the fact that there had been a lack of consent, the authorities would scrutinize the victims' behaviors such as their choice of clothing, alcohol consumption, or attending a party, which purposively shifted the blame from the perpetrators to the victims. Some had shared their experiences with the police and with doctors and were met with the following reactions:

"when asked by the DA if I was "out whoring around" that night, I gave up"

"because of the shame I felt after going to the doctor the day after, the way they made me feel as if I let it happen."

"The officer rolled his eyes at me when I tried to file a report. He then proceeded to criticize the outfit I was wearing, asked if I'd been drinking"

Theme 2: Fear of not being believed (n = 167)

This theme represents victims' fear of not being believed. Much research has demonstrated that the fear of not being believed is a common obstacle to reporting sexual harassment (Johnson, 2012; Prochuk, 2018; Sable et al., 2006). The victims believe that others will generally doubt whether the assault/rape had happened or whether the sex had not been consensual. They might also question the victim's ulterior motives behind the disclosure. The victims also worry that others will believe the perpetrator's words over their own and hence defend the perpetrators instead.

My important others would not believe me. (Subjective norms) (n = 145)

Many parents, friends, and professors did not believe the victims and even accused them of lying for attention, as illustrated by many victims: *"my parents thought I wanted attention", "I told … my boyfriend. He said I was lying for attention", "My step-father started raping me when I was 11. Didn't tell Mum until I was 18--her 1st words: 'Why would you lie to me?'"*

They thought the victims were being dramatic or lying to cover up a different issue.

"I was 8 and it continued for 5 years. When I finally came forward, my mom said I was just trying to cover for a bad report card."

"The professor in charge told me I was lying to get out of going to class."

Many even defended the harassers and outright rejected the possibility that he could be capable of ever committing such an act.

"He was a 'good' student. Ppl liked him. The only friend I told--responded w: 'He wld never do that.'"

"I was 5 when it started. When I got older and told a family member, they said 'I don't think he'd ever do that'"

Besides thinking they would not be believed by people in their inner circle, many victims also expressed a strong concern that no one in their community would believe them and that the society in general would not believe them. This concern was articulated by many victims:

"Because I knew what I would face: A justice system that wouldn't protect me and a society that wouldn't believe me."

"I was scared no one would believe me"

The authorities would not believe me. (Perceived behavioral control) (n = 26)

Many victims did not report to the authorities because they feared the police would not believe them. In reality, many reports were rejected due to this reason:

"I didn't think the police would believe me"

"I actually reported. I was then made to feel like a liar by hospital staff and the officer handling my case."

In some cases, those in positions of power accused the victims of fabricating the stories, questioned their motives in reporting, and even assumed that the victims reported out of spite due to their regret after sex:

"I was in college and when I walked to the police station after I gained consciousness, cold and wet from laying in a field for who knows how long, the desk cop basically told me regret was not grounds to file a report for rape."

Victims' account were more likely to be regarded with suspicion if they were under the influence of alcohols or drugs:

> *"Because they would have believed him over me thanks to the excessive alcohol use and subsequent memory loss."*

> *"I was drugged and taken from the nightclub I was in with my friend to a hotel where I was raped. I had been drinking, and had "a history". So I didn't tell cos I didn't think anyone would believe me"*

Theme 3: Dismissing the seriousness of the assault and suppressing it (n = 136)

This theme addresses the barrier to reporting of the tendency to dismiss the seriousness of sexual harassment and assault and suppress the issue. Previous research has conceptualized denial and minimization in the same continuum, ranging from complete denial to complete acceptance, where minimizing/dismissing is the incomplete form of denial (Maruna & Mann, 2006). This is different from theme 2, where people generally refuse to believe the perpetrators could commit such horrible acts, as in this theme people accept the victim's descriptions of the actions but resist acknowledging that those actions constitute sex assault. They normalize sexual harassment and minimize its effect on the victims. In this way, they encourage the victims to let it go and not report it. Regarding the victims, besides normalizing sexual harassment, in this theme they could be in denial, refusing to acknowledge the fact that they were assaulted and suppressing those memories. Denial and minimization were also found to be the most common strategies for coping with sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1995).

I dismissed the seriousness of the assault and suppressed it. (Attitude toward the behavior) (n = 65)

Victims commonly chose denial and minimization in response to sexual harassment over reporting. As assault/rape experiences were so traumatic and harmful to one's dignity, many victims refused to accept that such a crime could happen to them; for instance, one tweet said *"I kept telling myself it didn't happened"*, and another said *"reporting is admitting something terrible happened to me"*. Or, they refused to acknowledge that the incident would be considered assault/rape, as demonstrated by this tweet: *"I convince myself that it wasn't assault"*.

Victims under this theme normalized sexual harassment as a part of a woman's life and minimized the impact of the event, claiming it was not too serious or too bad, as evidenced by the following:

> *"Because it happened so often to so many girls/women I know, including myself, I thought it was normal behavior and that we just had to learn to take it, which a lot of us did!"*

> *"I STILL tell myself it wasn't bad enough to be taken seriously"*

They deliberately suppressed it and tried to forget that it happened:

> *"Because i didn't want weeks or months of my life consumed by a person/ incident I didn't want to think about. Because I didn't want to talk about it with my family. Because I didn't want to talk about it with anyone. Because I just wanted to bury it and move on."*

> *"thought if i ignored it then it would go away"*

My important others dismissed the seriousness of the assault and suppressed it.

(Subjective norms) (n = 54)

Some friends and family members of the victims did not consider the event serious; hence, they trivialized its effect on the victims. They did not think the assault was serious enough to report:

"*a friend told me i didn't seem 'too bothered' & when i told her how i felt about the situation she just shrugged. none of my friends supported me/checked on me, to them i seemed fine but they had no idea*"

"*when I told my parents they laughed and shrugged it off so I felt that I was making something out of nothing.*"

"*my boyfriend told me I was making a big deal out of nothing.*"

In other cases, after being told, the victims' confidante just ignored the issue and

encouraged the victims to do the same:

"*I was 11. Told me mom. She told me to forgive and pray.*"

"*I was 10. I told my mom at 14. She ignored it. She admitted she knew all along when I was 47. She is still with him today.*"

The victims also held a perception of the cultural normalization of sexual

harassment entrenched deeply in their community and society:

"*he was a much older photographer and friends with bigger people in the industry. I did the photoshoot I had been booked for and was told 'this is just part of it'*"

"*Because it happened so often over the years that followed that I thought it was the norm. Because the culture told me it was the norm.*"

The authorities dismissed the seriousness of the assault and suppressed it. (Perceived

behavioral control) (n = 19)

In these cases, the authorities did not register the seriousness of sexual harassment

and therefore did not support reporting. Sexual harassment was generally deprioritized

over other issues, such as the consumption of drugs and alcohol:

"*I've told this story before. I was 19, woke up to a man standing over my bed, somehow fought him out of my apt. Called the police, identified a serial rapist in the neighborhood. The police busted me for crumbs of marijuana. *"

"*I also had a feeling that it wouldn't be taken seriously by the partrons.*"

"I was drugged and taken advantage of. When I reported, campus police told me this happened all the time so they didn't file a report."

Theme 4: Belief that reporting will have negative results (n = 107)

This theme reflects victims' belief that reporting will not lead to any good outcome. This theme concerns people's evaluation of the outcome of disclosure. Many victims fear or have actually experienced, that the perpetrators will not be convicted or that no punitive measure will be taken. The victims, meanwhile, are the ones who suffer from the consequences resulted from reporting.

I believed that reporting would have negative results. (Attitude toward the behavior) (n = 93)

Fear of the consequences is an obstacle that victims face when it comes to reporting sexual harassment or assault. They fear that they will somehow be punished for disclosing, such as losing their job, being disrupted in their education, or sabotaging their finances:

"There's no good foreseeable outcome in reporting"

"'Cos being afraid was a way of life. I knew I'd lose everything. My job. Career. My mum."

"I actually did report, and I got kicked out of college because of it."

These victims also had an apprehension that reporting would result in nothing. In many cases, their reports did not lead to the successful prosecution of the perpetrator and the perpetrator faced no consequences:

"I did! and even with video evidence, the process was long, drawn out, violating, demeaning, exhausting, shameful, traumatizing, embarrassing, and fruitless, because he ended up with zero charges against him".

"Because I didn't think the classmate who raped me would face any consequences, while my life would be ruined."

"I F* DID and there were no consequences for him and a seemingly endless list of consequences and abuses for me"

My important others believed that reporting would have negative results. (Subjective norms) (n = 7)

Many victims' close ones also believed that reporting would only result in a negative outcome for the victims. Losing credibility, being stigmatized, and running into trouble were mentioned by their loved ones as some of the consequences of reporting.

"I didn't report the boy because my parents had already taught me that nothing would be done ... and that only bad things came from reporting."

"2nd time He was my professor. I reported it to a female teacher. Said no one would believe me. That it would ruin my life"

"Because my mother said it would turn out worse for me than for him....I'd be "tainted.""

The authorities believed that reporting would have negative results. (Perceived behavioral control) (n = 7)

In some cases, police officers and other people in positions of authority also warned the victims about a possible negative outcome when they tried to report their incidents. As the police were the ones with experience in dealing with sexual harassment and assault, the victims believed that the police would therefore have insight into how such cases typically ended, as well as the difficulties victims would face in pursuing the case. Thus, the police's discouragement and warning had a major influence on victims' perception, as expressed in the following examples:

"I was drugged and raped in the Navy. The MP told me if I filed a report I would be charged with adultery because my rapist was married. I would lose my benefits

and face a dishonorable discharge. 'Let's chalk this up to a bad choice on your part'."

"I did. & I was told that a jury would rip me to shreds if I followed through."

"when I was 4, I was molested by my babysitters' neighbour. My parents reported and were counselled against pressing charges, because I would have been basically on trial and would have suffered from the stigma in a small town."

Theme 5: Desire to protect others (n = 76)

This theme reflects the barrier to reporting of protecting others, where the victim expresses concern towards the perpetrator and the desire to avoid harming them personally or harming their careers or family. Additionally, the victims also wish to protect their own family and their social groups from any damage that their reporting might cause.

I wanted to protect others. (Attitude toward the behavior) (n = 52)

In many cases, the victims knew their harassers personally and even their families and thus felt reluctant to report. They did not want to cause trouble and destroy the perpetrator's life:

"*I was abused by 2 married men (one of them was my uncle) and I didn't want to destroy their marriages.*"

"*didn't want to publicly ruin someone's life, even though they privately ruined mine*"

Some victims were harassed by their close friends or relatives of a close friend and wanted to protect them since they still cared about them.

"*they were my "friends". because i didn't want to ruin their football careers.*"

"*it was my bestfriend's, at the time, stepbrother and I didn't want to be the reason to break apart her family.*"

The victims also wished to protect their own families. They did not want to see their parents suffer any emotional pain and wanted to protect them from acting recklessly out of rage and agony over learning of their child's suffering.

> *"I didn't want my mom to feel bad that she didn't protect me and blame herself. She still doesn't know to this day (34 years later) because I want to protect her heart."*

> *"because I was afraid my dad would kill my abuser and then end up in jail."*

> *"I was in 5th grade when my Grandmother's new husband began molesting me. I was scared she'd lose her house and financial support if I told. I didn't want my Dad to feel like he'd failed to protect me."*

My important others discouraged reporting to protect others. (Subjective norms) (n = 14)

When some victims told their important others, their close ones discouraged them from reporting and expressed disapproval of it in order to protect the offenders.

> *"Bc I was 13, he was 30. Bc my 21 yr old sister was there. Bc she was encouraging it. Bc when I started crying on the car ride home, she told me I couldn't bc it could ruin that man's entire life"*

> *"I did. And when my mother found out that I went to the police, she told me that I had ruined a man's life for no reason."*

Some others dissuaded the victims from reporting out of their own personal interest. They were afraid that the disclosure of sexual harassment events would hurt their reputation.

> *"I was told not to in case the reputation of the band suffered,"*

> *"I didn't even tell my editor as he'd have stopped me going out as a reporter to "protect me" - actually to protect the paper."*

The authorities discouraged reporting to protect others. (Perceived behavioral control) (n = 12)

Some victims also shared that the police, counselors, therapists, and their professors/teachers had discouraged them to report because it would damage the perpetrator's future.

> "The police officer I spoke to said, and I quote, 'Are you sure you want to report this? It could ruin his life, you know.'"
>
> "I was 15 years old. I did report i to my school counselor after the fact and later to therapist. The counselor and therapist told me not to report the boys because we were all drunk. And the boys would be branded for life."
>
> "When I woke up in the hospital the police told me I should give my abuser another chance because he seemed like such a nice guy and filing charges would damage his future"

Theme 6: Too scared and traumatized (n = 132)

This theme addresses the barrier of reporting due to the tremendous emotional stress. The victims are too scared and traumatized from the violence of the crime or from the threat they had received from the offenders. This theme also concerns the obstacle of reporting presented by the experience of reporting itself, since many victims feel re-traumatized by the reporting and prosecution process.

I was scared and traumatized by what had happened. (Attitude toward the behavior) (n = 116)

Enduring emotional pain such as feeling shocked and confused was found to be common traumatic responses to sexual assault. Many victims expressed fear and worry

for their safety after having been threatened with being beaten or killed by the offenders.

Many victims recounted feelings such as this in their tweets, such as the following:

> *"He said he would kill me and I believed him. He had beaten me within an inch of my life."*

> *"he was an angry, violent 14 year old, who threatened to cut my toes off if I told anyone he molested me."*

> *"He had guns in his home and he told me he would use them if I said anything. I. Was. So. Scared."*

I felt re-traumatized during the reporting and prosecution process. (Perceived behavioral control) (n = 17)

For some victims, the reporting and prosecution process—including receiving medical attention, and long hours of talking about such "profoundly sexual, violent details" to strangers—was challenging, overwhelming, and intimidating. They felt re-traumatized when having to relive, think, or talk about the assault. It was extremely difficult for them to overcome it and therefore also difficult for them to go through the reporting process with professionals. Many victims articulated this struggle:

> *"because the idea of telling anyone about made me think about it & thinking about it made me sick, terrified & humiliated, as if it was happening all over again."*

> *"Being incredibly shy as a child and having to repeat myself to so many unfamiliar faces and feel like they were all against me was so traumatic I told them I lied because I was too damn scared to face them. When they should've made me feel safe to speak up."*

> *"There were eight other girls. We were made to stand in front of the church deacons and tell exactly what he had done to us. This was more embarrassing and humiliating than the assault. The next time I kept my mouth shut."*

Theme 7: Inability to comprehend what had happened (Perceived behavioral control) (n = 98)

This theme represents the barrier to reporting of a lack of understanding the crime: victims are too young to fully comprehend that they have been sexually assaulted or what their legal rights are as a victim. Child sexual abuse was prevalent in the data—the assault had happened when the victims were so young that they could not comprehend what it was, nor articulate to others what had happened; hence, they were unable to seek help.

> *"I was a child ... I didn't have the vocabulary about what was happening to me. Because I did not receive any education about consent"*
>
> *"I was eight. The only words I could come up with was 'tickled me wrong and I don't like it. Please don't let him do it again.'"*

In most cases of child sexual assault, the perpetrators were acquaintances of the victims, even their relatives in some cases. They took advantage of that relationship and the innocence of a child to commit such a crime. They even convinced or threatened the victims to keep silent.

> *"the first time it happened, I was a child. He said we were friends and this is what friends do. I didn't understand it, I couldn't explain it, and you don't tell on your friends."*
>
> *"It was a family member, coming from a strict, religious family, I was taught that the only ones we could be safe with was with family! I was 8."*

In other cases, the victims did not have the knowledge nor the access to correct information, therefore they could not identify their experiences as sexual assault/rape. They did not recognize their rights as a victim. This theme is different from Theme 3—where the victims intentionally refuse to accept the assault or personally trivialize the effects it has had—because in cases falling under Theme 7, the victims cannot

comprehend that they are victims through no fault of their own. For instance, they did not

know that consent was also necessary in an intimate and marital relationship.

> *"I was 17+ didn't realize 'attempted date rape' was a thing."*

> *"Because I didn't know coercion is not consent. Because I didn't know I was allowed to revoke my consent at any time. "*

> *"I was 15 and didn't realize I had been raped. Real rapes were when women got a gun pointed to their head and beat up. My rape wasn't violent enough. So therefore, my rape wasn't a "real" rape."*

Theme 8: Powerlessness (Perceived behavioral control) (n = 42)

This theme represents the powerlessness that victims feel because the perpetrator

has power over them; examples include landlords, law enforcement agents, religious

leaders, and work associates. The victims felt weak, vulnerable, and unable to do

anything to help themselves. They might be dependent on the harassers financially and

could not get help from anyone.

> *"I was his children's nanny. I had no where else to live... He was rich, I was poor"*

> *"He was the owner of the house we lived in. I was afraid we would be homeless again."*

The victims perceived differences in power and status between themselves and the

perpetrators and hence believed they had no control or influence over the outcome. This

also reflects distrust in the criminal justice system, as the victims do not think that they, as

a marginalized group, will be protected and that justice will be done.

> *"because he's white and I'm not. That's it. Courts don't even believe white women. I don't have a chance."*

> *"because my molester was a JUDGE, who groped me in public."*

> *"Who do you report to when the person who assaulted you is the police?"*

Theme 9: Lack of evidence (Perceived behavioral control) (n = 33)

This theme represents the barrier to reporting of a belief that there is no evidence or a lack of credible evidence. Sexual harassment rarely happens in the public view, therefore there are often no witnesses or material evidence. The victims' words are not qualified as credible evidence, especially when their credibility is considered to be compromised, such as the victims being under the influence of alcohol or being unconscious during the event.

> *"I was told that I wasn't a reliable witness to my own rape because of how badly I was beaten."*
>
> *"'Do you have proof?' Because on a college campus filled with cameras and thousands of potential witnesses, I couldn't find a single shred of evidence to prove it."*
>
> *"I did report when I was 14, but he got rid of every last shred of evidence, and I was deemed mentally unstable because I was suicidal. I was told it was a lost cause."*

For many victims, it can take time to come to terms with what happened to them and for them to finally muster enough courage to report the offense. However, a long delay in reporting escalates the difficulty in gathering evidence and prosecuting the case.

> *"When I finally did tell they said it had been too long to press charges."*
>
> *"I reported my rape to police 3 months after it happened and the police asked why I waited so long. Also the police never contacted my rapist and the DA's office declined to press charges."*

The case becomes even more difficult if the victims do not know the identity of the offender, or if they cannot remember all the details of the event.

> *"I was told because it was an assault and rape by a stranger in a parking lot it would end up a cold case and a waste of department resources."*
>
> *"how do you report someone whose name you don't even know? who was a complete stranger, yet still felt entitled enough to my body to violate it? who came*

into my home, ripped my clothes off, mutilated me, & then left without saying a word?"

Discussion

The purpose of the qualitative study was to discover themes that capture important and meaningful barriers to reporting sexual harassment using the TPB framework. Individuals that posted on Twitter included those who did not report sexual harassment and assault, as well as those who had tried to report in the past but faced difficulties that resulted in not having a case or not being able to pursue the case to the end. A lack of support from friends, family, or professionals for reporting sexual harassment or assault resulted in a lack of self-efficacy for the victims with regards to reporting. The findings discovered in this study were not simply perceived or expected obstacles but rather actual barriers experienced by the victims.

The findings in this study are consistent with past research (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2010; Patterson et al., 2009; Sable et al., 2006; Tillman et al., 2010). In line with previous studies, shame, blame, and fear of not being believed are again found to dominate victims' concern about reporting (Patterson et al., 2009; Prochuk, 2018; Sable et al., 2006). Denial and minimization have also previously been found to be a barrier to reporting; however, these were studied in greater detail in the literature on different responses to sexual harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Prochuk, 2018). Taking a broader view, it can be observed that the three most prevalent themes—Theme 1 (*shame and blame*), Theme 2 (*the fear of not being believed*), and (*dismissing the seriousness of the assault and suppressing it*)—revolve around people's perceptions of both sexual harassment and victims of sexual harassment. The thinking that sexual harassment is not

real and not a big deal, and that victims of sexual harassment are shameful, dishonest, and at fault for the assault/rape creates a hostile culture for the victims. Meanwhile, Theme 4 (*belief that reporting will have negative results*), Theme 8 (*powerlessness*), and Theme 9 (*lack of evidence*) are concerned more with victims' distrust of the justice system. Victims feel that the current system cannot protect them or help them overcome the power structure; they find the procedures for reporting a hassle; and they fear that even after reporting, the system will not lead to the successful conviction of the perpetrators. These feelings deter the victims from reporting sexual harassment. *A desire to protect others, being traumatized*, and *being unable to understand what happened* have also been reported to be barriers to reporting; however, these were not as prevalent (Sable et al., 2006).

Compared to the previous research, the results of this study provide a more explicit and insightful look into the layered complexity of the barriers to reporting. The nuances of the discovered themes were highlighted by comparing not only the contrasting sources of the barriers (internal/external) but also the commonalities shared by the contrasting barriers. The internal struggle of shame, blame, fear, and denial prevented victims from disclosing an assault. When some victims finally chose to confide in friends and families or report the assault to the authorities, they were met with criticism, distrust, doubt, and shame. The coexistence of internal and external aspects in each barrier is alarming because it is known that people have the tendency to conform to and adopt others' beliefs and norms, especially when they perceive themselves to be in the minority (Halbesleben, 2009). Hence, the negative attitudes and beliefs of other people about sexual assault victims and reporting sexual assault can easily be internalized into victims'

own attitudinal beliefs. In cases where the victims already adhere to those erroneous

beliefs, the fact that others share the same perceptions actively validates those beliefs and

hence strengthens them further.

The study also demonstrates an extended view of "important others". The findings

support Goldstein et al.'s view (2008) that important others are not solely characterized

by "who" (e.g., friends and families versus strangers) but also by "where" (e.g., local

community versus distanced community). Victims sought approval and support not only

from people in their inner circle but also from community and society members, which

were addressed abstractly as my community and the society. These community members

represent how situational commonalities create important others who affect social norms.

Additionally, the data analysis also unveiled overarching traces of rape myth in

the themes, especially in Themes 1–3. The literature suggests that rape myth—negative

attitudes and stereotypical beliefs about sexual harassment—directly and indirectly

influence victims' disclosure decision (Heath et al., 2013; Johnson, 2012; Peterson &

Muehlenhard, 2004). Rape myth acceptance is highly linked with the attribution of blame

to the victims and minimization of the perpetrators' responsibility (Johnson, 2012). For

instance, a known common myth theme asserts the assumption that the woman who was

raped deserved it because of her conduct, dress, or demeanor. Therefore, if the victims

had engaged in a flirtatious manner ("*I let him come home with me; I willingly allowed*

him into my space"), been under influence of alcohol or drugs *("i'm the one who got*

obliterated drunk"), or worn sexy, revealing clothes ("*I was in a short dress*"), according

to this myth they should feel ashamed and bear partial or total blame for what happened.

Moreover, as rape myths define rape very narrowly, they portray a distorted picture of so-

called typical/real victims and typical/real rapes. According to those prejudicial beliefs, the so-called real rape victims should have fought hard, explicitly said no, suffered serious physical injuries, and reported the rape immediately after the incident—and if the victims do not meet these criteria, their claims are disregarded and not believed. People with a stereotypical attitude also presume that women commonly lie about rape. The widespread acceptance of prejudicial beliefs that are rooted in a social system of male dominance also dismiss the seriousness of rape; minimize the harm of rape; and justify male sexual harassment, claiming that "*it was normal behavior*" for a male, "*it was the norm*", or that the "*assaults weren't a big deal*". These ingrained negative attitudes and beliefs perpetuate the dominance and power of male perpetrators and magnify the formidable barriers that victims must overcome to break their silence. While this study unveiled the major barriers to not reporting discussed in the context of the #whyIdidntreport initiative, Study 2 discovered the possibility that some reasons for not reporting might be better received than others and see more engagement by the online audience.

STUDY 2

The purpose of this study was to assess the potential involvement of theme categories on tweet engagement, as well as the affective aspect of a tweet, both measured by the number of likes and retweets.

This study used the same data sample as Study 1 with the additional inclusion of the number of likes and retweets of each tweet. Unlike the first study, for which the data was cleaned by omitting all redundant parts such as hashtags and links, in order to ensure high-quality data before entering it into NVIVO, for the second study all tweets were kept as they originally appeared. This also ensured accuracy in the analysis.

Independent Measure

Nine themes discovered in Study 1 were used as independent variables in Study 2. It was found that content categories were related to levels of on tweet engagement (Chung, 2017; Sutton et al., 2015); therefore, this study was interested in whether some themes drew more attention and support than others. Each theme was coded as a binary variable (0 = absence, 1 = presence) to test whether the presence or the absence of each theme had influenced tweet engagement. The theme categories were not mutually exclusive, thus a tweet could be coded as "1" (presence) in more than one category.

Other potential elements of a tweet that might influence its reader engagement was identified, analyzed, and measured by Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) software. LIWC is a text analysis program that aims to quantify language use by measuring the frequency of words in pre-existing meaningful categories (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). LIWC has been used widely in psychology and linguistics to

scrutinize thought processes, emotional states, intention, and motivation (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). LIWC has four main categories:

(1) Linguistic processes: word count, total pronouns, articles, prepositions, numbers, negations

(2) Psychological processes: affective process, positive emotions, negative emotions, cognitive process, perceptual process

(3) Relativity: time, space, motion

(4) Personal concerns: occupation, leisure activity, money/financial issues, religion, death and dying

(Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010)

For the purpose of the current study, the researcher focused on the authenticity and affective dimensions, in particular the three negative emotions: anxiety, anger, and sadness.

The affective dimension, which is composed of anxiety, anger, and sadness, detects emotions reflecting the tweeters' expressions and feelings about the issue they discussed in the tweets. A study in 2006 about women who had experienced intimate partner violence found that the high use of emotional words when they were describing the incident later demonstrated that the victims were more immersed in the experience, which signaled strong feelings of physical pain (Robertson & Murachver, 2006). The use of emotion words illicitly shows how sexual harassment victims experience and cope with the traumatic event. This emotion signaling might attract more attention and strengthen others' empathy towards them. Furthermore, according to the cognitive appraisal theory, emotional responses reflect people's interpretation and explanation of their circumstances (Lazarus, 1991; Lerner & Keltner, 2000); therefore, expression of the three discrete emotions of anger, anxiety, and sadness might signifies to the audience how differently

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the victims appraise their event of sexual assault/harassment. Consequently, the audience would react differently to those appraisals.

In LIWC, *anxiety*, *anger*, and *sadness* were measured by calculating the percentage of words expressing anxiety, anger, and sadness, respectively, among total words in a tweet. However, for better analysis and interpretation, these variables were convereted into binary variables (0 = absence; 1 = presence) to test whether the presence or the absence of each emotion has an impact on tweet engagement, and then into continuous variables to test how each unit change influenced tweet engagement.

Additionally, to help explain the results of the theme variable, the researcher ran another model to test the correlation between theme presence and *authenticity*—a summary variable in LIWC. A high score in authenticity indicates "a more honest, personal and disclosing text" whereas a low score suggests "a more guarded, distanced form of disclosure" (Pennebaker, Boyd, Jordan, & Blackburn, 2015).

Dependent Measure

Tweet engagement was measured by the number of likes and of retweets. The two variables are identified as an indicator of tweet engagement by the Twitter platform (Twitter Help Centre, 2016), and have been used to measure tweet engagement in previous studies (Hwong et al., 2017; Lahuerta-Otero et al., 2018; Ma et al., 2013). The number of likes was measured by the number of users that clicked on the "favorite" button reacting to a tweet. The number of retweets was measured by the number of times that a tweet was shared by other users. The higher the number of likes and retweets, the more engaging the tweet is to the audience. A high number of likes and retweets signals that the tweet garners attention and reactions from others.

Control Measure

Followers. Number of followers was used as a control variable. Even though tweets can be shown in the feed of a non-follower, recent studies have shown that users with more followers have a greater capacity to disseminate information (Lahuerta-Otero et al., 2018; Zhang, Peng, Zhang, Wang, & Zhu, 2014).

Date posted: The researcher controlled for the number of days between the date of posting and data extraction because tweets posted earlier have a greater chance of being viewed.

Results

Given that the dependent variables are count variables and their variances exceed their means (M_{likes} = 1332.09, Var_{likes} = 81570752.11; $M_{retweets}$ = 263.10, $Var_{retweets}$ = 3851544.97), negative binomial regression was used to analyze the correlation between the dependent and independent variables. Indeed, the dispersion coefficients in both models were positive and significant (β_{likes} = 1.00, 95% CI, 0.95 to 1.05; $\beta_{retweets}$ = 0.88, 95% CI, 0.84 to 0.92), suggesting that the negative binomial model was more appropriate than a Poisson model (Greene, 2008). Descriptive statistics and results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Dependent and Independent Variables

Variables	Total Mean	Total SD
Likes	1332.09	9031.65
Retweets	263.10	1962.54
Followers	39677.48	392201.54
Days posted	534.20	350.48
Anxiety (continuous)	0.51	0.81
Anger (continuous)	0.80	0.99
Sadness (continuous)	0.23	0.50
Authenticity	22.33	630.60

		Likes Mean (SD)		Retweets Mean (SD)	
Theme	N (%)	Theme Present	Theme Absent	Theme Present	Theme Absent
Theme 1: Shame and blame	321 (39.5%)	1264.58 (4958.58)	1376.14 (10902.74)	236.94 (1010.49)	280.17 (2388.17)
Theme 2: Fear of not being believed	167 (20.5%)	2591.83 (18510.85)	1006.43 (3739.95)	551.02 (4048.28)	188.67 (777.13)
Theme 3: Dismissing the seriousness and suppressing it	136 (16.7%)	1464.58 (5226.65)	1305.48 (9618.82)	308.23 (1310.12)	254.04 (2069.58)
Theme 4: Belief that reporting will have negative results	107 (13.2%)	3935.22 (23161.40)	937.57 (3479.78)	789.72 (5004.51)	183.29 (788.66)
Theme 5: Desire to protect others	76 (9.3%)	966.36 (2984.80)	1369.81 (9437.73)	185.54 (588.03)	271.10 (2052.64)
Theme 6: Too scared and traumatized	132 (16.2%)	1005.37 (3352.29)	1395.42 (9757.84)	210.25 (823.00)	273.35 (2113.78)
Theme 7: Inability to comprehend what happened	98 (12.1%)	803.72 (3357.03)	1404.51 (9549.46)	116.74 (458.02)	283.16 (2085.27)
Theme 8: Powerlessness	42 (5.2%)	6929.29 (36210.18)	1027.19 (3795.29)	1550.52 (7920.93)	192.97 (790.91)
Theme 9: Lack of evidence	33 (4.1%)	1287.88 (5201.88)	1333.97 (9160.49)	141.42 (503.11)	268.25 (2000.91)
Anxiety (categorical)	288 (35.4%)	1921.05 (14270.53)	1009.01 (3816.85)	381.27 (3095.89)	198.28 (840.83)
Anger (categorical)	419 (51.5%)	1668.67 (12042.64)	974.16 (3746.76)	353.69 (2669.30)	166.76 (601.17)
Sadness (categorical)	165 (20.3%)	1136.18 (4192.62)	1381.98 (9894.71)	207.26 (802.08)	277.32 (2160.95)

Table 3

*Negative Binomial Regression Testing Effects of Theme Presence
on the Number of Likes and Retweets*

	DV = likes		DV = retweets	
Variable	*Coefficient*	*(SE)*	*Coefficient*	*(SE)*
Theme 1: Shame and blame	0.37**	(0.12)	0.56***	(0.09)
Theme 2: Fear of not being believed	0.63***	(0.15)	1.37***	(0.14)
Theme 3: Dismissing the seriousness of the assault and suppressing it	0.15	(0.15)	0.72***	(0.12)
Theme 4: Belief that reporting will have negative results	1.25***	(0.22)	2.30***	(0.21)
Theme 5: Desire to protect others	-0.69***	(0.15)	-0.10	(0.13)
Theme 6: Too scared and traumatized	0.09	(0.16)	0.05	(0.12)
Theme 7: Inability to comprehend what happened	0.07	(0.20)	0.13	(0.14)
Theme 8: Powerlessness	6.45*	(3.32)	6.69	(3.52)
Theme 9: Lack of evidence	2.045**	(0.87)	0.62*	(0.31)
Followers	2.069E-06***	(0.00)	1.786E-06***	(0.00)
Days posted	2.303E-05	(0.00)	0.00**	(0.00)
Dispersion	1.00	(0.03)	.88[c]	(0.02)
Pearson X2	1898.6632		5976.991	

$*p \leq .05$, $** p \leq .01$, $*** p \leq .001$, N = 813

Table 4

Negative Binomial Regression Testing Effects of Theme Presence on Tweet Authenticity

	DV = authenticity	
Variable	*Coefficient*	*(SE)*
Theme 1: Shame and blame	0.55**	(0.19)
Theme 2: Fear of not being believed	0.45*	(0.21)
Theme 3: Dismissing the seriousness of the assault and suppressing it	0.39	(0.24)
Theme 4: Belief that reporting will have negative results	0.11	(0.32)
Theme 5: Desire to protect others	-0.57^	(0.33)
Theme 6: Too scared and traumatized	-0.19	(0.26)
Theme 7: Inability to comprehend what happened	0.51*	(0.24)
Theme 8: Powerlessness	-0.33	(0.44)
Theme 9: Lack of evidence	0.36	(0.71)
Followers	0.00	(0.00)
Days posted	0	(0.00)
Dispersion	1.004	
Pearson X2	70.65	

$*p \le .05$, $** p \le .01$, $*** p \le .001$, $^ p = 0.08$, N = 813

Table 5

Negative Binomial Regression Testing Effects of Affective Elements on the Number of Likes and Retweets

	Discrete model				Continuous model			
	DV = likes		DV = retweets		DV = likes		DV = retweets	
Variables	*Coefficient*	*(SE)*	*Coefficient*	*(SE)*	*Coefficient*	*(SE)*	*Coefficient*	*(SE)*
Anxiety	0.60***	(0.11)	0.60***	(0.12)	0.28***	(0.08)	0.30***	(0.09)
Anger	0.44***	(0.11)	0.48***	(0.12)	0.04	(0.06)	0.09	(0.07)
Sadness	-0.34**	(0.13)	-0.24	(0.14)	-0.44***	(0.11)	-0.39***	(0.13)
Followers	0.00***	(0.00)	0.00***	(0.00)	0.00***	(0.00)	0.00***	(0.00)
Days posted	0.00	(0.00)	0.00***	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00***	(0.00)
Dispersion	2.19	(0.09)	2.55	(0.11)	2.26	(0.09)	2.62	(0.11)
Pearson X2	7275.01		7157.27		11340.14		10664.40	

$*p \le .05$, $** p \le .01$, $*** p \le .001$, N = 813

- *Effect of theme presence on tweet engagement*

Controlling for number of followers and days posted, the presence (versus

absence) of themes 1 shame and blame, 2 fear of not being believed, 4 negative results, 8 powerlessness, and 9 lack

of evidence had a positive effect on the number of like votes (theme 1: β = .37, Wald X2 (1, n = 813) = 9.90, p < .01; theme 2: β = .63, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 17.18, p < .001; theme 4: β = 1.25, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 31.59, p < .001; theme 8: β = 6.45, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 3.80, p = 0.05; theme 9: β = 2.05, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 5.49, p < .05) (Table 3). However, the presence (versus absence) of theme 5 protect others had a negative effect on like votes (theme 5: β= -.68, Wald X2 (1, n = 813) = 21.61, p < .001). The presence or absence of themes 3 dismiss the seriousness, 6 being scared, and 7 inability to understand were not significant (theme 3: β = .15, Wald X2 (1, n = 813) = 0.94, p = .33; theme 6: β = .09, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 0.28, p = .12; theme 7: β = .07, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 0.13, p = 0.71).

Regarding the number of retweets, directionally similar relationships were observed for the presence of theme 1 shame and blame, 2 fear of not being believed, 4 negative results, 6 too scared, 7 inability to understand, and 9 lack of evidence (theme 1: β = .56, Wald X2 (1, n = 813) = 35.93, p < .001; theme 2: β = .1.4, Wald X2 (1, n = 813) = 93.52, p < .001; theme 4: β = 2.30, Wald X2 (1, n = 813) = 125.80, p < .001; theme 6: β = .05, Wald X2 (1, n = 813) = .63, p = .68; theme 7: β = .13, Wald X2 (1, n = 813) = .91, p = 34; theme 9: β = .62, Wald X2 (1, n = 813) = 3.92, p < .05). However, in contrast with the model with the likes, the presence of theme 3 dismiss the seriousness increased the likelihood of getting retweets (β = .72, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 34.43, p < .001), while theme 5 protect others, and theme 8 powerlessness were found to be not significantly correlated with the chance of retweets (theme 5: β = -.10, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 0.63, p = .43; theme 8: β = 6.69, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 3.62, p = .06).

- *Effect of theme presence on authenticity*

While controlling for number of followers and days posted, theme 5$_{\text{protect others}}$ had a marginally significant negative effect on authenticity ($\beta = -.57$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 2.91, $p = 0.088$) (Table 4). Theme 1$_{\text{shame}}$, theme 2 $_{\text{not believed}}$ and theme 7 $_{\text{inability to understand}}$ are positively correlated with authenticity (theme 1: $\beta = .55$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 8.14, $p <$ .001; theme 2: $\beta = .45$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 4.59, $p < .05$; theme 7: $\beta = .51$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 4.52, $p < .05$). The remaining themes had no significant effect on authenticity (theme 3 $_{\text{dismiss the seriousness}}$: $\beta = .39$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 2.60, $p = 0.11$; theme 4$_{\text{negative results}}$: $\beta = .11$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 0.12, $p = 0.73$; theme 6 $_{\text{too scared}}$: $\beta = -.19$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = .49, $p = 0.48$; theme 8$_{\text{powerlessness}}$: $\beta = -.33$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = .57, $p = 0.45$; theme 9 $_{\text{lack of evidence}}$: $\beta = .36$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = .26, $p = 0.61$).

- *Effect of the emotion expressions*

Controlling for the number of followers and days posted, negative binomial regression showed that the presence of the three discrete emotions influenced tweet engagement. Tweets expressing anxiety received more likes and more retweets ($\beta_{\text{likes}} = .60$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 27.81, p < .001; $\beta_{\text{retweets}} = .60$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 24.57, p < .001) (Table 5). Consistent results were obtained when the emotion in a tweet was modeled as a continuous variable ($\beta_{\text{likes}} = .28$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 11.81, p < .001; $\beta_{\text{retweets}} = .30$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 12.23, p < .001).

Similarly, the expression of anger was positively related with the number of likes and the number of retweets ($\beta_{\text{likes}} = .44$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 15.76, p < .001; $\beta_{\text{retweets}} = .48$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 16.34, p < .001). However, the effect was not significant when the variable was modeled as a continuous variable ($\beta_{\text{likes}} = .04$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = .47, p = .50; $\beta_{\text{retweets}} = .09$, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 1.47, p = .23).

The expression of sadness, however, was found to be negatively associated with the number of likes (β_{likes} = -.34, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 6.68, p < .01), while its correlation with the number of retweets was not significant (β_{likes} = -.24, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 2.79, p = .10). On the other hand, when sadness was modeled as a continuous variable, it was negatively correlated with both the number of likes and retweets (β_{likes} = -.44, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 14.94, p < .001; $\beta_{retweets}$ = -.39, Wald X^2 (1, n = 813) = 9.18, p < .01).

Discussion

The study sheds light on people's responses to different reasons why sexual harassment and assault victims did not report the assault to the police or other authorities and to different negative emotions expressed in the tweets.

The results of the study help to confirm that thematic analysis with TPB as the underlying framework was a suitable and competent method to analyze data for this study, as it led to the discovery of barriers to reporting that were considered important by not only the victims but also the audience, with those barriers being deemed more relatable and believable. Specifically, six out of 10 themes were found to be significant and positively related to tweet engagement. Based on the observation in Study 1, cultural and systemic barriers are more likely to engage with the public. Theme 4 (*belief that reporting will have negative results*), Theme 8 (*powerlessness*), and Theme 9 (*lack of evidence*) are systemic barriers that reflect victims' distrust of the justice system. People empathize with the despair of victims who yearn for justice but do not achieve it even when they try. These victims are powerless against a long-established system that proves difficult to change, meaning the barriers are hard to overcome. Similarly, the themes

related more to the cultural aspect, including Theme 1 (*shame and blame*), Theme 2 (*fear of not being believed*), and Theme 3 (*dismissing the seriousness of the assault and suppressing it*), reflect the formidable barriers of a pervasive system of negative attitudes and beliefs occurring over centuries and heavily embedded in a variety of institutions as well as in the society (Fitzgerald, 2017; Johnson, 2012). Furthermore, as those prejudicial, stereotypical attitudes and beliefs are so prevalent and deeply ingrained that they might be considered social or cultural norms, the victims possibly felt it necessary to conform to social expectations in order to stay bonded to the society (Hirschi, 1969). Since people are aware of those common rape myths or cultural stereotypes about rape and rape victims, as well as being familiar with social conformity, those themes appear to be more identifiable, relatable, and believable.

The presence of Theme 5 (*desire to protect others*), however, has a negative effect on tweet engagement. This is possibly because Theme 5 was found to be less authentic than other themes. Previous studies have shown that authenticity has a positive correlation with online user engagement (Fox & Royne Stafford, 2020; Hwong et al., 2017) and may play an important role in source credibility (Fox & Royne Stafford, 2020). From a linguistic perspective, when talking about their desire to protect others, victims used fewer self-references such as first-person pronouns (*I, me, my*), which dissociated and distanced themselves from the stories, thus making the stories less personal and less honest, and suggesting the victims were deceiving themselves (Newman, Pennebaker, Berry, & Richards, 2016). Tweets with the presence of Theme 5 also contained fewer remarks of cognitive and perceptual complexity (*think, know, feel)* and fewer exclusive words (*but, except, without*), meaning that the victims made fewer evaluations, judgment

about the situation, and were less personally invested in the stories, which also made them less credible and genuine (Newman et al., 2016), hence garnering less support and empathy from the audience.

Furthermore, the state perspective of authenticity emphasizes behavioral consistency in the expectations of others on oneself (Lim, Nicholson, Yang, & Kim, 2015). In the case of sexual harassment and assault, the victims are expected to favor offender punishment in response to criminal wrongdoing because it could help to restore their belief in justice, and also likely aid crime victims in recovering from the harm caused by the crimes (Gromet, 2011). The fact that sexual assault victims choose not to report due to their concern for the offenders and desire to protect them contradicts people's expectations of the victims' responses. This value-behavior incongruence may make the victims appear to be inauthentic and less self-aware.

Theme 6 (*being traumatized*) and Theme 7 (*inability to comprehend what happened*) were found to have no influence on either the number of likes or the chance of getting retweets. The cultural and systemic barriers above portray powerless victims who believe that their own behavior cannot determine or impact the outcome or the reinforcements they seek (Schneider, 1980). The reasons these victims refrained from reporting were somewhat instigated by external sources, either the pressure of conforming to social norms or a perceived lack of power and authority against an ineffective justice system. However, being too scared to act or not fully understanding what had happened to them reflects a sense of helplessness on the part of the victim, a state of incapacitation, and inaction deriving from the victim's own perceived sense of weakness and incapability. Helpless, scared victims, especially helpless children who did not know nor

acknowledge that they had options they could exercise appeared to have given up, did not have the motivation to act, and had to wait for rescue from others. Contradicting the social responsibility norm positing that a helpless child would garner more empathy compared to other victims, due to their apparent dependency and deservingness (Howard & Crano, 1974), this finding infers that helpless victims would not necessarily gain support from the public.

Interestingly, the analysis of the three discrete emotions (anxiety, anger, and sadness) might also suggest the audience's lack of support for helpless, passive victims. As discussed in the Results section, the expression of anxiety and anger improves tweet engagement, while the expression of sadness decreases it. According to the cognitive appraisal theory, while anger and anxiety signal a sense of adaptive struggle and active coping, sadness is an inactive, inward emotion, manifesting no sense of struggle but rather resignation and disengagement from the event (Lazarus, 1991). With a motivation to eliminate the source of harm or reduce uncertainty, angry victims were outraged at the injustice, and wanted to punish the offenders and change the system; fearful victims did not report because they wanted to protect themselves from potential harm, and they yearned for the certainty of a fair outcome. Sad victims, on the other hand, accepted what had happened, did not attribute blame to anyone or anything, and had no tendency to take action. They appeared to be disempowered and helpless because they perceived the loss and the harm they had experienced to be irrevocable. This observation infers that the audience might be more supportive and empathetic towards empowered, active victims compared to helpless, passive ones.

Another possible explanation for the results of affective factors is based on the affect control theory. According to that theory, people's emotional responses should match the severity of the event (Heise, 1989). Considering how serious a sexual assault/rape is, people should exhibit strong, intense, negative emotions such as anger or anxiety in the face of this crime. As sadness is a mild negative emotion, being sad in response to such an event is deemed "unusual" and violates the emotion norms. Therefore, the audience might find these victims less credible and thus be less supportive towards them. The observation that the presence of a greater number of angry words in a tweet lead to no impact on tweet engagement can be explained by correspondent inference theory, suggesting that in this case, the readers tend to attribute the angry words to dispositional factors, such as the writer being a person who is easily irritated (Yin, Bond, & Zhang, 2014); hence, the victims are less likely to receive empathy.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The results of the current research provide powerful narratives on how sexual harassment victims experienced obstacles to reporting, and shed light on understanding the factors that contributed to the engagement of victims' messages on Twitter. In particular, using the TPB framework, the thesis identified nine major themes surrounding victims' reasons for not reporting. The research also identified ways to gain reader engagement on Twitter by examining the content and affective factors of the victims' tweets. Findings from the current research offer practical implications that can help develop strategies for social marketing campaigns to address the underlying obstacles that impede victims from coming forward.

First, the thesis has proved that social listening is an appropriate and valuable tool for social marketing in delving into sensitive and controversial topics, as the researcher can capitalize on the power of online conversations and interactions. Social media provides an open and convenient environment for victims to express themselves and act freely and anonymously. Hence, the lived experiences of sexual assault victims shared on Twitter could be quantitatively and qualitatively different from those shared offline. Social listening also helps to capture the real-life reactions of the public toward certain conditions, which are significantly less susceptible to social desirability bias compared to traditional methods such as surveys. Social listening might be the only tool with which to collect some types of data from a broader population, such as data on taboo behavior or criminal behavior.

Second, the findings of the thesis could inform social marketers by giving them a more insightful and complete look into the layered complexity of important barriers that factor into victims' decision to not report. Since the data revealed that external barriers are as prevalent as internal ones, future social marketing campaigns should not only aim to empower victims to overcome internal barriers but also address changing the perceptions of other parties such as victims' families, friends, and the authorities. In particular, cultural themes highlighting rape myths emerge as the most formidable and persistent barrier to reporting. This barrier affects the victim's decision in many ways, from their own appraisal of the event and the support and approval they receive from loved ones, to their interactions with the authority. Dismantling this belief system is critical for social marketing in reforming a community, and society as a whole, in terms of the proper perception of sexual harassment and assault. Victims and others must acknowledge that sex crimes are serious crimes and that the victims of such crimes are legitimate victims who suffer from severe consequences and deserve to get help and be helped.

Another goal that needs to be addressed by social marketing is to restore victims' belief in the legal, medical, and social service systems, and facilitate their access to them. One solution to achieve this goal might be to promote, develop, and facilitate the use of the rape kit exam by making it more accessible, while keeping it confidential and handled by trained specialists. This medical examination can help to provide important evidence supporting investigations into the incident and prosecution, as well as minimize any unfortunate resistance from the authorities. At the same time, the responsible institutions should be encouraged to train their officers about those barriers victims generally face

and to impose certain rules, standards, or merits in professionally dealing with the victims of sexual harassment. Another means to restore belief in justice is by showcasing examples of successful convictions. For instance, the Me Too movement, which resulted in the convictions of many high-profile perpetrators such as Harvey Weinstein and Dr. Larry Nassar, has empowered many women to finally come forward to report assault, proven by the increase in the reporting of sex crimes recorded by a study (Levy & Mattsson, 2019).

Third, the findings of this thesis can help to inform social marketers in designing a social marketing message that is informative, attractive, and effective. Thematic analysis has informed us of the significant barriers to reporting based on victims' first-hand experiences. And thanks to the results of negative binomial regression, it is found that when a particular message is present in a tweet, it can garner more attention. These two methods could help to develop the right social marketing message.

Fourth, the research has also unveiled the potentially important role of authenticity in communicating social marketing messages by demonstrating that content that is high in authenticity can increase attention and interaction from others. To achieve authenticity, the message should be delivered in a personal and genuine manner with a strong presence of oneself. Authentic content that reflects the victim's feelings and judgment can strongly resonate with others and is thus more likely to garner empathy and support from the public. Similarly, if targeting other victims, heartfelt messages with mirrored experiences could inspire and empower them to take similar action.

Another important factor that contributed positively to tweet engagement were strong effective elements. Strong negative emotions such as anxiety and anger, which

signal the urgency of the matter and a desire to act, can stir the audience and thus prompt them to react—to like or retweet the tweet. This suggests that a social marketing message with strong negative emotions would strongly engage the audience, while one with mild negative emotions might have an undesirable effect.

Limitations and Future Direction

The current research is subject to some limitations. First, Twitter users do not represent the general population. Previous research has shown that Twitter users tend to be younger, more educated adults, and urban and suburban residents (Perrin, 2015). Moreover, the thesis only collected tweets in English. This might limit the research's generalizability. Second, uncovering the barriers in this research relied on victims' memories, and it is possible that the victims did not recall all the reasons why they did not report an incident or that some memories were distorted. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to argue that the victims would remember the most salient reasons. In addition to the advantage of the aggregate large amounts of data, the researcher is confident that the data truly reflects the most important and prevalent barriers. Fourth, since the themes are not mutually exclusive and overlapping, the theme variables might be interrelated. The research also did not analyze the possible difference between the presence of single theme and multiple themes in a tweet.

With the ultimate goal of empowering women to report sex crimes, this research has only addressed one side of the coin—breaking down the barriers to justice. Future studies should also research facilitating factors and the reasons why victims did report, in order to gain a complete picture of the matter as well as more thorough insight for developing social marketing campaigns. While the current research only studied the effect

of authenticity and negative emotions, LIWC analysis offers many other potential language dimensions and categories. Future studies should examine additional linguistic aspects to provide a more robust perspective.

A study carried out by Buddie and Miller (2001) on others' perceptions of victim reactions to rape showed that being traumatized, helpless, and sad were perceived as common reactions besides being angry and anxious. However, the results on helplessness and sadness in this research might infer that accepting the barriers to be common does not necessarily lead to understanding, empathizing, and supporting the victims, especially when being sad even decreased others' engagement with the cause. It would be interesting to find out whether people have an expectation of/standard for how the victims should behave/cope in response to sexual assault/rape.

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