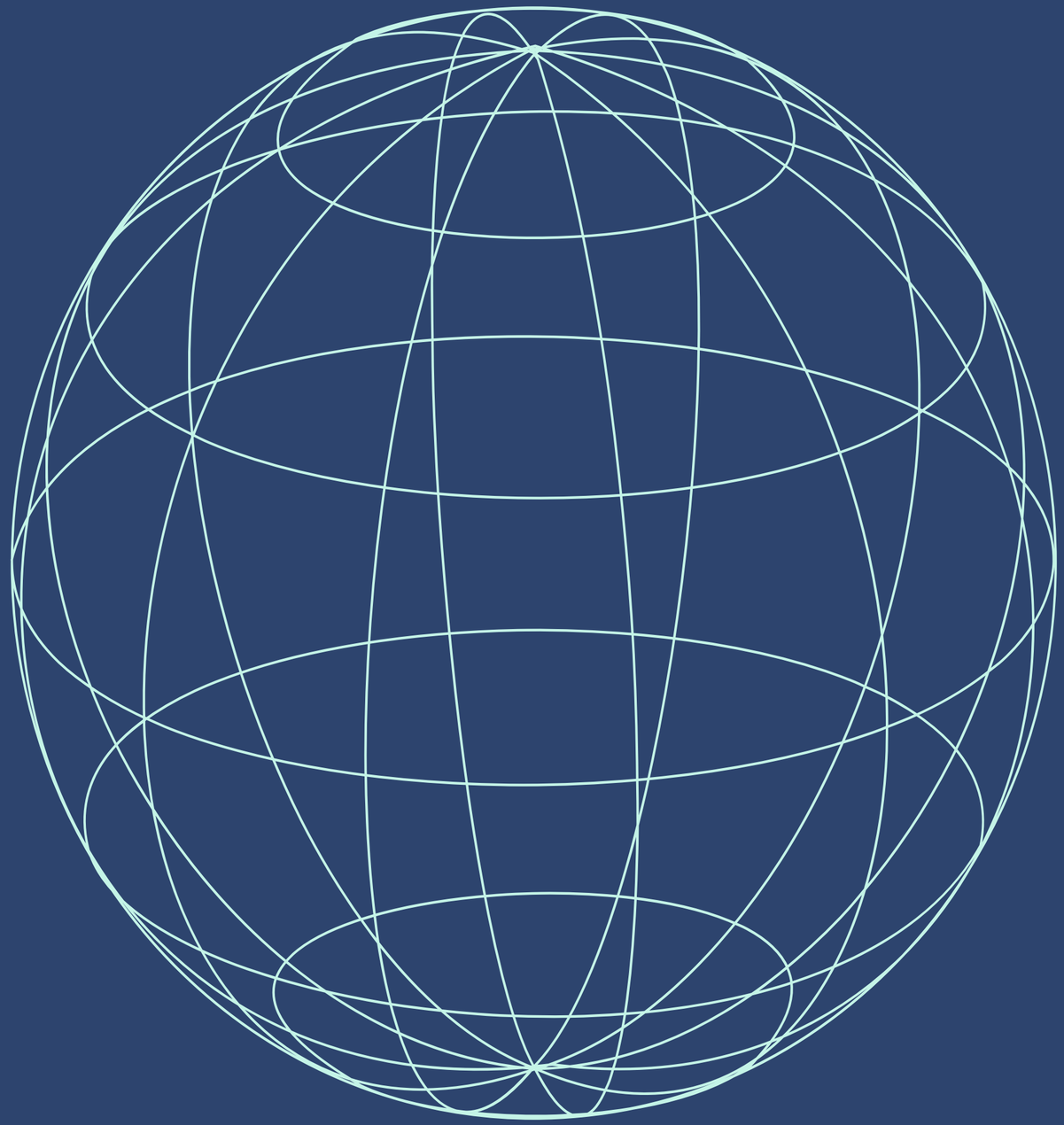
SUBVERT

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Prevention of gender-based violence in sub-Saharan African universities: A multinational network approach



Presented by the SUBVERT Network

subvertnetwork@gmail.com

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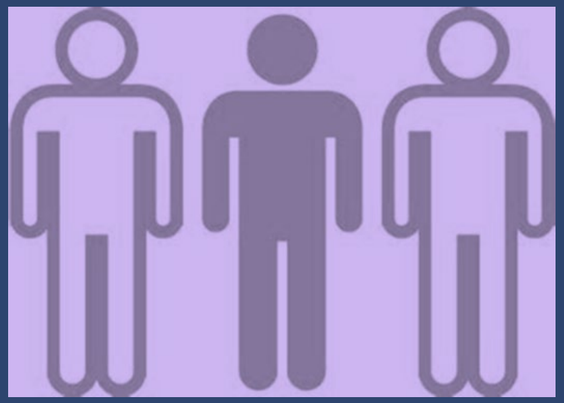
Outline

1. Background
2. The SUBVERT Network
3. Challenges & Opportunities to GBV Prevention
4. Best Practices in Policy Development
5. GBV Campus Climate Survey

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Background

- Evidence from across the globe suggests that 1 in 3 women and girls will suffer some form of intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime (WHO, 2021).
- Specific to female youth enrolled in educational institutions, a systematic review found the overall prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) ranged from 42.3 to 67.7% within sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Beyene et al., 2019).



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“Gender-based violence (GBV) constitutes a global public health crisis, occurring across geographic and cultural contexts, with attendant consequences on acute and chronic physical, psychological, emotional, and reproductive health.”

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Sustainable Development Goals

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls







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University Focus

Practical

- All investigators in a university environment with environmental & institutional support
- A captive audience to develop and evaluate tools and interventions that can be adapted to the community

Microcosm of the community

- Future leaders of the country
- Still forming beliefs about gender equality & GBV
- Part of a larger community and ecosystem with the potential for ripple effects into the community



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Significance

Targets young adults who are still forming their beliefs around gender equality and GBV.

Engages stakeholders from universities across SSA with the potential to expand to include all types of universities across SSA, focusing on long-term and sustainable change.

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Introductions











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Our vision is to promote higher institutions of learning free of gender-based violence across the continent of Africa.

Collaborative Network



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Collaborative Partners



- University of Cape Coast, Ghana
- Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology, Ghana
- Takoradi Technical University, Ghana
- University of Liberia, Liberia
- Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria
- University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
- Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, South Africa
- National University of Science & Technology, Zimbabwe
- University of Rwanda, Rwanda

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Major Themes for Network Development

- Imbalance of power
- Economic resources
- Capacity building
- Trust
- Definition of roles
- Promoting good governance

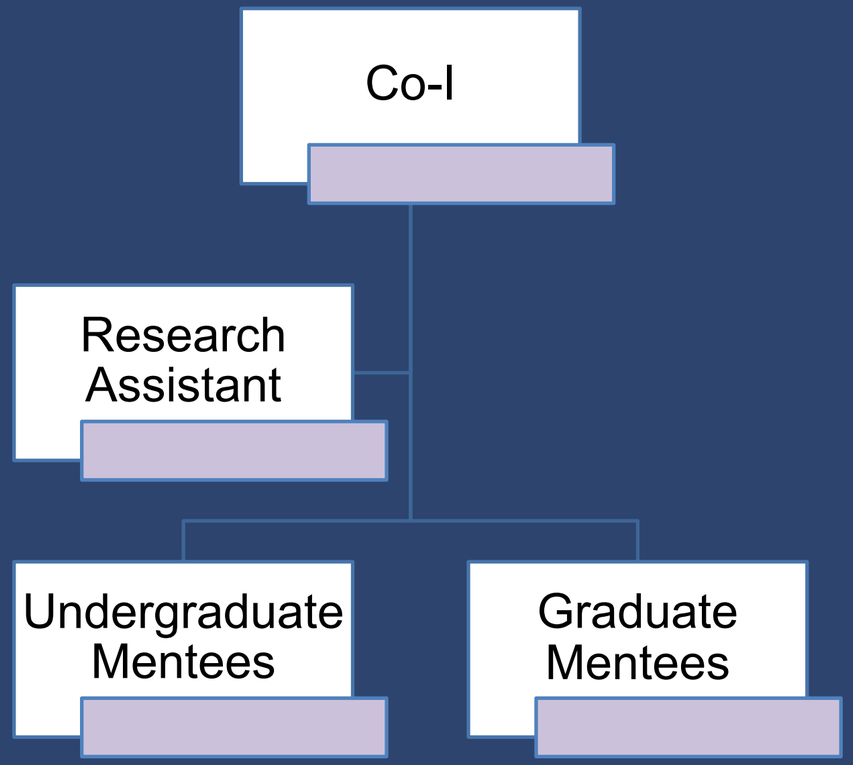
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Collaborative Structure

Our collaborative structure highlights equality among all Co - Investigators, who serve as Site PIs at their institution

Research assistants are engaged as trainees and to assist with recruitment, data collection, and dissemination

Undergraduate and graduate mentees are involved in project development, analysis, and dissemination



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2025 Leadership



President



Vice President



Secretary



Vice President

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2025 Leadership



Finance



Data Management



Communication: Website



Communication: Social Media



Training & Archiving

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Research Priorities: Theory to Practice

Theory-based interventions are adapted/developed for unique cultural contexts.

Leading to changes in policy, practice, and student behaviors that have extended

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Membership Criteria

01

Champion focused on GBV prevention and/or response within a university setting in SSA

02

Commitment to attend biweekly meetings with the larger SUBVERT Network (Mondays)

03

Commitment to serve as Site PI on all projects

- Ability to identify projects, papers, and policy work that is pertinent to their site

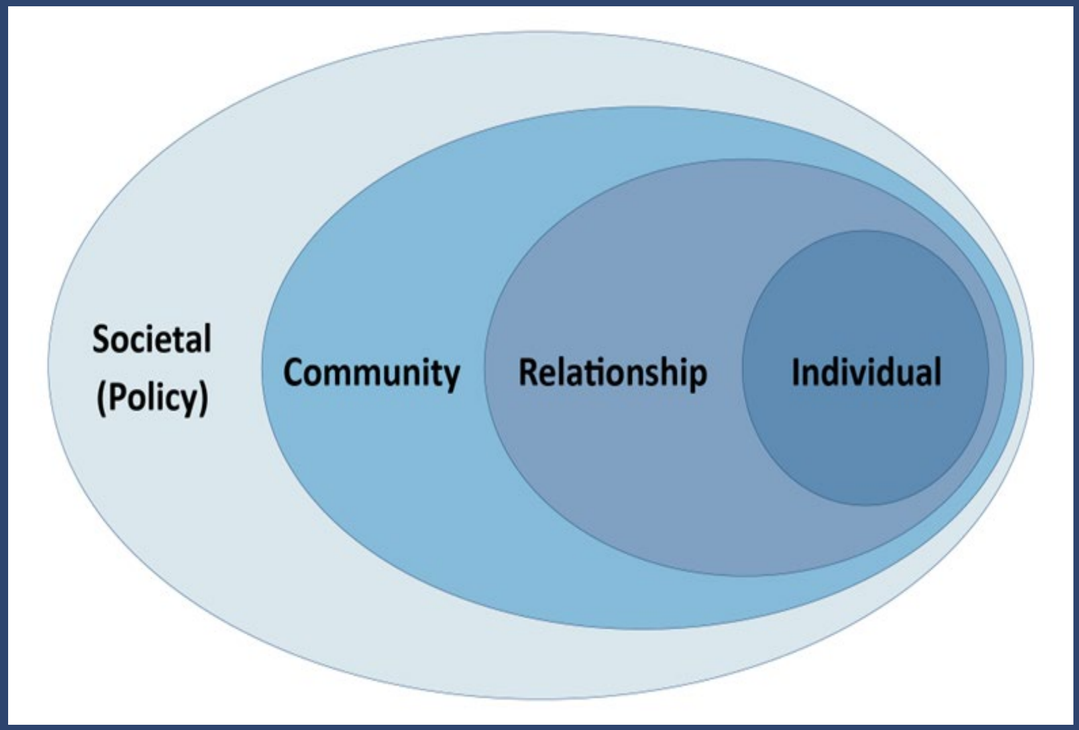
04

Willingness to share data and best practices

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Preliminary Work: Challenges & Opportunities to Addressing GBV

- Individual interviews with key stakeholders from six sites
- Diagnostic survey on campus/ community resources and policies



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Interview Themes



Resources available



Barriers to implementing programs



Areas for opportunity

(Munro-Kramer et al., 2024)

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Recommendations: Place-based Prevention Framework

1) **Primary Prevention**
   a) Country-wide attempts to shift cultural attitudes about gender norms and gender equality *(societal level)*
   b) Education and training for university students, faculty, and/or staff on GBV and healthy relationships *(community level)*
   c) Attempts to make places safer by installing more lights, offering rides home, or having increased staffing/security of locations that have been identified as hot spots for GBV *(individual level)*

2) **Secondary Prevention**
   a) Increasing training for post-assault care via modalities like forensic nursing *(societal level, Randa & McGarry, 2023)*
   b) Multi-sectoral approaches and policies that connect survivors with health, advocacy, and legal needs *(community level)*
   c) Friendly spaces on campus where survivors can learn about resources and receive assistance in navigating resources for their identified needs *(individual level)*

3) **Tertiary Prevention**
   a) Large scale counseling services like national hotlines or increased training of healthcare providers and/or healthcare extenders *(societal level)*
   b) Peer support groups *(community level)*
   c) Long-term assistance for survivors by ensuring fair justice and academic accommodations to meet their needs *(individual level)*

(Munro-Kramer et al., 2024)

Barriers and opportunities for gender-based violence(GBV) prevention & response at universities in sub-Saharan Africa

What influences GBV?

- Location
- Type of relationship with perpetrator

Barriers for prevention and response

- Patriarchal norms
- Lack of awareness
- Poor institutional infrastructure

Opportunity areas for prevention

Primary Prevention

- Creating and raising awareness
- Provision of preventive resources

Secondary Prevention

- System-wide response

Tertiary Prevention

- Fair punishment
- Justice for survivors

Munro-Kramer, M. L., Morris, K., Duma, S., Akinyemi, A., Kamusoko, S., Chamisa, J. A., David, D. S., Owusu-Antwi, R., Omolo, T., Darteh, E. K. M., Randa, M. B., & Compton, S. D. (2024). Barriers and opportunities for gender-based violence prevention & response at universities in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Sexual Aggression,* 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2024.2328055

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Preliminary Work: Best Practices for Policy Development



University Sexual and Gender-Based Violence(SGBV) Policies in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA): Exploring Best Practices

Existing SSA SGBV policies analyzed

7 University policies

- *Ghana*
- *Liberia*
- *Nigeria*
- *Rwanda*
- *South Africa*
- *Zimbabwe*

6 National policies

BEST PRACTICES FOR SSA UNIVERSITY SGBV POLICY DEVELOPMENT

- Evidenced-based
- Incorporate broad definitions for all
- Readily available in multiple formats
- Identify when and who created the policy
- Define key terms broadly with gendered signifiers
- Address prevention and recognize cultural and contextual factors enabling SGBV
- Be succinct and concise
- Address response including confidential and anonymous reporting

Seidu, A.-A., Duma, S., Compton, S., Akinyemi, A., Randa, M. B., Owusu-Antwi, R., David, D. S., Chamisa, J., Kamusoko, S., Darteh, E. K. M., Morenkeji, F., Mott, J., Bauer, S., Dickson, K. S., & Munro-Kramer, M. (2024). University sexual and gender-based violence policies in sub-Saharan Africa: Exploring best practices. *Journal of Forensic Nursing, 20*(1), 43. https://doi.org/10.1097/JFN.0000000000000462

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GBV Campus Climate Survey: Methods

We adapted and deployed a gender-based violence (GBV) Campus Climate Survey at nine universities in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) that will allow for comparisons among and across sites and countries related to knowledge, attitudes, and experiences of GBV.

This will help the research team to develop contextually appropriate prevention and response interventions that could be used across SSA cultures and countries.



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Aim 1 Methods

- Used a pre-existing Campus Climate Survey created by two members of the study team and piloted at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana (Compton et al., 2022).

- Contextualized the pre-existing Campus Climate Survey by recruiting 6-15 students from public locations on each university campus using convenience and snowball sampling to conduct cognitive interviews.

- Developed a sampling methodology using:
  - ✓ Emails sent to the student body OR use of University portal
  - ✓ Sensitization via posts on university websites and through student leaders (e.g., WhatsApp groups)

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Aim 2 Methods

- The GBV Campus Climate Survey was programmed in RedCap as an anonymous survey and access was provided to investigators at each site.
- The survey launched between July and October 2023 and remained open for two months with automated reminders sent at 1 week, 2 week, and 6-week intervals.

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Aim 3 Methods

1) Preliminary analysis of data among and across institutions and countries to identify key intervention targets

2) Compiled best practices for implementing campus climate surveys at universities across sub-Saharan Africa

3) Identifying pre-existing interventions that address key targets for evaluation and recommendation to other universities/communities in sub-Saharan Africa

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GBV Campus Climate Survey: Results



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Aim 1 Results

Campus Climate Survey with the following sections:

- Demographic Characteristics: 11 items that are tailored to the context
- Knowledge Questions: 5 items
- Attitude Questions: 19 items
- Experiences: 36 items + 11 items if someone endorsed an experience of violence



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Aim 2 Results

Participation at each site varied dramatically and was impacted by:

- The anonymous survey methodology & an inability to return to the survey
- The academic calendar
- Survey fatigue



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University Sample Sizes

University of Cape Coast (UCC), Ghana	561
Takoradi Technical University (TTU), Ghana	730
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology (KNUST), Ghana	306
University of Liberia (UL), Liberia	17
Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Nigeria	2914
University of Rwanda (UR), Rwanda	895
University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), South Africa	37
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU), South Africa	53
National University of Science and Technology (NUST), Zimbabwe	37

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GBV Campus Climate Survey: Analyses & Aim 3 Results



Experiences of gender-based violence and help-seeking among university students in sub-Saharan Africa (Owusu-Antwi et al., 2024)



Global prevalence of GBV[1]

27%

Women experiencing GBV in SSA[1]

33%





Prevalence in Educational Institutions[2]

42.3%

67.7%

9

Universities
In sub-Saharan Africa

3,512

Students

Forms of Gender Based Violence Experienced

29%

Physical violence

18.7%

Sexual violence

64.9%

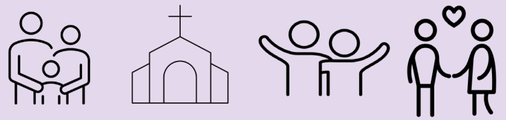
Psychological violence

63.3%

Stalking

For those who experienced Gender Based Violence

78%



(Sought Informal help)

30%



(Sought formal help)

Conclusion: Comprehensive gender-based violence policies and prevention programs in sub-Saharan African universities is essential for fostering formal help-seeking behaviors and ensuring safer campus environments.

1.Beyene AS, Chojenta C, Roba HS, Melka AS, Loxton D. Gender-based violence among female youths in educational institutions of Sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Syst Rev. 2019 Feb 25;8(1):59.
2.WHO. Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates [Internet]. 2021 [cited 2024 Jan 5]. Available from: https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789240022256

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Lessons Learned

- The importance of champions
- Need to institutionalize our collaborations
  - Currently the SUBVERT Network is built on individual relationships
- Differences in ethical approval processes and academic calendars makes collecting comparable data challenging on a short timeline
- Funding opportunities aimed at network development are limited
- Best way to engage students moving forward

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Quotes from Network Members



“Collective and Consolidated efforts are necessary to create conducive learning and working environments free of gender-based violence in our Institutions of higher Education (IHE).”



“Winning the war against GBV in institutions of Higher education must be collectively done. SUBVERT network is connecting like minds to wage war against GBV to ensure safe spaces across Institutions of Higher Education.”

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Summary & Next Steps

- Universities across sub-Saharan Africa are addressing GBV on campuses to various degrees (Sine)
- There is a lack of comparable data about GBV prevention, response, and policies across sub-Saharan Africa (Bertha)
- Evidence-based interventions for university students in sub-Saharan Africa are lacking (Maria Jose)
- There is a need to consolidate a formal network that will facilitate the development and sharing of best practices as well as a “menu of options for interventions” that can be tailored based on context, culture, and type of institution (Michelle)

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Acknowledgements



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Coming Soon!

Our Website will be online soon:

https://subvertnetwork.umich.edu/

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Do you want to continue learning about our work?

- Today, 14:45 Oral session 8: Violence In Teen And Student Population

  “University based gender-based violence prevention in low- and middle-income countries: A scoping review” – Maria Jose Baeza Robba

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Questions & Discussion

