

PP 39: Violence seen on Facebook and YouTube videos: a qualitative study

P. Harshani,¹ C. Jayananda¹, N. Hapuarachchi¹, U. Harshana¹, H. Kularathna¹, L. Athauda²

¹Faculty of Medicine and ²Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya

Introduction: Social media is popular specially among young adults in Sri Lanka. In the recent past, violent and graphic content have been seen circulating on social media.

Objectives: To describe violence published on social media (Facebook and YouTube) in the last three months of 2019.

Methods: This was an observational study. Facebook and YouTube were searched for videos depicting physical, sexual, emotional violence and verbal abuse using Sinhala and English search terms (shoot*, bomb* etc.). Duplicate videos were removed and analysed for their content (types of violence, reactions of viewers). Two researchers individually interpreted the videos for their content.

Results: The analysis included 94 videos including 27 from Facebook and 67 from YouTube. YouTube had 28 promoting and 26 educational type violent videos while Facebook had 15 and 6 per each type, respectively. Physical violence (YouTube=52; Facebook=21) was the most common type of violence seen on both media. Likes (n=5326), haha (n=805) and sad (n=286) were the most prominent reactions observed on Facebook. Videos on both Facebook and YouTube represented violence as newsworthy, entertaining items and depicted of misuse of power or law. Violence was also displayed by v-loggers as experiments and used for publicity and promotion of social media channels. Those who witnessed violence reacted against it only if the recipient was a female.

Conclusions: During the 3-month period observed, various types of violent content were shared on Facebook and YouTube. Physical violence was prominently seen on both media. Violence was used to increase views and potentially as marketing tools for commercial interests.

Keywords: Social media, Facebook, YouTube, violence, graphic content