

## WHARC POLICY BRIEF SERIES

### Addressing the Challenge of Sexual Violence Affecting Nigerian Youth

- Policy Recommendation for A Women Movement to address Gender Based Violence



## **Background**

Sexual violence has become a common feature in Nigeria's socio-economic life. Cases of sexual violence affecting young women are increasingly being reported in the social media on a daily basis, with dire consequences for the victims. However, the true incidences are not known with certainty as most cases of sexual assault are underreported by the victims for fear of stigmatization and shame. Often female victims are mostly blame for the act, while the culprits are usually left unpunished

Unlawful discrimination, including sexual coercion, harassment, and other types of sexual violence is not only traumatic on those who experience it but can compromise the integrity of the university community.

Sexual assault encompassed a range of acts including demands of sex for grade and jobs, coerced sex in dating/marriage, forced pornography, as well as organized rape.

While higher levels of male intimate partner violence victimization occur in countries with greater gender equality, however, females are usually the victims in male-dominated patriarchal societies such as are evident in Nigeria.

Its impact can have a profound effect on both the mental and physical health as well as on the social well-being of an individual.

Addressing sexual violence and any other forms of gender-based discrimination and inequality in the university community is an important aspect of the Millennium Development Goals wherein the Women Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC) is in support of.

### **Causes of sexual violence among Nigerian university students**

Common factors speculated as favouring sexual violence includes;

1. Indecent dressing by the females with resultant display of sensual body parts (like breasts, navel and buttocks) through tight and transparent wears.
2. Social habits such as night clubbing and alcohol intake
3. Victimization by some universities lecturers
4. Tricked/drugged into non-consensual sex
5. Fear of what their partner might do and that perpetrators may become more dangerous after their victims report these crimes

### **Effect of sexual violence**

The followings are some of the grievous impact of sexual violence

1. It can cause psychological and physical injury and associated with an increased risk of a range of sexual and reproductive health problems.
2. Poor projection of university image and lack of concentration in studies by the victim
3. Unprotected sex stemming from sexual violence could increase the possibility of getting STIs including HIV/AIDs and unplanned pregnancy.

## **Recommendations**

Sexual assault is a criminal act that violates the standards of our university community and should be unacceptable. Possible recommendations are:

1 There should be adequate security measure in all nook and crannies of the university premises by security guard patrol team

- 2 Provision of close circuit television(CCTV) in strategic places so as to monitor most on-going activities
- 3 University authority, student affairs units should organise advocacy and information shearing workshops, debates to create awareness of the danger inherent in it
- 4 University authority should set up or strengthen counselling centres that will be dealing with issues of sexual assault

## **Acknowledgment**

The women's Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC) is a non-governmental and non-profit organization based in Benin City, Edo State, whose mission is to promote the health and social well-being of women through research, documentation, advocacy and service delivery.

## **Further Reading**

1. Abubakar Ali Kullima; Mohammed Bello Kawuwa; Bala Mohammed Audu; Abdulkarim G. Mairiga; Mohammed Bukar Sexual Assault against Female Nigerian Students African Journal of Reproductive Health Sept. 2010; 14(3): 189-193.
2. Archer J. Cross-cultural differences in Physical Aggression between Partners: a social-role analysis. *Pers Soc Psychol Rev* 2006;10(2):133-53

## **Developed by:**

Isaac Ejakhegbe, Friday E. okonofua AJRH