

Violence against Female Students of Tertiary Institutions in Yola Metropolis of Adamawa State, Northeast Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Prevalence of violence against female students in public tertiary institutions of learning in northern Nigeria is under researched, mostly because of the domineering culture of a patriarchal society where such matters are not exposed for fear of social stigma. The aim was to find out the prevalence of violence on female students in tertiary institutions of learning. Semi-structured questionnaire was administered on female respondents in two tertiary institutions located in the Jimeta metropolis of Adamawa State. A non-random purposive sampling was used in the administration of questionnaires on respondents from the most populated departments of the institutions under study. Data was analyzed by means of simple percentage and presented in the form of bar charts. The study revealed that gender-based violence of the penetrative form is least reported compared to other forms. The continual recurrence and rise of violence of this form is attributed to general gender inequality entrenched in and by the society with the girl child has limited right and stake in the general function of the society in northern Nigeria. The study advocates the enforcement of the protection of the rights of the woman folk by all authorities concerned.

Keywords: violence, gender-based, tertiary institutions, students, harassment, abuse

I. INTRODUCTION

There is hardly a history of an agglomeration of people from different gender backgrounds in a semi-closed-circuit setting of an academic institution without a record of an incident of violence. Interactions between persons of

different gender most often result in conflict of interest that do trigger some violent tendencies. The fact is, most institutions are populated with persons from diverse culture, ethnic, social, and economic environments. In terms of gender, the male population has most often dominated institutional settings thus giving them a phallic domineering influence on the weaker sex on issues of violence.

The United States Government defined Gender Based Violence (GBV) as “Violence that is directed at an individual based on his or her biological sex, gender identity, or perceived adherence to socially defined norms of masculinity and femininity. It includes physical, sexual, and psychological abuse; threats; coercion; arbitrary deprivation of liberty; and economic deprivation, whether occurring in public or private life. GBV takes on many forms and can occur throughout the life cycle. Types of gender-based violence can include female infanticide; child sexual abuse; sex trafficking and forced labor; sexual coercion and abuse; neglect; domestic violence; elder abuse; and harmful traditional practices such as early and forced marriage, “honor” killings, and female genital mutilation/cutting.” Thus, cases of gender-based violence are often treated with tolerant minimization skewed in favor of the gender in dominance.

History has shown that the female gender has most often been the victim of all forms of violence; which led to the advent and growth of women’s liberation movements on violence and sexuality in the late sixties (Reingardiene, 2017). Its wave of influence however spread globally covering North America, Europe and India in the

21st century and its gradually gaining influence in Africa albeit slothfully. Despite the foregoing, gender-based violence has continued to be an issue of concern because of its recurring tendencies especially among students.

There are diverse researches on gender-based violence especially in the developed parts of the world. Forbes-Mewett, (2014) observed that over one-third of the woman folk have been victims of physical and sexual violence. The World Bank in 2019 roll out the following statistics: “35% of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence; globally, 7% of women have been sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner; globally, as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner; 200 million women have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting.”

Despite the foregoing statistics, the issue is somewhat under-researched in the developing parts of the world, especially in sub-Saharan Africa with a male dominant culture. Mezie-Okoye, and Alamina, (2014) cross-sectional study of genderbased violence in a tertiary institution in PortHarcourt city of south-south Nigeria reported a prevalence rate of 46%, which agrees with Imonkhe et.al., (2012) earlier study who concluded that gender-based violence is prevalent and on the rise. Elsewhere in Ebonyi, southeast Nigeria, a prevalence rate of 36.7% was reported by Ogbonnaya, et.al., in 2011. Iliyasa, et. al., (2011) also reported a higher prevalence rate of 58.8% of physical, sexual and emotional violence in a tertiary institution of the northern nigerian city of Kano citing religion, ethnicity, indigenship, marital status, campus residency and faculty affiliation as predictors. The higher prevalence rate reported in northern Nigeria may be influenced by the penal code in operation that legalizes corrective beating of a child, pupil, servant or wife without inflicting bodily injury.

Gender-based violence is however, highly under reported, with the rate of reporting in direct proportion with the level of development of the country, and how liberal the society is and whether gender equality has been mainstreamed in all aspect of societal function. Stenning, et.al., (2013) study on female university students in the UK between 2009 and 2011 using onling survey, focus group discussion and interviews revealed that victims preference to an informal approach of dealing with the issue to avoid secondary victimization; they therefore proffered guardianship and education and socialization measures for potential victims and perpetrators. Forges-Mewett

(2014) and Imonikhe et.al.,(2012) also observed low reporting of gender-based violence in Nigeria as common because of fear of secondary consequences such as stigma and reprisal attacks. This makes the issue of low reporting a universal problem requiring most urgent response.

Identified types of gender-based violence include stalking, harassment, rape, assault, coercion, trafficking, exploitation, domestic and dating violence (Forges-Mewett, 2014; Okoroafor, et.al., 2014; Stenning, et.al., 2013; Imonikhe et. al., 2012). These acts have generally been identified by Imonikhe et al (2012) to be carried out in the forms of male lecturers to female students, male students to female students, male lecturers on female lecturers and non-academic staff on female students. Gender-based violence of penetrative forms are known to lead to spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies, and unsafe abortions (Tantu et al, 2020); while all forms of gender-based violence cause trauma that manifests in the forms of anger, loss of esteem and confidence, depression, anxiety and powerlessness, poor academic performance, poor selfworth, poor interpersonal relationships and sexual adjustment, increased alcohol consumption, drugs and other substance abuses (Imonikhe et.al., 2012; Iliyasa et.al., 2011). There is however no information on which of penetrative and non-penetrative forms is reported the least.

Okoroafor, et.al., (2014) found that the causes of violence in Nigerian tertiary institutions include: faulty vetting process, inadequate security, declining cultural values and academic standards, brain drain and gender inequality. Omotosho, et. al., (2008) however, revealed that cultism on campuses is often the cause of gender-based violence on campuses inflicting assault and rape on female students. Furthermore, female cultists are known to also perpetrate violence and to coerce female students into joining prostitution rings. Omonijo, et.al., (2013) cross-sectional survey study of faith-based institutions, Imonikhe, et.al., (2012) perception survey and Ezeakile of the Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF) 2015 biennial conference identified members of both academic and non-academic staff as main perpetrators of gender-based violence in tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria; and faulted situations where institutions dissociate from such incidences and the weak remedial actions of suspension, termination of appointments as too mild and the reason for the rising trend of the menace. The NFF conference argues that gender-based violence will continue to rise because of the absence of a consistent and clear policy by tertiary institutions on harassment,

assault and rape as evident in its complete invisibility in most students handbooks and verbalization during matriculations or orientations of new students. They further adduced that the absence of dedicated channels of redress or support for victims makes for the low reporting of the incidences.

From the foregoing it is inferred that gender-based violence is prevalent because of the deliberate minimization and repression of the problem by authorities of tertiary institutions to protect its image making them culpable culprits of the act. In the context of northern Nigeria with a patriarchal and reserved society where such matters are repressed to protect from religious shame and social dogma, making the woman folk voiceless, it is important to investigate this problem in its tertiary institutions. This is with a view to bringing out its true nature and the action or inaction of stakeholders that help perpetuate the menace in the face of inadequate and non-operable law against it. Furthermore, research on gender-based violence in Nigeria generally focus on the university domain mainly with peculiarities distinct from other 'second-tier' tertiary institutions like polytechnics and advanced colleges in Nigeria. Furthermore, most studies have been on institutions in southern Nigeria that are perceived as 'educationally more advantaged and advanced' compared to those in the

north. This study therefore investigates the menace of gender-based violence in the second-tier tertiary institutions of learning that are saddled with the job of providing the technical, vocational and teaching skills required to drive the Nigerian economy.

The feminist social theory (Jackson, 1993) that analyzes the social and cultural processes of the perpetuation of female subordination forms the theoretical base of this research. It is a theory that aims to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women in the social world and attempting to addresses issues concerning women by focusing on the perspectives, experiences and viewpoint of women. In this study, women and girls in tertiary institutions of learning are the focus. It is pertinent to note that despite the strategic roles played by these institutions, they are however perceived to be the most neglected in the higher education sector in Nigeria.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Two tertiary institutions of learning comprising Adamawa State Polytechnic and the Federal College of Education both located in Jimeta, the commercial hub of Yola the capital of Adamawa State (Figure 1) were purposively selected for this study. Both institutions provide technical/vocational and teaching skills to students.

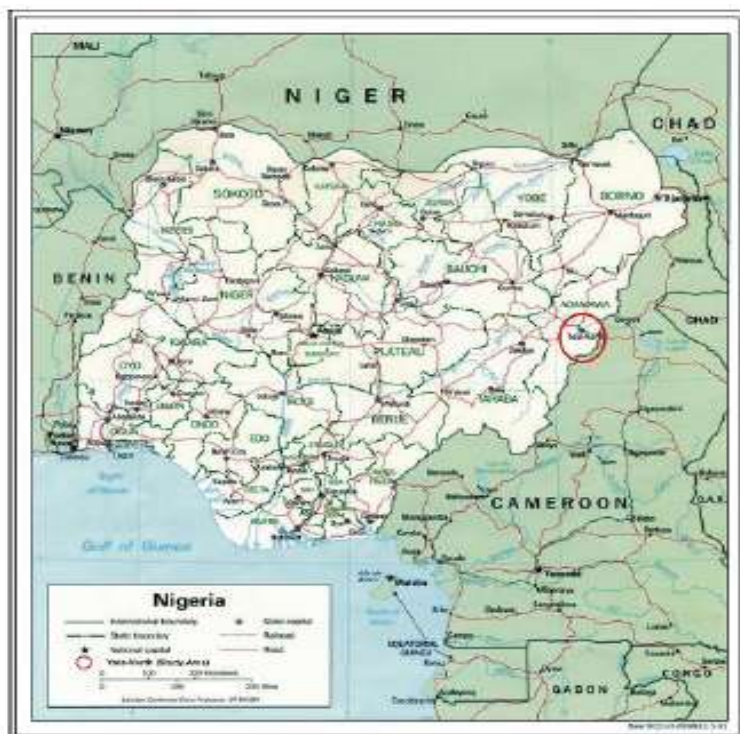


Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing Yola North, Adamawa State in Circle

Semi-structured questionnaire was administered on 200 female respondents in the two tertiary institutions located in the Jimeta metropolis of Adamawa State. Test and retest method was used in the determining the reliability of the questionnaire on a sample of 10 female students of the department of disaster management in Adamawa State Polytechnic, Yola in 2019. Peer to peer assisted questionnaire distribution approach was adopted where research assistants were selected from female students of each selected departments to provide some form of confidentiality for willing female respondents. The

peer assisted research assistants were drawn from the two major religions of the study area (Christianity and Islam) and thus coached on the contents and administration of questionnaire distribution. The simple random sampling was used in the administration of questionnaires on respondents from the most populated departments of the institutions under study. Data collated from the questionnaire were analysed using the simple percentage and presented in the form of bar charts. This is to give a simple picture of the state of gender based violence in tertiary institutions of learning in Adamawa northeast Nigeria.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

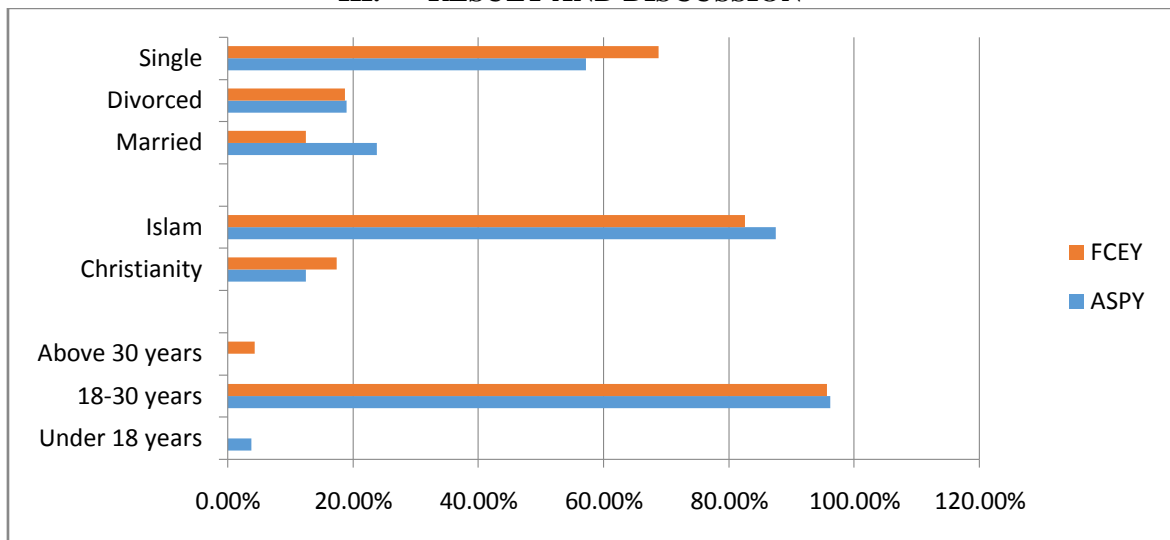


Figure 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Figure 2 on demographic characteristics of respondents' shows that over 90% of respondents from both tertiary institutions are adults in the 18-30 years age bracket with more than 80% from the Islamic religion. In terms of respondent's marital

status, more than 50% are single with 18% that are divorced. This shows that respondents were matured enough to give responsible and accurate answers to questions on violence against women without prejudice.

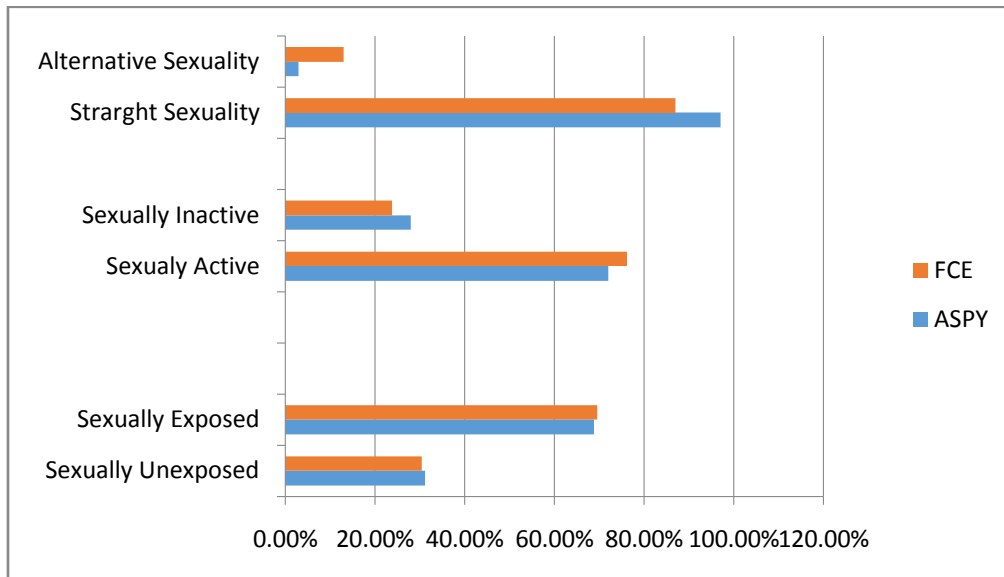


Figure 3: Respondents Sexual Awareness

Figure 3 on sexual awareness status of respondents' shows that over 68% are sexually exposed, which in other words suggest that respondents have had sex before and 30% of respondents are sexually unexposed; over 70% fall under the category of sexually active indicating that they currently are into sexual relations with partners and 23.8% are not into any sexual relations

at the time of this survey; the table further shows that respondents with straight sexuality (romantically and sexually attracted/involved with partners of opposite sex) constitute 87% while those with and into alternative sexuality (romantically and sexually attracted and involved with same sex partners) constitute 3% in ASPY and 13% in FCEY.

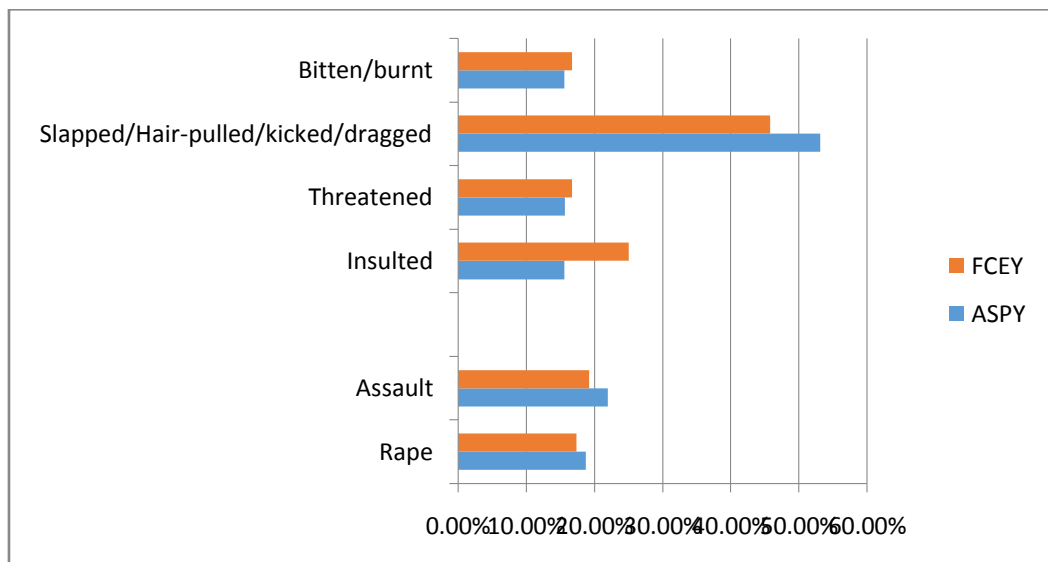


Figure 5: Exposure to GBV

Figure 5 shows the various types of GBV that respondents claim to have been ever exposed to. It shows that GBV carried out in tertiary institutions of learning fall within three broad categories: Sexual, Emotional and Physical violence. In terms of sexual forms of GBV, Figure

5 shows that 17-19% of respondents claimed to have ever been raped, with another 19-22% who claimed to have ever been sexually assaulted. In terms of exposure to emotional forms of GBV, between 15-25% of respondents from both institutions claimed to have ever been sexually

insulted, 15-17% claimed to have ever been sexually threatened and 45-53% claimed to have

ever experienced a combination of slap, hair-pulled, kicked and/or dragged because of sex.

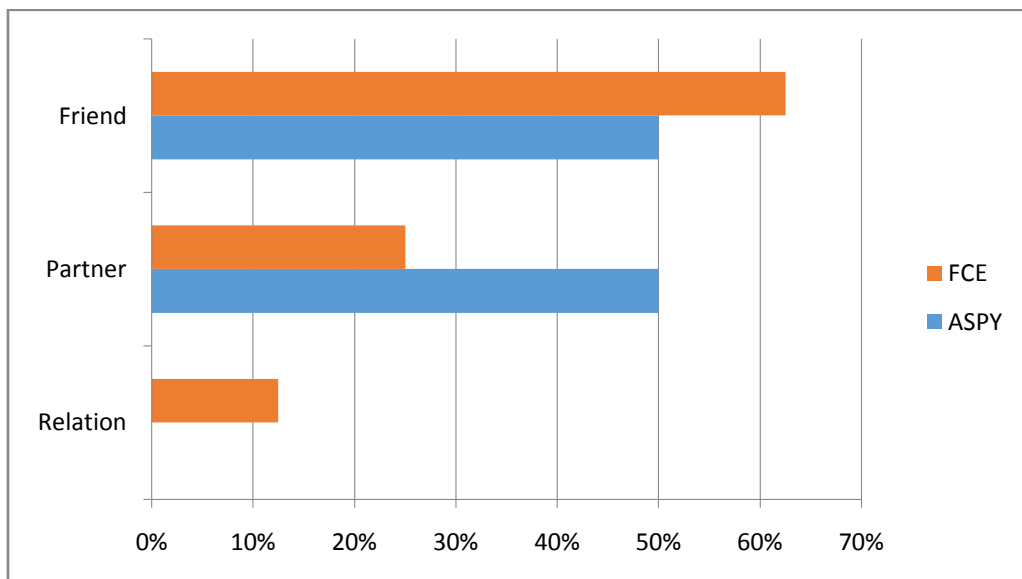


Figure 6: Perpetrators of Rape

Figure 6 Perpetrators of rape indicates that of the respondents from ASPY and FCE who respectively claimed to have ever been, raped by a relation constitute between 12% and 25%, raped by a sexual partner constitute between 25% and 50%; and rape by a friend constitute between 50% and

62.5%. Ironically none of the respondents claim being raped by a stranger. This goes to show that perpetrators of rape are known and trusted person who take advantage of victims vulnerability to carry out the deed.

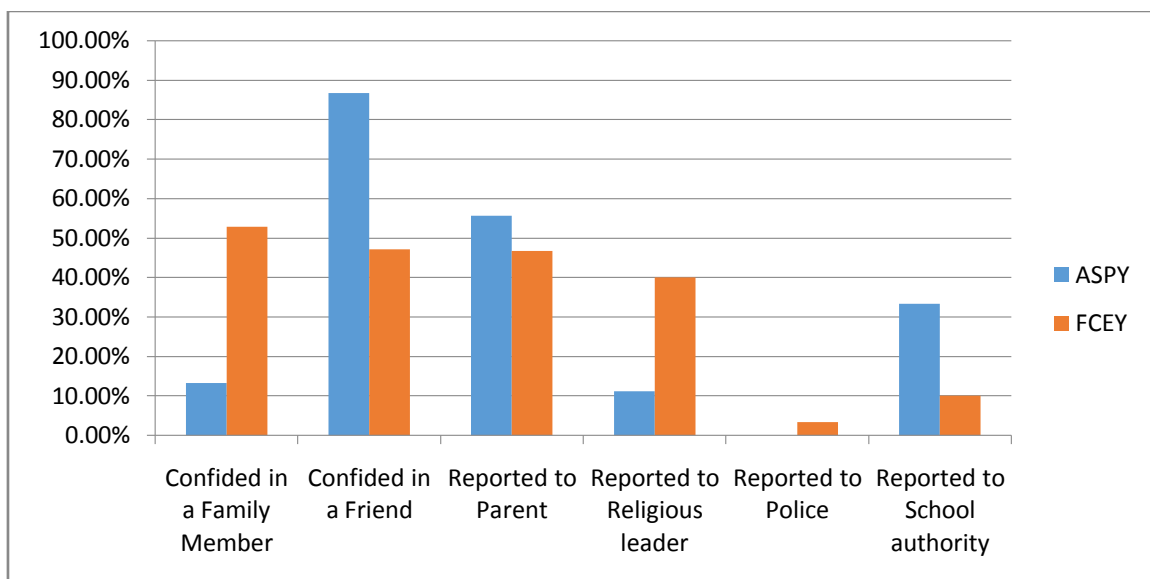


Figure 7: Attempted Means of Closure

Figure 7 on the attempted means of closure used by victims of GBV shows that between 13-53% of victims only confided in a family member; between 47-87% confided in a

friend; between 46-56% reported the matter to a parent; between 11-40% reported the matter to a religious leader; between 0-3% reported the matter to the Police. This goes to show that victims have

more confidence on friends and religious leader to help them find closure than on parents and the

Police, whom they feel will judge their character rather than help them find redress.

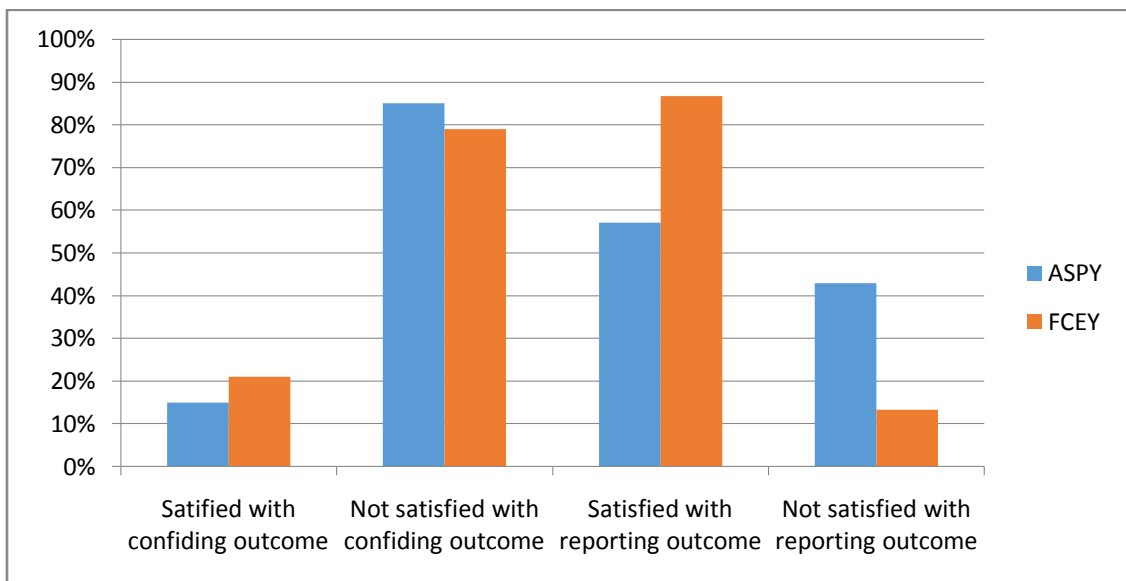


Figure 8: Satisfied with Outcome of Closure

On whether respondents were satisfied with the outcome of the means of closure, Figure 8 shows that between 15-21% of respondents were satisfied leaving 79-85% not satisfied with the outcome of confiding in either a family member or a religious leader. This is because of the resulting stigma associated with GBV that leads to character assassination and mockery by friends and family.]

In terms of reporting however, figure 8 also shows that 57-87% were satisfied with the outcome while 13-43% were not satisfied. This suggests that victims tend to find redress when they report the matter to either religious authorities or the Police as culprits get punished than it is with confiding in either a friend or a family member.

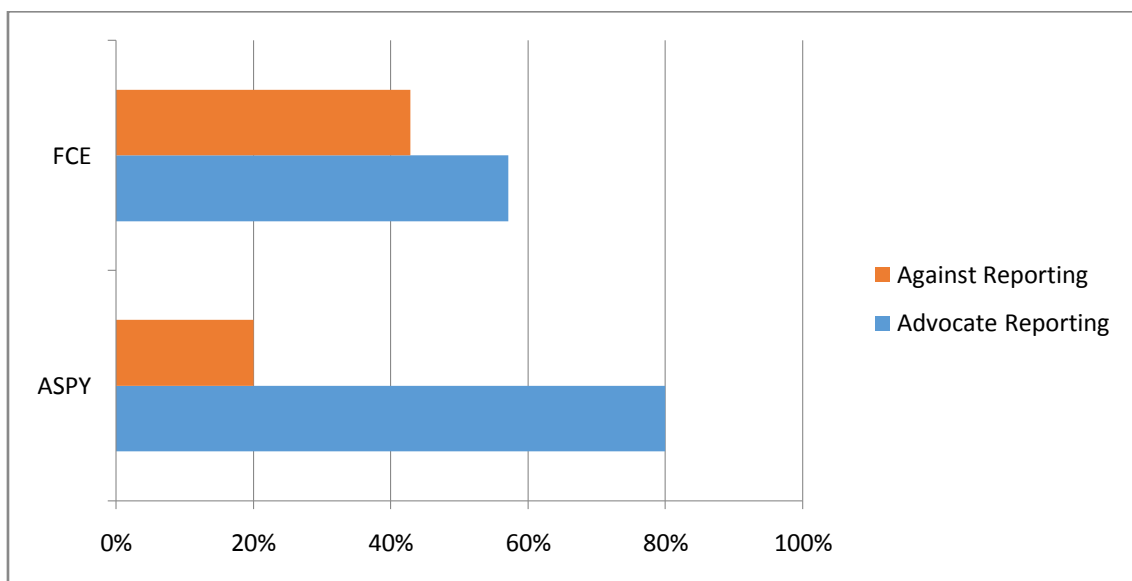


Figure 9: Reporting Advocacy

On whether respondents advocate reporting of cases of GBV to relevant authorities

for redress or not, Figure 9 shows that respondents who answered in the affirmative constitute 57%

while those in ASPY constitute 80%. This suggest that though most respondents would advocate reporting as a means of finding redress and psychological closure, yet a number of people will not actually do it. This according to respondents is because of fear of social stigmatization from immediate members of their community.

IV. FINDINGS

- i. Prevalence rate of gender-based violence in tertiary institutions of Adamawa stands at 53%.
- ii. Perpetrators are known persons to the victims (mainly intimate partners, friends and relations) who take advantage of trust to commit the crime
- iii. Common types GBV in the study area are harassment, physical abuse in the forms of slapping, hair pulling, beating, dragging, coercion, emotional abuse in the form of harassment, insults and threats; and sexual abuse in the form of rape and inappropriate physical contacts.
- iv. The penetrative forms of violence (rape) is the least reported with a report rate of 1.9% in tertiary institutions in the study area
- v. Predictors are poverty, ignorance of fundamental rights, social stigma from the authorities and students alike.

V. CONCLUSION

Gender based violence especially of penetrative form has a negative effective on victims. It can lead to psychological traumas causing the manifestation of low self esteem, depression and possible suicide tendencies in victims. It is therefore a menace to the society and a terrible crime on the victims. In northern Nigeria with its dominant phallic culture laden with discriminatory gender roles that undermines the human right of the female gender is seen to be the major supporting motivation for offenders to commit acts of GBV because they feel they can always get away with. Thus, GBV related crimes are significantly under reported in this part of Nigeria. The focus on academic institutions of learning reveals that the crime is also being perpetrated within the four walls of institutions of learning and has further underscored this under reporting fact. More with the perception by victims of no hope of finding redress. Consequently it behoves on all members of the society to engage in social campaigns till stricter penalties are enforced on GBV offenders. Then and only then shall there be a drastic fall in GBV in Adamaawa and Nigeria at large.

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