



# Prevalence and Causes of Gender Based Violence (GBV) Among Students in Tertiary Institutions in Abuja, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Gender-based violence (GBV) is a growing problem in Nigeria, with reports of cases increasing across different regions of the country. This menace has been identified to be associated with different public health challenges and problems. GBV encompasses various forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, and psychological, and it disproportionately affects females, including minors. Understanding GBV among students is vital in addressing the issues relating to GBV because of the influence of education in addressing social challenges. This study, therefore, investigates the prevalence, of GBV, and identifies the causes, and perpetrators of GBV among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja, Nigeria. The study adopts a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design to study the prevalence of all forms of GBV among the study population. The study was conducted among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja, representing the three major types of tertiary institutions in the location. The sample size of 440 respondents was calculated using a scientific sample size formula for cross-sectional studies and stratified sampling was used to ensure adequate representation. A pre-tested well structured standardized questionnaire with open and closed-ended questions was used to collect data, which was analysed using simple descriptive statistics. The prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) among tertiary institutions in Abuja, Nigeria was found to be high, with 61.9% for physical abuse, 56.4% for psychological abuse, and 25.3% for sexual abuse. The most prevalent form of physical abuse is slapping, while the most prevalent form of sexual abuse is forceful kissing, and the most prevalent form of psychological abuse is insults/criticism. Teachers/instructors were found to be the most significant perpetrators of physical abuse, while non-relatives are the most significant perpetrators of sexual abuse, and fellow students/learners are the most significant perpetrators of psychological abuse. The major causes of GBV are gender norms which include traditional beliefs and practices, religious beliefs and practices, and the belief that males are superior to females. This study highlights the need for a comprehensive strategy to combat GBV effectively. It recommends an urgent approach to combat the prevalence of GBV among the study population, engaging major stakeholders and policymakers.

**Keywords:** Gender-Based Violence, Prevalence, Causes, Tertiary Institutions Student

## 1. Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is any type of abuse or violence perpetrated against people or groups based on their gender or sex. This can include harassment and other types of discrimination, resulting in physical, sexual, or psychological abuse. GBV can occur in many contexts, including families, schools, workplaces, and public areas. It is frequently entrenched in cultural norms and power inequalities that harm particular genders or sexes [1]. Millions of individuals throughout the world are affected by gender-based violence, and statistics show that 1 in 3 women could suffer physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime [2]. Gender-based violence has significant impacts on society, the economy, and the health sector. It undermines social cohesion, hinders economic development, and can cause physical and mental health problems [3]. It has become a significant concern in public health with its impact across the globe. Gender-based violence is a pervasive human rights violation that affects females worldwide, regardless of their social, economic, age, ethnicity, or national background. It is a serious issue that compromises the health, dignity, security, and autonomy of women [4]. It is rooted in discriminatory gender norms and legislation and veiled in impunity, which happens in all communities as a method of control, enslavement, and exploitation ultimately promoting gender inequality [5].

GBV can be associated with various health challenges and problems. GBV has been linked to several health issues with the resultant effect of "robbing women of their vitality, jeopardizing their physical health, and undermining their sense of self-worth. It could also result in women's long-term risk of a variety of additional health issues, such as chronic pain, physical impairment, drug and alcohol dependence, and depression [6]. Additionally, unexpected pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unfavorable pregnancy outcomes, and death are also more common among women who have experienced either physical or sexual abuse [7].

This menace can be expressed in many dangerous behaviours against women and girls because of their gender, which includes wife abuse, domestic servitude, sexual assault, dowry-related murder, Sexual exploitation and abuse, marital rape, sexual slavery, selective malnourishment of female children, forced prostitution, female genital mutilation, and sexual abuse of female children [7].

GBV is a major global policy concern with serious social, economic, and individual repercussions. This is disproportionately burdened in low- to middle-income nations in the Global South, where rates of gender-based violence are also much greater. However, the majority of worldwide research on GBV is based on urban communities' experiences in wealthy, English-speaking nations, primarily in the worldwide North [8]. GBV especially among young people is a global issue with serious implications for public health [9,

10]. In many diverse societies, it has a major negative impact on men's and women's avoidable morbidity and death [11]. Understanding GBV among students is vital in addressing the issues relating to GBV because of the influence of education in addressing social challenges. Afolabi. [12] asserts that many students do not well understand what gender-based violence is, therefore, they may not be able to educate their peers about the issue or defend themselves against its occurrence.

Several attempts have been made to conceptualize GBV, however, scholars admit, that it is a complex phenomenon, that will require the use of various models that considers several factors that operate at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels as an appropriate framework [13]. Atwell, [14] describes GBV as damaging behaviors that are carried out against the victim's will and are motivated by socially constructed gender disparities between men and women. GBV include all acts of violence, whether they take place in the public or private domain, and cause or are likely to cause bodily, sexual, or psychological pain or suffering to an individual, including threats of such actions, coercion, or arbitrarily restricting freedom [10]. Therefore, any physical or psychological injury committed against a person because of his or her sex or gender might be considered gender-based violence.

The European Institute for Gender Equality reports that GBV is enacted under different manifestations, from its most widespread form; intimate partner violence, to acts of violence carried out in online spaces. These different forms of violence are not mutually exclusive and multiple incidences of violence can be happening at once. Inequalities experienced by a person based on their race, (dis)ability, age, social class, religion, and sexuality can also drive acts of violence. This invariably means women are not just exposed to violence and discrimination based on gender, rather some women experience multiple and interlocking forms of violence based on other factors [15].

GBV can manifest in different types of violence such as rape, sexual assault, physical assault, forced marriage, denial of resources, opportunities, or services as well as psychological or emotional abuse [14].

Physical violence can be defined as any act which may cause any kind of physical harm to a person (partner; in the case of intimate partner violence) as a result of unlawful physical force [16]. The United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs categorized this form of GBV to include; slapping, throwing object at a person, pushing, shoving, pulling hair; hitting, kicking, dragging, beating, choking, use of weapons against an individual etc. [17].

Sexual violence just like every other form of GBV is expressed in various forms but refers to any kind of sexual activity with a person (victim) without their consent. It can take the form of rape or sexual assault and covers a wide variety of sexual acts [18].

Psychological violence falls into the following acts; Verbal/emotional abuse, humiliation, discrimination, denial of opportunities and /or services, spouse confinement (domestic violence) etc. which may have some sort of psychological effect on a person [16].

In Nigeria, a study of public and private secondary schools in Ilorin [19], shows that 89.1% of students in public secondary schools and 84.8% of students in private secondary schools reported having encountered GBV of some sort. The most prevalent kind of GBV encountered by these students was psychological violence: 72.5% of public and 69.2% of private secondary schools. For sexual violence, 41.4% of Public and 37.4% of private school students have experienced some sort of sexual violence and for physical violence, 67.2% of public and 70.2% of private secondary schools have experienced one or more kinds of physical violence.

Similarly, Afolabi, [12], discovered that among tertiary institution in Ekiti state, Nigeria, sexual-related violence is the most frequent. And a vast majority of the students in higher institutions have never heard of or have poor knowledge of gender-based violence. Also, this study identified lecturers, strangers, and fellow students as the major perpetrators of GBV.

In the study of Oladepo et. al., [20], It was discovered that 26.9% of the respondent have been the victims of physical assault, including 353 men (11.8%) and 453 women (15.1%). Also, as many as 364 respondents reported having experienced sexual violence, 221 (7.4%) of whom were men and 143 (4.8%) of whom were women.

Gender-based violence has been confirmed as a common experience in many schools. Fawole et al./, [19] found a high proportion of Nigerian students to have experienced GBV. A relative challenge in understanding and addressing the prevalence of GBV in low-income and developing nations is the limited number of researches being carried out in these nations. Unfortunately, estimates of the prevalence of gender-based violence based on information from the health system or from police records may be too low, to truly understand the prevalence of GBV [21]. Therefore, there is a need to empirically investigate gender-based violence.

This study, therefore is aimed to determine the prevalence and the major causes of Gender-based violence among tertiary institution students in Abuja, Nigeria. This study addresses the question:

1. What is the prevalence of gender-based violence among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja, Nigeria?
2. What are the major causes 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 [25].

### 2.2. Data Collection Methods

Pre-tested and standardized questionnaires from previous studies were adopted and administered to the selected study participants. This method of data collection was adopted for its flexibility, the type of respondent, being students, and also considering the number of expected participants involved in the study. Participant from the selected schools were administered the instrument at different location and at different time. A total of four hundred and forty (440) questionnaires in all were shared, and four hundred and thirty-one (431), were returned, completed, and found valid.

### 2.3. Study Participant

The study was carried out among the students of 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.

Being a cross-sectional study, the sample size for this study was calculated using a scientific sample size formula for cross-sectional studies. To ensure representativeness, respondents were selected using stratified sampling. Stratification was based on school/institution and faculty/college, and then the respondents in each level of the class were chosen randomly from each of the selected schools. A total sample size of 440 was used for study with appropriate sample frame for each institution involved in the study.

### 2.4. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance and approval (with approval number FCT/CON/RC/2022/001) was 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 Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20.0. This analysis was further presented in table for proper presentation.

### 3. Results

The demographic information of the study of 431 respondent, reveals the gender of respondents, 168 (39.0%) being Male and 258 (59.9%) of the respondent to be Female. As many as 339 (78.7%) of the respondents are students of the University of Abuja, 26 (6%) of the respondents are students of FCT School of Nursing, and 66 (15.3%) of the respondents are students of FCT college of education.

#### 3.1. Forms of Gender-Based Violence

Table 1 below shows the prevalence of the major forms of gender-based violence among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja, Nigeria. It revealed a prevalence of 61.9% for physical abuse, followed by Psychological abuse at 56.4% and sexual abuse at 25.3%.

*Table 1. Prevalence of different Forms of Gender-Based Violence.*

Types of GBV (n=431)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Ranking
Physical Abuses	267	61.9	1st
Psychological Abuse	243	56.4	2nd
Sexual Abuses	109	25.3	3rd

#### 3.2. Types of Gender Based Violence

Table 2 below shows the different types of gender-based violence experienced by student of tertiary institutions categorized by the major forms (physical, psychological and sexual).

*Table 2. Specific Types of GBV Experienced by Each Gender.*

Specific Types of GBV	Male (n=170)	Female (n=261)	Total (n=431)	X2; p-value
	F (%)	F (%)		
<b>Physical abuses</b>				
Hit/ Punched	66 (38.8%)	70 (26.8%)	136 (31.6%)	6.868; 0.009
Kicked	57 (33.5%)	48 (18.4%)	105 (24.4%)	12.804; 0.000
Slapped	86 (50.6%)	116 (44.4%)	202 (46.9%)	1.560; 0.212
Beaten with an object	64 (37.6%)	92 (35.2%)	156 (36.2%)	0.256; 0.613
Bitten	44 (25.9%)	54 (20.7%)	98 (22.7%)	1.580; 0.209
Pushed	63 (37.1%)	83 (31.8%)	146 (33.9%)	1.271; 0.260
Used Weapon	24 (14.1%)	17 (6.5%)	41 (9.5%)	6.916; 0.009
<b>Sexual abuses</b>				
Touched private part	23 (13.5%)	34 (13.0%)	57 (13.2%)	0.023; 0.880
Kissed against wish	24 (14.1%)	35 (13.4%)	59 (13.7%)	0.044; 0.835
Forced to watch sexually explicit materials	12 (7.1%)	10 (3.8%)	22 (5.1%)	2.214; 0.137
Attempted forced sex	16 (9.4%)	38 (14.6%)	54 (12.5%)	2.489; 0.115
Forced to have sex	14 (8.2%)	15 (5.7%)	29 (6.7%)	1.016; 0.314
<b>Psychological abuse</b>				
Insulted/criticized	81 (47.6%)	121 (46.4%)	202 (46.9%)	0.068; 0.794
Forced to end pregnancy	1 (0.6%)	11 (4.2%)	12 (2.8%)	5.002; 0.025
Belittled	34 (20.0%)	80 (30.7%)	114 (26.5%)	6.004; 0.014
Spite	23 (13.5%)	15 (5.7%)	38 (8.8%)	7.755; 0.005
Humiliated	47 (27.6%)	67 (25.7%)	114 (26.5%)	0.207; 0.649
Threatened to kill	13 (7.6%)	20 (7.7%)	33 (7.7%)	0.000; 0.995

As seen Table 2, slapping is the most prevalent physical abuse among both genders in the category of physical abuse among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja, Nigeria, with 202 (46.9%) respondents having a record of being slapped.

However, between the gender category, it appears that more males have been slapped with 86 (50.6%) respondent comments, than their female counterparts with 116 (44.4%) respondent comments.

In the category of sexual abuse; "Kissed against wish" is the most prevalent sexual abuse with 59 (13.7%) respondents having being kissed against wish. However, between the gender category, it appears that more males have been kissed against wish with 24 (14.1%) respondent comments, than their female counterparts with 35 (13.4%). Also, looking closely, considering the individual prevalence of the different

types of violence in the category, it appears that attempted forced sex was more prevalent among females with 38 (14.6%) in the sexual abuse category.

In the case of Psychological abuse; "Insult/Criticism" is the most prevalent Psychological abuse among both genders with 202 (46.9%) respondents having a record of being insulted or criticized. However, between the gender category, it appears that more males have been insulted/criticized with 81 (47.6%) respondent comments, than their female counterparts with 121 (46.4%) respondent comments.

#### 3.3. Perpetrators of GBV (Physical Abuse)

Table 3 below shows the prevalence of perpetrators of GBV for physical abuse among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja, Nigeria.

As seen in Table 3, Teachers/Instructors with 101 (23, 4%) responses are ranked as the highest perpetrators of physical abuse. This is followed by mothers with 75 (17.4%) responses ranking second, and fellow students with 67 (15.5%) responses ranking third among perpetrators of physical abuse.

**Table 3.** Perpetrators of GBV (Physical Abuse).

Perpetrators of Physical Abuse	Physical Abuses (n=431)		Ranking
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Teacher/Instructor	101	(23.4%)	1st
Mother	75	(17.4%)	2nd
Fellow student/Learner	67	(15.5%)	3rd
Father	65	(15.1%)	4th
Friends	63	(14.6%)	5th
Siblings	58	(13.5%)	6th
Non-relatives	39	(9.0%)	7th
Relatives	35	(8.1%)	8th
Guardian	25	(5.8%)	9th
Partner/boy-friend/girl-friend	24	(5.6%)	10th
Stepmother	12	(2.8%)	11th
Stepfather	5	(1.2%)	12th

### 3.4. Perpetrators of GBV (Sexual Abuse)

Table 4 below shows the prevalence of perpetrators of GBV for sexual abuses among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja, Nigeria. As seen, non - relatives with 20 (4.6%)

responses are ranked as the highest perpetrators of sexual abuse, closely followed by relatives with 19 (4.4%) responses and partners with 17 (3.9%) responses.

**Table 4.** Perpetrators of GBV (Sexual Abuse).

Perpetrators of Sexual Abuse	Sexual Abuses (n=431)		Ranking
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Non-relatives	20	(4.6%)	1st
Relatives	19	(4.4%)	2nd
Partners	17	(3.9%)	3rd
Friends	13	(3.0%)	4th
Lecturers	12	(2.8%)	5th
Fellow student/Learner	10	(2.3%)	6th
Guardian	5	(1.2%)	7th
Mother	3	(0.7%)	8th
Father	2	(0.5%)	9th
Stepfather	2	(0.5%)	9th
Siblings	1	(0.2%)	10th
Stepmother	1	(0.2%)	10th

### 3.5. Perpetrators of GBV (Psychological Abuse)

Table 5 below shows the prevalence of perpetrators of GBV for psychological abuse among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja, Nigeria.

**Table 5.** Perpetrators of GBV (Psychological Abuse).

Perpetrators of Psychological Abuse	Psychological Abuses (n=431)		Ranking
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Fellow student/Learner	64	(14.8%)	1st
Teacher/Instructor	56	(13.0%)	2nd
Friends	54	(12.5%)	3rd
Non-relatives	38	(8.8%)	4th
Father	37	(8.6%)	5th
Relatives	34	(7.9%)	6th
Mother	32	(7.4%)	7th
Siblings	23	(5.3%)	8th
Partner/boyfriend/girlfriend	22	(5.1%)	9th
Guardian	20	(4.6%)	10th
Stepfather	8	(1.9%)	11th
Stepmother	7	(1.6%)	12th

As seen in Table 5, Fellow students/learners with 64 (14.8%) responses are ranked as the highest perpetrators of psychological abuse. This is followed by Teacher/Instructor with 56 (13.0%) responses ranking second, and Friends with 54 (12.5%) responses ranking third among perpetrators of psychological abuse.

### 3.6. Causes of Gender-Based Violence

Table 6 below shows the causes of Gender Based Violence among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja, Nigeria.

The table shows that 221 (74.4%) of the study participants believed that GBV is caused by traditional beliefs and practices, 41 (13.8%) respondents disagreed, while 35 (11.8%)

said they do not know. Also, 178 (60.8%) respondents agreed that GBV is caused by religious beliefs and practices, 79 (27.0%) respondents disagreed, and 36 (12.3%) said they do not know. As many as 258 (80.9%) respondents affirmed that the belief that males are superior to females is a major cause of GBV, but 41 (12.9%) respondents disagreed to this, while 20 (6.3%) do not know. Likewise, the majority of the respondents 247 (76.7%) agreed that the belief that females should obey and not argue is a major cause of GBV, 47 (14.6%) do not agree, while as few as 28 (6.5%) respondents do not know. Noticeably, 241 (75.3%) respondents also agreed that peer pressure could cause GBV, but 44 (13.8%) respondents disagreed, while 35 (10.9%) respondents do not know.

**Table 6.** Causes of Gender-Based Violence.

Causes of gender-based violence	Yes (%)	No (%)	I Don't Know (%)
Traditional beliefs and practices	221 (74.4%)	41 (13.8%)	35 (11.8%)
Religious beliefs and practices	178 (60.8%)	79 (27.0%)	36 (12.3%)
Belief that males are superior to females	258 (80.9%)	41 (12.9%)	20 (6.3%)
Believes that Females should obey and not argue	247 (76.7%)	47 (14.6%)	28 (6.5%)
Wearing revealing clothes	202 (66.7%)	67 (22.7%)	34 (11.2%)
Drunkenness	195 (68.2%)	53 (18.5%)	38 (13.3%)
Peer pressure	241 (75.3%)	44 (13.8%)	35 (10.9%)

## 4. Discussions

### 4.1. Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence Among University Students in Abuja Nigeria

The prevalence of GBV across various educational levels and every gender has been shown by various research carried out in Africa, especially Nigeria. This violence can come in different forms ranging from physical, psychological, and sexual violence. It has not only proven to affect the student in their academic pursuit but could affect their general well-being.

A comparison between this study and Fawole *et al* [19], found some differences in the prevalence of GBV among student. While the other study found psychological violence to be more common, followed by physical violence, this study found physical violence to be more prevalent, followed by psychological abuse. The difference could be due to age and education level differences of the respondents. Both studies found sexual violence to be the least common form of violence, indicating a need for policymakers and stakeholders to consider these findings when addressing gender-based violence among students [19].

According to the findings of this study, teachers are the major perpetrators of physical violence in Abuja's tertiary institutions, which is consistent with a similar study in Ekiti state by Afolabi [12]. However, Fawole *et al* [19], identified friends as the major perpetrators of physical violence in secondary schools. Also, the most common act of physical violence identified in this study is slapping and beating, this suggests that students may have experienced physical abuse from teachers in their previous level of education, outweighing every other kind of physical abuse they have

experienced.

The findings of the study regarding psychological abuse perpetrated by fellow students is consistent with previous research by Fawole *et al* [19] who also found that friends were the primary perpetrators of psychological abuse among secondary school students. These results suggest that Psychological abuse is prevalent across different levels of education, emphasizing the need for interventions that target peer relationships and social dynamics within schools, and creating safe and supportive school environments to encourage students to speak out against abusive behavior.

This study suggest that non-relatives are the major perpetrators of sexual violence. This is contrary to the findings of Fawole *et al* [19], which discovered partners as the major perpetrator of sexual violence among secondary school students. The difference in the findings could be attributed to the fact that students at tertiary institutions give consent to sex and do not consider it as a violation as compared to students in secondary schools. It could also be that students at a higher level of education are more aware of how to prevent themselves from sexual molestation as compared to younger students who might easily be taken advantage of by their partners.

### 4.2. Causes of Gender-Based Violence

The major causes of GBV among students of tertiary institutions in Abuja as shown by the findings of this study can be linked to; traditional beliefs and practices, religious beliefs and practices, the belief that males are superior to females, believes that females should obey and not argue, wearing revealing clothes, drunkenness, and peer pressure. However, among the various factors identified, the belief that males are superior to females and the belief that females should obey and

not argue ranks as the highest cause. These two factors are indeed interrelated and can be best described as primitive. Itegi and Njuguna [22] attribute the major cause of gender-based violence (GBV) to the disadvantage faced by women compared to men. This partially agrees with the finding of this study that males are seen as superior to females, but disagrees with Badri [23] notion that the major cause is due to guiding children. The study also finds that discriminatory treatment against girls at home contributes to GBV. Other causes of GBV identified by Uyanne [24] are poverty and drug abuse, and by Muzavazi et al [26] are child marriage and spouse dominance behavior. These varying results indicate the need for tailored interventions and the influence of context on GBV causes.

Gender inequality and discrimination, with males being viewed as superior to females and having greater privileges and opportunities, are deeply ingrained in many cultures. This can lead to the justification of violent behavior towards women and perpetuates harmful social norms and practices that contribute to gender-based violence. It is important to note that these beliefs are not innate to any specific culture or religion, but are constructs that must be challenged and dismantled through education and awareness-raising initiatives. Such initiatives may involve educating students on gender equality and healthy relationship dynamics, while also addressing harmful social norms and practices that contribute to gender-based violence.

## 5. Conclusion

Gender-based violence (GBV) is prevalent in tertiary institutions in Abuja, Nigeria, and across different levels of education. The violence can come in various forms, such as physical, psychological, and sexual abuse, affecting students' academic pursuit and general well-being. The study reveals that teachers are the major perpetrators of physical violence, while friends and non-relatives are major perpetrators of psychological and sexual violence, respectively. The major causes of GBV among students are traditional and religious beliefs and practices, male superiority complex, obedience and submission expectations of females, revealing clothes, drunkenness, and peer pressure. Therefore, tailored interventions and education on gender equality, healthy relationships, and harmful social norms and practices are crucial to combat GBV in educational institutions.

## 6. Limitations of the Study

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

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended to address the prevalence of gender-based

violence among student:

Urgent action is advised for tertiary institutions in Abuja to combat gender-based violence. This includes domesticating the VAPP act in schools, implementing a comprehensive policy to prevent and respond to violence and offering support services for victims.

Strengthening awareness creation on the need to promote breaking the silence by improving on reporting so that survivors can access care and treatment services.

Interventions that target peer relationships and social dynamics within schools should be implemented to reduce the prevalence of psychological abuse among students.

Students should be educated on gender equality and healthy relationship dynamics to prevent gender-based violence, including sexual violence, regardless of their age or level of education.

Schools should develop curriculum-based activities that teach students about safe behaviour and protecting themselves from abuse. Lecturers and school staff should also be trained in recognizing violence and asking students in a responsible way about violence.

Tailored interventions should be developed to address the various causes of gender-based violence identified in the study, including traditional beliefs and practices, religious beliefs and practices, and discriminatory treatment against girls at home.

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