

Perceived Effects of Sexual Harassment on Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Students

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Abstract: *This study was designed to fluid out the perceived effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being of secondary school students in Oyo metropolis of Oyo state, Nigeria. The study focused on finding the influence of gender and religion effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being of students. The disruptive survey method was adopted for the study. The target population comprised of all secondary school teachers in Oyo metropolis. The sample for the study was selected using purposive sampling technique. A sample of 200 participants was involved in the study. A research instrument titled, "Effects of Sexual Harassment on Psychological Well-being Questionnaire" was employed to collect data for the study. It has two sections. Section A consists of demographic data of gender and religion and Section B consists of 15 items on effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being of students. The content and construct validity of the instrument was established by experts in counselling and test and measurement department of the Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo. The reliability of the instrument was carried out using test re-test procedure and co-efficient of 0.73 were obtained. The findings revealed that sexual harassment make student loose interest in schooling, it makes students perform woefully in examination and also make students develop emotional stress. No significant difference in teachers' perception on effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being of students based on family type and religious affliction. The implication of this findings for Counsellors and Education Managers among others are that both counsellors and Education Managers need to be trained on skills of handling issues of sexual harassment among students. The strategies of handling sexual harassment need to be included in the sexuality and family life education programmes. It is therefore recommended that seminars and conferences should be organized for the teachers in other to enlighten them on challenges of sexual harassment on student's psychological well-being. The school workers and personnel should also be given counselling on unwholesome activities that can lead to sexual harassment.*

Keywords: sexual harassment, psychological well-being, secondary school, mental health and trauma

INTRODUCTION

Unwelcome sexual behaviors, such as vocally or physically soliciting sexual gratification or touch, are considered sexual harassment. Workplaces, educational institutions, and social situations are just a few of the venues where sexual harassment can happen (Ali & Alwan, 2023). In Nigerian society, sex was considered a separate topic (Imasuen, 2024). This accounted for the lack of conversation on sexual matters, particularly between generations. But now that sex-related topics are being discussed openly, even among young people, things have changed in Nigeria. Unwelcome sexual overtures and requests for sexual favors, whether made verbally or physically, that create an uncomfortable, threatening, or hostile learning environment are considered forms of sexual harassment of female students. This can happen in educational environments, such as workplaces, universities, schools, and even online platforms. Sexual harassment is a severe issue that is currently becoming more prevalent in schools in Nigeria and other nations. There are reports of sexual harassment everywhere (Mushta, 2015). According to a US study, high school students and their professors have a stronger influence of sexual harassment and unethical relationships since they frequently meet in person when they seek academic assistance (Ali & Alwan, 2023). This has also been seen in educational institutions where male instructors abuse their power to sexually harass female undergraduate students. Sexual harassment is a serious problem because it is a type of aggression that is gender-based and has as its fundamental goal the oppression of women, whether intentional or not, while simultaneously demonstrating male supremacy. (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Anwar, 2022). One such instance of aggression against women is sexual harassment, as stated in article 40 of the Istanbul Convention.

Sexual harassment encompasses several forms of abuse, such as improper sexual advances, provocative gestures or jokes, verbal abuse, sexually threatening someone, sending pornographic emails or texts, or intimidating someone. Sexual harassment has numerous detrimental impacts on its victims, despite the fact that some people consider it to be a harmless and trivial behavior. This comprises psychological stress, physical or bodily problems that might result in infections and illnesses that can send the victim to the hospital, and emotional stress (Monsoor, 2020).

Many societies faced severe cultural, social, and economic difficulties, which were mirrored in all functioning social institutions in the area of social control. As a result, some behavioral maladjustments among young people emerged, including the occurrence of nationality, according to Ali and Alwan (2023). The type of harassment resulted from complete indiscipline and a severe moral decline. This can result in a situation where people, particularly women, are having issues that negatively impact their psychological wellbeing. These issues include anxiety, despair, low self-esteem, and lack of confidence. Similar side effects, including insomnia, headaches, nausea, and ulcers, can also be brought on by physical trauma. The harassed women

may experience psychological discomfort, feel humiliated, furious, lose confidence, and become psychologically ill. In certain circumstances, it may be in resignation in employment. The aforementioned objectives motivate researchers to look into how sexual harassment affects high school students' psychological health in Oyo State, Nigeria, as reported by medical professionals.

The issue of sexual harassment has been widely recognized. According to a study, sexual harassment and unethical intimacy between high school students and their teachers are more common in the United States because of in-person encounters that occur when students seek assistance on their academic achievement (Ali and Alwan, 2023). The victim, their team, their general health, and the sanctity of human existence are all severely impacted physically and psychologically by sexual harassment.

One type of sexual discrimination that goes against fundamental human rights is sexual harassment. According to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it is an unwanted sexual approach, a request for a sexual favor, or any other verbal or physical sexual behavior.

Sexual harassment has a number of detrimental repercussions on victims' psychological health, such as emotional stress and physical abnormalities that may lead to illnesses and ultimately necessitate hospitalization. Many psychological repercussions, such as anxiety, despair, low self-esteem, and lack of confidence, can result from emotional stress. In addition to other issues, physical trauma can cause insomnia, headaches, nausea, and ulcers. A victim of sexual harassment may experience feelings of humiliation, anger, loss of confidence, and other negative emotions (Imasuen, 2024).

In terms of cognition, victims often develop negative beliefs about men, start to obsess over and continuously look for reasons why the male students or lecturers sexually harassed them, and ultimately develop dissociative identity disorder (Campbell, 2009). People who suffer from dissociative identity disorder are so obsessed with looking in the mirror that it significantly impairs their ability to operate in daily life. They also become distant and neurotic due to their lack of motivation (Nolen, 2008). The person may retreat as a result of this demotivation and eventually experience depression.

According to a number of academics, sexual harassment can cause severe damage to the victim. In addition to experiencing severe anxiety, terror, and mood swings, female students who develop a phobia of men may also become depressed and prefer to spend a lot of time inside (Bennet, 2008, Hill & Kearn, 2011 and Stevan, 2000). These academics go on to explain that victims of sexual harassment may experience long-term psychological repercussions, similar to those of rape. Victims could become the object of backlash, vengeance, etc. During the course of the investigation, the victim may be subjected to cruel treatment, which could further harm their mental health.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Question

1. What are the effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being of secondary school students?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the perception of respondents on effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being of secondary school students based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the perception of respondents on effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being of secondary school students on the basis of religion.

Purpose of the Study

The findings of this study would probably provide useful information on effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being of secondary school students in order to devise strategies for handling the problems to reduce it or possibly eradicate the problem in discussion.

Research Design

This study makes use of a descriptive survey methodology as its research design. Survey method was adopted for the study as it has capacity to sample opinions from respondents' sample & accurately from the population via questionnaires that gave opportunity for the formation of conclusions, inferences, and generalizations regarding contemporary phenomenon.

Sample and Sampling technique

The population of this study consists of all Secondary School Teachers in Oyo metropolis. Considering the fact that all teachers cannot be involved in the study, some teachers from selected Secondary Schools were chosen. Researchers purposively used teachers as respondent because teacher are mostly having direct contact with students in discharge of their primary duties.

The study consists of two hundred sampled participants. The representatives were selected from ten Secondary schools in Oyo metropolis, due to the impracticality of gathering data from the entire population. A purposive sampling technique was to sampled out 200 teachers for the study.

Twenty teachers was purposively selected from ten selected Secondary schools from Oyo metropolis to arrive at two hundred (200) participants used to conduct the study.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation is a vital process of developing or selecting devices for gathering desired data in educational studies (Aina, 2019). Ndagunu and Ajere (2003), defined a questionnaire as series of relevant questions which are used to elicit information from respondents who are normally drawn from the target population of a given study. The questionnaire has two parts. Part 'A' consists of demographic data such as gender, religious affiliation, age, and family type, while part 'B' has fifteen items on the effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being on secondary school students.

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the data analysis, which include percentage, mean score and ranking order for demographic data. The T-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tools were employed to test the three null hypotheses set at 0.05 alpha levels.

Demographic Analysis of**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents based on gender and religion.**

No	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender		
	Male	70	39.5
	Female	121	60.5
	Total	200	100.0
2	Religion		
	ATR	11	8.0
	Christianity	103	51.5
	Islam	86	40.5
	Total	200	100.0

Table 1 indicates that 70 (39.5%) of respondents were males while 121 (60.5%) were females. The table also reveals that 11 (8.0%) were African Traditional Religion practitioners, 103 (51.5%) belongs to Christianity, while 86 (40.5%) falls under Islam.

Research Question: What are the effects of Sexual Harassment on psychological well-being of Secondary School Students as perceived by Secondary School Teachers in Oyo metropolis.

Table 2: Mean and Rank Order of participants view on effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being of secondary school students.

No.	Sexual Harassment Can:	Mean	Rank
1.	Make students lose interest in schooling	3.30	1 st
2.	Make students perform woefully in examination	3.18	2 nd
3.	Make students develop emotional stress	3.11	3 rd
4.	Make students develop bodily disturbance	3.10	4 th
5.	Induce diseases on students	3.94	5 th
6.	Make students sick and lead to hospitalization	2.86	6 th
7.	Lead to development of anxiety	2.79	7 th
8.	Make students have low self-esteem	2.74	8 th
9.	Make students lack confidence	2.62	9 th
10.	Lead students to traumatic experience	2.57	10 th
11.	Make students develop hatred for teacher	2.56	11 th
12.	Lead students to sleeplessness	2.52	12 th
13.	Affect students participation in class activities	2.34	13 th
14.	Promote boredom and fatigue in victim(s) during class	2.32	14 th
15.	Make students engage in examination malpractice	2.13	15 th

The mean and ranking order of respondents about the impact of sexual harassment on secondary school students' psychological health are displayed in the table above. With a mean score of 3.30, item 15—which states that "Sexual harassment makes students lose interest in schooling"—ranked first in the chart. Item 11—which claims to "make students perform woefully in examination"—ranked second with a mean score of 3.18. With a mean score of 3.11, item 1 came in third place. "Make students develop emotional stress" is what the item says. The statement "affect students participation in class activities" (item 12), however, came in at number 13 with a mean score of 2.34. With a mean score of 2.32, item 13, which claims to "make students bored and tired in victims during class," came in at number 14. The statement that "make students engage in examination malpractice" (item 15) came in at number 15 with a mean score of 2.13. Given that the mean scores for twelve of the fifteen items are higher than the 2.50 mid-cut points, it may be concluded that respondents attested to the impact of sexual harassment on secondary school students' psychological health.

Hypotheses Testing

Three null hypotheses were formulated and tested using t-tests and analysis of variance.

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant difference in perception of respondents on the effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being of Secondary School Students based on home type (monogamy/polygamy).

Table 3: Mean, Standard deviation and t-values of respondents' view based on home type.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Df	Cal t-valu	Crit t-val	P-value
Monogamy	147	69.46	2.86	198	1.40	1.96	0.005
Polygamy	53	70.15	3.56				

At the 0.05 level of significance, the table displays a cal t-value of 1.40 and a critical t-value of 1.96 with 198 degrees of freedom. The null hypothesis, which holds that there is no discernible difference in teachers' perceptions of the impact of sexual harassment on secondary school students' psychological well-being depending on the type of house, was not rejected since the computed t-value is smaller than the crucial t-value.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the perception of respondents on effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being of students based on religion.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showing Respondents' view based on religion.

Source	Df	SS	Mean	F-Crit	F-Ratio	P-Value
Between Group	2	597.57	298.786	2.21	3.00	2.10
Within Group	197	27183.42	197.527			
Total	199	27780.99				

At the 0.05 alpha level of significance, Table 4 showed that the computed F-ratio of 2.21 is less than the crucial F-ratio of 3.00. Teachers' perceptions of the impacts of sexual harassment on secondary school students' psychological well-being do not significantly change based on their religious affiliation because the estimated F-ratio is smaller than the crucial F-ratio, supporting the null hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate that sexual harassment can cause students to lose interest in learning, perform poorly on tests, and experience mental stress. According to research by Ali and Alwan (2023), high school pupils who experience sexual harassment psychologically suffer from low academic performance, a loss of interest in learning, and difficulty focusing during class activities. The results of this study showed that respondents attested to the detrimental impacts of

sexual harassment on secondary school students' psychological health and development. Students who experience this syndrome are likely to be confused about life, which can cause them to engage in a variety of social vices, including drug addiction, cultism, prostitution, and other maladaptive behaviors.

According to the results of hypothesis one, respondents' perceptions of how sexual harassment affects students' psychological health varies significantly depending on their gender. According to the findings, teachers' perceptions of how sexual harassment affects students' psychological health would vary depending on their gender. This was in keeping with Franklin (2006), who emphasized that victims have been known to be sexualized in public and to become walking symbols of misdirected romantic love.

Based on this, Macneela and Bredin (2010) speculate that alcohol use may be an escape strategy, which could impair academic performance and serve as a means of expressing unpleasant emotions. However, the victim of sexual harassment can be made to bear a heavy load in the educational setting, regardless of whether there is a favorable or unfavorable opinion of them. No gender would advocate sexual harassment as a social maladjustment and criminal behavior, thus this finding is not shocking. According to hypothesis two, there was no discernible variation in teachers' opinions about how sexual harassment affects secondary school students' psychological health depending on their religion.

According to Ryckan (2008) and Williams (2003), students who are sexually harassed may face emotional issues, become vulnerable, and feel a great deal of resentment toward their harassers or all men in their immediate vicinity. Given that no religious association agreed on the practice of sexual harassment, this is encouraging for religion. According to this research, all religions advocate for harmony and positive interpersonal relationships in society.

CONCLUSION

Researchers worked on effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being of Secondary School Students as expressed by teachers in Oyo metropolis of Oyo state, Nigeria. Findings revealed that sexual harassment can make students to lose interest in schooling, can lead to students performing woefully in examination and also make students develop emotional stress among others. Significant effects was observed on teachers' perception on students who are sexually harassed based on gender. No significant difference was found on teachers' perception on effects of sexual harassment on psychological well-being of students based on family type and religious affiliation.

Recommendations

The following suggestions were put out in light of the substantial negative effects that sexual harassment has on secondary school students' psychological health: Teachers should be educated about the effects of sexual harassment on students' psychological health through seminars and conferences. Beyond academic pursuits, this would improve students' overall psychological health in all areas of their lives.

Counseling on unwholesome extramarital sex should likewise be provided to school employees. Professional school managers and counselors should handle and coordinate this so they can gain the knowledge and abilities they need to carry out their professional responsibilities to children. In order to improve working conditions and their students' well-being, teachers should also be aware of their own teaching methods and personalities.

Religious counselors should support and educate educators about the risks of sexual harassment. This can be accomplished by giving a sermon on their wedding day that focuses on the effects of sexual harassment on students' mental and physical health as well as coping mechanisms. These findings should be used by counselors, educational management, and other stakeholders to help teachers and students develop a deeper knowledge of one another.

To address the needs of educators and students who could be struggling with issues related to sexual harassment, the government at all levels must prioritize the training of social counselors.

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