



Dating Related Abuse on Girl Students, The Case of Bonga University

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Abstract

The objective of the study is examining dating related abuse on girl students in Bonga University. A mixed research method was used for the data collection and analysis of this study in a sample of 166 regular undergraduate female students. Systematic random and purposive sampling methods were used for data gathering. This research's result shows that there is a prevalence of dating related abuse with the dominance of emotional abuse. Cultural influence and considering abuse as a sign of love are the major contributing factors and self-esteem is negatively correlated with the three abuse types. Therefore, the researcher concludes; dating abuse can be both a cause and a consequence for low self-esteem and considering abuse as a sign of love which is influenced by society's culture, has contributed most to its prevalence. Finally, the researcher recommends that attitudes and norms related to gender inequality needs to be challenged and heavy measures should be taken on those who break the law in order to deter others.

Keywords: *Dating; Physical Abuse; Sexual Abuse; Emotional Abuse; Self-Esteem*

1. Introduction

Violence in pre-marital dating relationships has become an area of scientific study in the last three decades, and began with Makepeace's (1981), seminal study of physical violence in a college dating population. Since then, research about dating relationship abuse has grown gradually (Miller, 2010).

Few years ago, in Oct. 2011, an Ethiopian airlines flight attendant lost both her eye- sights after her ex-husband stabbed her with a sharp knife. And a couple of months ago, another separated husband shot and killed the mother of his two kids in a broad daylight in the heart of Addis Ababa; and the number of acid attacks against women has shown a disturbing increase since the first case involving Kamilat Mehdi and her ex-boyfriend was reported in 2007 (Emnet, 2013).

Physical abuse in college dating relationships is widespread, and that failure to acknowledge abuse is common among relationship partners, for that reason, almost no woman, whether in university campuses or outside, tend to report sexual abuses by their partners because they believe it's normal or they have a fear if they make it public they will be harmed or ashamed (Miller, 2010). In Ethiopia's case,

the fact that the societal acceptability of dating is very low makes it more difficult for the victims of dating abuse to seek the necessary help (Emnet, 2013).

Dating abuse occurs in higher education institutions heterosexual relationships and is defined as sexual, physical, psychological or verbal abuse especially on girl students. As research indicates, approximately 35% of college students have been subjected to dating violence in a relationship, and the victims are often faced with self-blame, embarrassment, and fear of their perpetrator (Paludi, 2010).

According to Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, and Polek (1990), most women in physically abusive relationships frequently report that psychological/emotional abuse has the more negative impact on emotional well-being.

Psychological abuse is common in college dating relationships, and it can be very damaging. It is defined as controlling and coercive behavior, including isolating romantic partners from others; belittling and dominating them; and using recurring criticism, threats, and verbal aggression (O'Leary, 1999). One study indicates, more than three quarters of college women reported being the victims of psychological abuse (Jonathan, John, & Melissa 1999), and in another study, it was stated that more than half of college students reported the prevalence of psychological and/or physical abuse in their romantic relationships (Sugarman, Hotaling, 1989).

University campuses are environments where young people could be vulnerable for different things. For the reason, that the students may be away from home for the first time and may have the curiosity to try things that they have not tried before (including dating), also they might not have the support network they had before they joined campus, there can be new friends with different experiences, and they might be new to dating relationships. Dating abuse has become a major and controversial issue that is affecting the youth, most specifically young females, all over the world. Several studies have been conducted in different countries on dating abuse in university campuses. Baker (2007), for example, conducted a quantitative research to examine a variety of risk factors for male and female perpetrators of dating violence in college dating relationships in the United States of America. This researcher run correlation and multiple regression statistical tools for the data analysis and found that for males, partner's use of physical aggression, low anger management skills and high relationship satisfaction were the strongest variables associated with male's use of physical aggression against a dating partner. For the females, partner's use of physical aggression, followed by partner's use of psychological aggression were the most significant variables. Straus (2004), examined rates of violence against dating partners by students at 31 universities in 16 countries (5 in Asia and the Middle East, 2 in Australia-New Zealand, 6 in Europe, 2 in Latin America, 16 in North America). The results revealed both important differences and similarities between universities. The most important similarity found from the study was the high rate of assault perpetrated by both male and female students in all the countries. Rank order was used to compute the rates at each of the 31 universities. Also, Aguanunu (2014), examined the influence of gender and age on attitude to dating violence among Nnamdi Azikiwe University college students in Nigeria. Two-way analysis of variance was used to test two hypotheses in the study and the result revealed that there is no significant difference between male and female students on attitude to dating violence and also between younger and older students.

In Ethiopia, there are studies conducted on intimate partner abuse but it seems like all of them focus on domestic abuse. Perhaps, because the cultural acceptability of dating is very low in our country, the problem has not been given appropriate attention. Moreover, as far as the researcher's knowledge, there is no single research that has been conducted on dating related abuse on girl students in Bonga University. Therefore, using mixed research design, the current study had assessed the prevalence of dating abuse in Bonga University focusing more on the victimization side, (like, by assessing factors that contributes for a person to be victimized by dating abuse, the effects abuse has on their self-esteem and

the strategies they use to cope with the problem) to fill the gap of the previous researches mentioned above as most of them focused on the perpetration side of dating abuse. The current research also focused on a particular gender which is female. Because, according to the observation of the researcher, most victims of intimate partner abuse in Ethiopia, (be it dating abuse or domestic abuse) are females. Related to this Underneath are the most important questions that the researcher addressed during the study.

- Ψ What are dating related abuse types in Bonga University?
- Ψ What are the major contributing factors to dating related abuses on girls in Bonga University?
- Ψ What are the victims' dominant coping strategies?
- Ψ What is the relationship between self-esteem and dating related abuses?

2. Methodology

In assessing dating related abuses on girl students in Bonga university, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed. In this study descriptive survey research design and exploratory research design were employed.

The populations of the study are regular undergraduate girl students studying in Bonga University. The total population is 913. The target populations of this research are girl students who were or currently are in a dating relationship. As it was difficult to determine the exact number of the target population, the researcher used the total population as a target population. Among them, the researcher used only 166 representative samples.

The sample of this research consists of 173 girl students who were or are currently in a dating relationship and who study in Bonga University. The sampling techniques that were used to select the participants were systematic random sampling and purposive sampling techniques (systematic random sampling for the survey and purposive sampling for the focus group discussion). Systematic random sampling technique was used to minimize biases, to have appropriate representatives of the study group and to have assurance that the population will be evenly sampled; and purposive sampling technique was used because it helps to reach a targeted sample quickly to easily get a sample of subjects with specific characteristics.

First, the researcher went to the registrar office and asked for the total number of regular undergraduate female students of Bonga University. Since it was very difficult to clearly identify the exact number of the target population, the researcher decided to use the total population as a target population. The total number was 913 and the sample size 270. The sample size was determined according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the table used for determining sample size from a given population.

In order to systematically select a representative sample, the researcher followed the following steps: first, the researcher created a list of regular undergraduate female students from every department, then, selected 1 as a beginning number, then, selected 4 as an interval number; finally, after checking for class schedules of the students, the researcher along with the data collectors visited all classes, asked for permission from both the instructor and the students, introduced the purpose of the study and distributed the questionnaires to every fourth student after class ended. To ensure that all students are given equal chance of getting selected in the sample, the researcher and the data collectors also went to the women's dormitory to address those who may not have been addressed.

In this study, the data gathering instrument (the questionnaire) was adopted from Thompson, Basile, Hertz, and Sitterle (2006), *Measuring Intimate Partner Violence Victimization and Perpetration: A Compendium of Assessment Tools*.

From these assessment tools, the researcher only used items that measure the physical, sexual and emotional partner violence victimization and changed the questions to university context. The questionnaire has three parts. The first part measures the emotional abuse, which consists of 20 items; physical abuse, which consists of 12 items; and sexual abuse, which consists of 5 items, the second part measures the contributing factors and dominant coping strategy, and the third part consists of Rosenberg's self-esteem scale (10 items). And for the self-esteem, the researcher used Rosenberg's self-esteem scale. The *Rosenberg self-esteem scales* (RSES), developed by sociologist Dr. Morris Rosenberg, and is a self-esteem measure widely utilized for research purposes.

The RSES is designed similar to social-survey questionnaires. It is a ten-item scale where each item is rated on a four-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Five of the items measure the positive and optimistic side of the person while the other five measure the negative and pessimistic side. The sample size was determined according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the table used for determining sample size from a given population.

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3. Result

Table 1. Association between contributing factors of dating abuse

Contributing factors	Frequency	Percent
Economic dependency	13	7.8
Insecurity	25	15.1
Cultural influence	38	22.9
Considering abuse as a sign of love	56	33.7
Personality of the abuser	34	20.5
Total	166	100

In the above table, we see the frequency distribution of the contributing factors for dating abuse. As we can see from the table, the contribution of economic dependency is 7.8%, insecurity is 15.1%, cultural influence contributes 22.9%, considering abuse as a sign of love contributes 33.7% and personality of the abuser contributes 20.5%. Therefore, even though the difference is not very high, it is clear that according to the result from the above table, considering abuse as a sign of love is a major contributing factor for dating abuse followed by cultural influence.

Table 2. Coping strategies

Coping strategies	Frequency	Percent
Emotion focused	68	41
Problem focused	98	59
Total	166	100

The above table shows that from descriptive statistics for dominant coping strategy, from the total of 166 participants, 98 (59%) of them used problem focused coping strategy, the rest 68 (41%) of them used emotion focused coping strategy, which implies that, the dominant coping strategy is problem focused.

Table 3. Relationship between self-esteem & dating related physical sexual & emotional abuse.

Variables	1	2	3	4
Self-esteem	-			
Emotional abuse	-	.32	-	
Physical Abuse	-.25**	.30	.74**	-
Sexual Abuse	.25**	.56	.56	-

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

A Pearson correlation was conducted to evaluate the relationship between students' dating related abuses.

- Ψ There was a strong, positive correlation between physical and emotional abuse ($r=0.74$, $N=166$, $p=0.000$) indicating that high levels of emotional abuse is associated with high levels of physical abuse.
- Ψ There was also a strong, positive correlation between sexual and emotional abuse ($r=0.56$, $N=166$, $P=0.000$) indicating that high levels of emotional abuse is associated with high levels of sexual abuse.
- Ψ And there was a strong, positive correlation between sexual and physical abuse ($r=0.56$, $N=166$, $p=0.000$) indicating that high levels of physical abuse are associated with high levels of sexual abuse.

A Pearson correlation was conducted to evaluate the relationship between students' self-esteem and dating related abuses.

- Ψ There was a negative correlation between self-esteem and emotional abuse, which was statistically significant ($r=-0.32$, $N=166$, $p=0.000$) indicating that high levels of emotional abuse is associated with low levels of self -esteem.
- Ψ There was a negative correlation between self-esteem and physical abuse, which was statistically significant ($r=-0.29$, $N=166$, $p=0.000$) indicating that high levels of physical abuse is associated with low levels of self -esteem.
- Ψ There was a negative correlation between self-esteem and sexual abuse, which was statistically significant ($r =-0.24$, $N=166$, $p=0.000$) indicating that high levels of sexual abuse was associated with low levels of self -esteem.

Consequently, the data gathered through Focused Group Discussion is analyzed and obtained the following findings. In a society where nearly all individual's right is respected or gender equality prevails, the definition of abuse is very broad and anything that might be viewed as normal by others might be considered as an act of abuse. On the contrary, in a society where there's human rights violation and disregard for individual's right or choice, the definition of abuse is very blurry. We are the result of a society that we live in and the family that raised and nurtured us. So, our perception of dating and what to expect from it, is influenced and shaped by that. One's definition of abuse also differs when she/he is in a dating relationship and outside a relationship. There is a high possibility that one may consider some behaviors (behaviors that she/he used to consider as abusive before getting in to an intimate relationship) as normal when she/he is in a relationship. Besides, a woman in love may not realize that she is being abused. Due to this, the researcher conducted a focus group discussion regarding this issue. Let's see how some of the participants defined dating abuse.

Below are some of the response's participants gave when they were asked what dating abuse meant to them.

Sample₁ "For me dating abuse includes both a physical and emotional attack on a partner. Being very controlling is also an abuse."

sample₂ "I also agree that abuse is not limited to a physical attack, and it includes psychological attacks. If a partner is too jealous and that makes the other partner to fear and be uncomfortable that is an abuse."

Sample₃ "Dating abuse for me is to physically or emotionally control someone. For example, if a girl says 'I can't do this because he doesn't want me to' that is abuse. Some of these restrictions and controls may come from good intentions to prevent the partner from harm like using drugs. However, any restrictions not to meet friends or dictating what to do and not to do are abuse for me."

All the above participants defined dating abuse as a physical (which includes scratching, slapping, pushing, slamming or holding someone against a wall, biting, choking, burning, beating someone up, and assault with a weapon), sexual (which includes: rape, and harassment to obtain a sexual contact, sexual exploitation of younger or intoxicated victims, forced oral sex, and refusing to stop a sexual intercourse when asked by a partner) and emotional attack emphasizing more on the psychological part (which includes, jealousy, extreme possessiveness, insult, belittling acts).

The researcher also asked the participants if they have encountered abuse in their current or past relationship or if they have or had a close friend who experienced/is experiencing such a thing. One of the participants responded as follows:

Sample 4 "I have never encountered physical or sexual abuse. But I had a very toxic relationship, at least that's what my friends say to me. My boyfriend did not trust me and he used to follow my every movement and activity."

According to the FGD result, almost none of the focus group participants experienced physical or sexual abuse but all of them were victims of psychological abuse one way or another. Although, one of the participants stated that she witnessed her best friend being physically, sexually and emotionally abused by her dating partner. She said,

“She did not have many friends so she was dependent on him. He knew that and used to tell her that she is nothing without him and he used to also physically attack her. Once he pulled her hair, pulled her out of a car in public and told her ‘you are nothing without me’ and bit her. He also used to sexually abuse her when he got angry. He forced her to sleep with him. However, she loved him and stayed with him believing that she couldn’t be with anyone better than him and telling herself that he was the one for her.”

While conducting the focus group discussion, the researcher asked the participants what they think would be the major contributing factors for dating abuse. Unlike the questionnaire, the participants were not provided with options to choose from. However, the researcher has put their responses in the categories they fit, in order to minimize the difficulty when triangulating the result of both the qualitative and quantitative analysis. Below are some of the responses the participants gave.

The following are some of the responses by the FGD participants:

Sample 1 “Many things may contribute to people to be abusive. The way they were raised up could be one major reason. If one grew witnessing his father abusing his mom, he may reflect that when he gets in a relationship. The other possible reason is insecurity. An unconfident person may think his girl may leave him. Such a thought may make people aggressive. The third reason could be “not trusting self”. A person that does not trust himself thinks others are the same, and doesn’t trust other people and wants to control ending being abusive.”

Sample 2 “How people are raised is a major contributing factor. Many practices in life what they grew up observing in their own families. The other could be past experience. If a person was honest, nice and kind in past romantic relationship and was hurt, he might think he was hurt because he was good and tries to change. If he was trusting he would be suspicious and may turn abusive in his next relationship.”

Sample 3 “I don’t have a different view. How one views woman is reflected in their relationships.”

Sample 4 “Sometimes it is the girls themselves that give the ground for such abuses. If you keep quiet when he treats you bad, he might take that as a norm and continue doing that. Things may get worse unless you defend yourself and try to correct it.”

As we can see from the focus group responses, different reasons were raised as a contributing factor for relationship abuse. Some of them target the abuser, some the family upbringing, some the society’s culture and some the victim as a contributing factor. Most of the reasons are intertwined with each other.

The first point raised by one of the participants of the FGD as a contributing factor for relationship abuse is family upbringing. As the participant stated, if one grew witnessing his father abusing his mother or being physically abused, he may reflect that when he gets in to a relationship.

Jealousy and insecurity were also raised as contributing factors for relationship abuse. Most of these behaviors are results of family upbringing. For example, if someone is raised in a loving home, given all the attention and care a child deserves, there’s a high possibility that he/she will be a confident person, and if one is raised being told that he/she is good for nothing and neglected, that person would possibly become unconfident.

Based on the above findings from the FGD participants, the major contributing factor for dating abuse is cultural influence (society's culture) as individuals are results of the society, they are raised in.

While conducting the focus group discussion, the researcher asked the participants a kind of coping strategy they used to manage the problems they face in a dating relationship. Below are some of the responses that the participants gave.

Some women don't tolerate abuse. My father used to abuse my mom. She couldn't take it anymore and left the country. But some stay around believing things may change through time. Some use their friends as a support group to express their frustration and stay in the relationship.

The researcher asked what their own experiences were:

Sample1 "I have never been in a relationship too much. I was emotionally abused in my first relationship. I decided to get out of it."

Sample2 "Mine was a relationship that stayed for a short time. If I had stayed, the abuse could have grown worse as I had many male friends, he might have grown more jealous and controlling. We live in a society that keeps the bad and the ugly and only talks about the good and the kind. Though I believe most of the issues in a relationship should be resolved by the partners themselves, some things may need the intervention and ideas of a third party. But many of us keep our secrets to ourselves believing things may change through time. This would neither make the relationship better nor end it."

Sample 1 "A friend of mine who was in an abusive relationship did nothing to change the situation or leave the relationship. She preferred staying with her abusive boyfriend believing he might change and telling herself she has no other option."

According to the FGD participants' responses, almost all of them are emotionally abused and the coping strategy they used is leaving their relationship partner, believing that the level of abuse would increase if they stay in the relationship.

4. Discussion

According to the result of this research, dating related abuse is defined as physical, sexual and emotional abuse committed against an intimate partner either to maintain power in a relationship or get something that one needs from the relationship or controlling a dating partner physically, sexually and/or emotionally which is consistent with the findings of Walker et al. (2007). The definition of dating abuse differs from individuals. A person who grew being exposed to different cultures has the opportunity to examine, compare and question why and how one is different from another. Being exposed to different cultures helps a person not to conform to societies rigid norms. The more one is exposed to different ways of thinking, the more his/her view on things changes and the more that person becomes flexible and open minded. On the other hand, a person who grew in a particular culture that dominates the society's way of living, that person will possibly tend to be influenced by that culture whether that culture is considered good or bad by others. His/her perception of things will also be shaped by that culture. Even two individuals who grew in the same city may have different understandings of abuse and that difference comes from their exposure. Our exposure to international Medias, different books and people with different background than ours shapes the way we view things.

When it comes to dating abuse, one may consider a specific act as completely normal and acceptable while another considers it as an abuse. However, even though the extent is not clear, this research's result reveals that some level of emotional abuse is expected and acceptable in a dating relationship, and this finding is consistent with Marina et al. (2007), and Candace et al. (2012) research finding that states how psychological abuse is considered a normalized practice by youths. In addition to that, this research finding shows that emotional abuse is the dominant abuse type which contradicts to Sugarman and Hotaling (1989) research findings that argues the dominance of the physical abuse.

The result found from the quantitative data reveals that the major contributing factor for dating abuse on girl students is accepting abuse as a sign of love followed by cultural influence and the result found from the qualitative data shows that cultural influence is the major contributing factor for dating abuse which is basically consistent with the feminist theory that argues on how women are socialized to accept the power difference between male and female both in relationships and outside relationships. Accepting abuse as a sign of love comes from the acceptability of relationship abuse in the society. In many societies, abusive acts are considered as a way of disciplining, and when a man hits his girlfriend/wife, it's believed that he is actually doing it to benefit her or he did it because he loves her. Especially, in patriarchal societies like ours, where both men and women accept the superiority of men, it's not very surprising to see abusive acts towards women. Women not only get abused by their dating partner, but also by any stranger.

The society raises its men telling how strong and superior they are, and how they can get anything they want in life, telling them they are not supposed to be emotional and to fear nothing. A man being raised this way expects to get every respect and acceptance from his girlfriend when he starts a relationship (or any woman for that matter) by any means possible, just because he is a man and she is a woman. In most cases, women who are raised in a patriarchal system learn to accept abuse by their partners; they not only accept it as normal but also as a sign of love, because that is what the society taught them.

Women believe it's their duty to fulfill their boyfriends' needs and to take care of them. Deviating from this may result in severe societal stigma and discrimination because the society considers women as an object which is there to fulfill any of man's needs. Girls accept abuse in a relationship because they grow seeing their mother being abused and not doing anything about it and this could make them develop a perception of accepting abuse as a normal way of dealing with their arguments.

The result from quantitative data confirms Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which states violence is learned through exposure to violent models, it is also consistent with Maren and Tracy (2012) findings that confirms young individuals who witness abuse while growing learn to accept abuse is a normal part of relationship. Being a victim, or witness of violence, would contribute to children's learning that violence is tolerable and acceptable. Thus, they would have a perception of considering violence as a normal way of resolving disagreement. Men learn abusive behaviors not only from their fatherly figures but also from their peer group. For instance, a man who has friends that treats their female partner with love and care, tend to reflect that in his own relationship and the same works for the maltreatment or abusive acts. On the other hand, a woman learns to accept and tolerate violent acts if she has friends who do the same.

Furthermore, results from both the quantitative and qualitative data analysis states that the dominant coping strategy used by dating abuse victims is a problem-focused coping strategy. According to the descriptive analysis frequency and percentage distribution, it was found that 59% of the participants used a problem focused coping strategy. One decides on how to cope with a problem based on her/his history of family abuse, gender role socialization, the attitudes toward violence in the immediate and extended social network, and various characteristics of the abuse and the abusive partner.

To identify the relationship between the three abuse types, the researcher administered Pearson correlation. The result found from this test reveals that, there is a strong positive relationship between emotional, physical and sexual dating abuses. This result is consistent with Coffey, Leitenberg and Henning (1996) research finding which states that physical violence also causes emotional harm which includes strong feelings of anger, fear, anxiety and sadness, and Arias and Pape's (1999) findings that confirms the relationship psychological abuse has with a person's physical and psychological health.

A Pearson correlation analysis was run to identify the relationship between self-esteem and the three abuse types (emotional, physical and sexual dating abuses). The result shows that there is a significant negative relationship between self-esteem and dating abuse, which means, when dating abuse increases self-esteem decreases. This finding is consistent with Tariq's (2013) research findings which states that psychologically abused women have low self-esteem as compared to non-abused women and the physically abused women have low self-esteem as compared to non-abused women. It is also consistent with Aguilar and Nightingale (1994) finding which asserts that abused women experienced lower self-esteem than the non-battered women. Walsh, Foshee, Bauman, Arriaga, Helms, Koch and Linder (1998) study also confirm that girls who are more confident (has a high self-esteem) in their ability to protect themselves from sexual aggression are less likely to be sexually victimized, in another word, girls with lower self-esteem are more likely to be sexually victimized. Additionally, in Aguilar and Nightingale (1994) study, it was the emotional abuse cluster that was significantly related to self-esteem, suggesting that abuse that is controlling in nature might play a significant role in the feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness noted in battered women and may contribute to the difficulty that some battered women have in terminating their abusive relationships. Similarly, the finding of this research also shows that from all abuse types, it is the emotional abuse that has a strongest correlation with self-esteem.

Conclusion

Based on the above discussions of the findings, the researcher draws the following conclusions. Dating abuse is a pattern of behavior that has a physical, sexual and emotional nature which is committed by a dating partner against the other to maintain power in a relationship or to fulfill the desire of oneself. Physical abuse targets the physical body and is manifested by beating, biting, slapping, scratching, pushing, slamming or holding someone against a wall, choking, burning, assault with a weapon and anything that can cause an injury on someone's body. Sexual abuse also targets the sexual parts of one's body and can be manifested by forced kissing, rape, forced oral sex, refusing to stop intercourse when asked by a partner, etc. emotional abuse targets the mind or the psychological wellbeing of a person and can be manifested by verbal assault, dominance, control, isolation, ridicule, or the use of intimate knowledge for degradation.

Based on the result of both the quantitative and the qualitative analysis, the researcher found two major contributing factors for dating abuse, those are considering abuse as a sign of love and cultural influence. The result of this study shows that considering abuse as a sign of love is a result of cultural influence which is an argument supported by both the feminist and social learning theory. Therefore, it can be concluded that the major contributing factor for dating abuse is cultural influence as other causes are deeply intertwined with culture.

According to the findings of this research, the dominant coping strategy used by regular undergrad girl students of Bonga University is a problem focused coping strategy. Hence, the research revealed that there's a strong positive relationship among physical, sexual and emotional abuses and a negative relationship between the three abuse types and self-esteem.

Recommendations

Even though the prevalence of dating related abuse in Bonga University is low based on the findings of this research, it does not mean there is no abuse at all. There are individuals who suffer from physical, sexual and emotional dating abuse every single day. There are girls who lost their lives, became physically disabled and are forced to withdraw from school as a result of dating abuse. Therefore, the researcher believes that the issue needs intervention therefore forwards the following recommendation.

- ✚ As the main contributing factor found from this research result is cultural influence, the researcher suggests that attitudes and norms related to gender that for instance, allow men control over women needs to be challenged through media campaigns and awareness creation programs,
- ✚ A message needs to be sent to a society through different medias, about the offensiveness and unacceptability of dating abuse by formulating laws and policies that clearly state the measures that will be taken if committed,
- ✚ The law enforcement bodies should take serious measures on the perpetrators
- ✚ Girl students need to be empowered to stand for themselves and against the idea of dating or any related abuse,
- ✚ The researcher also suggests that further research need to be conducted in order to thoroughly investigate the issue.

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Competing Interest

The author has declared that no competing interests.

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