GBV in Higher Education in LMICs:

Evidence, Policies and Research Priorities

Online Webinar

29 September 2025

Webinar Agenda

15:00 - 15:05 — **Welcome and Introductions**

15:05 - 15:25 — **Presentation of Findings**

Scoping review, Policy review, Research priorities setting on GBV in HEIs

15:25 - 15:50 — **Panel Discussion: Reflections on the findings and on GBV in HEIs**

15.50 - 15.55 — **IDRC Reflections and Next Steps…**

15:55 - 16.00 — **Note of Gratitude**

Housekeeping

01 Today's session will be 60 minutes

02 The session is being recorded for sharing

03 The audience is muted

04 Please use the Q&A box / chat for questions

METHODOLOGY

Overview

4 Languages

Arabic, English, French and Portuguese

13 Years

Jan 2010 to Dec 2023

84 GBV Policies

From 75 Universities

4 FGD

In Arabic, English and French, with 33 experts including researchers, practitioners and university focal points

93 Online Ranking Survey

In Arabic, English and French, with experts from civil society, universities and other institutions

248 Papers

Literature concentrated in certain sub-regions and countries, particularly larger, middle-income countries, including Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa

22 KIIs

With University focal points

5 Domains

- Understanding the issue,
- Perceptions, norms and institutional cultures
- Impacts and consequences of GBV
- Interventions and policies
- Measures and methodologies

Scoping Review

Policy Study

Research Priority Setting

OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

Scoping review

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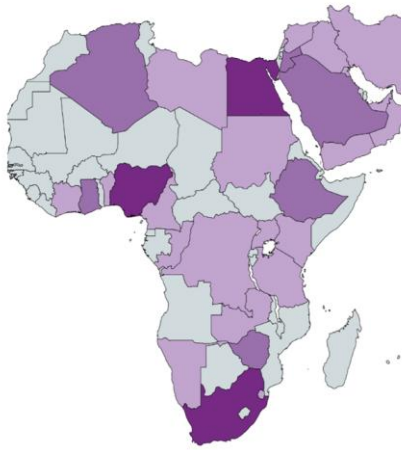

Policy study

Desk review

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22 KIIs

With university focal points

Research priority setting

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Online ranking survey

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Scoping Review
Key findings

'VICTIM BLAMING'
Dozens of papers excluded because they reproduced 'victim-blaming' discourses.

BULLYING AND CYBER BULLYING
Large literature in MENA region on bullying and cyberbullying, finding intersections between victimisation and perpetration - cyberbullies are often victimised and vice versa.

GBV AGAINST STAFF
Few studies on GBV against staff. Female staff experience sexual harassment and bullying both from other staff members and students. Power and position are linkd to perpetration.

PREVALENCE & CORRELATES
Focus on prevalence and correlates of GBV but important methodological gaps, e.g., varied and unclear time scales for prevalence (ever, past year, past 6 months, anytime during study).

SEX DISAGGREGATION OF DATA
Across different types of GBV, there is weak sex disaggregation of data and analysis overall. Disaggregated data shows strongly that gender is clearly implicated in prevalence of different forms of GBV.

GBV PREVENTION
Literature on GBV prevention is small & largely concentrated in South Africa. Some promising results at outcome level, but limited measurement of impact on GBV.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE
The literature on sexual harassment is the most prolific. Prevalence of sexual harassment and violence is high, but there are persistent gaps in research on perpetration.

IMPACTS OF GBV
Literature focuses on health & mental health impacts of GBV - few studies on educational or professional outcomes and no longitudinal studies to explore longer term impacts.

'SEX FOR GRADES'
Growing literature, particularly in Western Africa. Poor reporting and access to justice due to impunity of staff members, particularly senior male academic staff.

INTERSECTIONALITY
Very limited literature on GBV against marginalised populations, including LGBTQI+ people - available literature shows alarming levels of abuse and microaggressions.

Policy Review
Key findings

Status of Policies

- Fewer than 10% of more than 1,000 universities reviewed across Africa and MENA had policies in the public domain.
- Fewer policies were found in Central and North Africa; but more common in Southern and East Africa, and in Egypt and Jordan in the Middle East.

Policy Implementation : Barriers

Policies and systems are failing survivors: Existing GBV policies are inconsistently implemented, lack accountability, and rarely deliver justice. Institutional norms and patriarchal culture reinforce victim-blaming narratives, further undermining survivors' access to protection and support.

Impunity of perpetrators (mostly staff) from punishment due to factors like nepotism, hierarchy and a risk of reputational risks where they go unpunished despite clear disciplinary actions laid out in the policy

"Recently a student filed a complaint against a professor through the university presidency. There were messages from the harassing professor. The university asked the professor to submit his resignation to avoid being expelled."

Weak inclusivity: Less than 40% of the policies mention disability; LGBTQI+ protections are largely absent.

Policy implementation: Facilitators

- Key Informants mention that successful implementation of policy is closely linked to :
- Availability of funding to support policy implementation
- Strong leadership commitment to addressing GBV
- Availability of string services that are consistent and available across locations
- Training of staff, and students to increase awareness and reporting.
- Integration of HEI GBV policy with existing national legal frameworks on GBV.

Research Priority Setting
key findings

TOP RESEARCH QUESTIONS BY DOMAIN

Understanding the Issue | Perceptions, Norms and Institutional Cultures | Impacts and Consequences of GBV | Interventions and Policies | Measures and Methodologies

Q1

What are the prevalence of and risk and protective factors for different types of GBV in higher education institutions, including under-researched forms of GBV (e.g., 'sex for grades', gender micro-aggressions, and technology-facilitated GBV) and among under-researched groups (e.g., LGBTQI+ individuals and people with disabilities)?

Q2

What are the demographic and contextual characteristics of GBV perpetrators in higher education institutions (distinguishing between staff and student offenders), and which risk and protective factors predict their likelihood of perpetration?

Research Priority Setting
key findings

TOP RESEARCH QUESTIONS BY DOMAIN

Understanding the Issue | **Perceptions, Norms and Institutional Cultures** | Impacts and Consequences of GBV | Interventions and Policies | Measures and Methodologies

Q3

What is the impact of normative barriers—measured through indices of stigma, shame, and victim-blaming attitudes on GBV survivors' help-seeking, case reporting, and access to services in higher education institutions, and how does this vary across different intersectional groups (e.g. gender, ethnicity, disability and socioeconomic background)?

Q4

What role do peer norms and informal social networks play in reinforcing or mitigating GBV within higher education settings, and how do these social dynamics affect the willingness of individuals to report incidents or intervene in potential cases?

Research Priority Setting
key findings

TOP RESEARCH QUESTIONS BY DOMAIN

Understanding the Issue | Perceptions, Norms and Institutional Cultures | **Impacts and Consequences of GBV** | Interventions and Policies | Measures and Methodologies

Q5

What are the quantifiable short- and long-term educational and professional consequences of GBV for students and staff in higher education institutions, as measured by indicators such as academic performance, retention and graduation rates, and career progression?

Q6

How do the health, psychosocial, and educational impacts of GBV differ according to intersectional characteristics (e.g., age, gender, sexuality, and disability) in higher education setting?

Research Priority Setting
key findings

TOP RESEARCH QUESTIONS BY DOMAIN

Q7

How effective are GBV prevention interventions in reducing the incidence of GBV in higher education institutions, including those targeting social norms and behaviour change, and how does this vary across intersectional groups (e.g., age, gender, sexuality, disability, and ethnicity)?

Q8

To what extent do GBV awareness-raising interventions, including targeted communications campaigns, in higher education settings affect the frequency of GBV reporting and the utilisation of support services?

Research Priority Setting
key findings

TOP RESEARCH QUESTIONS BY DOMAIN

Q9

What are the most reliable / valid / sensitive standardised tools for measuring sexual harassment in higher education settings, including online and offline forms of harassment?

Q10

Which research methodologies including non-experimental approaches, qualitative methods, and participatory designs provide the most robust and actionable evaluation of the effectiveness of GBV prevention initiatives in higher education settings?

Moving Forward

- Moving Ahead Requires Coordinated Action and Investment
- Implement survivor-centred policies and accountability systems backed by trained staff and clear lines of responsibility.
- Challenge stigma and silence through visible leadership and safe spaces for open dialogue.
- Fund research to expand the evidence base, addressing gaps and overlooked groups, including staff and patterns of perpetration.
- Scale proven interventions beyond pilots into sustainable institutional and national frameworks.
- Invest in research capacity and infrastructure in low- and middle-income countries, enabling local scholars and institutions to lead and apply evidence for long-term change.

THANK YOU!

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