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RESEARCH ARTICLE

GENDER DIFFERENCES AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT AMONG TERTIARY INSTITUTION STUDENTS IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined gender differences in sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. Descriptive research design was adopted in the study. 623 undergraduate students, of which 336 were male and 287 were female, selected through stratified random sampling from three tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, constituted the respondents. Data generated were subjected to descriptive analysis of frequency counts and percentages. Hypotheses were tested using one way analysis of variance at 0.05 level of significance. Data analysis revealed that there were significant gender differences in sexual harassment among undergraduate students in Ekiti State. Male respondents reported being more sexually harassed than their female counterparts. Policy that takes care of current prevalence of sexual harassment among students should be put in place by government and school authorities.

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Introduction

Sexual harassment 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. Sexual harassment, as considered by Ogunbameru (2006), 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 behaviour.

Ogunbameru (2006) enumerated a 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. He stressed further that lecturers who harass exploit the enticing opportunities as unsolicitedly provided by

'dressed to kill' girls who harass them. Previous studies among students of Nigerian tertiary institutions have reported cases of sexual harassment. Owuamanam (1991) found out that close to one half of the subjects had been victims of sexual harassment and 67.9 percent of the subjects thought that harassment on campus was a serious problem occurring at a rate sufficient to warrant some concern and official action.

Fatimehin (1992) also reported that cases of sexual harassment existed among tertiary institutions students. In his study, he noted that a female undergraduate student was harassed in one of the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Most sexual harassment in higher institutions of learning 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 behaviour. The students are unable to cope, because of immaturity, with

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. Moreso, use of campus gang and secret cults have been known to serve as instruments of sexual harassment of students in tertiary institutions.

However, it will be naïve 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 malaise. 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. The case of lesbians is rampant in higher institutions. The incidence of lesbians are usually tied to the wrong moral upbringing of the girls but it is a form of sexual harassment. It does not necessarily begin in adulthood; it may begin as early as middle childhood. Various studies suggest that from about one-quarter to one-half of tertiary institution students (female and male) have experienced some form of harassment from other students, faculty members, or administrators (Owuamanam, 1991).

Hardly a day passes in Nigeria today without stories and reports of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions in Nigerian newspapers. It is in line with these observations that the researcher aims at investigating the extent of sexual harassment experienced by students of tertiary institutions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate gender differences in sexual harassment among tertiary institution students in Ekiti State. The study is also to find out the extent of sexual harassment experienced by male and female students.

Research Questions

These questions were raised:

What is the level of sexual harassment among the male and female undergraduate students in the tertiary institutions in Ekiti State?

What is the level of sexual harassment among undergraduate students in the different tertiary institutions in Ekiti State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study.

There is no significant difference in sexual harassment experienced by male and female students in the tertiary institutions in Ekiti State.

There is no significant difference in the level of sexual harassment experienced by undergraduate students in different tertiary institutions in Ekiti State.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research of the survey type was used in the study. The population for the study consisted of all the students in all tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The sample for the study consisted of 623 students selected using stratified random sampling, from the three tertiary institutions (i.e. College of Education, Polytechnic and the University). Only the undergraduate students in these institutions who were accessible and gave their consent to be involved in the study constituted the respondents for the study. The instrument used to collect data was a self-designed questionnaire titled "Sexual Harassment Questionnaire" (SHQ). The questionnaire sought from the respondents various forms of experience of sexual harassment at school. The instrument had two sections, A and B. Section A elicited information on the demographic attitudes of respondents while Section B was designed for respondent to indicate whether he or she has been sexually harassed at one time or the other. The researcher personally administered the instrument on the subjects.

Data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and simple percentages. Frequency counts and percentages were used to answer the general questions raised. The hypotheses were tested by one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by multiple comparison using Scheffe analysis and t-test where necessary. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Extent of sexual harassment among tertiary institution students by gender

Sex	N	LOW		MODERATE		HIGH	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Male	336	55	16.37	252	75.0	29	8.63
Female	287	78	27.18	191	66.55	18	6.27

Table 1 shows that only 55 (16.37%) of the male respondents experience low level of sexual harassment. 252 (75%) have moderate level of sexual harassment, while 29 (8.63%) of the male respondents have high level of sexual harassment. 78 (27.18%) of the female respondents responded to low level of sexual harassment, 191 (66.5%) had moderate level of sexual harassment, while 18 (6.27%) admitted to a high level of sexual harassment. This shows that male students experience sexual harassment more than female students.

Table 2: Extent of sexual harassment experienced by students in tertiary institutions

Institution	N	LOW		MODERATE		HIGH	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
University	256	92	35.94	158	61.72	6	2.34
Polytechnic	151	33	21.85	105	69.54	13	8.61
College	216	8	3.70	180	83.33	28	12.96

The results in Table 2 reveal that 92 (35.94%) students indicate that they have experienced low level of sexual harassment in the University, while 158 (61.72%) students have experienced moderate level of sexual harassment and 6 (2.34%) respondents indicate high level of sexual harassment. 33 (21.85%) students in the Polytechnic admitted to a low level of sexual harassment while 105 (69.54%) have moderate level of sexual harassment and 13 (8.61%) students responded to high level of sexual harassment. 8 (3.70%) students

have low level of sexual harassment, 180 (83.3%) responded to moderate level of sexual harassment and 28 (12.96%) students responded to high level of sexual harassment in the College of Education. The results show further that sexual harassment is most prevalent in the College of Education.

Testing of the Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: There is no significant gender difference in the sexual harassment experienced by undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State.

Table 3: t-test Analysis on sexual harassment of male and female students in tertiary institutions

Variables	N	Mean	S.D.	Df	t _{cal}	t _{table}
Male	336	19.92	9.47	621	3.79*	1.96
Female	287	16.97	9.85			

P < 0.05 (Significant)

The figures in Table 3 show that the t-calculated is 3.79 while its corresponding table value at 0.05 level of significance is 1.96. Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected. It implies that there is a significant difference between sexual harassment experienced by male and female students in tertiary Institutions in Ekiti State. Males experience sexual harassment more than female students.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the sexual harassment experienced by undergraduate students in different institutions

Table 4: ANOVA Summary on sexual harassment experienced by students in the University, Polytechnic and College of Education

Sources of Variation	SS	df	MS	F _{cal}	F _{table}
Between Groups	11369.4	2	5684.7	73.7	3.01
Within Groups	47808.3	620	77.11		
Total	59177.6				

P < 0.05 (Significant Result)

It can be seen from Table 4 that the F-calculated is 73.7 while its corresponding table value at 0.05 level is 3.01. Since the calculated value is greater than the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is, therefore, a significant difference between sexual harassment experienced by students in the University, Polytechnic, and College of Education in Ekiti State. A Post-Hoc analysis using Scheffe was carried out to locate the source of variability among the institutions. The result is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Post-hoc Analysis on Sexual Harassment by Students in University, Polytechnic and College of Education

Source of Variation	Mean	College	University	Poly
College	23.63			
University	13.83	*		
Poly	19.31		*	

*P < 0.05 (significant result)

Table 5 shows that there is a significant difference in sexual harassment experienced by University and College of Education students, and Polytechnic and University students, at 0.05 level of significance. No significant difference was observed between College of Education and Polytechnic students in sexual harassment.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that there is a significant gender difference in sexual harassment experienced by tertiary institution students in Ekiti State. The results also show that male students are more sexually harassed than their female counterparts. The findings of this work agree with that of Maihoff and Forest (1983) who found out that it will be naïve for anybody to believe that it is only males who harass females. That the many reported cases have males as culprits does not exonerate the females from this societal menace. They further explained that females actually harass males but this cannot be easily discerned because they are more subtle in their approach. The study disagrees with Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia (2003) which reported that over 99% of the victims of sexual harassment are females. The study also disagrees with that of Lott and Reilly (1980) who reported that women are overwhelmingly the target of sexual harassment and that nearly all the harassers are men.

The findings of this study also show that sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State is most prevalent in the College of Education and less prevalent among students in the University and Polytechnic in Ekiti State. This finding is in agreement with Bello (2005) who found out that sexual harassment was prevalent in the College of Education. This result may be because female students' population is higher than that of male students in the College of Education than in the other institutions. The variation in population could influence the harassment. Also, the College of Education is residential. Male and female students have easy access to each other's hostels without any restrictions from the school authorities. The low level of sexual harassment recorded in the University and the moderate level of sexual harassment experienced by Polytechnic students could be attributed to their level of maturity, the nature of their personal discipline and their level of studies whereby they do

not have much time for frivolities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following conclusions can be made:

The male students are more sexually harassed than their female counterparts and the result show that majority of the sexual harassment is experienced by College of Education students.

Based on the findings the following recommendations are derived from the study:

Policy should be put in place to reduce the current high prevalence of sexual harassment. Also the school authorities should make it a point of duty to orientate fresh students so that they would know how to avoid the menace of sexual harassment. Social and religious bodies on campus should also orientate their members. Lastly, the government at the various levels should through their legislative arms legislate and promulgate laws that would punish offenders at all times.

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