

Vulnerable and Outside the Margins: From Challenges to Informed Inclusion

“A study on violence against women in the political space”

Research Conducted By: Stand To End Rape Initiative (STER)



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1 About Stand To End Rape Initiative:

Founded in June 2014, STER is a women and youth-led social justice organisation advancing gender equality by advocating against gender-based violence, leading community and national-based prevention interventions and providing holistic psychosocial support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in Nigeria. STER adopts a comprehensive approach to advocating for gender equality and eliminating gender-based violence in Nigeria. First, by working with communities to generate sustainable homegrown solutions to the issues of gender-based violence that impact the broader society, then by partnering with local and national groups on systems-level prevention and intervention activities, and finally, by working with survivors of sexual violence and their families to help them recover from the related trauma. At the core of all STER's programs and activities is to advocate for a society where women and girls are empowered to equally contribute free from violence. Our **mission** is to catalyse innovative programs, policies, and public engagement efforts and create transformative policy-wide behavioural and systemic changes in the lives of women and girls in Nigeria. Our **vision** is to create an equitable, safe, and resilient society where all persons are free from sexual violence.

STER has been working on prevention and intervention initiatives by engaging in awareness-raising efforts, prevention education, policy advocacy, and survivor-centred programming. STER's systems-level change prevention and intervention activities promote structural changes in the medical, legal, and social support systems. STER provides free and confidential direct services to survivors and their families, including legal support, mental health therapy, referrals, transportation, and accompaniment for medical and shelter services.

About Action Aid

ActionAid Nigeria is a member of the ActionAid federation, a global alliance of organisations focusing on rights, poverty eradication and social transformation in 45 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. ActionAid works with People living in poverty, the poor and excluded, promoting values and commitment in civil society, institutions, and Government with the aim of achieving structural changes to eradicate injustice and poverty in the world.

About The Women's Voice & Leadership Project

The Women's Voice and Leadership Nigeria (WVL – Nigeria) project is a five-year project funded by Global Affairs Canada. The project is aimed at tackling the barriers to gender equality and supporting the empowerment of women and girls through the provision of financial and technical resources to local feminist/women's rights organisations in Nigeria. This intervention is designed to

respond to the challenges faced by these organisations in their ef
and rights violations in policy and legislation and the provision of services, as well as harmful social
beliefs and practices.

Through this project, ActionAid Nigeria has provided demonstrable evidence of its capability to effectively manage sub-granting initiatives. This is being done through the provision of multiple layers of funding and tailored capacity-building support to these organisations.

2 List of Acronyms

CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CSO - Civil Society Organisation

GBVAW - Gender-Based Violence Against Women

INEC - Independent National Electoral Commission

NYSC - National Youth Service Corps

SRS - Simple Random Sampling

UN - United Nations

VAPP Act - Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act

VAWE/VAWIE - Violence Against Women in Elections

VAWP - Violence Against Women in Politics

3 Study Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this study is to obtain information on the level of violence against women across various geopolitical zones in Nigeria. In particular, the study aims to examine the prevalence of electoral violence on women, to understand firsthand:

1. Lived experiences of women in the political space who have experienced actual violence.
2. Lived experience of women who have experienced political violence by simply being a wife, daughter, mother or sister to a candidate.
3. Lived experiences of women who attempted to run for political office but were bullied out of the process.
4. Women who have faced violence in the process of being vocal about their support for a candidate, engaging in political activism, or simply exercising their civic rights to vote.
5. Lived experiences of women who got into political spaces either through elections or appointment and constantly had to deal with gross insubordination, threats, and outright disregard for the powers their offices bestow on them simply because they are women.
6. Lived experiences of women who are involved as officials and ad-hoc staff in the electioneering process with a primary focus on female NYSC Corp Members recruited for election duties.
7. Also identify factors that may contribute to its occurrence, its impact, and the strategies to prevent it.

This study addresses a significant gap in knowledge of violent experiences of women in the political space in the context of Nigeria. Findings from this study will inform sexual violence prevention programming, policies, and practices.

4 Executive Summary

This report presents research conducted between October 2021 and April 2022 and explored violence against women in politics as a global scourge that marginalises women in political and public life. The Nigerian electoral politics and indeed political space is not bereft of violence and as such women face significant gender-based vulnerabilities. Women actively in the political space via elections or appointments, women and girls who have a familial association with a politician, women who are political activists or those who are involved as officials or ad hoc staff of electoral bodies have been directly targeted by thugs and criminals for physical violence, including sexual abuse. All of these actions are direct examples of violence perpetrated against women in politics, an intimidation tactic employed to reinforce entrenched patriarchal values and undermine the integration and representation of women's experiences and perspectives into governance processes and institutions.

This research was influenced by the spate of violence against women in politics and during elections based on sacrosanct reports in news media. A quantitative study was designed and launched across the six (6) geo-political zones of the country with a state as representative of the zone. Research questions developed for the study were peer-reviewed by a team of representatives and experts from the SGBV space- from partner organisations and CSOs. The study also sought views on what could be done to prevent sexual violence against women in politics.

The study produced several important findings for STER's work to prevent and respond to sexual violence. First, data gathered suggests a series of alarming reports from Osun, Cross River and Gombe states of indicators such as Political Activists who have had injuries or bodily harm inflicted upon them, respondents who have had their properties destroyed due to their familial affiliation to a politician and political activists who report that they have been raped or sexually harassed despite the expected reticence in opening up on sexual violence.

However, whether at the community level or otherwise, male leaders, civil society groups and women rights organisations all play an essential role in promoting and creating shared responsibility and an environment in which sexual violence is not accepted, tolerated and met with the force of domestic or international laws.

The study's findings align with STER's mandate and operationalise our actions and activities. They provide opportunities to address gender-based vulnerabilities at all levels of society-from a trauma-informed and survivor-centred model of care for survivors to enhanced engagements with political and administrative authorities at every level to working with the police, the judiciary and communities.

5 Political Violence - The Nigerian Context

Women in Nigeria have been subjected to varying degrees of violence, cutting across socio-demographic factors including age, social status/class, educational background, ethnicity, religion, mental and physical ability. Violence against women in politics is a global scourge that marginalises women in political and public life. This report examines the troubling, multidimensional phenomenon of violence against women in politics and elections with a specific focus on Nigeria, where historic presidential elections were held on March 28, 2015, followed by local elections on April 12. In the lead up to the elections, which were postponed for six weeks due to the tenuous security situation, there was widespread fear of electoral violence.

The electoral process in Nigeria is not free from violence, and women face significant gender-based vulnerabilities. In the year prior to the elections, Nigeria experienced more political violence than it had during its previous election cycle in 2011, when over 1000 fatalities were reported. These numbers only reflect the violence that is either reported or visible to the election monitors. Unfortunately, violence against women in politics and elections often goes unreported and unmonitored but remains a troubling issue with far-reaching implications for democracy, human rights, gender equality and security. The analysis uses the backdrop of the Nigerian elections to explore the impact of violence against women in politics and elections and the next steps to further address this important subject.

Violence is a major impediment to economic growth and development. Violence committed against women has the propensity to impede progress in achieving development. The political system in Nigeria has historically been characterised by violence, uncertainty, fear, harassment and marginalisation of women in the electoral process, in the sense that men are the occupants of the majority of the political positions in the country and this constitutes major impediments to women's aspiration in contesting for elective positions at all levels of government within the country. The participation of women in terms of contesting for electoral positions in the act of governance in Nigeria has been minimal compared to their male counterparts and this could be termed as a way of cutting down women's involvement in the electioneering process. The relevant information for this paper was gathered through primary data, involving interviews with key study participants to unpack the impacts of violence on women's political participation in Nigeria.

Violence Against Women in Politics (VAWP) is a form of gender-based violence against women (GBVAW). VAWP is any act, or threat, of physical, sexual or psychological violence that prevents women from exercising and realising their political rights and a range of human rights. VAWP manifests in specific, gendered ways including, but not limited to, the following examples:

- Physical violence: This includes assassinations, kidnappings, and beatings – often with the intent to force women to resign or withdraw from political life.

- Sexual violence: This includes sexual harassment, unwanted rape, sexualised threats, and altered pornographic or sexualised images intended to publicly question women's competencies and shame them.
- Psychological violence: This includes threats, character assassination, stalking, online abuse as well as economic violence such as denial of salary or political financing, property theft or damage.

6 Review of Existing Literature

Violence Against Women in Elections has become globally pervasive and a major threat to the integrity of electoral and democratic processes. It has been identified as a major constraint for the participation of women in politics and governance both globally and more specifically, in Nigeria (Ajanaku, 2015). In what follows, existing evidence in the literature of political and electoral violence against women in Nigeria is discussed.

Firstly, violence against women in elections has been identified as extending beyond physical harm to include violence in terms of hate speeches, sexual assaults, intimidations and threats, which are most often overlooked (Ajanaku, 2015; Huber & Kammerud, 2016). However, while electoral violence against women is believed to occur during elections, evidence suggests that they take place before, during and after elections (National Democratic Institute NDI, 2016)

Secondly, there exist several incidences of violence against women following their participation or affiliation to participants in electoral processes. For instance, during the 2019 Governorship Election in Kogi State, Nigeria, it was reported that the PDP women leader of Ochadamu Local Government Area of the state was burnt to death by some men identified as political party thugs of the opposition party (Ogaziechi, 2021). This is among several other unreported incidents suffered by women who were either directly involved in the electoral process or even those who were reportedly coerced to vote in favor of a political party by their husbands, fathers or brothers.

Similarly, in a recent report by the Violence Against Women in Election (VAWIE) ambassador, Stephanie Linus, she recounted the experiences of some women who were divorced by their husbands as a result of their intention to run for political office. She also noted the case of a woman who was beaten and almost stripped naked in public because she supported a political party (Ajanaku, 2015). Furthermore, it was reported during the 2015 presidential elections, that the Nigerian Police Force forcefully dispersed and tear-gassed about two thousand women from the All Progressives Congress (APC) party who were peacefully protesting the misconduct of elections in Rivers State (Safir and Alam, 2015). This has been faulted as a premeditated attack on women in relation to an election.

Moreover, in a state report of the Stop-VAWIE project using Focus Group Discussions, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) reports that men, including security personnel, are the leading perpetrators of violence against women in elections and that women withdraw from full participation in the electoral processes due to their varying experiences of violence (Para-Mallam, 2015).

However, a major challenge militating against efforts to eradicate e
paucity of research data on violence against women, especially in the one-cycle elections as well as
the lack of documentation and underreporting of occurrences of such events by victims of such

violence. This is in addition to the exclusion of political and gender dimensions from standard
violence against women (VAW) and electoral violence definitions (UN Women, 2018).

7 Research Methodology

The research team adopted a quantitative methodology for this survey using an online survey hosted on the KoboCollect platform. The surveys were administered by Research Assistants to respondents.

STER relied on her network and Research Assistants in these states to generate responses for this survey, particularly in the six target states for this survey. One hundred and twenty (120) responses were recorded in each state and hence for six (6) of the states, Seven hundred and twenty (720) respondents participated in the survey.

Method of Analysis: The Descriptive Analysis method utilised is particularly useful in quantitative research analysis and helps to summarise data sets that are representative of larger population samples. Descriptive statistics were calculated using Microsoft Excel and STATA.

Descriptive analysis helps to understand specific data attributes and provides intelligent summaries that enable comparisons.

Sampling Technique: The SRS technique was employed in this research study. It enabled us to extract samples from the population size and make constructive generalisations. Among the numerous advantages of the SRS technique is its ease of use and rather accurate representation of the characteristics of the larger population.

This study utilised a quantitative approach. Specifically, a mobile data collection survey questionnaire was developed and used to collect data from eligible participants. Participants in the study were recruited from six states across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. To participate in this study, participants needed to self-identify as 18 years or older, reside in Nigeria and have participated in elections within the last four years.

Demographics: Participants were asked to respond to personal demographic questions. The personal data that were collected included age, job/vocation and what category of “women in politics” they belong to.

The target states are:

- Cross River State (for the South-South geopolitical zone)
- Enugu State (for the South-East geopolitical zone)
- Osun State (for the South-West geopolitical zone)
- Gombe State (for the North-East geopolitical zone)
- Kogi State (for the North Central geopolitical zone)

- Zamfara State (for the North-West geopolitical zone)

The states selected for study in this research were based on available data and recent reports gathered on reported cases of electoral violence perpetrated against women and girls in that region.

8 Limitations and Mitigations Measures

- **Research Fatigue, High attrition rates / Low response rates:**

Responses to the survey would have been higher but a number of identified and potential survey respondents declined to participate in the survey. This was well respected. Generally, this has contributed to the paucity of quantitative research data on the subject of Violence against women and girls in pre and post-election.

9. Ethics

- **Anonymity:** To ensure that survey participants were not at risk of any kind of exposure, no personally identifiable information was collected when participants took the survey. Also, the data collection platform ensured encryption of the study results.
- **Informed consent:** The survey participants were informed of the purpose of the survey, and had the choice of either participating in the study or total refusal. Those who did not consent were not obliged to participate in the survey.

10 Key Findings

A. Experiences of different categories of “women in politics”

In this section, the experiences of the different categories of “women in politics”, including active and direct participants in the political space; relative (wife/mother/daughter/sister) of a politician; political activists; Corp (NYSC) members who have served as electoral management ad-hoc staff as well as female citizens with the right to vote are discussed.

a. Active and Direct Participants in the Political Space

Results from figure 1.1 below shows that of the women who identify as active and direct participants in the political space, across the selected states, 59% of them report that they have never had to trade sexual favours for an appointment, while 20% say that they rarely have to, and 16% report that they often must trade sexual favours. Interestingly, a significant percentage, 5%, of the women indicate that they always have to trade sexual favours for an appointment, which raises cause for concern. However, for the individual states, the figure shows that a greater percentage of women in the South (Cross River, Enugu and Osun states) report either always, often and rarely having to trade sexual favours for appointments compared to states in the North (Zamfara, Kogi and Gombe).

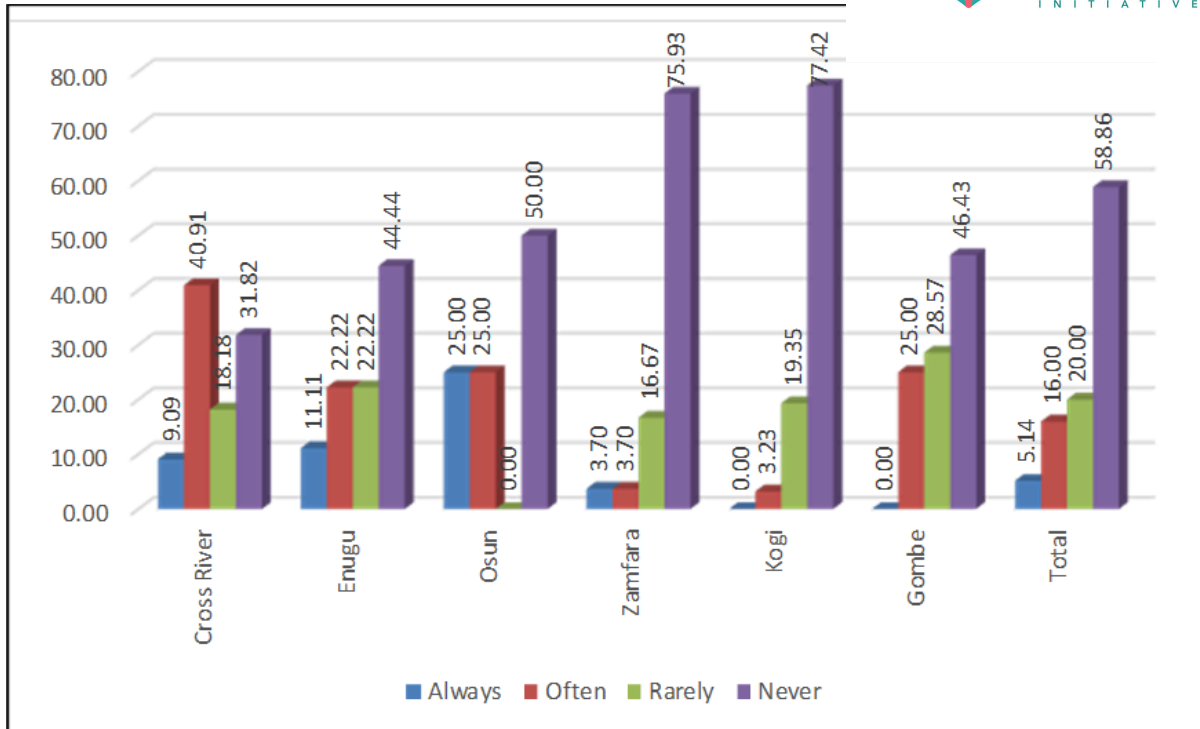
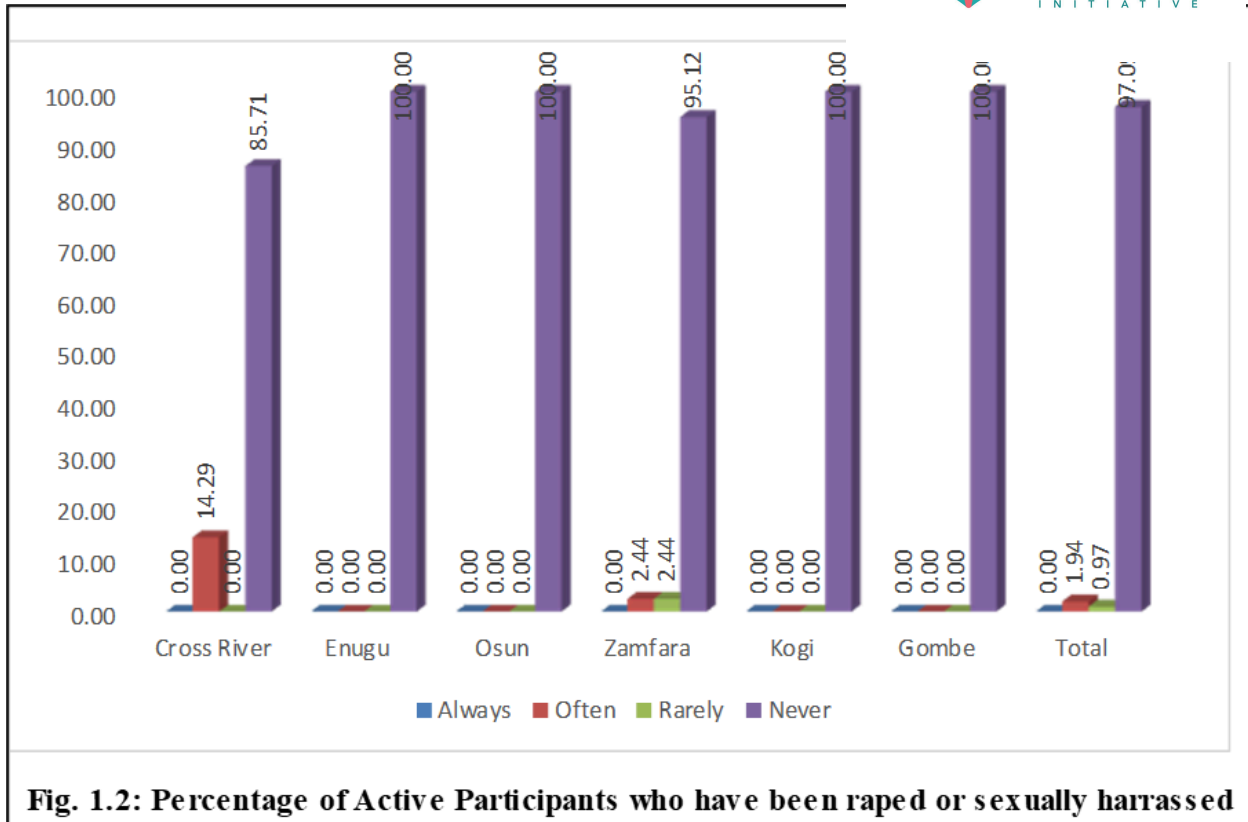
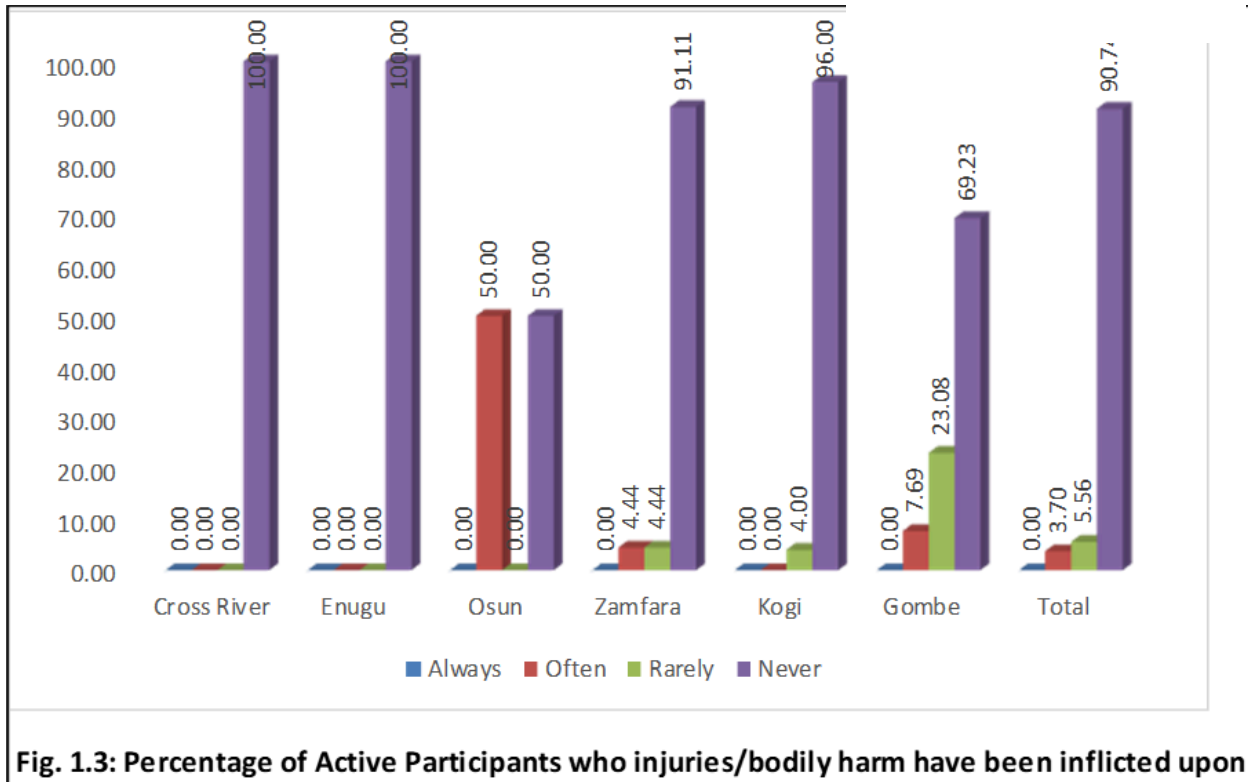


Fig. 1.1: Percentage of Active Participants who trade sexual favours for appointment

Figure 1.2 however shows that the majority (97%) of the active and direct participants in the political space across the selected states report that they have never been raped or sexually harassed. However, in Cross Rivers state, about 14% of the respondents indicate some level of rape or sexual harassment. Also, in Zamfara state, an equal percentage (2%) of the respondents who are active or direct participants report having been raped and either often or rarely sexually harassed.



With regards to the infliction of injuries or bodily harm, 97% of the women who identify as active and direct participants say that they have never had any injuries or bodily harm inflicted on them, while 6% and 4% of them report that they have been exposed to such, rarely and often respectively. The incidence of the infliction of injuries on participants of the election process appears to be more predominant in Osun state, specifically, the figure reveals that 50% of respondents in the state who are active participants often have injuries inflicted on them as a result of their participation in the election process, while in the north, about 8% and 4% of the respondents in Gombe and Zamfara states made a similar report as those in Osun state.



About 76% of the active and direct participants have never been denied access to political financial resources which are otherwise accessible to their male counterparts while 24% report that they have been denied to some extent, either always (2%), often (11%) or rarely (12%). This is depicted in figure 1.4 below. Further to this, the figure shows that while 100% of the participants from Osun state report that they are either often (50%) or rarely (50%) denied access, 100% of those in Kogi report that they have never been denied access to political financial resources. However, in Gombe state, about 69% of the participants say that they are denied access, in varying degrees, compared to their male counterparts, whereas, in Zamfara state, about 27% report the same.

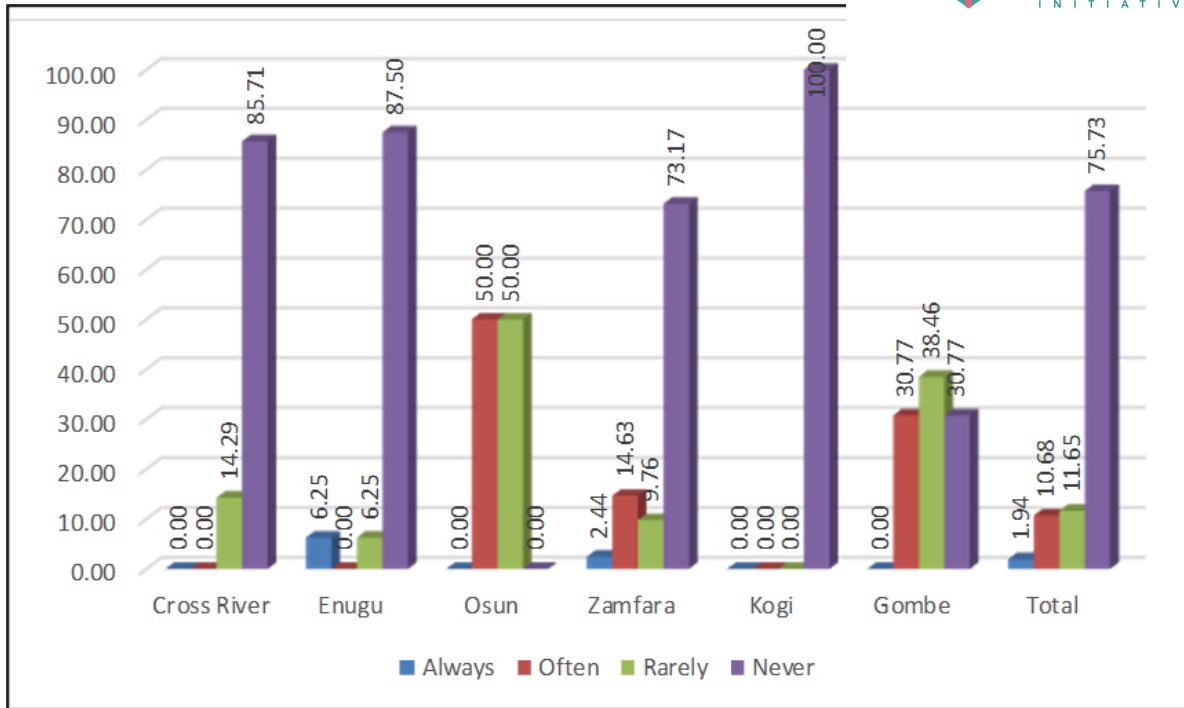
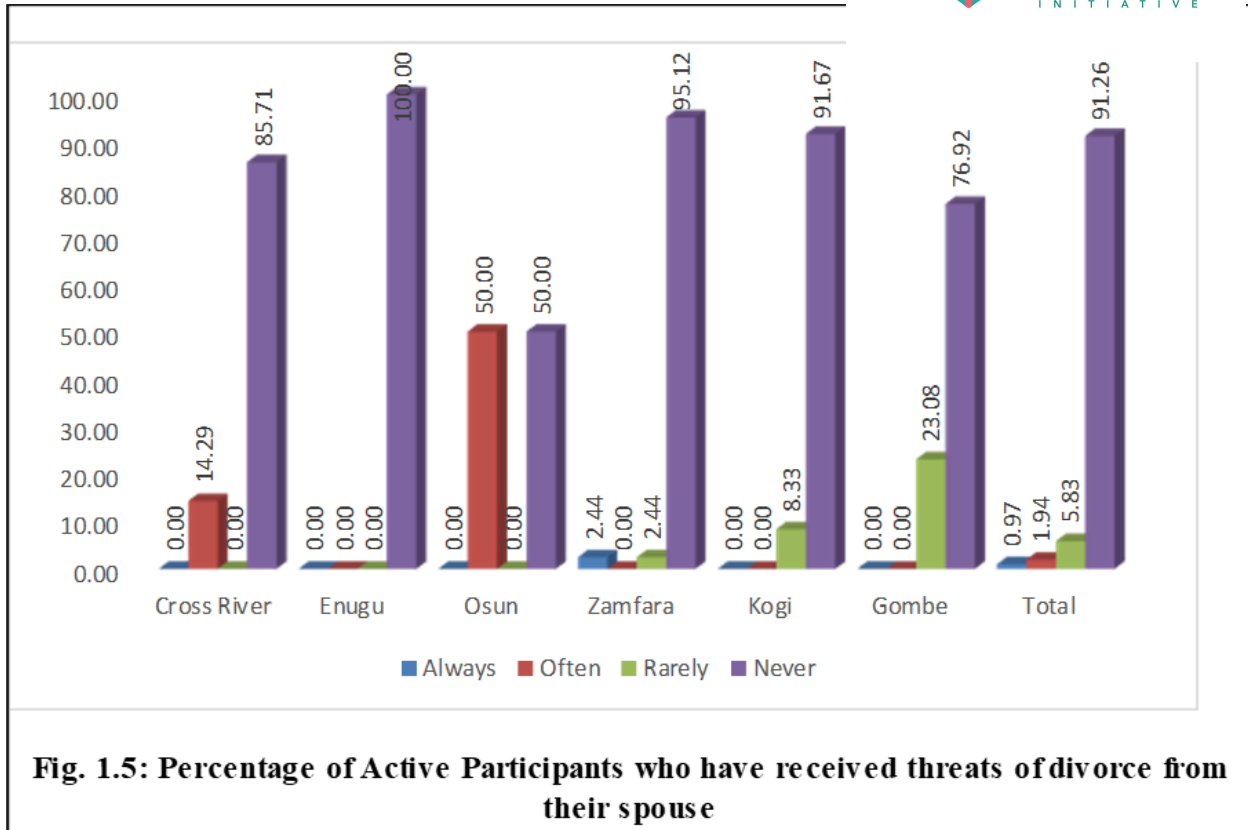
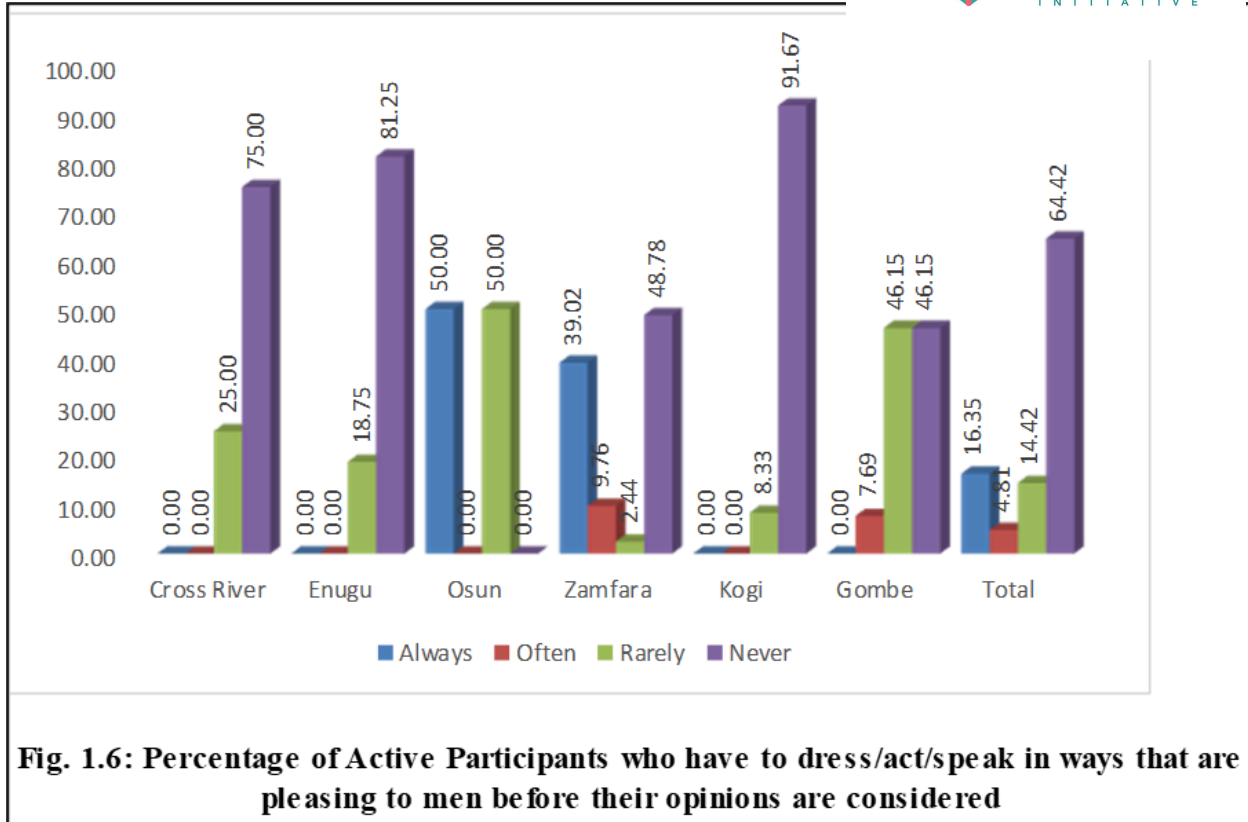


Fig. 1.4: Percentage of Active Participants who have been denied access political financial resources accessible to their male counterparts

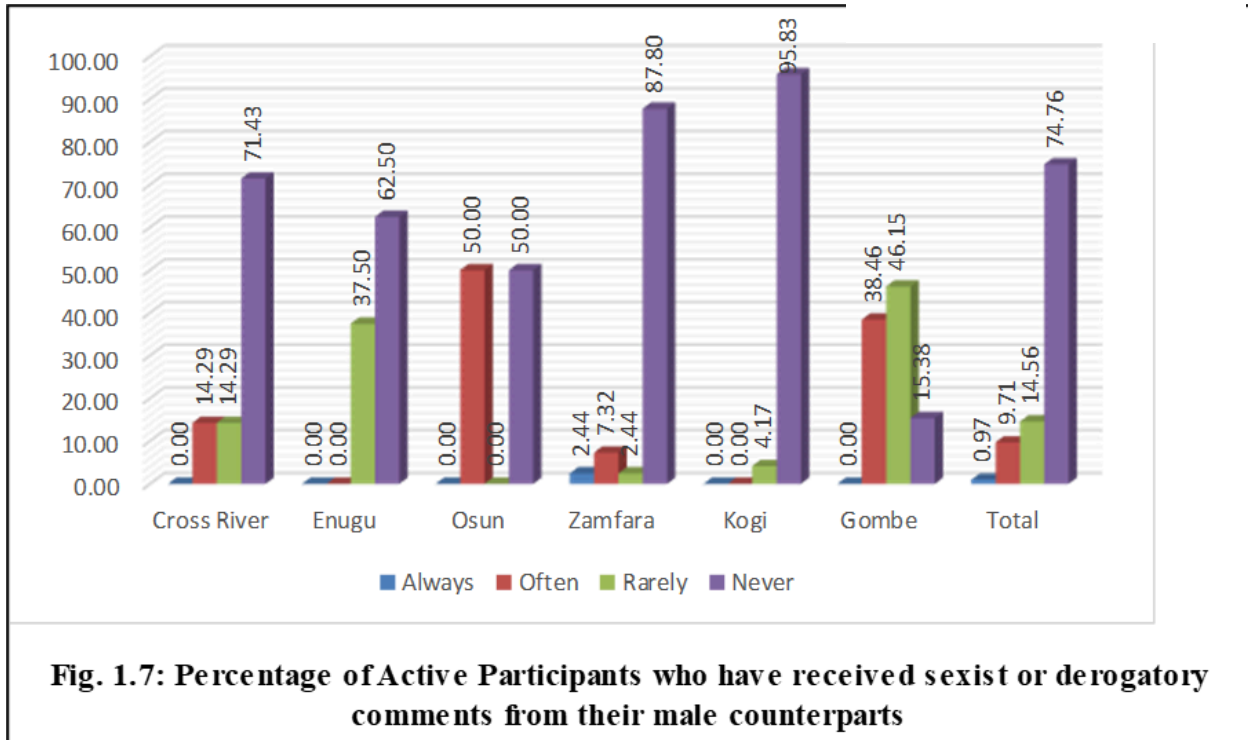
In figure 1.5, an analysis of active and direct participants in the political space who have received threats of divorce from their partners is presented. Specifically, the figure shows that while 91% of the respondents report that they have never received threats of divorce from their spouses, about 6% report that they rarely receive threats of divorce, 2% say that they often receive it and 1% of the respondents say that they always receive threats of divorce from their partners. However, the results from the individual states indicate that Osun state has the highest percentage (50% - often) of active participants who reported having threats of divorce from their spouses. This is followed by Cross River state with about 14% while 2% of the respondents from Zamfara state say that they always receive such divorce threats.



Of the respondents who identified as active and direct participants in the political space, about 36% (always – 16%; often – 5%; rarely – 14%) of them report that they have to dress, act or speak in ways that are pleasing to men before their opinions are considered, though 64% of the participants reveal that they have never had to do any of such. Results from the state-level analyses indicate that all the selected states have a significant proportion of active participants who reported having to please their male counterparts for their opinions to count. However, while all the respondents, 100% (always - 50%; rarely – 50%) in Osun state reveal that this is their case, in Kogi state, only about 8% make similar reports. In a similar fashion as Osun State, 39% of the respondents in Zamfara state say that they always have to act and dress in certain ways for their opinions to be considered. These findings are depicted in figure 1.6 below.

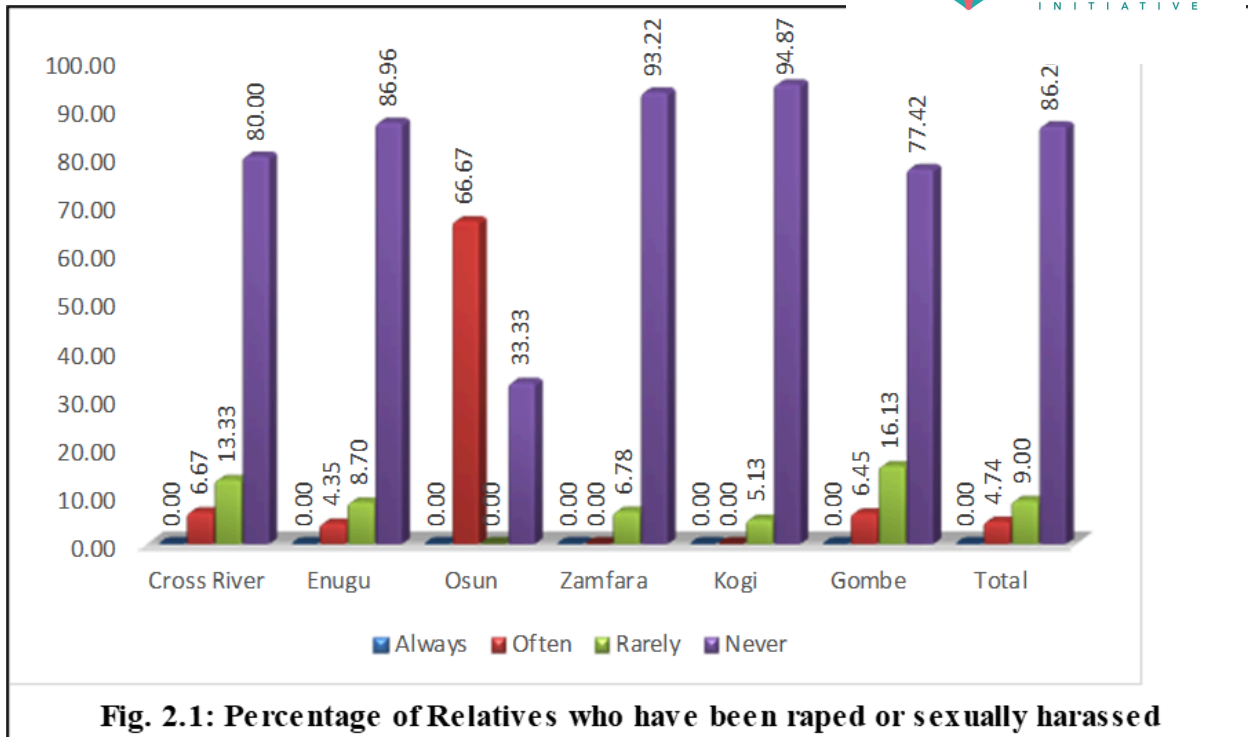


Similarly, in figure 1.7 below, of the respondents who are active participants in the political space, 25% overall (always – 1%; often – 10%; rarely – 15%) report that they have received some sexist and derogatory comments from their male counterparts with the aim of weakening their confidence level. This is however compared to about 75% who reveal that their male counterparts have never used derogatory comments on them. In Osun and Gombe states, however, 50% and 38% of the respondents say that they have received such comments from their male counterparts. These states represent the states with the highest percentage of active and direct participants in the political space who report this occurrence.

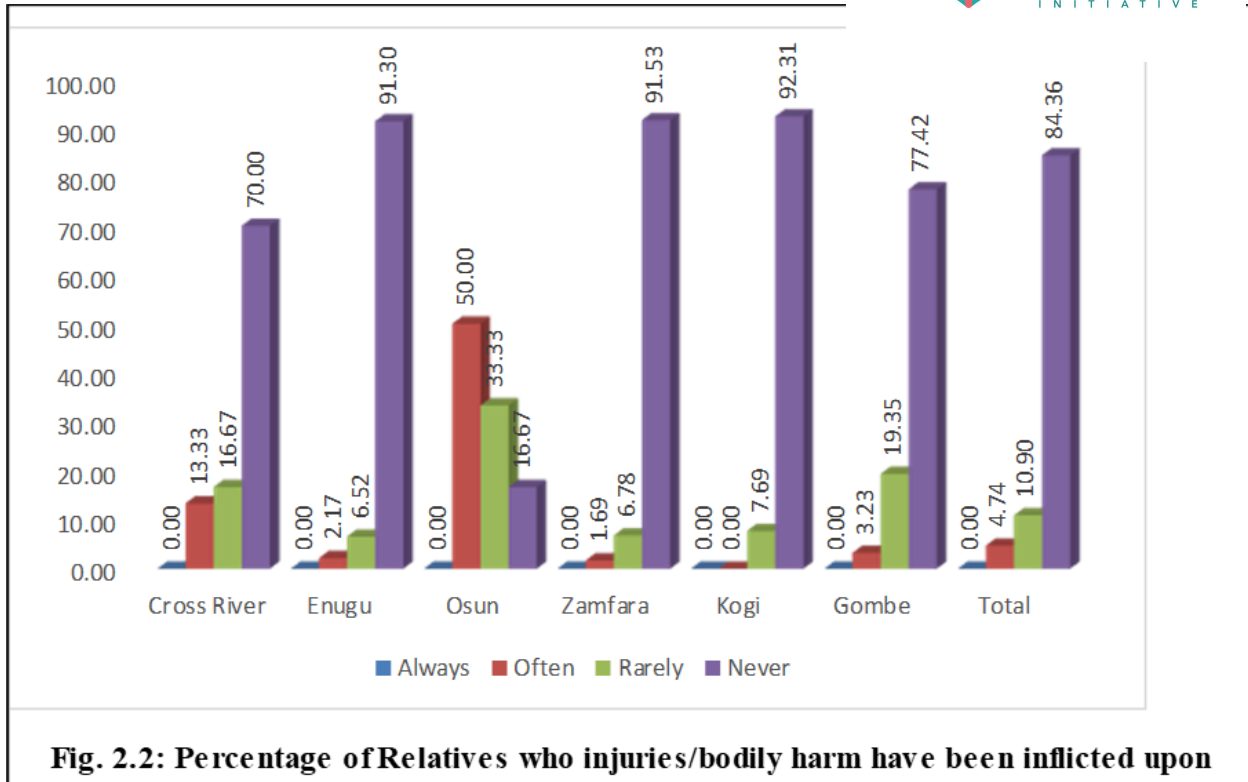


b. Wife, Daughter, Mother or Sister of a Politician

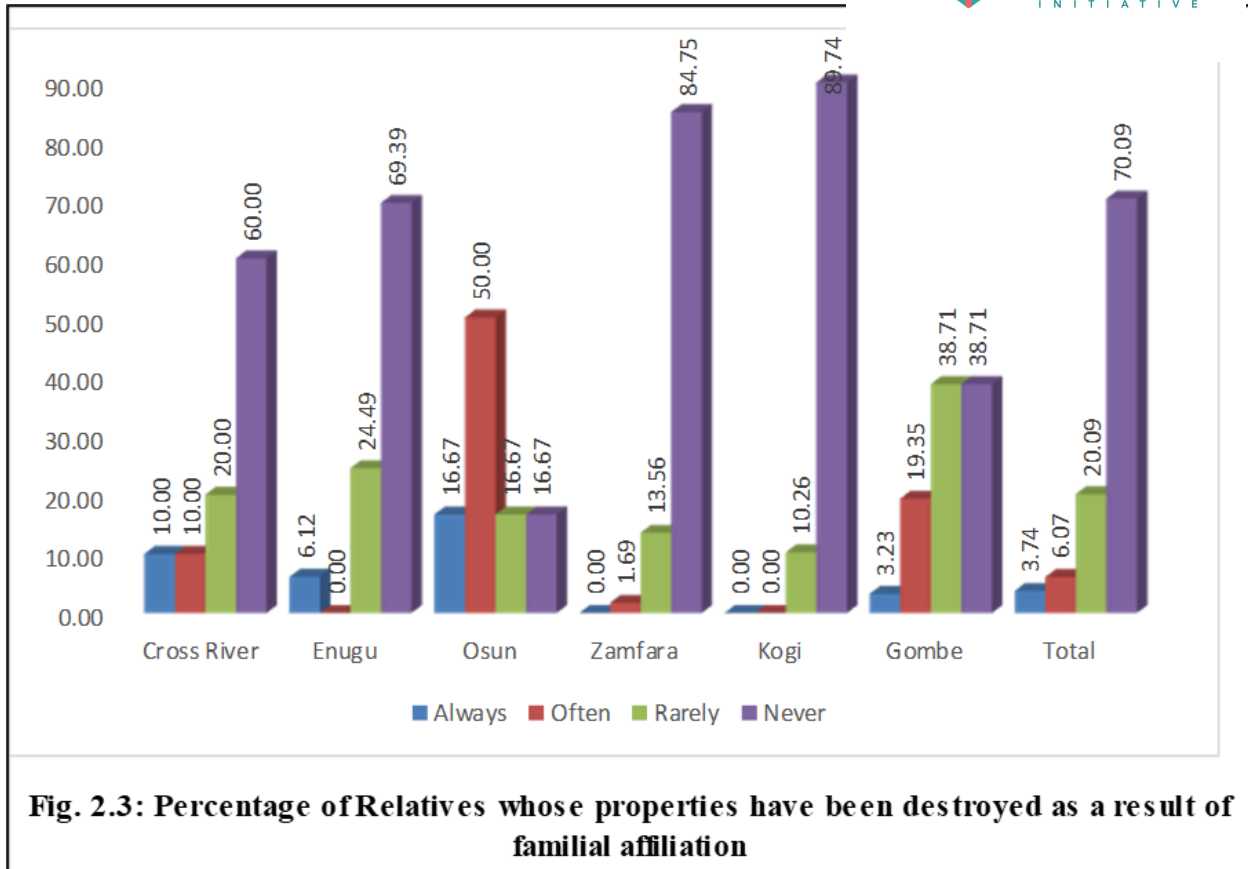
Among the respondents who identify as relative (wife/daughter/mother/sister) of a politician, 14% reveal that they have been raped or sexually abused as a result of the politician's involvement in politics, while 86% say that they have never been. Interestingly, despite the sensitive nature of the topic, about 67% of the respondents in Osun state report that they have been raped as a result of their relatives' involvement, this represents the highest percentage of respondents among all the selected states. In addition, among the selected Northern states, 23% of the respondents in Zamfara state, report that they have been raped/sexually harassed.



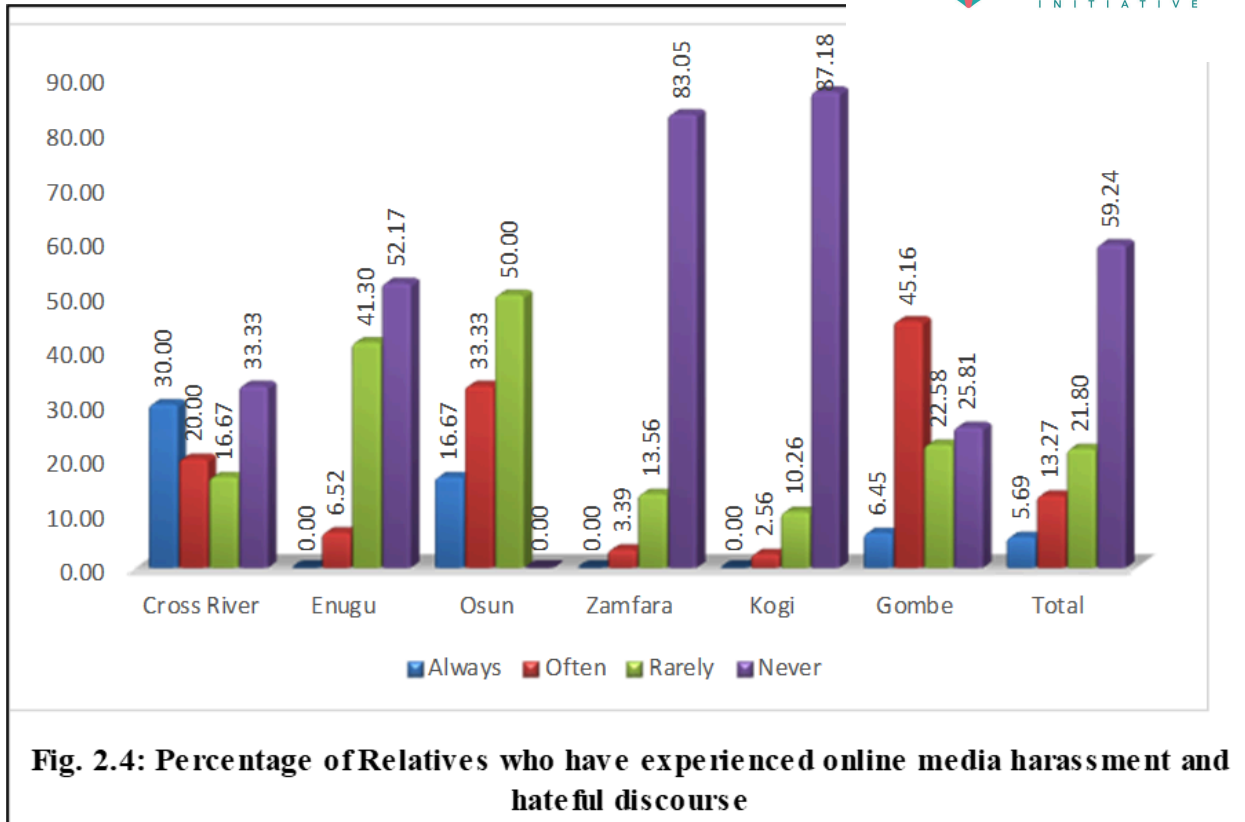
Among the respondents who are relatives of a politician, about 16% report that they have had injuries/bodily harm inflicted on them to thwart the political participation of their husband, father, son or brother, whereas 84% say they have never had such experience. Consistent with the preceding findings, the result of the analysis from figure 2.2 below further shows that a greater percentage of the respondents from Osun state (83%) report that they have had injuries/bodily harm inflicted on them as a result of their familial relationship with a politician. This represents the state with the highest percentage of women reporting such incidents. This is followed by respondents in Cross River state, where 30% reported a similar experience. In addition, among the states in the Northern part of the country, 23% of the respondents from Gombe state, which represents the highest proportion of respondents, say they have been faced with similar ordeals.



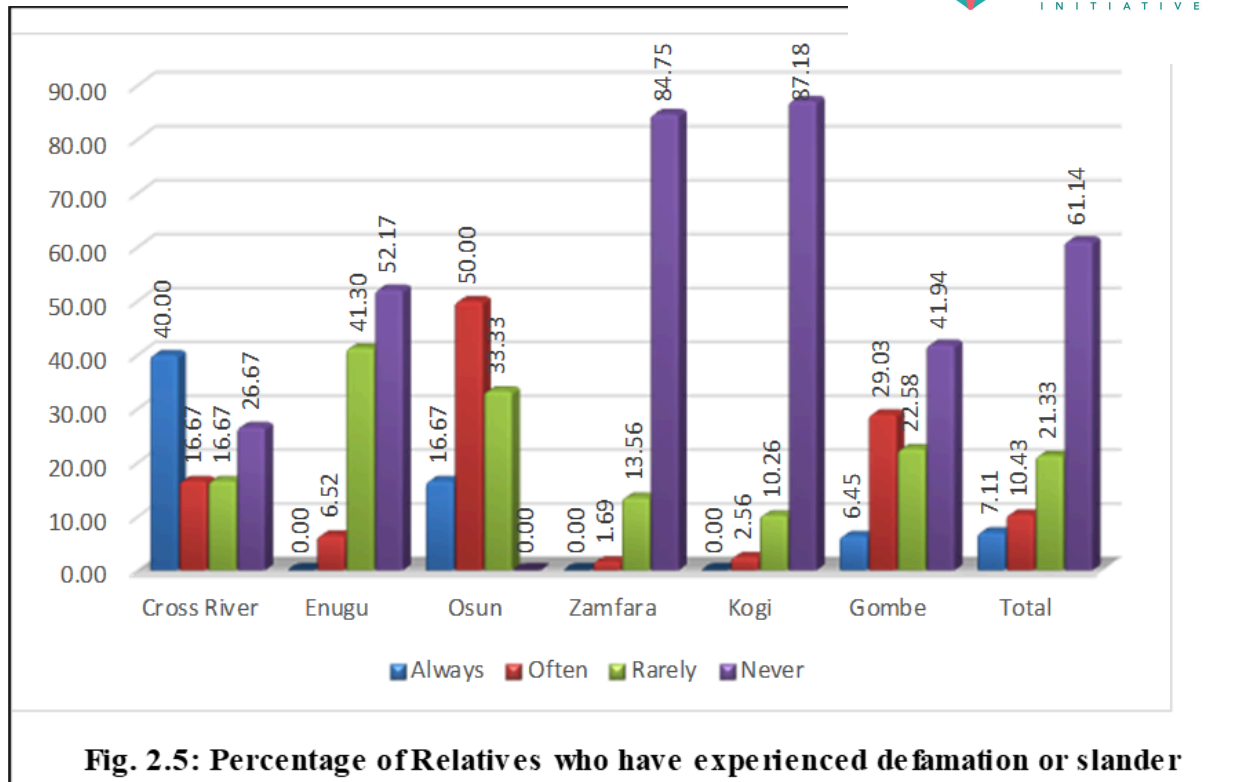
Results from figure 2.3 below reveal that about 30% of the relatives of a politician reveal that they have had their properties destroyed because of their familial relationship with a politician, while 70% say that they have never experienced that. Also, among all the selected states, Osun state has the highest percentage of respondents (83%) who report that they have had their properties destroyed due to their familial affiliation to a politician, while 40% of the respondents in Cross River report similar experiences. In the same vein, 61% of the respondents in Gombe state reveal that they have also had their properties destroyed for similar reasons, and this represents the greatest percentage of respondents with the experience among the states in the North.



Among the respondents who identify as either wives, mothers, sisters, or daughters of a politician, 41% (from figure 2.4 below) report that they have experienced online media harassment and hateful discourse targeted at them as a result of their familial relationship with a politician. The majority of the respondents from the states in the South report having such experiences, no respondent from Osun state reported not having experienced online media harassment, whether always, often or rarely, 48% of respondents from Enugu state and 67% of those from Cross-River state report a similar experience. Also, though most of the respondents from states in the North say they have experienced such incidence, a greater percentage, 74%, of the respondents are from Gombe state.



About 39% (always – 7%; often – 11%; rarely – 21%) of the relatives of a politician say that they have experienced defamation or slander in an attempt to thwart the political participation of their relative. Among the states, Osun state also had the highest percentage of respondents (100%) who reported that they have been defamed or slandered, however, in Cross River state, about 40% of the respondents, reported that they “always” face defamation or slander due to their familial relationship with a politician, 27% of the respondents say that they have never had such experience. Among the Northern states, Gombe state has the highest percentage of respondents, 58%, who report having experienced defamation due to their familial affiliation to a politician. These are represented in figure 2.5 below.



c. Political Activists

The third category of the respondents are women who identify as political activists. Figure 3.1 below presents a graphical presentation of the rape or sexual harassment experience of this group of respondents. In particular, the figure shows that while about 68% of the respondents report that they have never been raped or sexually harassed following their involvement in politics, an alarming 32% report that they always, often or rarely experience rape or sexual harassment. Moreover, figures from the selected states show that all the respondents (100%) in Enugu they state said that they have been raped or sexually harassed (often) due to their involvement in politics, while 55% of those in Osun state report that similar experience, either always (11%) or often (44%). In the North, most of the respondents report that, though they have had such experience, it is quite rare, 100% in Gombe state, 25% in Zamfara state and 21% in Kogi state.

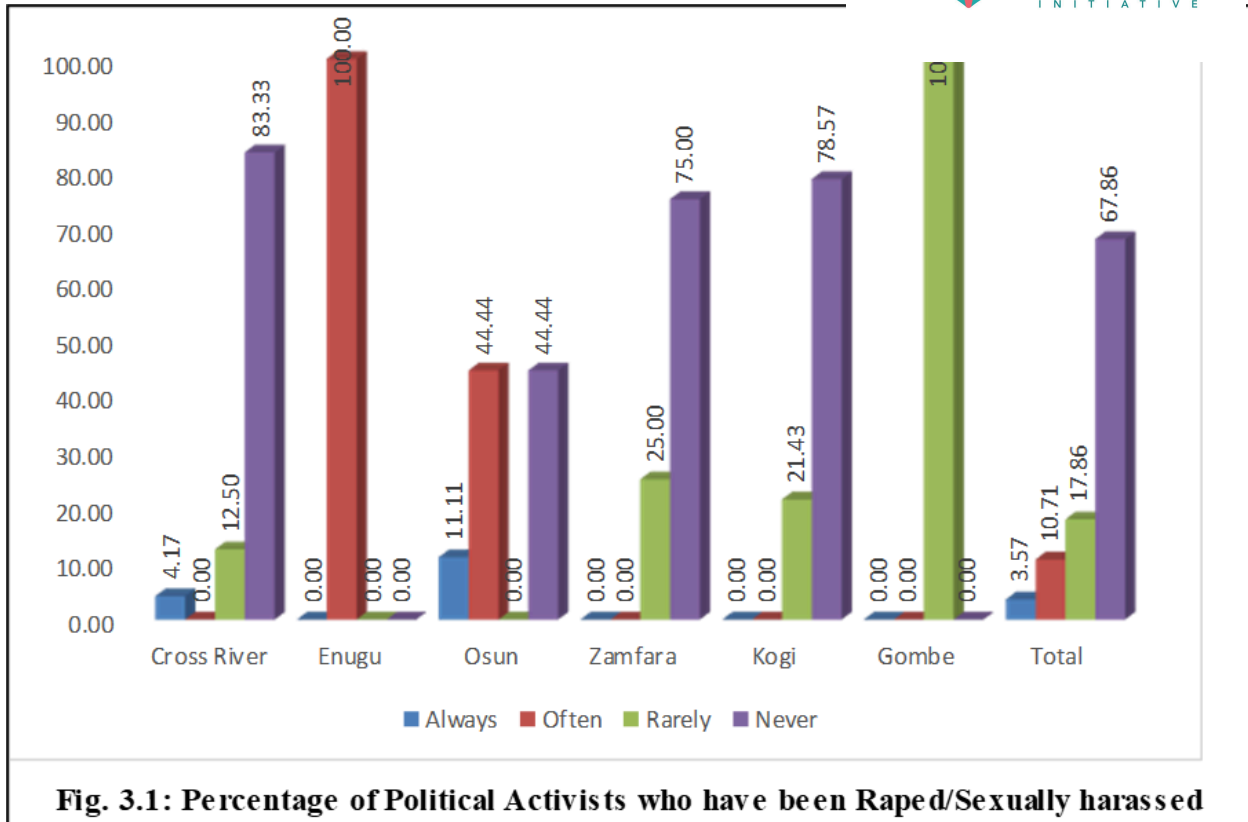
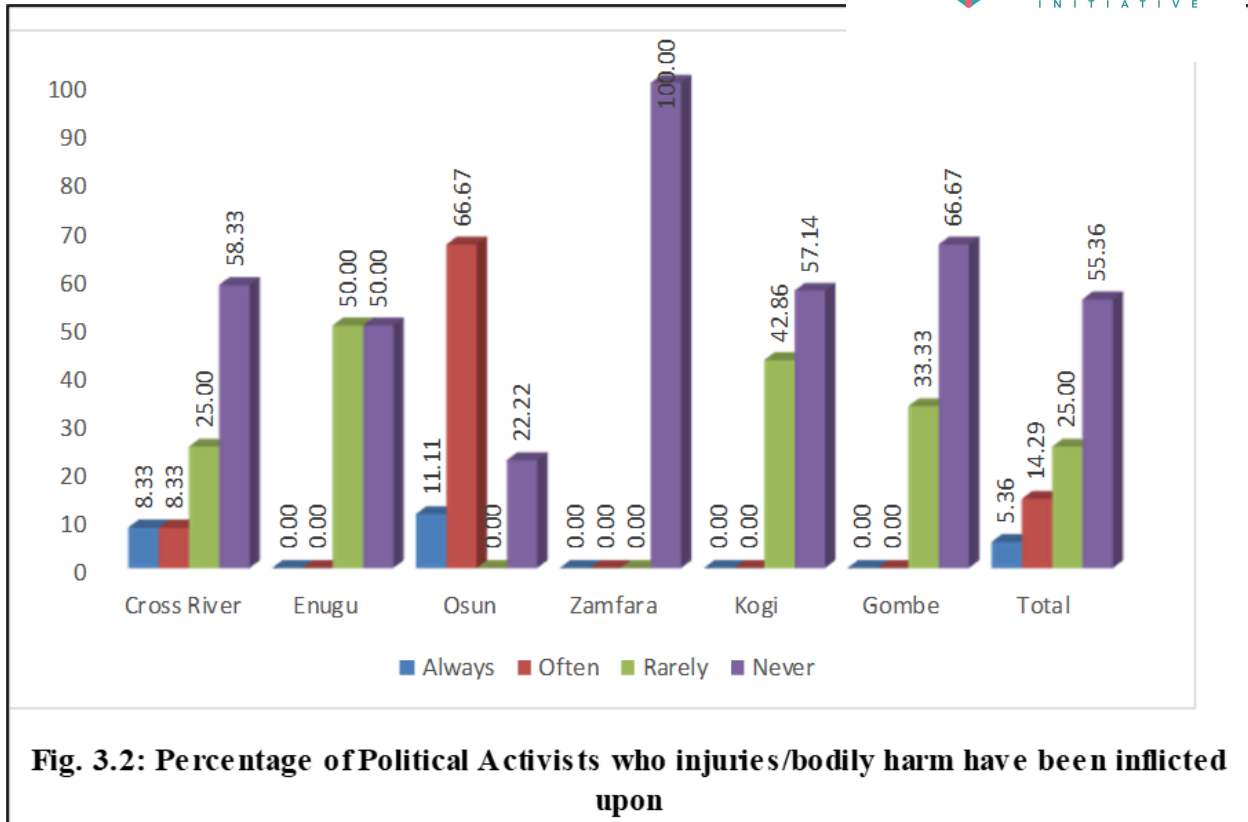
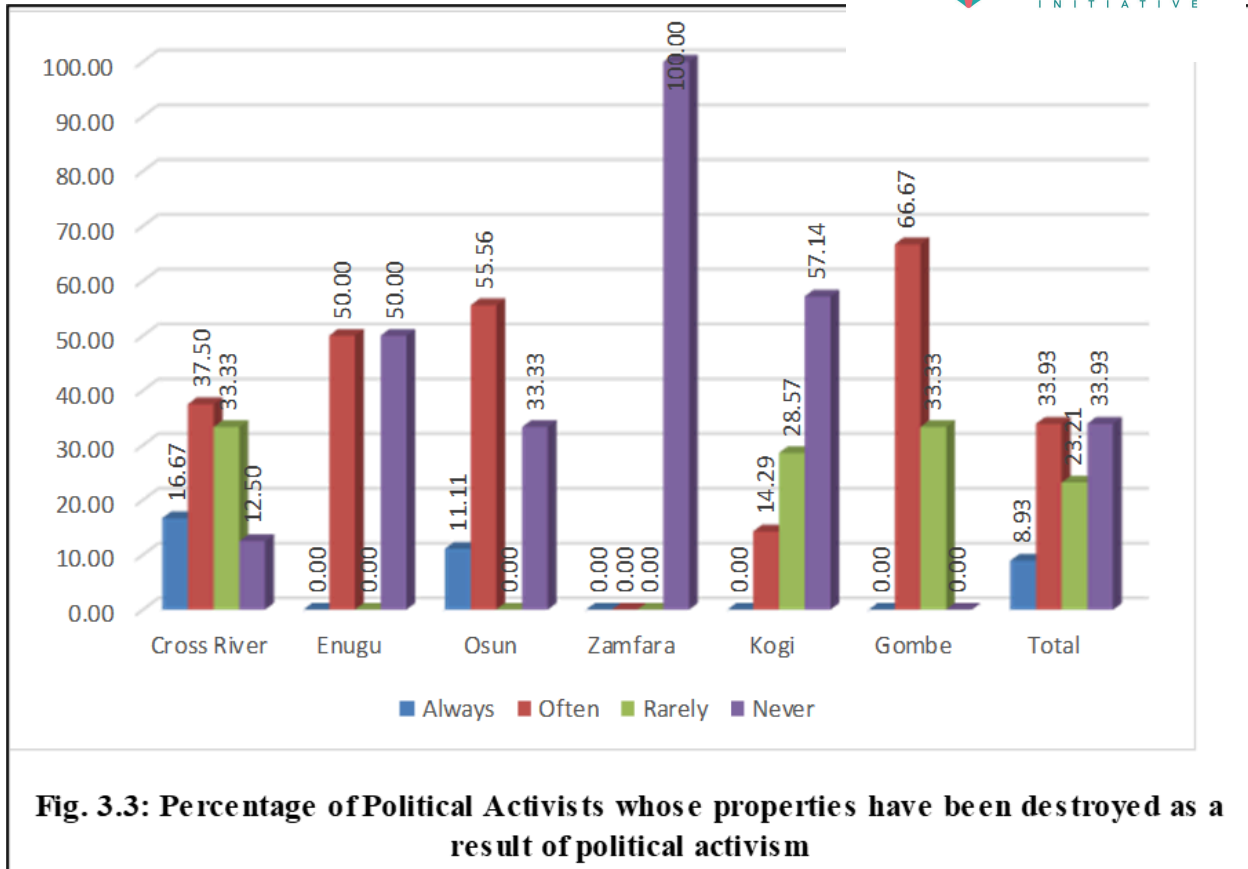


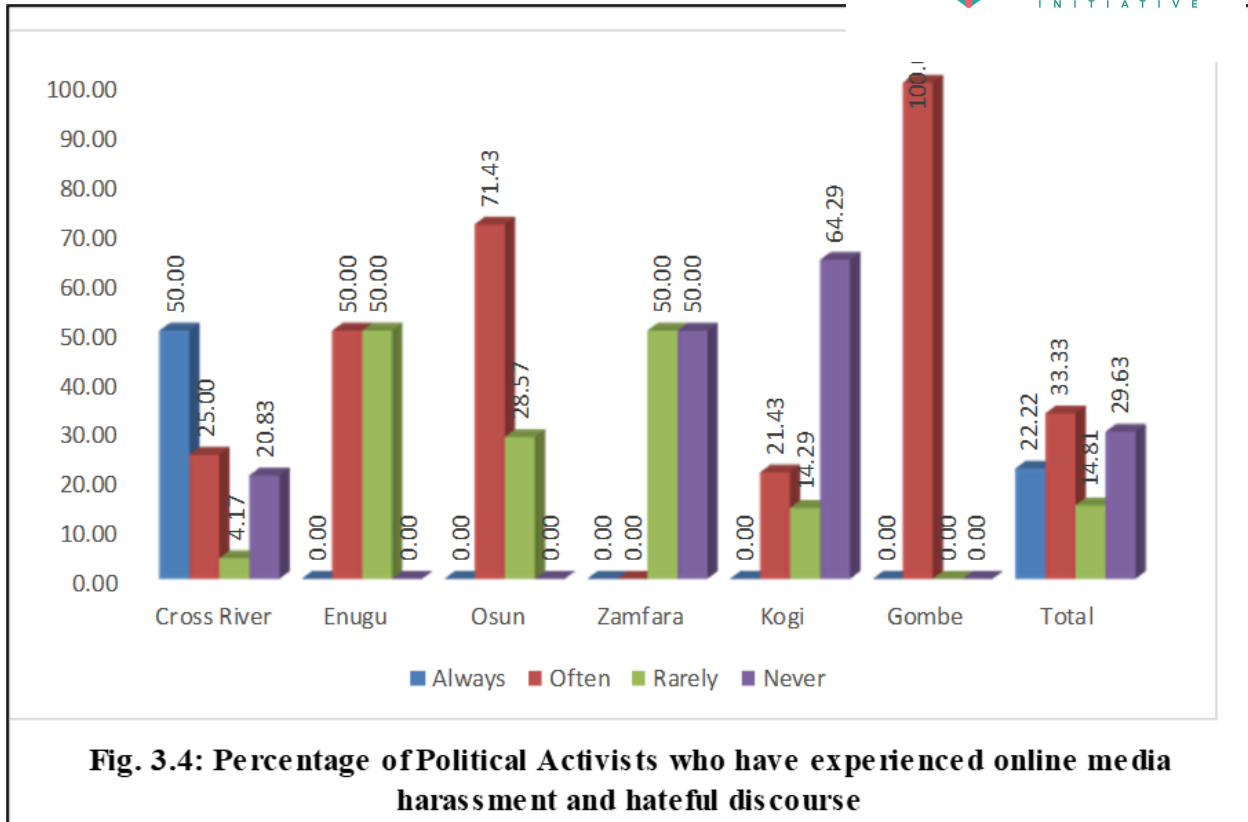
Figure 3.2 below shows that 45% of the respondents who are political activists reveal that they have suffered injuries and bodily harm in a bid to suppress their political vocality. Moreover, among the selected states, Osun state has the highest percentage (78%) of political activists who report that they have been raped or sexually harassed while in the North, 43% of the respondents in Kogi state report that they rarely have such experience of rape or sexual harassment.



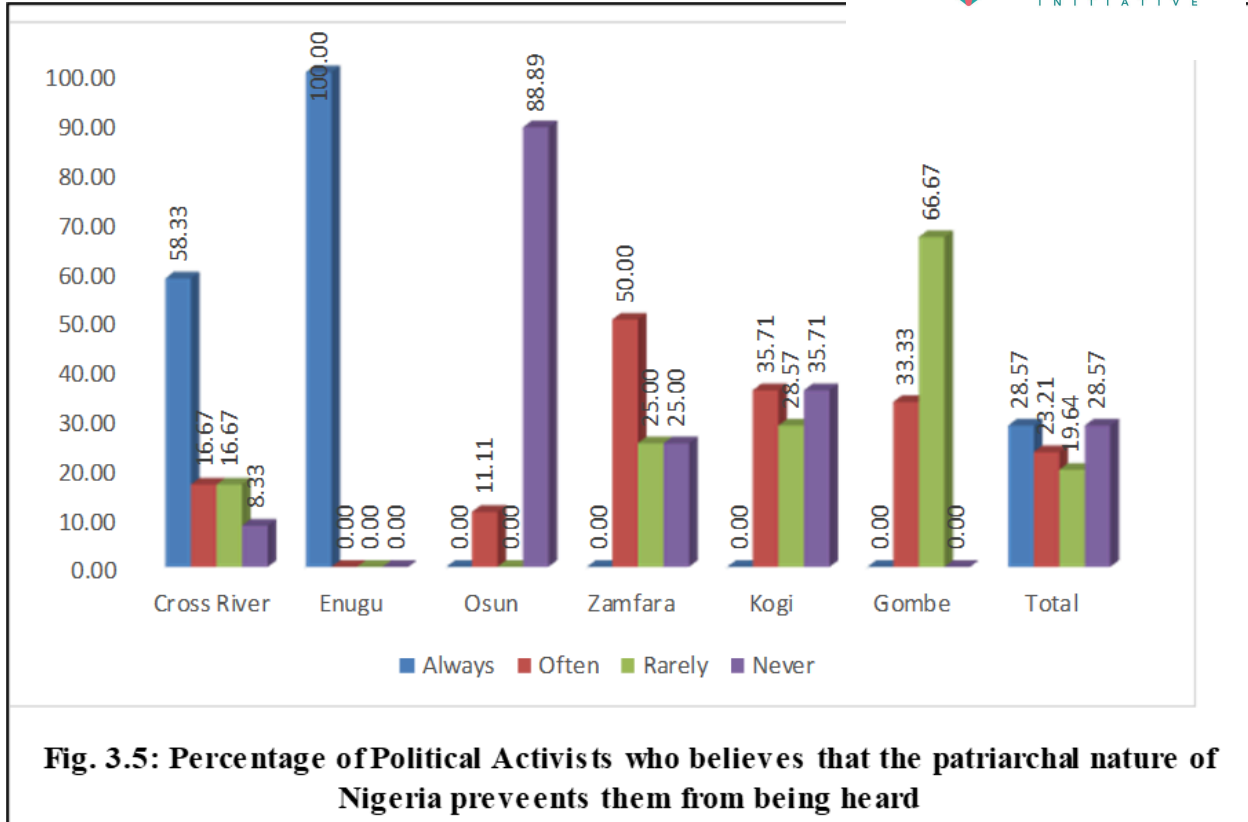
In figure 3.3 below, the result shows that 66% of the respondents who are political activists have had their properties destroyed resulting from political activism, while 34% say that they have never had their properties destroyed. In particular, the result from the state-level analysis indicates that about 88% of the respondents from Cross-River state (the highest proportion among the selected states) report that they have had their properties destroyed, out of which 17% of them say that this always happens. This is similar to respondents in Osun state where 67% of them report having similar experience due to their political activism. This is however not so different for states in the north as 100% of all the respondents in Gombe state say that they have also had their properties destroyed while 43% in Kogi report a similar experience.



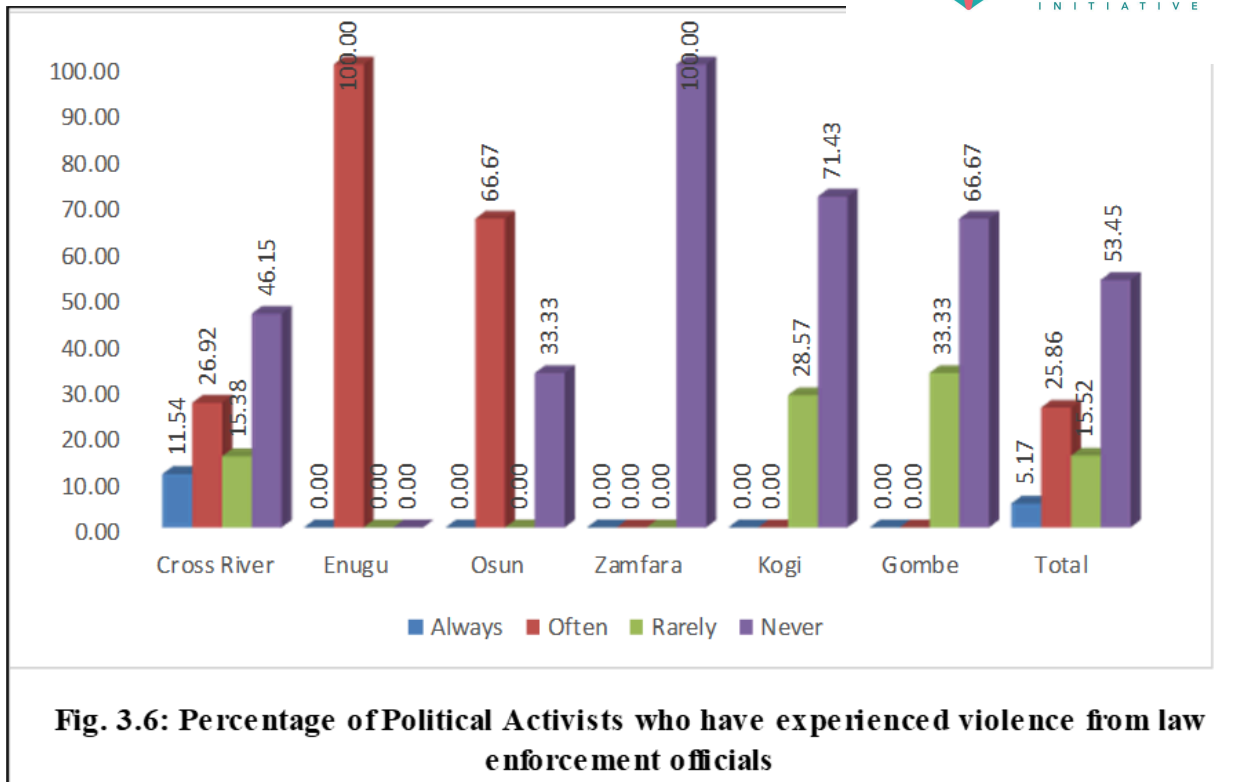
Online media harassment and hateful discourse is another challenge faced by women in the political space. For women who are political activists, figure 3.4 shows that 70% of the respondents report that they have experienced online media harassment and hateful discourse targeted at their participation in politics, whereas 30% of the respondents say that they have never experienced any form of online harassment. Specifically, among the selected states, 100% of the respondents in Gombe state report that this is often their experience, while 50% of the respondents in Cross River state say that they always have such experience. Interestingly, this challenge appears to be quite predominant among all the respondents across all the states, both in the north and southern part of the country, as in some of the states, Enugu, Osun, and Gombe states, none of the respondents reported that they have never encountered online media harassment following their involvement in politics.



Among the political activists, 71%, report that the patriarchal nature of Nigeria prevents them from being heard. The result is quite worrisome as 100% of the respondents in Enugu state and about 58% of those in Cross-River state reveal that patriarchy is a major constraint and a key contributor to their voicelessness in the Nigeria political space. In the North also, 75% of the respondents make the same claim, whereas surprisingly, only 11% of the respondents in Osun state agree with this claim. These results are depicted in figure 3.5 below.

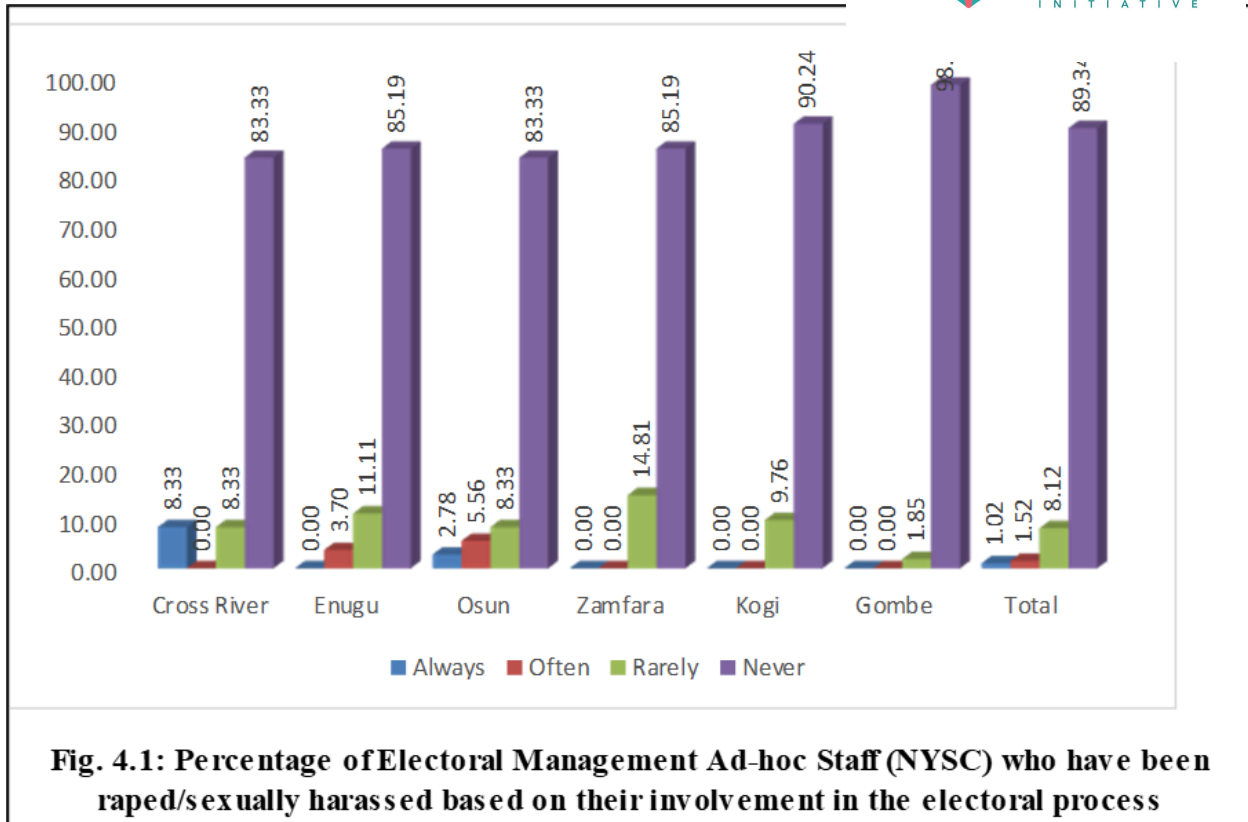


Furthermore, about 47% of the respondents in this study reveal that violence has been perpetrated against them by law enforcement officials based on their political affiliation. This is predominantly the case in Enugu state, as 100% of the respondents in the state report that they often have experienced violence from law enforcement officials. In contrast, figure 3.6 shows that all the respondents, 100%, in Zamfara state report that they have never suffered any form of violence from law enforcement officials.

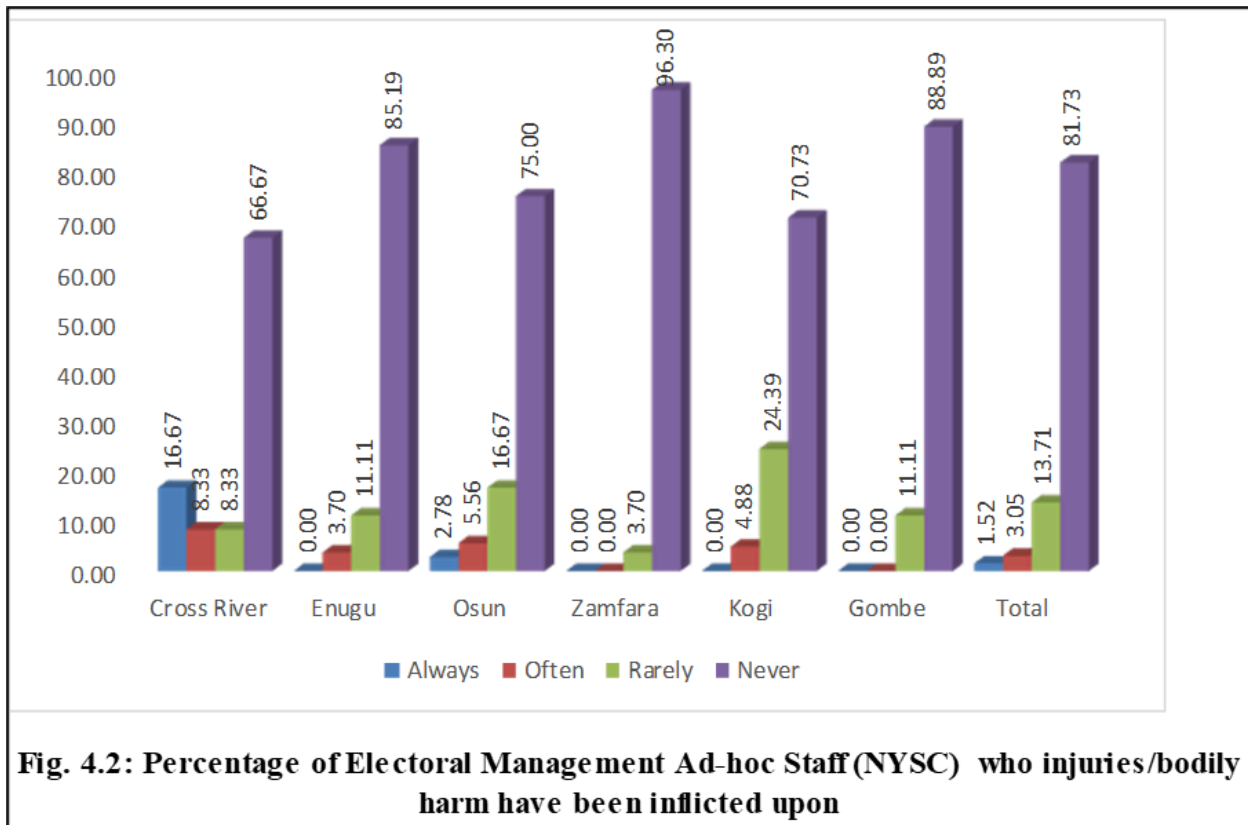


d. Electoral Management ad-hoc Staff - National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Members

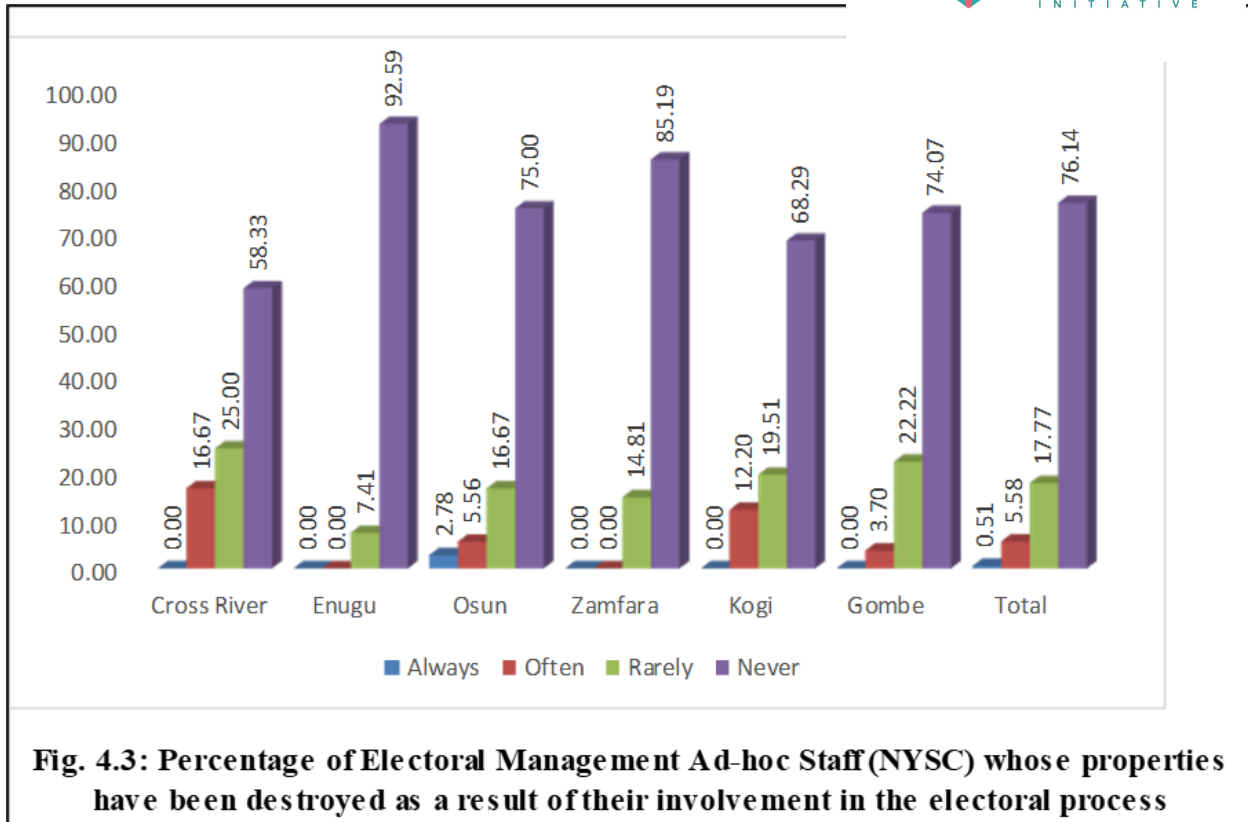
Among the respondents for this study who identify as electoral ad-hoc staff, particularly the Corp (NYSC) members, about 11% of them report that they have either been raped or sexually harassed based on their involvement in the electoral process. However, among the selected states, 8% and 3% of the respondents in Cross-River and Osun states, respectively say that this is “always” the case for them. In the Northern states, most of the respondents (15% in Zamfara state, 10% in Kogi and 2% in Gombe state) report that they rarely have such experiences.



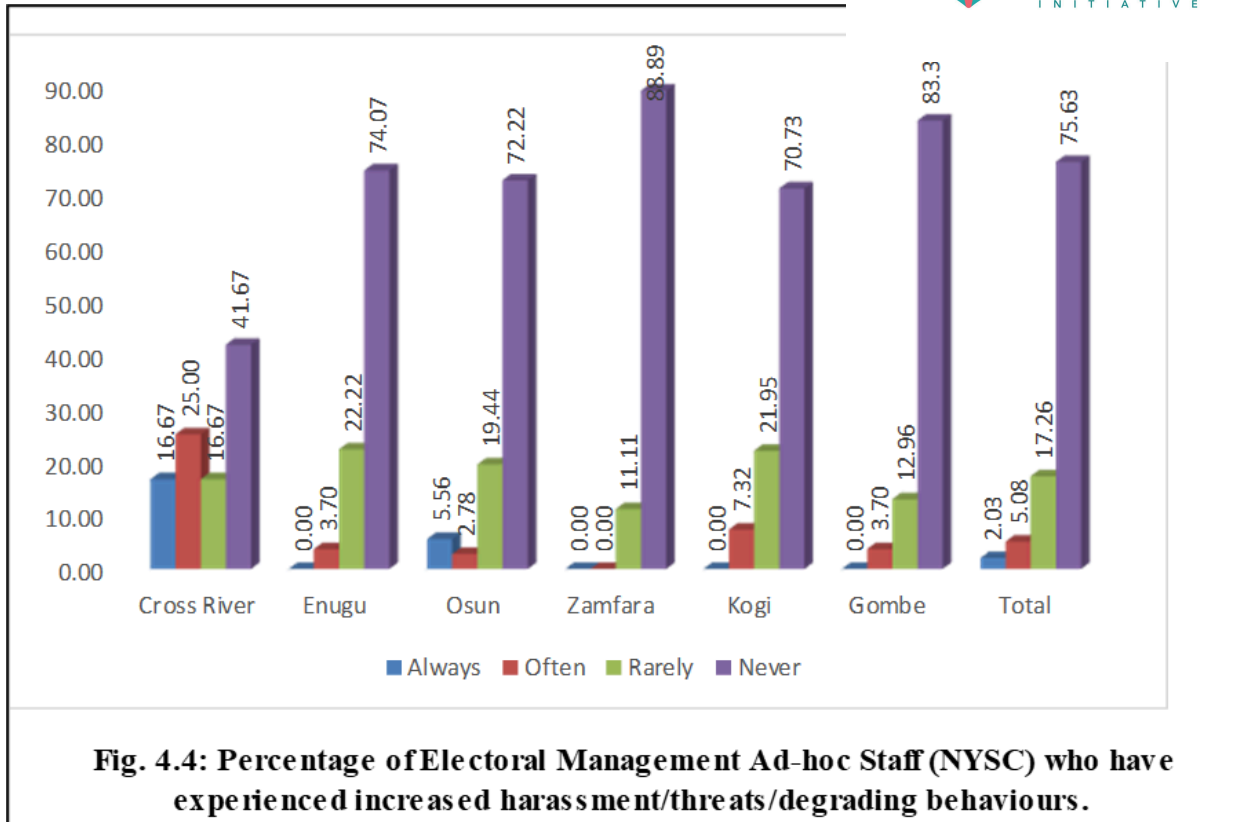
From figure 4.2, 18% of the respondents who are Corp members report that they had suffered injuries/physical harm inflicted on them as a strategy to jeopardise their effective management of the electoral process. It is noteworthy that many of the respondents with this experience are in Cross-River state with about 33% of the respondents in this state reporting that injuries and bodily harm have been inflicted on them as a result of their involvement in the electoral process. In the Northern states, however, most of the Corp members say that they rarely face such occurrences.



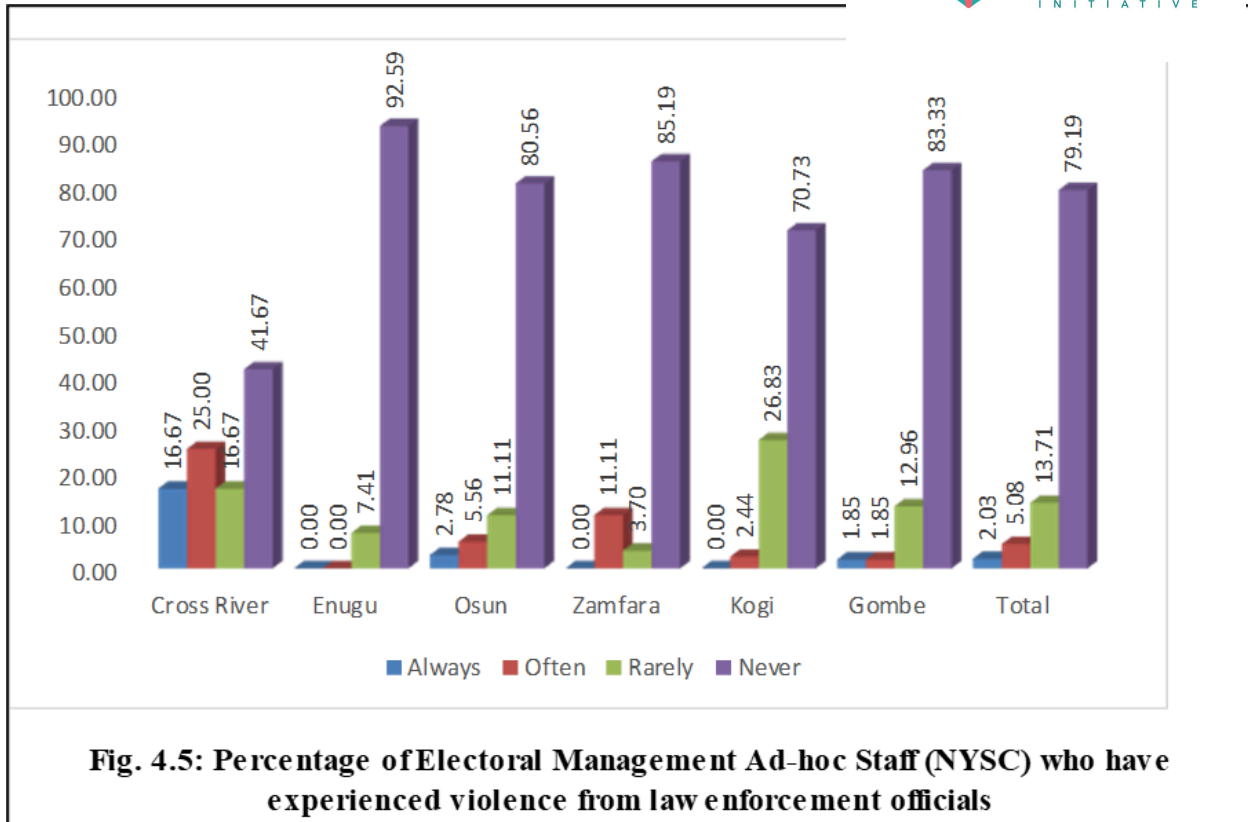
About 24% of the Corp members who have worked as an electoral management ad-hoc staff report that they have had their properties destroyed based on their involvement in the electoral process, while 66% of them report otherwise. Among the selected states, Cross River state has the highest percentage (42%) of Corp members who report this finding. In the North, Kogi state has the highest percentage of respondents who report having experienced the destruction of their properties. This is depicted in figure 4.3 below.



Among the selected states, figure 4.4 shows that Cross-River state has the highest percentage of respondents (58%) who report that they experienced increased harassment, threats and other abusing and degrading behaviours than their male counterparts. About 6% of the respondents in Osun state say that this is always the case, while 19% report that it rarely happens to them. Overall, from figure 4.4, 24% of the respondents who are Corp members and have worked as electoral management ad-hoc staff, report that they have suffered a relatively higher rate of harassment and other degrading behaviours than their male counterparts, whereas 66% report otherwise.

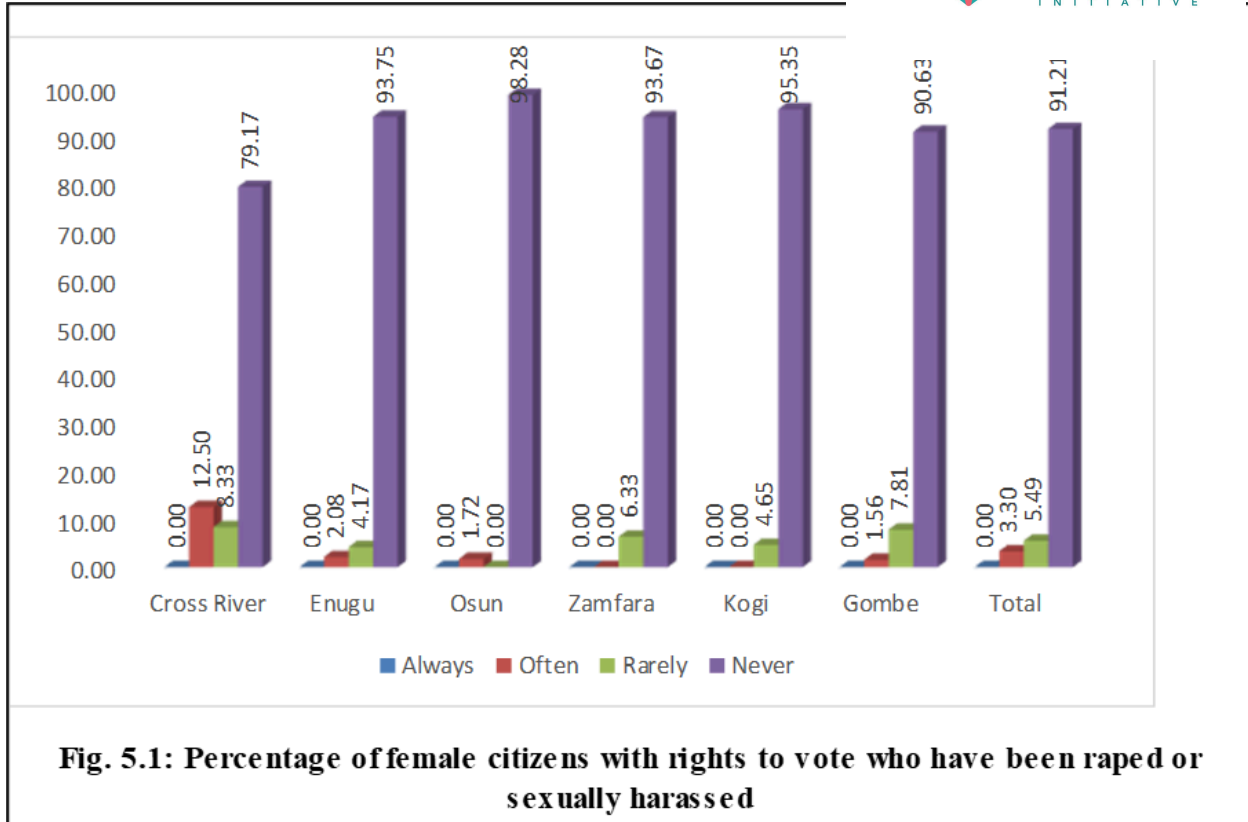


About 21% of the Corps members reveal that violence has been perpetrated against them by law enforcement officials as a result of their affiliations with management electoral agencies. Also, figure 4.5 below shows that Cross River State has the highest percentage of Corps members who report this experience, particularly, while about 17% of the respondents from Cross River say that they “always” experienced violence from law enforcement officials, 25% report that they “often” experience it while 17% say that it rarely happens to them. In the North, respondents from Kogi state represent the highest percentage of Corps members who report the incidence of violence from law enforcement officials.

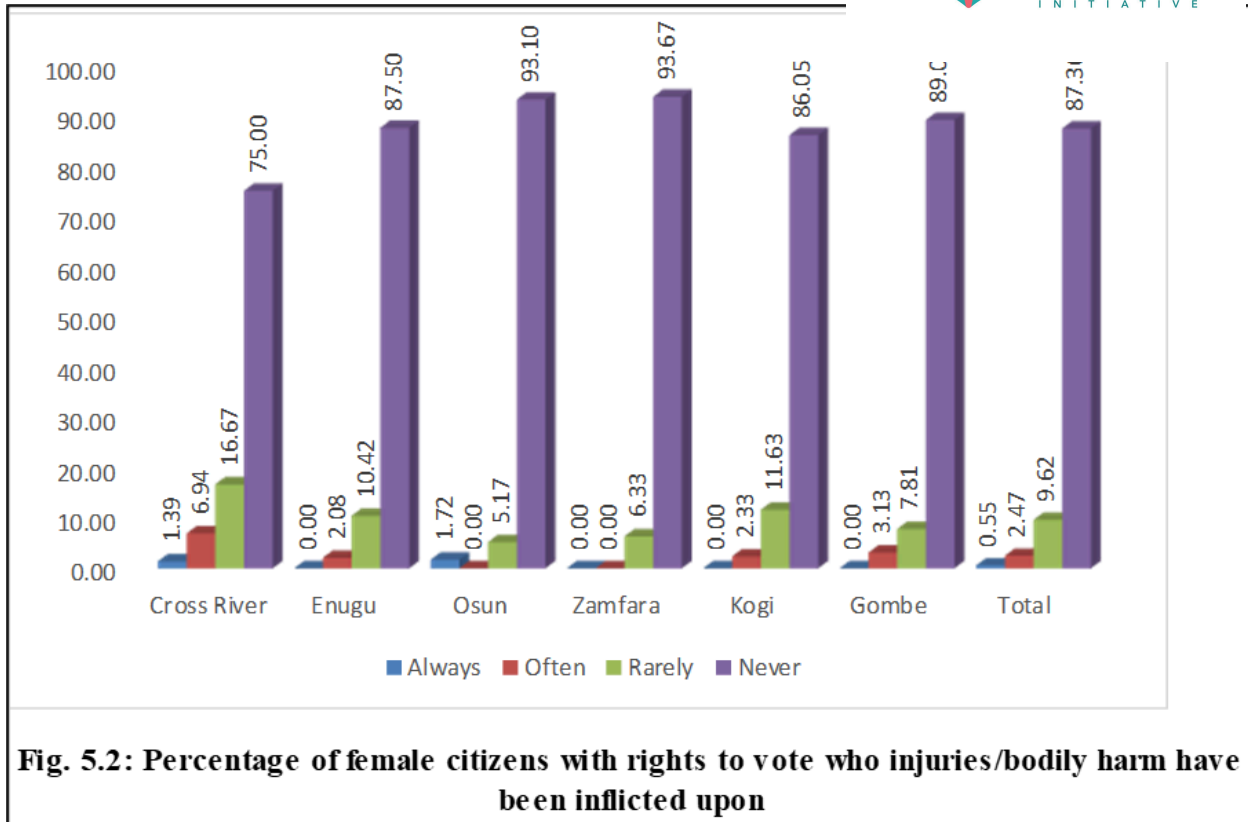


e. Female citizens with the right to vote

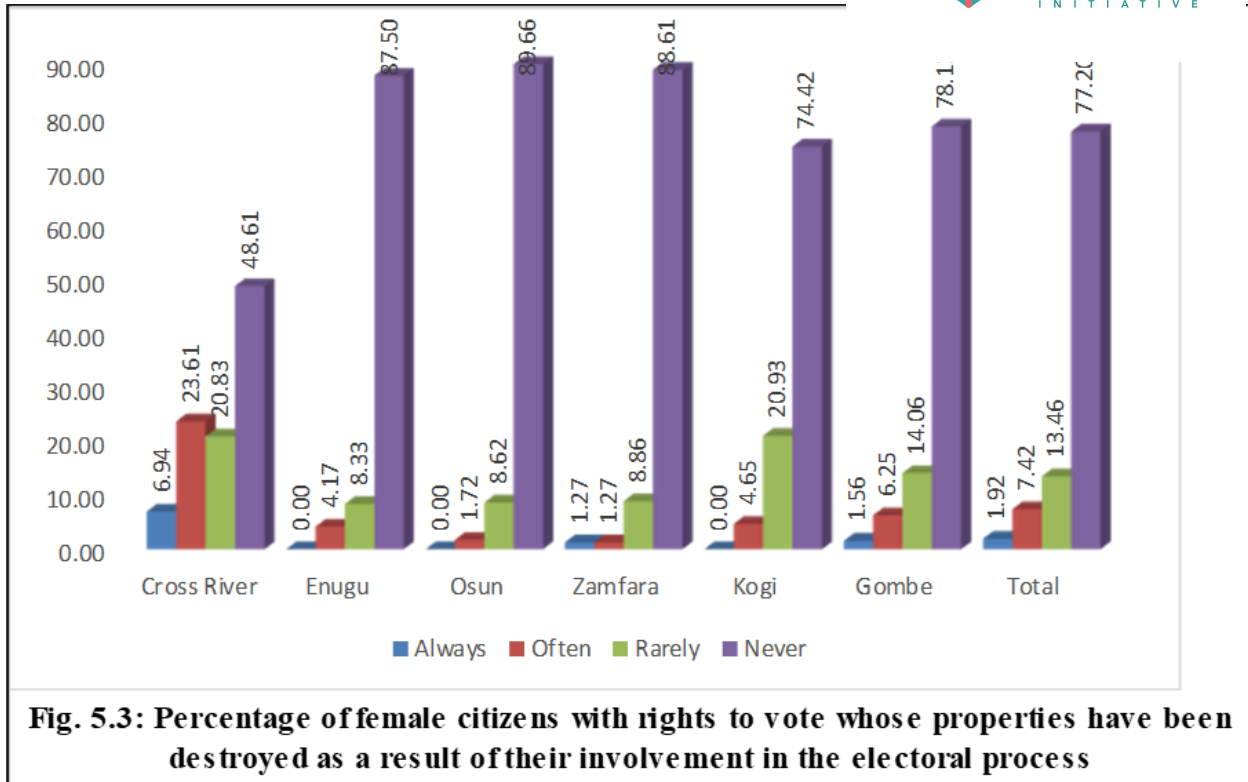
Figure 5.1 below shows that about 9% of the respondents who identify as female citizens with the right to vote report that they have been raped or sexually harassed due to their involvement in the electoral process. The figure however shows that the incidence of rape and sexual harassment is predominant among respondents in Cross-River state as about 21% of the respondents report the same. In the North, however, most of the female citizens report that they rarely experience rape or sexual harassment due to their involvement in the electoral process.



About 13% of the female citizens with the right to vote report that they have suffered injuries/bodily harm due to their involvement in their electoral process. However, figure 5.2 shows that most of the respondents who report having suffered injuries and bodily harm are from Cross River, where about 25% report this occurrence and in the North, about 14% of the respondents report a similar experience. Overall, 87% of all the respondents who are female citizens say that injuries have never been inflicted on them due to their involvement in the electoral process.



Of all the female citizens with the right to vote, 23% report that they have had their properties destroyed resulting from their involvement in the electoral process. This is particularly the case for respondents in Cross River state, where about 51% report that their properties have been destroyed (always – 7%; often – 24%; rarely – 21%). Similarly, up to 26% and 22% of the respondents in Kogi and Gombe states, respectively, report having the same occurrence. This is depicted in figure 5.3 below.



In figure 5.4 below, 28% of the respondents who identify as female citizens with a right to vote report that they experience increased harassment, threats as well as other abusing and degrading behaviours than their male counterparts due to their involvement in the electoral process. The majority of the respondents who report this are from Cross River state, where about 56% of the respondents in this state say that they have had the same experience, while 44% of them say that they have never had such. On the other hand, about 27% of the respondents in Gombe state also make the same report. This represents the highest percentage of respondents with such experience in the North.

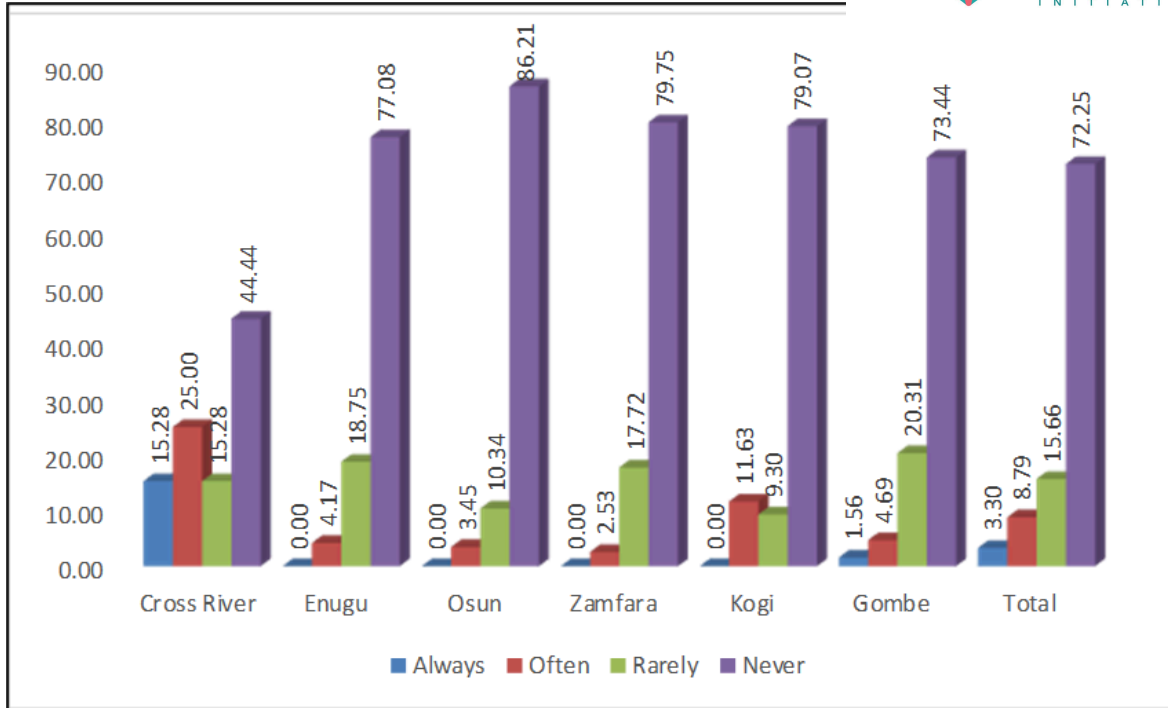
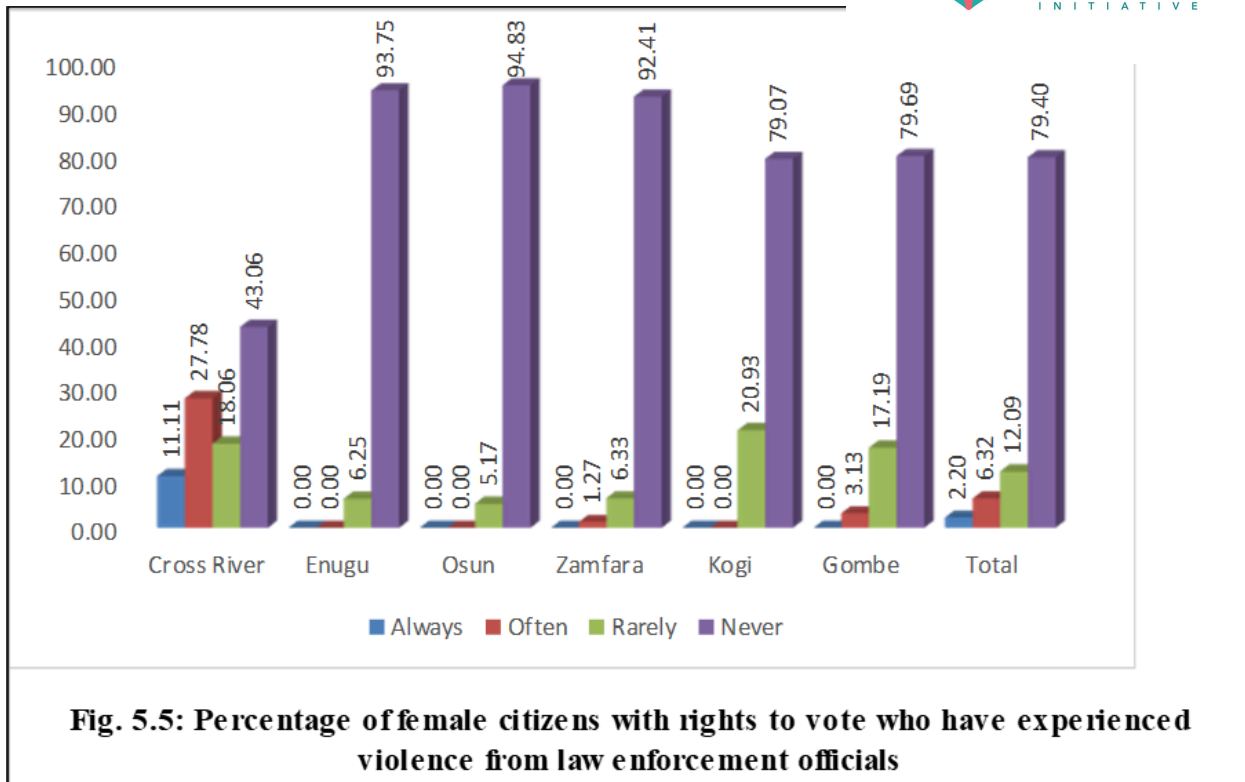


Fig. 5.4: Percentage of female citizens with rights to vote who have experienced increased harassment/threats/degrading behaviours

Among the female citizens with the right to vote, about 21%, reveal that law enforcement officials have perpetrated violence against them based on their involvement with INEC. However, while this is predominant among respondents from the South, specifically, Cross River state, with about 57% of the respondents, 21% of those in Kogi state say that they rarely experience violence from law enforcement officials.



B. General Questions

The respondents in this study expressed their thoughts about some general questions, these are in turn discussed in this section. Figure 6.1 displays the opinion of the respondents about the appointment of Nigerian women only to “soft-tissue” portfolios and excluded from top political positions. While about 50% of the respondents “strongly agree” with this, about 31% “agree”, 12% of the respondents disagree with the statement and about 7% say that they strongly disagree. However, the majority of the respondents who reported that they strongly agreed with this statement are those from Cross River state, with about 85% of them, while 17% of the respondents from Kogi state strongly disagreed with the statement, which is the highest percentage among the selected states.

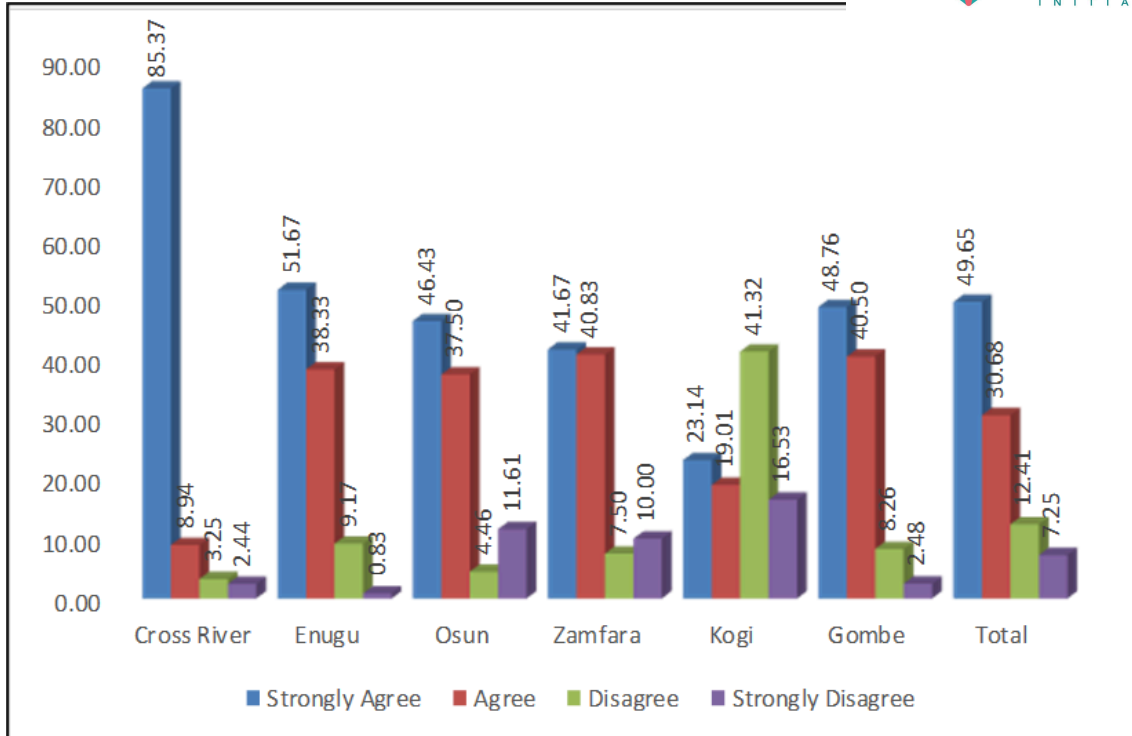
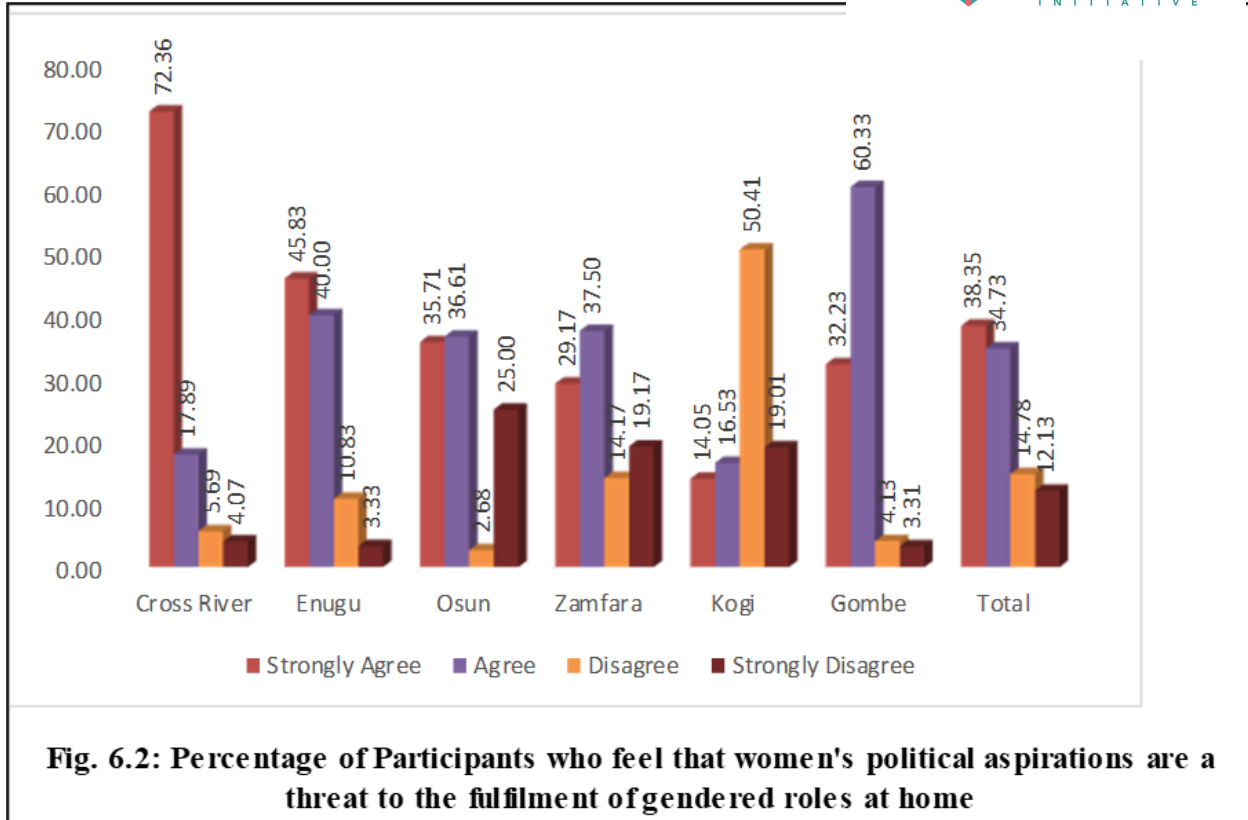


Fig. 6.1: Percentage of Participants who feel that women are only appointed to "soft-issue" portfolios

Also, when asked about their opinion on women's political aspirations being considered a threat to the fulfilment of gendered roles at home, up to 38% of the respondents (from figure 6.2) reveal that they strongly agree with the statement, and 35% say they agree, while 15% and 12% report that they disagree and strongly disagree, respectively. In particular, 72% of those who strongly agreed with the statement are from Cross River state while 50% of those who disagreed are from Kogi state.



Regarding the time of occurrence of specific types of violence against women, while about 28% (from figure 6.3) of the respondents report that it occurs/emerges before elections, 11% say that it is on the day of the election and about 8% of them say it occurs mostly after the election. However, a greater percentage of the participants (52%) report that violence against women emerges across the timeline of the election, that is, both prior, on and after the election day (all of the above). Interestingly, across the selected states, in both the North and the South, a majority of the respondents say that violence emerges across the different periods of the election (all of the above).

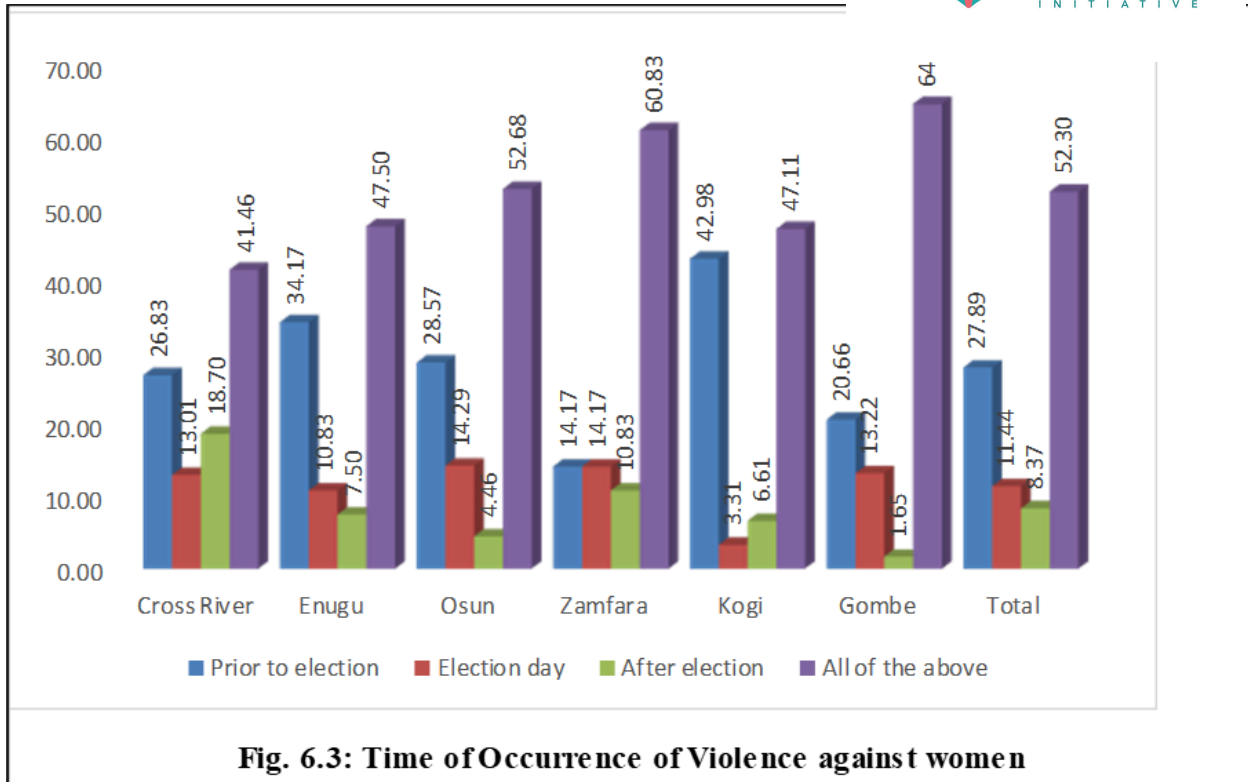
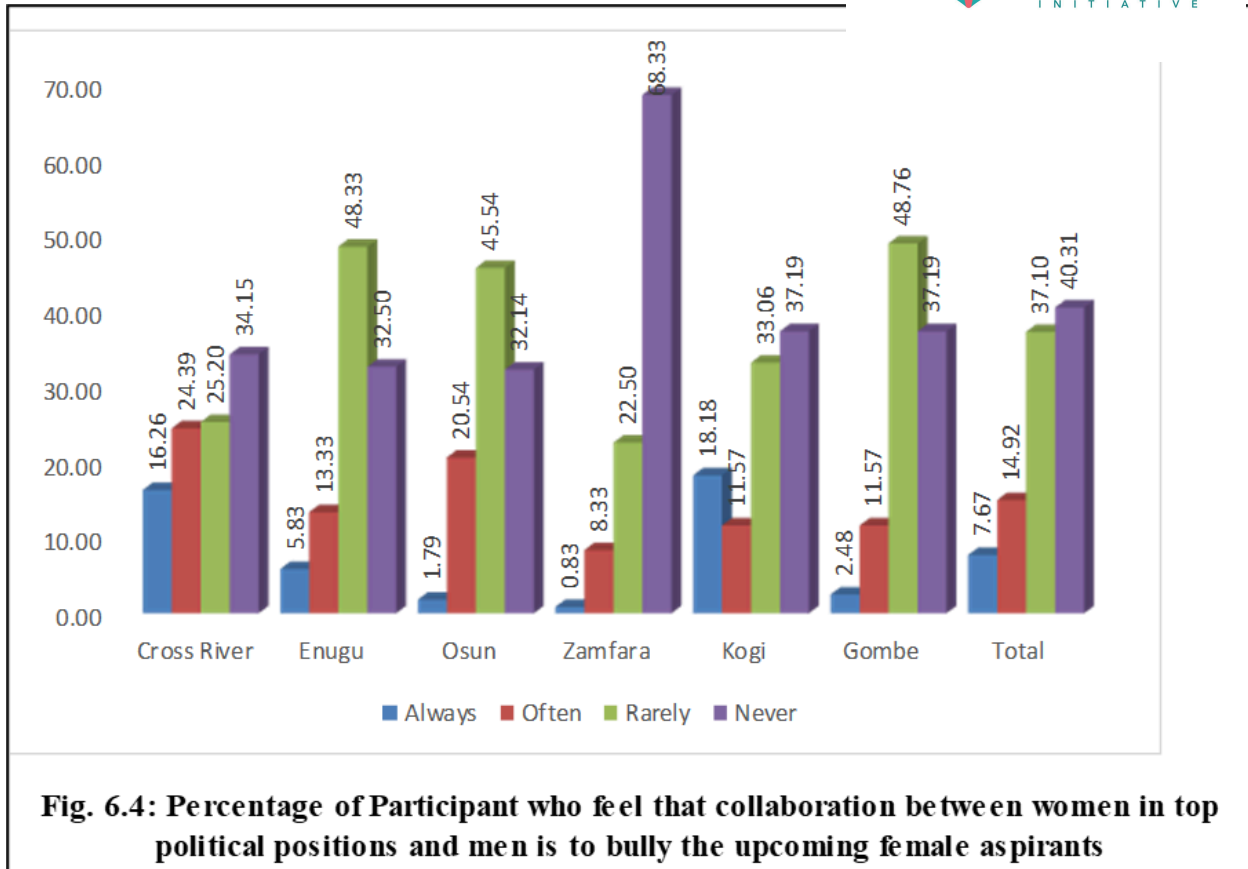
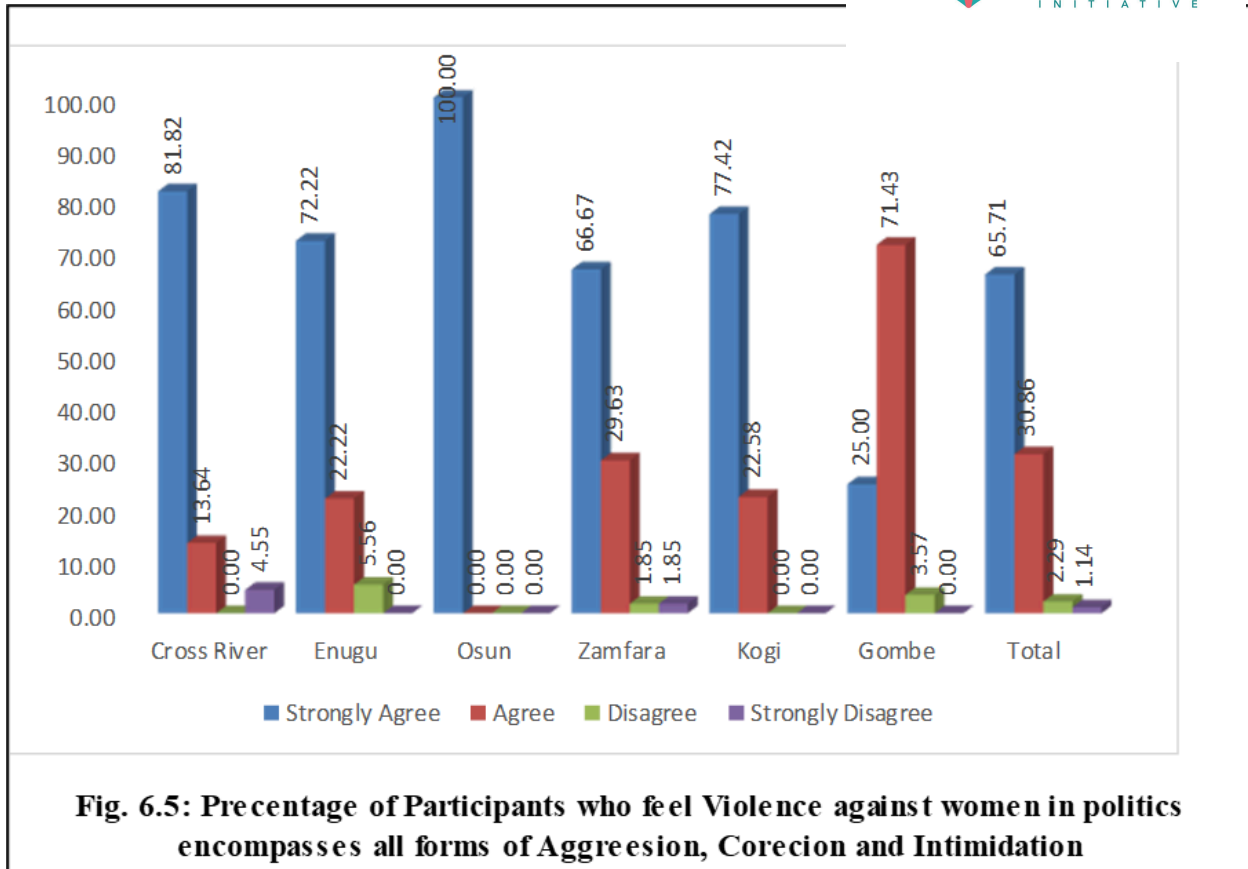


Figure 6.4 below shows that about 60% of the respondents reported that women in top political positions often collaborate with men, the public and the media, to bully upcoming female aspirants, whereas 40% say that they never have such an opinion. Moreover, it is noteworthy that a significant number of the respondents (68%) from Zamfara state share in the latter finding, 68% of those from Osun state agree that women in top positions mostly collaborate to bully upcoming female aspirants. This is depicted in figure 6.4 below.

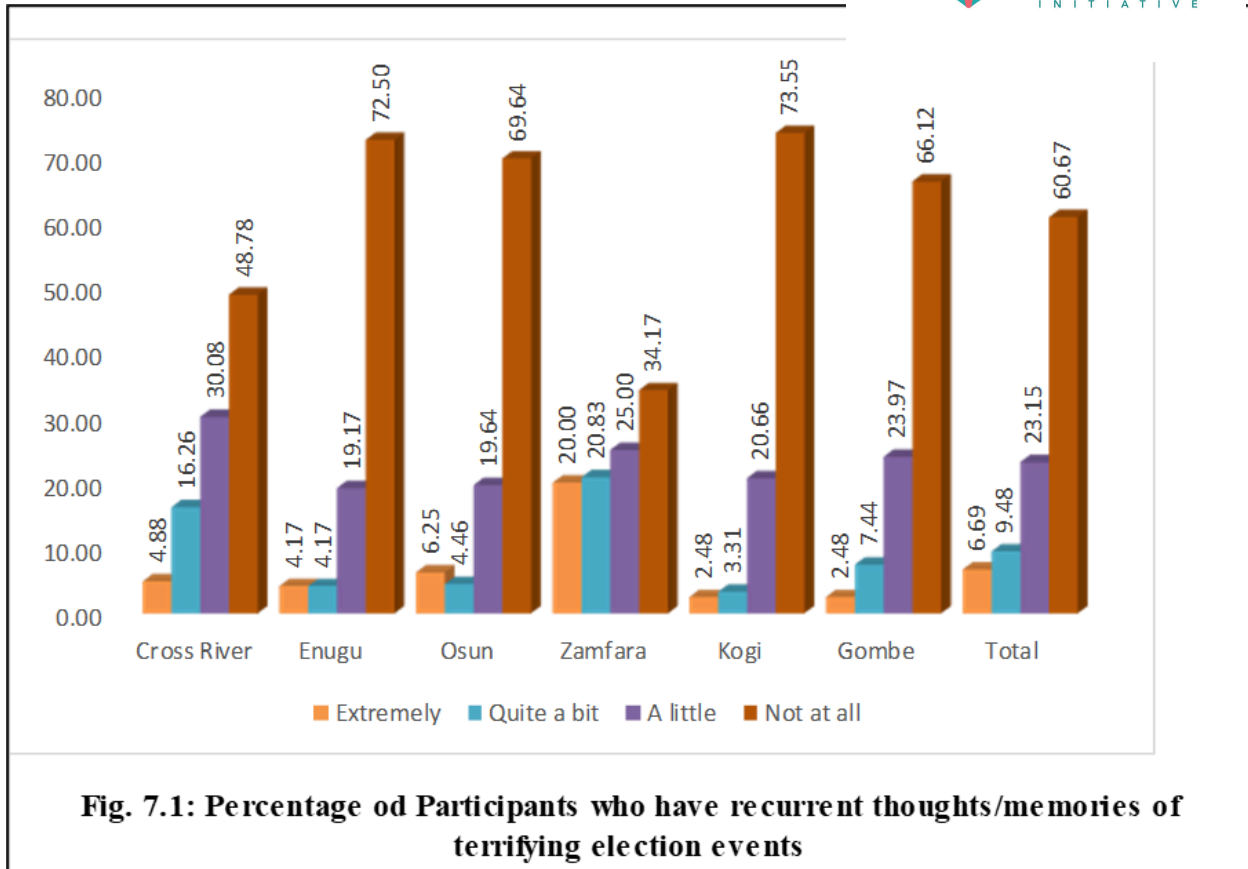


When asked about their thoughts about violence against women encompassing all forms of aggression, coercion and intimidation against women as political actors, up to 97% (figure 6.5) of the respondents agreed (66% strongly agree, 31% agree) with the statement while about only 3% disagreed with the statement. Suffice to say that the majority of the respondents across the selected states are in strong agreement with the statement except for Gombe state where 71% of the respondents merely agree.

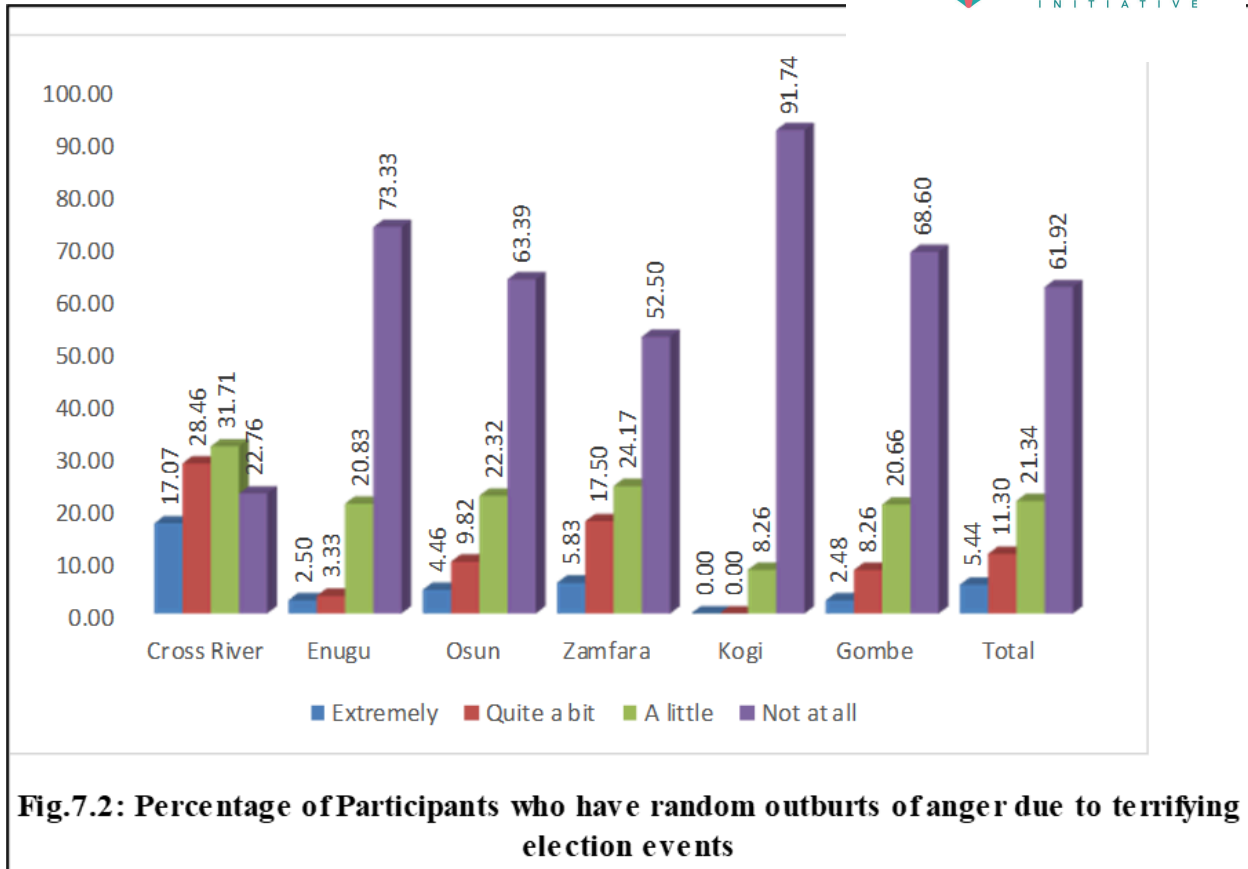


C. Mental Health Effects of Political Violence

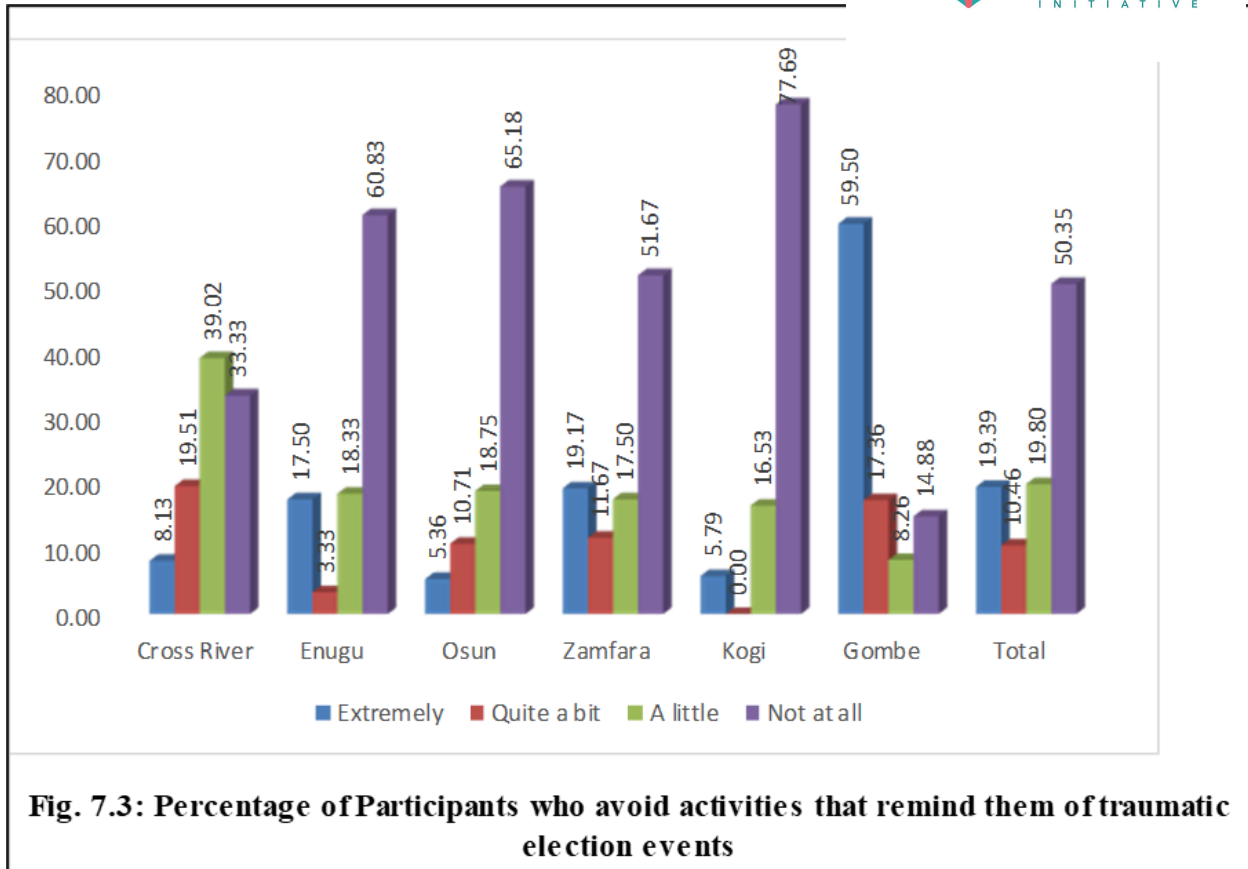
This section assesses the mental health effects of exposure to political violence. From figure 7.1, although about 61% of the respondents report that they do not have recurrent thoughts or memories of the most terrifying election event, a significant percentage of about 39% report that they do, either extremely (7%), quite a bit (9%) or a little (23%), which is a major source of concern. In particular, the majority of the respondents from Zamfara state (66%) report having recurrent memories of hurtful election events, while 52% of those in Cross River state report a similar experience.



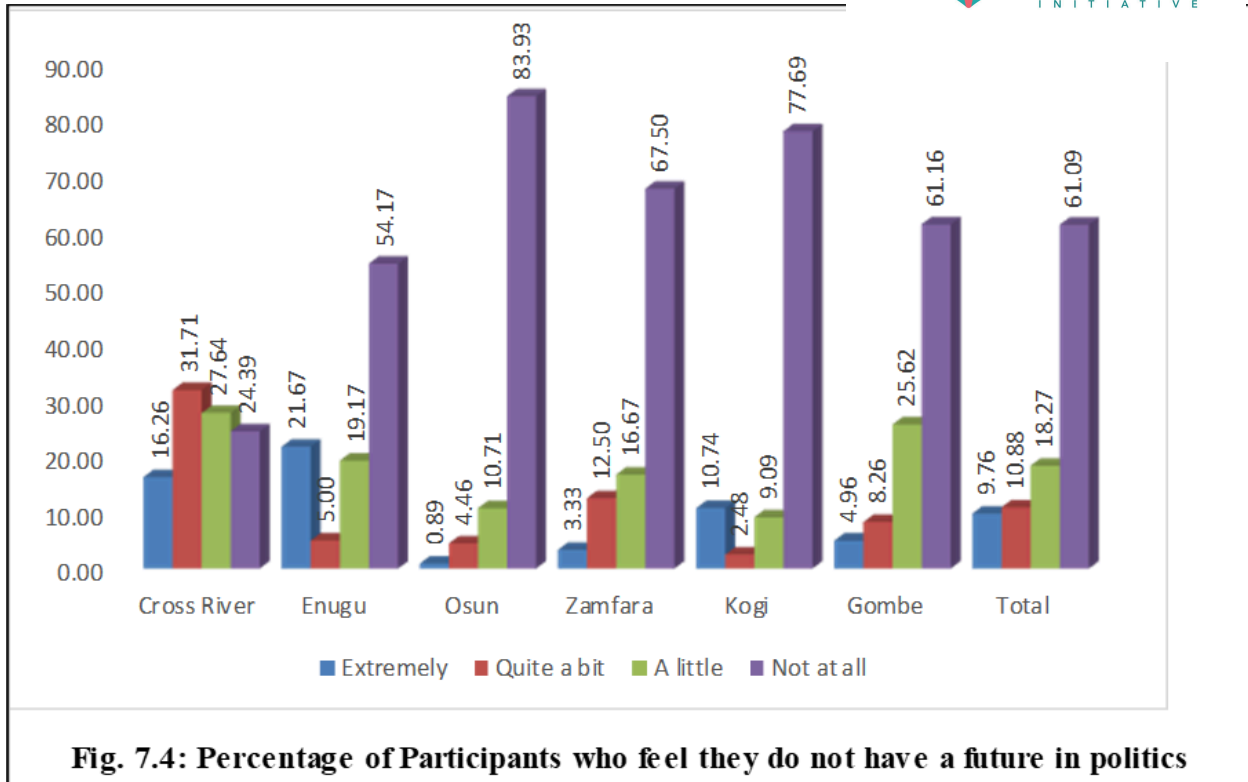
Also, from figure 7.2, while up to 62% of the respondents say that they do not feel irritable or have random outbursts of anger as a result of any terrifying election events, 38% report that they do, with about 5% reporting extreme occurrences. This experience is however predominant among respondents in Cross River state with about 67% saying that they do have such outbursts resulting from their experience of terrifying election events. Up to 92% of those in Kogi state report that they do not have such experience.



About 50% of the respondents reveal that they do avoid activities that remind them of traumatic election events while the other 50% say they do not. Avoidance of such traumatic events is mostly the case for respondents in Gombe state, where 85% of the respondents report that they do so, with about 60% reporting that they extremely have to avoid such activities. In Kogi state, however, about 78% of the respondents report that they do not have to resort to avoiding such activities from traumatic election events. This is as shown in figure 7.3 below.



In figure 7.4 below, 39% of the respondents believe they do not have a future in politics and this ranges from about 10% who report it being extremely the case, 11% feel that way, quite a bit while 18% feel such a little. This finding is predominant among respondents from Cross River state where 76% of the respondents report such feeling of isolation from politics in the future, whereas up to 84% of those in Osun state do not have that feeling at all.



From figure 7.5 below, 27% of the respondents reported feeling they have fewer skills than they had before their experience of the traumatic election event. However, at the state level, about 68% of the respondents from Cross River state reported a similar experience. In addition, about 14% of them report that the case is extreme for them. On the contrary, the majority of those in the north, especially in Kogi state, with about 93%, report that they do not have this kind of feeling at all.

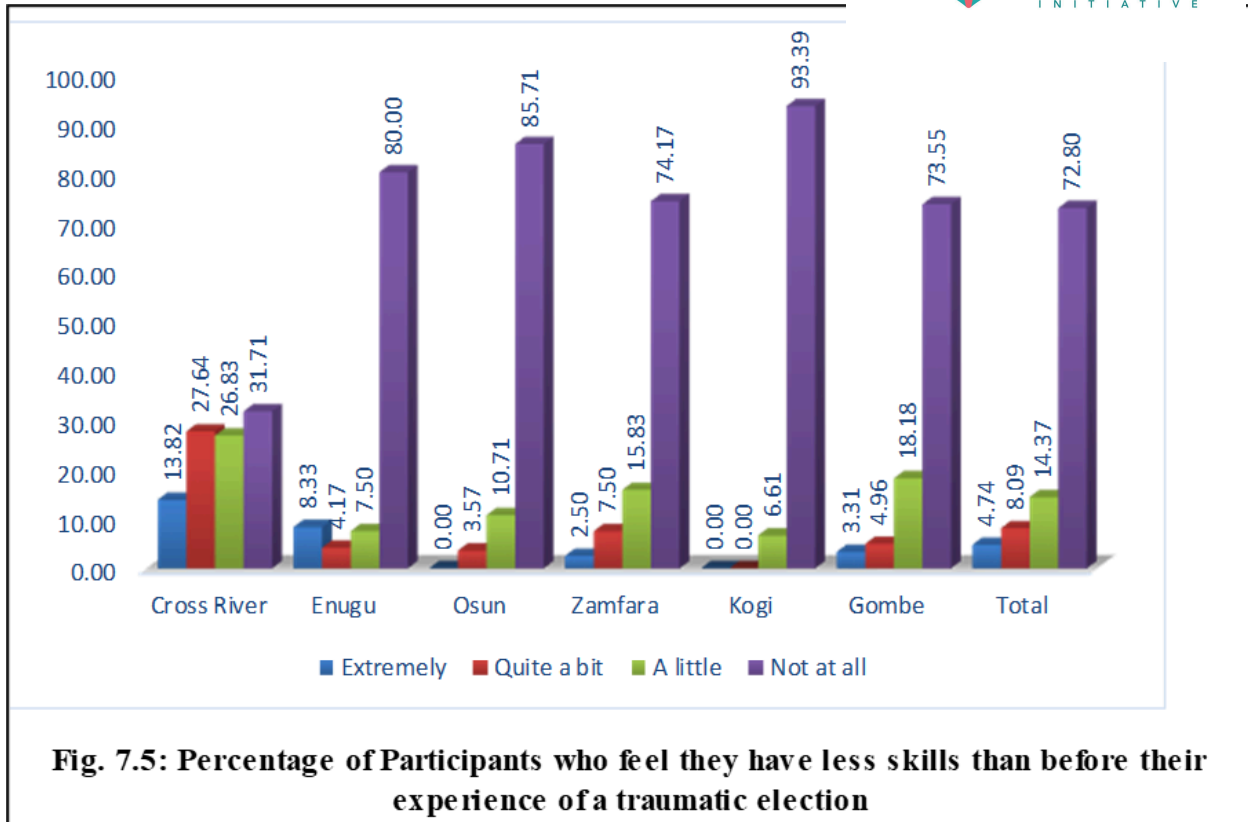
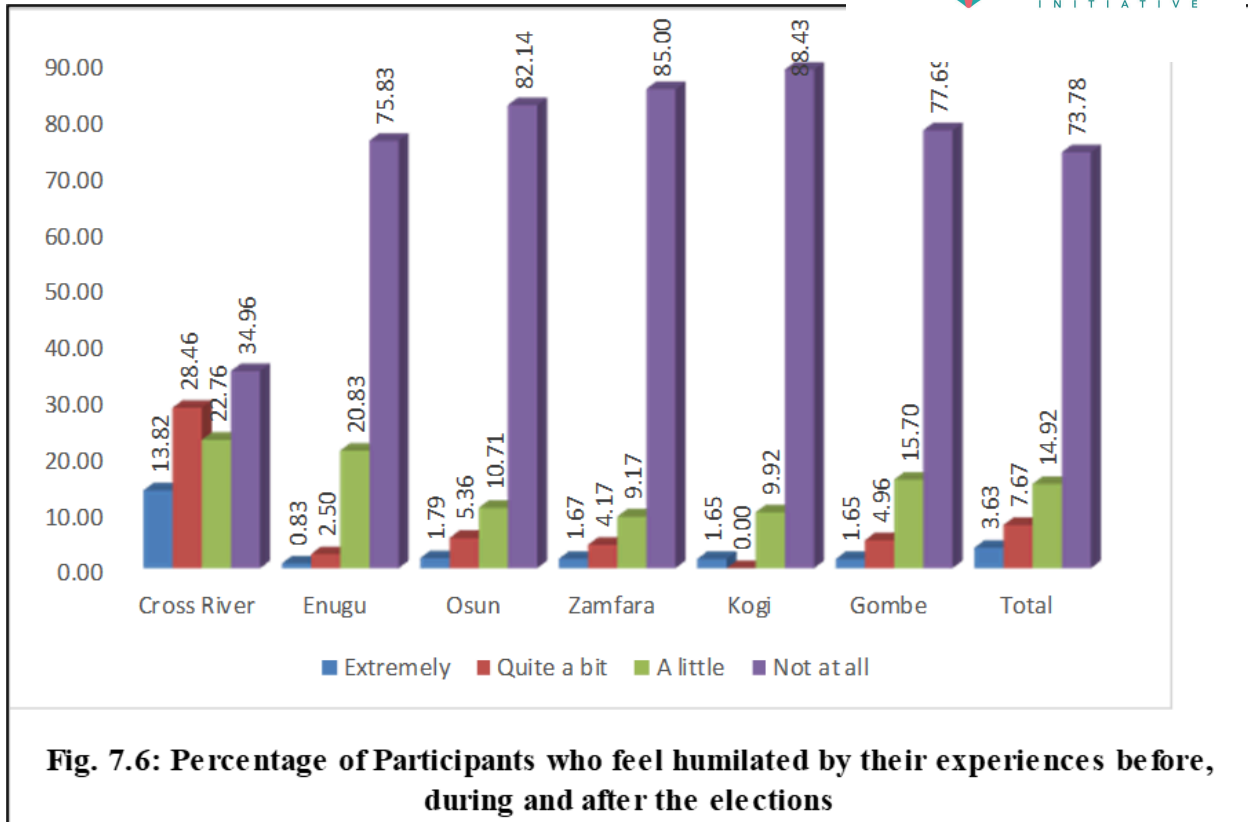


Figure 7.6 further shows that about 26% of the respondents report that they feel humiliated by their experience before, during and after the elections, while 74% say they do not feel that way at all. This feeling of humiliation is however mostly observed among respondents in Cross River state where 65% report such feeling and it is extreme among up to 14% of the respondents.



11 Demographic Data

I. Age Group of the Respondents

Figure 8.1 below displays the age group of the respondents for this study. Specifically, the figure shows that the majority (44%) of the respondents are between the ages of 25 to 34, while 21% are within the age range of 35-44. Also, whereas 20% of the respondents are between the ages of 18-24, 11% fall within the 45 to 54 age range and about 3% are between 55-64 years of age.

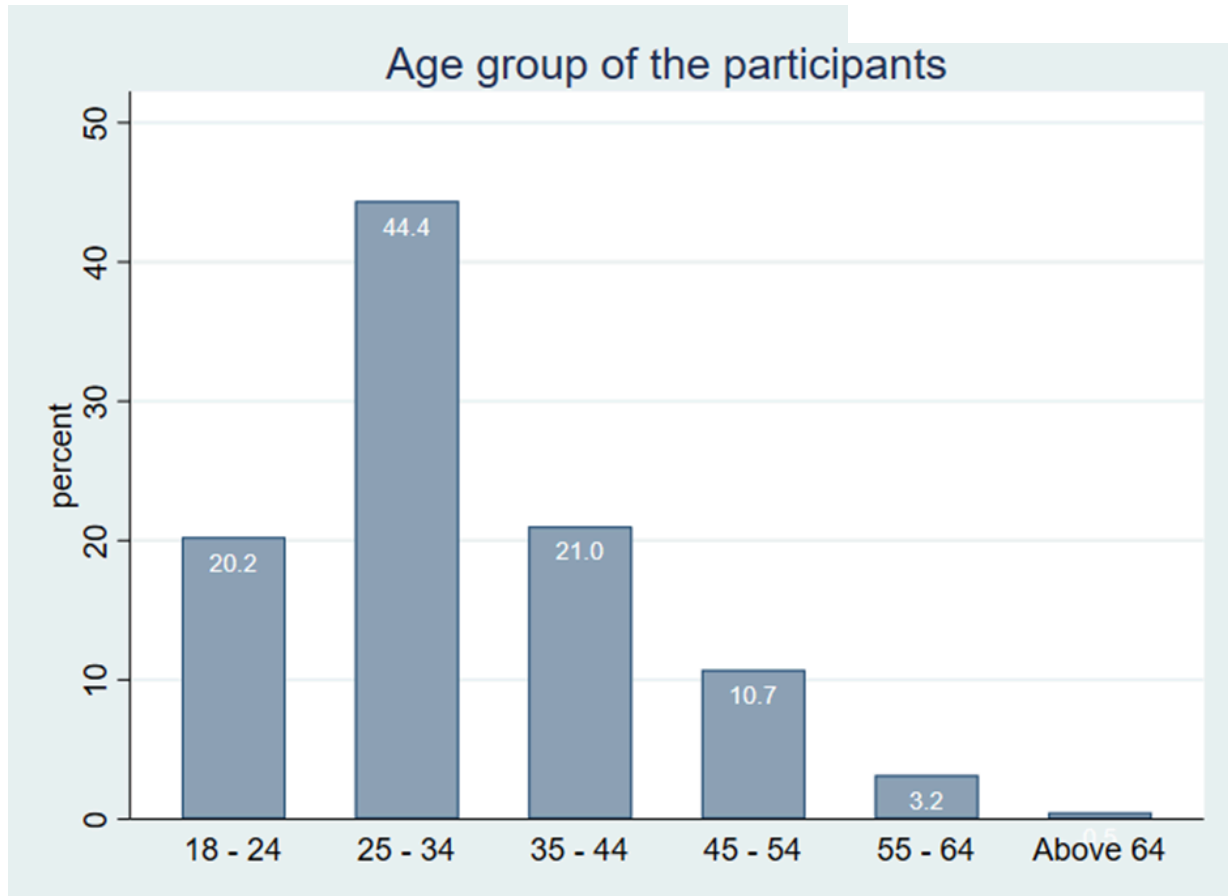


Fig. 8.1: Age group of the participants

II. Category of the respondents

From figure 8.2 below, the highest percentage (46%) of the respondents of this study, are the female citizens with the right to vote, this is followed by the electoral management (NYSC) ad-hoc staff (20%); relatives (wife/mother/daughter/sister) of a politician, 10%; active and direct participant, 6% and political activists as 4% of the respondents. However, some of the respondents identified with more than one of the categories, for instance, 9% identified as electoral ad-hoc staff and female citizens with the right to vote.

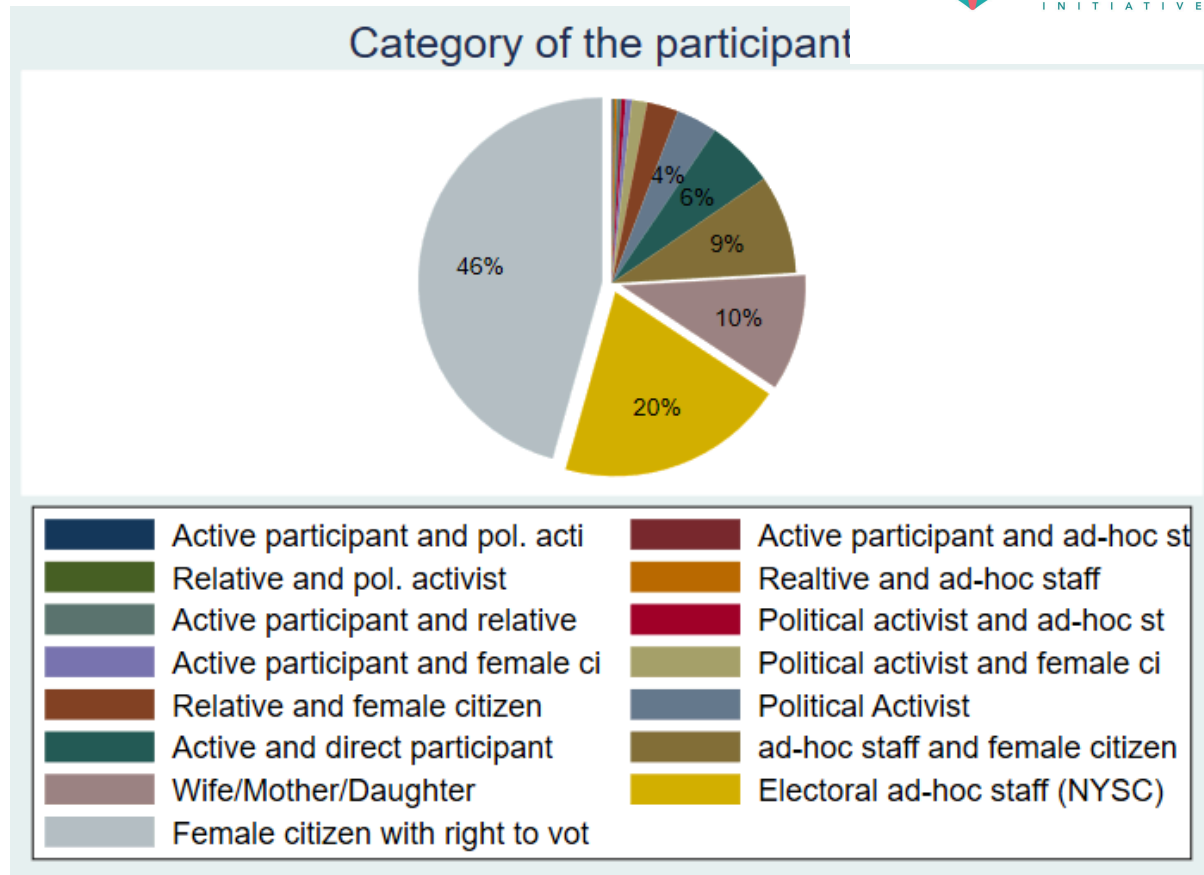


Fig. 8.2: Category of the Respondents

12 Conclusions and Recommendations: Call to Action

STER has found that VAWE offenders are not held accountable, despite the existing laws and multiple punitive mechanisms that exist across different institutions. There is often a double standard for electoral violence cases involving women's political participation, relegating them to second-class citizen status. Impunity can make such offences viable tactics both in campaigning and in post-election agitation.

For the sake of public confidence in rule of law and a meaningful path to political gender equality, it is imperative that offences do not go unpunished. The issue of impunity for VAWE is particularly acute as women already face greater barriers to participation in public life and experience highly distinct forms of violence – especially forms that are often overlooked or hidden, including sexual assault, intimidation and threats. Overcoming VAWE and ensuring perpetrators do not go unpunished is not just an issue of individual rights, but one of broader electoral justice and electoral integrity.

a. Recommendations on Institutional Changes

Law Review: The National Human Rights Commission should ensure that the Committee of Human Rights Experts, established in November 2015, and mandated to compile a list of laws to be reviewed for compliance with human rights norms and standards, prioritises the VAPP Act for review. One of the key functions vested in national human rights institutions is receiving and investigating complaints of human rights abuses, with the power to enforce decisions.

Treaty Domestication and Implementation: Certain international and regional human rights treaties such as the CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol should be domesticated and implemented to protect women's rights.

State Implementation and Domestication of Relevant Laws: State's Houses of Assembly should ensure the adoption of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act in all states in Nigeria. States that have domesticated these laws should fully implement their provisions to protect women and girls' rights.

Prioritisation of Women's Rights: Women's rights must be prioritised in allocating funding and training government officials, including police officers and court officials. Members of the police force should receive in-depth training while in and after graduating from the Police Academy on adequate and survivor-centred response to gender-based violence.

Nationwide Sensitisation Efforts: The National Orientation Agency and other key stakeholders should create nationwide awareness of inclusive practices and inclusive architecture for women living with disabilities to access unassisted care or care with limited assistance and accessibility of support. Sensitisation efforts aimed at reducing gender-based violence in Nigeria must also include teachings on gender equality and dismantling harmful gender stereotypes.

b. Recommendations for Community Support

Community Advocacy: Community advocacy plays a crucial role in creating services that not only address the needs of victims but also improve legal protections and reform/review laws that address violence against persons (women) to eliminate normed assumptions about the characteristics of people who are victims or perpetrators of violence. Grassroots advocacy would seek to support violence prevention and education and penalise those who perpetrate violence against women as a community-focused response. Advocates should also continue to persist in educating policymakers.

Training for election/political/security stakeholders by Electoral body: In addition to community advocacy efforts, mandatory training is recommended to be undertaken by the Electoral body (INEC) for security and judicial personnel, political parties, NYSC Adhoc staff and other electoral

stakeholders on awareness, response, documentation and reporting of violence against women in elections. This should be a standard part of an electioneering toolkit used to document, respond and address VAWE and ensure that it is a core part of all election programming. As with nonelectoral stakeholders, this would include an overview of gender equality and women's empowerment in the electoral process, women's rights more generally, and GBV more specifically.¹

Leveraging Technology: National and state governments and communities should leverage technology to tackle electoral violence by partnering with tech organisations that have developed apps that can report violence in real-time such as Kasala App. A nationwide awareness-raising initiative on the use of platforms to report apps and training should be implemented across the country. This will aid data tracking on incidences of violence during elections in real-time and also equip security agencies to track persons in precarious situations, intervene and ensure they receive prompt support.

Logistics/Welfare/Security: Adequate security, welfare and logistics should be provided for Corp members involved in election duties. STER reiterates the call for security reinforcement for all the Adhoc staff involved in elections, as a preventive strategy, especially NYSC members in volatile areas.

Media Election Reporting: Adequate capacity building and training for journalists covering politics or elections to help them understand and report on incidents or threats of VAWE. Moreover, the media should promote positive images of women in politics through ethical reporting and strongly desist from terms and languages that are sexist or promote gender stereotypes.

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