



Research Article

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Fighting Female Sexual Harrassment in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract

Tertiary institutions all over the world including Nigeria are known for academic and moral excellence aimed at shaping leaders and intellectuals for the development of the world. However, the moral fabric that holds the tertiary institutions is seriously eroded because of the menace of sexual harassment to the female students in a developing country like Nigeria. Although, the menace is not only peculiar to tertiary institutions but across all workplace where male and female interact and relate with each other. In recent time the menace has negatively change the integrity and respect accosted for people in the tertiary institutions occasioned by incessant report of sexual harassment mostly directed to female students. Thus, there is constant need and clamour for way through which female students sexual harassment can be fight to the barest minimum in our tertiary institutions especially as attempt to stop this menace in the past has not yielded little or no positive outcomes. The methodology adopted in the study is the qualitative method using a content analysis approach. The concept of sexual harassment as given by various scholars and researchers were adequately domesticated in the study. The paper also beams its search light on some disturbing sexual harassment directed to the female students in the past so as to justify the presence of this menace. The study also analyses factors contributing to sexual assault. Based on these summations, the paper was able to give stringent policies that could be used to fight the scourge of sexual harassment.

Keywords: Sexual harassment, female students, tertiary institutions, Nigerian

1. Introduction

The significant influence of tertiary institutions on shaping society's future cannot be overstated. This is because tertiary institutions serve as citadel of knowledge for the advancement of humanity and possibility of building visionary future leaders (Jega, 2013). However, the increase in incident of professional misconducts especially as it relates to sexual harassments has negatively affected the repute of Nigerian tertiary institutions in the country (Ibrahim, Sogbanmu, Omoju & Ukwaja 2020). Globally, the incident and complains of sexual harassments started in the year 1980s and since then the menace has continue to be on a high increase (Joseph, 2015; AAUW Educational Foundation, 2011; Bello 2020). Sexual abuse is common today, not only in the workplace, but in educational institutions across the globe. (Kayuni, 2009) with the menace assuming a disturbing trend in Nigeria (Imonikhe, Okeyo 2014; Joseph, 2015). In the summation made by Idris, Adaja, Audu and Aye (2016) they asserted that sexual harassment has now becomes prevalence in Nigerian tertiary institutions as reported cases of sexual harassment among female students has continued to affect the development of the Nigerian educational system in all ramifications.

Due to the sensitive nature of the menace of sexual harassment, providing accurate statistics have always being challenging but anecdotal reports show that it is rampant, with the victims mostly females and the perpetrators are more likely to be male (Aluede, 2000; Owoaja, & Olusola-Taiwo 2010; Okeke, 2011; Joseph, 2015; Anene & Osayamwen 2016). At different time, female students have reported different form of sexual harassment gestures made by randy lecturers to different authorities and very little of these complaints have been made public either in the print or social media by journalist or by civil or pressure society (Makinde, 2018; Familugba, 2016). In the same vein, sexual assault of female students in Nigeria has contributed negative effect on the victims such as psychological pain, melancholy, stigma etc. Julie (2013) also affirmed that sexual harassment on female students has a serious psychological implication on the academic performance of the female students as well as contribute poorly on the health of the victims leading to fear, trauma, depression, anxiety, loss of trust and most likely contracting sexually transmitted infections.

Motivated by earlier studies (Ogunbameru, 2006; Reena & Saheab, 2012; Omonijo, Uche, Nwadiafor & Rotimi 2013; Bello 2020), and incessant media reports on the increase in the menace, fighting sexual harassment should be the topmost priority efforts across the globe. In a bid to reduce or mitigate sexual harassment, many countries of the world have implemented policies and laws (Reena & Saheab, 2012; Bello 2020). There have being slight measures that have been adopted by Nigeria government and other concerned stakeholders in order to stop the challenge of sexual harassment, among female students. It therefore means that for a meaningful sustainable development to be recorded in Nigerian education sector, harassment of female students must be fought

with all sincerity and seriousness. It is imperative therefore to equip female students in tertiary institutions with enough information which will help them protect themselves against sexual harassment.

2. Scope and Objectives of Study

The study is restricted to tertiary institutions (universities and polytechnics) in Nigeria. Numerous studies have been conducted on sexual assault in Nigerian tertiary institutions with few studies analysing the incidents from both universities and polytechnics dimension. Therefore, the present study improves on the literature on female sexual harassment beyond a quantitative exercise and inculcates a position to fight this menace in our tertiary institutions.

3. Methodology and Structure

A qualitative method using a content-based approach was used. The study is theoretical in nature which draws its argument from secondary relevant sources of information including journals publications, textbooks, print and electronic media, reports and internet sources on sexual harassment in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Multiple secondary sources were also used to improve the reliability and validity of the paper. In realising the objectives of paper, it was divided into five sections. The first section looked at introduction of sexual harassment, scope and objectives of study and research methodology and structure. The second discussed concept of sexual harassment by various scholars and x-rayed some disturbing sexual harassment directed to the female students in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The third section also looked at factors contributing to sexual harassment in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The fourth section examined theoretical framework of sexual harassment. The fifth section looked at the conclusion and recommendations that can help fight sexual harassment among female students.

4. Concept of Sexual Harassment

Scholars in the field of criminology have all agreed no universal definition of sexual harassment, hence various scholars have define the concept in various ways, for instance Latcheva (2017) defined sexual harassment as any unpleasant gesture displayed to an individual which could be insulting, intimidating, humiliating, malicious, degrading or offensive, that is either continuous that seriously affect someone's performance. The New York state (2019) also defined harassment as discriminatory gestures that consist of words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation, physical actions that are exhibited to an employee due to any protected characteristic. The harassment may be based on age,

gender identity, disability, marital status, race, creed, colour, national origin, sexual orientation and criminal history. In the definitions of Ogunbameru (2006) and Numhauser-Henning and Laulom (2012) they both agreed that sexual harassment is perceived as undesirable sexual gestures for sexual favour, physical, verbal or nonverbal conducts which make acceptance or rejection of such sexual advances in an open or implicit form such as threats, intimidation, taunting, unwanted touching, unwanted kissing, phonography, etc. According to Anene and Osayamwen (2016) Sexual harassment is any form of unsolicited sexual behaviour aimed at placing an individual at a disadvantage. Bonnie (2009) also described sexual harassment (SH) as any unwanted sexual gestures, sexual preferences or sexual expressive conduct directed towards a person. Gupta (2014) conceptualizes sexual harassment as an undesirable force of sexual pleasure in a relationship of unequal power.

McCann (2018) defines sexual harassment to inculcate two elements of sexual conduct and sex-based 'behaviour, which are unacceptable to the recipient. Page and Pina (2015) view sexual harassment as a societal problem that has affected workplaces all over the world, with serious negative implication on the sufferers and organisations. The definition of sexual harassment is also difficult due to cultural differences, for instance acceptable greetings in a particular region could be seen as harassment in another. Peters and Bourne (2012) observed that the Jamaican culture is characterized by funny names such as baby, honey, sweetheart, hotness, dearie, sexy names, even those used at the workplace, making it difficult to understand the definition of sexual assault. Gruber (1992) classified 11 forms of sexual harassment into three domains: verbal demands (from simple phrases to promises and threats), sexual gestures (from jokes to solicitation) and non-verbal displays (from gestures and photographs to compulsory sex). Also, the New York State (2019) offers two primary forms of sexual assault which are hostile environment and quid pro quo. Hostile Environment of sexual harassment entails sexual or discriminatory appearance in any vicinity of the workplace which includes showing pictures, posters, calendars, or other materials that are sexually attracting or pornographic in nature. These sexual materials can be on the computer or mobile phone which such displays are often shared while in the workplace. A hostile environment based on sex may be coined by words, signs, jokes, intimidation, physical actions or violence. On the other hand, Quid Pro Quo sexual harassment is a situation of a person who is in an authorized position exchange, or tries to exchange benefits for sexual favours. Quid pro quo is a legal terminology which means "trade". This kind of harassment often happens between an individual and someone in higher authority, such as a lecturer, who decide academic performance of his or her students. Quid pro quo sexual harassment involves giving improved opportunities in substitute for a sexual relationship. In conclusion, sexual harassment can be said to be an undesirable sexual gesture which include verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature which in turn create a hostile environment. However, sexual harassment has basically been conceptualized as women's subject; this

does not totally say that men are not harassed, but the rate is low with few negative psychological consequences of sexual harassment compared to women. Despite the reality it is often disclaimed or trivialised (Bello, 2020).

5. Female Sexual Harassment Incidents in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions: Media Report and Empirical Findings

The hidden nature of this menace makes the cases of sexual harassment to be underreported (Imonikhe et al 2011; Omonijo et al, 2013) despite high incidence of this menace in our tertiary institution (Imonikhe, Okeyo 2014; Joseph, 2015). Despite this fact, there are still some cases of sexual harassment that was popular and reported in the media. In April 2018, Professor Richard Akindele of the Department of Accounting Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife was accused to have sexually harassed a female student named Monica Osagie (Alexandra, 2018; Lawal, 2018). Their recorded exchanges where the said lecturer was verbally harassing the female student disclosed to the media and became a matter of nation-wide discuss. The embattled professor was investigated and later found guilty of sexual harassment. He was later sentenced by a High court Judge sitting in Osogbo to a 2-year imprisonment making the conviction Nigeria's first sexual corruption case. Another mind-blowing revelation regarding sexual harassment in our tertiary institution was reported by an investigative journalist of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) named Kiki Mordi, (who disguised as a 17-year-old admission seeker) and a senior lecturer, Dr. Boniface Igbeneghu on the campus of the University of Lagos. The 13-minute viral video showed how the lecturer was caught demanding for sex from the disguised student before he could help her secure admission into the institution. In another similar development, a lecturer also from University of Lagos Dr. Samuel Oladipo, was caught demanding sex from a female admission seeker before he could help the student secure admission into the school in the viral video. The University of Lagos management after evidence suspended the two lecturers involved in the shameful act.

Recently, another sexual harassment occurred in the Polytechnic Ibadan between Mr. Ajadi, lecturer in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Faculty of Environmental Studies, and 31-year-old Modinat Balogun. Investigation revealed that Mr. Ajadi has been sexually harassing Modinat Balogun. This fact was gotten though some recorded telephone discussions, which went to public domain in 2019. The management suspended Mr Ajadi from the school and set up an investigative panel to thoroughly investigate the sexual assault between the lecturer and the said student. On Friday, September 11, 2020 upon report of investigation, found the lecturer guilty of sexual harassment. The governing councils of the institution therefore terminated the appointment of the said lecturer. In 2020, another lecturer Mr Olabisi Olaleye, from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife also sexually harassed his own student named Motunrayo Afolayan. The university upon evidences dismissed the said lecturer from the

university. In the same university and year, Mr Omo-Etan, a lecturer at the institution's Distance Learning Centre, was suspended for sexual abuse of a 19-year-old female student via a telephone conversation. He was later suspended by the school management and also handed over to the police for allegation of sexual assault. It can be seen that the abuse of female students is practically the same in many tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Otekunrin, Makinde and Adepoju (2017) found in their study that 69.8% of female graduates reported having been sexually abused at school by their male peers and lecturers. Also, 32.2% of female disclosed they get sexual gestures in trade for academic favours while only 29.4% receive undesirable sexual touching. Examining the prevalence of sexual harassment among university students, Omorogiuwa (2018) found that prevalence of sexual harassment was shown to females more than males and that females experienced negatively when harassed than males. In his research on sexual harassment at Ebonyi State University, Ogbonnaya (2011) found that 89.5 per cent of respondents had knowledge of female sexual victimization, while only 36.7 per cent of female students had experienced the threat of sexual harassment, only 50.9 per cent of such actions had been committed by university staff. Similarly, a study by Imonikhe, Idogho and Aludede (2011) on forms of sexual harassment in public tertiary institutions in the state of Edo found that 70 per cent of teachers and 69 per cent of students believed there was sexual harassment in their school. Ekore (2012) found that females have higher awareness of things that makes up sexual harassment. Abe's (2012) report on sexual harassment among university students found that 85 percent of female students had encountered one type of physical harassment at school, while only 9 percent had experienced physical abuse. Omonijo et al (2013) found that 40-50 per cent of female students were sexually abused, while 30 per cent of those who were harassed did not report the incident to the school authorities.

6. Factors that Lead to Female Sexual Harassment in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Many factors in the literature have been found as antecedents of female sexual harassment in tertiary institution in Nigeria. Some of the factors include but not limited to:

1. Lack of Academic Integrity

Some lecturers in Nigerian tertiary institution lack academic integrity to diligently carry out their duties as an academia. In some cases, these lecturers are not always satisfied with self not until they sexually harassed their students all because they know they have the power to do so with little or nobody checkmating them of such deviant act. Most of the lecturers that lack this integrity see no reason why they cannot date their students.

2. Indecent Dressing

Indecent dressing by some of the female students on campus has also increased

the occurrence of sexual harassment. Some students often time wear dress that revealed their nudity or nakedness to lecturer offices, or lecture room which tempt some male lecturers with poor self-control into seeking sexual relationship with these female students. In a situation when these female students disagree with their sexual advances, such person who is in a position of power resort to engaging in sexual harassment.

3. Declining Academic Standards

Nowadays, academic performance of students including female students is on a serious decline. This is because tertiary education is increasingly view as a social vocation with many students preferring to engage in cultism or high-class prostitution. This situation therefore makes female student vulnerable for a male lecturer to threaten a female student with failure, because such lecturer is aware that the student is below average or is not serious with his academics. In another vicious cycle, some female students are of the view that they can have good grade once they willingly to have sex with their lecturers.

4. Inadequate Security

The poor state of security in Nigeria tertiary institution has also in a way encouraged sexual harassment. This is because poor policing as a result of poorly staffed security outfits on and outside campus have given avenue for undesirable elements such as students and lecturers the right to harass female students on campus. There have being reported cases of female students been raped by lecturer in their office or by male students (usually cultists) in an ambiguous location on campus without the security arresting the culprit (Okoroafor Umoh & Ojinma 2014).

5. Gender Stereotype

The incessant stereotype against female gender has also contributed in no small measure to sexual harassment being experienced mostly by females. Hence Anene and Osayamwen (2016) rightly describe sexual harassment as an end product of gender inequality. The general phenomena leading to violence against women effectively downgraded the chances of female students to legal, social, political and economic equality in society in order to stand up and challenge sexual harassment.

6. Lack of Specific Policies on Sexual Harassment

The lack of legislation on sexual harassment in Nigeria continues to cause female sexual harassment in our tertiary institution. That is why either reported or unreported; the threat of sexual assault against women will remain high in our tertiary institution if adequate legislation on sexual harassment in the workplace, including tertiary institutions, is not enforced.

7. Patriarchal Configuration of the Society

The patriarchal configuration of many African societies, including Nigeria has also

contributed to the increasing incidence of sexual harassment among female students. This is because females are considered to have a lower status than males and are frequently seen as having poor power relationships (Ladebo, 2003). This is why when women raise issues of sexual harassment in the society they are often labelled as trouble-makers or are often blame for such harassment (Amukugo, 2017). This has discouraged many female students to report the incident of sexual harassment either directed at them or their female friends on campus.

7. Effect of Female Sexual Harassment in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions

The threat of sexual assault in Nigeria's tertiary institutions has far-reaching consequences not only for female students, but for the university as well as for the nation as a whole. Some of the effects results are illustrated briefly.

1. Psychological Problems

Female who are sexually harassed are often faced with some psychological challenges associated with this illicit act. For example, female victims can be vulnerable to stressful traumatic symptoms arising from this menace capable of distorting their thoughts and feelings which come in form of depression, sleeplessness, fear, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and loss of trust.

2. Lower academic standard of tertiary institutions

Sexual harassment of female is capable of affecting the reputation as well as lowers the standard and rankings of our tertiary institution in Nigeria. This is because certificates which should be bagged on merit are now gotten through Sex-for-marks and this is constantly seen by the international communities.

3. Loss of academic interest and school drop-out

Females who are presented with the issue of sexual assault by their lecturers are often frustrated either by losing interest in their academic history or by a long-term drop out of school. This has significant effect on the girl child education and increased rate of female illiteracy in the country.

4. Health challenges

There are several health implications of sexual harassment, particularly the physical and emotional life of the victim. Female's victims are frequently presented with HIV/AIDS and other sexual issues such as transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy and other health problems.

5. Family stereotype and violation of human right

The perpetrators of sexual harassment will not only be a mockery in the society, it will also affect a long-life stereotype effect on the family image. Sexual assault is also a form of violation of the fundamental human rights of certain victims, in particular their right to human dignity and the right to freedom of movement.

8. Theoretical Framework

The study was hinged on the socio-cultural theory. The theory looked at sexual assault as a product of the inequalities that are part of the societal notions of patriarchy, male superiority and female subordination. Therefore, sexual harassment is understood as a way to hold female in a lower position (Ladebo 2003). Recently, the reasons for the prevalence of sexual assault have been embedded in socio-cultural. Feminist theories suggest that the general tendency of men to retain their power dominance over women in society is derives from sexual coercion and abuse (Bohner, Weisbrod, Raymond, Barzui, & Schwarz, 1993). However, scholars have recently begun to understand the role that individual differences play in promoting sexual assault (Pina, Gannon, & Saunders, 2009). A new theory of women's ambivalence shows that sexist ideologies are viewed from a female paternalistic belief of benevolent sexism that is violence against women and hostile sexism. These two types of sexism, representing and preserving the oppression of women, are complementary and common across cultures (Glick et al., 2000). That is, why many women may excel in some professions, such as teaching and nursing, but they may not be allowed to pursue male-dominated professions. Women's occupations in most cultures have traditionally been off-shoot of female sex role (Glick et al., 2000). Relating this theory to this present study, the high incidence of female students been mostly the victim and males most times as the perpetrators is embedded in the cultural notion of the society such that male are often seen as having a high visual arousal level than female and lower status than men in the society makes sexual harassment as a form of dominance pertinent among men in the society including the tertiary institutions.

9. Fighting the Scourge of Sexual Harassment in Nigerian Tertiary Institution

Fighting the menace of sexual assault among female students in Nigeria tertiary institution required collaborative effort of all relevant stakeholders, including the three tiers of government (Executive, legislature and judiciary) parents, management of tertiary institutions, and civil society. This is because reports of sexual harassment are becoming to have negative implication on the sustainability of job engagement and academic success in higher learning institutions in Nigeria. Country of the world has committed both financial and human capital to strategies toward eradicating the menace from their society. Many laws supporting female assault and other forms of gender-based violence has been endorsed by international communities. For instance, the Beijing Forum for Action recognizes sexual harassment as a form of violence against women and as a form of discrimination, and calls for a range of actions, including government, employers, labor unions and civil society, to ensure that government legislation on sexual harassment is implemented and enforced and that employers implement anti-harassment policies and prevention strategies.

Also, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention (No. 111) of 1958 and (No. 169) assert that sexual assault is a form of gender discrimination that is not tolerated in the work place including educational institutions. In some developed and developing countries of the world, sexual harassment especially in the educational settings has already been addressed through proper local policies and disciplinary codes with different institutions put in place to implement the policies (Joubert, 2009; Reena & Saheab, 2012). Countries such as the United States of America (USA), Pakistan, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa have functional sexual assault policies in their respective educational institutions (Joseph, 2015; Joubert, 2009; US Department of Education, 2008).

Despite Nigeria being known as the giant of Africa, the commitment toward eradicating sexual harassment in our tertiary institution is still far from reach. While Section 42(1) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended) made an attempt to stop stereotype on the grounds of sex against a Nigerian citizen. However, the breadth of the clause is narrowed and reasonably selective. It is unfortunate that there is no federal legislative law combating sexual harassment at the moment. The Sexual Harassment Prohibition Bill sponsored to the National Assembly, is yet to be implemented (Yebisi, & Olukayode, 2017). Until the bill is passed and signed into law by the president, security agencies and other relevant stakeholders will continue to face serious challenges prosecuting people involving in sexual harassment in Nigeria. The successful two-year prison sentence reported in the first sexual corruption case against Prof. Akindele on the grounds of sexual harassment, was revolutionary and seemed to signal a new age of concerted efforts to tackle sexual harassment. However, The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) failed to conclude a broker plea agreement of the accused person (Prof. Akinjide) would have been warned and fined was not granted by the Chief Judge. This shows the reluctance by ICPC to prosecute comprehensively with the charge but the law was fully implemented to the latter. The unwillingness of the ICPC as an agency of government fortified by section 98 of the Criminal Code and section 112 of the Independent Corrupt Act to arrest and prosecute lecturers accused of sexual harassment has grave implications for ICPC's efforts and the increase in sexual harassment in Nigeria tertiary institutions. Since policies law and strict implementation have really helped developed world in the fight against sexual harassment, it will be vital that local policies be adapted from the international organisations and countries which can be used to fight the scourge of sexual harassment which has continued to impend the girl child education and gender equality in our country.

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper sought to extend the discourse on sexual harassment beyond a quantitative exercise in a bid to proffer strategy that can mitigate female sexual harassment in Nigeria. It is obvious from the study that female sexual harassment across tertiary institutions in

Nigeria is still at an alarming rate and has continued to cause serious psychosocial consequences to the female students and the institution as a whole. Despite collective efforts made by institution managements, parents, civil society and journalists, in the fight against female sexual harassment, such efforts have yielded little or nothing. The study finding, also concluded that lack of academic integrity, indecent dressing, declining academic standard, gender stereotype among others are some of the factors accountable for sexual assault in Nigeria tertiary institutions. The study also found that sexual abuse is a violation of the fundamental human rights of female learners in Nigerian universities, which presents a major challenge to girls' education, gender equality and sustainable growth. The incessant media reports of sexual harassment among lecturers in our tertiary institutions have continued to dent the reputation and integrity of our tertiary institutions. It can be seen that Nigerian tertiary institutions at present have no existing legislation to curb sexual harassment and this has led to a significant setback in the fight against the menace. Fighting the scourge of sexual harassment in our country needs stringent measures to be put in place. Based on these summations, the study recommended that

1. Legislatures in the National Assembly should speed up the anti-sexual harassment bill and immediately be passed into law by the president of the country. The proposed bill should be strictly prosecuted by the security agencies and implemented by the judiciary whenever the need arises.
2. The proposed anti-sexual harassment bill should be adapted by all tertiary institutions in order to devise effective policies that would not only suspend the perpetrator but also criminalize sexual assault and ensure that all persons on campus, particularly female students, are protected from the menace.
3. The tertiary institutions and government security agencies should equip their security unit for rapid response to any type of sexual harassment especially to the female students either on or off campus.
4. School management should ban all indecent dressing patterns among female students and enforce a cultural acceptable dress code such that any female students found violating this dress code should be seriously penalised as a deterrent for others.
5. Finally, Behavioural scientists' i.e. psychologists, sociologists, and counsellors should be employed to all tertiary institutions to organise seminars and workshop on a regular basis for staff (academic and non-academic) as well as students. For staff, self-control training should be inculcated in staff personality makeup in order for them to cope and resist sexual advances, gestures and intimidation by female as well as enlighten them on the destructive tendency sexual harassment could have on them and their institution as a whole. On the other hand, students, particularly females, should be trained on their right and ability to speak up against sexual harassment.

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