

Role of Family, School, and Religious Institutions in the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Among Tertiary Institution Students in Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract: Gender-based violence is a critical issue that impacts people, families, and communities worldwide, and is considered one of the most alarming human rights violations. Despite this, it is often unrecognized and misunderstood, particularly in Nigeria. To address this problem, families, schools, and religious organizations must take an active role in promoting healthy societal norms and attitudes toward gender and relationships. Understanding gender-based violence (GBV) is crucial in addressing the various forms of abuse, such as physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, etc. It is especially important to address GBV among students because education has a significant influence in tackling social challenges. This study assesses the role of the family, schools, and religious institutions in the prevalence of Gender-based violence among tertiary institution students in Abuja, Nigeria. The study adopts a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design to understand the roles of the family, school, and religious organizations in addressing GBV among the study population. The research was carried out among tertiary institution students in Abuja, covering all three major types of institutions in the area. A sample size of 440 participants was determined for the study, using a scientific formula for cross-sectional studies, and stratified sampling to ensure a representative sample. Data was collected through a pre-tested questionnaire with both open and closed-ended questions and analyzed using SPSS. The findings of this study highlight the overwhelming agreement among respondents regarding the need for schools, religious institutions, and families to take proactive measures in addressing gender-based violence. The results show a clear consensus on the importance of creating policies, curriculum-based activities, and awareness programs to educate students, religious leaders, and parents/guardians on how to recognize and respond to GBV. This study recommends that at the family level, parent and guardians should teach their children about the importance of respect for all genders and promote gender equality. Also, schools should establish policies against violence, coordinate violence response, and teach students safe behavior.

Religious institutions are also admonished to train their leaders and offer support to victims. All institutions should collaborate to prevent GBV comprehensively.

Keywords: Gender-Based Violence, Families, Schools, Religious Institutions

1. Introduction

Gender-based violence is a pervasive problem that affects individuals, families, and communities across the world [1]. It raises a global concern, as it is one of the most alarming and noticeable among all the human right violation which has been established from various research. However, it remains the least recognized form of human rights violation in the world. [2]. Gender-based violence is not well known or understood in Nigeria. The majority are ignorant of its prevalence and effect on society [3]. Families, schools, and religious organizations must recognize their active role in advancing healthy societal norms and attitudes toward gender and relationships if gender-based violence is to be addressed [4].

The United Nations identifies gender inequality and every kind of violence (GBV) that is associated with it, as one of the major challenges confronting the development of Nigeria. In her Sustainable Development Goals for Nigeria, the UN has listed gender equality as one of its seventeen goals [5].

Gender-based violence is almost synonymous with Violence against women and girls [6]. And It is one of the most commonest and most widespread forms of Human rights violation with disturbing statistics of about 35% of women worldwide have experienced one form of physical and/or sexual violence, according to the 2013 global review [7]. It is also estimated that on average one out of three women will experience sexual or physical violence in their lifetime (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n. d.). Gender-based violence has also been described in some studies as a major risk to the health of women globally [8].

While the focus has always been on women as the victim of gender-based violence, GBV is getting a better understanding of not only perceiving women as victims and men as the perpetrator. Rather any gender can be either the victim or the perpetrator. Males have typically been the target perpetrators of domestic violence investigations, but this does not mean that there aren't any instances of men who have also been the victims of domestic abuse. Men are not exempt from the negative effects of domestic abuse [9].

In Nigeria, violence against women has been described as a common issue attracting global interest, concerns and attention of medical and social communities including psychologists, sociologists as well as medical and mental health personnel [10]. There has been a growing interest and increase in GBV-centred research as well as programs and interventions over the past two decades. The majority of the research work has been recorded in the fields of sexual, reproductive and maternal health (SRMH), HIV & AIDS [11] as well as the impact of GBV in the education and economic sector.

As early as 1993, the study of Heise et al. discovered that

8-70% of women worldwide are victims of GBV with their partners as perpetrators [12]. This challenge continues to grow and is relevant in our society to date.

1.1. Concept of Gender-Based Violence

Generally speaking, GBV is any act of violence against a person because of the gender of the individual or any act of violence that affects an individual disproportionately as compared to their counterparts. The violence might be in various forms which includes, physical, sexual or even psychological violence. While the commonest examples of GBV are: domestic violence, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and online violence. Gender-based violence is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality, and this continues to be the primary and most significant human rights violation that is seen within every society [13].

Gender-Based Violence is most commonly used to depict how systemic inequality is expressed between males and females in every society in the world. It is the bases for every act of violence related to most forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls [14]. While many research appears to present GBV as violence against women or girls and also an act of violence that is most often perpetrated by the male gender against the female. GBV is not only violence against women and girls but can be clearly described as 'the violence perpetrated against women, girls, men and boys with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities as well as non-binary individuals as a result of the desire to punish those seen as defying gender norms [14].

1.2. Empirical Review

According to NDHS (2013), 30% of Nigerian women have experienced at least one form of different forms of violence before the age of fifteen. GBV is endemic in some public institutions in Nigeria including educational institutions according to research [15]. It also reports that Nigerian girls that are enrolled in school drop out of school more than their male counterparts, majorly as a result of violence.

Students in secondary schools in Ibadan, Nigeria have experienced violent behaviours. The study revealed that 97.9% of the respondents had experienced at least one of the three types of violence in their lifetimes [16].

Similarly, Oladepo et al, [9], reports in their study that 26.9% of the respondent have been the victims of physical assault, including men accounting for 11.8% and women, 15.1%. Also, the study reports that 7.4% of men and 4.8% of women had experienced sexual violence of a kind or more in their lifetime.

In a study by Fawole, on violence among young female hawkers, 19.7% of women had experienced physical assault,

36.3% had experienced sexual harassment, while only 7.2% had emotional or psychological violence [22].

Gender-based violence may be prevented in large part by families. Children may learn about respect, consent, and effective communication from parents and other adult caregivers by seeing how they interact with others [17, 18]. Families can also foster a friendly and secure atmosphere where students feel free to express their thoughts and feelings. This can significantly aid the prevention of gender-based violence by encouraging healthy values and attitudes about gender and relationships [19].

Schools are also crucial in the fight against gender-based violence. Education and training on subjects like gender, sexuality, consent, and healthy relationships can be provided in schools. They can also establish rules and practices that provide a welcoming and safe environment for every student [20, 21]. Schools can help prevent GBV from happening and offer support to individuals who have experienced it by fostering awareness and understanding of it.

Likewise, religious organizations also have an important role to contribute to the reduction of gender-based violence. Teaching respect, compassion, and justice are virtues that can be promoted by several religious organizations. Religious organizations can lessen the prevalence of GBV by teaching these ideals and fostering healthy relationships. They can also offer resources and help to people and families who have suffered from this menace [23].

In conclusion, gender-based violence is a prevalent problem globally and has been established as one of the most alarming and noticeable forms of human rights violation. Nigeria is not immune to this threat, which is thought to be a widespread problem drawing attention on a worldwide scale. If gender-based violence is to be addressed, families, schools, and religious institutions must acknowledge their active role in promoting healthy social standards and attitudes regarding gender and relationships. In addition to promoting positive values and attitudes about gender and relationships in families and religious institutions, preventive strategies can include teaching and training in schools on topics including gender, sexuality, consent, and healthy relationships. It is crucial to understand that gender-based violence affects people of all genders, not only women and girls and that everyone can help put a stop to it.

1.3. Research Rationale

Gender-based violence is a complex and pervasive phenomenon that affects individuals, communities, and families all around the world. Studies have revealed that it can happen to anybody, anyplace, and that women are mostly the ones who are most affected. However, men are also victims of GBV, so efforts should be made to educate people about the problem and raise awareness of it. When it comes to avoiding GBV and fostering healthy relationships based on mutual respect, consent, and equality, families, schools, and religious organizations all have a significant role to play.

Therefore, this paper assesses the role of the family, schools, and religious institutions in the prevalence of Gender-based

violence among tertiary institution students in Abuja, Nigeria.

This study addresses the question: What is the role of the family, school, and religious institution in the prevention of Gender-based violence among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja, Nigeria?

2. Methods

2.1. Study Setting

The study was carried out among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. Abuja is the capital city of Nigeria. It is located right in the Centre of the country and is also one of the area councils of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). It lies on approximate latitude 09°4'North and longitude 07°29'East and has a population of about 776,298 according to the 2006 population census.

2.2. Data Collection Methods

The chosen study participants were given pre-tested and standardized questionnaires used in previous related studies. The questionnaire was used for data collection because of flexibility, the type of respondent nature, and because of the anticipated number of study participants. The instrument was administered to participants from the chosen schools. Four hundred and thirty-one (431) of the total four hundred forty (440) shared questionnaires were completed, returned, and deemed valid.

2.3. Study Participant

The study was carried out among selected tertiary institutions in Abuja. These academic institutions were selected to represent the three major types of tertiary institutions in the location (University of Abuja, College of Education, and School of Nursing), all located in the Abuja metropolis.

As this study was cross-sectional, the sample size was determined using a formula appropriate for this type of research. Stratified sampling was employed to guarantee that the sample was representative, with participants selected based on both their school/institution and their faculty/college. To obtain a random sample, respondents were then chosen from each level of the class at the selected schools. The study utilized a total sample size of 440, with an appropriate sample frame established for each participating institution.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance and approval (with an approval number FCT/CON/RC/2022/001) were obtained from the Ethics & Research Committee of FCT School of Nursing, Gwagwalada – Abuja, Nigeria, moreover, written consent was obtained from the selected schools and the study participants were briefed on the questionnaire before they were enrolled in the study. The consent letters were written stating the study's objectives, the nature of participants' involvement, and the confidentiality of the data. Students were requested to read the

consent letters carefully before answering the questionnaire. They were given clear options regarding voluntary participation.

2.5. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the collected data using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, the analysis summarizes the collected data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20.0. This analysis was further presented in a table for proper presentation.

3. Results

The study's demographic information discloses that out of the respondents, 168 (39.0%) are Male and 258 (59.9%) are

Female. A total of 339 (78.7%) of the respondents are students of the University of Abuja, while 26 (6%) and 66 (15.3%) are FCT School of Nursing and FCT College of Education students, respectively.

In addition, the religion of the respondent consists of 276 (64.0%) who are Christians, 140 (32.5%) are Muslims, 2 (0.5%) are Traditional believers, and 4 (0.9%) others. Furthermore, 106 (24.6%) of the respondent are from a polygamous family, and 313 (72.6%) are from a monogamous family.

3.1. Roles of the Family in Preventing Gender-Based Violence

Table 1 presents the roles of the family in preventing Gender-Based Violence.

Table 1. Roles of the Family in Preventing Gender-Based Violence.

Statements on the Role of Family in the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence among Students.	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Parents should teach their children to respect other genders	343 (85.5%)	44 (11.0%)	8 (2.0%)	5 (1.2%)	1 (.2%)	4.80	.551
Parents/guardians should teach children to be generous and kind to all	287 (71.4%)	96 (23.9%)	13 (3.2%)	4 (1.0%)	2 (.5%)	4.65	.643
Gender equality should be emphasized in the family	273 (68.1%)	105 (26.2%)	14 (3.5%)	5 (1.2%)	4 (1.0%)	4.59	.712
Family should create opportunities for abused members to report any form of abuse and should be attended to	298 (75.1%)	70 (17.6%)	14 (3.5%)	11 (2.8%)	4 (1.0%)	4.63	.770

Key: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents 387 (96.5%) agreed that it is important for parents to teach their children to respect other genders, 8 (2%) respondents were undecided, while only 1 (0.2%) disagreed. Also, 385 (95.3%) respondents agreed that parents/guardians should teach children to be generous and kind to all, 13 (3.2%) respondents were undecided, while only 2 (0.5%) disagreed. More so, 378 (94.3%) respondents agreed that gender equality should be emphasized in the family, 11 (3.5%) respondents were undecided, and 9 (2.2%) disagreed. In addition, 360 (92.7%)

respondents agreed that family should create opportunities for abused members to report any form of abuse and should be attended to, 14 (3.5%) respondents were undecided, while 15 (3.8%) disagreed.

3.2. Role of the Schools in Preventing Gender-Based Violence

Table 2 below presents the roles of schools in preventing Gender-Based Violence among students.

Table 2. Roles of the School in Preventing Gender-Based Violence.

Statements on the Role of Schools in the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence among Students.	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Schools should set up a school-based coordinating team to address violence.	279 (69.2%)	114 (28.3%)	7 (1.7%)	2 (.5%)	1 (.2%)	4.66	.566
Develop a school policy that condemns violence and is enforced fairly for everyone.	278 (69.7%)	109 (27.3%)	8 (2.0%)	2 (.5%)	2 (.5%)	4.65	.599
Schools should establish a record-keeping system for incidents of violence and the school's responses to these.	218 (55.3%)	138 (35.0%)	31 (7.9%)	3 (.8%)	4 (1.0%)	4.43	.756
Make sure that data is kept confidential within the school.	250 (66.7%)	91 (24.3%)	26 (6.9%)	3 (.8%)	5 (1.3%)	4.54	.772
Schools should set up curriculum-based activities that teach students about safe behaviour and protecting themselves from abuse.	280 (70.7%)	98 (24.7%)	12 (3.0%)	3 (.8%)	3 (.8%)	4.64	.655
Schools should set up a curriculum that transforms social, cultural, and gender norms that justify violence and promote equal relationships	236 (60.2%)	124 (31.6%)	22 (5.6%)	5 (1.3%)	5 (1.3%)	4.48	.770
Address and transform teachers' harmful beliefs, and social, cultural, and gender norms	237 (60.9%)	117 (30.1%)	21 (5.4%)	7 (1.8%)	7 (1.8%)	4.47	.826
Train teachers/instructors and school staff in recognizing violence and asking students in a responsible way about violence.	238 (65.0%)	107 (29.2%)	17 (4.6%)	3 (.8%)	1 (.3%)	4.58	.648
Train parents/guardians in recognizing and asking	235 (63.9%)	107 (29.1%)	19 (5.2%)	4 (1.1%)	3 (.8%)	4.54	.718

Statements on the Role of Schools in the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence among Students.	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
appropriately about violence and supporting children exposed to violence.							
Create awareness among parents on how to recognize and ask appropriately about violence.	252 (68.9%)	94 (25.7%)	14 (3.8%)	2 (.5%)	4 (1.1%)	4.61	.693

Key: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

From Table 2, the report shows that 393 (97.5%) agreed that schools should set up a school-based coordinating team to address violence, 7 (1.7%) respondents were undecided, while only 3 (0.7%) disagreed. Also, as many as 387 (97%) respondents agreed that schools should Develop a policy that condemns violence and should enforce it fairly for everyone, 8 (2%) respondents were undecided, while only 4 (1%) disagreed. More so, 378 (95.4%) respondents agreed that schools should set up curriculum-based activities that teach students about safe behaviour and protecting themselves from abuse, 12 (3%) respondents were undecided, while 6 (1.6%) disagreed. More still, 345 (94.2%) respondents agreed that schools should train teachers/instructors and school staff in

recognizing violence and asking students in a responsible way about violence, 17 (4.6%) respondents were undecided, while 4 (3.8%) disagreed. Lastly, 346 (94.6%) respondents agreed that schools should create awareness among parents on how to recognize and ask appropriately about violence, 14 (3.8%) respondents were undecided, while 6 (1.6%) disagreed.

3.3. Role of the Religious Institution in Preventing Gender-Based Violence

Table 3 below presents the roles of religious Institutions in preventing Gender-Based Violence among students.

Table 3. Roles of the Religious Institutions in Preventing Gender-Based Violence.

Statements on the Role of Religious Institutions in the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence among Students.	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Religious Institutions should create multi-religious support groups for victims of violence	239 (64.2%)	112 (30.1%)	17 (4.6%)	2 (.5%)	2 (.5%)	4.57	.659
Train religious leaders on GBV issues and how to respond to diverse situations	210 (56.6%)	143 (38.5%)	16 (4.3%)	2 (.5%)	—	4.51	.608
Advocate for enactment and enforcement of laws to protect community members.	217 (59.0%)	122 (33.2%)	28 (7.6%)	1 (.2%)	—	4.51	.648
Create multi-religious centres where people can receive help/legal assistance.	224 (61.7%)	121 (33.3%)	16 (4.4%)	1 (.3%)	1 (.3%)	4.56	.627
Train multi-religious paralegals to give free advice to victims	209 (58.2%)	122 (34.0%)	25 (7.0%)	3 (.7%)	—	4.50	.664
They should sensitize communities on GBV and related issues	203 (55.8%)	130 (35.7%)	28 (7.7%)	1 (.2%)	2 (.5%)	4.46	.697
Conduct multi-religious seminars, that include topics such as the effects and consequences of GBV	221 (60.7%)	116 (26.9%)	25 (6.9%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	4.52	.661
Provide shelter and counselling services to victims of violence at existing religious structures.	212 (58.4%)	116 (32.0%)	30 (8.3%)	3 (.8%)	2 (.6%)	4.47	.792
Provide information on GBV issues, based on religious scriptures and teachings.	229 (62.2%)	104 (28.3%)	31 (8.4%)	4 (1.1%)	—	4.52	.696

Key: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

From Table 3, the study shows that 351 (94.3%) agreed that religious Institutions should create multi-religious support groups for victims of violence, 17 (4.6%) respondents were undecided, and 4 (1%) respondents disagreed. Also, as many as 353 (95.1%) respondents agreed that religious organizations should train religious leaders on GBV issues and how to respond to diverse situations, 16 (4.3%) respondents were undecided, while only 2 (0.5%) disagreed. More so, 345 (95%) respondents agreed that religious institutions should create multi-religious centers where people can receive help/legal assistance, 16 (4.4%) respondents were undecided, while 2 (0.6%) disagreed. More still, 337 (87.6%) respondents agreed that religious institutions should conduct multi-religious seminars, that include topics such as the effects and consequences of GBV, 25 (6.9%) respondents were undecided, while 2 (0.4%) disagreed. Lastly, 333 (90.5%) respondents agreed that religious institutions should provide

information on GBV issues, based on religious scriptures and teachings, 31 (8.4%) respondents were undecided, while 4 (1.1%) disagreed.

4. Discussions

The Family, School, and Religious institution has collectively been identified as very important institutions that can help in curbing and preventing GBV among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja. The respondent admits that none of these institutions should be left out in an attempt to address GBV among students of tertiary institutions. However, the respondent believes that among every other thing the family should do, the most significant role of the family is that, the parent should teach their children to respect the other gender. Also, the result of the findings of this study shows that among other efforts the school should make, it is most important that

schools develop a policy that condemns violence. Similarly, respondents believe that religious institutions should focus more on training religious leaders on GBV issues and how to respond to diverse situations.

The role of the family in preventing GBV cannot be overemphasized. Parents are the primary socialization agents for their children and can shape their attitudes and behaviours towards gender and violence. By teaching their children to respect other genders, parents can instil values that promote peaceful coexistence and discourage violence.

Schools also have a significant role to play in addressing GBV. Developing policies that condemn violence sends a clear message that GBV is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Such policies can also provide a framework for dealing with incidents of GBV systematically and effectively.

Religious institutions can also play a crucial role in addressing GBV. Training religious leaders on GBV issues and how to respond to diverse situations can equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to address GBV within their religious communities. Religious institutions can also use their platforms to raise awareness about GBV and promote values that discourage violence.

Combating GBV among students in Abuja's tertiary institutions necessitates a comprehensive approach that includes the involvement of different institutions such as the family, school, and religious institutions. Each institution has a unique and collective responsibility, and by working together, they can establish a secure and harmonious environment for students, free of violence.

5. Conclusion

The family, school, and religious institutions have significant roles to play in curbing and preventing GBV among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja. Parents' role in teaching their children to respect other genders cannot be overemphasized, while schools' policies that condemn violence and curriculum-based activities can provide a framework for dealing with incidents systematically. Additionally, religious institutions can raise awareness and train religious leaders to respond to GBV. It is essential to involve these institutions in combating GBV, and through collective efforts, a secure and harmonious environment can be established for students, free of violence. Overall, preventing gender-based violence on tertiary institution campuses requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including schools, families, religious institutions, and the government.

6. Limitations of the Study

The limitation of this study is that even though, the study included all the major types of tertiary institutions in the Abuja metropolis, it focused on the public tertiary institutions. This study would have been more comprehensive if it included private tertiary institutions and covered more states in the country.

7. Recommendations

The following recommendations will help to address GBV among students in tertiary institutions in Abuja:

The family should teach their children to respect other genders, promote gender equality and create a safe environment for abused members to report any form of abuse and receive help.

Schools should develop a policy that condemns violence, set up a school-based coordinating team to address violence and provide curriculum-based activities that teach students about safe behaviour and how to protect themselves from abuse.

Religious institutions should focus on training religious leaders on GBV issues and how to respond to diverse situations. They can also create multi-religious support groups for victims of violence and conduct multi-religious seminars to raise awareness about GBV.

All institutions should work together to establish a comprehensive approach to prevent GBV among students. The involvement of different institutions such as the family, school, and religious institutions is crucial for addressing GBV effectively.

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