University based gender-based violence prevention in low-and middle-income countries: A scoping review

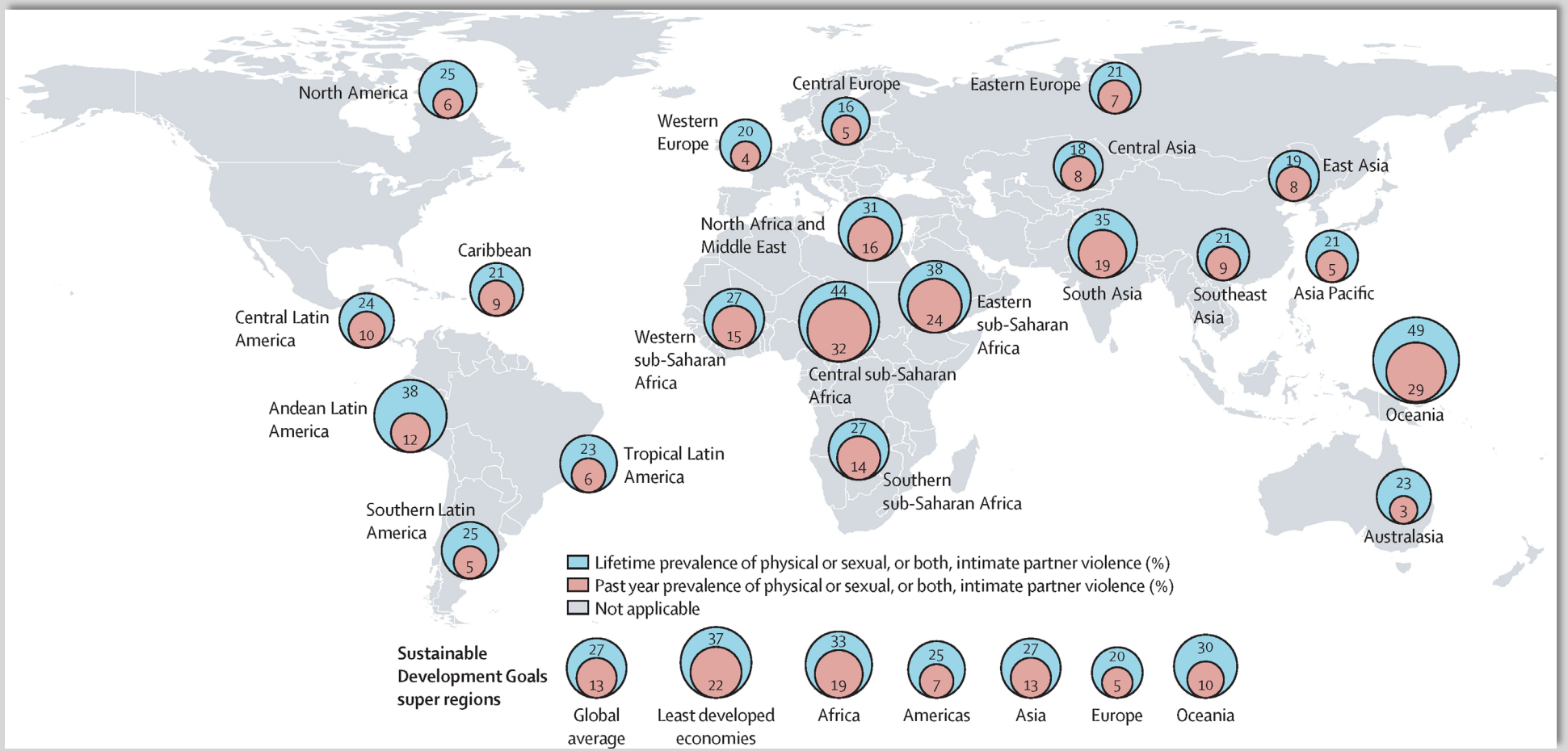
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SUBVERT
Sub-Saharan African University Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Network
Breaking the bonds of power and control for a better future

Low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) have higher prevalence rates of gender-based violence (GBV) than high-income countries



Source: Sardinha, L., Maheu-Giroux, M., Stöckl, H., Meyer, S. R., & García-Moreno, C. (2022). Global, regional, and national prevalence estimates of physical or sexual, or both, intimate partner violence against women in 2018. *Lancet*, *399*(10327), 803–813. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(21)02664-7

Gender-based violence remains a persistent challenge in higher education institutions worldwide

Globally:

17.5%
Of female students

7.8%
Of male students

18.1%
Of trans-gender diverse students

have experienced sexual assault while being a student

In sub-Saharan Africa:

42.3 -67.7%

Of students in higher education institutions have experienced GBV

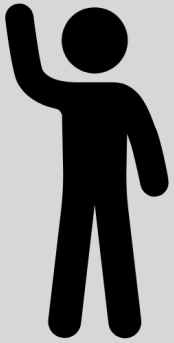
Beyene et al., 2019; Steele et al., 2024

GBV can cause severe health issues, and hinder students' educational performance

- Missed lectures
- Feelings of shame and stigma
- Stress levels
- Withdrawal from studies

- Sense of safety and well-being on campus
- Academic achievement

- Education is key to reducing gender disparities and poverty.
- Higher education institutions in LMICs have the potential to be powerful agents of change in preventing GBV, not only within campuses but also in broader society.



Banyard et al., 2020; Geppert et al., 2024; Tarzia et al., 2024

Purpose

Identify and synthesize the available evidence on GBV prevention interventions in higher education institutions in LMICs.

Methods

Reporting methods:

- JBI methodology for scoping reviews

Protocol

https://bit.ly/ScopingReviewProtocol

Inclusion/exclusion criteria:

Population: University students.

Intervention: Any primary, secondary, tertiary level intervention or policy.

Context: Any LMIC (The World Bank, 2024).

Types of evidence sources: Any except for editorials, commentary, or opinion pieces.

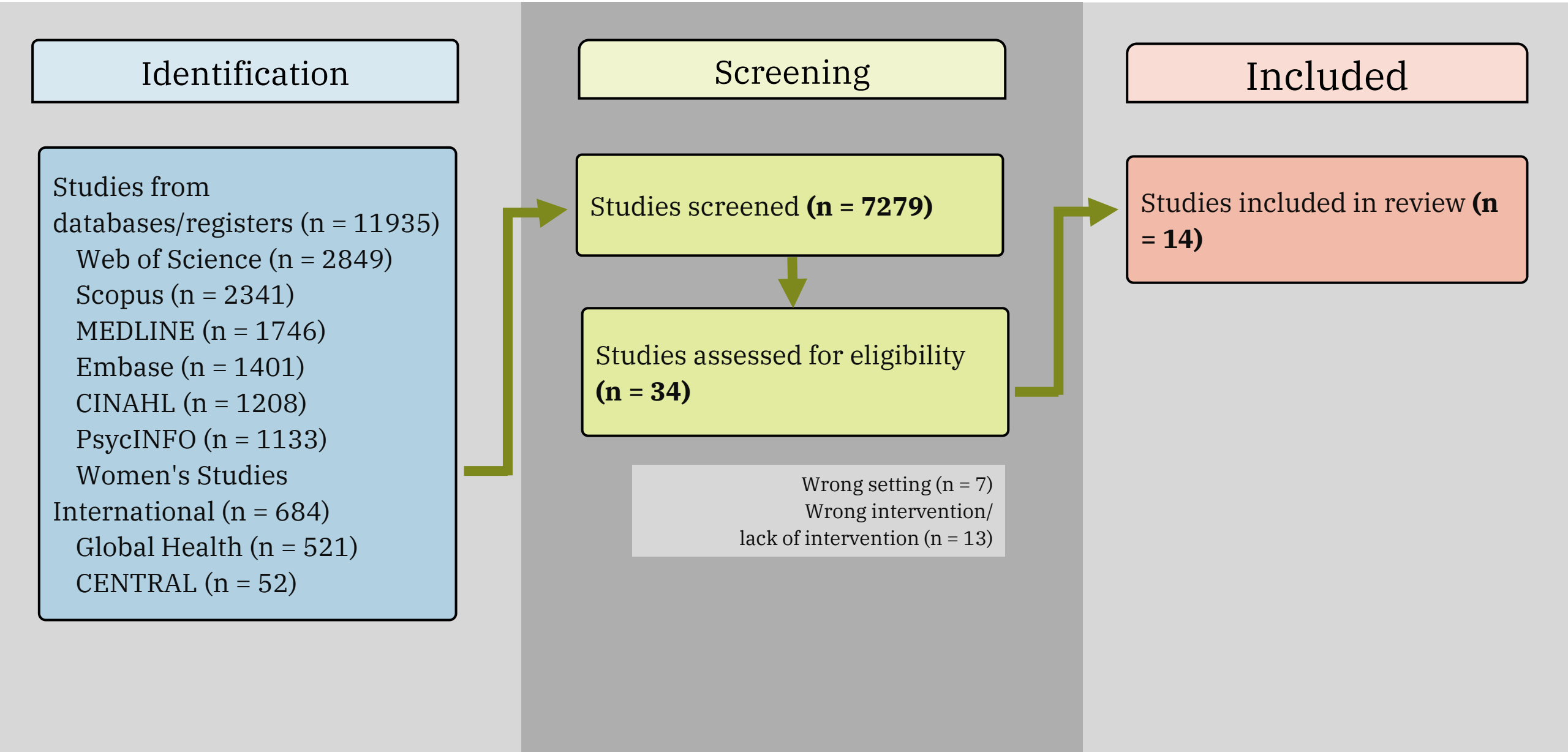
Search Strategy:

- Completed by a health informationist.
- 9 scholarly databases searched
- Key words and controlled vocabulary used.
- 11935 references exported to Covidence systematic review software.

Search Strategy

https://bit.ly/Search-Strategies

Prisma Diagram (Adapted)



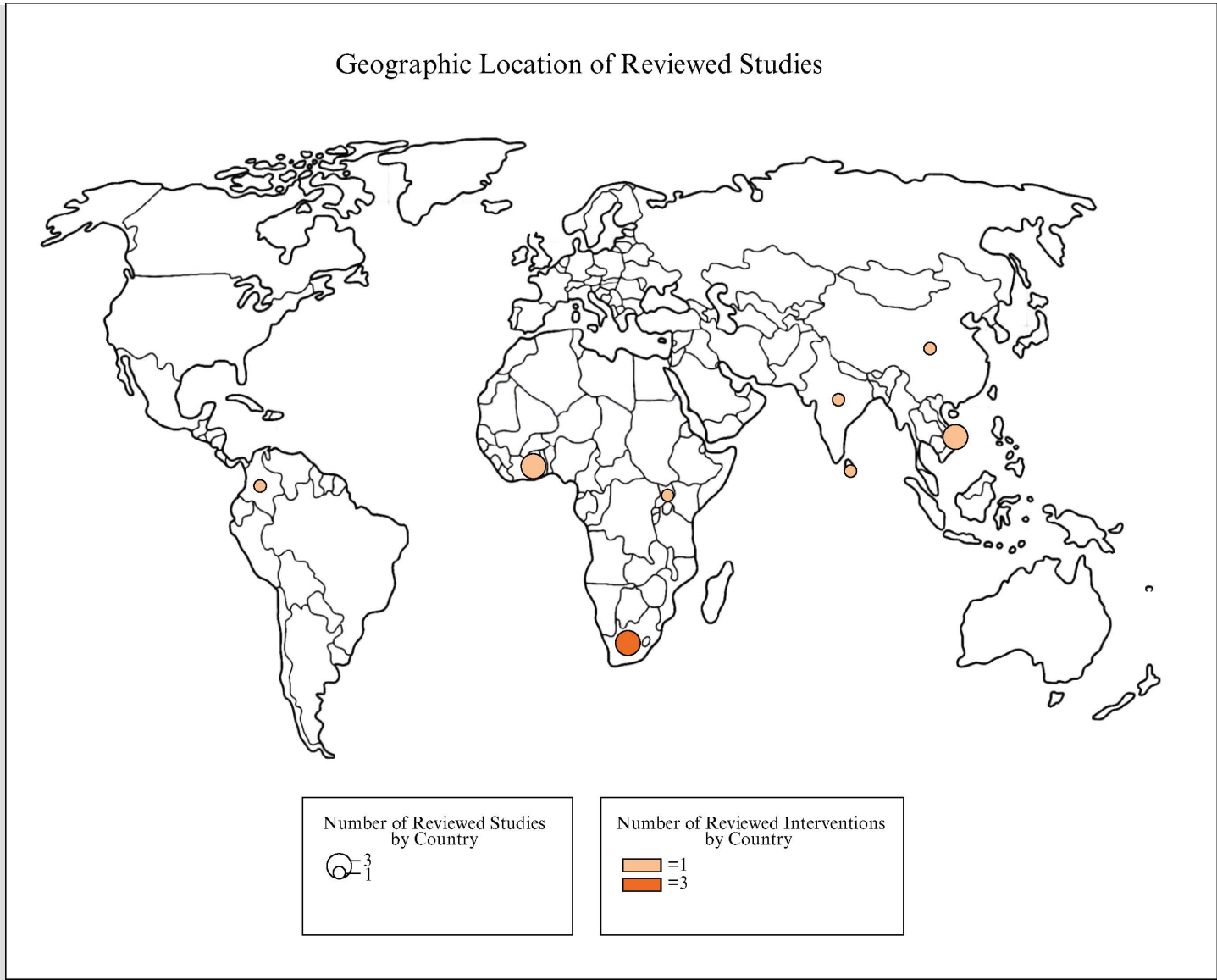
Results:

14 studies, 10 interventions

4 studies focused on GBV (broadly)

9 studies focused on sexual violence/sexual harassment

1 study focused on dating violence



Results:
Design and methods

6

Quantitative studies.
The majority were quasi-experimental designs:
Pre-post test

2

Studies reported on an RCT

4

Mixed methods studies:
The majority were pre-post test evaluation + focus groups

4

Qualitative studies.

Study aims:

Pilot testing

Feasibility and acceptability

Developing interventions

Exploring participants' experience.

Cultural adaptation

Evaluating the effectiveness

Results:

Studies used different content and level of prevention

8
Educational & awareness

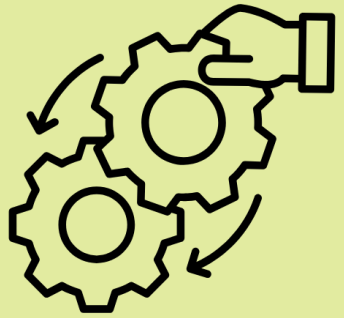
4
Bystander

3
Training & capacity building

2
Community mobilization



5 primary prevention interventions



5 primary and secondary prevention interventions



No interventions focused on tertiary prevention

Discussion

Evidence-based interventions are still in the **early stages of development.**

- The focus was on **pilot testing and intervention development**, only one RCT.
- Studies measured **short-term outcomes**, making it difficult to determine sustained behavioral changes, or long-term impact.
- Most interventions were conducted in **sub-Saharan Africa**, few studies from other LMICs regions.
- Interventions addressed **primary and secondary prevention**, but none included tertiary prevention to support survivors.

Why are these findings important?

Implications for research:

- More efficacy testing to strengthen the evidence base.
- Prioritize evaluation of long-term impact and sustainability.
- Expand geographic location to ensure culturally diverse evidence from LMICs.
- Increase dissemination through academic journals

Implications for practice:

- Development of interventions that address all levels of GBV prevention.
- Adaptation of interventions to local cultural contexts, ensuring that they meet the needs of diverse student populations.

Implications for policy makers:

- Resources should be allocated to support research in regions with limited GBV evidence and interventions.

- Higher education institutions should require the implementation of data-driven GBV interventions and ensure rigorous evaluations of their effectiveness.

Thank you!

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