



## ANALYSIS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ITS PERCEPTION AMONG STUDENTS OF TECHNICAL HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

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**Abstract:** The study was set out to investigate prevalence of sexual harassment of students of Technical higher institution using Osun State Polytechnic, Nigeria as a case study. Two research questions and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study with the aid of questionnaire. Related information were gathered on 203 students across all the faculties and levels (ND 1&2, HND 1&2). The descriptive statistics of frequency distribution and percentage were employed with inferential statistics of correlation analysis to test the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study found out that: there is prevalence of sexual harassment of students in tertiary technical institutions. Sexual harassment of female students were carried out through inappropriate sexual comments, unwanted touching of female students and other seductive ogling. The findings revealed that students have knowledge, awareness and perception of what sexual harassment entails. One of the recommendations is that authorities of tertiary educational institutions should enshrine behaviours indicative of sexual harassment entrenched into the conditions of service of staff of tertiary education as well as faculty and students handbooks to create the needed awareness.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Perception, Sexual harassment, Polytechnic, Knowledge.

### INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment is termed as one of the most common form of sexual violence that consequently threatens people physical and mental health with majority of the victims being women (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). It is also described as an unwanted determined behaviour such as physical contacts and advances, making sexually ridiculing comments, showing porn videos or images and exerting sexual pressure either by verbal or non-verbal actions (Grurung, Pryadarshini & Margaret, 2016).

A study conducted by Hejase (2015) reported that there are several forms of sexual harassment which includes;

verbal form: this includes suggestive comments, jokes of a sexual nature, sexual proposition and sexual threats, non-verbal form which includes sexual suggestive objects or pictures, graphical commentaries, insulting sounds, whistling or obscene gestures; physical form which includes unwanted physical contact including touching, pinching, brushing the body, coerced sexual intercourse.

Harassment can occur between anyone, which is very common among members in the higher institutions community. These community members comprises of faculty staff, learners and administrator (Aluede, 2009; Taiwo, Omole & Omole, 2014). In the same study, it was



reported that harassment can occur anywhere in the higher institution environment which includes; classrooms, students hostels, in cafeterias. In several studies conducted it was realised that females are mostly at risk of sexual harassment than males and the likely perpetrators of sexual harassment in the institutions are males either lecturers or students (Imonikhe, Aluede & Idogho, 2012). It was reported from various studies that Power and not sex is the root cause of sexual harassment also the unequal distribution of power between genders and the misrepresentation of genders (Gaba, 2010).

In a study conducted by Oni, Tshitangano & Akinsola, (2016) it is reported that in Africa there is high prevalence of sexual harassment. In further study conducted, it was also reported that in the university of Malawi that 67% of harassment occur on campus and 12.6% of the females where raped and harassed by males generally, which include both the learners and teachers. From the study conducted it shows that the incidence of sexual harassment towards female is high.

The effect of sexual harassment on women is extremely serious depending on a variety of factors. It may also result to feelings of anger and embarrassment and serious health problem such as; depression, distress, anxiety, muscle aches, headaches, negative self-esteem, sleeplessness and even symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorders. It may also lead to discomfort on the academic performance of the victims, infringing on the victims right (Ogunbamere, 2006).

Sexual harassment has been observed as ongoing occurrences in the world at large and in various countries. It is important to note that sexual harassment is a threatening social occurrence in the Nigeria educational sector which has severe psychological and social consequences on the victim as well as economic and political consequences on the nation in achieving sustainable development (Nnamdi 2002).

There are few studies on how sexual harassment is perceived among students in Technical institution. Hence, the purpose of the study is to find out the perception of sexual harassments among Osun State Polytechnic students in Nigeria.

### **AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this study is to assess the level sexual harassment and its perception among students of higher institutions. While the specific objectives are:

- 1) to assess the level of knowledge of sexual harassment among Osun State Polytechnic students.
- 2) to assess the level of perception of sexual harassment among Osun State Polytechnic students.

### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

- I. There is no significant relationship between the respondent's gender and their knowledge of sexual harassment.
- II. There is no significant relationship between the respondent's age and what sexual harassment entails.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study is delimited to only students of Osun State Polytechnic. Therefore, staffs in the institution did not participate in the study. A cross –sectional descriptive study design was utilized to gather information on the level of perception of sexual harassment among students which cut across all the faculties in the institution. The sampling technique used in this study was stratified random sampling. A sample size of 203 was used for this study. This was derived using Slovincs formula as shown below;

$$n = \text{sample size} = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

N=population size

e=margin of error =0.05 with confidence level of 95%

A structured questionnaire was used to gather data for the study setting. Data were analyzed using descriptive



statistics of counts, frequency, percentages, bar and pie charts. Inferential statistical tool of test of correlation is employed to test for existence of relationship. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) IBM Version 21.0 was employed to aid the analysis.

**ANALYSIS**

**Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to their socio-economic characteristics (n=203)**

S/ N	Description	Characteristics	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1	Age	16	2	1.0
		17	1	.5
		18	5	2.5
		19	42	20.7
		20	54	26.6
		21	48	23.6
		22	23	11.3
		23	15	7.4
2	Factory sector	24	10	4.9
		25	2	1.0
		26	1	.5
		Total	203	100.0
3	Gender	Male	34	16.7
		Female	169	83.3
		Total	203	100.0
4	Ethnic group	Igbo/ Others	26	12.8
		Yoruba	177	87.2
		Total	203	100.0
5	Marital Status	Single	198	97.5
		Married	5	2.5
		Total	203	100.0
6	Religion	Christianity	122	60.1
		Islam	81	39.9
		Total	203	100.0
7	Level of study	ND 1	39	19.2
		ND 2	59	29.1
		HND 1	53	26.1
		HND 2	52	25.6
		Total	203	100.0

8	Family background	Monogamy	175	86.2
		Polygamy	28	13.8
		Total	203	100.0
9	Have you been sexually harassed in the university before?	Yes	47	23.2
		No	156	76.8
		Total	203	100.0
10	What is the location of the sexually harassment experienced ?	Office	5	2.5
		Classroom	29	14.3
		Hostel	33	16.3
		Outdoor/ On the road / In public space	38	18.7
		School bus	36	17.7
		Online	62	30.5
		Total	203	100.0
11	Gender of harasser	Male	187	92.1
		Female	16	7.9
		Total	203	100.0
12	Identity of harasser	Teaching staff	7	3.4
		Non-teaching staff	10	4.9
		Fellow student(s)	186	91.6
		Total	203	100.0
13	Position of harasser	Senior	45	22.2
		Junior	9	4.4
		Peer	149	73.4
		Total	203	100.0
14	Did you make a	1	.5	1



	report of sexual harassment to authority?			
		202	99.5	202
		Total	203	100.0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

while Hausa are conspicuously missing may be due to university religion affiliation and geographical location. Majority of the respondents are single (97.5%). It is reflected in the observed respondents that respondents are majorly Muslims (60.1%) while Christians take the remaining 39.9% as depicted in table 1. Observed are respondents from all faculties in proportional to their sizes. The respondents are from ND 1(19.2%), ND 2 (29.1%), HND 1 (26.1%) and HND 2 (25.6%) levels which spread across the faculties. It is however observed that they are of different family background; Monogamy (86.2%) and Polygamy (13.8%).

#### Realization of study objectives

### Discussion

As revealed in Table 4.01- 4.08, the sample size is represented in measures by male (16.7%) and female (83.3%) aged between 16 and 26 years' old, the modal age of the respondents is 20 (26.6%) followed by 21(23.6%). The respondents are majorly Yoruba (87.2%) Igbo (12.8%)

### Objective 1

To assess the level of knowledge of sexual harassment among Osun State Polytechnic students.

**Table 2: Level of knowledge.**

Item	Very insufficient		Insufficient		undecided		Sufficient		Very sufficient		REMARK
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Level of awareness	24	11.8	159	78.3	4	2.0	11	6.4	5	2.5	Insufficient

Source: Field survey, 2021

### Discussion

It is observed that the level of knowledge of sexual harassment among Osun State Polytechnic students are not sufficient in overall as depicted in table 2; 159 (78.3%) and 24 (11.8%) respondents agreed and strongly agreed that

level of knowledge is grossly insufficient, which suggest that the institution management should intensify effort in this area as it is well known that Osun State Polytechnic is above board morally among her peers.

### Objective 2

To assess the level of perception of sexual harassment among Osun State Polytechnic students.

**Table 3: Distribution of the respondents according to their perception on sexual harassment (n=203)**

Item	SD		D		U		A		SA		REMARK
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Women exaggerate the sexual harassment problem	4	2.0	3	1.5	14	6.9	63	31.0	119	58.6	Agreed



Sexual harassment is a problem invented by women concern groups	35	17.2	67	33.0	10	4.9	34	16.7	57	28.1	Disagreed
The occurrence of sexual harassment can be blamed on sexy apparel or looks on the part of women	15	7.4	28	13.8	8	3.9	46	22.7	106	52.2	Agreed
Sexual harassment is nothing more than over-reaction on the part of the victims	8	3.9	68	33.5	28	13.8	93	45.8	6	3.0	Undecided
The occurrence of sexual harassment can be blamed on the victim's insensitivity	8	3.9	68	33.5	28	13.8	93	45.8	6	3.0	Undecided
Sexual harassment is a problem of a person who could not handle personal relationships well	7	3.4	49	24.1	15	7.4	74	36.5	58	28.6	Agreed
Sexual harassment is men's admiration for women	8	3.9	46	22.7	10	4.9	88	43.3	51	25.1	Agreed

**Source: Field survey, 2021**

**Discussion**

As revealed in table 3, majority of students (89.1%) perceived that women exaggerate the issue of sexual harassment more than how it is actually occurred. Though, it is disagreed by many respondents (58.2%) that the issue is a problem invented by women concern group. It is however, positively perceived (74.9%) that the occurrence of sexual harassment can be blamed on sexy apparel or looks on the part of women. It was undecided whether sexual harassment is nothing more than over-reaction on the part of the victim as those agreed and disagreed of this opinion are of 47.5% and 48.8% perspective respectively. Likewise, the shifting of blame on the victim's

insensitivity. Majority (65.1%) and (68.4%) respectively perceived that sexual harassment is a problem of a person who could not handle relationships well and is caused by men's admiration for women.

**Hypotheses testing**

**Hypothesis 1**

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between the respondent's gender and their knowledge of sexual harassment.

H<sub>11</sub>: There is significant relationship between the respondent's gender and their knowledge of sexual harassment.



**Gender \* Level of knowledge of sexual harassment among Osun State Polytechnics students Cross-tabulation**

Table 4: Count

		Level of knowledge of sexual harassment among Bowen university					Total
		Very insufficient	Insufficient	Undecided	Sufficient	Very sufficient	
Gender	Male	2	27	0	3	2	34
	Female	22	132	4	8	3	169
Total		24	159	4	11	5	203

**Table 5: Symmetric Measures**

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup>	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval Pearson's R	-.125	.080	-1.787	.075 <sup>c</sup>
Ordinal by Ordinal Spearman Correlation	-.108	.068	-1.544	.124 <sup>c</sup>
N of Valid Cases	203			

**Decision:** H<sub>0</sub> is accepted since P-value (0.124) is greater than 0.05 level of significance.

**Conclusion:** There is no significant relationship between the respondent's gender and their knowledge of sexual harassment. Which infers that students' knowledge about sexual harassment is not gender-based.

**Hypothesis 2**

**Test statistic**

Spearman rank correlation coefficient, this is employed since the data is categorical and it is of opinion rating.

$$Z_c = \frac{r\sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r^2}}$$

**Table 6:** Hypothesis testing on significant relationship between the respondent's age and what sexual harassment entails.

	*Age versus	Z <sub>c</sub>	P-value	Decision (H <sub>1</sub> ) at α=0.05	Conclusion based on relationship
a.	Unwelcome pressure for sex	0.137	0.05	Accepted	Significant
b.	Unwelcome physical contact, e.g. touching, leaning or deliberate pinching	0.156	0.026	Accepted	Significant
c.	Repeated attempts to make a date which is unwanted	0.174	0.013	Accepted	Significant



d.	Sending emails, messages from online social networks, phone calls, letters or faxes which are of a sexual nature	0.137	0.05	Accepted	Significant
e.	Teasing, jokes or remarks about sex	0.158	0.024	Accepted	Significant
f.	Unwelcome sexually suggestive looks and gestures	0.151	0.032	Accepted	Significant
g.	Unwelcome display of visual materials of a sexual nature, e.g. slides, photos, posters, pamphlets, online materials, etc.	0.158	0.027	Accepted	Significant
h.	Making obscene/sexual jokes demeaning a gender	0.155	0.027	Accepted	Significant

**Decision:** Since in all the analysed variables of level of understanding of sexual harassment Table 6, alternative hypotheses are all accepted, it is thereby concluded that there is significant relationship between the respondent's age and what sexual harassment entails which means the level of perception of sexual harassment among Osun State Polytechnic students is apparent, high and significant.

### CONCLUSION

Sexual harassment is not only prevalent in place of work but in the educational institution also. It is a social phenomenon that is no longer confined to the western countries. The effect of sexual harassment on women is extremely serious depending on a variety of factors. It may also result to feelings of anger and embarrassment and serious health problem such as; depression, distress, anxiety, muscle aches, headaches, negative self-esteem, sleeplessness and even symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorders. It may also lead to discomfort on the academic performance of the victims, infringing on the victims right. The conclusion that can be drawn as a result of the findings is that sexual harassment knowledge is not gender-based and the level of perception of sexual harassment among students of technical higher institution is apparent, high and significant.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

These proffered activities were recommended by the respondents to raise awareness on sexual harassment in the institution.

1. The options are workshops/seminars on sex education, film shows/drama performance on related issues, exhibition, college assemblies, debates among others.
2. Behaviours indicative of sexual harassment should be entrenched into the conditions of service of staff of tertiary education as well as faculty and students handbooks to create the needed awareness.
3. Anti-harassment and awareness programs must be put in place to disseminate sexual harassment condemnation messages both within and outside the campus communities.
4. Immediate action must also be meted out against the harassers in order to deter such behaviour.

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