



Perceptions, Attitudes and Opinions of the Community towards Femicide

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Abstract: Femicide cases among female students have continued to rise despite universities and the country establishing various policies to prevent, and respond to femicide. The study explored the perceptions, attitudes and opinions of the community towards femicide in the University of Nairobi, Nairobi County. The study adopted a descriptive research design methodology using a mixed-methods approach integrating both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques. Stratified and cluster sampling were applied to get the quantitative sample size, while purposive sampling was used to sample key informants and focus group discussants. Majority of respondents were female (65.0%) while male constituted of 35.0% relatively distributed across four academic years. About 73.5% understood the meaning of femicide, and 93.4% felt it was a serious societal problem. The study established that femicide is a gradual progress shaped by unequal power relations, social norms, violent relationship dynamics. The study recommends that the university should promote healthy masculinity and positive relationship engagement; introduce anonymous reporting channels where witnesses and victims can report without fear of victimization; and the government should ensure that gender laws and regulations are enforced.

Keywords: Femicide, Masculinity, Perceptions, Patriarchy, Gender-Based Violence

How to cite this work (APA):

Okello, Z. K., Gesare, M. & Chesikaw, L. (2026). Perceptions, Attitudes and Opinions of the Community towards Femicide. Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education, 10(3), 476 – 487. <https://doi.org/10.59765/mzph43>

1. Introduction

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2019), femicide is defined as the intentional killing of women and girls simply because of their gender. A study conducted by African Data Hub (2024) observes that most of those affected are aged between 18-35 years, raising serious concerns on safety of women and girls particularly those in higher learning institutions. Global studies on femicide conducted by

UNODC (2021) observed that 66,000 women are murdered every year across the world. This number escalated in 2021 where 81,100 women were killed; 45,000 of them either murdered by their intimate partner or family member. In 2023, UN report (2024) reported that approximately 51,100 women and girls lost their lives in the hands of people known to them, representing an estimate of 68-75% of femicide cases committed by intimate partners. The Institute for Economic and Peace (2022) further observed that about 135% women were killed between 2015 and

2021 in Mexico. This data shows there is a global critical trend of gender based killing among women.

Africa, however, has the highest number of reported femicide cases compared to other regions (UN report, 2024). For instance, approximately 22, 600 women were killed in 2024, with South Africa recording 1000 femicide cases in 2022 (South Africa Police Services, 2022). Majority of these cases are linked to the harmful gender inequalities and patriarchal practices, which hinders survivor support and justice (Technical Working Group Report, 2025). Although femicide has been predominant in Kenya over the years, documentation of the cases begun in 2016. Between 2016 and 2023, 500 femicide cases were compiled by Odipo Development and Africa Uncensored. This initiative shed light on the perverse nature of gender-based killing in the country. In 2020, the Convention Report (2025) reported that approximately 100 women were killed, however most of the cases were linked to Covid-19. This number significantly went up in 2023 where 152 cases were reported. Africa Uncensored (2024) and Technical Working Group (2025) also observed that femicide cases went up in 2024 with an increase of 79% from 2023. Nairobi County recorded the highest number of cases between 2023 and 2024 compared to other counties. These tragedies triggered a massive national protest in January, 2024, under the hashtag #StopKillingUs, attracting thousands of women and girls, activists, and law makers who went to the streets to demand for action from the government.

Kenyan government has ratified to International and Regional frameworks and protocols that address GBV such as the Universal Declarations of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948), Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5.1), and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol, 2003), among others. These protocols reinforce Kenya's legal frameworks such as Protection Against Domestic Violence Act (2015), Sexual Offences Act (2006), and the National Gender and Equality Act (2011), which should protect women. Unfortunately, cases of femicide in Kenya have continued to rise. The National Council on the Administration of Justice (2023), observed that the survivors of GBV have continued to encounter stigma and limited institutional support, leading to underreporting of gender-based violence cases.

In addition, universities have policies and frameworks that address gender-based violence such as sexual harassment policy, students' code of conduct, and student disciplinary regulations. These policies are meant to protect students

and ensure that they have a safe and secure learning environment. However, majority of universities in Kenya lack gender officers, or trained staff who can handle violence against women within the university environment (National Crime Research Centre, 2022). Kenya's prevailing cultural norms and gender inequalities further subordinates' women forcing them to dependent on men. These systemic failures are made worse when victims fail to report their abusers while men's actions are justified.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Empirical Literature

Femicide has been normalized worldwide by hurtful social and gender norms that allow men to dominate over women (World Health Organization, 2021). Within university settings, which have a unique cultural, social and economic dynamics, survivors of gender-based violence are often blamed for abuse (McCullough, 2024). Badenes-Sastre *et al.* (2024) points out that the society has normalized abuses particularly those that occur within an intimate relationship. The society further accepts myths about rape, where the victim is blamed for provoking the perpetrator with their behavior, lifestyle or dress code.

This misconception reduces accountability shifting responsibility from the perpetrator to the victim. Women therefore grow up with an innate feeling that normalizes abuse, making them endure violence, and oppression as a controlling mechanism imposed to them by the society (Anderton, 2023). A UN study (2025) conducted in a University in Montenegro, reported that intimate partner violence (IPV) is treated as a private matter. This allows men to continue violating the rights of women without accountability. This corresponds with a study conducted by Puharic (2025) on IPV among college students, showcasing how toxic masculinity is normalized in universities.

In African context, femicide is deeply confined in patriarchal beliefs, gender imbalances, and institutional weaknesses. Ncube (2025) noted that femicide is a result of systemic gender inequalities, patriarchal structures and moral decay that emphasize on female submission and male control. Gqola (2015) in his study also observes that African societies look at women bodies as public properties. This attitude denies women personal choices and full autonomy over their lives. This normalization increases women's vulnerabilities to gender-based violence while the perpetrators actions are justified.

In East African, more so on higher education, female students face a double bind since they are expected by the society to succeed in their academic as well as achieve traditional gender expectations. The opinion of the community always shifts against them when they divert from these norms. On the other hand, institutional responses which are often shaped by societal attitudes instead of supporting victims of gender-based violence, contribute in victim blaming and stigmatization thus, discouraging victims of gender-based violence from seeking help (Ndlovu *et al.*, 2021). This leads to a culture of silence whenever one is abused, which creates an enabling environment for perpetrators to continue with their evil acts. Unfortunately, the media also contributes in escalation of IPV while reporting on gender-based killing. Many times, they frame femicide as a “*crime of passion*” resulting from relationship conflict. Such framing may shift the community’s attitude to victim blaming narratives.

In Kenya, although the discussions regarding femicide among female students have increased, the community perception on the matter is still controversial. The use of the term “campus” by most universities in Kenya, including the University of Nairobi is used to mean lifestyle, which is characterized by “*freedom*”. Due to peer pressure to maintain a certain lifestyle, some students enter into transactional relationships which may expose them to vulnerable conditions. In a study conducted by Kariuki (2018) he observed that majority of female students depend on their male partners for financial support, basic needs, and accommodation.

This dependency creates power imbalances that the society often overlooks in case of gender-based abuse. It fails to look at economic dependency as a risk factor for femicide, rather, women are perceived to exploit their partners for financial gain. Additionally, the society in Kenya as well as social media, associates femicide and gender-based violence incidents involving university students with the way they dress, sexual history, and victims’ behavior (Wanyonyi, 2021). This norm tends to divert blame to victims whenever violence occurs.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the Socio-Ecological Model (SME) to examine femicide among female students in the University of Nairobi. The model was first developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and later adopted by Heise (1998); and Dahlberg and Krug (2006) to address violence prevention. The framework enabled the researcher to understand how violence is produced through the interaction of interconnected levels including individual, relationships, community and societal factors.

At the individual level, Socio-Ecological Model points out how emotional vulnerability, financial dependency, previous exposure to violence, and personal history can increase the risk of female students to enter or remain in an abusive relationship. Dahlberg and Krug (2006) states that most young women in the university who depend on their partners for financial support, often face social isolation and economic dependency. This can lead to fear of social judgement and stigma, resulting to underreporting of abusive behaviors. This silence behaviors remains hidden, allowing violence dynamics to accumulate over time and increase the risk of severe gender-based violence.

At the relationship level, the model looks at intimate partners and their peer networks. Within university setting, intimate relationships are characterized by possessiveness, jealousy, emotional manipulation, and digital surveillance which may end up to lethal violence (Ogolsky, 2025). Further, Verney (2021) notes that domestic abusers use intimidation, threats, and coercion to instill fear to their victims, with primary intention to punish, harm, or frighten them in order to maintain control. Voce & Bricknell, (2020) also noted that women are often left defenseless when long term harm is imposed to them by their abusers.

At the community level, SEM examines the role of institutions such as the University of Nairobi in preventing gender-based violence. In a university system, inadequate reporting mechanism, weak security, limited counseling services, silence culture, and victim blaming can tolerate perpetrators and create an environment where abusers are rarely reported or held accountable. According to Heise, early warnings of violence may be overlooked, thereby abuse escalating to femicide.

At the societal level, the model draws attention to the gender dynamics, and broader cultural norms that shape violence. In Kenya, patriarchal belief normalizes male supremacy and subordinates’ women, discouraging victims from reporting abusive partners. This contributes to persistent occurrence of gender-based violence (Moorhead, 2025). These structural inequalities expose women to vulnerable situations, thus reducing their access to protection and justice.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Design

The study used a descriptive research design using a mixed-methods approach, which integrates both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis

techniques. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed separately but during interpretation both data was integrated to enhance the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2014). The research was conducted in the University of Nairobi, Nairobi County, which is one of the oldest and most prestigious public university in Kenya. It has the largest student's population that come from across the country and internationally. The target population for this study included the University of Nairobi administration staff and students enrolled in the Main Campus.

3.2 Samples and Sampling

The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to get the sample size from which quantitative data was collected. From a target population of 35,897 students, a confidence level of 95%, and a margin error of 5%, the study adopted a population proportion of 50% (0.5) to determine the appropriate sample size.

A purposive sampling technique was applied to identify key informants and focus group discussants. The key informants for this study included the university administration staff (Dean of Students, university counsellor, university security personnel) 2 student leaders (both male and female), a police officer handling gender issues, and a media personnel. Additionally, the researcher targeted five (5) focus group discussions (FGDs); four (4) FGDs with female students and one (1) FGD with male students, with each FGD consisting of 6 participants for easy management and interaction. The participants were drawn from registered students in the first to fourth year.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Key Informant interviews are semi-structured and in-depth interviews conducted with individuals' who have decision-making powers, firsthand experience and specialized knowledge related to the subject. The KIIs were interviewed to gather qualitative data on information pertaining extreme gender-based violence, risk factors, and prevention mechanisms that can be adopted by the university to ensure the safety of female students in the university.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are structured group interviews consisting of 6 – 10 participants who have similar characteristics. The discussions were conducted to explore the students' experiences in relationship dynamics,

safety perceptions, and collective attitudes towards femicide, gender imbalances in intimate relationships, as well as the university's response in addressing and handling cases of gender-based violence. The FGDs were conducted to compliment information gathered from key informants and surveys.

Survey Questionnaires

Survey is a structured quantitative data collection method that is used to measure the patterns of a phenomenon within a population. Undergraduate students were surveyed to gather the students' experiences, assess awareness of reporting channels, examine relationship dynamics, and measure perceived safety of students within the university.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Quantitative data collection exercise commenced after refining the tools using feedback gathered from the pilot study. Structured questionnaires were administered to both male and female students sampled. A total of 381 undergraduate students were surveyed. Additionally, seven (7) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Five (5) focus group discussions were conducted facilitated by the researcher ensuring that data collected was accurate and consistent. Upon completion, data collected was locked in a safe place awaiting data cleaning and analysis. This approach ensured both the integrity and confidentiality of the responses during the data collection process was secured.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected was entered into excel, and transferred to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 30) software. Data cleaning process involved the application of appropriate statistical procedures to address incomplete records, outliers, and inconsistencies thereby enhancing data quality and integrity. Subsequently, descriptive statistical technique was applied to generate accurate, and reliable findings aligned with the study objectives. Where appropriate data was disaggregated by sex. Qualitative data obtained was transcribed, organized, and analyzed thematically. The analysis process entailed coding of responses, grouping and development of themes according to the study objectives. Developing patterns and recurrent matters were interpreted and presented narratively reinforced by direct quotations from participants where appropriate.

After finalizing the analysis process, the results from both qualitative and quantitative analysis was integrated to provide an all-inclusive understanding of the research

problem. Quantitative data offered generalizable trends and patterns, while qualitative data provided contextual richness and deeper explanations of the findings obtained. Integration of the findings followed a convergent mixed-methods model, where the two data sets were interpreted together to validate, expand, and explain each other.

3.6 Ethical Concerns

The researcher strictly followed ethical requirements since the study explores sensitive subject on gender-based violence that can affect the dignity and general wellbeing of the study participants. Ethical approval was sought from Egerton University Ethics Review Committee (EUREC), National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), and the University of Nairobi administration to ensure that the study was contextually relevant and ethically acceptable. The researcher acquired informed consent from all the contributors, using the consent form designed by EUREC. The form was comprehensive and easy to understand, assuring respondents of the motive behind the study, risks as well as the benefits in participating in the research. In addition, the participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their involvement and entitlement to withdraw at any moment without adverse effects. Acquired information was anonymized and all identifying information coded to protect the respondent's privacy.

4. Results and Discussion

Perceptions, attitudes, and opinions towards femicide refers to the understanding, beliefs, feelings and judgements held by the community or individuals concerning incidents of gender-based violence and femicide. They influence how the society identifies, responds, or normalizes intimate partner violence. Perceptions relate to how people comprehend and interpret the seriousness of femicide, and their understanding on whether it is a consequence of a relationship conflict. Attitudes on the other hand, are people's emotional behaviors towards the victims and the perpetrators, including prevention efforts. While opinions refer to people's judgement on how they react to the incidences, causes and responses to gender-based violence and femicide.

4.1 Understanding Femicide

The study endeavored to examine if respondents understood the term femicide. Findings revealed that 280 students interviewed were aware of the meaning of femicide representing 73.5% of the study sample. Interestingly, 193 females (77.5%) compared to 87 males accounting for 65.9% were aware of the meaning of femicide demonstrating higher levels of awareness among female respondents. However, a small number of 22 students (5.8%) out of the study population reported that they were not aware of what femicide meant, with a gap in knowledge reported higher among male students where 12 of them (4.0%) compared to 10 females (9.1%) noted that they were not aware of the meaning of femicide.

Qualitative findings gathered were consistent with survey results, with focus group participants demonstrating high level of awareness and were able to cite examples of cases they encountered through media or within the society. However, some of the study respondents could not distinguish gender-based violence from femicide. This misunderstanding was also evident in the quantitative results where 51 respondents (13.4%) understood femicide as physical violence against women. This was more evident among female students where 27 of them (10.8%) compared to 24 males (18.2%) reported that femicide is physical violence that does not lead to death. In addition, 28 respondents (7.3%) including 12 males (9.1%) and 10 females (4.0%) regarded femicide as violence between intimate partners.

These findings show that although majority of students are familiar with the term femicide, some still lack a comprehensive understanding of its specific meaning as "gender-motivated killing of girls and women". The misconception between gender-based violence and femicide rises because femicide is often viewed as the extreme outcome of violence against women, while gender-based violence is abuse against women and may involve sexual, emotional, physical and psychological abuse. These findings are consistent with Walby's (2023) observation who observed that femicide awareness has been widely publicized but still the term is misinterpreted with other terms such as homicide, murder, and domestic violence. This is because there is no specific scope of femicide since different scholars argue that the definition of femicide should be narrowed to the killing of women because they are inferior or because of hatred. While others advocate for a broader interpretation including structural gender inequalities, unequal power relations and systematic discrimination against women.

Table 1: Understanding femicide

Understanding the term Femicide	Sex		Sex		Total Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
	Male		Female			
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
The killing of women and girls because of their gender	87	65.9%	193	77.5%	280	73.5%
Physical violence against women that does not lead to death	24	18.2%	27	10.8%	51	13.4%
Domestic violence between partners	9	6.8%	19	7.6%	28	7.3%
I am not aware of what the term means	12	9.1%	10	4.0%	22	5.8%
Total	132	100.0%	249	100.0%	381	100.0%

4.2 Perception on the Seriousness of Femicide among Female Students

The study further sought the views of respondents on the seriousness of femicide among female students. The findings established that femicide is widely perceived as a serious problem affecting young women in institutions of higher learning. From the study findings, an overwhelming majority of 356 respondents (93.4%) expressed different levels of agreement to the statement, underscoring the severity of extreme gender-based violence within institutions of higher learning. Specifically, 127 students (33.3%) strongly agreed to the statement. Distribution by sex shows greater concern among female students where 93 of them (37.3%) compared to 34 males (25.8%) strongly agreeing to the statement. An equal perception of the gravity of femicide was recorded across both gender where 92 females representing 36.9% and 48 males accounting for 36.4% agreed to the statement.

Further, 89 study participants consisting of 51 females (20.5%) and 38 males (28.8%) expressed their level of seriousness on femicide among female students to some extent. Interestingly, a small number of 25 students (6.5%) felt that femicide was not a serious problem. This was

expressed equally across both gender where 9 of them either male (6.8%) or females (3.6%) disagreed with the statement. In addition, 2 females (0.8%) somewhat disagreed with statement, while 3 males (2.3%) and 2 females (0.8%) strongly disagreed. This demonstrates that the society has different attitudes and perceptions towards gender-based violence.

Female focus group participants further observed that femicide is not only common, but it is a grave problem targeted toward young women who are increasingly becoming victims of sexual and intimate partner violence. Incidences of extreme violence against women reported include; victims thrown in septic tanks, rape, stabbing, and occurrences of acid attack intended to permanently deform the victim. These accounts shows that violence in university settings extends beyond abuse, reflecting broader patterns of toxic relationships, and insecurity among student relationships. However, according to WHO (2021) it is observed that femicide can not only be confined to institutions of higher learning since it is a societal problem affecting women and girls of different ages. The current shift in trend is observed in Kenya, where more young adolescent girls and older women are increasing becoming victims of femicide.

Table 2: Agreement level on the seriousness of femicide

Agreement level to femicide is very serious among female students	Sex				Total Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
	Male		Female			
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
Strongly Agree	34	25.8%	93	37.3%	127	33.3%
Agree	48	36.4%	92	36.9%	140	36.7%
Somewhat Agree	38	28.8%	51	20.5%	89	23.4%
Disagree	9	6.8%	9	3.6%	18	4.7%
Somewhat Disagree	0	0.0%	2	0.8%	2	0.5%
Strongly Disagree	3	2.3%	2	0.8%	5	1.3%
Total	132	100.0%	249	100.0%	381	100.0%

4.3 Factors that Contribute to Femicide among Female Students

There are several factors that contribute to femicide among female students in public universities. From the study results, it was established that the major contributing factor was lack of strict laws and weak enforcement of gender-based violence regulations. This was observed by an overwhelming majority of 102 respondents (26.8%), highlighted by 72 females (28.9%) and 30 males (22.7%). This raises serious concerns on the effectiveness of legal protection and justice system in the country. Financial dependency was noted by 98 students (25.7%) who felt that it was a key factor contributing to cases of femicide, expressed by 67 female students (26.9%) compared to 31 males (23.5%).

Broken relationships also emerged as a significant contributor reported by 73 respondents (19.2%) consisting of 44 females (17.7%) compared to 29 males (22.0%). This was followed by gender inequality identified by 66 respondents (17.3%). Distribution by gender reveals that 66 females (17.3%) compared to 21 males (15.9%) felt that femicide was caused by gender discriminations in the society. Similarly, a smaller proportion of 31 students (8.1%) associated femicide with alcoholism and substance abuse stating that it increases their aggression, exposing victims to risky relationships and unsafe environments. This was observed by 18 males (13.6%) and 13 females (5.2%).

These results were further corroborated with the focus group participants who provided practical examples that expose female students to vulnerable situations.

Participants mentioned that female students enter wrong relationships to seek financial support, social status, or material benefits. Some students were reported to engage in relationships with older men, influential individuals, or university staff, with a primary aim of maintaining a certain lifestyle, and financial gain. This demonstrates the growing culture of materially motivated relationships among university students. This finding aligns with Devries *et al.*, (2013) observation where he reported that women who depend on men for financial support are often at a greater risk of remaining in violent relationships, which may increase their vulnerability and exposure to extreme forms of violence. It was further reported that

“some female students are allegedly “sold or traded” by their peers to wealthy men for sexual exploitation. Refusal to comply with these demands leads to severe violence or death,” FGD Female Respondent.

These peer influence, existence of organized exploitation networks, and coercive environments increase the vulnerability of female students. This aligns with global and regional remarks where it is observed that femicide is driven by several factors including interpersonal, economic, and structural factors. A study conducted by UN women and UNODC (2023) reported that ineffective enforcement of the law and weak legal frameworks enables perpetrators to act with relative impunity, hence contributing to continuous abuse against women. Additionally, it was observed that many femicide cases occur when female partners assert their independence or attempt to end a relationship. Relationship conflicts, rejection, or separation is a trigger to severe violence in intimate relationships.

Table 3: Factors the contribute to femicide

Table 5: Factors that contribute to femicide							
		Sex				Total Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
		Male		Female			
Factors that contribute MOST to cases of femicide		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
Alcohol and substance abuse		18	13.6%	13	5.2%	31	8.1%
Gender inequality		21	15.9%	45	18.1%	66	17.3%
Lack of strict laws that enforce GBV		30	22.7%	72	28.9%	102	26.8%
Financial dependency		31	23.5%	67	26.9%	98	25.7%
Broken relationships		29	22.0%	44	17.7%	73	19.2%
Other		3	2.3%	8	3.2%	11	2.9%
Total		132	100.0%	249	100.0%	381	100.0%

4.4 Reporting Pattens of GBV Cases in Universities

Incidences of gender-based violence were reported to be common among university students, however, it was observed by an overwhelming majority of 223 respondents representing more than a half (58.5%) of the study sample expressing that cases of GBV among students are not reported to relevant authorities. This was reported by 142 females (57.0%) and 81 males (61.4%). Conversely, 158 out of 381 respondents (41.5%) believed that cases of GBV

are reported, this was expressed by 107 females compared to 51 males (38.6%). This finding corroborates with the key informant's sentiments who reported that

“only severe cases such as stabbing and rape are reported, there are many GBV cases among students but they are always concealed,” KII Respondent.

From the study findings, it is evident that reporting of gender-based violence cases among students is very low, hence many cases remain unresolved. This trend may limit timely interventions and protection of survivors, and allow perpetrators to continue with their abusive behaviors.

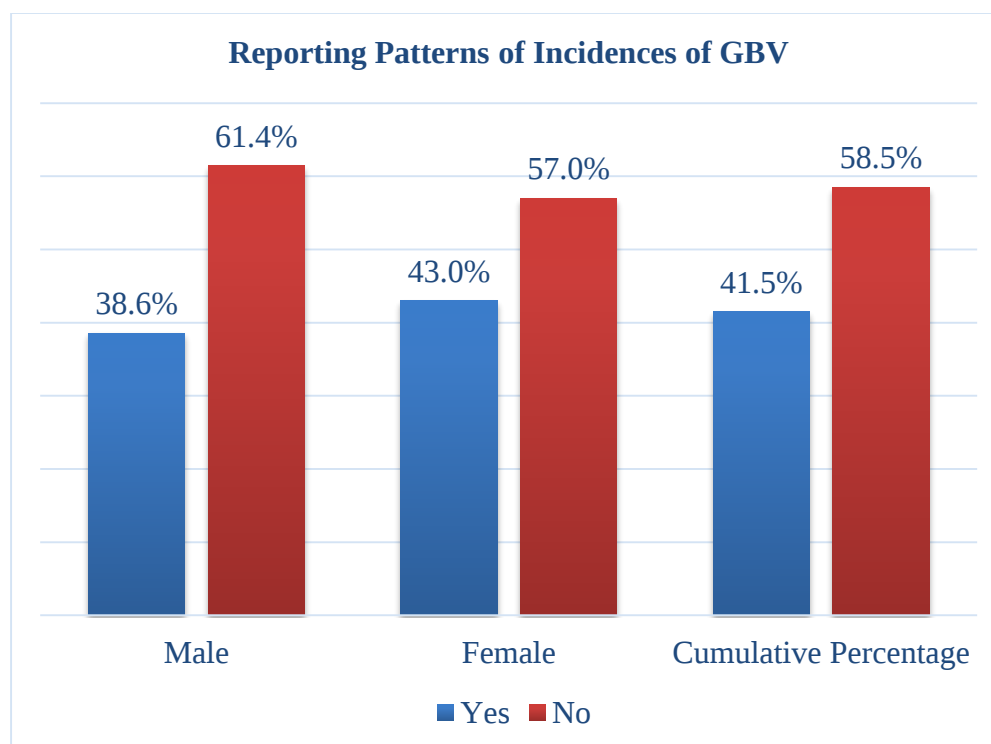


Figure 1: Reporting patterns of incidences of GBV

4.5 Reasons for Not Reporting Incidences of GBV and Femicide

Reasons given for underreporting cases of gender-based violence include fear of retaliation which was cited by an overall of 98 respondents (41.3%). This was expressed by 56 females (39.4%) and 42 males (51.9%). Shame and stigma were observed among 92 students with 58 females (40.8%) compared to 34 males (42.0%) expressing that it was among the major reasons for underreporting of GBV cases. Lack of trust in authorities was noted by 91 respondents (40.8%) where 64 females (45.1%) and 27 males (33.3%) raised it as a hinderance. Consequently, 59 respondents (26.5%) among them 42 females (29.6%) and 17 males (21.0%) reported financial dependency on the perpetrator as a reason for not reporting incidences of GBV. Hence, highlighting a major concern among females compared to their male counterparts. Other reasons given include fear of academic consequences, privacy concerns, and intimidation.

These findings show that students do not report incidents of GBV because they fear possible consequences that might be executed by the perpetrators escalating the situation. Societal attitudes surrounding masculinity, also blames victims and contributes to silence around intimate

partner violence and femicide risks. Male focus group participants reported that ...

"Sometimes we are severely punished and forced to provide evidence that we may not have. And sometimes when you report nothing happens. So, if you become a victim of violence, you don't report or you just refuse to be a witness,"

FGD Male Participant.

Opinions toward unsupportive and ineffective reporting mechanisms also reduce confidence in reporting cases of GBV, while economic dependency creates unequal power relations making students with limited financial resources to tolerate abusive behaviors.

Non-reporting of intimate partner violence could lead to escalation of violence and ultimately lead to femicide. This is influenced by a combination of social, psychological, economic and institutional factors. The study findings are in agreement with a study conducted by DeKeseredy (2024) who observed that silence culture is associated with societal and cultural factors that discourages victims and witnesses of abusive behavior from speaking. These factors contribute to normalization of abusive and violence within intimate partner relationships which makes it more difficult for GBV survivors to seek justice or protection.

Table 4: Reasons for not reporting

Reasons for Not Reporting	Sex				Total Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
	Male		Female			
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage		
Shame and stigma	34	42.0%	58	40.8%	92	41.3%
Fear of retaliation	42	51.9%	56	39.4%	98	41.3%
Lack of trust in authorities	27	33.3%	64	45.1%	91	40.8%
Financial dependency	17	21.0%	42	29.6%	59	26.5%
Any other specify	3	3.7%	4	2.8%	7	3.1%

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

Students have different levels of understanding of femicide and intimate relationship violence. Although femicide was perceived to be a very serious social problem related to gender inequality and intimate partner violence, some attitudes and perceptions expressed among students seemed to normalize abusive behaviors within relationships. Controlling behaviors such as investigating and monitoring of partners, excessive jealousy, restrictions of social interactions, and emotional manipulation seemed normal and perceived to be symbols of love, care, or commitment within relationships. Such perceptions are dangerous since they create enabling environment where abusive behavior is tolerated and warning signs of violence are ignored until violence heightens into severe harm or death.

These actions are further exacerbated by cultural and social beliefs that continue to influence attitudes towards violence in intimate relationships contributing to unequal relationship dynamics among university students. Male dominance was associated with authority over decision-making, financial control, and social interactions within relationships. Such attitudes strengthen power imbalances and increase women's vulnerability to coercive control and abuse. In addition, victim blaming attitudes still exist within university settings. Some respondents indicated that women who experience violence may be blamed for their actions such as through dressing styles, or attempts to leave relationships. These attitudes contribute to a culture of silence, and stigma, because victims fear judgment, shame, and social isolation. Victim blaming therefore, shifts accountability away from perpetrators and weakens efforts meant to prevent violence against women. Such perceptions also discourage victims from seeking help from friends, authorities, or institutional support systems.

5.2 Recommendation

Form the findings, the paper gives the following recommendations:

1. The university should promote healthy masculinity and positive relationship engagement: Male students should be involved in campaigns and discussions on healthy masculinity and relationship dynamics.
2. There is need for the university to introduce anonymous reporting channels where witnesses and victims can report without fear of victimization.
3. The government should enforce gender laws and regulations. This will ensure that perpetrators are accountable for their actions.

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