

Mechanism For Managing Gender Violence To Enhance Academic Performance In Tertiary Education Institutions In Kakamega County, Kenya

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Abstract:-The aim of this paper is to assess the mechanisms put in place for managing gender violence to enhance academic performance in Tertiary education institutions. It is based on a study carried out in tertiary education institutions in Kakamega County Kenya. Gender violence has become a concern in the education system world over. It is manifested in the form of sexual harassment, physical, or psychological harm to men and women. The violence has been identified among the wide range of problems working against the attainment of education aims and objectives by the students in tertiary institutions. Studies have rated Kakamega County as a region with a culture that tolerates gender violence. A descriptive design was preferred for this study. The study addressed the question: Which Mechanisms are there for managing gender violence to enhance performance in tertiary education institutions in Kakamega County? With the view of gaining some insight on this matter a survey was conducted among students and key informants who included principals of institutions, counseling heads, and deans of students. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques: stratified random sampling was used to select institutions before applying random techniques. Snowball was used to select victims of gender based violence, purposive for key informants and quota sampling technique was used to select students for focus group discussions. Primary data collection techniques employed structured questionnaires, informal interviews and observation. Findings established that there were mechanism for managing gender violence to enhance academic performance in tertiary education institutions in Kakamega County, however they were not effective.

Key words: *Gender, violence, tertiary institutions, physical, psychological, sexual*

I. INTRODUCTIONS

Countries world over have developed strategies for managing gender-based violence in their institutions; Nigeria for example has, The National Strategic Framework on Violence-Free Basic Education and the Minimum Standards for the Establishment and Management of Schools at the Inspectorate Division of the Federal Ministry of Education which provide the basis for the formulation of a policy that addresses school-based violence. The strategy is concerned with sensitisation, training and capacity building of teachers and students on gender based violence matters (Actionaid,2010 & UNESCO, 2016). According to the manual for educators in South Africa (2001), sexual harassment is recognised under law as an unfair labour practice and people with delegated responsibilities, such as principals, may be found liable for sexual harassment in their working environments. This means that administrators must take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in their Schools. UNESCO gives contribution in support of Education for All and the United Nations International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010). It is also a follow-up to the 2006 World Report on Violence against Children which represents the first comprehensive international effort to examine not only the scale of violence against children but also its impact (UNESCO, 2007). According to Sida(2015).Ending gender-based violence (GBV) and ensuring women's security is a priority for the Swedish government, a priority reflected in central objectives of Swedish policy for development cooperation. Entry points in addressing GBV is that gender-based violence is a violation of human rights, and that tackling GBV is crucial for poverty reduction and economic development.

Studies have found the majority of sexual assault survivors don't report their experiences, particularly if they were drunk, drugged or incapacitated when they were assaulted and those students who do report their assaults to colleges and file formal complaints have felt poorly served by the campus disciplinary process (Nelson, 2014). The study by Nelson on sexual assault in campus accuse colleges of mishandling reports of sexual assault, inadequately disciplining students found guilty, and not accurately reporting sexual assault.

Colleges more frequently suspended or give social probation, or not punished at all, meaning that perpetrators still remain on campus with their victims. Nelson gives an example at an Indiana University:

‘A freshman was raped by a fellow student while she was drunk the freshman reported the rape both to campus police and to the university's student support staff. Hearings during the disciplinary proceedings became a "shouting match," according to the Center for Public Integrity, which reported on the Indiana case as part of its extensive reporting on sexual assault. The alleged rapist was found responsible for "unwanted sexual contact," although he maintains the sex was consensual, and was suspended for one summer, later extended to two semesters. His victim dropped out of college’ (Nelson, 2014).

Another quote:

"If you are trying to study in a climate where you feel your safety is in jeopardy, or you've been sexually assaulted and it's affecting how you're able to live your life on that campus, it's getting in the way of your being able to have an equal education," "Then it's better to drop out," says Lisa Maatz, vice president for government relations at the American Association of University Women" (Nelson, 2014).

From the cases cited, students in institutions have been victims of sexual violence and the mechanisms for managing the violence have not been satisfactory to the majority leading to students drop outs. The students feel that perpetrators receive a punishment which does not measure to the expectations of the survivors.

According to Lobard (2014), an investigation by the Center for Public Integrity in U.S interviewed 50 experts familiar with the campus disciplinary process, as well as 33 female students who had reported being sexually assaulted by other students. The inquiry included a review of records in select cases; a survey of 152 crisis services programs and clinics on or near college campuses; and an examination of 10 years of complaints filed against institutions with the U.S. Education Department. The probe revealed that students deemed "responsible" for alleged sexual assaults on college campuses can face little or no consequence for their acts, yet their victims' lives are frequently turned upside down.

For the students, the trauma of assault can be compounded by a lack of institutional support, and even disciplinary action. Many times, victims drop out of school, while their alleged attackers graduate. Administrators believe the sanctions commonly issued in the college judicial system provide a thoughtful and effective way to hold responsible students accountable, but victims and advocates say the punishment rarely fits the crime. Additional data suggested that, on many campuses, abusive students face little more than slaps on the wrist. It showed that colleges seldom expel men who are found "responsible" for sexual assault; indeed, these schools permanently kicked out only 10 to 25 percent of such students. One respondent summed up the sentiment this way: 'Judicial hearings almost NEVER result in suspension, let alone expulsion. ... Alleged perpetrators still remain on campus, in fraternities, and on sports teams' (Lobard, 2014).

By contrast, some students, reported dropping out because of what they considered lenient discipline for their alleged perpetrators, whom they feared seeing on campus. Others said their alleged attackers violated school-imposed sanctions, often with little repercussion. College administrators stress that the sanctioning in disciplinary matters reflects the mission of higher education. Proceedings aren't meant to punish students, but rather to teach them. "We'd like to think that we can always educate and hold accountable the student," (Lobard, 2014). Where mechanisms for managing gender violence have lapsed, students have opted to drop out of the institutions due to frustrations.

Kenya has developed adequate legislation for addressing gender based violence, including specific legislation on protection, prosecution and reintegration Omutoko & Rugut,(2006). However, the full enforcement of the legislation is hindered by the lack of specific policies addressing gender based violence, and insufficient institutional development in the field of combating gender based violence at the grassroots and institutional levels. There are no institutionalized programs for perpetrators/offenders, although the current legislation on gender based violence includes requirements to establish rehabilitation programs for offenders. This study was therefore interested in finding out what measures have been put in place to address gender violence in tertiary institutions. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this study would be used by education policy makers to roll out programmes on gender violence in tertiary institutions and monitor their implementations.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was based on a descriptive survey design (Kombo, 2006 & Mugenda & Mugenda 2003) focusing on the magnitude of gender based violence experienced by students in tertiary education institutions. The study was conducted in Kakamega County which is located in Western Kenya bordering Bungoma County to the North, Trans Nzoia County to the North East, Uasin Gishu County and Nandi Counties to the East, Vihiga county to the South, Siaya County to the South West and Busia County to the West. The County lies between Latitude 0.2833°N and Longitude 34.7500° E. The County is on an area of 3,224.9 Km² with a population of 1,660,651 (County Factsheet, 2011). The County experiences temperatures ranging from a minimum of 10.3°C to a maximum of 30.8°C with an average of 20.5°C. The rainfall ranges between 1,250 - 1,750 mm per annum.

Kakamega has a mix of both subsistence and cash crop farming, with sugarcane being the preferred medium to large scale crop. The county has three large sugar factories namely: Mumias, Butali and West Kenya, Commercial businesses; 'Boda-Boda' Transport business. There is also a significant tourism centering on Kakamega Forest, Caves and Crying Stone of Ilesi. There are also natural resources such as Gold and Arable Land (County factsheet, 2011). Kakamega has a strong culture that has tended to increase cases of gender-violence in the region and statistics from FIDA for three months; April to June 2013 indicate that there were 1527 cases of gender violence recorded. The ideologies include cultural practices such as wife inheritance, initiation and polygamy (District Strategic Plan, 2005-2010). Students particularly boys become violent in schools because during initiations they are advised to be aggressive, strict, brave and not 'joke' around with ladies. Kakamega was suitable for the study because it has experienced violence cases in schools and frequent riots in the university which brings about gender based violent acts therefore studying its effect in training institutions has realized data for policy makers in the County (P.D.E, 2009). The population for this study was 18,000 students from tertiary institutions. A stratified random sampling method was used to select the institutions (Fraenkel & Wallen 2012); simple random sampling was used to select respondents for the study. A sample size decision model by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used to determine the sample size of 450 students. The study used primary data which was collected by the help of structured interview guide (Kombo& Tromp, 2006). Data was analyzed using descriptive analyses such as means, modes, percentages, frequencies and narratives by aid of computer packages.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study sought to establish awareness of the mechanisms put in place to manage gender violence in the institutions by asking the respondents to state yes or no. The results are in Figure 1

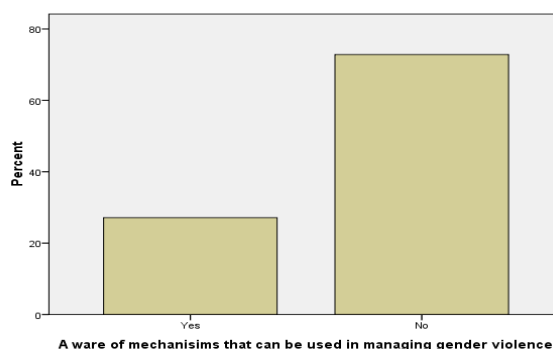


Figure 1: Mechanisms for Managing Gender Violence.

Figure 1 shows that 27% (107) of the respondents were aware of mechanisms put in place to manage gender violence while 73% (283) students said they were not aware of any mechanisms put in place to manage gender violence. The study also sought to establish if there were any mechanisms for curbing gender violence in the institutions by asking the dean of students and principles of institutions. The results are shown in Figure 2

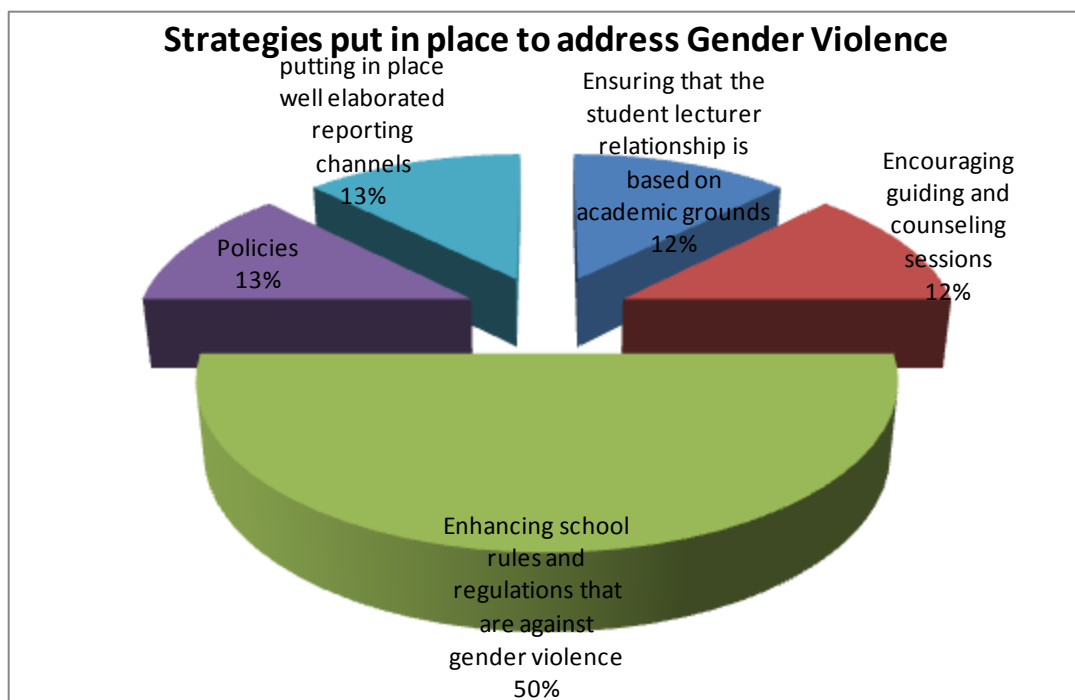


Figure 2: Mechanisms for Managing Gender Violence.

Figure 2 shows that 50% of the institutions identified enhancing school rules and regulations that are against gender violence, 13% talked of policies on gender violence to be put in place, 13% stated putting in place well elaborated reporting mechanisms, 12% said they ensure that student lecture relationship is purely for academic purposes and 12% encouraged guiding and counselling sessions. The majority of Key informants did not have any documentations on gender violence policy.

Training for Guidance and Counseling Officers

The study sought to find out if the officers handling guidance and counselling offices had any training on gender violence and the results are shown in Figure 3

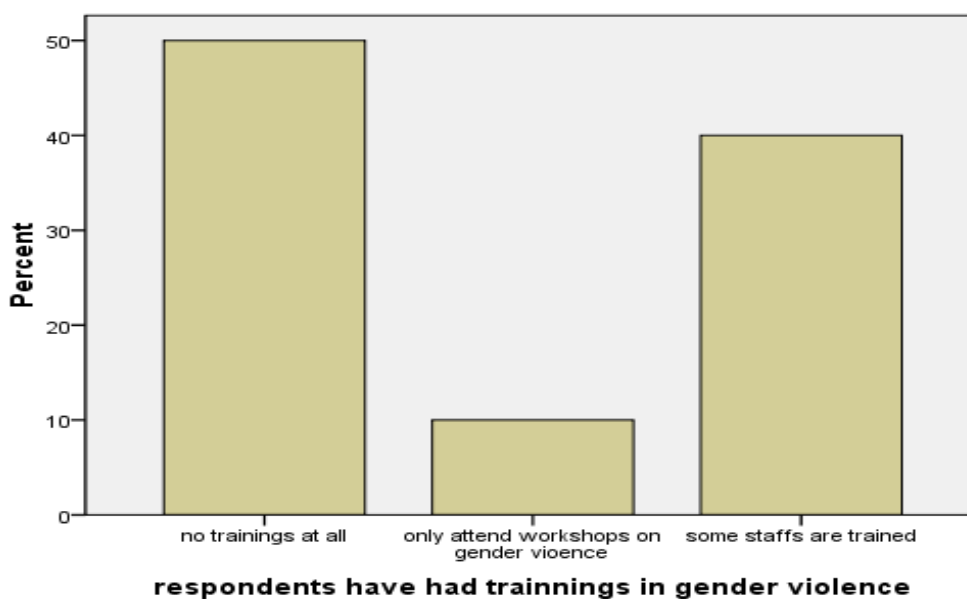


Figure 3: Training of Guiding and Counselling Officers

Figure 3 shows that 50% of the officers do not have any training, 10% have attended workshops and 40% have some training but not in the specific area of gender violence. When asked if students report to them when they are violeted, the response was that there were only afew cases who report as indicated in Figure 5

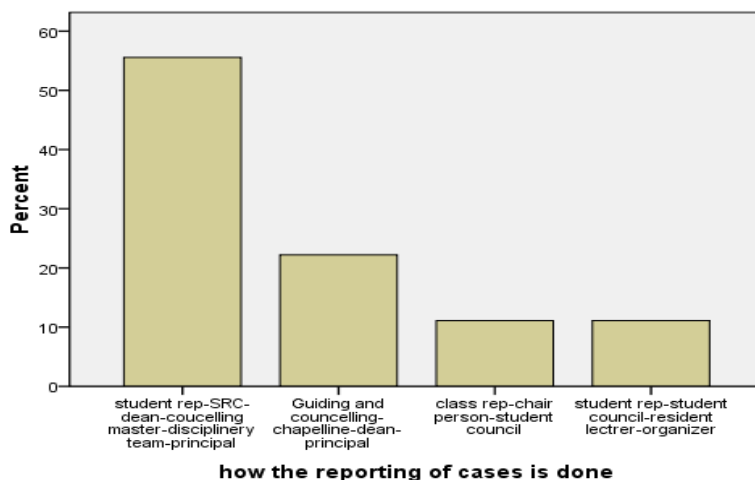


Figure 5: Reporting of Cases of Gender Violence in the Institutions

Figure 5 shows that 55.6% of the students report their cases to the student leader who then forwards to the dean then guiding and counseling officer. The figure further reports that 22.2%, report to the guiding and counseling, 11.1% report to the class representatives, 11.1% report to the student representatives then to the lecturers. From the FGDs students expressed fear of reporting cases to the guiding and counselling officers citing lack of trust. They felt they could only share with some staff whom they trust. The students identified lack of confidentiality as the main reason why they could not trust the officers. From figure 5, the students felt more comfortable reporting their cases to the student leaders who they have trust and confidence. This findings are consistent with UNESCO (2007) report where data on students’ exposure to sexual violence in schools is limited, due to the fact that they are hesitant to report acts of sexual violence for fear of being shamed, stigmatized, not believed or retaliated against.

Snowball was akey tool for gathering information from students who had been violeted and could not report their cases to the authority as indicated bellow:

One of the students said:

‘On 17th March 2014, students srieked over exams and during the strike, the ‘Boda bodas’(Motobyke) drivers and touts came to our hostel and raped us severally. When my boyfriend learned of the experience, he rejected me so i cannot concertrate in class’(OI, 14th May 2014).

From the case narrated, students are vulnerable not only to their institutions environment but also to the touts in the community.

In another interview, the student narrated the experience she had with her boyfriend.

‘During my second year,i had a boyfriend who loved me so much and every time he kept requesting me to visit him in his room but i used to refuse. One day he tricked me to visit him in the evening for abrief moment. I decided to go to his room at 6.00pm in the evening, hoping that i would come back to my hostel early enough. When i got there he served some drinks and after ashort while his three other friends came in. After taking the drink, idont know what happened until 8.00am in the morning when i woke up only to realize that i had been raped by the four men severally. I was not able to walk untill afriend came and assisted me to the hostel. I feard sharing the experience with my mother because she would have beaten me up. My close friend pleaded with me to go to hospital and I did accept. From that time I fear everybody and especially men. I can’t concertrate in class and have been dropping in my performance. I have never reported to the administration because I fear that they will spread the romours’(OI, 15th May 2014)

This study was able to get some insights from students who had information of their colleques who had been violeted and one gave the following: ‘My friend had a boyfriend whom they had been dating .All along she had been complaining to me how the boyfriend was hot tempered and could hit her anytime they had a misunderstanding. This continued on for some time and I suggested that we report the matter to the relevant authorities which she declined. She said that the boyfriend would beat her more as he had even told her never to report that to anyone.’(OI, 17th May 2014).

This study established that many students in the institutions were abused yet they choose to remain silent for fear of the aftermath effects. Institutions which have structures that students can trust could attract such cases instead of having students suffer quietly. The study identified a male student who narrated his ordeal as follows: 'My girlfriend who is a year behind me got a baby and insisted that we must stay together. I tried resisting but that could not work. I decided to move out of the hostel but everywhere I went she discovered the place and followed me. Finally my girlfriend came and threw the baby at me and left. It very traumatizing because I had hidden this from my family and now I had to take care of the baby and attend to my classes. Life at the university became very difficult until I had to tell my parents who finally took the baby' (13th May 2014)

From the narations, the study established that there were many male and female students who have been violeted yet they choose to remain silent. During FGDs the students identified culture as one of the reasons why they don't report the cases. They said that culutere does not alow them to talk about certain matters. The male students said that talking about being violeted by a female is not beeing 'man enough', they would rather keep quiet than talking about the issues. It was interesting to note that, students feared reporting cases to guidance and counselling officers because the officers never kept secrets, one said: 'One day I had a pressing problem and decided to share with the guiding and counselling mistress. Before the day ended, I heard the teachers talking about my story in the staffroom. I was so disapointed until I vowed never to report any other case to the guidance office' (FGD, 20th May 2014)

The study sought to find out if the institutions were gender sensitive by using observation check list to establish the availability of records, gender awareness messages, counselling rooms, Suggestion box and gender desk at the police. The findings indicate that most of the institutions do not have documentations of the policies. When asked to show documentations of policies, only two out of eleven istitutions had the documents. The messages on gender awareness were spotted in some institutions as indicated in plate 1



Plate 1: Messages to Curb Gender Based Violence Messages to Curb Gender Based Violence

The messages seems to have no impact since majority of students 72.8 % said they were not aware of mechanisms for managing gender violence. This is further indicated in their recommendations for the need to have more awareness on matters concerning gender violence.

Messages of drug abuse were identified in some institutions as indicated in plate 2.



Plate 2: Messages on Drug Abuse to Mitigate Gender Based Violence

Suggestion boxes were also seen in some institutions and when the deans of facilities were asked if there was a committee for handling the complaints, some said it was there but not functional. The study also established that there was no gender desk at the police station to cater for special cases of violation, all cases were handled at the crimes office which makes it difficult for confidentiality. The findings of the study are consistent with Omutoko and Rugut (2006) who cited inconsistencies in policies and policy priorities that make it difficult to realize Kenya's Vision 2030. For the institutions which had policies, the study sought to find out the effectiveness of the gender policy and any mechanisms for managing gender violence on enhancing performance in tertiary education institutions and the results are shown in Figure 6

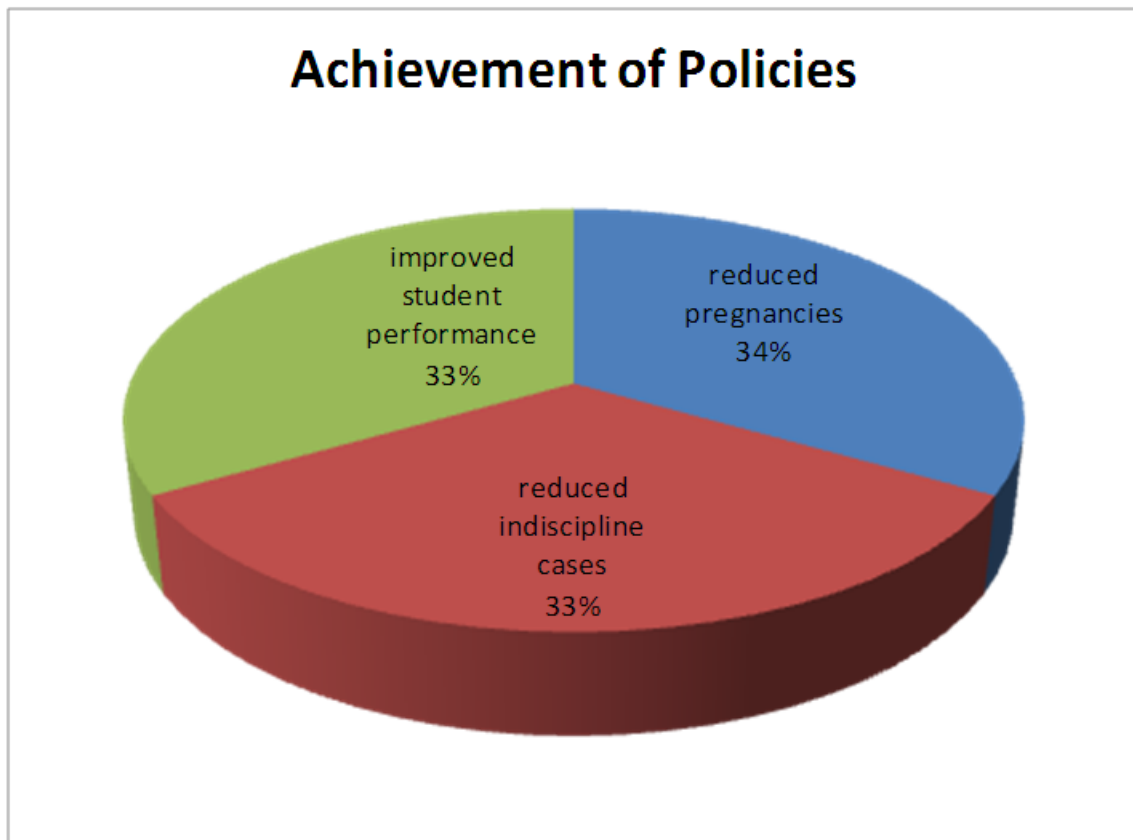


Figure 6: Achievements of the Policies

Figure 6 shows that the achievements of the gender policies are as follows: 33% improved students performance, 33% reduced indiscipline cases, 34% reduced pregnancies. From the Key informants; deans of curriculums and academic deans stated that, the policies put in place had improved performance, reduced indiscipline and pregnancies, however during the focus group discussions; majority of the students disagreed with the fact that there were policies on the ground to reduce gender violence.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

The study identified mechanisms existing in the institutions such as; enhancing school rules and regulations that are against gender violence, policies on gender violence, putting in place well elaborated reporting mechanisms, ensuring that student lecturer relationship is purely for academic purposes and encouraging guiding and counselling sessions in the institutions. It was noted that majority of students were not aware of the mechanisms, further the guidance lecturers had little or no training on issues of gender violence making it difficult for students to report their problems to the officers.

This study recommends the Ministry of education to clearly lay down guidelines and standards of conduct (if not existing already), which all education institutions should adhere to. The guidelines will foster responsible freedom by putting a stop to GBV and helping to make the institutions a safer place for learning. Specific policies on stated gender based violence should be availed by each institution and its implementation programme be clearly stated.

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