Addressing stigmatization in gender based violence (GBV). The problem with GBV in educational institutions

By

Judith Wafula & Sylvia Tuikong

Stigmatization is a bottleneck in fighting GBV. Yet Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a pervasive problem in educational institutions that can have devastating impacts on those affected ranging from absenteeism, severe mental and physical health issues, dropouts and in most severe cases, suicide. This paper is based on research findings from six universities in Kenya involving 662 students, which revealed that stigmatization is a stumbling block in dealing decisively with GBV affecting students. Additionally, the study involved 144 lecturers, five deans of students and heads of student counselling in the sampled universities together with four student leaders and vice chancellors. These findings corroborate past studies where students did not want their cases to be known as a result of the fear of stigmatization and repercussions. Further, the World Health Organization findings show that male survivors are less likely to seek medical help due to stigma and prejudice regarding male sexuality or masculinity. From the research in the six universities, 21.8% of students in the public universities and 11.1% in private universities affirmed that stigmatization is a major challenge. The universities therefore have a task to devise means of managing this vice and communication was found to be vital in this end. The paper gives highlights on stigmatization as a challenge in the fight against GBV and the role of communication in managing the vice with the related policy recommendations.

Key words: Stigmatization, Communication, Gender-Based Violence, Social Justice