Sexual Violence Prevention and Response: Student Perspectives on the Influence of Socia Media

Includes:

Final Report

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Abstract

The present research paper explored the connections between social media usage and behaviours related to the influence on perspectives surrounding topics of sexual and gender-based violence. Highlighting the duality social media can have shaping young minds and the need for media literacy in an ever-growing social media focused world. By analyzing survey and focus group results from Trent University students the paper uncovers the need for updated training methods, increased infrastructure, increased awareness of supports is vital to the development of the Consent at Trent Program and culture of consent and safety on campus. This study adds to the every growing literature around the influence of social media, specifically within the scope of sexual and gender-based violence. Ultimately this research underscores the importance of student voices in the continued journey to improve and further develop the Consent at Trent Program and the University's culture of safety and community.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Introduction

This project examines the effects that social media has on the thoughts, perceptions, feelings and opinions on topics surrounding sexual and gender-based violence (SBV & GBV), specifically, how it affects the student population of Trent University. This project is being conducted in conjunction with the Trent Community Research Centre (TCRC) and Consent at Trent program which falls under the purview of the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office. This project is aimed to assist in the continued development of the policy and how it can best work to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and support those who have experienced this type of harm on or off campus. As any adaptations to the policy or changes to the program directly impact the students it is vital to make sure that their voices are heard in the ongoing development.

 As part of this research there were three main questions, one, when and how are young people getting on social media and does this involve sexual media content? Two, does social media and pop culture inform and influence perceptions on topics surrounding SGBV? Lastly three, how does this influence of social media influence post-secondary life and the supports it offers? This paper argues that social media and the behaviours surrounding the use of social media will have an effect on how Trent University students perceive topics surrounding SGBV and the influence of social media over life.

Social Media & Media Literacy

It's important to acknowledge current sexual assault myths and gaps in the research as well as the legislative influence on why programs like Consent at Trent exist and need to continue to expand their work within the campus community. With the ever-growing use of social media in the daily lives of youth, it's also important to consider how social media can be

used in both providing information and misinformation to young people. Social media is an everyday aspect in the lives of billions of people worldwide, if you have an internet connection and an electronic device, chances are you have used social media. A lot of early social media sites and platforms started as networking or professional communication sites, they have since evolved becoming more of a way for the average person to share and express themselves (Dhingra & Mudgal, 2019). While networking and professional business communication are still happening on these platforms, it is not restricted to this many companies take it as an opportunity to interact with consumers on a more personal level. It has become a way for companies and persons alike to share news, thoughts, events and more.

Currently, according to the Oxford Dictionary (n.d), social media is defined as "websites and applications which enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking". Essentially any form of online networking and communication could fall under the umbrella term of social media. However, we often don't consider applications (apps) such as Apple messages or WhatsApp to be social media platforms. Today social media is viewed through the lens of platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Reddit and more. The first credited use of social media was in 1994 to describe the online environment called Matisse in Japan (Aichner et al., 2021). However, social media as we view it today really took off in the early 2000s with platforms like Myspace and Friendster, followed by the boom that was Facebook in 2004, shortly after YouTube and Twitter (Now X) were developed as well in 2005 and 2006 respectively (Social Hosp., 2024). Then came the 2010s with new platforms like Snapchat (2011), Vine (2012) and TikTok (2016), with this new era of social media platforms others began to gain traction as well like Reddit (2005) and Tumblr (2007). Marking the new and current era of social media. It also marked the new era of users and the beginning of influencers

and profits that can be made from these platforms. However, this on its own does not account for the spread of misinformation that occurs on these platforms.

Social media literacy is the application of literacy skills applied to the online world of social media. This type of literacy is directly related to how people intake media and information passed through social media, relating to ideas of fake news or false media. Fake news refers to articles, news broadcasts, and social media postings that are intentionally and verifiably false, and can mislead readers and viewers, most often this is done intentionally at the source, but often unintentionally as it gets shared around the internet and platforms, as the false information or statements are being taken as factual (Dame Adjin-Tettey, 2022). As social media grows, it becomes a faster avenue for accessing news and other media in fact in 2016 it was found that 62% of US adults used social media to access news compared to 49% in 2012 (Goh et al., 2017). Fake news and the spread of misinformation caught the attention of the masses during the 2016 United States of America presidential election, and shortly after was listed as a major threat to society by the World Economic Forum (Dame Adjin-Tettey, 2022).

There is little fact-checking done on social media, aside from blatant and extremely obvious misinformation, most seem to take what they find on social media sites as factual. There are content creators that exist now to stop the spread of misinformation by "stitching" or "replying" to comments or whole videos that spread misinformation and refute it, often citing genuine stats or research articles. However, it should be noted that just because someone cites a research article doesn't mean they have properly represented the data or that the article itself is factual, peer-reviewed, or accepted by the scientific community. There are still people on social media who cite the infamous *Lancet* article linking the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine to rates of autism. A paper published in 1998 and redacted in 2010 due to "several

elements" of the paper being false, and "contrary to other findings" a paper that was determined to be unethical and had a "callous disregard" for the children used for the original paper (Eggertson, 2010). This again calls for increased literacy skills when it comes to social media.

A study by Wei and colleagues (2023) found several items related to social media literacy skills and the behaviours around sharing fake news. Social media literacy skills for this paper were defined as technical and cognitive abilities of social media users are required to use to effectively and efficiently communicate and engage socially on the internet which applied to both content creators and content users. Wei and colleagues (2023) found that those with a greater trust in social media were more likely to share fake news. As well status-seeking behaviours on social media also caused an increased likelihood to share fake news as well, in addition, those with lowered social media literacy skills were more inclined to share fake news. These results suggest again that social media literacy is vital to be able to combat fake news and misinformation spread on social media, including false information surrounding SGBV.

Sexual & Gender-Based Violence

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are intertwined with each other, one can not be discussed without addressing the other. Often GBV is viewed mostly or solely through the lens of sexual violence, but GBV can extend beyond this. GBV is an all-encompassing term that refers to anyone who faces violence because of their gender, gender expression, gender identity or perceived gender (Gov of Canada, 2025). GBV extends beyond intimate-partner violence (IPV), roots of GBV extend to media that objectify all women, "jokes" that belittle the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and women, and the enforcement of traditional gender norms all have an impact on the issue of SGBV in Canada. Additionally, in Canada IPV includes a multitude of behaviours including, physical, sexual, emotional, and financial violence. This subcategory of

GBV is considered a major public health problem worldwide by the World Health Organization as of 2017 due to the fact it not only impacts the direct victim of violence but extends to immediate family and can lead to intergenerational trauma (Cotter, 2021). GBV has its roots in systemic issues such as gender inequality and sexism, and despite the notion that GBV is a private internal matter, it can have a drastic impact on the economy. It's estimated that the government in Canada across all levels spend billions on healthcare, justice and social systems, which are exacerbated by the number of cases of GBV across Canada (Gov. of Can. WAGE, 2024). However, due to the complexity of GBV, it can be hard to research and disseminate to the general population.

With the complexity of GBV, it can be difficult to compile an accurate representation in Canada. With the roots of GBV being so complex both victims and perpetrators alike can fail to perceive the motivations behind GBV, which is why surveying for incident and prevalence rates can be difficult, however it's not impossible, it just requires more detail and effort (Cotter & Savage, 2019). Additionally, since not all acts of GBV are defined under the Criminal Code in Canada, this can reduce the avenues of compiling data, but that doesn't mean it hasn't been obtained. Through decades of research and compiled data from around Canada, we can begin to gauge the effect this type of harm can have countrywide. On average in Canada, 102 women and girls are victims of gender-related homicide per year and overall, more than 11 million people in Canada alone have experienced IPV at least one time since the age of 15 (Gov. of Can. WAGE, 2024). Of the 11 million people IPV rates of experience are highest among LGBT+ women (67%) and Indigenous women (61%), overall, the rates of IPV remain just under half of all women in Canada (44%). In 2023 women twelve years and older made up 78% of the 123,319 people of reported cases of IPV (Statistics Canada, 2024). Despite the high numbers that arise

from these reports, they are only part of the story, in 2019 it was estimated that 80% of those who experienced IPV that year did not report it to the police and often the cases that did get reported to the police came from situations where the frequency of abuse was higher, where abuse was occurring on a monthly or more frequent basis (Fact Sheet, Gov. of Canada, 2025).

Sexual-based violence (SBV) is an offshoot from GBV, it refers specifically to any sexual acts (stalking, voyeurism, assault), or attempts to obtain a sexual act, including by threat or force or unwanted sexual acts without the consent of one party. (Gov of Canada, 2025). This type of violence is not limited to women; however, sexual violence occurs most commonly with a female victim. In 2018 one in three women experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public as opposed to one in eight men, this behaviour included unwanted sexual attention, unwanted physical contact and unwanted comments with higher percentages of experience among women compared to men. (Cotter & Savage, 2019). Additionally, Cotter & Savage (2019) found while men were marginally more likely to witness inappropriate and unwanted sexual behaviour in their workplace, women were more likely to experience this behaviour.

Canadian Legislation & Resources

Another factor to consider for the continued development of programs such as Trent University's Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office and Consent at Trent program is in line with the surrounding legislation regarding post-secondary institutions. Such as Bill 26 (2022), An Act to amend various Acts concerning post-secondary education. Schedules one and two address adding and setting out new rules applying to sexual misconduct in both public and private post-secondary institutions. This bill is an act designed to strengthen post-secondary institutions' sexual violence offices and is broken down into three schedules, where the first two address sexual misconduct. The first schedule addresses the Ministry of Training, Colleges and

Universities Act. This newly added section addresses sexual misconduct by employees of postsecondary institutions toward students and also outlines what sexual misconduct entails. Sexual misconduct is outlined as "physical sexual relations with the student, touching of a sexual nature of the student or behaviour or remarks of a sexual nature toward the student by an employee of the institution" as it directly relates to behaviour that is a violation of the Criminal code (CC), Human Rights Clause, or violates any additional definitions the institution may have in place. Schedule two, addresses Private Career Colleges originally passed in 2005. The amendments made are very similar to Schedule One but directed at private institutions. The schedule added the requirement that private institutions must also have an employee sexual misconduct policy.

Both schedules outline the punishments for employees if they violate the misconduct policies. Punishments include discipline or discharge of the employee, and in the case of discharge, there is no entitlement of notice of termination, severance pay, or compensation of any kind. In addition, appeals or challenges to the original decision of punishment can not result in a lesser penalty. Also, if any institution re-employees the person who has committed acts violating sexual misconduct policy, they must be discharged from the new institution at the time of discovery of previous sexual misconduct, and the other institution must uphold the decision of punishment from the first case. This is done to ensure the goal of maintaining both the integrity of the institution as well as the safety of students who attend it.

Ontario Regulation 131/16, Sexual Violence at Colleges and Universities, this regulation is one of the reasons programs like Consent at Trent exist, to be able to offer support to those affected by this type of harm and work to spread awareness and prevent this type of harm from occurring specifically within a campus's population. This amendment outlines the content

required in postsecondary sexual violence policy, the development and approval of the policy, the publication of the policy and training requirements. The policy must include information about the supports and services available to students and the process in how to report cases of violence. It also must outline examples of measures that can be taken to protect a student who reports an instance of this violence, as well as the process of deciding if an incidence of violence will be investigated by the institution, as well as the statements students can sign to choose not to participate in an investigation. It also must outline the legal rights and supports of students and what measures will be taken following an investigation and the appeal process as well as the assurance of confidentiality for the student.

The development and approval process is also covered in Bill 131/16, it outlines that the process was developed in conjunction with post-secondary representatives and elected student governing bodies and that this process was to be followed for both the original copy and any and every time the policy is updated. Additionally, the Bill outlines publication requirements, stating that each institution must publish its sexual violence policy and any student input during the process on its website and must be producible upon request. Lastly, the Bill outlines training, stating that the training must be available to everyone who attends the institution including members of the board, faculty, staff, contractors, and students. The training must also include the process for responding to and addressing incidents and complaints of sexual violence, as part of the policy outlined in early sections of the Bill. These are just some of the legislative Bills that are the reason programs like Consent at Trent programs exist, and why they are vital to ensuring campuses remain a safe location for students.

Outside of legislative mandates, other pieces of framework come into consideration when developing policy and programs. One piece is called Courage to Act: A Call to Action, this 152-

page document written by Khan and colleagues (2019) and an organization called Possibility Seeds which is a Canadian systems change consultancy, to create gender justice, equity, human rights and inclusion. This call to action is also supported by the Women and Gender Equity Canada (WAGE) which is a branch of the Government of Canada. This call to action outlines several ways to address and work to prevent GBV in Canada. It does this by providing background on what GBV is and how it affects Canadians, it then moves on to state that while traditional supports and programs currently in place are still vital, they are no longer enough, and need to grow and adapt. The document came up with 45 recommendations in total but highlighted 13 as their key recommendations for post-secondary institutions.

These recommendations outline the implementation of Indigenous-led solutions to combat the fact that Indigenous women and girls are overrepresented among those who face GBV and overall implement a more intersectional equity approach to encourage all those who face GBV to report violence and work to prevent it. The use of trauma-informed approaches to services including education, reporting and support, as well as supporting student survivors, researchers and activists in leadership roles and working with broader movements outside of the post-secondary institutions to expand the knowledge base. Establishing central databases for collection, reporting and disclosure as well as developing and implementing recurrent performance evaluations, surveys and measurements. The idea is that this leads to the creation of new policies and review processes, which in turn ensures policies are adapting to the changing landscape of GBV while working on the development of long-term plans. Other recommendations included the development of sustainable funding for support services and education, as well as having oversight measures with different levels of government including Indigenous, provincial and federal. The last of the 13 recommendations dealt with adjusting how

programs respond to disclosures of GBV and provide support which is essentially combining all of the above recommendations into one plan for improvement.

With all of this information to take into consideration when looking to answer the three research questions of when and how are young people getting on social media and if this early access involves sexual media content. Two does social media and pop culture inform and influence perceptions on topics surrounding SGBV. Lastly three, how does this influence of social media influence post-secondary life and the supports it offers?

Methodology

The first step of conducting research for this project was to meet with the Manager of Trent's Sexual Violence Prevention and Response office (Consent at Trent), Kristen Haines who would act as my liaison for this project as well as a TCRC's project coordinator, Sarah Khaki. Once the project had been discussed thoroughly with specific goals in mind, the next steps of the project could begin in order to reach this projects research goals.

Literature Review

The research for a literature review first began in late September 2024. The goal of the literature review was to provide background on the topics being discussed throughout this project, as well as the importance of understanding why social media should be analysed with the specific focus on its influence over sexual and gender-based violence. It also provided a background on why programs like Consent at Trent exist and the legal and legislative support and mandates behind these programs. Use of the Trent University Library system Omni to search for articles and research as well as access databases such as ProQuest, Sage, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis E-Journals and more. This allowed access to journals like the International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice, The Journal of Science and Technology, Reviewing Crime

Psychology, and the Journal of Interpersonal Violence. Google Scholar was also utilized to search further for academic articles outside of the Omni system.

In addition, the use of Grey Literature which encompasses all non-academic forms of publishing. This includes government reports as well websites and social media postings. Its important when using grey literature to understand that the quality of research and information can be varying. Typically, Government and legislative information tends to have a higher reliability and accuracy as it tends to have more of an academic background to the information provided on these websites. Lower quality information in terms of reliability and accuracy tends to originate from social media sites and other websites where data may not have been fact checked, or originated from research but has been spread around to become fact or has been provided to these sites in a convincing manner.

For this literature review legislative information and Bills were also used, as they provide the background on why programs like Consent at Trent exist on university campuses across Canada. It also provides the information on what exactly is defined by the criminal justice system under the scope of sexual and gender-based violence in Canada. These were collected through communication with my agency partner Kirsten Haines as well as through Google to discover how best to access them. In addition, other Government of Canada data was accessed through Juristat (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics) and Statistics Canada to compile data that represents Canadian citizens as the research being conducted has to do with Trent University which is a Canadian university and Canadian (domestic and international) students. This provides a more relevant picture to the project at hand. Social media platforms were also analyzed as they can provide a more current picture of social media and a perspective that a lot of academia research doesn't include due to its reliability issues.

There is no shortage of information about social media and SGBV on their own, however there is less looking at the combination of how social media influences behaviours and perceptions of SGBV specifically. There has been the evolution of research including what has been labeled as technology facilitated sexual violence, which is a step in the right direction with regard to researching this topic.

Internet and Social Media Searches

Given the topic being discussed and analyzed is largely based on the influence of social media it is necessary to look at grey literature, in this case online postings from the internet as well as various social media platforms. It is important as this is where the influence being analyzed is coming from, although it should be noted due to the often unverifiability of grey literature and social media postings this information is not taken as 100 percent factual without support from primary peer reviewed or scholarly research. It can be beneficial as it adds information that is often left out of scholarly research and literature due to the nature of its contents and dissemination style. Below are some examples of searches entered into online platforms including Google, TikTok, Reddit, X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram.

Examples of phrases searched include:

- "Can you consent online"

- "Evolution of social media"

- "Gender based violence help"

- "How does social media influence us"

- "Myths about sexual and gender-based violence"

- "Sexual assault help"

- "Sex education resources"

- "Sexual violence on Canadian university campuses"

- "Social Media and Consent"

- "Social media and the effect on sexual consent"

- "The rise of social media"

- "Who owns the major social media platforms"

Omni/Google Scholar

For access to more scholarly and peer-reviewed literature searches were done through Omni and Google Scholar. Some examples of phrases searched to locate the papers used throughout the literature review.

Examples of phrases searched include:

- "Can you consent online"

- "Gender based violence in Canada"

- "Myths about sexual and gender-based violence"

- "Sex education and awareness in Canada"

- "Sexual violence in Canada"

- "Sexual violence on Canadian university campuses"

- "Sexual violence prevention on Canadian post secondary campuses"

- "Social Media and Consent"

- "Social media and the effect on sexual consent"

- "The rise of social media"

Agency Information

Kirsten Haines, the main contact for Consent at Trent provided me with a number of sources including copies of legislation that is relevant to the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response program (Consent at Trent), as well as background information about their policy and some more recent statistical data from the Government of Canada that they had been reviewing as part of the update to the programs policy.

Ethical Considerations and Ethics Approval

Ethical considerations were needed as this project included human participants through both survey respondents and focus group participants. Due to the nature of the research topic, it was important to consider how the questions of both the survey and focus group were worded, in attempts be most in line with the current terminology, as well it was decided early on that collecting data related directly to harm experienced was outside the scope of this project, but still wanted to remain sensitive to anyone participating in either the focus group or survey.

An application was submitted to the Trent University Research Ethics Board on November 18th, 2024. Following some further clarifications requested by the reviewer a revised ethics application was submitted on January 8th, 2025. Attachments to the application included the outline of an email to be sent out to departments and professors for recruitment as well as posters that were to be printed and spread around the campus and electronic copies to be sent out for recruitment as well. Copies of consent forms for both the survey and focus group participants as well as an extra confidentiality agreement for the focus groups. Copies of the finalized project agreement with TCRC and Consent at Trent which outline the project and the support for the project. As well as the agreed upon survey and focus questions. The protocol was approved on January 10th, 2025, by the Trent Research Ethics Board through the Forensic Science Department.

Recruitment

Recruitment was conducted in three main ways. First posters were designed by me then printed off courtesy of the TCRC and were hung around the university campus for both the survey and focus groups. The second avenue was through email, I sent out emails to several different departments and professors ranging across departments, asking them if they would consider sending out the posters to their professors to spread or directly to the students in their departments. The third avenue of recruitment was talking directly to students. This was done in two settings, in and out of classrooms, after receiving approval from the professor I would display my recruitment posters and talk directly to the class about my research including why I was doing, who I was working with and incentives for participation. Outside of classrooms, I approached a number of students in communal areas such as the student lounges and the student centre building. I would have a copy of the recruitment poster with the QR code and provided them a shortened version of what the project was about and ask if they would be willing to participate. These recruitment methods insured participation campus wide encompassing different departments as well as years and levels of study.

Survey

The survey was developed in conjunction with Kristen Haines in order to fully outline the type of information that the that the Consent at Trent program was hoping to ascertain. Once the general information was provided, I developed a draft of survey groups and questions. Following this draft another meeting with Kristen Haines was conducted at which point further questions were added and some of the wording was adjusted to be more inline with the Consent at Trent Policy. Following changes made with the suggestions of Kristen Haines as well as the Ethics

committee, the survey was uploaded to Qualtrics the approved platform and was live from January 20th, 2025, to February 28th, 2025.

The survey was broken down into 7 categories, Basic Information such as program and year, Consent at Trent to ascertain how many of the survey respondents knew about the Consent at Trent program and how they learned about it. The Social Media Use & Viewing Topics section asked questions about first access to social media, daily use including platforms and time spent on social media, and type of use. The next section revolved around sexual and gender-based violence notions that exist in our society and this section and the following were all to be answered based on personal beliefs. Sexual Scrips, Gender Expectations and Norms followed the same outline proving statements that the respondents based on personal belief ranked how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement. The last category asked respondents how social media influences their lives and attempts to gauge the likelihood of changing personal behaviours because of items viewed or persons followed on social media platforms. The survey ended with a place for students to add in any additional comments about the research topic if they would like and a link to sign up for focus groups and a link to participate in the Trent-Cash draw associated with the survey. These sections had separate links found at the end of the survey which led participants to a secondary Qualtrics survey where they could opt into emails about the focus group and/or enter into the Trent Cash Draw. This was done in order to ensure the anonymity of respondents. In total there were 155 survey respondents and was closed Friday February 28th at 11:30am**.**

The Trent cash draw was proposed and funded by Consent at Trent and was advertised throughout the recruitment process. The draw was performed on Friday, February 28th with Kristen Haines as a witness to the draw. Five students were selected from the random wheel and

emailed using the student email provided, asking for a student number. Once all winners had responded Kristen Haines was able to ensure that the Trent cash won was added directly into their accounts.

Focus Groups

After discussion with my agency partner, we decided that due to the nature of the subject matter it would be beneficial to the research to run focus groups. A short list of questions was developed in order to be more open-ended prompt style to encourage discussion around the topics of social media and sexual and gender-based violence. The questions asked about the specific influence that social media has on changing or affirming perceptions surrounding sexual and gender-based violence and how that occurs. Other prompts asked about how the university community could improve their awareness, outreach, policy and programs. There were two focus groups scheduled on February 28th, one at 14:30 and one at 18:00, however due to weather only the first focus group was able to be run. In total four students participated in the first session and the group ran for approximately one hour and twenty minutes. Participants were required to sign both a consent agreement for the research as well as an additional confidentiality agreement before the start of the focus group. These forms were collected and stored in a file folder, with a locked drawer that only I had access to, to ensure that participants would remain anonymous throughout and following the research.

Data Analysis

Following the collection of data from the survey and focus group, data was analyzed in three ways, Qualtrics statistical analysis, JASP statistical analysis and thematic analysis. Qualtrics has a built-in feature that allows for live analysis of the survey as its in progression as

well as once the survey had been closed. The output form the Qualtrics analysis was used as preliminary information to gauge the totality of the data collected. JASP was used to run statistical tests such as frequencies and correlations. Background data, frequencies, and percentages provide useful information in understanding what the behaviours are surrounding social media usage (Taddi, et al., 2024). Correlations were run given the fact that it was of interest how social media behaviours influence students' perspectives (Lamash et al., 2024). This allows for a deeper understanding of how the behaviours around social media impact or persuade the perspectives of student

Thematic analysis (TA)was done on the focus group data. TA is used primarily for identifying key themes or patterns and the interpretation of these themes and patterns which makes it particularly helpful for non-numerical, or non-statistical data. TA is useful because of its flexibility, it can be used with both large and small data sets, and ranges of data that can be used including that of interviews and focus groups (Clarke & Braun, 2017). TA was conducted following the methods outlined by Braun & Clark (2006), this is a 6-step process that begins with familiarizing yourself with your data. This entailed transcribing the recording made during the focus group, and reviewing the notes written throughout the session and beginning to pull out initial themes. The second step in Braun and Clark's (2006) methodology is 'generating the initial codes', this entailed generating the initial codes, which pulled out key words, interesting notes and, give that the prompts varied on topic, this coding was done for both the prompts individually as well as from the focus group as a whole.

Once initial coding had been established the data was reviewed again this time looking for themes to be pulled from the coding. At this stage am initial theme map was created to begin to link together coding and key themes across each prompt. The fourth step outline by Braun and

Clark's (2006) was "reviewing themes" from the maps and initial code the next step was to refine the themes and narrow the focus of key information and how it is supported. This review was not only for the themes but of the initial coding as well, this is done to ensure that the themes drawn from the data in the previous steps is truly representative of data being analyzed. The second last step consists of defining the themes as well as generating cohesive names for them. This is done for the presentability of the themes for analysis as well as the further refinement of the themes with the possibility of generating sub-theme categories to best represent the data. Lastly step 6 in pulling all of the steps together and producing the final report of analysis from start to finish, for this report, the detailed analysis can be found in the results section. There the thematic analysis results will be outlined following the steps listed above.

Literature Review

Social Media and Pop. Culture

Throughout the years, within literature and research, there have been mixed definitions of what exactly constitutes a social media platform and the functions of social media. Many authors either don't define what social media means or have a definition that better suits their field of research. Many of these definitions can differ, however, there are a few elements which tend to be similar across papers such as the fact that social media is used to connect people and that there is an online aspect associated with use.

Aichner and collogues (2021) investigated some of the reasons society uses social media regularly. Some of the main categories found include socialization with friends and family, job seeking/networking, romance, and business/interaction between people and companies/brands. This paper is interested in the use of social media as an influential tool and the effect that it has on being able to alter and/or reinforce ideas, specifically pertaining to sexual and gender-based

violence. Like anything regarding social media, it can not simply be viewed solely in a positive or negative light, nor can it be viewed simply as a balance between the two. Due to the personal nature of social media, it's important to account for individual differences in use and content viewed.

A study done by Narasimha Rao and colleagues (2022) examined some of the positives and negatives of social media on different aspects of life. In terms of the effects on society, they found that social media boosted connectivity, spread news and information worldwide at an increased rate, and helped build communities of interest that people wouldn't have necessarily been able to be a part of, due to location, stigma, cost etc. are all positive outcomes of the spread of social media. On the flip side, the study found that there are negative impacts on society as well, such as cyber harassment or bullying, showcasing when one can have anonymity and face little to no consequences for their actions some abuse this ability to spread hate or attack others known or unknown, without the backlash on them. Another downside is that social media is a sea of personal information which can make it easier for certain people to become hacked and have information spread against their will or be targeted for frauds or scams which are becoming ever more present. The are many other influences on several factors in life, however, the focus of this paper is on somewhat of a gap in the literature about its influence in all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Social media and pop culture Literature

     TikTok

TikTok is a social media platform that's focus is on sharing short videos. After looking at the most up-to-date guidelines TikTok is open about the fact the content on the app ranges from very

family-friendly to more mature. This includes sexual education topics, according to TikTok's 2024 policy:

"TikTok is a place where you can come to discuss or learn about sexuality, sex, or reproductive health. We are mindful that certain content may not be suitable for young people, may be considered offensive by some, or may create the potential for exploitation. We do not allow sexual activity or services. This includes sex, sexual arousal, fetish and kink behaviour, and seeking or offering sexual services. However, it does not include reproductive health and sex education content."

This policy allows for sexual education to be shown on its platform, something other platforms have blocked out as part of their sexual activity conduct policies, or default to removing like Meta platforms whose policy reflects that some images or content may have a benefit the default is to remove that content, but allow users to appeal the removal (Meta, 2024). However, what is written in the policy often varies from what is experienced on the platforms, through lack of censorship as well as the community circumventing the apps' censorship programs. For instance, one common circumvention is the use of the grape emoji or spelling the words "grape" and "grapist" or "r@p!st" to avoid the censorship of the words "rape" and "rapist".

Another common theme noticed when searching for general sex education information was the use of the word doctor, scrubs or another medical prop to increase traction on the videos. While some platforms provided information about their education and background many didn't including people who seem to be representing themselves as medical staff, @luvbite.co-us00 – Dr. Tara Relationship Expert with the use of the Dr., despite no evidence on the profile of a medical background. The profile @yoxlyhealth – Yoxly who is featured prominently in scrubs

again presents no evidence to suggest that they work in the medical field or have a medical background. Many others don't have any medical or educational background on their profiles but seem to be rooted in fact from what was viewed like @sexedfiles – Mariah. However regardless of how these platforms are presenting themselves, many were also promoting paid information, including separate apps, at-home STI- tests, personal education/coaching, and even promoting their personal podcast or sex toys.

After watching some of these creators it was clear some were based more on fact and education, and some were being used to promote products or just sexual content under the guise of education. Where the issue arises in the accounts that are just promoting products is that they are least likely to back up their information, they also are more likely to cite outdated information under the guise of common knowledge. If students are using these videos as fact, or as an entry point into a topic as detailed and complex as sexual education including topics of SBV and GBV it can lead them down a path of misinformation, or cause confusion because of all of the different avenues of information that exist on these platforms.

Reddit

Reddit is known for its anonymity, including having options to post and comment anonymously. Reddit also has options for adult-specific content that require an 18+ login. Many feeds discuss sex, sex education, and SBV & GBV, some include r/sexeducation, r/sexualhealth, r/SexualAbuseSurvivors, r/domesticviolence, r/domesticviolencehelp and many more. Many of these feeds require extra consent to enter and there are warnings on individuals' posts about the type of content. Most of the content shared on Reddit is personal experience based, or intended to be supportive in nature. Due to this anecdotal-based approach those using this app/site for information may be drawn in overgeneralizing the information found.

After reading through the posts, the general theme was that others offered support to the original poster (OP). Advice would typically fall under the helpful category, mostly supportive, and recommendations were often based on others' personal experiences over factual or academic research. For most OP's and commentators, this information was sufficient to help in their situation. Most often questions were asked by young adults with little to no sexual education, and many of the concerns could be answered with a basic understanding of sexual education and reproductive biology. While most information provided was helpful to the OP, there was still a pattern of information provided that was somewhat outdated or only partially factual. This underlines the issue with using social media platforms as your sole source of information.

While this is a way to get lots of information quite quickly, a lot of this information can be unverifiable or misleading in nature. Moderators work their best to delete misleading or false information, it can sometimes be difficult. Certain posts, media and language can make it difficult for moderators to catch false or negative information as it lies outside keywords and phrases that moderators skim posts for. This can sometimes allow for this misinformation to slip through the cracks of moderation and continue the spread of misinformation for a new generation to learn and internalize.

Myths Surrounding Male Sexual Violence

Most research either excludes male participants in their recruitment or frames them as the sole perpetrators of this type of violence. There are many myths surrounding rape culture many of which view have a negative viewpoint when men are victims of this harm. A study by Walfield (2021) found that of the 1220 people interviewed across gender, racial, sexuality, and education backgrounds (50.5% male) many of these rape myths still had an elevated percentage in the surveyed population. A high 32% of respondents had some level of agreement that the

extent of resistance from the man should be a determining factor on if the action was rape or not. These types of myths are harmful as they perpetuate harmful stereotypes that can create a negative environment for survivors of this type of harm, as well as create false narratives around both victims and perceived perpetrators. Like the fourth ranked on the list with 30.8% agreement "Male rape is usually committed by homosexuals". Part of the reason this myth may still be as prevalent as it is due to the prevalent homophobia still found within many societies across the globe which can seep into the foundation of how we treat these cases.

One study by Javaid (2018) based in the United Kingdom (UK) examines the experiences of victims, caseworkers, police officers and sexual assault counsellors with a focus on male sexual assault victims. One male officer commented on some of the male sexual assault cases he's dealt with, saying that while sometimes a victim may have been homosexual, the perpetrators weren't always. And that in certain cases it's about the power and control and the personal level of harm that comes from a sexual assault. A case worker spoke of the same idea, that male sexual assault often comes from a place of power and control, not necessarily for one's sexual gratification. These ideas can be seen more clearly for some depending on the case type (date/stranger sexual assault as opposed to prison sexual assault) as some may be more "socially accepted" as power and control sexual assaults. So, perpetuating this narrative not only harms the gay male community it also hinders the process of justice for male victims of this harm. Throughout research that targets male rape, it is suggested that the total research, acceptance and support of victims is approximately 20 years behind that of female rape cases and victims (Pearson & Barker, 2019). This is an issue that needs to be addressed in line with other myths and research that affect all genders and identities as this type of harm can affect everyone.

An interesting finding about the Walfield study (2021) is that while there was a large proportion of people who said they would doubt if a man told them they were raped by women (31.3%) is that the majority of participants (81.6%) believed that false reports of rape would be under 10% for males as opposed to only about half of the participants believed this to be the case in reports made by women. The 20% rate for false reports was nearly doubled by participants when the report was made by women. So, despite that many respondents said they would have a hard time believing a man if he told them he was raped by a woman, yet still believed that men would make fewer false reports than women. This highlights an important factor when discussing rape and other sexual violence offences, is that while women are more accepted as victims, as much as that may seem callous, it's a fact of our current society. Yet even within the "accepted" victim profile, there is still doubt and shame that is cast on survivors of this harm.

A study by Erentzen and colleagues (2021) also examined the experiences of male victims, related to female-perpetrated stranger sexual harassment, which did include online harassment. They found that men often referred to harassment in almost a mocking manner, often putting quotations around words like harassment to minimize the seriousness of the harassment. They ran two studies on this topic and they found that most men in response to in-person harassment did one of fourth things; play along with it (S1 32.32%, S2 36.09%), ignored it (S1 38.88%, S2 48.12%), laughed politely (S1 34.85%, S2 37.59%), tried to brush her off (S1 36.87%, S2 31.58%) with the fifth most common option being telling her they weren't interested (S1 20.71%, S2 20.30%). Regarding online harassment most men simply ignored the women (S1 55.56%, S2 54.89%), also common was blocking (S1 29.17%, S2 34.07%), deleting (28.24%, S2 33.33%, or playing along with it (S1 27.31%, S2 30.37%). This study overall found that there is a large minority of boys and men who have experienced SBV from girls and women. They state

while this harassment can and does start young it receives less attention in research. Erentzen and colleagues (2021) postulate that this is largely due to gender norms and myths surrounding male sexual assault myths particularly ones that associate the idea of masculinity with behaviours like hypersexuality, heteronormativity, and dominance as well as the ability to "fight off" female attackers. All of these ideas contribute to the under-researched, underfunded and under-supported scope of male SBV cases and experiences.

Technology/Social Media and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

One study by Henry & Powell (2016) examined what they labelled "technology-facilitated sexual violence" (TFSV). One of the topics they looked at within the scope of TFSV was technology-facilitated sexual assault and corrosion. This entails the use of an online platform (typically but not limited to dating-specific platforms) to gain the trust of a person before a meeting which is followed by a physical sexual assault upon a first meeting. Some of these platforms did not originally require a minimum age, for example, "Skout" which was designed as a networking and dating site had created a sub-area for minors aged 13-17 after becoming aware of minors using the app. This solution was deemed to be a safer platform; however, three separate accounts of sexual assaults were reported by minors (12-15) across the United States, all the offenders were adults (21-37), the founder of "Skout" then decided to completely suspend service to minors and develop safeguards to prevent minors from being able to gain access to the adult site again (Perlroth, 2012). This is just one example of how social media can be used by those looking to exploit cracks in safeguards or preventative factors for their own wants.

A study by Salerno-Ferraro and colleagues (2022) examined university-aged women's experiences with online sexual harassment from male perpetrators and the development of stranger harassment in person to stranger harassment online. Traditional forms of this harassment

are outlined as unwanted attention of a sexual nature including nonverbal, verbal, and physical harassment. Stranger harassment in the online world is outlined in this paper as unsolicited-nonconsensual online communication from men who are not known the female recipient of the communication. This paper also uses the term TFSV to encompass all behaviours that are considered to be sexually harassing and committed by strangers. Salerno-Ferraro and colleagues (2022) found that in response to online harassment by men, women tended to ignore (59.92%), block (59.55%) and/or delete (54.68%). Comparing between genders regarding online harassment responses, only 8.24% of women played along (Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2022) with the harassing behaviours as opposed to 27.31% and 30.37% of men in studies one and two from Erentzen and colleagues (2021). This again suggests a disconnect in how different genders are taught to handle this type of harassment. Yet, both genders agreed that generally, the experience of harassment from the opposite gender was unwanted and unpleasant to experience.

Social Media and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

There are gaps within the literature individually, but where the biggest gap remains, in the overlap of topics. While many papers discuss the positives and negatives of social media (Aichner et al., 2021; Narasimha Rao, 2022), they lack a view of how these positives and negatives can influence other topics found on social media. Other papers discuss SGBV topics, outlining gaps in current research, and common myths and ideals found within the realm of SGBV, especially regarding myths surrounding men and SBV (Javaid, 2018; Pearson & Barker, 2019; Walfield, 2021). They again lack insights social media and pop culture have on spreading and maintaining these myths and false notions. One of the biggest reasons why social media isn't included in these types of academic papers is because social media is mostly grey literature. Particularly, if you want to reference or examine a specific platform, unlike with academic

research just because a piece of information is repeated and confirmed by multiple sources, doesn't mean anything in particular. Aside from completing additional academic research on a topic, there is no peer review of social media postings, making it difficult to use traditional academic-styled writing and papers.

However, this doesn't mean research isn't growing, Henry & Powell (2016, 2018) are among the first to begin bridging the gap between technology and SGBV. They discuss how the digital world can be just as dangerous with regard to experiencing SGBV. Many other papers have gone on to reference Henery & Powel's term of TFSV. Other research has been growing in the past decade, with many looking at some of the more extreme negative echo chambers on social media, including the "manosphere". Research conducted by Ging (2019) focused on increased attention to the online context of these "male liberation" and "men's rights activist" groups. This was done as social media and other online platforms provided widespread evidence of the dangerous and malicious anti-feminist views these groups hold. Ging (2019) also stated the importance of this research to include online platforms as this is where much of the focus and centre of debates and "activism" of these groups have migrated. Ging (2019) found that many of these groups have complex online presences including interconnection with other similar organizations, blog posts, and online forums. These online zones foster the development of more extremist views and ideologies. This can and has led to numerous cases of violence, including murders and mass shootings that target women (Barnes & Karim, 2025; Ging, 2019).

This research field continues to grow as more studies include the influence of society on numerous topics surrounding SGBV. Including but not limited to the "manosphere" and "alpha males" and their dedication to spreading misinformation around SGBV as well as promoting violence against women in many cases. This ties into the continued reinforcement of myths

surrounding SGBV including SBV against men and the many myths that exist around that subject. (Barnes & Karim, 2025; Erentzen et al., 2021; Ging, 2019; Henry & Powell, 2016; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 2022). Given the vast entity that is social media and how it grows and adapts yearly let alone monthly, it is not surprising to find gaps within the literature. Academia is struggling to keep up with the ever-changing social media, but there have been major steps made towards adapting how influences like social media affect the research topics at hand.

Results

The goals of this research were to understand the perspectives Trent University students had on topics surrounding SGBV which included topics such as myths and notions around SGBV, SS, GE/N as well as perceptions on the influence of social media. Knowing when young people get on social media and how they are interacting with social media is important. On top of knowing how young people get on social media, it is important to see where and if there is any influence on the topic surrounding SGBV, and how this information surrounding the influence works to inform and support the services on campus that deal with an offer supports on campus for students who have experience harm as well as working towards reducing and preventing this harm from occurring within the student population.

Survey

Demographics and correlation items are presented in Appendix A, Section 1.1, Tables 1 and 2. Of the 155 respondents, the majority identified as female (80.6%) and spread mostly among first to fourth-year students (32.3%, 12.9%, 29.7%, 20.0%) the remainder of students were in their fifth year or beyond. Given the goal of understanding it was important to understand some of the behaviours around social media usage. The largest percentage of students fell within the three to four hours daily range (47.1%) with the majority of students found within

1 to 4 hours daily (78.1%). The primary use of social media was split between entertainment (38.1%), communication (27.7%), and muti-use (31.6%), answers were categorized as multi-use if more than one primary use were listed, combinations included, entertainment and communication, entertainment and education, communication and education etc.

With regards to the onset age of social media use, students ranged from seven years old (1.9%) to 25 years old (0.6%) with the majority of students falling between age 10 and 14 years old (80.7%) with the largest section of students found accessing social media for the first time at age 12 (26.5%). Most student's first social media platform was either Instagram (42.6%), Facebook (20.6%) or Snapchat (14.2%). Additionally, most respondents (84.5%) indicated that they had bypassed age restrictions on social media apps that required a minimum age. With regards to bypassing age restrictions on platforms with sexual aspects to them, there was only a slight majority of respondents (54.2%) indicated they had. This was the same as those who indicated they had bypassed parental controls (54.2%).

With regards to the influence of the behaviours around social media and perspectives of topics surrounding SGBV, there were several significant results found. The first set of data was comparing the age of first use of social media and all perspectives questions. The strongest correlation in this section of data was regarding SS7: *Sex for men is driven primarily by sexual pleasure rather than emotional intimacy,* they were found to have a weak to moderate negative correlation $r(153)=-.26$, $p<.001$. IoSM8: *I regularly use social media to learn about how I should act in sexual settings* and IoSM10: *I regularly use social media to learn about how I should act in social settings* both expressed weak to moderated negative correlations $r(153)=-.20$, $p=.012$ and $r(153)=-.25$, $p=.001$ respectively.

Table 1

Age of First Social Media Use Correlation

Variable		At what age did you first access social media?
1. At what age did you first access social media?	Pearsons' r p-value	– –
2. SS 6: Sex for women is driven primarily by emotional intimacy rather than sexual pleasure.	Pearsons' r p-value	-0.171 0.033
3. SS 7: Sex for men is driven primarily by sexual pleasure rather than emotional intimacy	Pearsons' r p-value	-0.262 <.001
4. IoSM 8: I regularly use social media to learn about how I should act in sexual settings	Pearsons' r p-value	-0.200 0.012
5. IoSM 10: I regularly use social media to learn about how I should act in social settings	Pearsons' r p-value	-0.253 0.001
6. IoSM 12: Social media has reinforced my perceptions about certain communities (POC, LGBTQIA2S+ etc.)	Pearsons' r p-value	-0.163 0.043

Looking at average daily time (hours) and the perspectives questions there were several correlations, including again IoSM8 and IoSM10 with weak to moderate positive correlations $r(153)=.26$, p=.001 and $r(153)=.20$, p=.012 respectively. The strongest correlation found within this section of results is in regards to IoSM9: *I regularly use social media to get advice on relationships (arguments, date ideas/building trust etc.)* with a moderate positive correlation $r(153)=.31$, p<.001. The most correlations were found when looking at the bypassing of restrictions on platforms that had sexual aspects for them. Again, IoSM8 and IoSM10 were among the strongest of the correlations found $r(153)=.28$, p<.001 and $r(153)=.27$, p<0.001 respectively. IoSM 7: *I regularly use social media to get advice about daily issues (anxiety,*

school, family, friends) also had a weak to moderate correlation $r(153)=.23, p=0.004$. In terms of bypassing age restrictions on general platforms, the strongest correlations were found with IoSM10 $r(153)=.25, p=0.002$ and SGBV7: *It's only sexual assault if there is penetration* $r(153)=-.20, p=0.012$ respectively.

Table 2

Average Daily Use Correlations

Variable		Average daily social media use (hours)
1. Average daily social media use (hours)	Pearsons' r	–
	p-value	–
2. SGBV 23: Sexual violence is more likely to occur when the people involved are not known to each other	Pearsons' r	0.160
	p-value	0.047
3. SS 8: Sex should only occur for reproductive purposes	Pearsons' r	-0.159
	p-value	0.048
4. SS 16: It's a women's responsibility for the use of protection during sex	Pearsons' r	-0.182
	p-value	0.024
5. IoSM 1: I regularly buy items/objects promoted by influencers I follow	Pearsons' r	0.160
	p-value	0.047
6. IoSM 4: I follow influencers who discuss sexual topics	Pearsons' r	0.175
	p-value	0.029
7. IoSM 7: I regularly use social media to get advice about daily issues (anxiety, school, family, friends)	Pearsons' r	0.186
	p-value	0.021
8. IoSM 8: I regularly use social media to learn about how I should act in sexual settings	Pearsons' r	0.255
	p-value	0.001
9. IoSM 9: I regularly use social media to get advice on relationship (arguments, date ideas/building trust etc.)	Pearsons' r	0.311
	p-value	<.001
10. IoSM 10: I regularly use social media to learn about how I should act in social settings	Pearsons' r	0.201
	p-value	0.012
11. IoSM 12: Social media has reinforced my perceptions about certain communities (POC, LGBTQIA2S+ etc.)	Pearsons' r	0.177
	p-value	0.027
12. IoSM 20: The anonymity of social media allows me to express my opinions and beliefs without fear of judgement	Pearsons' r	0.159
	p-value	0.048

Table 3

Bypassing Restrictions (Sexual) Correlation

Variable	Did you ever bypass age restrictions on platforms that had sexual aspects to them?	
1. Did you ever bypass age restrictions on platforms that had sexual aspects to them?	Pearsons' r	–
	p-value	–
2. SGBV 14: Consent can be obtained through an electronic device for a later sexual arrangement (through text/call)	Pearsons' r	0.182
	p-value	0.024
3. SGBV 27: Sexual and gender-based violence is a private matter and should be dealt with in a private manner	Pearsons' r	-0.172
	p-value	0.032
4.SS 7: Sex for men is driven primarily by sexual pleasure rather than emotional intimacy	Pearsons' r	0.158
	p-value	0.049
5. GE/N 2: Men are not expected to take into account others' emotions in any type of relationships (dating, working etc.)	Pearsons' r	0.206
	p-value	0.010
6. GE/N 7: Men should be the sole providers for their family	Pearsons' r	0.173
	p-value	0.031
7. GE/N 13: Men are too impersonal and not emotionally adept to take on tasks better done by women (taking care of children etc.)	Pearsons' r	0.189
	p-value	0.019
8. IoSM 2: I modify my style based on influencers I follow	Pearsons' r	0.183
	p-value	0.023
9. IoSM 7: I regularly use social media to get advice about daily issues (anxiety, school, family, friends)	Pearsons' r	0.228
	p-value	0.004
10. IoSM 8: I regularly use social media to learn about how I should act in sexual settings	Pearsons' r	0.278
	p-value	<.001
11. IoSM 9: I regularly use social media to get advice on relationship (arguments, date ideas/building trust etc.)	Pearsons' r	0.169
	p-value	0.035
12. IoSM 10: I regularly use social media to learn about how I should act in social settings	Pearsons' r	0.272
	p-value	<.001
13. IoSM 18: Its okay to make comments and jokes about sexual and gender-based violence on social media because I can remain anonymous	Pearsons' r	0.186
	p-value	0.020

| 14. IoSM 19: It's okay to make comments and jokes about sexual and gender-based violence on social media because I would never act that way in real life | Pearsons' r | 0.211 |
| | p-value | 0.008 |

Table 4

Bypass (Age Restrictions) Correlations

Variable	Did you ever bypass age restrictions on platforms that required a minimum age?	
1. Did you ever bypass age restrictions on platforms that required a minimum age?	Pearsons' r	–
	p-value	–
2. SGBV 7: Its only sexual assault if there is penetration	Pearsons' r	-0.201
	p-value	0.012
3.SGBV 16: Anyone can cause sexual harm regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression	Pearsons' r	0.162
	p-value	0.044
4. SS 13: A single sexual encounter should take place with a single partner	Pearsons' r	-0.158
	p-value	0.049
5. IoSM 2: I modify my style based on influencers I follow	Pearsons' r	0.168
	p-value	0.037
6. IoSM 3: I only follow influencers with similar beliefs to mine	Pearsons' r	0.178
	p-value	0.026
7. IoSM 7: I regularly use social media to get advice about daily issues (anxiety, school, family, friends)	Pearsons' r	0.175
	p-value	0.030
8. IoSM 8: I regularly use social media to learn about how I should act in sexual settings	Pearsons' r	0.173
	p-value	0.032
9. IoSM 9: I regularly use social media to get advice on relationship (arguments, date ideas/building trust etc.)	Pearsons' r	0.161
	p-value	0.045
10. IoSM 10: I regularly use social media to learn about how I should act in social settings	Pearsons' r	0.250
	p-value	0.002

As a secondary interest outside of the research questions the perspectives questions were also run for correlations for gender and program year. The strongest correlation in regards to gender were the weak to moderate negative correlations of SGBV26: *If a person returns to a*

harmful intimate relationship (dating/marriage), they are also somewhat responsible for the

harm they experience r(153)=-.24,p=0.042, GE/N10: *All women should want children and to*

take on the role of mother/caregiver r(153)=-.21,p=0.008 and SGBV11: *Clothing or style of*

dress implies consent r(153)=-.21,p=0.009 and SGBV23: *Sexual violence is more likely to occur*

when the people involved are not known to each other r(153)=-.20,p=0.009. Lastly, the program

year was examined. The strongest correlations were in regards to IoSM17: *People act on social*

media how they would act in real life which had a weak negative correlation r(153)=.18,p=0.022

and SS5: Sex *should only occur in a committed intimate relationship* with a weak negative

correlation r(153)=-18,p=0.028. Another result of interest is in regards to IoSM5*: I follow*

influencers with different beliefs to mine which showed a weak positive correlation

r(153)=.17,p=0.032.

Table 5

Gender Correlations

Variable	What gender do you identify with?	
1. What gender do you identify with?	Pearsons' r	–
	p-value	–
2. SGBV 11: Clothing or style of dress implies consent	Pearsons' r	-0.209
	p-value	0.009
3. SGBV 23: Sexual violence is more likely to occur when the people involved are not known to each other	Pearsons' r	-0.201
	p-value	0.012
4. SGBV 26: If a person returns to a harmful intimate relationship (dating/marriage), they are also somewhat responsible for the harm they experience	Pearsons' r	-0.243
	p-value	0.002
5. SS 4: Women should be able to orgasm solely through penetrative sex	Pearsons' r	-0.178
	p-value	0.027
6. SS 8: Sex should only occur for reproductive purposes	Pearsons' r	-0.163
	p-value	0.042
7. SS 9: Women should have fewer sexual partners then men	Pearsons' r	-0.208
	p-value	0.009
8. GE/N 1: Women tend to be overly sensitive by nature	Pearsons' r	-0.167
	p-value	0.038

9. GE/N 10: All women should want children and to take on the role of mother/caregiver	Pearsons' r	-0.211
	p-value	0.008
10. IoSM 13: Social media has changed the way I view others in different communities to mine in a positive, more supportive way (POC, LGBTQIA2S+ etc.)	Pearsons' r	0.162
	p-value	0.044

Gender Correlations

Variable	What gender do you identify with?	
11. IoSM 18: Its okay to make comments and jokes about sexual and gender-based violence on social media because I can remain anonymous	Pearsons' r	-0.169
	p-value	0.036
12. IoSM 19: It's okay to make comments and jokes about sexual and gender-based violence on social media because I would never act that way in real life	Pearsons' r	-0.163
	p-value	0.042

Table 6

Program Year Correlations

Variable	What year of your current program are you in?	
1. What year of your current program are you in?	Pearsons' r	–
	p-value	–
2. SGBV 20: Gender based violence only effects certain women	Pearsons' r	-0.171
	p-value	0.033
3. SS 5: Sex should only occur in a committed intimate relationship	Pearsons' r	-0.177
	p-value	0.028
4.IoSM 5: I follow influencers with different beliefs to mine	Pearsons' r	0.172
	p-value	0.032
5. IoSM 17: People act on social media how they would act in real life	Pearsons' r	0.184
	p-value	0.022

Focus Group

Thematic analysis was used for the focus group and was examined as a whole to gain an overview perspective of the focus group data; full prompts can be found in Appendix C 1.2. This data was analyzed to understand the complex role that social media has in shaping not only university students' perspectives on SGBV but also university life. As well as how both the university and Consent at Trent can improve their accessibility and support services. From the analysis, five main themes arose, (1) The Duality of Social Media, (2) Normalization of Violence

Online (3) Community, Connection & Vulnerability, (4) Consent Culture Gaps and Education Barriers, (5) Campus Trust & Infrastructure.

The first theme looking at the duality of social media outlines the ability of social media to act as a double-edged sword in the sense that perspectives and opinions on social media can be both positive and negative, including on topics surrounding SGBV. On the positive side participants described how platforms could be used to access supports individuals may not have otherwise "can give access to resources that might be withheld either intentionally or unintentionally… by parents or teachers… that don't teach those kinds of things in the house or school.", another participant stated "social media can be a way for people gain access to information that can be helpful. "One participant noted that while social media can be a great place to get the information it can also be easy for that information to be false, stating "If you get the correct information, especially for places that don't have, like overly good, like education around sexual violence… but on the flip side, you can also get a lot of misinformation, and it's hard sometimes to sift through it all."

Theme two refers to the Normalization of Violence in online spaces. Participants outlined that social media can often create a disconnect to the everyday world and that within the echo chambers that can exist on social media, it is easy to fall into a pattern of videos and posts that normalize violence and uphold stereotypes. "real effect of an echo chamber where things that might to the general public seem to be like extreme seems like a normal thought or behaviour" which outlines the impact of social media echo chambers, how extreme views can be normalized. One participant talked about his brothers' journey into that echo chamber "My brother… was very much into sort of the manosphere, the alpha male type stuff… and that definitely had an effect on how he viewed gender." Another discusses why getting off social media was the right

choice when viewing comments seen on friends' social media "cause just comments, sections and stuff are just like, wow, people really hate women." Participants cited this normalization due to the detachment of social media. "an added level of like detachment from it so they're a lot more willing to say, or do certain things that you would not even consider doing a person", "people are a lot more willing to say and do things online."

The third theme is regarding Community, Connection & Vulnerability, especially with respect to the transition between high school and university life. This theme outlines the disconnect from the community as well as this lack of connection to resources, as well as the general connectedness of campus life. Within this theme, a few subcategories arise one being the overreliance on social media to be informed of activities and groups. "I know a lot of times I find that I'll see events after they've already happened, so I'll see the ad for the event two days after it happened or a week after." While there are platforms that post about events, the sheer number of social media profiles can make this easily missed one participant stated "The TCSA they post on their story, which is great, but like it's 24 hours... I have so many stories typically only look at the first five" this idea was supported by other participants who stated the pros and cons of shifting ads to social media platforms "...which is really good if you are on social media and you follow those accounts... but like, if you don't know to follow those places, you don't know."

Another common subtheme of this theme is isolation often experienced by first-year residents, especially when an individual may be less social can lead to vulnerability to SGBV as well as feelings of depression, anxiety and loneliness. One participant in first year stated, "It's really the first time in my life I've been completely alone... social media has kind of helped me... but it's still hard." This isolation can make individuals more susceptible to cases of SGBV "If you don't have people around you, it could be terrible... being alone." The participant did go

on to say the benefits of having a strong social group "can kind of create a buffer where these things are more likely to happen." First-year experiences were common when talking about the community experience of university, participants seemed to agree that resources just aren't advertised enough or through the proper channels "We have good resources on campus. It's just well, people don't know about them, or how to access them." If supports are unknown to an individual it is obvious that the knowledge on how to access these supports would also be unknown.

The fourth theme pulled from the analysis is Consent Culture Gaps and Education Barriers. This theme encompasses the current gaps in consent culture and SGBV awareness, and the barriers in educating the university population. This theme does tie into the precious theme but is more focused on consent culture and SGBV awareness specifically. A common idea from the participants was the fact that every individual had a different experience coming into university concerning their knowledge and education on topics of SGBV. One participant stated, "Were from different backgrounds… like the Catholic or the public-school board and what province you' from… difference in what kind of like sex education you're getting." Male participants felt slightly more disadvantaged when it came to their education background "I remember once in our teacher asked you're all familiar with the pill, right … every single girl in the class raised their hand and none of the guys did " and "I'm a guy and I've always felt I'm not given the same kind of education on a lot of this stuff."

Regarding the education from the Consent at Trent program and the university itself, participants also felt that there were gaps, especially concerning the Consent at Trent orientation "I don't remember anything from the Consent at Trent presentation... I learned through social media or on my own." and "some people ought to do the training online and then never actually

interact with consent at Trent again." One item in particular that participants felt was lacking was the ball game, an activity where participants state their name, ask the name of another participant, and then ask to toss them a ball, the idea behind this game is to demonstrate consent. However participants of the focus group were not particularly fond of this activity. "with the ball game, like I get it, but it's more of a joke than anything else, at least that I've noticed what I remember", "I just feel like that isn't the best way to get the message across", " I can guarantee there were people in there who were not listening. They were there to get their green wristband, and then they were leaving." This was also a common theme among discussions surrounding my research in more informal settings.

The last theme, which turned out to be one of the largest was Campus Trust & Infrastructure. This theme outlines, the current supports of Trent University and Consent at Trent and how they are succeeding and lacking. This outlines goals for future supports and changes to the current university systems. One point of discontent came to the emergency lights located around campus, these blue lights with bright yellow poles are designed to automatically connect you to security with the press of a button. However there is a big issue with these lights "Whenever I go around campus, they have those emergency buttons but they're all out of order", "If someone's not able to pull the phone fast enough… there's a blue light close by, it's not working… it's it definitely has created gaps." Discussion around Trent's new safety app also contributed "They're trying to transition to the Trent safety app, which has the like the mobile blue light… if you were ever in a situation where you needed it … well it's a little late for me to download the app"

Outside of the blue lights and new app, there is also some disparity in how well campus security is doing. Some participants suggested increased visibility "Even just having one

guaranteed [security guard] to be in every college at any specific point during the day, even during the night, I think would be really nice and just seeing them around could." However, on the other side perspectives changed "I don't really have a ton of faith in the campus security because there's just a lot of things… that seems like they don't really have a motivation, to be doing their jobs." This perspective was backed by another participant's experience with campus security "I have had to call campus security twice for two different instances, the first time we could not get through. The line wasn't working." This suggested the idea of a more centralized approach to accessing help "There should be one centralized phone number… if you call the 1-800 Trent number, it will do that, but half the time you won't get a dispatcher."

Other issues experienced came from the walk-home program offered by the university, this program is designed for students to be able to call for security personnel or volunteers to meet the individual where they are and walk them home, to their car, or transit. However when one participant called the line they received an unhelpful answer "I called and they were like we don't do that anymore… they're like we can say the phone with you if you want…you know I think like, if you are going to advertise a service, have the service" other participants were simply unaware of programs "I didn't even know the program existed until training this year" where they learn about these programs and how to advertise them to new students.

Discussion

The Current Social Media Landscape

The first research question was how and when young people are getting on social media. Given that 59.3% of respondents indicated that they used social media before the age of 13 (7-12 years old) it is not surprising that 84.5% of respondents also indicated that they had bypassed age

restrictions on social media platforms. Given that platforms like Instagram and TikTok both have a minimum age requirement of 13 (Meta, 2025; TikTok, 2025). Instagram launched new "Teen Accounts" in early 2025 on a case-by-case basis. These accounts for those aged 13-17 are automatically set to more protective settings, such as limiting content and automatically private accounts. In addition, a parent or guardian can opt to supervise the account, which would require teens to have parental permission to lessen the safety settings. It also allows parents to see insights into how their child is using social media. However, given the fact that 54.2% of participants had indicated bypassing parental controls, it will require time to see if new safety measures like this do in fact, improve safety. Especially given research that supports the notion that youth are more susceptible to the influence associated with social media (Cinelli et al., 2021).

Social Media as Positive and Negative Influence

The results from the focus group analysis highlighted the complexity and contradictory nature of social media platforms in shaping perceptions around SGBV. As well as challenges around the University and Consent at Trent's use of social media and digitalization of supports. Social media being both a positive and negative influence is consistent with previous research. Participants described social media as a double-edged sword. Recognizing the capacity social media has to spread awareness around all topics including topics surrounding SGBV, build supportive communities, and decrease stigma on numerous topics. It can also be a space where harmful ideologies can grow and flourish, such as misogynist views and the so-called "manosphere" (Barnes & Karim, 2025; Ging, 2019). The idea of "you are what you search" and echo chambers that were found in this research also support the ideas of the "manosphere" and the toxicity of social media. Echo chambers can be caused by algorithm-driven content following

46

a general search, which can cause a flourish of extremist views which act as a reinforcement, particularly with younger users of social media (Cinelli et al., 2021).

This notion is supported by qualitative data as students with an earlier age of first social media use showed a weak to moderate negative correlation with reliance on social media to learn about topics about social and sexual behaviours. This suggests that earlier exposure to social media may correlate with a lower critical view of this type of content as individuals age, causing a greater influence social media holds on these topics. In addition, more time spent on social media daily was positively correlated with increased reliance on social media for advice on relationship topics. This again emphasizes the role social media plays in acting as an educator on topics related to romance, social and sexual development. Overall, these findings suggest that while media literacy has improved among university students there is still susceptibility to misinformation and overreliance on social media advice. Meaning a need for balance between the university's utilization of social media, while also ensuring increased media literacy skills.

Consent and SGBV Education: A Need for Recurrence

One topic that emerged strongly from the focus group was the inadequacy of one-time consent training. One of the biggest criticisms of the current orientation-week training session was the ball game. The critique came from the perception that this activity acts as lighthearted, and treats consent as a joke rather than anything else. Focus group participants called for a new training model, one that is recurrent and tiered across the entire university career. In addition, education also needs to encompass student perspectives, including lived experiences. Gender-based correlate data highlighted the presence of gendered differences in terms of response to SGBV topics. Female students were significantly less likely to agree with statements that implied blame on the part of a victim (SGBV11). As well female students were also less likely to enforce

gender expectations and norms (GE/N10). This reinforces the idea that arose in the focus group suggesting that men receive less education on topics surrounding SGBV.

The idea that men are given less education on topics surrounding SGBV, likely contributes to the continued misinformation men receive on these topics. The effort to fight this narrative, or lack thereof around SGBV has increased in recent years. Programs like the White Ribbon aim to change this normalcy of male ignorance of SGBV. The movement is dedicated to men and boys working towards ending violence against women and girls while promoting gender equity, healthy relationships, and positive masculinity (White Ribbon, n.d.). With this type of education, Flood (2011) suggested six steps of intervention. The very first is strengthening individual knowledge and skills. This supports the perspective of students in the focus group who felt as a man, they had received less information about SGBV both formally and informally. This in turn was backed by the qualitative data that demonstrates differences between genders regarding reducing the likelihood of disagreement with certain outdated notions.

Institutional Trust and Infrastructure Gaps

Students who participated in the focus groups repeatedly expressed their disappointment in campus infrastructure, particularly with out-of-service emergency systems, and lack of visibility and response from security. These failings undermined trust on campus as well as feelings of discontent with the University's commitment to ensuring the safety of its students. These conkers were exasperated by disjointed communication from campus resources, leaving students unaware of the supports they may require. This was also seen with Consent at Trent specifically with 83.2% of survey respondents knowing about the program. This number dropped when asked if participants knew the supports Consent at Trent offered at only 63.9%. Again, this

number dropped to 40% who knew how to access these supports, these results can be located in Appendix A, Table 2. This supports the idea that there is a failure on the side of Trent to adequately inform their students about the supports it offers.

One of the reasons awareness of these supports is so important is because the transition to university can make students feel alone. A common idea found in the focus group was the fact that in many cases this is a student's first time being away from family for an extended period. Where the less social students may feel left behind, as they don't know how to access supports, clubs or other social information. This idea is backed by previous research, indicating that social, structural, health and behavioural changes can all be related to increased feelings of loneliness. Ways to combat this include introducing and reinforcing support networks, self-efficacy courses, contact information for supports and counselling, as well as increasing physical activity style social events (DeGue et al., 2016; Diehl et al., 2018). All these act as protective factors against feelings of depression, anxiety and loneliness that are associated with the transition to university life. This is why ensuring supports are accessible and known to the student population is vital to a safe and positive campus environment.

Limitations

This paper is not without some limitations. Survey data was the main source of data for this project, an anonymous online collection format was used which across research is preferred when discussing topics that participants may view as private and personal. While I believe that this type of online data collection is extremely beneficial for large-scale groups of study, the value of focus groups and interviews cannot be overlooked. Unfortunately for this study, there was only a small sample of students who participated in the focus group. This group still

provided a vast resource of data, with a wider breadth of topics, it is important to note a small sample may not be completely representative of the University population.

Another limiting factor that must be discussed is the survey itself. This survey was developed for this research project. Influence of questions came from various authors of this topics (Hockett et al., 2016; Masters et al., 2013; Salerno-Ferraro et al., 202; Walfield, 2021; Wilson & Newins, 2024), in conjunction with the experience Kristen Haines has as both a research and manager at Consent at Trent. Overall though this was a newly designed scale so the need for repeated analysis with this scale should be noted.

Future Directions

Future studies should examine how the information gathered from Trent University students compared to other universities and colleges across Canada. This would provide a more in-depth and representative sample of university students in Canada as a whole. In addition, the benefits of having more in-depth qualitative analysis such as larger participant focus groups, or individual or small group interviews would provide an even more representative sample of the university population. It would also be of interest in the future to look at platform-specific data. Different social media platforms are associated with different ideologies, information sharing, and popularized narratives. Another factor of interest would be the development of media literacy skills, how the critical reasoning skills and awareness of social media influence, particularly relating to algorithmic reinforcement. As this increased media literacy at a young age may help to combat the spread of misinformation and ability to avoid being used into an echo chamber.

This would be of interest looking particularly at gender differences, experience online, especially at young ages can be drastically different between genders. Looking at how these experiences are the same and different within and between the genders can be helpful to understand youth interaction with social media. As well as an understand of how to combat these issues with youth online. While it was outside the scope of this project it would also be of interest to discus the prevalence and incident rates of this harm on these topics as the experience of harm can have a drastic impact on how an individual perceives topics around SGBV, and to provide a more detailed landscape of where supports need improvement on the campus and withing campus culture. Given the broad nature of social media, its importance for the replication of research and development of different viewpoints from different communities is vital to an encompassing understanding of this topic.

Conclusion

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data revealed that social media acts as a multifaceted influence on both youth and university students. It appears that most students are gaining access to social media at young ages, often resulting int the bypassing of age restrictions on social media and other platforms. Often students were also bypassing parental controls on devices as well as bypassing restrictions on sexual content. These findings suggest that individuals are young when the gain access to social media, often younger then these platforms allow. Calling for an increase protection of youth online, including increased parental awareness and stronger age verifications. The second research question aimed to answer if social media and pop culture influences students' perspectives of SGBV topics. While there were significant results most correlations were weak to moderate, and it did not appear that within the Trent University population there is not a large influence from these social media topics. Throughout

this paper, most correlations appeared to present the idea that social media did have a moderate impact on students viewed SGBV. However, interestingly the strongest correlations were often found in the IoSM category which asked students directly about how social media acts as an influencer. This suggests an increased awareness when on social media and increased media literacy skills as students were aware of the influence social media can have, yet often did let its influence overwhelm their opinions on SGBV. With most students disagreeing with outdated notions and stereotypes, regardless of their social media behaviours,

The third research question aimed to answer how this influence of social media influences overall life on campus. While some issues did arise particularly regarding how the university uses social media to advertise for clubs, events, supports etc. It did also act as a mitigating factor for those wishing to learn about different avenues of university life, as it gave them a space to do so. How students interact and engage with social media is ultimately up to the individual. However, the need for improved media literacy is ongoing and necessary to allow students to be able to sift through the enormous amounts of information that can be found on social media. These findings also indicate the need for improved training provided to university students, typically done through Consent at Trent. Training that needs to be recurrent, up-to-date, and student-focused. This training will not only give students a deeper understanding of topics surrounding SGBV but also emphasize how to navigate the online world critically. These findings also suggest that Trent University as a whole needs to improve how the advertises its supports and responds to calls for action by legislation and the student body alike. This combination of Consent at Trent and Trent University improvements will work to foster a campus culture that is rooted in consent, safety, and support for all students.

Glossary

Consent: is an active, direct, voluntary, unimpaired, continual and conscious choice and agreement between persons to engage in physical contact or sexual activity.

Consent Culture: An environment where every individual feels comfortable and safe expressing their boundaries and having the boundaries set honoured.

Cyber-harassment: means harassing messages, photos and videos sent on-line or posted to social media sites

Gender Based Violence: Violence experienced due to their gender, gender expression/identity or perceived gender.

Rape Culture is a culture in which dominant ideas, language, social practices, media images and societal institutions implicitly or explicitly condone sexual assault by normalizing or trivializing sexual violence and by blaming survivors for their own harm.

Sexual assault: is an assault, as defined in Section 265(1) of the Criminal Code, committed in circumstances of a sexual nature such that the sexual integrity of the person who has experienced sexual violence is violated.

Sexual coercion: is unreasonable and persistent pressure to seek consent for sexual activity. Coercion is the use of emotional manipulation, intimidation including blackmail, threats to family or acquaintances or the promise of rewards to persuade someone to consent to sexual activities.

Sexual exploitation: involves taking nonconsensual or abusive sexual advantage of another person. It includes, but is not restricted to, the digital or electronic broadcasting, distributing, recording and or photographing of people involved in sexual acts without the consent of everyone involved, voyeurism and human trafficking of another person.

Sexual harassment: means engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a person because of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, where the course of comment or conduct is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome, or making a sexual solicitation or advance where the person making the solicitation or advance is in a

position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement to the person and the person making the advance knows or ought reasonably to know that the solicitation or advance is unwelcome.

Sexual violence: means any sexual act or act targeting a person's sexuality, gender identity or gender expression, whether the act is physical or psychological in nature, that is committed, threatened or attempted against a person without the person's consent, and includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, stealthing, indecent exposure, voyeurism and sexual exploitation.

Social Media: forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information.

Social Norms: are the perceived informal, mostly unwritten, rules that define acceptable and appropriate actions of a person, this can vary person to person and culture to culture.

Pop. Culture: modern popular culture transmitted via the mass media and aimed particularly at younger people, can include music, movies, trends and other forms of media.

Gender Norms: Societal expectations and perceived rules surrounding how men and women should behave, interact with others and appear in general society.

Sexual Scripts: Perceived guidelines for appropriate sexual behaviours and encounters

1.1 – Frequencies

Table 1

Survey Respondent Characteristics & Comparison Factors (n=155)

Variable	Level	Counts	Percentage (%)
What Gender do you identify with?	Male	21	13.5
	Female	125	80.6
	Non-Binary	7	4.5
	Prefer Not to Say	2	1.3
What year of your current program are you in?	First Year	50	32.3
	Second Year	20	12.9
	Third Year	46	29.7
	Fourth Year	31	20.0
	Fifth Year	7	4.5
	Beyond Fifth Year	1	0.6
Average daily social media use (hours)	<1 Hour	5	3.2
	1-2 Hours	48	31.0
	3-4 Hours	73	47.1
	5-6 Hours	16	10.3
	>6 Hours	13	8.4
What do you use social media for primarily?	Entertainment	59	38.1
	Communication	43	27.7
	News	3	1.9
	Multi-Use	49	31.6
	No Social Media	1	0.6
At what age did you first access social media?	7	3	1.9
	8	7	4.5
	9	5	3.2
	10	21	13.5
	11	15	9.7
	12	41	26.5
	13	29	18.7
	14	19	12.3
	15	10	6.5
	16	3	1.9
	18	1	0.6
	25	1	0.6
What was the first social media platform that you accessed?	Instagram	66	42.6
	Snapchat	22	14.2
	YouTube	11	7.1
	Facebook	32	20.6
	Musically	6	3.9
	TikTok	2	1.3
	Pinterest	2	1.3
	My Space	2	1.3

Survey Respondent Characteristics & Comparison Factors (n=155)

Variable	Level	Counts	Percentage (%)
	Other	12	7.7
Did you ever bypass parental controls?	No	71	45.8
	Yes	84	54.2
Did you ever bypass age restrictions on platforms that required a minimum age?	No	24	15.5
	Yes	131	84.5
Did you ever bypass age restrictions on platforms that had sexual aspects to them?	No	71	45.8
	Yes	84	54.2

Table 2

Consent at Trent Awareness

Variable	Level	Counts	Percentage(%)
Are you familiar with Trent's Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (Consent at Trent)?	No	26	16.8
	Yes	129	83.2
Are you familiar with the supports and initiatives provided by Consent at Trent	No	56	36.1
	Yes	99	63.9
Do you know how to access the supports provided by the Consent at Trent Office?	No	93	60.0
	Yes	62	40.0

Appendix B

1.1 – Survey Questions

Basic Information

1.) What year of your current program are you in?
   a. Year 1,
   b. Year 2,
   c. Year 3,
   d. Year 4,
   e. Year 5
   f. Beyond year 5
2.) What degree level are you currently in?
   a. Undergraduate,
   b. Masters/Graduate,
   c. PhD
3.) Have you attended any other post-secondary institutions?
   a. Yes
   b. No
      i. How many
         1. 1
         2. 2
         3. 3
         4. >3
4.) What program are you currently enrolled in?

   a. Open Response

5.) What gender do you identify with?
   a. Man
   b. Woman
   c. Non-Binary
   d. Prefer not say/Other

Consent at Trent

1.) Are you familiar with Trent's Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (Consent at Trent)?
   a. Yes
   b. No

2.) Are you familiar with Trent's Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Policy?
   a. Yes
   b. No

3.) Are you familiar with the supports and initiatives provided by Consent at Trent?

   a. Yes

   b. No

4.) Do you know how to access the supports provided by the Consent at Trent office?

   a. Yes

   b. No

5.) Do you know where the Consent at Trent office is located?

   a. Yes

   b. No

6.) Where/How did you first hear about Consent at Trent?
   a. Open response

Social Media Use & Viewing Topics

1.) At what age did you first access social media?

   a. Open response

2.) What was the first social media platform did you access?
   a. Open response

3.) Did you ever bypass parental controls

   a. Yes

   b. No

4.) Did you ever bypass age restrictions on websites or social media platforms that required a minimum age?

   a. Yes

b. No

5.) Did you ever bypass age restrictions on apps, websites, or social media platforms that had sexual aspects to them?

    a. Yes

    b. No

6.) What platforms have you used? (check off)

    a. TikTok,

    b. Instagram,

    c. X (Twitter),

    d. Snapchat,

    e. Reddit,

    f. Twitch,

    g. Discord

    h. Other/add response

7.) What platforms do you use on a regular basis?

    a. TikTok,

    b. Instagram,

    c. X (Twitter),

    d. Snapchat,

    e. Reddit,

    f. Twitch,

    g. Discord

    h. Other/add response

8.) On average, how often do you use social media?

    a. Under an hour daily

b. 1-2 hours daily

c. 3-4 hours daily

d. 5-6 hours daily

e. Over 6 hours daily

9.) Where do you access information about global events?

a. Direct News Websites/articles (CTV, CBC, CNN etc.),

b. Newspapers/Magazines

c. Direct News Through social media (i.e., TikTok/Instagram accounts run by news outlets (CTV, CBC, CNN etc.),

d. Secondary News outlets on social media (*News Daddy* and other Nonofficial new outlets/outlets that refer to articles from a direct source (CTV, CBC etc.),

e. Non-news related social media (not an official or non-official news outlet/Word of Mouth type social media)

f. Family

g. Friends

h. I don't typically follow Global News

i. Other/add Response

10.) Where do you access information about sex and/or sex education? (questions, curiosities, resources)

a. Family,

b. friends,

c. educators,

d. trained professional,

e. books/magazines,

f. online websites,

g. social media platforms,

h. apps (Flo, stardust)

      i.   I don't look up sex and/or sex education information

      j.   Other/add response

Perspectives on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Notions, Sexual Scripts, Gender expectations, Gender Norms

All questions ranked on a Likert Scale - 1=strongly disagree 2= somewhat disagree 3= disagree 4 = neither agree nor disagree 5 = agree 6 = somewhat agree 7 = Strong agree

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Notions (Personal Beliefs)

1.) Consent can be given even when impaired by alcohol and/or drugs

2.) If you experienced an orgasm, it wasn't sexual assault

3.) Consent is implied if a person doesn't verbally say no

4.) Consent can't be withdrawn after it's been given

5.) Consent is implied in an intimate partner relationship (dating/married)

6.) It's not sexual assault if the person didn't physically resist or fight back

7.) It is only sexual assault if there is penetration

8.) Male sexual assault is mainly committed by other men

9.) A woman can't sexually assault a man

10.) Most men who are sexually assaulted by women are somewhat to blame for not escaping/fighting off the woman

11.) Clothing or style of dress implies consent

12.) Consent cannot be given when someone is pressured or manipulated into engaging in sexual activity

13.) Consent can not be given when the other person is in a position of power or authority directly or indirectly over the other person

14.) Consent can be obtained over an electronic device for a later sexual arrangement (through text etc.)

15.) Anyone can experience sexual harm, regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression

16.) Anyone can cause sexual violence/harm, regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression

17.) Gender-based violence against women is an issue that only concerns women

18.) Anyone can experience gender-based violence/harm, regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression

19.)   Anyone can cause gender-based violence/harm, regardless of sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression

20.) Gender-based violence only affects certain women

21.) Reports of sexual and gender-based violence are an accurate representation of the prevalence of these types of violence/harm

22.) Intimate partner or dating violence is only experienced by

23.) Sexual violence is more likely to occur when the people involved are not known to each other

24.) If a person does not leave a partner who caused them harm, the harm experienced must not have been that serious

25.) Gender-based violence only includes physical violence

26.) If a person returns to a harmful intimate relationship (dating/marriage), they are also somewhat responsible for the harm they experience

27.) Gender-based and sexual violence is a private matter and should be dealt with in that manner

Sexual Scripts (social guidelines that dictate how people should behave sexually and are influenced by culture and gender)

1.) Men should be more dominant and initiate sexual activity

2.) Sex should primarily focus on pleasure for the man and ends once a man ejaculates

3.) It is hard or nearly impossible for a woman to reach an orgasm

4.) Women should be able to orgasm solely through penetrative sex

5.) Sex should only occur in committed intimate relationships (dating/married)

6.) Sex for women is driven primarily by emotional intimacy rather than sexual pleasure

7.) Sex for men is driven primarily by sexual pleasure rather than emotional intimacy

8.) Sex should only occur for reproductive purposes

9.) Women should have fewer sexual partners than men

10.) Sex should only take place in opposite-sex relationships

11.) Women should be more submissive during sexual intercourse

12.) Sex should not include additive features (sex toys, bondage etc.)

13.) A single sexual (hookup) encounter should take place with a single partner

14.) An intimate relationship (dating/marriage) should only be between two individuals

15.) Men will always have a higher sex drive than women, so women must adapt to the male drive

16.) It's a women's responsibility for the use of protection during sex

17.) Non-binary individuals should engage in sexual intercourse according to their biological sex assigned at birth

18.) Non-binary individuals should identify with the gender role they assume during sexual intercourse

Gender Expectations/Norms (social guidelines that dictate how people should behave based on birth sex and are influenced by culture and gender)

1.) Women tend to be overly sensitive by their nature

2.) Men are not expected to take into account others' emotions in any relationship type (dating, working etc.)

3.) Men shouldn't show their emotions through soft expressions (crying, anxiety attacks etc.)

4.) Women shouldn't express anger or violence as a way to deal with emotions

5.) Men should be dominant and aggressive, whereas women should be submissive

6.) If a woman has children, their role should be to stay at home with the children

7.) Men are expected to be the sole providers for a family

8.) Girls should play with dolls and boys should play with trucks.

9.) Girls are better at reading and writing and boys are better at science and math

10.) All women should want children and to take on the role of a mother/caregiver

11.) Women are natural nurturers; men are natural leaders

12.) Men who are not aggressive and/or assertive are considered "unmanly"

13.) Men are too impersonal and not emotionally apt to take on tasks "better done by women" (i.e., taking care of children)

Perspectives on how social media influences the above topics

- For the purpose of this study an influencer refers to anyone who has a platform with over 10k followers on their main platform and/or a position of authority/celebrity etc.

1.) I regularly buy items promoted by influencers I follow

2.) I modify my style based on influencers' styles

3.) I only follow influencers with similar beliefs to mine

4.) I follow influencers who discuss sexual topics

5.) I follow influences with different beliefs than mine

6.) I regularly check on influencer's feeds outside my for you page/regular algorithm

7.) I regularly use social media to get advice about daily issues (anxiety, school, family, friends)

8.) I regularly use social media to get advice on relationships (arguments, date ideas/building trust etc.)

9.) I regularly use social media to learn about how I should act in sexual settings

10.) I regularly use social media to learn about how I should act in social settings

11.) Social media has changed the way I think about sexual and gender-based violence

12.) Social media has reinforced my perceptions about certain communities (POC, LGBTQIA2S+ etc.)

13.) Social media has changed the way I view others in different communities to mine in a positive, more supportive way (POC, LGBTQIA2S+ etc.)

14.) It's clear to see from online presentation whether someone is experiencing sexual or gender-based violence

15.) I model my ideal intimate relationship off of relationships/family vloggers on social media

16.) Influencers I follow reinforce my ideas on how men and women should behave

17.) People act on social media how they would act in real life

18.) It's okay to make comments and jokes about sexual and gender-based violence on social media because I can remain anonymous

19.) It's okay to make comments and jokes about sexual and gender-based violence on social media because I would never act that way in real life

20.) The anonymity of social media allows me to express my opinions and beliefs without fear of judgement

21.) There are no consequences to my actions on social media

Additional comments

1.) Open response/space to provide any further comments

Are you interested in participating in a focus group about the topics discussed in the survey

a.) Yes

b.) No

Draw opt-in

a.) Link to enter student email for survey draw

Opt-in Focus group email

a.) Link to join an email list

1.2 – Focus Group Questions

1) Do you think that social media has an influence on behaviour and perceptions surrounding sexual and gender-based violence? Why? How?
2) What impact/s does this influence have on both the University and wider communities?
3) How can we as a community work to challenge the normalization of sexual and gender-based violence and the influence of the media in relation to these topics?

How can we as a community work to create a culture of consent in the campus community?

4) How can Trent-based programs like Consent at Trent work to create a culture of consent in the campus community?
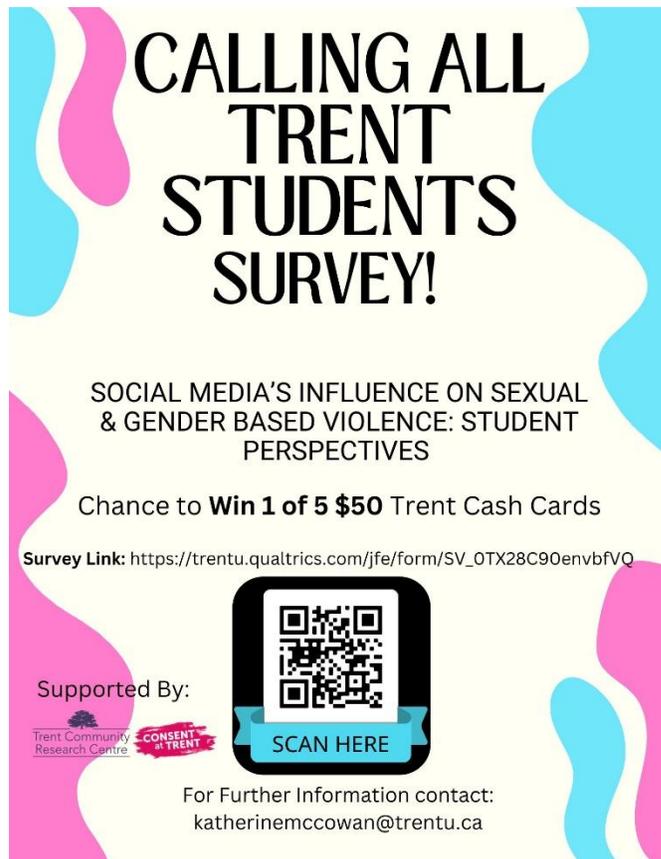
Figure 1: Focus Group Recruitment Flyer

Figure 2: Survey Recruitment Flyer

Figure 3: Consent at Trent Logo

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