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Relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya

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Abstract

Sexual victimization among university students has been rising despite the efforts put in place to address this social plague; a trend potentially exacerbated by inadequate and fragmented preventive strategies and information. While most studies have explored this pervasive phenomenon from socio-legal lenses, the influence of individual vulnerability attributes remains an imperative gap to be investigated. Focusing on this gap this study endeavored to examine the relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students in Tharaka Nithi County. The study adopted a correlational research design. The target population was 27,005 university students in Tharaka Nithi County. From the population, 394 students were sampled by multistage sampling technique. Structured questionnaires and interview guides were the data collection instruments. A pilot study, involving 10% of the sample size, was conducted at Meru University of Science and Technology to assess the instruments' reliability and validity. A Cronbach Alpha Reliability of 0.791 was obtained, which exceeded the 0.75 threshold indicating the instruments were reliable. Quantitative data was analyzed by use of SPSS Version 27 and qualitative data was analyzed by use of Max QDA 2020 software. Spearman's Rank Correlation analysis was employed to determine the relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students in Tharaka Nithi County. The findings of the study indicated a positive relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization, $\rho=0.548$, $p<0.01$ tested at 0.05 significance level. The study recommended the need for university managements to create comprehensive awareness on sexual victimization with emphasis directed to individual vulnerability attributes to victimization. There is need for universities to put in place working reporting channels where cases of sexual victimization are reported and victims of sexual victimization assisted through counselling programs and other support services. Further, the study recommends a review of sexual misconduct policies in universities to cushion victims rather than blame them. The study also suggested that policies regarding alcohol and substance should be strictly enforced to prevent students from becoming susceptible to sexual victimization.

Keywords: Individual Attributes; Individual Vulnerability Attributes; Sexual Victimization; Victim; Offender; Risky Behaviour

1. Introduction

There has been an increase in sexual victimization among university students (Bondestam and Lundqvist, 2020). University communities have for the longest time been associated with a normal trend as far as sexual victimization is concerned (Mellgren et al., 2018). This has led to normalization of sexual victimization in these institutions as most cases go unreported. In instances when sexual victimization incidents are reported, they are not attended to with the necessary urgency. Sexual victimization generally refers to acts of unwanted, unsolicited, non-consensual and offensive sexual contact (Erentzen et al., 2022). Sexual victimization includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape, sexual abuse as well as stalking. Victimization is the act of directing harm or causing injury to a person by another (Khan, 2022).

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Whereas sexual crime victimization is mostly appreciated within the scope of contact, unwelcoming sexual expressions also have as much impact on the victim as contact (Dardis et al., 2021).

Scholarly literature in European countries on sexual assault of individuals between the ages of 12-25 years revealed that the prevalence of sexual victimization ranges between 2% to 83% (Krahé et al., 2014). The differences in the variations of the sexual assault prevalence were subsequently attributed to cultural and economic differences between the countries' jurisdictional borders as well as the generally accepted violence between dating partners, sidelining the contribution of individual vulnerability attributes. Bonar et al., (2022) suggested for studies to be conducted in specific countries and institutions to unearth pertinent demographic diversities impacting the prevalence of sexual victimization. This study therefore, aimed to bridge a geographical gap by addressing individual vulnerability attributes of sexual victimization among university students in perceived rural and semi-urban situated universities; where studies have underexplored this phenomenon and students possess a higher susceptibility to sexual victimization.

An epidemiology study by Fielding-Miller et al., (2021) on female university students in Eswatini in regard to sexual assault unearthed a significant association between students losing their parents before the age of 21 years old, hazardous and risky alcohol drinking and childhood victimizations as precursors to sexual victimization among university students. In addition, 93% of the perpetrators of sexual crimes were acquainted with the victim (Fielding-Miller et al., 2021). Sexual victimization among university students is contextualized in the student's socialization environment which comprises perpetrators who in one way or another have had or have a close interaction with their victims. However, this study, like most studies conducted, inclined to sexual victimization of female university students sidelining male students. Further, Choudhry et al., (2014), victims' episodic alcohol use was found to pose a greater likelihood of sexual victimization. However, this study failed to provide information on the drinking habits of the offenders involved in sexual coercion which is a predictive scope in sexual victimization.

Most crimes in universities, sexual crime victimization inclusive, are attributed to the risky student lifestyle pursued by university students including frequently visiting bars, stranger socialization, holding parties and alcohol and substance abuse, especially bhang abuse (Kariuki and Barkhuizen, 2023). The study conducted by Kariuki and Barkhuizen (2023) however concentrated on the causes of different crimes among university students and not necessarily in the context of sexual victimization. A cross-sectional study among first year students in the University of Nairobi on alcohol and substance abuse unearthed a high prevalence of alcohol and substance abuse among the students (Musyoka et al., 2020) a vulnerability attribute associated with sexual victimology pattern. A study conducted to unearth crime victimization in Egerton University found out that 27% reported cases of sexual assaults comprised females who experienced financial constraints, access to pornographic materials as well as alcohol and substance abuse (Chebii, 2019). This study however, did not solely focus on sexual victimization among university students but rather the collective crime victimization framework. Nyamu (2019) in her cross-sectional descriptive study among university students in Tharaka Nithi County, found that institutional and individual features were informing risky sexual behavior among the students. This study however, was tailored from a health structured scope understanding of university students and not comprehensively as to why university students fall victims to sexual victimization; hence the need to understand the individual vulnerability attributes influencing sexual victimization among university students.

Objective of the Study

To examine the relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students in Tharaka-Nithi County in Kenya.

1.1. Research Hypothesis

There is no statistically significant relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students in Tharaka-Nithi County in Kenya.

2. Literature review

University life is characterized by possessing a reputation where young women and men have the freedom to party and make merry as much as they wish (Horowitz, 2013). This is attributed to the fact that it is a time when they can indulge in legally drinking alcohol with no supervision or if any, minimal. In most parties conducted by students, alcohol and drugs are presumably the life of the party. The usage and indulgence in alcohol use and other drugs lead to intoxication among the users further increasing their vulnerability to sexual victimization (Caamano-Isorna et al., 2021). This is a result of the victim being unable to resist the unwelcoming physical and sexual contact and as a result, thwarting their ability to fight back even if they wanted to. Ford (2017) asserted that university students who go out on romantic dates

are most likely to fall into such situations as alcohol may be used as a central tool to coerce them into unwillingly consenting to sexual advances

From his study, Ford, (2017) found out that out that 2.4% of 7481 hookups among university students resulted in sexual victimization and alcohol was used as tool to facilitate the victimization. Alcohol drinking in university settings can also be attributed to negative peer influence from other students (Hallett, 2014). According to Sutton et al., (2021), hook-ups among university students increases their chances of finding themselves in risky environments attracting sexual victimization. Students gauge their self-worth and identity to that of their peers and to fit in this group, end up engaging in binge alcohol taking and substance abuse (Spencer et al., 2024). This ultimately paves way for sexual victimization. The victims become apprehensive in reporting these incidences as they fear the blaming that comes from the relevant stakeholders.

Alcohol and substance use is prevalent among university students (Bakar et al., 2013). A report by Substance Use and Mental Health Service Administration in (2019) brought to light an extensive alcohol and substance abuse rate among 53.4% university women in the United States. A cross-sectional study among first year students in the University of Nairobi on alcohol and substance abuse unearthed a high prevalence of alcohol and substance abuse among the students (Musyoka et al., 2020). A study conducted by Burke et al., (2023) among first year students in Ireland revealed that sexual victimization was precipitated by alcohol hazardously consumed by female students and cocaine, ketamine and ecstasy abused by male students. The study did not however, incorporate the larger student body but only focused on first year university students. Previous studies on the influence of alcohol and substance have not extensively covered the extent to which alcohol and substance abuse contribute to sexual victimization among university students. This study therefore, endeavored to bridge this knowledge gap by making methodological adjustments including using correlational design to acquire both quantitative and qualitative information; to show the prevailing relationship between alcohol and substance abuse as an individual vulnerability attribute and sexual victimization among university students.

Previous incidences of sexual victimization have been found to predispose an individual to later victimization (Caamano-Isorna et al., 2021). This forms a basis for later revictimization amongst victims (Decker and Littleton, 2018). This is so the case with university students who had experienced prior sexual victimization even before their entry into the tertiary education level. A study conducted by Light (2018) found that university students who were sexually molested or assaulted in their childhood or teenage years were more susceptible and likely to develop depressive symptoms and disorders compared to those who had no such growing experiences. Incidents of sexual victimization leads to internalization and rationalization of such anti-social behavior against an individual. Childhood sexual victimization experiences expose these sexual harassment victims to vulnerability in terms of victim blaming, guilt and traumatic feelings and they eventually come to terms with and accept the abuse (Kennedy and Prock, 2018). They become fearful and are likely to succumb to unsolicited sexual advances due to desensitization of the abuse, with little or failed attempts to counter the abuse or the abuser. Studies on the relationship between prior victimization and sexual assault however, fall short of enough information on sexual victimization among university students to which this study endeavored to fill the knowledge gap.

In reference to the Down Theory, Kennedy (2025) asserts the influence of seductive, indecent and revealing dressing among female students to sexual victimization. Indecent wares are associated with holding an availability and prepared impression among female students to sexual manipulation and exploitation by the males in their environment. Nwiko et al., (2022) conducted a study among female university students in Southern Nigeria and found a positive correlation between indecent dressing and the susceptibility to sexual victimization. Additionally, Okafor and Uwalaka, (2021) illuminates on the role played by attributive dressing styles including miniskirts and tight worn trousers to sexual victimization in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. Unbuttoned shirts worn by female students connoted a negative impression of a provocative attribute. Understandably, the choice of wares by individuals tends to communicate how a person is judged in the social environment including how people act towards them including acts encompassing sexual victimization.

A cross-cultural study conducted by Schuster and Krahe (2019) on the predictors of sexual victimization among university students in Chile and Turkey found a positive correlation between low self-esteem and religiosity to sexual victimization among university students. Students who presented low self-esteem were found to be more susceptible to sexual victimization in comparison to those who portrayed a more developed sense of self-confidence. Low self-control involves the students' inability to perceive themselves as deserving and seeks validation from others, who in turn take advantage of their deficiencies to say no to advances and sexually victimize them. Students with high religious attachment were less likely to attract incidents of sexual victimization as opposed to those on the lower spectrum (Schuster and Krahe, 2019). Getaye (2020) in his study asserts that religiosity builds a conservative character in

individuals on sex related matters cementing self-control, a sense of belonging and virtue. Students with weak religious backgrounds have a positive interaction with risky behaviour including excessive clubbing and alcohol and drug use, which presents a susceptibility to sexual victimization.

3. Methodology

The study engaged Chuka University and Tharaka University students in Tharaka Nithi County. A correlational research design was employed in examining the relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students. The study population comprised of 27005 students. Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to select 394 students. Purposive sampling was employed to select 12 key informants including security personnel, counsellors and administrators. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides. To check for the validity and reliability of the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted in Meru University of Science and Technology. A Cronbach reliability coefficient of 0.791 was obtained indicating the research tools are reliable. Data analysis was conducted through the use of descriptive and inferential statistics; and Spearman Rank correlational analysis and thematic content analysis were employed in quantitative and qualitative data analysis respectively. The results were presented in tables.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Demographic Information of Respondents

The study involved 347 university students who responded to the questionnaires administered with 12 key informants in the universities interviewed. The gender distribution of the students indicated that male students were 56.8%, female students were 42.4% while the non-binary students represented 0.9% of the total sample. More than half, 55.3%, of the students were aged between 21-23 years. An overwhelming 91.9% of the students reported to be Christians. Additionally, 71.5% of the students were single.

4.2. Individual Vulnerability Attributes and Sexual Victimization

The objective of the study was aimed at examining the relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students in Tharaka Nithi County. The statements comprised of indicators that were used to measure the individual vulnerability attributes variable. Table 1 presents the descriptive analysis of individual vulnerability attributes that predispose university students to sexual victimization.

Table 1 Individual Vulnerability Attributes

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I regularly use alcohol and other substances (like bhang, miraa, cigarettes)	242	10	26	42	27
	69.7%	2.9%	7.5%	12.1%	7.8%
I have engaged in risky activities while under the influence of alcohol and other substances	240	24	44	23	16
	69.2%	6.9%	12.7%	6.6%	4.6%
I have always felt unsafe from any form of unwanted sexual contact or sexual assault	141	38	53	42	73
	40.6%	11.0%	15.3%	12.1	21.0%
I have a previous history of victimization in my childhood	238	38	24	22	25
	68.6%	11.0%	6.9%	6.3%	7.2%
I am confident enough to set boundaries with other people	69	32	41	68	137
	19.9%	9.2%	11.8%	19.6%	39.5%
I easily cooperate with people even if a situation makes me feel uncomfortable	136	49	52	53	57
	39.2%	14.1%	15.0%	15.3%	16.4%
	214	34	26	37	36

I have ever received uncomfortable comments based on my dressing	61.7%	9.8%	7.5%	10.7%	10.4%
I sometimes put on revealing, tight and short clothes in public	230	27	26	29	35
	66.3%	7.8%	7.5%	8.4%	10.1%

The results obtained from the descriptive analysis as presented in Table 1 show that 69.7% and 2.9% respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed to regularly using alcohol, bhang, miraa and other substances statement. On the other hand, 12.1% and 7.8% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed to regular drug use and substance, constituting 19.9% responses in affirmation to regular alcohol and drug use. The results of the study indicate that majority of the students did not regularly indulge in the use of intoxicating substances. This shows that the prevalence of this risky behaviour in the student population is low. However, 19.9% of the students reported to be regular alcohol and drug users. This increases the vulnerability of this portion of students to sexual victimization. Drugs tend to reduce a person's situational awareness by blurring their judgement and predisposing them to risky environments such as bars and clubs where they are likely to experience sexual victimization. Although students who reported to engage in regular alcohol and drugs usage are the minority, they represent a student population deemed high risk to sexual victimization.

The results also show that majority 76.1% of the students reported not to engage in risky activities under the influence of alcohol and other substances. The responses to this item closely align with the item measuring students' regular use of alcohol and other related substances. This implies that majority of the students are keen to avoid risky activities that predispose them to risky situations. However, 11.2% of the students reported to have engaged in risky activities as a result of alcohol and drug use. Risky activities students are likely to engage in after alcohol and drugs intake include following strangers to unknown places, lone walking at night and engaging in unprotected sexual relations, highlighting their elevated vulnerability to sexual victimization. In as much as minority of the students indicated involvement in risky behaviour after alcohol and substance, their significant exposure risk to sexual victimization cannot be underestimated.

The results of the study further show that majority of the respondents, 51.6% of students, reported to feeling safe from sexual victimization. A significant portion, 33.1% of students, feel unsafe from sexual victimization. Unsure responses from 15.3% of the students depict a student population that is unaware as to the parameters encompassing sexual victimization in their environment. It is notable to point out that one-third of students who reported to feeling unsafe from victimization in the total sample is a reflection of a sense of pervasive vulnerability to sexual victimization. While majority of the students feel safe in their environment, others may have counter feelings of being exposed. The perception of lack of safety may lead to avoidance behaviour and chronic anxiety which prevents students from resisting or reporting incidents of sexual victimization, further heightening the vulnerability risk.

The findings of the study further showed that majority, 79.6% of the students indicated not to have experienced previous victimization. The least 6.9% of the respondents reported to be unsure to have experienced previous sexual victimization which can be deduced to mean that a fraction of the students lack the conceptualization to label some incidents as forms of sexual victimization. In affirmation to the item, a significant proportion, 13.5% of the students reported to have experienced previous childhood victimization. In as much as majority of the respondents deny childhood victimization, a significant minority proportion reveal the contribution of childhood victimization to sexual victimization among university students. Students who have experienced prior victimization are susceptible to revictimization due to the learned helplessness manifesting as trauma that disrupts their abilities to set boundaries and be assertive.

In response to the statement of confidence in setting boundaries, the study found out that 19.9% of students who strongly disagreed, and 9.2% of students who disagreed to the item reported lack of confidence in setting boundaries with others. This represents a significant number of students who lack assertiveness which is a critical value in resisting coercion and manipulation that present vulnerability to sexual victimization. Neutral responses were from 11.8% of the students. Majority, 59.1% of the respondents reported to be confident in setting boundaries. This represents more than a half of the respondents, suggesting that more students exhibit self-awareness and self-esteem which acts as protection skills shielding them from vulnerability.

The results of the study further revealed that majority, 53.3% of the respondents reported to not easily cooperating with people in situations that make them feel uncomfortable. Respondents who remained neutral were 15%. However, 31.7% of the respondents admitted to have cooperated with people even in uncomfortable situations. This finding presents a significant proportion of university students who are characterized with compliance behaviour. More than

one third of the respondents affirmed to freely flowing with the wave regardless of the situation. This represents students who are easily cooperating with their peers while failing to recognize their boundaries. Further, this proportion of students fear confronting people who predispose them to uncomfortable situations. This heightens their vulnerability to coercive and non-consensual sexual experiences, more so from exploitative and domineering individuals.

The results of the study indicated that majority, 71.5% of the respondents indicated not to have received uncomfortable comments based on their dressing. However, a significant minority, 20.5% of the respondents reported to have received uncomfortable comments based on their dressing. This portion of respondents constitute students who have been sexually harassed through objectification by comments which stands as a risk factor elevating an environment attracting sexual victimization. Closely linked to this item was a statement to which respondents were to respond to their degree of agreement to dressing in revealing, tight and short clothes in public places. The results indicated that majority 74.1% of the respondents disagreed to dressing indecently in public. Respondents who were unsure of this item were 7.5% denoting their complexity awareness regarding sexual victimization as solely not dependent on a person’s mode of dressing. This portion of respondents’ responses lie in between the uncomfortableness of blaming the victim while at the same acknowledging that some kinds of clothing may attract unsolicited attention which constituted the ambivalence. A considerable minority, 18.5% of the respondents recorded in affirmation to putting on revealing clothes. From the findings of the study, majority of the students indicated to dressing modestly in public. Although a significant portion of 18.5% of the respondents’ point to a section of students with increased vulnerability. The findings are in agreement with the findings of Akpan (2018), who noted that indecent dressing among university students resulted in their sexual harassment and assault.

To establish the relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization, a correlation analysis was conducted. The objective of the study sought to examine the relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students in Tharaka Nithin County. The null hypothesis that there is no statistically significant relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization was tested at $\alpha=0.05$ significance level. Spearman Rank Correlation analysis was conducted to establish whether there exists a significant relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students. The results obtained are presented in Table 7.

Table 2 Correlation Analysis between Individual Vulnerability Attributes and Sexual Victimization

			Sexual Victimization	Individual Vulnerability Attributes
Spearman's rho	Sexual Victimization	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.548**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.000
		N	347	347
	Individual Vulnerability Attributes	Correlation Coefficient	0.548**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
		N	347	347

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of the Spearman’s Correlation indicated that there was a significant correlation between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students in Tharaka Nithi County, $\rho = 0.548$, $p < 0.01$. The Spearman’s rho coefficient of 0.548 points to a positive correlation. This implies that an increase in individual vulnerability attributes leads to an increase in sexual victimization. The p-value obtained was 0.000, which is less than the threshold critical value of 0.01 significance value (2-tailed). This infers that the relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students is statistically significant at 0.05 significance level. Hence, the correlation between the two variables is unlikely to be due to chance. Therefore, it is on this premise that the study rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there is a statistically significant relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students.

The findings are in agreement with that of Cusack et al., (2021) who noted that some certain personality traits in university students including lowered self-regulation and enhanced impulsivity and neuroticism coupled with initial sexual assaults predispose students to sexual violence victimization. The established study emphasizes the

compounded exposure risk linked to dispositional attributes and previous traumatic experiences' interplay on the susceptibility of university students to sexual victimization. Additionally, this revelation resonates with the work of Spencer et al., (2024) who found a strong correlation between previous childhood sexual assault, a personal factor, and later sexual victimization among university students. The study established that childhood trauma left unaddressed is bound to diminish a person's ability to recognize boundaries thereby predisposing them to coercive sexual assaults. These findings strengthen an understanding that individual attributes play a significant role in shaping sexual victimization among university students.

Interview guides were used to collect qualitative data from the university key informants which helped in the triangulation of the information elicited from the university students on individual vulnerability attributes on sexual victimization. The university security personnel and counsellors reported the use of alcohol and substance abuse as linked to sexual victimization susceptibility. A counselor stated that, *"I have handled a case where a student blamed their self for being drunk and ending up being sexually assaulted. I believe alcohol, specially makes students to lose control in regards to consent."* Other key informants reiterated on the influence of alcohol and substance abuse on sexual victimization by highlighting its contribution in misconstrued judgement of consent which ultimately leads to lack of reporting of majority of the incidents for fear of being blamed as well as the failure to recognizing the offender. These sentiments agree with Burke et al., (2025) who reported sexual assault among university actualized through incapacitation from alcohol and other intoxicating substances. In a study conducted by Campbell et al., (2021), among university students in the United States, 95.5% of reported incidents of sexual victimization took place when the victims were incapacitated by alcohol and substance usage.

The university counsellors and security personnel attributed to the pervasive nature of sexual victimization to the personality traits and dressing of students. A counsellor responded with affirmation and stated, *"Dressing misrepresents consent. This mostly affects the female students who put on short dresses, skirts and transparent clothes. This attracts potential offenders around them. In as much as the dressing may result in some cases of assault, there is need to approach such an issue with care to avoid apportioning blame to the victim."* Some expressed that the flirtatious direction a provocative dressing style may present is what attracts sexual victimization to some of the cases reported. This finding is in line with the study of Otieno et al., (2021) who reiterated on the contribution of miniskirts, tight trousers and skirts with long slits on sexual victimization among university students. Further, the respondents recognized the influence of low esteem which limits university students on recognition of boundaries as regards to consent. Most of the interviewed respondents mentioned of the inability of some of the students to remain firm in turning down sexual advances. This revelation is similar to the findings of Getaye (2020) that self-control and assertiveness cushions university students against sexual assault while lack of assertiveness results in sexual assault incidents. A counselor noted that students who experienced past victimization were likely to experience re-victimization in future following the normalization and acceptance of their inability to prevent sexual assaults. This view was supported by other interviewed respondents who alluded to the undeniable contribution of past victimization incidents to susceptibility to sexual victimization. These sentiments are agreement with the scholarly work of Wood et al., (2023) who asserted that past victimizations reduce the resilience ability in a person rendering them psychologically vulnerable.

5. Conclusion of the Study

The findings of the study on individual vulnerability attributes held that prior victimization, students' personalities, dressing, alcohol and substance usage are linked to sexual victimization among university students in Tharaka Nithi County. Notably, past traumatic experiences led to difficulties in assessing dangerous situations, alcohol and substance abuse was found to impair judgement to make informed decisions as regards to consent whereas the students' personalities and dressing was found to result in ill presentation of consent which exacerbates the risk of sexual victimization. The findings of the study indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students in Tharaka Nithi county, $\rho = 0.548$, $p < 0.01$, tested at 0.05 significance level. The p-value obtained, 0.00, was less than the critical value threshold, 0.01. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis that there is a statistically significant relationship between individual vulnerability attributes and sexual victimization among university students accepted.

Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations for this study are

The Universities managements to create institutionalized prevention awareness and avail education platforms on individual vulnerability attributes to sexual victimization. Initiatives campaigns to be undertaken to deconstruct the narrative surrounding victim-blaming on surrounding students' dressing mode. Workshops to be regularly conducted

to sensitize university students on parameters of sexual victimization and education initiatives on alcohol and substance abuse to be emphasized as to influencing vulnerability to sexual victimization and the importance of personal safety.

Policy makers in the Ministry of Education to enhance policy reviews on an elaborate guideline on the confines of sexual misconduct, clear stipulated reporting and disciplinary channels and procedures. Safeguards to be put in place to ensure the dignity and confidentiality of students is maintained regardless of their lifestyle and personalities.

The university management to strengthen counselling and other psychosocial support services within the university settings. The number of trained counsellors and peer educators to be increased to ensure accessibility and confidentiality in the support services so that students who have experienced prior victimization can be assisted to prevent revictimization. The development of support groups will ensure empowerment and healing to sexual victimization survivors.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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