

Perception of Lecturers and Students on Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Institutions in Edo State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Sexual harassment of students in school, mostly the females had negatively affected a woman's psychological and physical well-being. The purpose of this study is to determine the perception of students and lecturers on sexual harassment in tertiary institution (University of Benin, Benin City and Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma) in Edo state. One thousand research questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in the institutions with respect to the hypotheses drawn. The findings reveals that sexual harassment of students in tertiary institution amount to violation of human right, it has psychological effects on victim and that government policy and laws can help curb the menace. The null hypotheses are rejected as the P- value is less than 0.05 level of significance. The study therefore recommended that, Lecturer should not take the economic status of their student as a basis to perpetrate these antisocial acts, school authority should encourage lecturers to work together in groups, sexual harassment behaviors and its consequences should be incorporated into the conditions of service for tertiary education, as well as faculty and student handbooks, dress codes should be enforced, appropriate disciplinary action should be taken against perpetrators and justice secured for the victims

Keywords: prevalence, sexual harassment, and tertiary education

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I. Introduction

Sexual harassment is rampant in higher education systems around the world, with far-reaching implications for individuals, groups, and entire organizations. One out of every three women in the globe is subjected to physical and/or sexual abuse by a spouse or sexual violence perpetrated by another person (UN Women 2019; WHO 2013). More than 2.6 billion women live in countries where rape within marriage is still not considered a crime (UN Women 2019).

High infant and maternal mortality rates, a lack of education for girls and women, limited financial independence alternatives for women, and a slew of other serious health concerns all add to and worsen the negative consequences of men's violence against women (WHO 2011)(2017 World Economic Forum). In the EU member states, between 45 and 55 percent of women (equivalent to roughly 100 million women) have been subjected to sexual harassment in the workplace (Latcheva, 2017). While nine out of ten nations have laws preventing sexual harassment in the workplace, roughly six out of ten countries lack effective laws prohibiting sexual harassment in higher education and schools (Tavares and Wodon 2018). Until the mid-1970s, the term "sexual harassment" was not generally used. The civil rights movement in the United States resulted in the enactment of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which barred discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex. That act also created the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Sexual harassment is commonplace today, not only in the workplace but also in educational institutions.

Rather than the ivory towers of the past, educational institutions have become battlegrounds for sexual abuse. Sexual harassment first surfaced at schools, colleges, and universities in the early 1980s, and the number of complaints has continuously increased since then.

Furthermore, until recently, policymakers and law enforcement agencies have mostly ignored sexual harassment in schools, and where it has been addressed, the focus has been on peer-on-peer sexual harassment (Leach, 2013). Unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other sexually related verbal or physical behavior are all examples of sexual harassment (Abuya, 2012). According to the Commission on the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria (CRHEN), the topic (sexual harassment) is progressively taking on a

significant dimension in Nigeria's higher learning institutions (Ladebo, 2001). It is severely diminishing academic excellence in Nigeria's higher education institutions. The majority of the time, sexual harassment is viewed as an undesired (the recipient does not want it), unsolicited (the recipient did not ask for it), and repetitive attitude (the behaviour is not one isolated incident). In schools, sexual harassment refers to unwelcome and unwanted sexual activity that disrupts the learning environment with a student's access to an equitable education. It is concerned with the power imbalance between the supervisor/employer and the employee/subordinate. In exchange for job rewards, an employer or supervisor wants sexual gratification from an employee or subordinate. In the academic setting, a similar situation may be said to occur when lecturers propose sexual favors to female students in exchange for good grades. Asking for sex in exchange for a reward or a favor, continually asking for dates and not taking "no" for an answer, demanding hugs, making unnecessary physical contact are all forms of sexual harassment, Unwanted touching, using unpleasant or offensive words or making comments about girls and women (or boys and men, depending on the circumstances), calling individuals sex-specific derogatory names, making sex-related comments about a person's physical attributes or activities, saying or doing something because you think a person does not conform to sex-role stereotypes, posting or sharing pornography, sexual pictures or cartoons, sexually explicit graffiti, or other sexual images (including online), making sexual jokes, bragging about sexual prowess, bullying based on sex or gender, spreading sexual rumours or gossip (including online) are just a few examples. (Conley *et al.*, 2017).

Sexual harassment is a common occurrence in higher education, and it is one of the most pervasive forms of gender-based violence that many women experience on a daily basis (American Association of University Women, 2006). Sexual harassment in academic settings is varied, not always unidirectional, underreported, and viewed as a severe moral and social issue by all parties involved. Male lecturers to female students, male students to female students, male lecturers to female lecturers, male lecturers to female lecturers, male lecturers to female lecturers, male lecturers to female lecturers, male lecturers to female lecturers, male lecturers to female lecturers, and non-academic employees are just a few examples. Female students are in most cases at great risk, while the male academic staffs are likely to be the perpetrators of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions. This trend is both amazing and alarming in an environment that is usually thought to be a center of excellence, a molding and sifting ground for developing virile leaders and thinkers who will take the country's leadership stage tomorrow (Jordan, *et al.*, 2014).

Research Question: What are the perception of lecturers and students on sexual harassment in tertiary institutions in Edo State.

Research Hypotheses

H0: Sexual harassment is not perceived as violation of human rights by students of high institutions.

H1: Sexual harassment is perceived as a violation of human rights by the students of high institutions

H0: Sexual harassment does not have psychological effect on the female students in high institutions

H1: Sexual harassment has psychological effects on the female students in high institutions

Ho: Government policies and law can not help curb sexual harassment in higher institution in Edo State

H1: Government policies and law can help curb sexual harassment in higher institution in Edo State.

Objective of the Study

- To identify the perception of students on sexual harassment in higher institution
- To identify the danger of sexual harassment in higher institution
- To identify the strategies in which Government should employ to curb sexual harassment in higher institution.

II. Literature review

Definitions of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment, like most social notions, is difficult to define and does not entail a uniform set of behaviors. The meaning of sexual harassment varies depending on the situation. Sexual harassment prohibitions can be found in criminal codes, labor codes, health and safety legislation, anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws, as well as education and licensing statutes all around the world (Jordan, 2010). Some nations, such as Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, have laws or policies that specifically prohibit sexual harassment in schools, while others have laws that do not apply to educational institutions. In general, international agreements define sexual harassment as a type of aggression against women and discriminatory treatment, but national laws place a greater emphasis on the criminal conduct. As a result, sexual harassment encompasses a vast range of activities, and there is no uniform definition of what constitutes illegal behavior. Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual behavior that is damaging to the victim, which is implicit in all of these

approaches (Fitzgerald and Cortina 2017).

- **Conceptual definitions**

Many academics have developed definitions of sexual harassment that are based on concepts. According to MacKinnon, sexual harassment "refers to the unwanted imposition of sexual obligations in the context of an unequal power relationship." The use of power acquired from one social arena to leverage gains or inflict deprivations in another" is central to the notion (Joubert *et al.*, 2011).

- **Behavioral definitions**

There is a wide range of activities that might be classified as sexual harassment. Sexual harassment, according to the Working Women United Institute, can be characterized as persistent or unwelcome sexual advances, sexually disparaging utterances, or sexually discriminatory remarks that are offensive or disagreeable. "Voiced sexual suggestions or jokes, constant leering or ogling, an unintentional brushing against your body, a friendly pat, squeeze, pinch, or arm around you, catching you alone for a quick kiss, the explicit proposition backed by the threat of losing your job, and forced sexual relations" are examples (The Working Women United Institute, 1978)

- **Legal definitions**

In 1980 the United States Equal Opportunity Commission defined sexual harassment in the workplace as a form of sex discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when this behavior explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment and interferes with an individual's work performance. It also creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. The EEOC's Guidelines define two types of sexual harassment: quid pro quo and hostile environment. According to the Guidelines quid pro quo harassment occurs when submission to, or rejection of such conduct by an individual, is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting an individual. Quid pro quo sexual harassment includes any attempts to extort sexual cooperation by means of threats (either subtle or explicit) of job-related consequences by someone with authority, usually a supervisor or manager. In cases of quid pro quo sexual harassment, the courts have held that the employer is strictly liable and responsible, even if the employer did not know that the harassment was occurring and even if the company had policy forbidding such behavior. A hostile environment is created when such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating or offensive working environment (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1999).

Legislation/Policies of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions

Internationally, sexual harassment in tertiary institutions was ignored by law makers and others in authority. However, recently some countries are addressing this situation. In 2011, Pakistan, for example, in attempt to stop sexual harassment at education institutions, has decided to institute stiff measures by implementing the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010 in 128 public sector Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) across Pakistan. This was to ensure that students attending these institutions are not subjected to intimidating, offensive and hostile behaviors or be coerced by male lecturers to have sex in exchange for grades. However, by 2013, 80 percent of the universities had not implemented the anti-sexual harassment regulations, so the government threatened to withhold funds from such universities until they implement the policies (Education Pakistan, 2011). In 2012, France approved legislation that makes sexual harassment a crime and it covers sexual harassment in educational institutions. The violation of the new French law is punishable by up to three years in prison. South Korea is toughening its rules against sexual abuse after several well-publicized cases of sexual harassment have occurred in universities in Korea (The Star/Asia News Network, 2014). Australia has included schools, colleges and universities in its Sex and Age Discrimination Legislation Amendment Act 2011 (Australian Human Rights Commission, n.d.). In the United States, sexual harassment in education is an unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that interferes with a student's ability to learn, study, work or participate in school activities. It is a form of discrimination under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1999).

Nigeria's Senate has passed a bill aimed at combating sexual harassment as part of a broader move to uphold ethics in the nation's universities.. University lecturers found guilty of sexually harassment or teachers who make sexual overtures towards students could be jailed for two years under the proposed law. It also prescribes fines or jail terms for university administrators who fail to probe allegations of sexual misconduct brought against staff members.

The Senate at its plenary session of Tuesday, 7 July 2020 passed the Sexual Harassment Bill, 2020 (SB 77) which seeks to prevent, prohibit and redress the sexual harassment of students in tertiary educational institutions. Presenting the report of the Committee on Judiciary, Human Rights and Legal Matters, Chairman, Sen. Opeyemi Bamidele stated objectives of the Bill to include:

- Prohibiting the offence of sexual harassment of students in tertiary institutions;

- Criminalizing the act of neglect or failure of administrative heads of tertiary institutions to address complaints of sexual harassment within a specified period;
- Creating a strict liability offence by removing mutual consent, as a defense in the prosecution of sexual harassment cases in tertiary educational institutions; and
- Maintaining and sustaining the fiduciary relationship that exists between educators and students with the aim of making tertiary institution a conducive center of learning and moral rectitude.(CNN, 2020).

SEXUAL HARASSMENT: THE CAUSES

Sexual harassment can happen anywhere within and outside schools, in the classroom, the locker room, on a field trip, sporting event, and even outside school premise such as on the way to and from school. However, sexual harassment is likely to happen when there is no clear observation from the school authorities for example, during class breaks, lunch or recess, among others. Some of the causes for the high occurrence of sexual harassment are highlighted below (Chukwudi and Gbakorun, 2011)..

Indecent dressing

While perception with regard to indecent dressing might differ, generally dressing that is revealing might influence the opposite sex in the school environment to initiate social interaction that might subsequently lead to sexual harassment (Muhammad *et al.*, 2007). Wearing skimpy or transparent clothes for example, may arouse the sexual emotion that could lead to physical, verbal and nonverbal sexual harassment. Studies have shown that campus girls who are dressed skimpily are usually prone to receiving compliments, wishes and having their demands gratified (Chukwudi and Gbakorun, 2011).

Exposure to sexual materials

Students are enticed by sexual materials that are accessible to any internet browser and this arouses their sexual emotions which may lead to a desire to perform a sexual act on classmates. One of the hazards of information communication technology is the introduction of e-sexual harassment" with the use of electronic networks for sending pornographic pictures, sexual messages and many other illicit sexual activities. Study shows that sexual jokes among employees could create a hostile work environment (Ashgar, *et.al* 2011). Inferably, sexual jokes are also common among the students which undoubtedly have a tendency of creating hostility by female students towards male students as they may perceive it as a form of harassment.

Use of illicit drugs

Studies have shown that sexual misconduct has been committed under the influence of drugs besides negative effects on the personality of students (Katz, *et al.*, 2000). Further, the prevalence of the use of alcohol among secondary school and college students has contributed to sexual harassment (Dermen and Cooper 1994)..

Activities in secluded environments

It is on record that in the context of school or college environments, where activities are allowed to be conducted in secluded area, sexual harassment would most like occur (Adams-Curtis and Forbes, 2004). For instance, where male and female student/teacher are allowed to conduct a task in a secluded area, the tendency of sexual harassment is more likely to occur compared to those who are engaging in their activities in a group and in an open place.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is often associated with assault, bullying, coercion, discrimination, favoritism, exploitation and intimidation as vices that play out in the sexual encounter leaving the victim with long-term pains that devastate their psychological well-being. Incidence of sexual harassment is not always reported and perpetrators are allowed to go free. This could be responsible for the unchecked reoccurrence of the behavior deficit.

Sexually harassed individuals can suffer through a number of psychological effects ranging from irritation and frustration to anxiety, stress and trauma. Depending on the situation, a victim can experience anything from mild annoyance to extreme psychological change, while the impact on a victim's career and life may be significant and also leave them in ruins,

Discriminatory events cause a variety of bodily and psychological responses. Sleep disorders, sexual dysfunction disorders, and psychological adjustment disorders are among them (Gaba, 2010). General stress process model posits that the frequency and severity of harassment are key predictor of mental health and well-being and that personal vulnerability moderates the association between harassment and its negative outcome.

III. Methodology

RESEARCH DESIGN

In two Nigerian tertiary institutions, a cross-sectional study was conducted using a random sample technique to pick 1000 students. The researcher was able to determine the perception of students on sexual harassment in the

two institutions (AAU and UNIBEN) using this method

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

Students from several faculties at Ambrose Alli University (AAU) in Ekpoma, Edo State, and the University of Benin (UNIBEN) in Edo State made up the study population. The samples for this investigation were chosen using a multi-stage random sampling process. Each institution picked one hundred candidates from ten faculties/departments of study, totaling one thousand (1000) students. Overall a total of 1000 students who consented participated in the study.

INSTRUMENT

The responders were given a self-developed, well-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contains items such as awareness of sexual harassment cases, socio-demographic information, the trend of sexual harassment occurrence, the causes of sexual harassment, the level of acceptance and reporting of sexual harassment, the perceived psychological consequences of sexual harassment and the prevalence of sexual harassment of female students. The instrument was validated through a test-re-test method.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

For a comprehensive analysis of data collected, emphases were laid on the use of absolute numbers frequencies of responses and percentages. The researcher therefore chooses the simple percentage and Chi square with significance level of 0.05.

IV. Results

Table 1: Respondents' socio-demographic characteristics

Age bracket	Frequency	Percentage
20-24	257	26
25-29	523	52
30-34	112	11
35-39	108	11
Total	1000	100

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	467	47
Female	533	53
Total	1000	100

Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Christianity	701	70
Islam	237	24
Traditional	62	6
Total	1000	100

Respondents	frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent
Male students	300	30	30
Female Students	410	41	41
Male Lecturers	168	16.8	16.8
Female Lecturers	122	12.2	12.2
Total	1000	100.0	100.0

Table 1 show that the average age of respondents was 27 years. Female respondents are slightly higher than male respondents (53 % vs. 47 %). The bulk of responders (70%) are Christians, with a few Muslims (24%) and others indicating African traditional religions (6 %).

The above tables also shown that 300 respondents which represent 30% of the respondents are male students, 410 respondents which represent 41% were female students, 168 respondents which represent 16.8% of the respondents were male lecturers, while 122 respondents which represent 12.2% of the respondents were female lecturers.

Table II: Sexual harassment is perceived as a violation of human rights by the students of tertiary institutions

Respondents	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Residual
Agreed	406	1.406	404.6
Strongly agreed	511	1.511	509.5

Disagreed	53	1.053	52
Strongly disagreed	30	1.03	28.97
Total	1000		

Test Statistics

	Sexual harassment is perceived as a violation of human rights by the students of tertiary institutions		
Chi-Square			291597.324
Df			3
p-value			0

Decision rule:

There researcher therefore reject the null hypothesis that state that sexual harassment is not perceived as a violation of human rights by the students and lecturers of tertiary institutions as the P-value is less than 0.05. Therefore the alternative hypothesis is accepted that state that Sexual harassment is perceived as a violation of human rights by the students and lecturers of tertiary institutions.

Table III: Sexual harassment has psychological effects on the female students in tertiary institutions

Response	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Residual
Agreed	340	1.34	338.7
strongly agreed	550	1.55	548.5
Disagreed	70	1.07	69
strongly disagreed	40	1.04	39
Total	1000		

Test Statistics

	Sexual harassment has psychological effects on the female students in tertiary institutions.		
Chi-Square			285552.848
Df			3
p-value			0

Decision rule:

There researcher therefore reject the null hypothesis that states that sexual harassment does not have a psychological effects on the female students in high institutions as the institutions as the P-value is less than 0.05. Therefore the alternative hypothesis is accepted that states that sexual harassment has psychological effects on the female students in tertiary institutions.

Table IV: Government policies and law can help curb sexual harassment in tertiary institution in Edo State.

Response	Observed Frequency	Expected Frequency	Residual
Agreed	410	1.41	408.6
strongly agreed	561	1.561	559.4
Disagreed	12	1.012	11
strongly disagreed	17	1.017	16
Total	1000		

Test Statistics

	Government policies and law can help curb sexual harassment in tertiary institution in Edo State		
Chi-Square			319266.3102
Df			3
p-value			0

Decision rule:

There researcher therefore reject the null hypothesis which state that Government policies and law cannot help curb sexual harassment in Tertiary institution as the institutions as the P-value is less than 0.05. Therefore the

alternative hypothesis is accepted that states that Government policies and law can help curb sexual harassment in tertiary institution in Edo State

V. Discussion

This research has added to the body of knowledge about sexual harassment in Nigerian academic institutions. One of the findings of this investigation revealed that there is prevalence of sexual harassment of female students in the two universities (AAU) and (UNIBEN), Edo State. This implies that there is a high rate of incidences of sexual harassment in tertiary education institutions in Edo State. This may be so because victims do not have the courage to report such cases to appropriate Authorities. The perpetrator's behavior did not change despite the perpetrator's high level of awareness of the frequency of sexual harassment. Many incidences of sexual harassment go unpunished, leaving victims to live with the trauma, which affects many of them for a long time and can lead to a psychiatric condition or mental health problem. This has a severe impact on academic performance as well as future sexual relationships, especially in the case of rape. The most common trend of sexual harassment in tertiary institution is sexual advances from male lecturers to female students confirming the unequal power relation where the perpetrator occupies a higher and influential position of authority over the victim as affirmed by previous study (Jordan *et al.*, 2014). There are incidences of sexual harassment from male students to female students and some extreme cases of rape where the female student refuses to respond to initial advances. This is also a manifestation of unequal power relation and a gender based violence that impact negatively on human rights. Some indolent female students may encourage male lecturers to engage in unethical behavior in order to "use what they have to obtain what they want," which is a typical phrase among such female students who refuse to attend courses, sit for any assessments, and wish to pass their exams..

VI. Conclusion And Recommendations

Sexual harassment is considered as a widespread occurrence that goes uncontrolled in Nigerian higher institutions. Female students are more vulnerable to unwanted sexual advances from lecturers or other authority figures. Many underprivileged students, who are also negatively influenced by their friends, are willing to trade their bodies for better grades on their exams. Rape cases continue to fill the pages of the newspaper on a daily basis, with no aggressive replies in the form of retribution. Existing structures are inadequately geared to deal with sexual harassment situations. The overall effect of these issues manifest in increased school dropout, low skilled graduate, low productivity, aggression, mal-adjusted young adult who are not capable of contributing to national socio-economic development of Nigeria. The conclusion that can be drawn as a result of the findings is that sexual harassment of female students exists and is perpetrated by male lecturers and non-academic male staff against the female students.

Recommendations

The following suggestions are made in light of the observations and conclusions achieved:

- School administrators should establish procedures for reviewing students' examination booklets after lecturers have marked them in order to assure the validity of the grades given to students.
- Authorities of tertiary educational institution should devise adequate measure to ensure that lecturers do not leak examination questions to female students as a means of sexually harassing them.
- Students disciplinary committees should be made up of men and women with proven integrity so that cases of students' misbehaviour are not manipulated in exchange for sex.
- The University, Polytechnic, and Colleges of Education Authority should ensure that only students who meet the cut-off scores are accepted.
- Authorities of tertiary education should ensure that bed spaces in various institutions are given out on the basis of "first come, first serve" policy and not on the basis of exchange for sex.
- To raise awareness, sexual harassment behaviors should be incorporated into the conditions of service for tertiary education employees, as well as faculty and student handbooks.
- To prevent female sexual harassment, school officials should encourage lecturers to work together in groups

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