

BRIEFING NOTE

ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS IN CAMPAIGNING AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS



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About the Centre for Health Ethics, Law and Development (CHELD)

The Centre For Health Ethics, Law and Development (CHELD) is a non-profit initiative, established in 2010 to employ law, policy, ethics promotion and research, as well as practical health development projects to improve public health in Nigeria and other African countries. Our work on gender-based violence (GBV) includes support for policy efforts and research, the execution of research projects to provide an evidence-base for GBV projects and the provision of legal and other assistance to GBV survivors. CHELD has supported national and state policies on gender equality and the elimination of GBV in Nigeria. CHELD researchers have conducted a range of research on gender and on GBV prevention and response initiatives from legal, policy and social perspectives in Africa.

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Key findings

- Tertiary institutions mirror society, and mainstream gender norms are reflected in many aspects of their institutional processes and in the lives of students. This study found that gender norms in Nigeria and within tertiary institutions still reflect strong patriarchal attitudes to women and underpin sexual violence.
- Religion and culture are key factors in maintaining gender norms, including through harmful interpretations of religious scripture. However, religion and culture did not impose strong constraints on the decisions made by women rights organisations (WROs) on whether or not to engage men and boys in interventions to combat gender-based violence (GBV).
- Our findings suggest that although there is little opposition to specific male engagement, it was not a strong component in the projects of WROs working in tertiary institutions. Instead, projects were more likely to be based on gender integration.
- Despite women's higher experience of sexual violence in tertiary institutions and the need for greater male engagement to address this, there are several barriers to their more deliberate engagement. These include:
 - a lack of comprehensive knowledge within WROs about male engagement strategies
 - limited information and guidance on how to involve males in GBV interventions
 - inconsistent academic calendars as a result of industrial strikes that affect interventions and programmes within public higher institutions
 - the non-prioritisation of sexual violence issues by the institutions, and
 - lack of funding for sexual violence interventions.

Acronyms

BUK	Bayero University Kano
FGD	focus group discussion
GBV	gender-based violence
IPV	intimate partner violence
KII	key informant interview
NDHS	Nigeria Demographic Health Survey
SV	sexual violence
SVRI	Sexual Violence and Research Institute
UI	University of Ibadan
VAWG	violence against women and girls
WHO	World Health Organization
WRO	women's rights organisation

Introduction

In 2019, a BBC documentary exposing sexual exploitation in Nigerian institutions led to the dismissal of a Nigerian lecturer who had exploited the power dynamics in the student-teacher relationship to solicit sexual favours (Chinkondenji, 2019). The #SexForGrades trend which ensued on social media amplified findings from previous studies showing the high prevalence of sexual violence (SV) experienced primarily by women in Nigeria's tertiary education institutions (Onasoga et al., 2019; Eguagie, 2016). Such studies have indicated that most perpetrators of these acts of sexual violence are male (Iliyasu et al., 2011). These findings have shaped the nature of advocacy in this area.

Given the prevalence of sexual violence in these institutions, women's rights organisation (WROs) working in this area have become increasingly proactive in implementing interventions to address this problem. These organisations are typically non-profit, non-governmental and independent bodies that advocate against sexual violence, increase awareness and accountability, and collaborate with policymakers to develop policies that prevent such violence (Sule and Sambo, 2021). Through their work they help to bridge the gender gap and promote the needs of girls and women.

Sexual violence is a particular concern for WROs, given that women and girls account for most survivors. These WROs work on different fronts to see that existing gender norms and other structures that cause sexual violence to thrive are slowly but surely dismantled. WROs in Nigeria, for example, have lobbied for legal reforms, increased awareness of the problem at different levels, and supported the development of policies and response teams in universities.

The fact that most perpetrators are male can result in men being treated as adversaries in campaigns against sexual violence (McCray, 2015). However, research has shown that quicker gains can be made by engaging men and boys effectively in the conversation (Fabiano et al., 2003). In addition, studies show that men wield significant influence over the decisions of other men and can, therefore, contribute to success in transforming gender norms through their participation in advocacy activities and as personal role models (PettyJohn et al., 2018; Fabiano et al., 2003). Engaging men as allies in the campaign against sexual violence reframes their involvement as constructive, rather than as a source of blame, and reduces their resistance to engage with the issue (Onasoga et al., 2019; Katz, 1995).

There is, however, a dearth of information on whether WROs in Nigeria have made efforts to engage men and boys specifically as allies rather than adversaries in the fight against sexual violence. This report, therefore, examines the extent to which WROs engage men and boys in the discourse on sexual violence in tertiary education institutions and the factors that shape such engagement. It presents the findings of a research study on how factors such as religion and culture affect the strategies adopted by WROs to engage men and boys in activities against sexual violence and how this may vary by location.

Conceptual framework

Sexual violence

In the context of this report, we adopt the definition of sexual violence provided by the Sexual Violence Research Institute (SVRI) as: 'non-consensual completed or attempted sexual contact; non-consensual acts of a sexual nature not involving contact (such as voyeurism or sexual harassment); acts of sexual trafficking committed against someone who is unable to consent or refuse, and online exploitation' (SVRI, 2020). While sexual violence can be directed against both men and women, this study focused on female students in tertiary institutions.

In Nigeria, about 9% of Nigerian girls and women between the ages of 15 and 49 were reported to have experienced sexual abuse at least once in their lifetime, according to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS). However, these figures indicate significant underreporting when compared with anecdotal observations and newspaper reports. Other studies such as one conducted on sexual violence amongst female students in the University of Port Harcourt found that 46.7% had suffered at least one form of sexual violence (Mezie and Alamima, 2014). This suggests silence around the issues of sexual violence, as well as the need for further research. NDHS data also suggest vast underreporting: around two-thirds of women who have experienced physical or sexual abuse have never sought help to stop the violence with only 32% seeking help.

This underreporting is linked to a narrow understanding of sexual violence. Most Nigerian literature that addresses sexual violence focuses on rape, sex as a bribe, (such as sex for grades or as a result of coercion), child abuse and sexual assault. It tends to neglect other forms of sexual violence, such as non-contact acts of violence that include catcalling, unwarranted sexual comments and even unsolicited pictures via social media, as well as other non-penetrative acts like groping. As a result, these forms of sexual violence often go unreported and have not been studied extensively.

Sexual violence and gender norms in Nigeria

Sexual violence is shaped significantly by gender norms (Nydegger et al., 2017). These norms are understood as the 'subset of social norms that relate specifically to gender differences' (Pulerwitz et al., 2019). They are informal, deeply entrenched and widely held beliefs about gender roles, power relations, standards or expectations that govern human behaviours and practices in a particular social context and at a particular time (UNICEF, 2020).

In Nigeria, gender norms are largely patriarchal, with men viewed as higher in social ranking than women (Amusan et al., 2017), and it is largely accepted that women are or should be subordinate to men. Norms around violence also tend to minimise certain aspects of sexual violence, in particular sexual harassment. This narrow understanding of violence facilitates an environment where men, whether younger or older, engage in behaviours that make women and girls uncomfortable – including catcalling, teasing and physical touching – that are not regarded by these men as sexual violence. Furthermore, gender norms on masculinity emphasise that men and boys are invincible and should be able to get away with sexual harassment (Fakunmoju et al., 2016).

Religion and culture wield influence over and maintain gender norms to a significant degree within Nigerian society, providing a platform that enables sexual violence to thrive (Winkel, 2019). Religion has also been used to propagate harmful gender norms, such as the culture of silence, which has led to the dismissal of the lived experience of survivors of sexual violence. Similarly, abused women are taught to endure abuse (Scarsella and Krehbiel, 2019).

While it has been argued that religion in itself does not intend harm, the interpretation and teaching of religion has been employed to perpetuate violence (Scarsella and Krehbiel, 2019). Interpretations of religion have often been used to disadvantage women in Nigeria (Kullima et al., 2010). Although it is natural to find different perspectives related to the same concept, the social construction of many religions has created an environment in which sexual violence can flourish.

In Nigeria, the major religions are Islam (53.5% of the population) and Christianity (45.9%) (CIA Factbook, 2019). The relationship between Christianity and sexual violence is quite complex. In the interpretation of theological concepts, for example, reinforcing God's wrath can be used to perpetuate 'righteous' violence and dominance by abusers while a focus on God's mercy suggests that humanity and understanding should permeate relationships (Westenberg, 2017). In some versions of Christian teaching women are portrayed as weaker than and therefore inferior to men (Slater, 2020). At the same time, Christians are also often admonished to emulate Christ's selflessness by being friends with their enemies, loving their abusers and forgiving all offences without concern for their own individual safety (McDugal and Behel, 2021). Forgiveness can be seen, therefore, to empower the perpetrator and increase the vulnerability of the survivor (Scarsella and Krehbiel, 2019). Christianity has also been used to manipulate the survivor to focus on the repentance of the perpetrator, forgetting that sexual violence is a criminal act that requires accountability (McDugal and Behel, 2021; Scarsella and Krehbiel, 2019). In contrast, Christianity also emphasises love, and the protection of women and of the human body as being made in the image of God, all of which negate abuse.

Similarly, while some adherents of Islam believe in the equality of men and women, there are diverse understandings. Some argue that there is no excuse to resort to domestic violence in spousal relationships, while others claim that the religion supports light strikes or beating in cases of 'spousal disobedience' (Pertek, 2020).

In line with prevailing norms across ethnic groups in Nigeria, sexual violence uses the assumptions contained within existing social norms to validate toxic masculinity, objectify women and support the silencing of women's voices. These assumptions are linked to, for example, the perpetuation of rape myths such as the social justification of rape by men because of the way in which a woman is 'dressed'. They reflect how deeply the patriarchy is engrained in Nigerian society (Fakunmoju et al., 2020).

The country's educational institutions are mirrors of that society. Gender norms have been identified as the major cause of exploitative male-female relations reported in its tertiary education institutions (Odejide, 2014). For example, female students have been seen to cook and clean for male students and women who do not conform to these domestic roles are seen as not being 'wife material' (Odejide, 2014). Although there are no school policies that mandate the secondary role of women, many believe that, given women's 'natural place', they will fit in best in assisting or supporting roles. As a result, women are mainly vice presidents or assistant executives in student fellowships and unions while the men hold the executive positions (Odejide, 2014). The presumed 'nurturing' nature of women also sees them taking charge of the welfare aspects of their school societies.

Within Nigeria's tertiary education institutions, therefore, the patriarchal attitudes that are prevalent in wider society provide fertile ground for a perception that women are subservient to men and lack ownership of their own bodies. They often reflect permissive attitudes to sexual assault, and a belief in the inability of young women to say no to the unwanted sexual advances that may come from their peers, their intimate partners, their lecturers and other people in authority in these institutions. In addition, norms around chastity often focus on women and girls, fuelling victim shaming and blaming where sexual violence occurs.

Male engagement

Male engagement in public health interventions has been described as ‘a programmatic approach that involves men and boys (a) as clients and beneficiaries, (b) as partners and (c) as agents of change, in actively promoting gender equality, women's empowerment and the transformation of inequitable definitions of masculinity’ (GHeC, 2022). It is distinct from programmes that address the issues that affect men and boys directly. The Beijing Declaration provides a basis for male engagement through governments’ commitment to ‘encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality.’ It identifies gender-based violence (GBV) as a key area where male engagement and participation is required (UN, 1995).

Interest and investment in the engagement of men in different aspects of public health has been growing since the 1990s (Barker et al., 2011). Indeed, the World Health Organization (WHO) has come to recognise male engagement as pivotal in changing sexual and reproductive health outcomes (WHO, 2015). If men are encouraged to take a larger, more specific role in prevention efforts it may significantly reduce the occurrence of sexual violence (Banyard et al., 2004).

Women's Rights Organisations (WROs) could, therefore, include male engagement as a strategy to reinforce their interventions to address harmful gender norms and sexual violence. This strategy has already been used in various ways to eliminate sexual and GBV as noted in the ALiGN Guide: Gender Norms and Masculinities (ALiGN, 2019). These include group-based gender education to shift norms in men and boys, direct engagement with perpetrators to change their behaviours and attitudes, engagement with men and boys who have grown up in families where GBV was perpetrated, and the use of male champions in messaging. Championing male involvement also includes community outreach and awareness programmes, door-to-door visits and educating, workplace education programmes, and mass media campaigns that are targeted specifically at men (Audet et al., 2016; Doyle et al., 2018).

Some studies show that male engagement can improve gender-related behavioural outcomes (Tokhi et al., 2018; Chowdhury, 2013). In a study conducted on an intervention aimed at preventing sexual violence through engaging college men, male participants in the study self-reported positive changes in language, perspective, and behaviour shortly after the interventions to transform ideologies on rape myths and gender norms (Barone et al., 2007). Some other studies also show that male engagement programmes can change men's attitudes towards violence against women and girls through improving awareness on gender inequities and the transformation of negative gender norms (Instituto Promundo, 2012). More recent randomised trials are ongoing to evaluate the best ways to engage males in sexual violence prevention in universities (Yount et al, 2020). This suggests that this approach has potential effectiveness in changing behaviour in tertiary institutions.

Methodology

Key research objectives

The objective of this project was to examine the engagement of men and boys by WROs involved in interventions to prevent sexual violence in Nigerian tertiary institutions, the extent to which they have engaged males, the strategies employed, and the factors that moderate the engagement of men in the prevention, reduction or elimination of sexual violence, in particular culture and religion. It also aimed to identify the challenges that may prevent or limit constructive engagement.

Key research questions

The study aimed to answer the following research questions.

- What are the prevailing gender norms in Nigeria's tertiary education institutions? What are the gender norms that underpin the sexual violence in these institutions?
- Do religion and culture influence and entrench these gender norms, and in what way?
- How and to what extent is male engagement incorporated into WRO activities in tertiary institutions? Do religion and culture have any influence on male engagement?
- What male engagement strategies are employed by WROs and how do they contribute to eliminating sexual violence within the target population?
- What barriers and opportunities exist for male engagement by WROs in tertiary institutions?

Research design

This study used a mixed-methods approach comprised of a quantitative and qualitative cross-sectional survey to solicit information from respondents on the engagement of men and boys by WROs involved in the campaign against sexual violence in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Tools used

The quantitative tool (online survey) was deployed among students in selected higher institutions. Qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) with male and female students, student leaders and staff of women-led WROs working in the institutions.

The quantitative data collection was carried out using a self-administered questionnaire designed by the research team after a comprehensive literature review. The instrument was deployed online on [Kobocollect toolbox](https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/G0z19Q6W)¹, and was shared on the major social media sites used by many of the students in the institutions surveyed.

¹ <https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/G0z19Q6W>

To encourage student participation, research assistants from the Centre For Health Ethics, Law and Development (CHELD) liaised with student leaders in the surveyed institutions to prompt students' interest in the research. The student leaders also helped to share the survey link on social media platforms like class WhatsApp and Telegram groups to encourage participation by both females and males. In addition, hard copies of the questionnaire were provided to students in institutions where there was patchy internet to encourage participation.

FGDs and KIs were conducted using guides with open-ended questions designed to capture information around the study objectives and thematic areas. The themes discussed with participants during the FGDs and KIs included prevailing gender norms, assessment of incorporation of male engagement strategies in WROs' activities in tertiary institutions and existing barriers and opportunities for male engagement. To avoid double responses, participants were asked if they had responded to a similar survey online. Individuals who had done so were excluded from the paper version of the questionnaire administration.

The research is, however, subject to a few limitations. The use of an online method of data collection is prone to introduce bias in the response of study participants. It may also disenfranchise participants who do not have access to mobile devices.

Sampling technique

A total of 1,496 respondents were recruited for this study, with a purposive sampling strategy employed in their selection. A minimum sample size of 300 students per institution were estimated to participate in the online survey while three FGDs consisting of 6-10 male students, female students and student leaders were carried out respectively in each of the institutions surveyed. A total of 10 KIs were conducted by experienced WRO staff with recent experience of carrying out interventions on sexual violence in the targeted institutions.

In selecting the institutions, the country was divided into two: North and South. On this basis, three tertiary institutions in the North (mostly Muslim) and two in the South (mostly Christian) were selected for the study. The schools included different types of institutions – university, college of education and polytechnic where WROs or similar organisations have had sexual violence prevention programmes or a similar intervention.

Table 1: Names and locations of institutions involved in the study

Name of institution	Location
Bayero University	Kano, Kano State
Federal College of Education	Bichi, Kano State
University of Abuja	Federal Capital Territory, Abuja
University of Ibadan	Ibadan, Oyo State
Yaba College of Technology	Yaba, Lagos

Source: Primary data findings.

Inclusion criteria

For the purposes of our study of their engagement with men to address sexual violence, we adopted the OECD (2016) definition of WROs as: ‘civil society organisations with an overt women’s or girls’ rights, gender equality or feminist purpose....’. Although those included in this study may not necessarily define themselves as feminist organisations, they generally work to protect women and girls, partly through redefining beliefs around masculinity and femininity. The full list of criteria for the selection of WROs for inclusion in this study is as follows:

- women-led and women’s rights organisations (WROs)
- include a focus on GBV, as reflected in policy statements
- programmes and interventions on sexual and GBV have been conducted within the last four years in the selected tertiary institutions in the selected areas – Lagos, Ibadan, Kano and Abuja. Programmes are intended to interrogate or transform gender norms. WROs state in their profiles or websites that their programmes include the engagement of men and boys.

Although many of the WROs have programmes in the selected institutions, only a few have programmes that are targeted specifically at the male population. A large number of the programmes implemented involved both sexes (Table 2).

All 10 WROs currently work in, were about to implement in, or had recently implemented programmes in tertiary institutions. All have implemented programmes that involve both sexes. At least one staff representative from each organisation was interviewed in order to gather information on its work on male engagement. The details are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Type of male engagement in programmes carried out by selected women’s rights organisations

	WRO and tertiary institution(s)	General activities	Activities in tertiary institution	Men/male engagements	Outcome as reported by civil society organisations (WROs)
1.	Adolescent Health and Information Project (AHIP) – Federal College of Education Bichi	The organisation has been working in the area of policy formulation and creation of opportunities for survivors of violence.	The organisation conducted a four-year intervention programme in conjunction with ‘voice for change’ at Bayero University Kano. The programme aimed to raise awareness on sexual violence (SV).	No specific male engagement. Men and women were included in the programme. The project used young male lecturers as mentors, while older male lecturers who showed interest were also trained and played the role of mentors.	Many young men became advocates against gender-based violence (GBV) and went on to create their own programmes.

2.	Divine Women of Purpose Association (DWOPA) - Secondary schools (with intention of extending interventions to tertiary)	The organisation was established in 2014 and has been at the forefront of advocating, sensitising, mentoring and counselling women and girls.	The organisation is not currently running programmes in universities, but engages secondary students.	No male engagement in tertiary institutions.	Schools have been able to continue with the He4She programme by establishing groups that continue to train boys solely on the programme goals in secondary schools.
3.	Education as a Vaccine (EVA) - University of Abuja	Founded in 2000, the organisation focuses on improving the health of children, adolescents and young people.	The organisation has programmes addressing SV in universities in Nigeria, but not in the institutions covered by this study.	No specific male engagement. All programmes ensure that both males and females are included.	Creating policies to address GBV in schools.
4.	Gender Mobile - Yaba College of Technology University of Abuja	The major programme implemented by the organisation aims to create awareness and stop the menace of SV in Nigeria's tertiary education institutions.	The programme aims to support tertiary institutions to address sexual harassment. This is done by leveraging technology to create safe means of reporting cases of SV.	The organisation ensures that any programme or project being implemented is gender sensitive. It has also involved men as campus ambassadors in the fight against SV.	Interventions have increased male sense of ownership and the need to defend females who are sexually molested.
5.	HACEY - University of Ibadan Yaba College of Technology University of Abuja	Programmes include, creating development projects, and working with stakeholders and other policy makers on gender-related projects.	The organisation implemented the Youth Amplified project, which trained 7,000 students virtually on responses to GBV. This project was funded by the Spotlight Initiative.	No specific male engagement. The organisation involves females in its programme through training on GBV and advocating for men in position of power to speak against it.	Supported advocacy for reform of policies and laws against GBV.
6.	Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation (SMYF) - Bayero University Kano	Improving the policy environment for response to SV and GBV.	Created a gender justice programme (a whistle blowing platform) for institutions of learning	No specific male engagement. The focus is on safeguarding for girls.	Activities enable accountability for perpetrators of SV.

7.	Women Advocates Research and Documentation Center (WARDC) - University of Ibadan Yaba College of technology University of Abuja	Advocacy for policies and laws that improve the lives of women and girls across the 36 states in Nigeria. Mediation services for victim of SV and GBV. Building the capacity of grass root women.	A project supported by the European Union to strengthen both the system and structures of the institutions. It also aimed to advocate for SV policies across different institutions in the country.	No specific male engagement. Men and women are engaged together.	Strengthened institutional policies on SV.
8.	Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF) - University of Abuja	Raising awareness on the prevalence of SV in communities.	Sensitisation and awareness generation for students on SV in tertiary Institution.	None in tertiary institutions. However, WARIF undertakes The Boy's Conversation Café that is specifically for boys aged 13 to 18 years.	Women were empowered by receiving more information on SV and available protections. Men are boys are more willing to have conversations on SV.
9.	Women Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) - Yaba College of technology Bayero University Kano	Sensitisation and awareness at community levels on GBV. Protecting the legal rights of women.	Engaging leaders of faith and community at the community level as male champions.	No specific male engagement in tertiary institutions. However, engaged young boys in the community. Partnered with the Save the Boys Initiative to give training on life skills such as negotiation and communication. Using male champions like faith and culture leaders.	Increased awareness on SV and changed perceptions on the 'rights and wrongs' of SV. Monitoring and evaluation activities report men's behavioural changes in dealing with women, including greater willingness to educate their peers as well as having a better understanding of consent in sexual relations.
10.	Youth Alive Foundation - University of Abuja	Youth-focused organisation on social issues and social change.	Organisation of project and symposiums on sexual harassment with all relevant stakeholders from the institution.	No specific male engagement. Both male and females are engaged in all projects.	Increased awareness of SV in the institution.

Findings

Figures 1 - 4 set out the sex, age range, ethnicity and religion of the students responding to the survey.

Figure 1: Sex of students responding to the survey

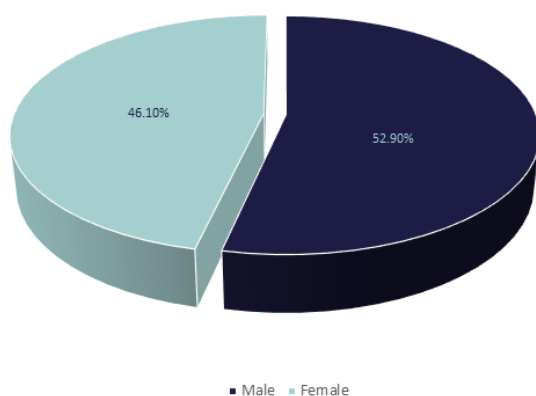


Figure 2: Age of students responding to the survey

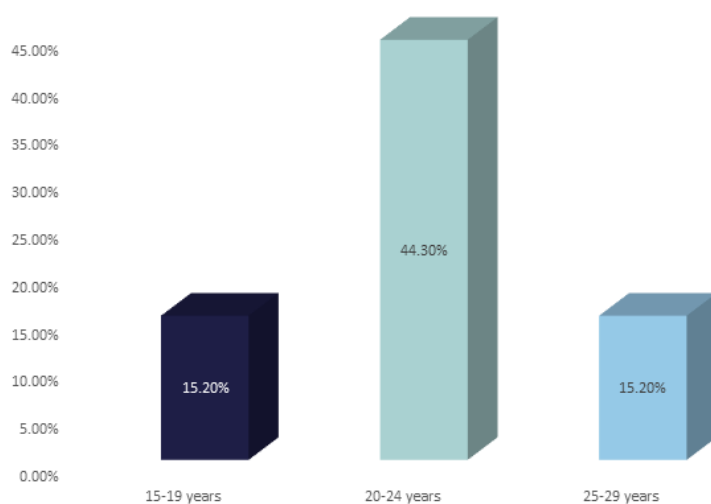


Figure 3: Ethnicity of students responding to the survey

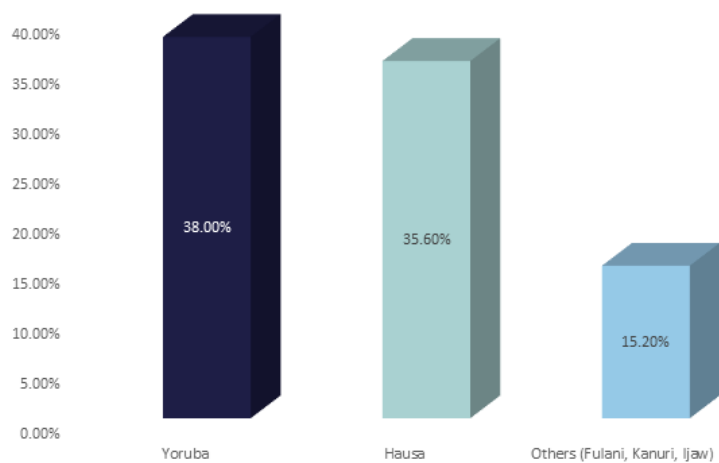
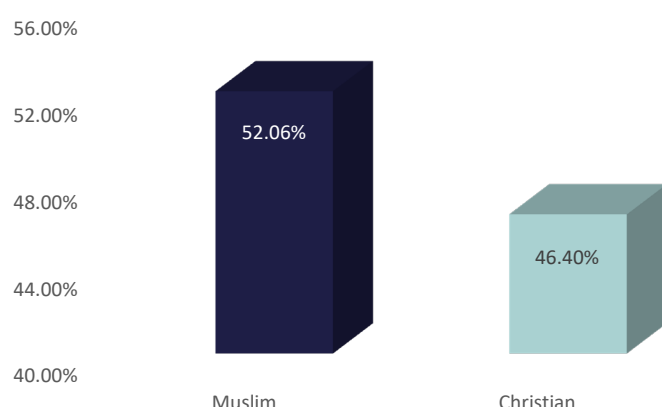


Figure 4: Religion of students responding to the survey



Perception of trends in the prevalence sexual violence in Nigerian tertiary institutions

Regarding trends in sexual violence, findings from the study showed that 52.6% of study participants both strongly agreed and agreed that there has been an increase in sexual violence within the tertiary institutions. On the otherhand, 13.1% disagreed, 9.8% neither disagreed nor agreed; and 30.2% were unsure (See table 3).

Table 3. Perception of trends in the prevalence of sexual violence in tertiary institutions

Concerns over increased incidence of sexual violence in tertiary institutions	Frequency (number)	Percentage (%)
I strongly agree	255	17.0
I agree	533	35.6
I neither agree nor disagree	146	9.8
I disagree	196	3.2
I strongly disagree	61	4.1
Unsure	317	30.2

Table 4. Perception of the trend of sexual violence in tertiary institutions by sex

Concerns over increased incidence of sexual violence in tertiary institutions	Female number (%)	Male number (%)
I strongly agree	613 (40.0)	548 (36.6)
I agree	90 (6.0)	81 (5.4)

I strongly disagree	19 (1.3)	41 (2.7)
I disagree	4 (0.3)	6 (0.8)
I neither agree nor disagree	29 (1.9)	24 (1.6)
Unsure	8 (0.5)	17 (1.1)

Concerning the trend in sexual violence through the years, both male (42%) and female (46%) study participants agreed or strongly agreed that sexual violence within the institutions is increasingly prevalent through the years with females agreeing slightly more than males (see table 4). Similarly, across both northern (49.2%) and southern tertiary (42.9%) institution, there seems to be a perception of increase in the prevalence of sexual violence. Table 5 provides further details on these findings.

Survey respondents also shared their views on the major perpetrators of sexual violence stating that male students and lecturers were more likely to perpetrate acts of sexual violence (46.7%) compared to females (18.5%) in the tertiary institutions. This finding is consistent with earlier studies that suggests males to be the major perpetrators of sexual violence (see table 5).

Table 5: Major perpetrators of sexual violence

Major perpetrators of sexual violence		Frequency (number)	Percentage (%)
	Female lecturers	13	0.9
	Female students	264	17.6
	Male lecturers	297	19.9
	Male students	401	26.8
	Other	501	33.5
	No response	20	1.3

Factors affecting prevalence of sexual violence in tertiary institutions

Some participants attributed sexual violence in institutions to lecturers taking advantage of female students' poor grades. Others noted that seductive clothing and witnessing violence (particularly at home) also played a significant role in perpetrating sexual violence.

This indicates the impact of power dynamics and gender norms in sexual violence in which females are seen as prey, especially where they are at a clear disadvantage, such as poor grades. Issues like 'seductive' clothing also indicate the impacts of harmful gender norms around chastity, which requires females to dress modestly in order to avoid sexual violence. Others have suggested that experiencing GBV at home or during childhood increases the likelihood of perpetrating sexual violence, which suggests a need for family interventions and approaches to tackle harmful peer influence amongst males.

A FGD participant reported:

'In the institution, there are a number of things that expose young girls to exploitation or even violence. We have found out some lecturers are randy and as a result when young girls have academic challenges, they tend to take advantage of those challenges that these young girls have to exploit them.'

Male KII participant

Another participant stated that:

'Like when a male child is seeing the father beat up the wife, what kind of character are you transferring to that child? So bad parenting is number one. And then the kind of peers children move around with: the kind of friends you move around with really affects the kind of person you will become.'

Male FGD participant, UI

Prevailing gender norms

According to this study, the gender attitudes and conventions that sustain patriarchy in society can also be found in tertiary institutions. When compared to the 32.8% who disagreed or strongly disagreed that women/girls and men/boys are equal, the poll data revealed that 55% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

These cultural interpretations also place men in positions of leadership and decision-making authority over women. Participants in the FGDs noted that men are considered as superiors and leaders while women are seen as followers with lesser rights, freedom and responsibilities than their male counterparts in society. A participant stated:

'In this part of the country, Kano in particular, the women belong to the kitchen and women should not be involved in decision making in the society, with respect to society first, then secondly with respect to running of home, because she is a woman, they believe she cannot think well.'

Female FGD participant, Bayero University Kano (BUK)

Gender norms and stereotypical beliefs that differentiate the roles of men and women in society are still very much prevalent. Study participants echoed this belief:

'Most students have the feeling that there are some responsibilities that are exclusive to only males. For example

it is girls' responsibility to clean up dishes in the house and it is the boys' responsibility to always wash the car. They have these kind of examples because that is what they have seen from the household setting, so that is what is currently dominant in the various household; it's like them speaking out of their personal experience.'

Male KII participant

These gender norms and stereotypical beliefs are important to note as they often also emphasise men's ownership of women's bodies a notion which has been linked to sexual violence (USAID, 2015).

Gender norms in Nigeria's tertiary education institutions

Many of the respondents to this study (75.2%) self-reported having a good knowledge of the concept of sexual violence before enrolling in a tertiary institutions. However, this self-reported knowledge does not coincide with other answers, for instance, in relation to consent. Furthermore, when students from Southern tertiary institutions were compared to students from Northern institutions, it was discovered that more students from Southern institutions reported having prior awareness of sexual violence before enrolling. Although many of the participants believed that males are still seen as superior to their female counterparts even within the tertiary institutions, the narrative is changing, but this has its own challenges. Women now hold senior positions in schools but continue to face gender norms that challenge the notion of equality, including their leadership role. This maintains inequality in power creating an imbalance in relations between women and men.

'When a male and a female contest – even if the female candidate is qualified or is a better leader than the male – the male just tends to have more supporters than the female because of the stereotype that males are stronger and better leaders than females.'

Female FGD participant, University of Ibadan (UI)

The impact of religion and culture on gender norms

While some participants believed that traditions and religious interpretations fuel sexual violence, others felt that religion has nothing to do with sexual violence. Several of the key informants from WROs noted that religious leaders play significant roles in maintaining the male dominance structure and culture by concealing cases of sexual violence. One key informant speaking on the role of religion noted that:

'Religion isn't assisting. You are a rebel if you speak up, since you do not respect the roles of women and men as established by God'.

Female KII participant

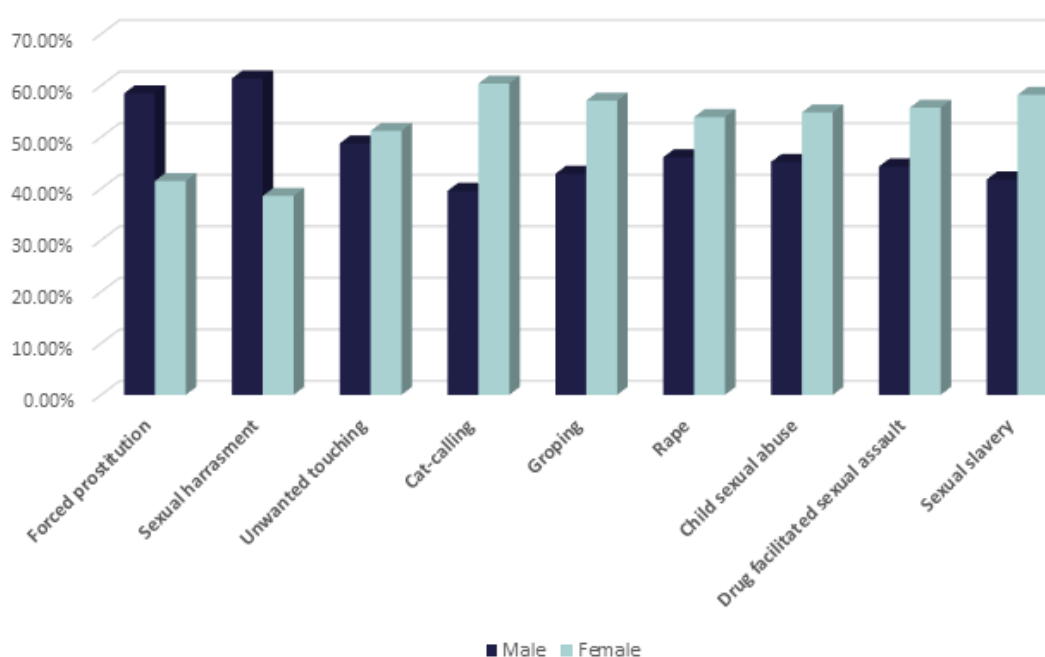
Study participants in the North said that religion does not contribute to GBV, but emphasised that wrongful interpretations of religion could give rise to gender inequality. In this regard, one participant explained that:

‘... it is not that religion contributes: rather religious misinterpretation has contributed to these aspects. For example here in this society, the popular religion is Islam and some people misinterpret the concept of Islam about this gender inequality. They are thinking men are above women or something of that nature, but in reality in Islam there is nothing like gender violence. All Islam means is men should treat women fairly, the two should motivate one another.’
Male FGD participant, BUK

Personal knowledge and perspectives of sexual violence

Majority of the students presented a poor understanding of the different forms of sexual violence. The findings revealed that while more than half of the respondents were able to identify unwanted touching (53.4%), rape (60.2%) and sexual harassment (55.5%) as forms of sexual violence, majority did not identify catcalling (82.6%), groping (81.6%), child sexual abuse (51.2%) and drug facilitated sexual assault (66.4%) as forms of sexual violence. This suggests a limited understanding of the behaviours that are recognised as sexual violence. Furthermore, a gender analysis of knowledge of sexual violence revealed that female respondents knew more about the various forms of sexual assault than their male counterparts.

Figure 5: Gender analysis of knowledge about sexual violence



In all, 76% of students agreed that consent is always required before participating in any sexual acts. In addition, 71.1% agreed or strongly agreed that consent could be withdrawn at any point during a sexual act or sexual contact.

More male students, (6%), however, disagreed that consent is always required before any sexual contact; in contrast to only 3.8% of female students. The responses show the disparity between females and males' understanding of importance of consent, and suggest that more effort is required to ensure male understanding of (and compliance with) this concept (see Table 6 and Figure 5).

Table 6. Gender and knowledge of consent before sexual contact among respondents

Consent is always required before partaking in any sexual contact	Gender of respondents	
	Female number (%)	Male number (%)
Strongly agree	332 (22.2)	302 (20.2)
Agree	253 (16.9)	294 (19.7)
Strongly disagree	25 (1.7)	36 (2.4)
Disagree	31 (2.1)	54 (3.6)
Neither agree or disagree	28 (1.9)	57 (3.8)
Unsure	30 (2.0)	54 (3.6)

Campaigns against sexual violence in tertiary institutions

In all 41.8% agreed that programmes implemented by the WROs were helpful in preventing cases relating to sexual violence in the institution. 17.4% agreed with this statement, 9.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 25.2% were unsure. This finding indicates that programs implemented by WROs in the tertiary institutions are not perceived as helpful by more than half of the students, implying that WROs may not be as visible as intended and as such interventions are not as efficient and productive. WROs may need to employ alternative approaches in planning interventions to capture more participation particularly within the tertiary institutions.

In terms of information provided on sexual violence prevention, half of the students, 52.9%, stated that information in this regard is provided within the institutions, while 18.6% stated otherwise and 28% were unsure whether any information was being provided. Also, more males (29.7%) agreed that information was provided on sexual violence compared to females (23.7%) (see Table 7).

Table 7. Information provided on sexual violence prevention in tertiary institutions

Information provided on sexual violence prevention in tertiary institutions	Gender of respondents	
	Female number (%)	Male number (%)
Yes	354 (23.7)	437 (29.7)
No	134 (9.0)	144 (9.6)
Unsure	205 (13.7)	210 (14.3)

In all, 42.4% of male respondents also indicated that the information provided during campaigns and prevention activities on sexual violence were mostly targeted at everybody while 31.1% reported that only female students were targeted (see Table 8).

Table 8: Major target audience for information provided during campaigns and prevention activities on sexual violence

Major target audience for information provided during campaigns and prevention activities on sexual violence	Gender of respondents	
	Female number (%)	Male number (%)
Everybody	94 (41.2)	431 (42.4)
Female lecturers	4 (1.8)	16 (1.6)
Female non-academic staff	1 (0.4)	1 (0.1)
Female students	71 (31.1)	323 (31.8)
Male lecturers	11 (4.8)	31 (3.1)
Male non-academic staff	0 (0.0)	2 (0.2)
Male students	22 (10.6)	105 (14.7)
Unsure	21 (9.2)	93 (6.1)

The study also noted some geographic disparities regarding the major target audiences for information shared during campaigns (see Table 9).

Table 9. Location of institutions and major target audience for information provided during campaigns and prevention activities on sexual violence

Location of institutions	Major target audience for information provided during campaigns and prevention activities on sexual violence		
		Everybody	Female students
Northern institutions	Bayero University Kano (BUK)	260 (29.5%)	44 (9.7%)
	Federal College of Education Bichi (FCE Bichi)	253 (24.3%)	36 (7.9%)
	University of Abuja	180 (17.3%)	73 (16.1%)
Southern institutions	University of Ibadan	144 (13.8%)	169 (45.4%)
	Yaba College of Technology	157 (15.1%)	95 (20.9%)

Students perception of WRO interventions in Nigerian tertiary institutions

A majority, around 59%, agreed programmes that include men and women implemented by the WROs were helpful in preventing cases of sexual violence in the school, while fewer disagreed (9.2%) and slightly more 25.2% were unsure. Perceptions of the effectiveness of WRO interventions were thus strong but not not overwhelmingly so. More participants from the southern institutions found the activities of WROs helpful (41.4%) compared to the northern institutions who did not (72.7%). This could be arguably due to the reported barriers WROs experience in convening male and female students together to participate in planned interventions in the predominantly muslim North where male and female interactions are guided by stricter regulations. While religion may not hinder WRO activities (as found in this study), it may influence the response rate and participation of students in activities.

Table 10. Knowledge of information on sexual violence prevention in tertiary institutions

Information provided on sexual violence prevention	Gender of respondents	
	Female number (%)	Male number (%)
No	29 (12.7)	210 (20.7)
Yes	123 (53.9)	523 (51.5)
Unsure	74 (32.5)	274 (27.0)

The analysis showed that a roughly equal proportion of females (53.9%) and males (51.5%) had some knowledge of information provided on sexual violence prevention (see Table 10). However, although the students noted that a few awareness campaigns on GBV, including sexual violence were carried

out on campus, they could not recall the specific names of these campaigns or the organisations implementing these initiatives. In general, the visibility and impact of WROs in higher education institutions is low, with most students unable to identify those working to prevent, manage and organise programmes against sexual violence against women in higher institutions. This could also explain why 48.3% of female participants agreed that interventions were helpful compared to the majority of male participants (62.3%) who found the interventions not helpful (Table 11). Interventions are also mostly targeted at females which may help explain the differences.

Table 11. Perception of WRO activities by gender

Gender of respondents	WROs found helpful in cases relating to sexual violence	
	Yes	No
Female	579 (48.3%)	110 (37.0%)
Male	606 (50.5%)	185 (62.3%)

Incorporation of male engagement strategies in the activities of women's rights organisations in tertiary institutions

The survey data show that only 37.0% of the students claimed to have seen WROs specifically inviting men and boys to participate in a campaign against sexual violence in their institution, while 34.7% claimed not to have seen this, and 28.2% were unsure (see annex). This suggests that fewer students are aware of any specific attempts at male engagement programmes in the universities. Similarly, just 23.4% of respondents agreed that WROs involved men and boys to a very large extent in campaigns against sexual violence in tertiary institutions.

It is also interesting to note that 53.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that men and boys were currently active in the campaign against sexual violence in their College/University, while 16.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Nevertheless, far more students agreed or strongly agreed 83.3% that men and boys should be more involved in the campaign against sexual violence. Only 5.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this, while 5.5% neither agreed nor disagreed. This indicates that male engagement is a strategy considered welcome by students, providing a basis for WROs to strongly consider this strategy. In addition to this, results also showed that when the extent to which WROs engage men and boys on campaigns against sexual violence was compared within institutions, 41.9 % of students from Southern institutions reported witnessing WROs engagement to a significant extent, compared to only 19.3% of students in Northern institutions (see Table 12). The quantitative component of the study also found that male participation in sexual assault prevention activities carried out in tertiary institutions was lower in the Northern States. (see Table 12). This suggests that there is more perception of engagement of males in the South than the North and this should be factored into future male engagement interventions.

Table 12: Location of institutions and extent to which women's rights organisations involve men and boys in their campaigns against sexual violence

Extent to which WROs involve men and boys in their campaigns against sexual violence	Location of institutions				
	Northern institutions			Southern institutions	
	Bayero University number (%)	FCE Bichi number (%)	University of Abuja number (%)	University of Ibadan number (%)	Yaba College of Technology number (%)
Not at all	3 (1.0%)	4 (1.4%)	6 (2.4%)	11 (3.5%)	0 (0.0%)
To a large extent	85 (28.0%)	13 (4.5%)	30 (11.9%)	55 (17.6%)	7 (2.8%)
To moderate extent	28 (9.2%)	11 (3.8%)	24 (9.5%)	42 (13.4%)	13 (5.2%)
To a small extent	14 (4.6%)	126 (43.6%)	51 (20.2%)	6 (1.9%)	12 (4.8%)
To a very large extent	44 (14.5%)	7 (2.4%)	6 (2.4%)	38 (12.1%)	75 (29.8%)
To a very small extent	40 (13.2%)	9 (3.1%)	7 (2.8%)	3 (1.0%)	7 (2.8%)
To an extremely large extent	9 (3.0%)	35 (12.1%)	9 (3.6%)	14 (4.5%)	21 (8.3%)
To an extremely small extent	8 (2.6%)	32 (11.1%)	6 (2.4%)	4 (1.3%)	9 (3.6%)
Unsure	73 (24.0%)	52 (18.0%)	114 (45.1%)	140 (44.7%)	108 (42.9%)

The qualitative component of the research generated similar insights. Male participation in sexual assault prevention activities in tertiary institutions was lower in the Northern institutions than in Southern institutions. The reason for this difference appears to be tied to religious practices in both regions. Although, as earlier stated, some interpretation of Christian text portrays women as inferior to men, Christianity as predominantly practiced in the south is less restrictive. This has often proven beneficial for participation in WRO's planned interventions, whereas Islamic religion in the North discourages mingling and physical interaction amongst both sexes.

One study participant stated that religion was a major factor that prevents male participation in sexual violence prevention programmes:

'Islam religion does not allow the male to mingle with females.'
FGD participant, Federal College of Education

Participants in the Southern States, however, indicated that males are engaged in activities geared towards fighting GBV.

'For example, the group Gender Mainstreaming Office in the Student Affairs Division of UI has strong engagement of men in their activities through training male peer educators. The group reflects gender equality, stressing that men and boys must be powerful change agents in curbing GBV. They have a

responsibility to take the lead and influence their peers'
Female FGD participant, UI.

Male engagement: interventions by women's rights organisations

All of the WROs covered by this survey were currently implementing, were about to implement or had recently been implementing sexual violence interventions in tertiary education institutions. It was observed that there were no specific definitions of male engagement by these participating WROs although the concept appeared somewhat understood. As noted, few programmes were designed with male engagement in mind. These did not target males specifically or show any significantly deliberate engagement of males. Similarly, the majority reported having no organisational policy or document to guide them on how to engage men in their interventions, although some programme frameworks were reported to inherently mainstream gender. They noted, however, that engaging both sexes was essential to address the existing gaps and create a healthy balance.

'We do not see gender. There is no specific attention given to boys. That's why when we saw this invite we thought it will be a good avenue as that is a group that is not focused on much.'
Female KII participant

Interestingly, only one WRO designed a male-specific intervention: Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF) runs the Boys Conversation Café. This focuses on conversations for boys on gender norms and GBV and is aimed at boys aged 13 to 18 in secondary school. We were unable to obtain any evaluation of the impact of this intervention, which is ongoing.

'...we have an intervention for men specifically but it's not in tertiary institutions, it's in secondary schools and it's called the boys conversation café, it's specifically for boys within the ages of 13-18. We decided to implement this programme because we saw the need to engage boys at an early age on the issue of gender based violence. The programme has been a success, we know have boys we are aware that female need to be respected and not molested.'
Female KII participant

However, both males and females are targeted for many of the interventions carried out. While gender integration is important, the deliberate engagement of males in universities is crucial, given the significant levels of sexual violence against females by males in these settings.

The interviewees seemed to understand male engagement as ensuring that men are involved in some way, including as staff members only, as the following quote suggests:

'The gender unit staff are also made up of men, so there are men and women so engaging with the gender unit staff

involves engaging with both male and female staff.'

Female KII participant

A current strategy utilised by the WROs to engage men in the fight against sexual violence in tertiary institutions is the engagement of religious leaders, who are usually males, as reporting channels for cases of sexual violence. The results are mixed as illustrated by the following comment:

'For work in tertiary institutions, they had as one of their reporting channels as going to their chaplain to make a report of any form of sexual grievance but from a quick survey that we conducted, we discovered that students were not confident or did not trust that channel. So most students would rather prefer to talk with their friends than to go to the chaplain to share or report this kind of case for resolution.'

Male KII participant

Another strategy employed by the WROs is sensitisation and workshops for traditional leaders who are, again, typically males. The aim is to enlighten them to the factors driving sexual violence and the consequences, as one KII participant explains.

'But for us in Lagos State here, we have discovered that due to what that has been happening, most traditional leaders are waking up to responsibilities of ensuring that they don't conceal the issues of gender-based violence and they are also taking steps to ensure that if it is a case they need to report, they could make such report. This is because of the awareness and the sensitisation that has been done to reach these traditional leaders.'

Male KII participant

It was not clear however if traditional leaders had been engaged in prevention for this project. However, this is a current focus for several organisations working on women's rights in Nigeria.

An additional strategy is to select and train men as role mentors or models with a focus on leadership and self-development.

'From planning to execution, men were involved and when we selected who should be in the safe spaces, we selected men and women separately and of course, we trained some young lecturers, like those who have just come to join the university, some of them are youth corper (usually young people serving in Nigeria's compulsory programme after graduation from

the university – the National Youth Service Corps). We trained them to be mentors and some of the older lecturers that are really passionate about young people’s development were trained to be mentors. Both male and female. Everything we try to bring a balance.’

Female KII participant

Another contributed as follows:

‘First of all, let’s start with me as a person, I am leading the gender-based campaign for my organisation in Lagos and I work with a couple of other people that are also males. In the protest that happened in the University, the team leader of that campaign is a male; he led the team that was responsible for creating awareness at a campus meeting with stakeholders, reaching out to authorities on the campus, so yes..., we engaged young boys a lot.’

Male KII participant

While, as noted, all of the WROs are, or had recently been engaged in interventions to tackle sexual violence, the interventions envision males primarily as targets for intervention alongside females. Only one of the WROs surveyed, WARIF, had developed an intervention targeting males specifically.

The end result can be seen in an overall lack of male engagement, as noted by one study participant:

‘Well, frankly speaking males are not very involved in their activities and I think they should be encourage to be involved as this will help to fight gender-based violence.’

Female FGD participant, Federal College of Education

A current strategy utilized by the WROs to engage men in the fight against sexual violence in tertiary is the engagement of religious leaders who are usually but not always males as reporting channels for cases of sexual violence.

Outcomes of projects by women’s rights organisations in tertiary institutions

Students were unable to identify any of the organisations or name a specific project conducted by the WROs in this study, even though many of the WROs claimed to have ongoing or completed projects in their institutions. However, WROs indicated that some of the projects have generated some positive outcomes. A study participant explained that:

‘We conducted a training programme for students on

behavioural change on gender based violence in tertiary institutions which was very successful. We noticed that after the project many students were aware and informed on gender based violence.'

Male KII participant

Another explained that a project conducted by the organisation led to higher self-esteem among female students

'The changes that occurred include young people especially females projecting themselves, building self-esteem and even at that period, a lot of female contestants showed interests in students political positions.'

Female KII participant

A project outside the tertiary institutions also had results, as one participant reported:

'We developed a community based sexual violence programme with key stakeholders such as chiefs, youth leaders and women leaders. The project helped create a safe reporting channel for victims of gender based violence. This helped reduce the occurrence of gender-based violence in the community.'

Male KII participant

Importance of male engagement in sexual violence interventions

All the FGD participants agreed unanimously that male engagement is vital to the prevention of sexual violence in higher institutions and in wider society. They feel that this will create confidence for women, provide more effective solutions to overcome sexual violence from perpetrators, and empower men to protect women.

'Engaging men is very vital. They have a crucial role to play – as fathers, brothers, husbands and public advocates – in both speaking out against violence against women and girls, and in defying the destructive stereotypes that serve to normalise gender inequality. Men can do this by speaking out. Having greater involvement in women's rights organisations' work can have benefits for women, children, and men themselves;

and it can lead to a reduction in rates of men's violence against women.'

Female FGD participant, UI

The benefits of male engagement were also noted by the students. As suggested by the students, strategies of male involvement should focus on enlightening and educating men on the subject, involving men to lead sensitisation and campaigns against sexual violence, providing training and workshops for men and boys, providing forums for male-female discussions on the subject and engaging religious leaders.

'They shouldn't be selecting women alone and say this session is for women. We are the victims and we are the only people that are educated about gender violence. If the perpetrators are not educated, it won't make any impact.'

Female FGD participant, BUK)

Another study participant explained that:

'It takes boys to persuade other boys to adopt a positive or negative character, that is why male engagement in planning interventions is necessary.'

Male KII participant

Barriers and opportunities for WROs Activities in tertiary institutions

Generally, WROs experience a myriad of barriers in planning interventions within tertiary institutions. There is a lack of institutional political will to implement programmes or prosecute sexual violence offenders.

'The tertiary institutions sometimes want to protect staff who are involved in sexual harassment in order to save the reputation of the institution. They want to protect the people of their campus, and at the same time they are also struggling with what kind of liability they may incur by taking actions towards the perpetrator who may be in a position of influence. This makes institutions wary of gender-based violence programmes'.

Male KII participant.

Participants also indicated that student academic activities leave little or no time for other activities:

‘Most students have a lot they are doing. I can't attend the programme. I am having lectures, test and the weekend is a no-go area. During the week, they are doing classes.’

Male KII participant

Barriers and opportunities to male engagement

This study highlights the barriers to the engagement of men in sexual violence prevention by WROs working with tertiary institutions. The WROs did not cite religion or culture as a significant impediment to the design of interventions that emphasise male engagement. However, lack of comprehensive knowledge on male engagement was observed to be a major barrier. Many of the WROs displayed a poor understanding of what constitutes as male engagement. Some opined that male engagement involved engaging men and women as a collective.

‘We don't have one specific project or program specifically targeting men, NO, we have a gender neutral approach.’

Male KII participant

Some others believe male engagement to be including male staff in the organisation.

‘I mean we must have male staff even though we are women's organisation, you must have male staff.’

Female KII participant

Some WROs also believe that solely engaging men and boys will create a gender imbalance and transversely lead to gender inequality. As a result they would rather engage both men and women in programmes and interventions.

‘Our work is based on equality and human rights and it's strengthened by inclusiveness at all times. Therefore, we do not discriminate against boys or girls.’

Female KII participant

Another WRO stated that while male engagement may be helpful in the long term, their focus is on empowering women to protect themselves from abuse and violence in the short term.

‘We focus on girls because we want to teach them safeguarding in general. We are just looking to create safe spaces and environment for women.’

Female KII participant

There is also a lack of written commitment to engage men and boys solely in interventions. This will most likely impact dedication to planning interventions.

‘So in terms of a written commitment, we specifically don’t have a written commitment to involve boys.’

Female KII participant

WROs also reported experiencing difficulties in changing the preconceived mindset of men as sometimes men express a lack of interest in sexual violence discourse.

‘I mean boys will be boys. There are certain mentality and attitudes they display during sessions because of where they are from or what they been used to.’

Female KII participant

Students had different views on the factors that act as barriers to male engagement. Participants from the North indicated that religion does not support the interaction of men and women, while many in the South explained that there is a fear of engaging men who are seen as perpetrators and a belief among men that programmes to stem GBV always advocate for women to be on a par with men which they find antithetical to cultural and religious principles.

‘There is resistance from some men to attempt to challenge the power they hold, especially from women in dominant social groups. These men perceive gender equality and engaging in ending gender-based violence as a threat to their privileges and an attack on their way of life. This begs the question: if men and boys are privileged by existing gender hierarchies and WROs, where is the incentive for them to work towards gender equality.’

Female FGD participant, UI

Conclusion

This study aimed to assess the extent to which female-led WROs involved in the campaign against sexual violence in Nigeria's tertiary education institutions engage men and boys and to consider the opportunities and barriers to such engagement. While it did not find religion and culture to be major barriers to male engagement, it did find that gender beliefs continue to reinforce male dominance across the country and that these are reflected within its tertiary institutions.

While the number of WROs intervening on the issue of sexual violence within tertiary institutions is increasing, awareness of sexual violence in these institutions remains low. For instance, although 75% of study participants self reported good knowledge of sexual violence and issues related thereto. However, findings from the study indicate that the knowledge is inconsistent. This is partly because the activities of WROs are often limited by a range of constraints that serve as barriers to the work of WROs in tertiary institutions in general, and in relation to sexual violence:

- the bureaucratic process and protocols within the university system
- protracted response times from the institutions' management
- inconsistent academic calendars and strikes
- lack of funding
- non-prioritisation of sexual violence issues
- an absence of viable reporting mechanisms for sexual violence cases, and
- the desire to protect the image of the tertiary institutions in reported cases of sexual violence.

Male engagement is a crucial part of the fight against sexual violence within tertiary institutions. Male-led campaigns increase awareness and education among men and enable them to take ownership of the interventions, thereby increasing their impact and reach. This strategy has, however, had limited uptake by WROs as a result of a limited understanding of the potential for such a strategy.

Some WROs are conducting specific and deliberate initiatives to encourage male engagement in secondary schools, indicating an understanding of its importance. Yet the study found no specific initiatives of this kind at the tertiary level.

Several WROs indicated that the lack of funding for programmes on GBV was a major barrier to their work in general, and more specifically to the design of programmes on male engagement in tertiary institutions. Other obstacles, however, include limited explicit acknowledgement of the potential benefits of male engagement amongst WROs, and a lack of technical knowledge, information and guidance on how best to involve males in GBV interventions. Taken together, these challenges limit the engagement of males in campaigns to address sexual violence in Nigeria's tertiary education institutions.

Given the high levels of such violence in these institutions, primarily against women, there is an urgent need for greater efforts to address this through multiple strategies. The adverse impacts of sexual violence against women, including its impact on their physical, emotional and mental health and their academic performance (among many others) demand the deployment of effective strategies. Engaging males as allies through programmes and actions targeted specifically towards them, including outreach, educational programmes, curriculum development, positive masculinity mentorships, male peer groups, is vital needed to address this urgent challenge.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, we suggest the following recommendations.

1. There is a need for capacity building on male engagement strategies for WROs working on sexual violence within tertiary institutions. While the majority of the organisations have some theoretical knowledge of male involvement, this strategy is notably absent from their projects as a result of a lack of technical knowledge. The development of policies, guidelines and training for WROs will help them to incorporate this approach into their programmes.
2. Male engagement in sexual violence interventions should receive more attention, given its potential benefits. It would be helpful to engage men and boys in designing interventions on sexual violence, rather than just reaching them as the secondary targets of interventions. Engaging men and boys in the design phase of interventions increases the likelihood of successful outcomes.
3. WROs need to devise more effective strategies to collaborate and partner with tertiary institutions on sexual violence prevention and management. This partnership may be initiated by joint research by the WROs to create mutual collaboration, interest and contributions. This is necessary to circumvent some of the bureaucratic obstacles for external organisations seeking to work within the system of higher education.
4. Providing incentives for men to take part in interventions and programmes – such as recognition programmes for males involved in the prevention and management of sexual violence against women and girls – could be an effective way to increase male participation in campaigns.
5. There is a need for greater advocacy to ensure recognition of the scale of all forms of GBV in institutions by ensuring adequate support for programmes that aim to address this rights violation.
6. The inclusion of gender-based (including sexual) violence in the curriculum for general courses in tertiary institutions would increase awareness and understanding about this topic within these settings.
7. WROs should consider extending interventions on sexual violence to secondary schools as a way to introduce basic knowledge on this subject. Given that gender-related bias is acquired through elements of socialisation, engaging boys at lower levels of education could help to increase awareness and enhance the potential results of interventions at the tertiary level.
8. More research on male engagement in other contexts within and beyond Nigeria will help to build the evidence-base for – and confidence in – this strategy.

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Annex

Table 13: Knowledge of sexual violence before admission into current school

Location of institutions	Knowledge of sexual violence before admission into current school			
		No	Unsure	Yes
Northern institutions	Bayero University Kano (BUK)	80 (29.7%)	14 (19.4%)	208 (19.5%)
	Federal College of Education Bichi (FCE Bichi)	104 (38.7%)	18 (25.0%)	167 (15.7%)
	University of Abuja	17 (6.3%)	16 (22.2%)	217 (20.4%)
Southern institutions	University of Ibadan	32 (11.9%)	12 (16.7%)	266 (25.0%)
	Yaba College of Technology	36 (13.4%)	12 (16.7%)	204 (19.2%)

Table 14. Perception on WRO activities in tertiary institutions

Location of institutions	WROs found helpful in cases relating to sexual violence		
		Yes	No
Northern Institutions	Bayero University Kano (BUK)	292 (24.4%)	12 (4.0%)
	Federal College of Education Bichi (FCE Bichi)	176 (14.7%)	113 (38.0%)
	University of Abuja	150 (12.5%)	103 (34.7%)
Southern Institutions	University of Ibadan	291 (24.3%)	22 (7.4%)
	Yaba College of Technology	205 (17.1%)	47 (15.8%)

About ALIGN

ALIGN is a digital platform and programme of work that is creating a global community of researchers and thought leaders, all committed to gender justice and equality. It provides new research, insights from practice, and grants for initiatives that increase our understanding of – and work to change – discriminatory gender norms. Through its vibrant and growing digital platform, and its events and activities, ALIGN aims to ensure that the best of available knowledge and resources have a growing impact on harmful gender norms.

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