Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development
In Partnership with
Nigerian Women Trust Fund

Prevalence of Gender-based Violence against Female Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gender-based violence continues to be a pervasive and pressing socio-economic and political issue affecting individuals (across various backgrounds, countries, religions, and cultural contexts) globally. Behind closed doors in many homes or confined spaces outside the home and in open environments, most gender-based violence is perpetrated by men against women. Gender-based violence also includes violence against men, boys, and other minorities and identities.

The primary objective of this study is to ascertain the extent of gender-based violence experienced by female students in higher institution across West African countries. Specifically, its aims encompasses comprehending the diverse forms of violence targeting female students, exploring optimal methods for reporting gender-based violence within these institutions, scrutinizing alternative response mechanisms to address sexual and gender-based violence, and investigating the overall experiences and safety of students in higher institutions.

The study used a cross-sectional descriptive study design to identify the pervasive violence perpetrated against female undergraduates. This study used simple random sampling to select respondents from various institutions. A questionnaire (Google Form) was deployed for data collection. Data cleaning and analysis were summarised using appropriate location and variability measures and presented as frequencies, percentages, and charts.

The key findings from the study showed that students had knowledge of gender-based violence and identified different forms, including sexual, physical, and psychological effects, often followed by dramatic physiological impacts on victims and survivors. For recipients or survivors of such violence, actions included reporting and taking laws into their own hands (injury), while others kept quiet about it. Students have continued to advocate for a better reporting system in higher institutions where they can report such cases. They believe perpetrators should be brought to justice, and their safety and security should be ensured when those reports are made.

This study concludes that gender-based violence remains a significant global challenge that requires collective action and multi-faceted solutions considering each region's norms, language subtext, religious nuances, political power dynamics, etc., to radically confront and mitigate future occurrences. By acknowledging its prevalence, understanding its complexities, and implementing comprehensive strategies, society can work together to create an equitable world for individuals. Collaboration among government, civil society, the media, and the community is essential to effectively combating gender-based violence while fostering a culture free from violence and discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence, often targeted against women and girls, is a global health emergency and problem that serves as one of the causes of health hazards, including human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome, eventually leading to death. Globally, women and girls have experienced gender-based violence, and this has increased, especially during the Covid-19 and Post Covid-19 era.

A Policy paper[1] by UN Women, UNFPA, UNHCR, and the AU on "Gender-based violence in Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic" estimated that for every three months, the lockdown continued, an additional 15 million additional cases of GBV were expected. It went further to include a study conducted in six Sahelian countries showing that domestic violence, whether physical or verbal, increased from 40.6% before the COVID-19 crisis to 52.2% during the pandemic crisis, a rate of increase of 12%. In Nigeria, however, Thompson & Awange, 2023[2] reports from 24 states showed that the number of reported domestic violence incidents spiked by 56 per cent during the first two weeks of April, compared with the same period in March after lockdown measures were enacted on the 31st of March, according to a report by Uzobo & Ayinmoro (2023)[3].

The Guardian[4] and the Pulitzer[5] Centre crisis reports during the lockdown showed spikes in sexual and gender-based violence against women and children, especially girls, across different states in Nigeria. It was a pandemic within a pandemic. In this multi-series investigative report, Ejiro Umukoro also documented how social distancing[6] during COVID-19 also made things worse for survivors of physical, emotional, and sexual violence by landlords against female tenants or tenants against tenants. Gender-Based Violence in the sub-Saharan region has been high compared to other

1. https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2021/Policy%20Paper-%20GBV%20in%20Africa%20during%20COVID-19%20pandemic_EN%2018%20Feb_compressed.pdf
2. Thompson, O., & Awange, P. D. COVID-19 Lockdown Measures and Domestic Violence in Nigeria.
3. Uzobo, E., & Ayinmoro, A. D. (2023). Trapped between two pandemics: domestic violence cases under COVID-19 pandemic lockdown: a scoping review. *Community Health Equity Research & Policy*, *43*(3), 319-328.
4. https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/broken-girls-and-boys-trapped-covid-19-lockdown-part-1
5. https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/broken-girls-and-boys-trapped-covid-19-lockdown-part-1
6. https://pulitzercentre.org/stories/covid-19-victims-abuse-social-distancing-makes-things-worse
7. Alemayehu, M., Yohannes, G., Damte, A. *et al.* Prevalence and predictors of sexual violence among commercial sex workers in Northern Ethiopia. *Reprod Health* **12**, 47 (2015). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-015-0036-5
8. https://www.unwomen.org/en/hq-complex-page/covid-19-rebuilding-for-resilience/gender-based-violence

areas. Studies[7] in sub-Saharan Africa have reported prevalence rates of gender-based violence ranging from 11.6% to 75.6%. The UNICEF[8] report shows that the rate of GBV has increased, that at least 1 in 3 women are victims of GBV-related cases, and that more of these cases are reported in the sub-Saharan region.

In Nigeria, violence and harmful practices against women and girls are barely reported, resulting in a lack of real-time data. However, the 2018 Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey – NDHS[1] found that 9% of women aged 15 to 49 had suffered sexual assault at least once in their lifetime, and 31% had experienced physical violence. A study by Iliyasu et al (2011)[2] reported a prevalence of 58.8% GBV among 300 female university students in Nigeria.

Gender-Based Violence among schoolgirls has been on the rise. Before this time, a study done in Nigeria indicated that the proportion of GBV ranged from 31 to 61 per cent for emotional and mental violence, 20 to 31 per cent for sex-related violence, and 7 to 31 per cent for physical violence. Also, apart from IPV, which is common among married women, studies have shown that girls in school are also abused in one way or another.

In 2020, CJID commissioned some investigative reports[3] on sexual harassment and the lack of sexual harassment policies in Nigerian universities. During the investigation, students recounted their gruesome and sad experiences while commenting on the absence of policies and redress mechanisms. Premium Times' correspondent, Adejumo Kabir, had spoken with students and lecturers and interrogated at least 25 universities across Nigeria, with most lacking policies.

The Pulitzer Center crisis reports also revealed that there is not a single national helpline that victims and survivors of SGBV and other forms of abuse could reach out to for emergency support and protection from perpetrators, a gap that needed to be critically addressed in helping to combat the scourge of GBV across the country.

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1.   https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR359/FR359.pdf
2.   Iliyasu, Z., Abubakar, I. S., Aliyu, M. H., Galadanci, H. S., & Salihu, H. M. (2011). Prevalence and correlates of gender-based violence among female university students in Northern Nigeria. *African journal of reproductive health*, *15*(3), 123-133.
3.   SPECIAL REPORT: How unclear policies contribute to sexual harassment in Nigerian universities (Part 1) (premiumtimesng.com)

In response to public outrage at the rate of sexual harassment and rape of women and girls, following BBC Africa Eye's documentary 'Sex for Grades, the Senate passed "A Bill for an Act to prevent, prohibit, and redress sexual harassment of students in tertiary educational institutions and for matters concerned in addition to that," which was sponsored by the Deputy Senate President, Ovie Omo-Agege, and 106 other senators in 2019. The passage of the bill in 2020 followed the consideration of the Committee on Judiciary, Human Rights, and Legal Matters, which oversaw reviewing the bill and organizing a public hearing on the legislation.

Additionally, the Nigerian Senate passed a bill in June 2023 titled "Mandatory Inclusion of Preventive Measures on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence into the Curriculum of all levels of Secondary School in Nigeria Bill," which seeks to mandate teaching against sexual and gender-based violence in schools.

Tertiary institutions are now taking steps towards the emancipation of women and female undergraduates from the shackles of belligerent perpetrators of gender-based violence through the enactment of policies that best serve the student populace. For instance, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, authorised its very first sexual harassment legislation after the investigative report commissioned by CJID in 2020 came to light.

A dangerous form of violence against women and girls in tertiary institutions, if not well mitigated, relates to religiously sanctioned gender-based violence within campuses by religious zealots, as was seen in the case of Deborah Yakubu of the Shehu Shagari College of Education in Sokoto when she was publicly killed on live video, which led to a public outcry.

In response to the gaps purported from different projects that speak to GBV, this study seeks to build more context around women and girls, analyse its prevalence among students in tertiary institutions, and determine how these cases are properly reported and handled. It is expected that at the end of the study, there will be identified gaps in GBV and the required social and structural service systems to be put in place to hold perpetrators accountable and seek justice for survivors.

i. General Objective

The general objective of this study is to understand the prevalence of gender-based violence among female students in tertiary institutions.

ii. Specific Objectives

- To understand the different forms of violence among female students in tertiary institutions
- To examine how best to report gender-based violence in tertiary institutions (inclusive of sexual harassment, sexual violence, sexual assault, rape, and sex for grades)
- To analyse other response mechanisms to gender-based violence
- To discuss student's experiences and safety in tertiary institutions

The study seeks to answer the following questions.

1. What are the different forms of gender-based violence?
2. What medium exists for reporting gender-based violence?
3. What has been the student's experience reporting gender-based violence, and how have they overcome it?

PRELIMINARY STUDIES

Gender-based violence emerges as a significant concern within the landscape of higher education institutions, impacting individuals across the spectrum of staff, educators, and students. Nevertheless, this study exclusively addresses female undergraduates as it delves into past studies to uncover the origins, effects, policies, and recommendations to tackle gender-based violence.

The Gender-Based Reporting Handbook[1] of the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID) serves as an essential research work in the introduction of the analysis of gender-based violence in higher institutions. The handbook acknowledges the regularity in the media coverage of issues around GBV, which indicates the recognition of the menace in society. It presupposes that the culture of impunity and the underrepresentation of women in positions of authority and influence have contributed to the lengthy history of gender-based violence in West Africa. And according to the Handbook, it could also be largely attributed to poor coordination and implementation among key stakeholders, a lack of awareness of human rights by parents, guardians, and victims, ineffective legal and policy frameworks, and entrenched gênder discriminatory norms.

The work of Ayodele Arowolo[3] argues that some of Nigeria's national laws, influenced by culture and religion, inadvertently condone violence against women, coupled with the non-domestication of ratified international anti-discrimination instruments into law. She opines that the International Bill of Rights for Women (CEDAW) ought to be enforced, laws reviewed, and extant archaic practices abolished for there to be adequate protection for women. The Maputo Protocol, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child are examples of international instruments ratified by Nigeria.

However, an analysis[4] by MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership Nigeria on the laws and policies to combat gender-based violence in Nigeria shows the key laws and

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1. Gender-Based Violence Reporting Handbook – CJID (thecjid.org)
2. Many Nigerian higher institutions lack sexual harassment policies (4) (premiumtimesng.com)
3. Arowolo, G. A. (2020). Protecting women from violence through legislation in Nigeria: Need to enforce anti-discrimination laws. International Journal of Discrimination and the Law, 20(4), 245–288.
4. An Analysis of Laws and Policies to Combat Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria: A Desk Review for the MOMENTUM Country and Global Leadership Nigeria Activity - USAID MOMENTUM

policies at the national level, identifying key gaps in addressing the issue. The 1999 Constitution (as amended) "lacks specific provisions protecting women from all forms of violence and recognizes any married woman as "of full age." The National Gender Policy (2007), "although quite comprehensive, has not been reviewed since 2007." The Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPPA 2015), on the other hand, "does not criminalize domestic violence; fails to address prevention, educational initiatives, awareness raising, or necessary professional training; fails to authorize the establishment of rape crisis centres; lacks provisions for compensation funds for victim rehabilitation support; and does not ensure the provision of a budget for implementation." Lastly, the Child Rights Act (CRA, 2003) "limited domestication: several states claim cultural and religious rationales for declining, and simultaneous legal systems (customary law, Islamic law) surface contradictions and limit impact."

Notably, Section 44 of the VAPP Act enabled the National Agency for the Prohibition of Persons in Trafficking (NAPTIP) to create a sexual offenders register in Section 1(4). This register serves as a go-to data for schools to include erring students who commit violent crimes as a form of justice and deterrent.

In this light, NAPTIP, a government agency through its VAPP Department, is mandated by this law to ensure implementation and enforcement. The department headed by an experienced and seasoned investigator is to carry out the following function: "... shall be responsible for the investigation of all cases of violence against persons and related offences (Rape, Infliction of injury, intimidation, forceful ejection from home, spousal battery, emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, Abandonment of spouse and dependents, incest, indecent exposure, stalking, offensive conduct, harmful traditional practices, and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence); Apply for protection orders in collaboration with the legal and prosecution departments; Conduct Rescue, Arrest, and detention through the NRRS in collaboration with the Investigation and operations departments; Offer protection, counselling and rehabilitation services through its Sexual and Gender-Based violence unit in collaboration with the counseling and rehabilitation department; Seek and receive information from any person, authority, corporation or company without hindrance regarding the enforcement of any of the provisions of the VAPP Act; Be part of case management teams and serve as prosecution witnesses in court; Coordinate the registration of service providers and protection officers as envisaged under the VAPP Act. Engage in Advocacy with stakeholders/donor agencies and coordinate the funding and implementation of projects relating to SGBV; Carry out sensitisation activities on SGBV

in collaboration with the Public Enlightenment department. Manage data on SGBV and upload information to the Sex Offenders Register in collaboration with the ICT department."

One important and fundamental question towards ensuring that school authorities are actively involved as stakeholders in the fight against sexual and gender-based violence is that are citizens and schools maximising or leveraging this end-to-end system in place. The answer is, however, shrouded in uncertainty but begs to be explored in some of the already established sexual harassment policies in institutions of higher learning. While some universities in 2023 will not have mechanisms or laws in place to combat this menace, others will. Covenant University, through the Covenant Applied Informatics and Communication African Centre of Excellence (CApIC-ACE), enacted a Sexual Harassment Policy (2019–2024), which they aim to revise on a consistent basis. One of the objectives of the Policy is to guarantee against victimisation and encourage the reporting of prohibited sexual behaviour, albeit by encouraging persons who 'believe' they have been targets of sexual harassment (victims) to inform their alleged harassers orally or in writing that the conduct is unwanted and unwelcome. On a safety scale, the aforesaid may not fully consider the well-being and safety of victims a priority. It also hasn't employed the right legalistic terminologies in addressing the situation, but it is a step in the right direction.

On the other hand, an overarching approach was also adopted in the passing of the 2020 Sexual Harassment Policy by the Africa Center of Excellence in Oilfield Chemicals Research (ACE-CEFOR) for the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State. It was fashioned after the Federal Government's Sexual Harassment Bill (2019), which was passed by the Senate in July 2020. The University's Policy mandates that complaints of sexual harassment be brought to the attention of the Reporting Office 'as soon as is reasonably possible'. It further makes room for hearsay or a witness to disclose such cases to the Reporting Office as well.

Worthy of emulation is the Policy's dispute resolution mechanism, where parties are allowed to settle formally or informally. The informal procedure allows for the resolution of a complaint in a way that is satisfactory to both parties and with their consent, while the formal procedure involves initiating formal proceedings to test the complainant's allegations through the disciplinary process. None of the procedures is mandated to supersede or precede the other. The right policies also need the right implementation strategies to take effect and have an impact on the issues they intend to address.

Over the years, entrenched norms have also significantly aggravated the multifarious forms of violence against women in Nigeria and, by extension, Africa. The Survey

Findings Report of Nigeria's 2021 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) and National Immunization Coverage Survey (NICS) captures the social justification for violence through the lenses of men and women aged 15 to 49. Out of the 38,806 women surveyed, 48.2% believe that it is justifiable for men to beat their wives in any of these circumstances, such as when she goes out without telling him, neglects the children, sleeps with another man, argues with him, refuses sex, and/or burns the food. Out of the 17,347 men surveyed, 37.3% hold the same belief.

These sociocultural gender roles, arguably amplified by the patriarchal system of practice in Africa, further aggravate the menace and downplay women and girls' attitudes towards domestic violence and the mobilisation of their legal rights. Similarly, Umoh et al. (2022),[1] after analysing a survey by the Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey conducted in 2013 on interparental violence and generational influences, posit that children internalise the attitudes and actions of their parents, which they carry into adulthood, resulting in a cycle of abuse.

Additionally, an original research article by Iliyasu et al.[2] on the "Prevalence and Correlates of Gender-Based Violence among Female University Students in Northern Nigeria" concluded that their analysis proves that there is a prevalence of GBV in the institution, which was mostly emotional or verbal violence orchestrated by male undergraduates and lecturers.

Zegeye et.al (2022)[3] while trying to understand the focus associated with married women's attitude towards wife beating in Sub-Saharan Africa, were quick to acknowledge that "enhancing women's socioeconomic status, decision-making power, and creating employment opportunities for women should be considered to increase women's intolerance of wife-beating practices." While Iliyasu et al.[4] noted that it is paramount for "university authorities and other stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, to develop and implement risk reduction and health-promotion programs directing efforts at making campuses safer through appropriate no-tolerance policies, effective redress mechanisms, and improved counseling of victims of GBV."

1. no10-c19de0eb.pdf (calebuniversity.edu.ng)
2. ajol-file-journals_49_articles_71443_submission_proof_71443-577-169927-1-10-20120323.pdf
3. Zegeye, B., Olorunsaiye, C.Z., Ahinkorah, B.O. *et al.* Understanding the factors associated with married women's attitudes towards wife-beating in sub-Saharan Africa. *BMC Women's Health* **22**, 242 (2022). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-022-01809-8
4. ajol-file-journals_49_articles_71443_submission_proof_71443-577-169927-1-10-20120323.pdf

The Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID), through its Media in Gender project, has therefore amplified efforts in spotlighting and addressing issues about women and marginalised groups in the past years through the launch of its handbook, the GBV reporting toolkit, and training of journalists on reporting women and disability inclusion. Through this research, the Project further seeks to build the reporting capacities of campus Journalists around the issues of SGBV and support them with sustainable guidance for telling stories on Gender-based violence on their respective campuses.

METHODOLOGY

- **i. Research Design:** This study uses a descriptive design approach to identify the pervasive prevalence of gender-based violence perpetrated against females in higher institutions in Nigeria. The quantitative method for this research is questionnaire, which was deployed to female undergraduate students in Nigerian tertiary institutions. These questions inquire into incidences of violence and harassment, post-effects, and attitudinal reactions of perpetrators towards victims.

- **ii. Sampling Techniques:** This study targets respondents who are female undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. A sample size of 160 students was obtained using a simple random sampling, to select respondents from various institutions who would constitute the Sampling frame. For Ethical considerations, participants were assured confidentiality and anonymity of their details and were also briefed on the sensitivity of the questions based on the topic. The data has also been archived into the database with password protection.

- **iii. Data Collection and Analysis:** The tool used for the study is a questionnaire, which was further scripted into online Google form for easy access, wider distribution, and analysis. The questionnaire collected information on the socio-demographic of respondents, experience of gender-based violence, classification of gender-based violence, perpetrators, consequences, and response. Other questions elicited perceived causes and suggested ways of preventing gender-based violence in educational institutions. The responses were downloaded in Excel format and were cleaned against any error and outliers. The cleaned data was later exported to SPSS 17 for analysis. Quantitative variables were summarised using appropriate measures of location and variability. Categorical variables were presented as frequencies, percentages, and charts. Also, qualitative analysis technique (thematic analysis) was used for open ended questions about perceived causes and strategies.

- **iv. Limitations:** Some of the limitations recorded include self -report bias (where respondent under/over report incidence of violence), participants unwillingness to share experiences.

Also, while the study on prevalence of gender-based violence in higher institutions across West Africa aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of this critical issue, we acknowledge that the low coverage in geographical scope, limited primarily to Nigerian universities, presents a notable limitation. This limitation stemmed from a low response from respondents in other West African countries, thereby restricting the applicability of our findings to a broader regional context.

Despite this geographical limitation, we have endeavored to conduct our analysis with impartiality and rigor, maintaining our commitment to the original purpose of the study. By transparently acknowledging the scope restriction and potential biases introduced by uneven representation of countries, we strive to provide balanced interpretation of the data collected from Nigerian universities.

FINDINGS

This research aims to clarify the various forms of gender-based violence against women and girls in tertiary institutions, investigate how students report cases of gender-based violence in schools to appropriate bodies, document different response mechanisms to gender-based violence reportage and perpetrators. Also, is to clarify the livelihood of female students in school based on students' experience and safety.

SECTION A - SOCIO DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic reports information on the age group of respondents, country location and tertiary institutions where respondents are currently enrolled. Analysis from the age group shows that 65% of respondents fall under 20-24 years – categorised as young adults. This category shows the highest age group distribution in the survey. About 19.1% are under 15-19 years, 13% are between 25-29 and about 3% are between 30 years and above.

Age group of Respondents

Respondents reported several institutions where they were located across the geopolitical zones in Nigeria. These institutions documented includes University of Maiduguri, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, University of Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University, University of Lagos, among others, to which most of the institutions reported are in Southwest region of Nigeria.

SECTION B - FORMS OF VIOLENCE

P reliminary studies have itemised different forms of violence, features attributed, causes, and characteristics of the victims (female). Some of the reviews have been categorised into primary and minor forms based on the rate at which they occur (more pronounced and more recorded than others). Examples of significant forms of violence are physical, emotional, sexual, physiological, and verbal, while examples of minor conditions are psychological, socio-economic, etc.

In this survey, we asked some questions to know the different reported forms of violence prevalent in tertiary institutions, if students were aware of policies addressing cases of gender-based violence, who the perpetrators of gender-based violence, types of awareness raised, and what is done to curb the menace of gender-based violence in schools.

From the responses gathered, the survey showed that 34.2% of respondents agree that sexual form of violence is the most prevalent, about 25.5% of respondents responded that psychological form of violence is the most prevalent, and 21.7% of respondents agree that physical form of violence is the most prevalent in tertiary institutions, respectively. The socio-economic forms (including property damage, restricting access to financial resources, education, or the labour market, etc.) contributed 14.9% to the total response.

Forms of Violence
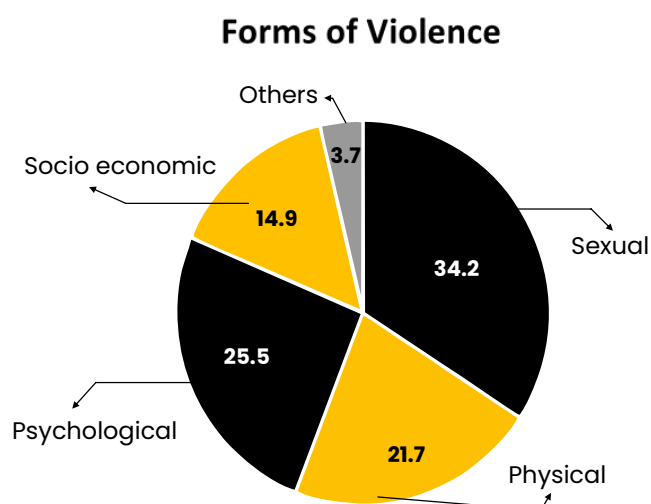
In analysing information about awareness of campus policies, about 76 (63%) respondents agree that they are aware of campus policies or procedures addressing gender-based violence, and 39 (37%) are unaware of any policy on how to report gender-based violence.
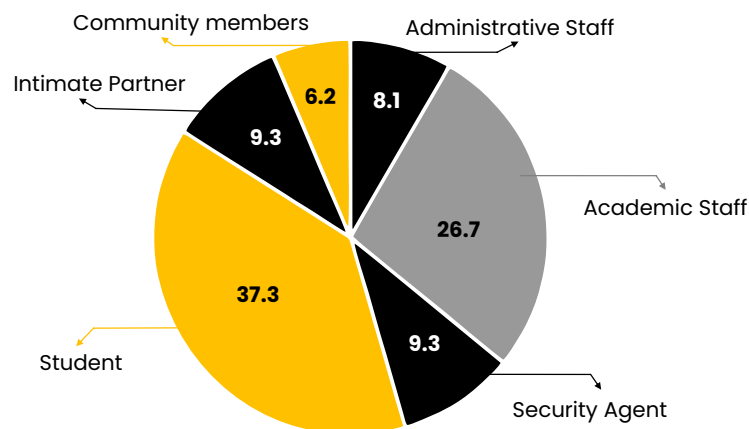
Awareness of Campus policies on Gender based violence
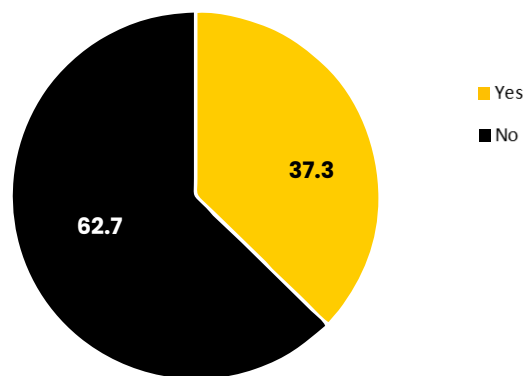

To further investigate the forms of violence in tertiary institutions, the study probed the major perpetrators of the forms of violence mentioned above. Data showed that 37.3% of perpetrators are fellow students, 26.7% are academic staff, about 9.3% agree that intimate partners and security agents are perpetrators of these forms of violence, 8.1% report that administrative staff are perpetrators of these forms of violence, and 6.2% say that other community members are perpetrators of these forms of violence in tertiary institutions.

Perpetrators of prevalence of Gender based violence

With the high rate of violence perpetrated and reports on the rate of violence, most students reported that they have low (80%) awareness of gender-based violence on campuses.
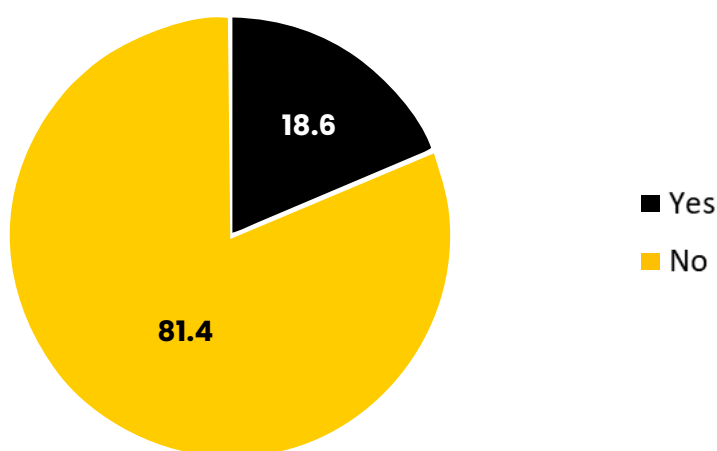
Awareness on Gender based violence
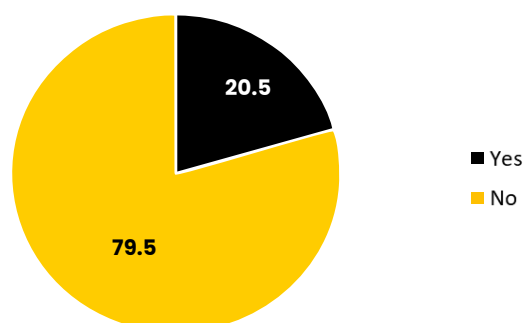
For respondents who think awareness has been done, some of the sources from which they received awareness on gender-based violence include ***Social media campaigns, Self-awareness, outdoor campaigns, workshops, conferences, Campus orientations, Protests and advocacies, Email communication, classroom teachings, hand and board bills, broadcast media campaigns, school memo publications, the "tell-a-friend-to-tell-a-friend" campaign, and establishing institutions to speak against gender-based violence.***

In responding to the degree in which they were aware through self-participation on the issue, the data reported that despite respondents' knowledge of gender-based violence awareness, the majority (81.4%) have not participated in any related awareness programme or involvement on campus.

Ever participated in awareness program on Gender based violence


18.6

81.4

■ Yes
■ No

SECTION C - REPORTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

This section provides findings on how female students have responded to cases of gender-based violence in terms of how they report gender-based violence, whether they have heard or witnessed it. Questions on whether the school has a reporting desk to which gender-based violence cases are reported, if they have ever reported any case of gender-based violence, if any action was taken on the report made, respondent's satisfaction with how the school takes gender-based violence cases; opinions on punishment methods for perpetrators; and the different forms of punishment recorded when such cases are reported and actions are taken.

Respondents were asked if they had heard or witnessed gender-based violence cases in school; about 64% reported they had heard or seen it in school.

Ever heard or witnessed any Gender based violence case on campus


- Yes
- No
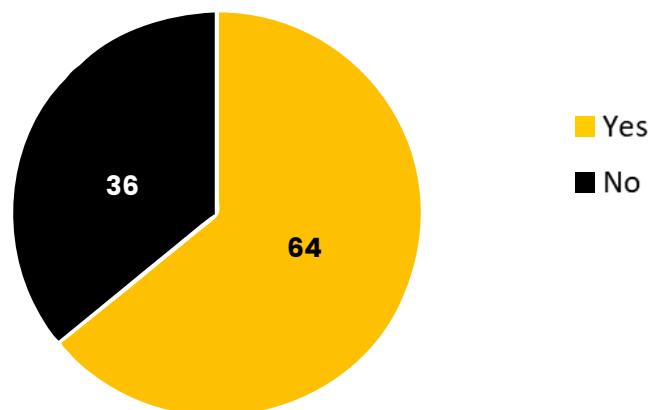
When asked about any gender-based violence reporting desk (50.9%) said that they do not have a desk or office where students could report gender-based violence, as against 49.1% who reported that they have a reporting desk.

## Gender based violence reporting desk in Schools

- Yes
- No
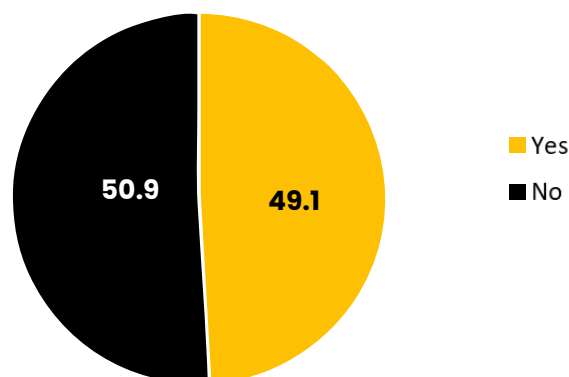
A higher percentage (92.5%) of respondents reported that they have never reported any case of gender-based violence, in contrast to those who have (7.5%) reported one or more cases.

Ever reported any case of Gender based violence

- Yes
- No
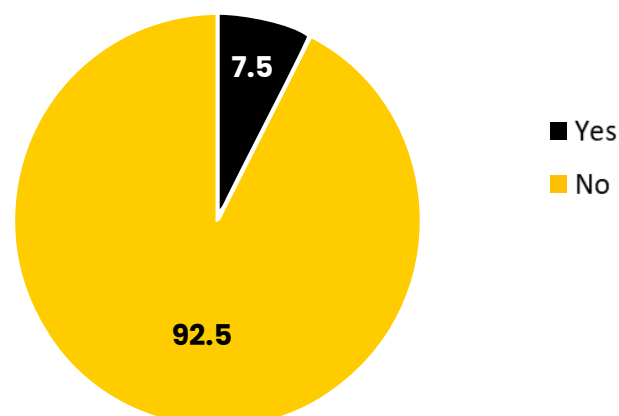
Out of those who said they had reported one or more cases of gender-based violence, about 82% reported that no action/justice was taken against them by the school.
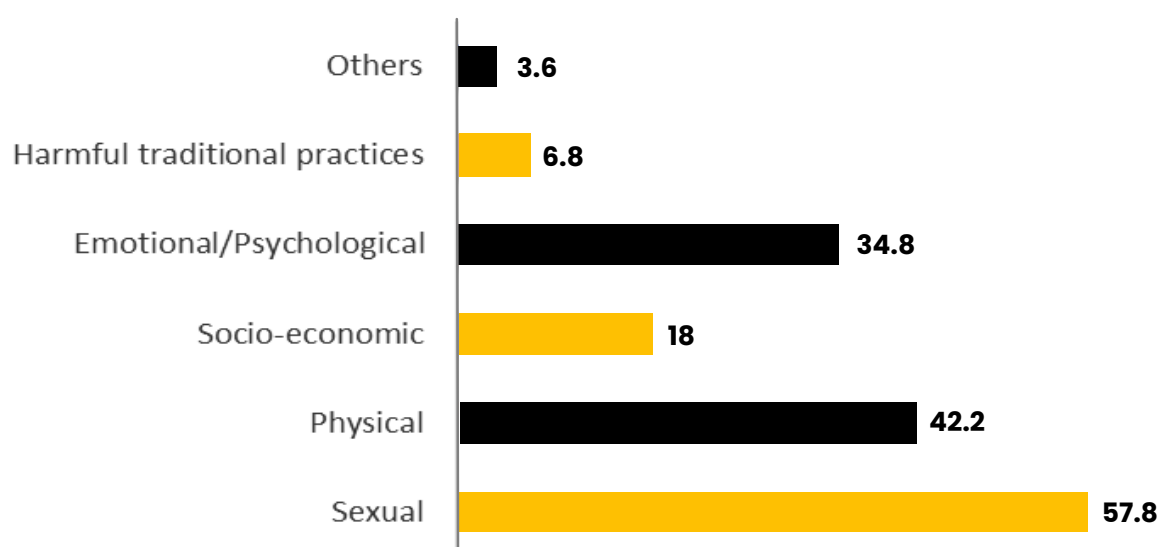
Action taken on Gender based violence report

18

82

■ Yes ■ No
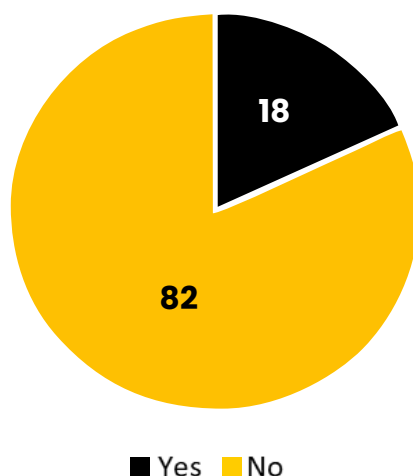
However, the 18% who reported that actions were taken explained that actions such as **suspension, expulsion, handed to securities/police, and termination of the contract were taken**.

The survey further asked respondents about the forms of violence that are mostly reported, to which about 57.8% reported that Sexual forms of violence are mostly reported, 42.2% said Physical forms of violence are mostly reported, 34.8% reported that Emotional/Psychological forms of violence are mostly reported, 18% reported that Socio-economic forms of violence are mostly reported, and 6.8% reported that most forms of violence that involve harmful practices are mostly reported.
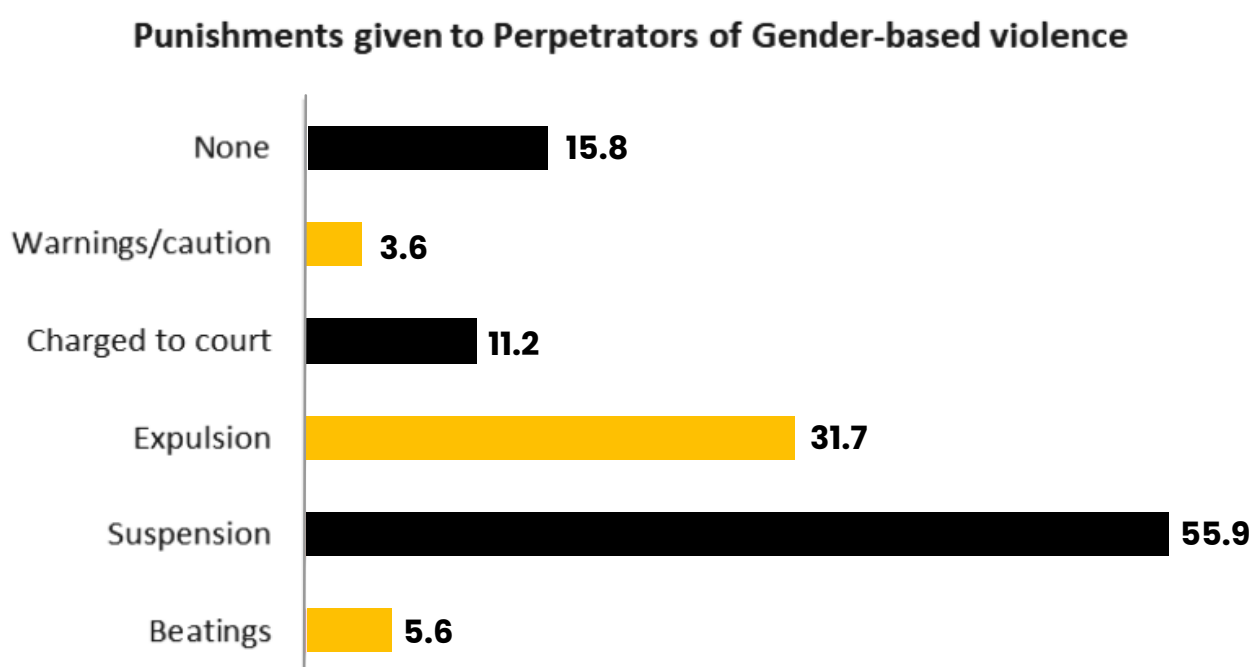
Forms of gender-based violence mainly reported

Form	Value
Others	3.6
Harmful traditional practices	6.8
Emotional/Psychological	34.8
Socio-economic	18
Physical	42.2
Sexual	57.8

With these high rates of prevalence of gender-based violence in tertiary institutions, about 65.8% of the students still think that the reporting channels provided in school for gender-based violence are not effective, compared to 34.2% who agree that the reporting channels are effective. Also, about 61.5% think that the punishments given to perpetrators are inadequate in response to the offence committed, compared to 38.5% who think the perpetrators received adequate punishment for the offence committed.

	Yes	No
Effective reporting channels for Gender based violence	34.2	65.8
Adequate punishment for perpetrators of Gender based violence	38.5	61.5

■ Yes ■ No
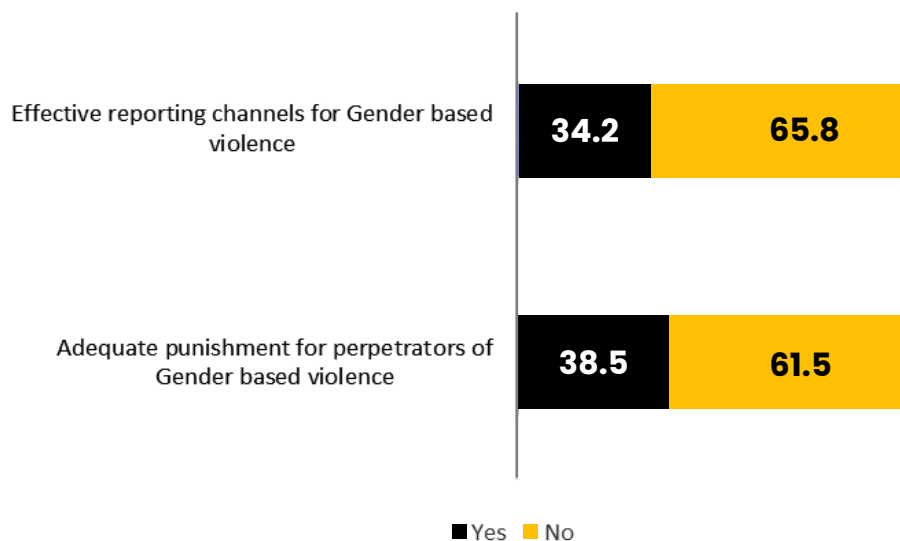
The study asked about some punishments given to perpetrators, and a higher percentage of respondents mentioned suspension. Other punishments mentioned were Beating, Expulsion, and being charged in court.

Punishments given to Perpetrators of Gender-based violence

Punishment	Percentage
None	15.8
Warnings/caution	3.6
Charged to court	11.2
Expulsion	31.7
Suspension	55.9
Beatings	5.6

Several recommendations for improving the reporting channels were grouped under the ***awareness and accountability strategies***. A further explanation of these includes ***multiple options for reporting, confidentiality, privacy, and evaluation; more awareness of the pros and cons of gender-based violence; adequate punishment for perpetrators of gender-based violence; emergency call logs for victims; and objectivity in handling gender-based violence issues in tertiary institutions.***

SECTION D - RESPONSE MECHANISM TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

This section provided a comprehensive examination of various response mechanisms employed by students in addressing instances of gender-based violence cases, particularly among those who have encountered such challenges. It centered on the first-hand experience, measures taken, potential risks, strategies for mitigation, and safety precautions.

Students were asked about their personal experience with Gender-based violence. About 24.2% of respondents said they had experienced a form of gender-based violence, compared to 75.8% of students who had not experienced any form of gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence experience on Campus


24.2

75.8

■ Yes ■ No
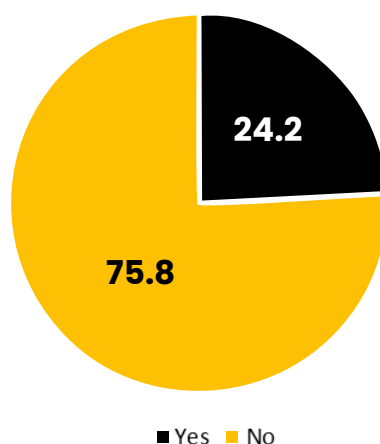
For those who had experienced violence, questions on the various forms were asked, and 38.5% reported that they had experienced psychological forms of violence, 35.9% had experienced sexual forms of violence, and 20.5% had experienced physical forms of violence.

Forms of Gender-based violence experience on Campus
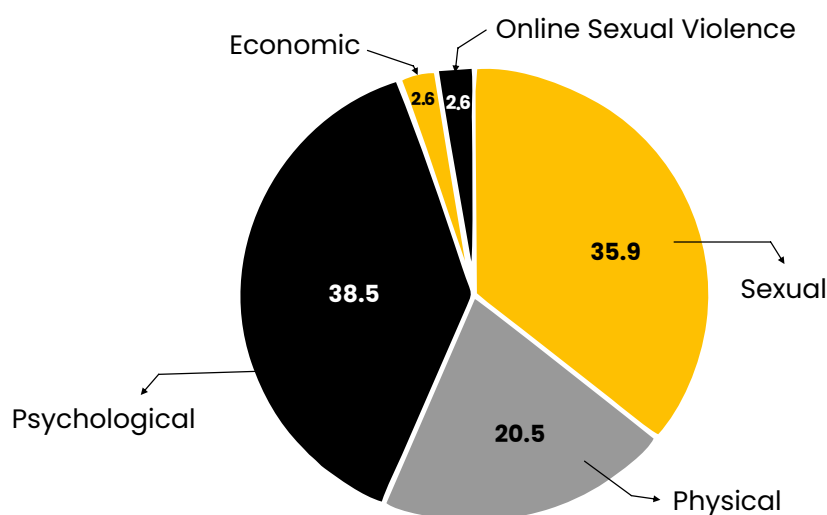
A further question was asked on measures taken after the experience; about 64.9% of respondents said that they kept quiet about it, 16.2% said they reported it to appropriate authorities, about 10.8% said they took laws into their own hands, and other respondents reported that they were cautioned and talked to other people about it.

**Measures taken when experienced forms of Gender based violence**
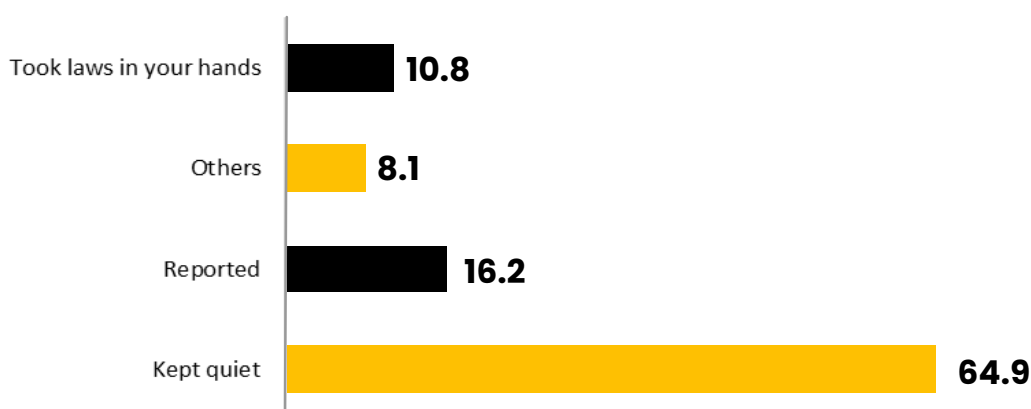
Furthermore, respondents explained who/what informed their decision on the measures taken against the forms of gender-based violence; responses include: ***Self-decision, Families, School rules and regulations, peers, society, and school authorities.***

Generally, with the recorded prevalence of Gender-based violence acts in school, a larger percentage (73.9%) of students still believe they feel safe on campus compared to those who do not (26.1%) feel safe. This is attributed to the knowledge gained on the risks and mitigating strategies for gender-based violence.

Safety on campus
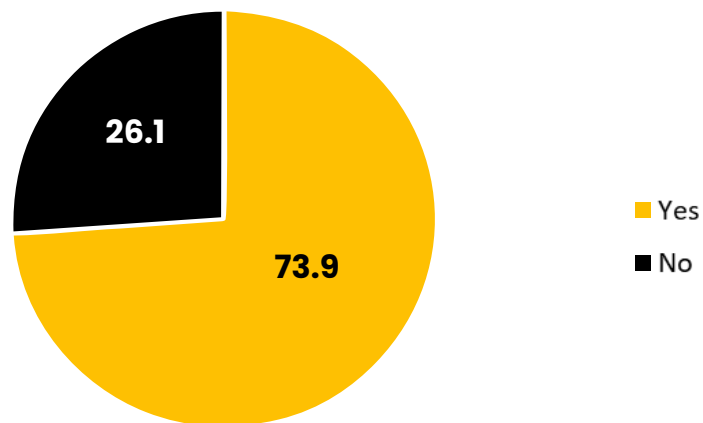
A further question on respondent experience of hearing and witnessing a gender-based violence case showed that the majority (64%) of respondents have heard but not witnessed violence cases on campus, 16.8% have heard and witnessed violence cases, and 19.2% have not heard or witnessed any case of violence on campus

## Witnessed/heard about Gender based violence on campus
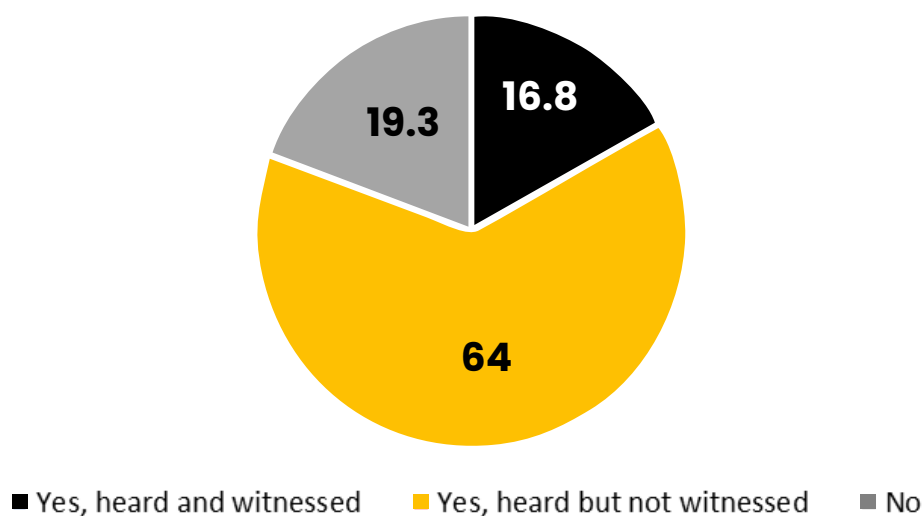
With this knowledge gathered and the testimony of witnesses, a more significant percentage (90.7%) of respondents did not report the case to the appropriate authorities.

The study went further to ask why, to which several reasons were given, such as **security intervention, past experiences that backfired, fear, and nobody/authority to report**.

Ever reported any form of gender-based violence to the appropriate authorities or support services on campus
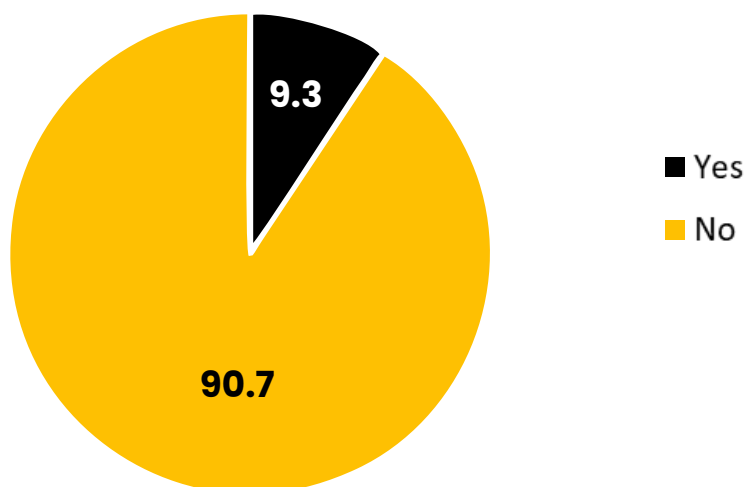
There were further questions on the measures needed to reduce or fully combat gender-based violence. Respondents explained that more ***awareness and proper enlightenment should be given based on revealing and reporting gender-based violence; this includes sensitisation, and providing standards, rules and regulations for perpetrators.*** Also, there should be ***working bodies/organisations that are tasked with taking up GBV cases and are ready to respond in real-time when reports are made***. There should also be an ***effective reporting system for cases of gender-based violence***. **Campus journalists** could also be instrumental in SGBV advocacy and reporting of handled cases so that people are aware of happenings and relevant bodies can take needed steps.

Of utmost importance is the ***enhancement of safety measures and a zero-tolerance policy, the provision of sanctions for offenders, and the setting up of sustainable investigation strategies for students living on and off campuses*** by the campus management. There should also be ***capacity building for students on how best to live, see and report these cases; a monitoring and evaluation strategy should be deployed, and there should be intermittent reassessment***. Equally important is ***gender empowerment,*** mostly for female students, who have also to take responsibility to safeguard themselves on matters relating to GBV.

Respondents validated that institutions are not doing enough to prevent and address gender-based violence cases on campus.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings and analysis from the study, the prevalence of gender-based violence remains a concern among female students in higher education institutions. While the study aims to elucidate the various forms of violence affecting female students and explore effective reporting mechanisms, there is a compelling need to prioritize the analysis of diverse response strategies to such violence. This is essential for comprehensively understanding students' encounters and ensuring their well-being within tertiary institutions.

The solutions to the objectives were provided from the quantitative data collected from higher institutions in some selected West African countries. The surveyed population primarily encompassed individuals aged 20-24 years, with a predominant number or respondents hailing from tertiary institutions in Nigeria. In addressing familiarity with gender-based violence or its awareness, a significant portion of participants demonstrated greater awareness of sexual violence compared to other forms. Nonetheless, limited awareness regarding various forms of general gender-based violence within campus context was evident. Furthermore, respondents highlighted male students as the primary perpetrators of gender-based violence, while other mentioned culprits included staff members, partners, and members of the community. It is noteworthy that the majority of participants indicated their non-participation in any gender-based violence awareness programs.

In reporting Gender-based violence, most respondents have heard and witnessed cases of gender-based violence on campus, and this has created a little gap between those who have gender reporting desks in their schools and those who do not. Less than ten per cent of respondents mentioned having reported cases of GBV. In these instances, actions taken included: suspension, expulsion, termination of contract, or being handed over to securities.

A higher percentage of respondents reported that they do not have adequate channels for reporting cases of gender-based violence, which has led to not approving adequate punishment for perpetrators. However, most perpetrators who have served punishment were suspended; some others were expelled; some were beaten; some were charged to court; and some were warned.

On the response mechanism to gender-based violence on campus, respondents were asked if they had been victims of gender-based violence, to which the majority said no; among those victimised, there was a higher percentage of psychological forms of

violence (which involved isolation from others, verbal aggression, threats, intimidation, control, harassment or stalking, insults, humiliation, and defamation), followed by sexual forms, physical forms, and other forms. When asked about the actions taken to combat this menace, most respondents reported that they kept quiet; others said they took the law into their own hands.

Notwithstanding the above, students reported that they still feel safe on campus. Even though the majority had heard about gender-based violence but not necessarily witnessed it, most of them don't report it because of the high probability that school authorities will not enforce the law to protect survivors while perpetrators go scot-free. Thereby discrediting the school system's repute and effort, as students report that often, the committee in charge of enforcement might even be aware of such incidents and in the long run become enablers for choosing to be bystanders. To therefore reduce this menace, respondents spoke more about the need for more awareness on gender-based reporting, which includes sensitization and providing standards and regulations for perpetrators, and the need for schools to enhance safety measures and a zero-tolerance policy against perpetrators.

CONCLUSION

In the wake of the pandemic, the noticeable surge in gender-based violence has sparked significant worry. The analysis unmistakably illustrates the swift emergence of gender-based violence as a pertinent concern within higher education institutions. This issue is impacting a substantial number of adolescents and young adults, the majority of whom are students. This phenomenon spans across both rural and urban regions, encompassing both male and female students who experience psychological, sexual, physical, and various socioeconomic forms of violence. The consequences ripple through society, affecting a wide range of individuals.

From various studies and reports conducted, it is evident that gender-based violence remains a distressing reality on college and university campuses. The consequences of such violence extend beyond just the survivors, as the continuous perpetuation of gender-based violence within tertiary schools also impacts the overall campus climate, hindering the academic and personal growth of those affected. In addition, it also perpetuates harmful gender norms and inequality, creating a hostile environment that undermines the principles of education and personal development that higher institutions are meant to foster.

Addressing gender-based violence in higher institutions demands a comprehensive approach and a well-articulated end-to-end process in response time, which must involve strong institutional policies that prioritise survivor support, confidentiality, and justice. Educational awareness and campaigns are therefore vital to mitigating and challenging harmful attitudes and behaviours while at the same time promoting a culture of respect, equality, and consent.

Similarly, collaboration between educational institutions, the media, government authorities, NGOs, and community stakeholders, is vital to developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. Safe spaces for open dialogues and empowering bystanders to act are critical to collectively striving to eliminate campus gender-based violence.

The Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID) believes that knowledge will help stakeholders tailor responses and allocate resources appropriately in combating this menace. As such, it consistently engages in research and data collection to understand the evolving nature of gender-based violence and the effectiveness of interventions.

While eradicating gender-based violence in higher education institutions is not an insurmountable challenge, it is imperative and a collective responsibility to create an environment where students, regardless of gender, age, social background, religion, or political views, can thrive, learn, and pursue their aspirations without fear or any form of discrimination. Where a culture of respect, empathy, and equality thrives, the principles of justice and inclusivity for all are embodied.

It is important to emphasize that while our study's findings may not encompass the full diversity of experiences and contexts of gender-based violence across all West African nations, they do shed light on an important facet of this pervasive issue within the Nigerian higher education system. Our hope is that these insights can inform targeted interventions, policies, and awareness campaigns within Nigeria, while also serving as a springboard for future research endeavors that encompasses a more expansive and representative regional sample.

To mitigate the limitation of low coverage in geographical scope, future studies could employ more targeted recruitment strategies, collaborate with local researchers in various West African countries, and use diverse communication channels to encourage broader participation. By expanding the coverage, researchers can work towards creating a more holistic understanding of gender-based violence within the higher education landscape of West Africa as a whole.

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