

Analysis of the Causes and Prevalence of Sexual Harassment among Undergraduates in Ekiti State University

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ABSTRACT

Sexual harassment is universally believed to be an offensive act targeting at violating fundamental human right of man or woman with an unconsented sexual motive. This study was carried out to investigate sexual harassment among Ekiti State University students. A structured questionnaire was administered across each Faculty, different forms of sexual harassment was identified as follows; rape, offer sex for grade and unwanted physical contact. The results of the study show that 53(26.5%) respondents picked rape a major cause, offer sex for grade has a total number of 75(37.5%) and unwanted physical contact has total number of 72 (36.0%). It occurred more often between lecturers and students compared to the occurrence among the students themselves. Also, findings show that Provocative dressing and Students' laziness are among the significant factors. Recommendations were drawn towards curbing the menace.

Keywords: Gender, Higher Institution, Sexual Harassment, Rape

INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment is a serious problem for students in tertiary institutions. It is different from flirting or other types of behavior that one usually consents to. It could be request for sexual favour or unwelcome sexual behaviour that happens often enough to make one feel uncomfortable, afraid or confused which may even interfere with schoolwork or reduce ability to get along with other colleagues or attend classes. Among its exhibitions are cases of raping, unwanted contacts with interior move or threatening

demand for sex. Somehow, the issue of sexual harassment has been addressed in the realm of violence against women. Violence against women is a universal, historical and common phenomenon. Studies conducted across the globe have revealed that violence against women is the most common and widely spread problem faced by women and girl in all culture. Thus, it transcends income, class, race and ethnicity. Such violence relegates millions of women and girls to the margin of society where their rights and safety are denied.

Sexual harassment is the most common form of sexual victimization and it is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the society. The menace of sexual harassment has become widespread in recent years. It has also assumed different natures from place to place particularly in Nigeria. Studies show that it is more prevalent between lecturer and student than student to student (Taiwo, 2014). Sexual harassment is any non-consensual sexual contact or sexual threat. Sexual contact includes (but is not limited to) unwelcome sexual behavior like kissing, and/or intentional touching of another person's sexually sensitive parts (breasts, buttocks, genital area, groin or inner thigh, or the clothing covering these areas), and any other unwelcome sexual behavior. Some number of factors that may account for girls being sexually harassed by their male lecturers. These include lust, pursuit of happiness, lack of norm of morality, lack of conscience, pursuit of pleasure, lack of temperance, passion, habit, value, personality disorder, inferiority complex,

immaturity, cheapness, abuse of power, and suffering from demonology.

Most sexual harassment in higher institution revolve around a combination of factors: individuals who are predisposed to reacting physically when confronted with the need to discipline oneself, environmental circumstances within their school system, social isolation and neglect among students, lack of support from other students and lack of social and economic power. Emotional immaturity is considered to be the greatest cause of destructive behavior. The students are unable to cope, because of immaturity, situations and stress that occur generally throughout society. The males are more demonstrative. A male student may use the advantage of being more intelligent than his female course-mate to make sexual advances to her before helping her out of an academic problem. More so, use of campus gang and secret cults has been known to serve as instruments of sexual harassment of students in tertiary institutions.

However, it will be naive for anybody to believe that it is only males who harass females. Accusing fingers pointing at males do not exonerate the females from this societal menace. The only reason why it may not be easily discerned that a female is actually harassing a male is that females are more subtle in their approach. Females also harass men by their indecent way of dressing. Some female students sexually harass their male lecturers. They do not attend lectures, preferring to consult with the lecturers privately. They know the power they possess and they exploit this to the fullest. They flaunt themselves and taunt the lecturers into sacrificing their conscience and integrity on the altar of immorality. It may sound absurd that females can sexually harass fellow females, but it does happen. Hardly could a day pass in Nigeria today without stories and reports of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions in Nigerian newspapers. It is in line with these observations that we aim at investigating the extent of sexual

harassment experienced by students of tertiary institutions. Sexual harassment as a phenomenon affecting the wellbeing of members of an organization came to be recognized in the 1970s. While it was mainly associated with situations in a traditional workplace, incidents constituting sexual harassment in structures that feature more mixed organizational relationships also came to be highlighted. One such structure is the educational institutions. Sexual harassment in a university setting worldwide is quite pervasive.

Fundamentally, there is no single cause of sexual harassment or a particular theoretical framework that best explains it. However, there some widely accepted theories or models of sexual harassment that tried to explain the phenomenon from different angles and perspectives. These theories are the organizational theory (Gruber, 1992), and natural-biology theory. Organizational theory (Gruber, 1992) explained sexual harassment through organizational-related issues such as power and status inequalities within the organization. According to this theory, power and status inequalities that characterized organizational settings increase the probability of the occurrence of sexual harassment. Just like a case of student to lecturer. As indicated, the key issue in the problem of sexual harassment is power. Exercise of power is expected and accepted in a hierarchical society. Western societies are structured hierarchically. This type of structure or orientation renders some individuals powerful and makes the less powerful subordinate to their authority. Unfortunately, in this type of structure, men are favored more than women because of the stereotypical belief that men are goal-oriented, powerful and aggressive, whereas women are passive-receptive and family-oriented (Eagly and Mladinic, 1989; Eagly and Wood, 1982). In this context, it could be said that sexual harassment is the consequence of organizational hierarchical structure that allots unequal power to people within the system. Organizational theory

also identified other factors that facilitate sexually abusive behavior within a hierarchical system. The above studies indicate that sexual harassment is prevailing in higher institutions across geographical regions, culture, and ethnicity. Sexual harassment is significantly impacting students' social, psychological, emotional, and academic lives as they struggle with the mental and physical frustration associated with such experiences. The manifestations of these unwelcomed sexual behaviors take different forms or shapes and the manner in which students perceive and respond to incidents depend chiefly on their gender, culture and level of education Dietz-Uhler et al. (1992). Comparing Nigerian experience with that of other countries, the difference is mostly on the availability of policy initiatives that address sexual harassment.

Natural-biological theory (Barak et al., 1995) argued that sexual harassment is an extension of mate selection evolutionary theory. In other words, sexual harassment is an expression of sexual attraction, a natural element in mate seeking. Naturally, men have a more powerful inner drive to be sexually aggressive and urge to look for mates than women.

Sexual harassment has posed a tremendous challenge to African women both in the workplace and educational setting, and this problem has affected their efficiency and effectiveness in their various academic fields (Haruna, 2016). It has been a challenge in all levels of education and across all academic fields in Africa, impeding their academic performances and social and psychology implications. The awareness of the impact of sexual harassment on female student's existence has led to multiple approaches in the definition of sexual harassment across culture, ethnicity, race, and settings. The problem of sexual harassment in the continent of Africa has received cold reactions from government and school authorities. Therefore, this study aims at examining prevalence of sexual harassment experience, assumed causes and the gender

dynamism among students and lecturers, students to students.

METHODS

Source and Data Collection

Primary data was used. The data was collected via questionnaire and the information required from the questionnaire was therefore presented to the consented respondents by administering the questionnaires by some trained interviewers. The questionnaire has two sections (A and B). Section A was for collection of information on personal data of respondents while Section B consisted of questions that elicited responses from the respondents on sexual harassment expressions with response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The statistical methods applied include Descriptive statistics, Chi-square test and T. test

Chi-Square Test

A Chi Square test, also written as χ^2 is any statistical hypothesis test wherein the sampling distribution of the test statistic is a Chi-Squared distribution when the null hypothesis is true. Without other qualification, Chi-Square test often used as short for Pearson's Chi-Squared Test. The Chi-Square test is used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the expected frequencies in two or more categories.

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where O = observed value and E= expected value.

Independent samples t-test

The independent-samples t-test evaluates the difference between the means of two independent or unrelated groups. That is, we evaluate whether the means for two independent groups are significantly different from each other. The independent-samples t test is commonly referred to as a between-groups design, and can also be

used to analyze a control and experimental group. With an independent-samples t test, each case must have scores on two variables, the grouping (independent) variable and the test (dependent) variable. The grouping variable divides cases into two mutually exclusive groups or categories, such as boys or girls for the grouping variable gender, while the test variable describes each case on some quantitative dimension such as test performance. Under this contest, the options are graded and scored with: SA=4, A=3, DA=2, SD=1 and U=0.

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{Se} \text{ And}$$

$$Se = \sqrt{\frac{(n_1 - 1)s_1^2 + (n_2 - 1)s_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2} \left[\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right]}$$

Where n_1 and n_2 are sample sizes and s the standard deviation.

Assumptions Underlying the Independent-Samples T Test

- The data (scores) are independent of each other (that is, scores of one participant are not systematically related to scores of the other participants). This is commonly referred to as the assumption of independence.
- The test (dependent) variable is normally distributed within each of the two populations (as defined by the grouping variable). This is commonly referred to as the assumption of normality.
- The variances of the test (dependent) variable in the two populations are equal.

RESULTS

Table 1: Age distribution of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent
15-19	48	24.0
20-25	124	62.0
26-above	28	14.0
Total	200	100.0

Table 1 above shows that 48(24.0%) of the respondents are within age 15-19 years,

124(62.0%) are within age 20-25 years and 28(14.0%) are of the age 26-above.

Table 2: Respondent distribution by academic levels

	Frequency	Percent
100L	57	28.5
200L	81	40.5
300L	28	14.0
400L	32	16.0
Spill over	2	1.0
Total	200	100.0

As displayed in table 2, it shows the proportion of students in each academic level. Obviously majority are in class two or below while two of the participants ought to have graduated but still remain on campus due to deficiency in one course or the other.

Table 3: Categories of Sexual harassment

Form	Frequency	Percent
Rape	53	26.5
Unwanted physical contact	72	36.0
Offer sex for grade	75	37.5
Total	200	100.0

Table 3: it is shown that 'offer sex for mark' is the most prevalent (37.5%) among the settings followed closely (36%) by 'unwanted physical contact' and 53(26.5%) consider rape as a form of sexual harassment.

Table 4: Provocative dressing as a factor that influences sexual harassment

	Observed N	Expected N	χ^2	p-value
Strongly agree	114	40.0	179.8	.000
Agree	77	40.0		
Undecided	8	40.0		
Disagree	0	40.0		
Strongly disagree	1	40.0		
Total	200			

We observed from the table4 above that 114(57%) of the respondents strongly agreed that provocative dressing is a perceived cause of sexual harassment while 77 agreed but 8 respondents disagreed with this notion and a respondent strongly disagreed. In comparing the p-value of the population parameter and the usual p-value (0.05), the p-value of the study is 0.000 < 0.05, thus we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that Provocative dressing is one of the factors that influence sexual harassment in tertiary institutions.

Table 5: Laziness in studying

	Observed N	Expected N	χ^2	p-value
strongly agree	76	40.0	195.45	.000
Agree	99	40.0		
Undecided	9	40.0		
strongly disagree	4	40.0		
Disagree	12	40.0		
Total	200			

We observed from the table above that 76(38%) respondents strongly agreed that laziness in studying is a perceived cause of sexual harassment, 99(49.5%) of the respondents agreed that laziness in studying is a perceived cause of sexual harassment while 12 of the respondent disagreed. In comparing the p-value of the population parameter and the usual p-value (0.05), the p value of the study is (0.000) and is less than 0.05, thus we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that laziness of students in studying is one of the factors that influence sexual harassment in tertiary institution

Table 6: Sexual lust from male and female lecturers

	Observed N	Expected N	χ^2	p-value
strongly agree	78	40.0	134.20	.000
Agree	81	40.0		
Undecided	23	40.0		
strongly disagree	13	40.0		
Disagree	5	40.0		
Total	200			

We observed from the table7 above that 78 of the respondent strongly agree, 81 of the respondent agree, 23 of the respondent are yet to decide, 13 of the respondent strongly disagree, and 5 of the respondent disagree that sexual lust from male and female lecturer is a perceived cause of sexual harassment. In comparing the p value of the population parameter and the usual p value (0.05), the p value of the study is (0.000) and is less than 0.05, thus we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that laziness of students in studying is one of the factors that influence sexual harassment in tertiary institutions.

Table 7: Poor system for redress (i.e. form of civilization) and partying

	Poor system for redress				Partying			
	Observed N	Expected N	χ^2	p-value	Observed	expected	χ^2	p-value
strongly agree	52	40.0	63.2	.000	71	40.0	102.4	.000
Agree	74	40.0			78	40.0		
Undecided	42	40.0			19	40.0		
strongly disagree	10	40.0			9	40.0		
Disagree	22	40.0			23	40.0		
Total	200				200			

We observed from the table above that 52 of the respondents strongly agreed that poor system for redress is the cause of sexual harassment, 74 agreed, 42 could not decide, 10 of the respondents strongly disagree while 22 disagree that poor system for redress is a perceived cause of sexual harassment. Similarly, 71(35.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed that partying is the major cause of sexual harassment, 78 respondents agreed, 19 of the respondents couldn't decide while 9 of the respondents strongly disagreed and 23 of the respondent disagree that partying is a perceived cause of sexual harassment. in both, there are strong association since p-value <0.05.

Table 8: Stress and disturbed emotions

	Observed N	Expected N	χ^2	p-value
strongly agree	65	40.0	58.35	.000
Agree	64	40.0		
Undecided	38	40.0		
strongly disagree	20	40.0		
Disagree	13	40.0		
Total	200			

From the table above, we observed that 65 of the respondent strongly agree, 64 of the respondent agree, 38 of the respondent are yet to decide, 20 of the respondent strongly disagree and 13 of the respondent disagree stress that stress and emotions are one of the perceived causes of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions. In comparing the p value of the population parameter and the usual p value (0.05), the p value of the study is (0.000) and is less than 0.05, thus we reject the null hypothesis and

conclude that Stress and disturbed emotions are one of the perceived cause to which students are sexually harassment.

Table 9: T-test for determining gender difference in the prevalence of sexual harassment
Independent t-test analysis

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	P-Value
sexual harassment	Male	83	2.14	.767	0.518	0.605
	Female	117	2.09	.816		

Test statistics: the t test statistics is .518

Since the P-value = 0.605 > 0.05, then we accept the null hypothesis there is no statistical significant gender difference in sexual harassment among tertiary institutions students in Ekiti State

Table 10: Sexual harassment experienced from student to student and lecturer to students

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t	P-value
Student to student	1.46	200	.686	-7.616	0.000
Lecturer to student	2.18	200	1.082		

Test statistics: the t test statistic is -7.616 and the p-value is <0.05. This implies the students agreed it is more rampant between lecturers to student than between student to student.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study was carried out to investigate sexual harassment among undergraduate students of Ekiti State University. Our findings reveal that Rape accounts for 26.5% of harassment while offer sex for grade has a total number of 75(37.5%) and unwanted physical contact accounts for 36.0%. Therefore, offering of sex for grade leads to the highest number of sexual harassment. Research hypotheses were raised to verify factors and reasons for sexual harassment among undergraduates within the study population. A point prevalence of sexual harassment were examined and the result shows that Provocative dressing is a significant factor that influences sexual harassment among undergraduate students and also a perceived cause of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions. Students' laziness is also a predetermined factor that influences sexual

harassment. Also, sexual lust from lecturer towards the students is one of the factors that cause sexual harassment in tertiary institutions. More so, poor system for redress and partying is one of the causes to which students are sexually harassed. Stress and disturbed emotions are one of the perceived causes to which students are sexually harassed. However, there is no difference in agreement by students with some of the causes between both genders but it was deduced that harassment is more prevalent between lecturer and student than the students themselves.

Based on the findings as seeing in the results, one can conclude that provocative dressing, student's laziness, sexual lust from male and female to students, poor system for redress and partying, stress and disturbed emotions are factors influencing sexual harassment among undergraduates. The participants' choice of response in the work might not be far from the truth since they were not coerced and their actions might be influenced by their personal experience. Moreover, most of the tested factors were significant which imply the questions are very suitable and relevant. Though, more factors are needed to be tested.

Based on the outcome of the study, we would like to make the following recommendations:

- School authority should make it a point of duty to orientate fresh students for them to know how to avoid the menace of sexual harassment.
- Social and religious bodies on campus should also teach their members institutional moral value.
- Nigerian government, through the legislative arm should promulgate laws

that attach stringent punishment for offenders of any act of sexual harassment.

- A reliable mechanism should be put in place in all higher institutions for students to report such cases without any intimidation and indecent dressing should be strictly rejected in all spheres of life.

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