

Sex for Grades: Untold Stories of Sexual Harassment in Institutions of Higher Learning in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined sexual harassment in higher learning institutions in Nigeria. Diverse forms of sexual harassment experienced by respondents in higher institutions, the perceived causes, incidence, prevalence, and consequences on respondents were examined. Three hundred respondents recruited through the multistage sampling method participated in the study, while the data was retrieved through questionnaires. Almost half (49.7%) of the respondents in the study were sexually harassed in school, out of which, (48.3%) were sexually harassed more than once. Verbal sexual harassment topped the list of forms of sexual harassment (25.5%), while wearing seductive dresses ranked as the highest perceived cause of sexual harassment with (81.2%). Sexual harassment was most prevalent in public universities, while respondents were mostly angered when they were sexually harassed with (27.5%) even though (18.1%) were terrified while (16.8%) felt violated.

Keywords: *Sexual harassment, universities, fear, violated, Nigeria.*

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.56279/ped.v41i2.2>

Introduction

Sexual harassment is a global phenomenon that permeates almost every facet of human society, including institutions of higher learning (Wilson & Krans, 2014; Taiwo, Omole & Omole, 2014 & Long & Hubble, 2018). Although in every society where

human interaction between opposite sexes takes place, some levels of sexual attraction are expected, when this happens, mutual interest and shared response should define such sexual behaviour. While sexual harassment has a long history, it has only received serious attention as a social malaise in recent years. It appears that sexual harassment has a global part of general education both as an abusive practice within educational institutions and as a classroom topic. For example, a longitudinal study conducted in the United Kingdom between 2016 and 2017 found that 7,688 cases of sexual harassment by students against other students were reported during that school year in England and Wales alone (Stokes, 2017). Similarly, another longitudinal study conducted in the United States in 2014 suggests that sexual harassment is predominant in many educational settings, with Homophobic name-calling setting the stage for social behaviour (Ó'Mochain, 2018).

Sexual harassment is not a newly occurring phenomenon in Nigeria; it has a long history of existence, even though it has not been given due prominence (Erinosho, Femi-Oyewo & Oduwole, 2018). Today, institutions of higher learning that are meant to be centers for knowledge creation, dissemination and realisation of students' potential have turned into a haven of sexual harassment where female students are sexually harassed by their male lecturers (Ajala, 2020). Allegations of sexual harassment where male lecturers tend to make sex a condition for grades are said to have been reported in many institutions of learning in and around the country with implications on the well-being of victims (Imonikhe, Aluede & Idogho, 2012; Ibekwe, 2015; Abudu, 2017; Ajala, 2020). A study that was conducted on some institutions of higher learning across the country confirmed the high prevalence of different forms of sexual harassment (Erinosho, Femi-Oyewo & Oduwole, 2018). However, despite the findings from the studies, not many institutions of higher learning adopt the cues to frontally address the problem and develop policy measures to regulate and/or sanction the behaviour; hence, it has remained a severe but insufficiently addressed problem.

Sexual harassment, which can be defined as an unwanted, often coercive, sexual behaviour directed by one person toward another, Alberta Human Rights Commission (2017) comes in different forms. According to the Department of Industrial Relations (2018), sexual harassment can present in the following forms: Whistling or staring at a person, standing too close or blocking the way of a person, trailing or stalking someone, hugging and kissing someone, rape, sending an appealing text on email, text, and social media platforms, talking about sex, commenting on a person's physical features or appearance, making sexual compliments, jokes, insinuations, insults, undignified comments, or slights, making enquiries about dating or sex, coercing someone to date or have sex, lying or spreading sexual rumours about someone, displaying or circulating sexual or insulting images on paper or electronically, making sexual gestures and exposing private body parts. The impacts of sexual harassment on victims cannot be overemphasised. According to Houle, Staff, Mortimer, Uggem and

Blackstone (2011), sexual harassment is known to have psychological and emotional consequences on the health of victims involved, mainly when it results in stress. For example, depending on the form, sexual harassment can result in irritation, frustration, anxiety, stress, sadness, trauma, irritability, negative outlook, emotional flooding, mood swings, impulsivity, anxiety, guilt, shame, fears of loss of control, escape fantasies, rage episodes, compulsive thoughts, crying spells, anger, fear, self-doubt, low self-esteem, low self-confidence, poor concentration, helplessness, humiliation, vulnerability and alienation on its victims (Taiwo, Omole & Omole, 2014).

A previous study conducted by Imonikhe, Aluede and Idogho (2012) further revealed that within institutions of higher learning, certain coercive behaviours are employed by male lecturers to perpetuate sexual harassment, such as withholding or threats to withhold grades that are either earned or deserved and submission or threat to submit an underserved performance. When this happens, female students must choose between succumbing to the lecturer's sexual advances or forfeiting their grades. Either decision can have negative impacts on the victim's psychological, emotional, and physical health since students must choose between the devil and the deep blue sea. Some other studies have also shown that sexual harassment has a more devastating effect on the education of female students than their male counterparts because, as fear sets in, victims become helpless. Their academic activities become disrupted (Magley, 2011 & Long & Hubble, 2018). Moreover, females are much more likely to be vulnerable to sexual harassment because they, more often than men, lack power and self-confidence, are unsecured or have been socialised to suffer in silence (William & Barbara, 1998). Besides, when rape is involved, victims become even more devastated and traumatised (Sharkansky, 2019).

Experiences of sexual harassment among females come with diverse negative health consequences. Sometimes, some of the victims are pushed into deep psychological trauma depending on the extent of the harassment with negative consequences on the larger society (Gouws & Kritzinger, 1995; Lenhart, 2004; Ackard & Neumark-Sztainer, 2002). Sexual harassment has also been shown to affect female emotional wellbeing, self-esteem, and ability to succeed academically, depending on the severity (Davidson & Fielden, 1999; Imonikhe et al., 2012 & Abe, 2012).

Unfortunately, this abnormal, endemic, antisocial behaviour appears to have become a norm in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. At the same time, social work interventions in this regard seem to be apparently missing. According to Ahmed and Tijani (2019), several cases of sexual harassment that have been reported in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria have only received lip service. Many of the perpetrators go unpunished, Ajala (2020), while their victims are usually left to deal with the

consequences that arise from such actions. The subsequent lack of trust that may have resulted from this may have further enhanced the problem with victims having no one to turn to for rescue, hence, becoming more vulnerable (Ibekwe, 2015).

Sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria appears to be under-researched and even less reported, while very little is done by concerned authorities to address the situation (Ibekwe, 2015). While various studies have been conducted on sexual harassment in higher learning institutions in Nigeria (see, for example, Abubakar et al., 2010; Eme & Omolara, 2010); Aluede, Imokhire & Idogho, 2012; Omonijo et al., 2013; Taiwo, Omole & Omole, 2014; Akanle, Ola & Adewunmi, 2020), many of these studies are reviews from the available literature—lacking first-hand information and lived experiences from the field. It is this critical knowledge gap that this study sought to fill. This study, therefore, examines the incidence, frequency, nature and perceived causes and prevalence of sexual harassment among respondents.

Theoretical Foundation

Natural/Biological Theory

The Natural/Biological theory proposes that sexual harassment is caused by a natural sexual attraction that goes on between people. It holds that men have stronger sex drives and, as such, are biologically motivated to engage in the sexual pursuit of women. It disagrees with the notion that sexual harassment is offensive or discriminatory, but it is rather perceived as merely a product of biological urges. According to the Natural/Biological theory, men have strong biological urges for sexual activities. When they lose control over their sexual drive, they may exert forcible powers towards women in the quest to satisfy their sexual urges (Tangri & Hayes, 1997). It further holds that individuals with no previous intention of sexually harassing a female may find themselves engaging in such an act when the opposite sex entices them. Drawing from the propositions of this theory, sexual harassment within the context of this study can be said to be a product of natural sexual attraction between female students and their male lecturers. Since men have a stronger inner drive for sex than their female counterparts, there are possibilities that these innate capacities may have been propelled by motivations provided by female students within the school campuses. For example, studies conducted by scholars such as Ogunbamerun (2006), Abubakar et al. (2010), and Kaufman et al. (2019) indicate that female students in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria are accustomed to wearing revealing and seductive dresses. We are of the opinion that this may be responsible for the prevalence of sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria.

Although the natural/biological theory acknowledges that an innate human instinct is potentially driving factor for sexual harassment, it explains sexual harassment in simplistic manner, ignoring all societal and personal factors. It also belittles sexual

harassment as part of a regular reproductive ritual or a product of some twisted appetites in men (Tangri et al., 1982).

Methods

To achieve our aim, the descriptive study adopted a quantitative research method. The study was conducted among female graduates of institutions of higher learning undertaking their one-year compulsory postgraduate National Youth Service Scheme (NYSC). A scheme established by the Nigerian government in 1973 to indoctrinate discipline, patriotism, and loyalty in Nigerian youths in any situation they may find themselves (National Youth Service Corps, 2017). Every year, graduates of institutions of higher learning in Nigeria are mandated to serve the country for one year through the scheme. The body posts graduates from various institutions to various states, where they are expected to serve the country for a year. The scheme organises a compulsory three-week orientation camp in every state where graduates from various institutions selected into various states are camped and given paramilitary training that will equip them and launch them into their primary assignment afterwards.

This study was conducted at the Ondo State's National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) orientation campground in southwestern Nigeria, where various graduates from institutions of higher learning in Nigeria are posted for their orientation. Respondents were recruited at the mammy market situated within the orientation camp to cater for the needs of corps members. The mammy market comprises various shops and business outlets such as eateries, saloons, cash points, and business centres, as well as relaxation and cool spots. The study was conducted over three weeks between the 10th and 30th of March 2021.

Respondents comprised graduates from various institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, such as Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnic, as well as the College of Agriculture and College of Health Technology. This also includes graduates from institutions abroad who are willing to partake in the scheme. The eligibility criteria include female corps members who are graduates of higher learning institutions undertaking their orientation at the Ondo State campground. By contrast, male corps are ineligible for the study.

A total of 300 respondents were recruited through a multistage sampling method. The first stage was cluster sampling, where people were usually gathered within the camp at the mammy market. The second stage was purposive sampling, where respondents were selected from the crowd or cluster. Respondents were recognised out of the crowd by their special uniform, which distinguish them from other people and convenience sampling methods where respondents were recruited as convenient to the researcher. There were about 1,500 corpse members in the camp during the orientation

camp. Primary data was retrieved from the field using a structured questionnaire, which contained 24 open and closed questions. The questionnaire was designed based on the objectives of the study. The questions were grouped into three sections, which are as follows: Section (A) Socio-Demographic characteristics of respondents comprising of four Items. Section B: Questions relating to sexual harassment among respondents, which covers five items and subsections which were open-ended. Section C: Consequences of sexual harassment on respondents, which comprised 15 items. Categorical variables were analysed using an Excel spreadsheet and were presented in tables consisting of frequencies and simple percentages. This is because descriptive research design helps researchers measure the characteristics of a population systematically by collecting data that describe the population without manipulating or altering any variables (Hassan, 2023). Besides, the study aims to describe the phenomena and not attempt to establish cause-and-effect relationships between variables or make predictions about future outcomes. It also focuses on providing a detailed and accurate representation of the data collected, which can be useful for generating hypotheses, exploring trends, and identifying patterns in the data.

The questionnaires were tested for content validity and reliability using Kuder Richardson 20 and Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Their reliability was 0.75 to 0.93. A pilot test was initially conducted before the exercise to determine the feasibility of the study and identify weaknesses in the study. It also helped to test whether the study instrument, is asking the intended questions, whether the format is comprehensible and whether the selected validated tool is appropriate for the target population.

Consent was obtained from the management of the orientation camp to conduct the study. Respondents also gave informed consent after they were duly briefed on the purpose and significance of the study. Respondents were given the opportunity to decline to fill out the questionnaire if they deemed it fit and the option to opt out of the study if they so wished. Privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for respondents were ensured during the study and beyond. Respondents' identities and institutions of higher learning were treated with anonymity.

The study was not without its limitations. This is because the study was conducted in just one state out of the 36 states in Nigeria, and as such, the findings might not be representative. Also, the study only focused on sexual harassment among female students, which tends to limit the scope of the study. Furthermore, the study adopted a descriptive research design to describe the distribution of one or more variables without regard to any causal or another hypothesis, which might not be adequate to describe the trend of the problem in the country.

Results

Table one contained the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in the study. 15.7% of the respondents fall within the age category of (18-22) years, while a whopping 68.3% fall within the age bracket of (23-28) years. A total of 10.3% of the respondents are within the age bracket of (29-33) years old, while 5.7% of the total respondents fall within the age bracket of 34 years old and above. Almost all 90.3% of the respondents belong to the Christian faith, while just a few, 9.7% of the respondents in the study are female. Out of the number of respondents in the study, only 10.7% are from the Yoruba ethnic background, while Hausa represent 6.0%. However, a total of 45.3% of the respondents belong to the Igbo ethnic background. At the same time, other minority groups, such as Tiv, Igala, Uhrobo, Ibibio, and Itshekiri, among others, constitute the rest of the respondents in the study, representing 38.0%. Furthermore, almost half of the respondents in the study, 48.3%, are graduates from government universities, i.e., Federal and State universities. In contrast, less than one-fourth, 17.7%, are graduates of privately owned universities. Others include 4.4% from faith-based universities, 27.0% from polytechnics, 0.7% from mono-technic, 1.3% from the College of Agriculture and 0.7% from the College of Health Technology.

Table 1

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

| Socio-Demographic Characteristics | Frequencies | Percentages (%) |
|--|--------------------|------------------------|
| Age (in years) | | |
| 18-22 | 47 | (15.7) |
| 23-28 | 205 | (68.3) |
| 29-33 | 31 | (10.3) |
| 34 Years and above | 17 | (5.7) |
| Total | 300 | (100.0) |
| Religion | | |
| Christianity | 271 | (90.3) |
| Islam | 29 | (9.7) |
| Total | 300 | (100.0) |
| Ethnic Background | | |
| Yoruba | 32 | (10.7) |

| | | |
|--|------------|----------------|
| Hausa | 18 | (6.0) |
| Igbo | 136 | (45.3) |
| Others i.e., Ijaw, Igala, Nupe, Ibibio, Efik, Esan, Idoma, Ikwere, Ogoni, Tiv, Urhobo. | 114 | (38.0) |
| Total | 300 | (100.0) |
| Institutions of Higher Learning | | |
| Public universities (Federal and State) | 145 | (48.3) |
| Private Universities | 53 | (17.7) |
| Faith-Based Universities | 13 | (4.3) |
| Polytechnics | 81 | (27.0) |
| Monotechnic | 2 | (0.7) |
| College of Agric | 4 | (1.3) |
| College of Health Tech | 2 | (0.7) |
| Total | 300 | (100.0) |

Source: **Researcher's survey 2021**

Table 2 contained questions relating to sexual harassment among respondents. Results showed that about half, 49.7%, of the respondents had been victims of sexual harassment. In contrast, in school, out of which 34.2% were sexually harassed once, 48.3% were sexually harassed more than once, 12.8% were sexually harassed many times, and only 4.7% were sexually harassed uncountable times. As regards the nature of sexual harassment respondents became victims of, 21.5% of the respondents in the study were victims of lustful gazing, 20.8% were victims of lecturers making the condition of grades dependent on sexual favour. In contrast, 25.5% were victims of verbal sexual harassment. Others include discussing sexual relations 4.0%, pressured to engage in sexual activities 7.4%, unwanted sexually explicit photos 4.0%, unwanted touching or physical contact 5.4%, unwelcomed sexual advances 4.0%, requests for sexual favours 3.4%, physical acts of assault 3.4% and outright rape 0.6%.

Further results from Table 2 revealed the factors responsible for sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. According to the result, 16.8% of the respondents suggested it could be because of female students wearing flashy or heavy makeups. In comparison, 81.2% of the respondents suggested it may be because of female students putting on seductive dresses. Other factors include the fact that sexual harassment is a norm among male lecturers in Nigerian higher institutions 43.0%, desperation for grades 27.5%, lack of self-discipline on the part of male lecturers 6.7%, and over-familiarity with male lecturers by female students 4.0%. On the prevalence

of sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, almost half 49.0% of the respondents who were sexually harassed during their study graduated from public universities. Others include 20.1% from private universities, faith-based universities 2.7%, polytechnics 26.2%, college of Agriculture 1.3%, and College of Health Technology 0.7%.

Table 2

Incidence, Frequency, Nature and Perceived Causes and Prevalence of Sexual Harassment among Respondents

| Variables | Frequency | Percentages (%) |
|---|------------------|------------------------|
| Did your male lecturer sexually harass you while you were in school? | | |
| Yes | 149 | (49.7) |
| No | 151 | (50.3) |
| Total | 300 | (100.0) |
| How often were you sexually harassed? | | |
| Once | 51 | (34.2) |
| More than once | 72 | (48.3) |
| Many times, | 19 | (12.8) |
| Uncountable times | 7 | (4.7) |
| Total | 149 | (100.0) |
| What was the nature of the sexual harassment? | | |
| Lustful gazing | 32 | (21.5) |
| Making conditions of grades dependent on a sexual favour | 31 | (20.8) |
| Verbal harassment of a sexual nature | 38 | (25.5) |
| Discussing sexual relations | 6 | (4.0) |
| Pressured to engage in sexual activities | 11 | (7.4) |
| Unwanted sexually explicit photo | 6 | (4.0) |
| Unwanted touching or physical contact | 8 | (5.4) |
| Unwelcomed sexual advances | 6 | (4.0) |
| Request for sexual favours | 5 | (3.4) |
| The physical act of sexual assault | 5 | (3.4) |
| Act of rape | 1 | (0.6) |
| | 149 | (100.0) |

| What are the perceived causes of sexual harassment in Institutions of Higher learning in Nigeria? | | |
|--|------------|----------------|
| Wearing heavy/flashy make-up | 25 | (16.8) |
| Putting on seductive/revealing dresses | 121 | (81.2) |
| It is a custom among male lecturers in higher institutions | 64 | (43.0) |
| Desperation for good grade | 41 | (27.5) |
| lack of self-discipline | 10 | (6.7) |
| Over familiarity with male lecturers | 6 | (4.0) |
| Prevalence of Sexual Harassment | | |
| Public universities | 73 | (49.0) |
| Private Universities | 30 | (20.1) |
| Faith-based universities | 4 | (2.7) |
| Polytechnic | 39 | (26.2) |
| College of Agriculture | 2 | (1.3) |
| College of Health Technology | 1 | (0.7) |
| Total | 149 | (100.0) |

Source: **Researchers' survey 2021**

Table 3 revealed the consequences of sexual harassment on respondents in the study. It revealed that 27.5% became angry because of the action, 18.1% became afraid, 16.1% felt humiliated, 7.4% felt like a commodity, and 5.4% of the respondents who were sexually harassed felt useless. Others include 6.7% felt cheated, 6.7% felt used, 9.4% felt demotivated in their studies, 7.4% felt ashamed of the act, 16.8% felt violated, 12.1% felt depressed, 8.7% lost concentration on their studies, 7.4% felt like committing suicide, 8.1% had fatigue while 11.4% had sleep disturbances.

Table 3

Consequences of Sexual Harassment on Respondents

| Variables | Frequency | Percentages (%) |
|--|------------------|------------------------|
| How did you feel being sexually harassed? | | |
| I was angry | 41 | (27.5) |
| I was afraid | 27 | (18.1) |
| I felt humiliated | 24 | (16.1) |
| I felt like a commodity | 11 | (7.4) |
| I felt useless | 8 | (5.4) |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|----|--------|
| I felt cheated | 10 | (6.7) |
| I felt used | 10 | (6.7) |
| I felt de-motivated | 14 | (9.4) |
| I felt ashamed | 11 | (7.4) |
| I felt violated | 25 | (16.8) |
| I was depressed | 18 | (12.1) |
| I lost concentration on my studies | 13 | (8.7) |
| I felt like committing suicide | 11 | (7.4) |
| I had fatigue | 12 | (8.1) |
| I had sleep disturbances | 17 | (11.4) |

Source: Researcher's survey 2021 (multiple responses)

Discussion

The study examined sexual harassment among female students in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. Results from the study showed that almost half of the respondents were sexually harassed at one time or another by male lecturers while they were in school. This result corresponds with the views of Akanle, Ola and Adewunmi (2020), who opined that the rate of sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria is alarming. This finding also corroborates the result of a previous study conducted by Aluede, Imokhire and Idogho (2011), which confirmed that sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria is on the rise. This may not also be far from the fact that sexual harassment is prevalent in countries with gender inequality, high levels of poverty and weak educational systems (Beninger, 2013; Lynch, 2013 & Sharma, 2013). We cannot also rule out the fact that some of the lecturers in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria are poorly trained, underpaid and under-sourced, hence contributing to the inevitability of the problem of sexual harassment within the school system.

Furthermore, almost half of the respondents in the study were sexually harassed more than once while they were in school. This probably may have been because, often, incidences of sexual harassment are not reported. It is usually done in secret as a result of the shame attached to it. The perpetrators continue to sexually harass their victims until they are satisfied or until the student graduates from the school and leaves without being able to tell anyone about it. When victims keep quiet and do not report incidences of sexual harassment, it is bound to continue. Animah (2019) argues that the more this happens, the more they are likely to lose their self-esteem and ownership over their body and experience shame, which further robs them of their power and sense of efficacy and believe that they can change their circumstance (Engel, 2018). This, however, contradicts the result of the study conducted by Yoon et al. (2010), in which 50% of the respondents had been sexually harassed at least once, and 22.2% had

been sexually harassed more than one time.

With regards to the nature of sexual harassment experienced by respondents while in school, verbal harassment topped the list, with a little over one-fourth of the respondents having experienced it, followed by lustful gazing and making the condition of grades dependent on sexual favour in that order. However, the least form of sexual harassment experienced by respondents in the study included physical acts of sexual assault and actual rape, with about one-tenth of the respondents in the study. This result correlates with findings of a previous study conducted by Eme and Omolara (2010) in which about two-thirds of the respondents have experienced non-physical type of sexual harassment, such as sexual comments and requests to do something sexually in exchange for academic favours with almost half experienced the physical type of sexual harassment such as unwanted sexual touching and being intentionally brushed against sexually. This is also like the finding of the study conducted by Sivertsen, Nielsen and Madsen (2019) among students in Norway, in which verbal expression topped the list while rape and rape attempts were reported to be the least.

Concerning the perceived causes of sexual harassment in the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, wearing seductive and revealing dresses topped the list, with more than a fourth-fifth of the respondents in the study opining this. This relates to the result of a previous study conducted by Kaufman et al. (2019) in which indecent dressing was one of the major factors responsible for sexual harassment in the study population. It also corroborates the results of the study by Abubakar et al. (2010), in which indecent dressing by female students is a decisive factor that causes sexual harassment among respondents. According to Ogunbamerun (2006), female students in higher learning institutions dress indecently to seduce their male lecturers. They are said to wear tight and transparent dresses that expose their body, thereby making themselves vulnerable to sexual harassment. However, this finding negates the result from a previous study conducted by Taiwo, Omole and Omole (2014) in which poverty and negative peer influence are also critical drivers of sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning in Osun state, Nigeria.

However, on the prevalence of sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, public universities topped the list, representing almost half of the respondents, followed by polytechnics and private universities in that order. This result nevertheless contradicts the findings from a previous study conducted by Onayase (2013) among female students of tertiary institutions in Taraba State, North Central Nigeria, in which no significant difference was found among the respondents in the universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education on the prevalence of sexual harassment of female students. This probably must have resulted from the fact that public universities are usually unwilling to aggressively address cases of sexual harassment by partially dispensing justice to perpetrators (Ibekwe, 2015). Also, because of the low cost of

tuition fees that is common with public universities when compared to private universities, most of the students found in public universities come from the lower class of society, where their voices cannot be heard when they are sexually harassed. It, however, supports the result of the study conducted by Aina-Pelemo, Oke and Alade (2021), in which public universities topped the list of institutions of higher learning in Nigeria in which sexual harassment is prevalent.

Further results also revealed that very few cases (less than a tenth) of the respondents were found to have been sexually harassed in faith-based universities, which confirms the result of a previous study conducted by Omonijo, Uche, Nwadiafor and Omolola (2013) among female students at some private universities in Ogun State southwestern Nigeria in which cases of sexual harassments were reported. It is, however, disheartening that faith-based institutions that are meant to uphold moral values are liable. However, while these activities are usually perpetrated in the hidden, we cannot rule out the fact that the attention of the school authorities may not have been drawn to this, hence making it thrive while the victims suffer in silence.

With respect to the consequences of sexual harassment on the well-being of respondents in the study, the highest number of respondents were angered. This was followed by fear, violation, and humiliation in that order, with the least being respondents feeling used and cheated. This finding, however, differs from that of a previous study conducted by Taiwo, Omole and Omole (2014), in which the highest impact of sexual harassment among respondents in the study was fear. However, when anger sets in, it becomes challenging for victims to concentrate on their academic activities. There is also the likelihood of skipping lectures to avoid contact with their perpetrators, thereby disrupting their academic performances in school. In addition to this, sexual harassment has also been linked to many adverse outcomes, including depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms, diminished mental health, perceived isolation and helplessness, internalised shame, disordered eating, nausea, and sleeplessness (Street et al., 2007). Furthermore, many harassed students experience negative academic effects, such as decreased academic satisfaction, perceptions of faculty, engagement, and performance (Rosenth et al., 2016).

Conclusion

This study concludes that sexual harassment is prevalent in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, especially in public universities. Despite this, sexual harassment is underreported and has far-reaching adverse consequences for the victims. However, in as much as indecent dressing should not be encouraged in institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, the Nigerian government and legal authorities must ensure that those found culpable of the act should not go without being punished. All hands must be on deck to ensure that this social problem in Nigeria's institutions of higher learning is drastically reduced.

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