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Perceived knowledge of causes and prevention strategies for sexual violence among university students in Niger Delta region of Nigeria

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Abstract
Sexual violence is a major public health problem that disregards basic human rights globally. Worldwide, mass media reports have shown an increased rate of sexual violence in higher institutions of learning, therefore exploring the knowledge of causes and strategies in prevention of sexual violence among undergraduate students is crucial in order to promote a coordinated movement against it. This descriptive cross-sectional study is aimed at assessing the knowledge of causes and strategies employed in prevention of sexual violence among undergraduate students in Niger Delta region of Nigeria.
Data were collected using the questionnaire and a multistage sampling technique was used to obtain a sample of 400 respondents from the population. Data analysis was done using SPSS version 20.0 at a 5% level of significance. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data collected. These were presented in tables and figures.
All the respondents have heard of sexual violence and opined that sexual violence is prevalent in the university. Most of the respondents demonstrated adequate knowledge on sexual violence but poor knowledge of where to report cases of sexual violence in the university. The major causes identified were Inadequate Punishment of perpetrators (100%), Keeping silent and not reporting the offenders 392 (98.0%), Portrayal of women as sex objects in the media (96.5%), Alcohol and drugs (95.5%), Inadequate security on campus (99.5%), Indecent dressing 374 (93.5%). The major strategies identified for preventing sexual violence include severe punishment for perpetuators/offenders (100%), adherence to dress code of the school (99.0%), mass campaigns against sexual violence (98.5%), enact laws prohibiting pornography (98.5%), avoid late night outing/party (97%), provision of adequate security on campus and avoid walking alone on lonely path (96.5%).

Keywords: Sexual violence factors, Sexual Violence mitigation, Undergraduates

Introduction
Sexual violence does not only have a profound impact on the physical and mental health of an individual but it is also a serious violation of human rights associated with an increased risk of sexual and reproductive health consequences; both immediate and long-term (WHO, 2018).
Sexual violence is any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act by violence or coercion, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise, directed against a

person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work. Sexual violence ranges from forcible rape to non-physical forms of pressure, psychological intimidation, blackmail, harassment or other threats that compel persons to engage in sex against their will (Sendo & Meleku, 2015). It also includes forced kissing, forced breast and genital fondling, attempted rape and forced exposure to pornography (Eze, 2013).

Awosusi. and Ogundana (2015) pointed out that overwhelming effect of sexual violence is much on the victim and could affect the trust and feeling of safety irrespective of age, gender or socio-economic status of the victim. Also, the damaging effect of sexual violence could spread to the parents, spouse, friends, co-workers or children of the victims. Nevertheless, sexual violence has serious health consequences which has been linked directly or indirectly, with adverse reproductive and mental health problems including, unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, gynecological complications, STIs including HIV/AIDS infections, suicide, frigidity among others in survivors (Mattew, Avid, Jama, Curtis, James, Linda, et.al 2011; Bekele, Kaso, Gebremariam & Deressa, 2015; Sendo & Meleku, 2015) .

Globally, an estimated one in three women are sexually abused, and the incidence is not restricted to any age group. Although, studies have shown that the prevalence of sexual violence is more among students (Smit & Plessis 2011, Awosusi & Ogundana, 2015). Sexual violence is a major issue in tertiary institutions of education worldwide with one in five experienced rape or attempted rape in their lifetime (Bekele et al., 2015). One in five college females are victims of acquaintance rape during their academic career and less than 5% of college women who are victims of sexual assault report their victimization globally (Sendo & Meleku, 2015; Dills, Fowler, & Payne, 2016). Approximately 37% of female rape victims were first raped between the ages of 18-24years while 19% experienced attempted or completed sexual assault after entering college (CDC, 2014). Krebs, et al., (2016) also reported a prevalence rate 10.3%, of sexual violence among female undergraduate with completed rape constituting 4.1%. For men, the study showed 3.1% sexual violence with 0.8% experienced rape (Krebs, Lindquist, Berzofsky, Shook-Sa, Peterson, Planty et.al, 2016).

Furthermore, Gross, Winslett, Roberts, and Gohm, (2006) reported that 27% of college females have experienced some form of unwanted sexual contact. Both male and females are victims of sexual violence but it is more common in females than males with an estimate of 18.3% in females and 1.4% in males (WHO, 2010; Black, Basile, Breiding, Smith, Walters, Merrick, & Stevens, 2011). Evidence in existing literature buttressed the fact that women and children are mostly at risk of sexual violence, and some are more vulnerable than others, especially young girls, women with disabilities, indigenous women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Sendo & Meleku, 2015; Awosusi & Ogundana, 2015; Abrahams, Devries, Watts, Pallitto, Petzoid, Shamu, & Garcia-Moreno, 2014; Onah, 2010). However, the reported figures on sexual violence are said to be inaccurate and often underestimate, as studies have indicated that most cases of sexual violence are under-reported by the victims because of the associated stigma, closeness of the assailant or the difficult legal requirements needed to prove the cases leading to limited access to justice (Ezechi, Adesolamusa, David, Wapmuk, Gbajabiamila, Eugeniaidigbe, et.al, 2016; Abdulkadir, et al. 2011; Kullima, Kawuwa, Audu, Mairiga & Bukar, 2010).

According to Cullen, Fisher and Turner (2000), more than 90% of sexual assault victims on college campuses do not report the assault. Odu, Falana and Olotu, (2014) affirmed that non-disclosure of sexual violence has been linked with shame, fear of rejection among colleagues, stigmatization, humiliation, guilt, fear of not being believed and cultural belief. Most cultures

have always projected sexual violence especially rape as shame rather than a huge crime (Awosusi & Ogundana, 2015). Sometimes, the perpetrators are exonerated and the victims are blamed as having encouraged the act through questionable character, action or mode of dressing. This tends to fuel the practice of crime and promote non-disclosure by victims. The perpetrators of the sexual violence tend to be someone well known to the victims from the environs like boyfriends, colleague, family members or sometimes strangers. Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher & Martin (2007) stated that eight out of 10 victims knew the person who sexually assaulted them. However, in higher institutions of learning, studies have shown older male students, peers, lecturers and administrative workers of universities as perpetrators of sexual violence (Adamu & Abebe, 2016; Chikwiri & Lemmer, 2014; Iliyasu, Abubakar, Aliyu, Galadanc, & Salihu, 2011). This violent incident most often takes place in the victim's home, lonely area, office or school environment, in the house of a friend, relative or neighbour (Mattew et.al., 2011; Bekele et.al., 2015)

Nevertheless, various evidences have shown that, sexual violence is on the increase in Nigerian higher institutions of learning and the major individuals at risk were the weak female students which both, the lecturers and fellow male students take undue advantage to abuse (Abubakar, Mohammed, Bala, Abdulkarim, & Mohammed, 2010). Therefore, exploring knowledge on the causes and strategies to curb sexual violence among undergraduate students is a crucial step in the primary prevention of sexual violence in tertiary institutions of learning

Materials and method

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used to assess the knowledge of causes and strategies used in the prevention of sexual violence among undergraduate students.

Study Setting and Population

The study was carried out at the Niger Delta University (NDU) Amassoma, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The university has twelve faculties, forty-four departments and four campuses. It has over ten thousand students living both in and off campus. The target population of the study is the undergraduate students of Niger Delta University.

Sample and sampling technique

The sample size of this study was determined using Fishers formula.

$$n = \frac{Z^2\ P(1-p)}{d^2}$$

Multistage sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study population.

First stage: A random sampling technique, the "fishbowl technique" was used. All the names of the faculties were written on slips and put in a bowl. The slips were drawn from the bowl one at a time to select the 5 faculties required for the study. The selected faculties include Management Science, Engineering, Pharmacy, Education, and Agricultural Technology

Second stage: A disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was used. A list of various departments in each of the faculties selected was obtained and seven of these departments were selected using disproportionate stratified sampling. The selected departments include: Banking/Finance, Mechanical Engineering, Petroleum Engineering, Pharmacy, Educational Foundation, Vocational/Industrial Education and Crop and soil science

Third stage: 400 respondents were conveniently selected from the selected departments. Questionnaires were administered to these respondents. These respondents were met in their classrooms between 9.00am and 5.00pm daily from Monday to Friday. The data collection took four weeks.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into four sections namely: section A elicited information on the demographic data of the respondents, section B was on level of knowledge on sexual violence, section C was on the causes of sexual violence, while section D composed of questions on strategies to prevent sexual violence. Face and content validity of the research instrument was done by colleague and experts in the field of study, while the Cronbach's alpha result for reliability test was found to be 0.84.

Data analysis

The data obtained was analyzed using Statistical Product Service Solutions (SPSS) version 20.0. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed in analyzing the data collected and level of significance was set at 5% (0.05) such that significant associations were established when $p < 0.05$

Ethical consideration

A letter was written to the university management. An approval was given to the researchers through the students' affair unit. All information concerning the research was thoroughly explained to the participants and freedom of withdrawal at any point was also emphasized. Respondents consent was obtained. Information given by the participants was treated with outmost confidentiality and anonymity was maintained as participants' names were not required while completing or filling the questionnaires.

Results

Table 1: Socio-demographic data of respondents

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
AGE IN YEARS		
18-20	26	6.5
21-25	204	51.0
26-30	138	34.5
Above 30	32	8.0
SEX		
Male	168	42.0
Female	232	58.0
MARITAL STATUS		
Single	336	84.0
Married	60	15.0
Widowed	4	1.0
RELIGION		
Christianity	356	89.0
Islam	44	11.0
ETHNICITY		
Ijaw	196	49.0
Hausa	18	4.5
Yoruba	44	11.0
Ibo	54	13.5
Others	88	22.0

Table 1 shows that half of the respondents 204 (51.0) were between the ages of 21-25years with a mean age of 25years. More than half of the respondents 116(58%) were females while 84(42%) were males, 168 (84%) were singles and 178(89%) were Christians

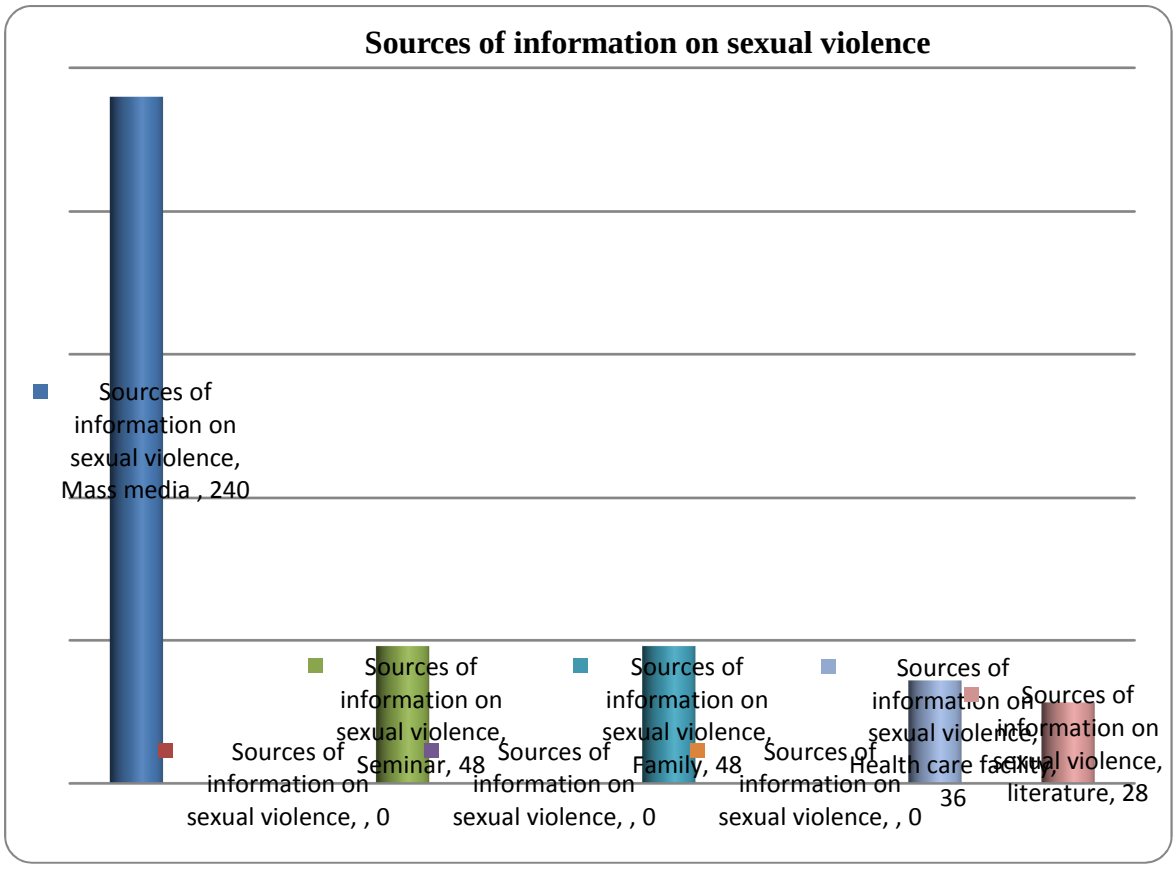


Figure 1 shows that majority 240(60%) of the respondents heard of sexual violence from mass media, 48(12%) from seminar and family each, 36 (9.0%) from health facility and 28(7.0%) from literature.

Table 2: Knowledge on Sexual Violence among respondents (n=400)

Knowledge Questions	Response	Frequency	Percentage	Decision
Have heard of sexual violence	Yes No	400 0	100 0.0	Good
Sexual violence is on the increase in higher institutions	Yes No	398 2	99.5 0.5	Good
Sexual violence is a criminal offence	Yes No	400 0	100 0.0	Good
Sexual violence is worth reporting to relevant authorities?	Yes No	326 74	81.5 18.5	Good
Awareness of proper channel to report cases of sexual violence on campus	Yes No	195 205	48.7 51.3	Poor
Sexual violence increases sexual and reproductive health problems	Yes No	394 6	98.5 1.5	Good
Do you know anyone who is a victim of sexual violence on campus	Yes No	400 0	100.0 0.0	Good
Gender of the known victims	Female Male	399 1	99.8 0.2	Good
Males can be victims of sexual assaults	Yes No	322 78	80.5 19.5	Good
Coercion into sexual acts in return for good scores or gift is a form of sexual violence.	Yes No	198 202	49.5 50.5	Poor

Table 2 shows that all respondents 400 (100%) have heard of sexual violence and knew that it is a criminal offence. Majority of the respondents 398 (99.5%) were of the opinion that sexual violence is on the increase in higher institutions of learning and 326 (81.5%) said that sexual violence is worth reporting to relevant authorities. However, more than half of the respondents 205 (51.3%) have poor knowledge on where to report cases of sexual violence on campus. All respondents knew at least one victim of sexual violence on campus and affirmed that 399 (99.8%) of them were females, despite this fact; majority 322 (80.5%) attested that males can also be victims of sexual violence. Half of the respondents 202 (50.5%) did not see coercion into sexual acts in return for good scores or gift as a form of sexual violence.

Table 3: Causes of Sexual Violence (n=400).

Causes of sexual violence	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Alcohol and drugs	Yes No	382 18	95.5 4.5
Inadequate Punishment for perpetrators	Yes No	400 0	100.0 0.0
Violence and conflict on campuses	Yes No	332 68	83.0 17.0
Beliefs that students have no right to refuse sexual advances	Yes No	358 42	89.5 10.5
Attending late night parties/ classes	Yes No	346 54	86.5 13.5

Inadequate security on campus	Yes No	398 2	99.5 0.5
Portrayal of women as sex objects in the media	Yes No	386 14	96.5 3.5
Keeping silence and not reporting the offender	Yes No	392 8	98.0 2.0
Indecent dressing can lead to sexual violence	Yes No	374 26	93.5 6.5
Lack of moral on the part of the perpetuators	Yes No	302 98	75.5 24.5
Children sexually violated are more prone to be perpetrators of sexual violence	Yes No	154 246	38.5 61.5

With regards to the causes of sexual violence, majority of the respondents 382 (95.5%) stated that alcohol and drugs play a role in sexual violence; 400(100%) opined that inadequate punishment for perpetrators, 332 (83.0%) said violence and conflict on campuses, 358 (89.5%) were of the opinion that the belief that students have no right to refuse sexual advances can lead to sexual violence, 346 (86.5%) opined that attending late night parties/ classes can predispose one to sexual violence, 398 (99.5%) mentioned inadequate security on campus, 386(96.5%) said portrayal of women as sex objects in the media, 392 (98.0%) said keeping silent and not reporting the offenders, 374 (93.5%) mentioned indecent dressing, 302 (75.5%) said lack of morals on the part of the perpetuators while only 154(38.5%) opined that children sexually violated are more prone to be perpetrator of sexual violence later in life

Table 4: Strategies for Preventing Sexual Violence (n=400).

Strategies preventing sexual violence	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Mass campaigns against sexual violence on campus	394	98.5
Avoiding private meetings with strangers	376	94.0
Provision of adequate security on campus	386	96.5
Severe punishment for perpetrators	400	100.0
Avoid late night outing/party	388	97.0
Enact laws prohibiting pornography	394	98.5
Provision of street lights	384	96.0
Cultural and societal norms promoting sexual violence against women should be discouraged	390	97.5
Adherence to the dress code of the school	396	99.0
Avoid walking alone on lonely path	386	96.5
Orientation of students on safety measures to prevent sexual violence	328	82.0

Table 4 shows that 394 (98.5%) of respondents identified mass campaigns against sexual violence on campus as one of the strategies for preventing sexual violence, 376 (94.0%) said avoiding private meetings with strangers, provision of adequate security on campus 386 (96.5%), 400 (100%) suggested severe punishment for perpetuators/offenders, 388 (97.0%) said avoidance of late night outing/party, 394 (98.5%) said government should enact laws prohibiting pornography, 384 (96.0%) said provision of street lights at night, 390 (97.5%) said that cultural and societal norms promoting sexual violence against women should be discouraged, 396

(99.0%) said adherence to the dress code of the school, 386 (96.5%) mentioned avoiding walking alone on lonely path while 328 (82.0%) opted that orientation of students on safety measures can help prevent sexual violence on campus.

Table 5: Relationship Between respondents' level of Knowledge and Some demographic variables (gender and marital statuses) (n=400).

Variables		Knowledge on sexual violence		Total	Pearson's chi-square			Remark
		High	Low		X^2	df	P-value	
Gender	Male	142	26	168	0.740	1	0.140	Not significant
	Female	192	40	232				
Marital Status	Single	278	58	336	0.910	2	0.674	Not significant
	Married	52	8	60				
	Widowed	2	2	4				

Table 5 shows that there is no significant relationship between gender of respondents under study and their level of knowledge of sexual violence with X^2 =0.740; P-value=0.140 >0.05. Also, no significant relationship was found between marital status of respondents under study and their level of knowledge of sexual violence with X^2 =0.910; P-value=0.674 >0.05. This implied that the level of knowledge of the respondents was independent of their gender and marital status, Hence, both null hypotheses were accepted.

Discussion of finding

In this study, half of the respondents were between the ages of 21-25 years and were single. This shows that majority of the respondents were in their 20s which is the usual age range for the university students. Boba and Lilley, (2009) stated that individuals between the ages of 16-24 experience sexual violence at rates four times higher than the rate for all individuals.

The study revealed that all respondents were of the opinion that sexual violence is on the increase in higher institutions and it is a criminal offence that is worth reporting to relevant authorities. However, existing literatures showed that about 50 to 90% of all victims may not report or disclose sexual violence that they have experienced due to shame, humiliation, guilt, fear of the perpetrator, cultural taboos; backlash, character assassination, victimization at the hands of other lecturers, co-students and society at large (Eguagie, 2016; Odu, Falana, & Olotu, 2014; Ado, Njoku & Bako 2010; Green, Adriana, & Mavis, 2001). Mouzos et al. (2004) affirmed that some victims do not even consider the incident serious enough to warrant reporting, let alone as a criminal offence.

All respondents knew at least one victim of sexual violence on campus and affirmed that 99.8% of them were females, despite this fact; majority (80.5%) attested that males can also be victims of sexual violence. This implies that sexual violence is strongly gendered with females mostly affected, which is in line with the study conducted by Eguagie, (2016) where all the sexual violence victims were female students. Of which majority did nothing after being raped, and

others made some kind of feeble report of being raped to friends, while very few reported to either course adviser, parents or guardians (Eguagie, 2016; Awosusi & Ogundana, 2015).

The study also showed that majority of the respondents opted that alcohol and drugs are major causes of sexual violence. This is corroborated by Grisso, Hirschinger, and Anderson (2009).who reported that alcohol and hard drugs have been shown to play a role in sexual violence as it provides opportunity for antisocial behaviors. This implies that people are more likely to act violently under the influence of alcohol or psychoactive drugs because they do not consider that they will be held accountable for their behavior (Katy & Trevor, 2017; Grisso et.al, 2009).

It is worthy to note that half of the respondents did not see sexual acts in return for good scores or gift as a form of sexual violence. This implies that socio economic problems can exert huge pressures on students making them submissive in the face of social challenges and cannot perceive it as sexual violence. Thus, there is need to equip and empower the girl child. Sendo and Meleku (2015) buttressed the fact that 29.9% of the sexually active female students had begun sexual activity with strangers for the exchange of gifts or money. However, female students, who came from lower income families, are tempted into sexual liaisons by gifts and other promises from boyfriends, teachers and others in most societies. Furthermore all respondents concurred that lack of morals is a reason for sexual violence. This corroborates the study of Fahmy et al. (2014), who reported that the motive for occurrence of sexual harassment/violence were lack of religious consciousness followed by a lack of supervision on the internet and media.

The World Health Organization (2010) stated that social and cultural gender norms place women and girls at increased risk of sexual violence and support the acceptability of sexual violence. This was also pointed out by the respondents, as majority maintained that portrayal of women as sex objects on the media and indecent dressing increase sexual violence. Therefore, the key element in the primary prevention of sexual violence is changing social norms that support sexual violence in any form (WHO, 2010).

Most of the respondents opined that a place where violence and conflict occur breeds sexual violence. According to MADRE (2011), areas where major disasters or conflicts occur can play a key role in increasing rates of sexual violence since access to justice may either be reduced or destroyed. Most of the respondents were of the opinion that children sexually violated are more prone to be perpetrators of sexual violence. This is in harmony with Borowsky and Hogan (2007) who stated that about one in five sexually abused children continue in later life to molest children themselves. Such experiences may lead to a pattern of behavior where the perpetrator regularly justifies being violent, denies doing wrong, and has false and unhealthy notions about sexuality.

In all, most of the respondents demonstrated adequate knowledge on causes of sexual violence but poor knowledge of where to report cases of sexual violence in the university. This may be due to the fact that student handbooks and codes of conduct for staff and students are generally 'silent' on this (Okakwu, 2015).

The study also revealed major strategies for preventing sexual violence which include, severe punishment for perpetuators/offenders (100%), adherence to the dress code of the school (99.0%), mass campaigns against sexual violence (98.5%), enact laws prohibiting pornography (98.5%), avoid late night outing/party (97%) Provision of adequate security on campus (96.5%), avoid walking alone on lonely path (96.5%), and Provision of street lights at night (96.0%). This corroborates similar study conducted among female students in tertiary institutions in northern part of Nigeria where respondents suggested enforcement of dress codes, punishment of offenders, sex education and awareness, improving security and advocating for legislation

against sexual assault as critical steps toward preventing sexual violence among the students (Abubakar et.al, 2010).

Conclusion

Sexual violence is a major public health problem which is highly prevalent in Nigerian higher institutions of learning. Therefore, critical analysis of the causes and strategies is the initial step in planning interventions to eradicate sexual violence among university students. The finding from this study had revealed that the respondents had poor knowledge on where to report cases of sexual violence on campus despite the good knowledge on causes of sexual violence and strategies to curb it.

Notwithstanding, all forms of sexual violence need the urgent attention of family, institutions, government, non government organization and the international community in other to eradicate sexual violence in educational institutions as well as society at large.

Recommendation

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Nurses and other healthcare practitioners in collaboration with the ministry of justice and education, and other nongovernmental organizations should design programs to raise awareness and discourage many of the tales that hinder people from reporting sexual violence.
- Ministry of Justice should ensure severe penalties for offenders and perpetrators.
- The university authority should have an accessible Committee that look into all forms of sexual violence where the victims can report without victimization
- Provision of adequate security measures such as Close Circuit Television (CCTV), street lights and armed security men etc by the school authority.

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