Views of the Crawford University Work Place Community on Sexual Harassment

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Abstract

This paper surveyed the opinions of Crawford University work place community on the problem of sexual harassment. One hundred members of the University community were sampled, using simple random sampling. Questionnaires were administered to elicit the opinions of the participants on the problem of sexual harassment. The respondents acknowledged that sexual harassment is a serious social problem in Nigeria. The respondents also acknowledged that the problem of sexual harassment has negative consequences on the victims, especially, on the academic performance of the victims. The study discovered that information and policies on sexual harassment were not adequately disseminated in Nigeria society. The survey recommended, therefore, that government and different organizations should give priority to the problem of sexual harassment and the information and policies on sexual harassment should be given wide publicity in the society. People should be well educated on sexual harassment and the victims should be encouraged to lodge complaint. The legal redress should be provided to the victims free of charge and the perpetrators found guilty should be punished accordingly. Finally, people should learn to accord respect to others, especially to women in our society and individual dignity should be treated with reference.

Keywords: sexual harassment, university community, psychological trauma, vulnerability and opinions

1. Introduction

Sexual Harassment is a social problem in every society of the world. It cut across every race, language, colour, religion, sex, age, educational qualification, social status etc. According to Kenny et al (2011), it is a global social phenomenon that causes problems for all working class irrespective of their age, colour, ethnicity, social status or work category. It can also occur in academic setting.

This study, therefore, investigated the views of the Crawford University Community in Nigeria on the issue of sexual harassment. Crawford University is a Missionary University of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Nigeria. The University was licensed in 2005 and started operation the same year.

The study was a preliminary study which investigated opinions of the sampled university participants on some issues related to the problem of sexual harassment. Further studies are expected to be carried out on the problem of sexual harassment in order to widen the horizon of the knowledge on sexual harassment as pertaining to the members of this University Community.

2. Review of the Related Literature

The phrase 'sexual harassment' originated in the United States, Canada and Europe to explain the kinds of gender – based derogation and violence that take place in public places, especially work places and educational institutions (Abe, 2012). Many definitions have been given to sexual harassment by many scholars who have written on the problem of sexual harassment. Sabitha (2008) defined sexual harassment as an unwelcome or uninvited behavior of sexual nature, which is offensive, embarrassing, intimidating, and it affects an employee's work performance, health career or livelihood. It is an unwelcome sexual advance, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of sexual nature (Street et al, 2008). It is any form of unwanted sexual contact obtained through violent or non-violent means (Young, et al, 2009). Sexual Harassment in the humanist view is "an unwanted verbal or physical behaviour of a sexual nature that occurs in the work place or in an educational setting under certain conditions" (Oko and Nwankpa, 2012).

The meaning of 'Sexual Harassment' is socially constructed depending on the personal and situational characteristics of the individual making judgment (Ladebo, 2003). For instance, Lunenburg (2010) argued that men and women often view sexual harassment differently. Women tend to perceive a broader range of behaviours as sexual harassment than do men. But women and men tend to agree that sexual propositions and coercion constitute sexual harassment. In a similar way, Sabitha (2008) explained that women have broader definitions of sexual harassment than men, have more negative attitudes, are less tolerant and consider teasing, looks, gestures, unnecessary physical contact and remarks to be sexual harassment. Sabitha (2008) argued further that men and women with traditional sex – role orientations are more willing to tolerate unwelcome sexual behaviour and less inclined to label it harassment than persons with non – traditional orientations, and that men who have adversarial attitudes

towards women have been consistently more involved in sexually aggressive actions towards women than those with egalitarian attitudes.

Moreover, the nature of job would also determine the individual definitions of sexual harassment. Huebner (2008) explained that sexual harassment varies by work norms in jobs that are typically classified as women's work. According to Huebner (2008), work norms impact workers' perceptions of sexual behaviours, which will help clarify meanings of sexual harassment for individual workers. The author cited nurses and waitresses as examples of such jobs.

According to Abe (2012), there are two types of sexual harassment: quid pro quo and hostile environment harassment. Quid pro quo harassment involves requests for sexual favours, generally by a school employee to a student in exchange for educational participation or benefit (Abe, 2012). It means in order to obtain a job, win promotion, or gain access to training opportunities or other benefits, the granting of sexual favours becomes a contractual term either explicitly or implicitly (Sabitha, 2008). The second type: hostile environment harassment entails harassing sexual conduct that is so severe, persistent or pervasive that it limits the victims' ability to participate in or benefit from work place or educational activities (Abe, 2012). It is a form of sexual annoyance where there are no direct contractual dimensions involved. No clear contractual gain or penalty, but where a pattern of behaviour based on sex develops and creates an uncomfortable and hostile work situation for the victim (Sabitha, 2008).

The main reason for sexual harassment is to dominate the women at work and in society. According to Kenny et al (2011) sexual harassment is a means by which men in higher positions have reinforced their privileges and maintained dominance over women at work and in society. Sexual harassment is seen as a tool of domination to keep the women perpetually subordinated to men (Ladebo, 2003). Sexual harassment can also be used to demonstrate masculinity by men so that they can identify themselves in a macho way; in the presence of other men (Kenny et al, 2011). The vulnerability in sexual harassment is worthy of being mentioned. Some groups of people in the society have been identified as vulnerable groups to sexual harassment. Ladebo (2003) identified young, unmarried or divorced women as likely victims of sexual harassment. Uggen and Blackstone (2012) identified adult women as the primary targets and Okoro and Osawemen (2005) signified the school dropout teenagers as the most vulnerable group in the society. Dumond (2000) pin pointed young and inexperienced people; physically small or weak; mentally affected people; and middle – class group as vulnerable groups to sexual harassment in the society.

The effects of sexual harassment are very grievous. Sexual harassment jeopardizes both individual safety and institutional security (Alarid, 2000). The effects of sexual victimization are pervasive and devastating with profound physical, social and psychological components. Sexual victimization causes psychological trauma, physical assault and continuation of terror, helplessness, and fear. It may also cause depression, suicidal ideation, loss of social status, labeling and stigmatization (Dumond, 2000). Elliott et al (2004) listed fear, anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress, decreased self esteem, social difficulties, psychiatric

problem and sexual dysfunction as grievous effects of sexual harassment. Street et al (2008) argued that sexual harassment in the military was associated with poorer psychological well being and higher rates of substance abuse disorders. Sexual harassment can lead to break down of physical health. It also increases the risks of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDS) and other medical injuries (Street et al, 2008 and Dumond, 2000). It may also lead to further victimization, and lodging complaint may further the psychological trauma (Dumond, 2000 and Naik et al, 20100. Hence, many victims of sexual harassment normally delay in telling others about their experiences (Tishelman et al, 2010).

In area of jobs or professional works, sexual harassment may reduce productivity, produce less job satisfaction and job commitment, and increased work withdrawal or potentially influenced intention to quit the job (Fayankinnu, 2012 and Bergman and Henning 2008). The effects of sexual harassment are also noticeable in the educational system. Young et al (2009) argued that sexual harassment has negative ramifications on the victim's school attendances, success and attachment to school. Sexual harassment impacts negatively on the academic performance of victims. It is a silent disease that is seriously eroding academic excellence (Imonikhe et al, 2012). It is also most likely to affect academic work with implications for the quality of education (Abe, 2012). This may consequently lead to fewer career choices and decreased or lost economic opportunities and possible job failure (Okoro and Osawemen, 2005). This is because the victims might have experienced failure in their academic work in the past (Arulogun, et al, 2013). This is so because sexual harassment creates fear for students in school; lower students self – esteem; make students have difficulty concentrating in their studies; and enable students earn unmerited grades (Imonikhe et al, 2012).

Writers on sexual harassment have provided ways out to deal with the problem. Ladebo (2003) suggested that victims of harassment may exhibit avoidance behavior i.e. staying away from the aggressor or from the environment that promotes such behaviour, and possibly file a formal complaint. Dumond (2000) proposed that in a serious case, mental health clinicians should be willing to entertain the complaints of the victims and treat them accordingly.

Women with history of sexual assault should be identified by encouraging disclosures within a context of safety and trust. Such women should be offered a prevention programme and longer term therapy to solve the chronic psychological problems of these women (Sochting, 2004).

At the school level, current emphasis on moral instruction and sex education should be encouraged and such should be done within the purview of the culture (Oko and Nwankpa, 2012). Short courses on managing sexual harassment should be designed to help students recognize sexual harassment, understand it as a form of discrimination and learn to deal with it accordingly and effectively (Okoro and Osawemen, 2005).

Within the work environment, there should be establishment of no tolerance policy; widely disseminate such policy; make it easy for employees to file complaints, investigate complaints promptly and objectively and take appropriate remedial action to prevent a reoccurrence (Lunenburg, 2010).

At the societal level, there should changes in the underlying cultural norms about women which encouraged sexual harassment against women (Bergman and Henning, 2008). Finally, there should be adoption, re – adoption or retention of protective social norms such as: total abstinence, mutual life long fidelity, and moral responsibility for not endangering others (Oko and Nwankpa, 2012).

3. Research Methodology Applied

Survey design was adopted in this study. It involved asking questions, to obtain information from a sampled group of Crawford University members about themselves and their opinions on sexual harassment (Schutt, 2004).

The entire population of the University Community (Staff and Students) was the population of the study. However, a group of samples was taken from this entire population because the whole population cannot be studied.

Simple random sampling was used to select the staff and the students who participated in the study. The population elements were available and equally accessible. It was a technique in which every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected (Adler and Clark, 1999). Simple random sampling is most likely to yield a sample that truly represents the entire population (Neuman, 2003). A lottery method was used to select the sampled group which participated in the study. Questionnaire was the research instrument used in the study. It was administered through face – to – face contact to reduce the chances of non- returning of the materials, and to guide the respondents when needed. The questionnaires were collected back immediately after completion. Hence, all the 100 questionnaires administered were collected.

For the analysis of the data collected from the survey, Statistical Package for Social Sciences computer software was used and the data were analyzed using frequency and percentage. The hypothesis was tested, using chi – square method.

4. Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

This section treats the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data gathered. The issues relating to personal data of the respondents were dealt with first, after which the main focus of the questionnaire (sexual harassment) was treated. Thereafter, hypothesis was tested.

The presentations and the analyses of data were based on the 100 questionnaires returned by the respondents who participated in the study.

Table 1. Socio – bio data of the respondents

	Variables	Frequencies	Percentages
1	Category of Respondents		
	Students	80	80.0
	Academic Staff	10	10.0
	Non – Academic Staff	10	10.0
	Total	**100**	**100.0**
2	Sex		
	Male	50	50.0
	Female	50	50.0
	Total	**100**	**100.0**
3	Age		
	15 – 20 years	18	18.0
	21 – 30 years	62	62.0
	31 – 40 years	12	12.0
	41 – 50 years and Above	8	8.0
	Total	**100**	**100.0**
4	Marital Status		
	Single	75	75.0
	Married	25	25.0
	Total	**100**	**100.0**
5	Religion		
	Christianity	60	60.0
	Islam	30	30.0
	Others	10	10.0
	Total	**100**	**100.0**
6	Ethnic Group		
	Yoruba	54	54.0
	Igbo	42	42.0
	Hausa	4	4.0
	Total	**100**	**100.0**

Source: Research survey, 2014

The first variable dealt with in the analyses was the category of the respondents who participated in the study. A cursory look at the table shows that 80% of the respondents were students drawn from various programmes of study. 10% of the respondents were academic staff from various departments and another 10% were non – academic staff of the University. It can be inferred that many of the students featured in the study more than the academic and non – academic staff of the University. This was so because the students outnumber the academic staff and non academic staff of the University of our Study.

The next variable analyzed was the sex of the respondents. The table above shows that 50% of the entire respondents were males and 50% were females. The samples drawn for the study gave equal chance for both sexes (50 – 50). The data were not lopsided to favour any sex.

Age was another variable examined in the study. The analyses of the data show that those respondents of 20 years of age and below were 18% of the entire respondents. The respondents between 21 years and 30 years were 62%; those between 31 years and 40 years were 12% and those between 41 years and 50 years above were 8%. A quick glance at the table shows that majority of the respondents sampled for the study were between 21 years and 30 years. Hence, most of the students and the staff who participated in the study were young people.

Marital status was considered next. The data analyses show that 75% of our respondents were not married (singles); while 25% were married. These outcomes of data analyses on marital status were justified on the ground that most of the respondents were students who were expected to face their studies rather than being engaged in marital responsibilities through marriage. Moreover, such students may not have enough requirements (economically, psychologically and socially) to engage in marital duties and responsibilities.

The religions of the respondents were also considered during the survey. The data analyses on the religion show that 60% of the respondents were Christians; 30% were Muslims and 10% the adherents of other religions. It can be inferred from the data that the majority of the respondents were Christians. The reason for this can be deduced from the fact that the research setting was a Christian based University Community established by a Christian faith mission.

Lastly, the study considered the ethnic groups of the respondents. The analyses of the data show that 54% were Yoruba; 42% were Igbo and 4% were Hausa. The Yoruba people were in the majority. This may not be surprising because this University Community is located in Ogun State, which is a Yoruba speaking state in Nigeria.

A section in the questionnaire was devoted to the questions related to the issue of sexual harassment. The first question requested that respondents should indicate whether sexual harassment was perceived by them as a social problem. The analyses show that 86% of the respondents perceived sexual harassment as a serious social problem in Nigeria, while 14% did not perceive it as a social problem. The study requested the respondents to say whether sexual harassment is usually committed by stranger. Only 14% of the respondents concurred that sexual harassment is usually committed by strangers, 86% signified that it is usually committed by people who are close to the victims; within the family, work place etc.

The survey wanted to know whether the respondents who participated in the study have been victims of sexual harassment in the past. 62% signified that they have been victims of sexual harassment in the past while 38% have not been victims of sexual harassment by the time the survey was conducted.

Indecent dressing was assumed as a factor which may provoke sexual harassment. The analyses of the data show that 76% of our respondents were of the opinion that indecent

dressing or what is termed 'sexy dressing' can lead to sexual harassment, while 24% did not form the opinion that indecent dressing can lead to sexual harassment.

The research wanted the respondents to show whether there is a strong relationship between sexual harassment and moral decadence in Nigeria society. 88% of our respondents signified that there is a strong relationship between sexual harassment and moral decadence in Nigerian society. The respondents agreed that sexual harassment can be caused by moral decadence in the society and that sexual harassment is one of the symptoms of moral decadence. However, 12% of our respondents did not agree that moral decadence and sexual harassment are related.

The effect of sexual harassment on the victims involved was also examined. 88% of our respondents believed that sexual harassment has negative effects on the victims. 12% of the respondents did not have such belief. Furthermore, in view of the fact that the research setting was an academic institution; the survey requested that the respondents should say whether sexual harassment would negatively affect the academic performances of the victims. 68% of our respondents agreed that sexual harassment would negate the good academic performances of the victims.

The survey requested that the respondents signify whether they were aware of government policies to avert sexual harassment in Nigeria or not. 41% of the respondents were aware of some policies of the government on sexual harassment, while 59% of the respondents were not aware. The majority who were not aware clearly indicated that government policies on sexual harassment may not have been adequately disseminated in the society.

Finally, the study requested from the respondents their opinions, on whether sexual harassment can be curbed in Nigeria or not. 52% of our respondents were of the opinion that with concerted efforts, sexual harassment can be curbed. 48% did not hold any hope that sexual harassment can be curbed in Nigeria or be solved.

5. Hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between sexual harassment and poor academic performance of the victim:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between sexual harassment and poor academic performance of the victim.

Hi: There is a significant relationship between sexual harassment and poor academic performance of the victim

Table 2. The Responses on influence of sexual harassment on academic performance

	Do you agree that sexual Harassment has negative influence on victim's Academic Performance		
	Yes	No	Total
Yes	68	0	68
No	0	32	32
Total	68	32	100

Table 3. Chi-square tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig (2) sided
Pearson chi - square	76.780a	1	.000
Likelihood Ration	72.959	1	.000
Linear by – linear Association	76.012	1	.000
No of Valid Cases	100		

0 cells (0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.16. Since the calculated x^2 (76.780) is greater than the tabulated x^2 at 0.05 (A symp sig 0.000<0.05) ; the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and alternative hypothesis (Hi) is accepted. Hence, there is a significant relationship between sexual harassment and poor academic performance of the victim.

6. Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

This survey has established that majority of the people (86%) confirmed that sexual harassment is a social problem and 62% of the respondents had been victims of the same in the past. 86% of the respondents was of the opinion that the perpetrators of sexual harassment were usually known and close to the victims. 76% of the respondents signified indecent dressing as a factor which can provoke sexual harassment. 88% of the respondent saw a strong relationship between moral decadence in Nigerian society, and sexual harassment and the same percentage (88%) confirmed that sexual harassment has negative consequences on the victims. 68% of the respondents acclaimed that one of the effects of sexual harassment is the poor academic performance of the victims. 41% of the respondents were not aware of sound and effective government policies against sexual harassment and finally 52% of the respondents was of the opinion that the problem of sexual harassment can be curbed.

The hypothesis tested shows that sexual harassment impacts negatively on the academic performance of the victims that were students. This may seriously affect their academic career and success, and consequently their future life development in the society. Hence, the problem of sexual harassment in educational institutions needs drastic interventions of the educational stakeholders in the society.

We conclude, therefore, that more needs to be done on the problem of sexual harassment, especially on the dissemination of adequate information on the government policies against the problem. More information needs to be passed around in the society on the problem of sexual harassment, for many are not aware of such policies.

The study, therefore, recommends that government and different organizations should give priority to the problem of sexual harassment. The policies against the problem should be widely circulated in the society. Moreover, people should be educated on the problem and the victims should be encouraged to come out to lodge their complaints. Legal redress should be made available to the victims free of charge, while the perpetrators found guilty should be punished accordingly. Above all, the people should learn to accord respect to others, especially to women in our society, and individual dignity should be treated with reference in our society. Further studies on sexual harassment are also strongly recommended.

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