

The Impact of Family Type, Gender and Perception of Sexual Harassment among In-School Adolescents in Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the impact of family type and gender on the perception of sexual harassment among in-school adolescents in Ondo State, Nigeria. Five family types were considered: divorced parents, single parent, dead parents, parents staying together, one dead parent and separated parents. The study also compared the perception of adolescents to sexual harassment on the basis of gender. The population for the study consisted of four hundred and seventy three students (473) drawn from five local government areas of Ondo State. Simple random sampling procedure was used to select the local government and schools used for the research. The respondents were made to respond to a structured questionnaire titled Perception of Sexual Harassment among Adolescents Inventory (PSHAAT) to give information on their family type, gender and perception of sexual harassment. The instrument has a reliability of 0.70 and was validated using both face and content validity. The data generated were analyzed using frequency counts, percentage and mean. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested using t-test and ANOVA Statistical procedures. The result indicated that there were no significant difference found on the basis of family type and gender on the perception of sexual harassment among adolescents. Recommendations were made about need for cordial relationship between adolescents and their parents. The need for exposure of adolescent to sex education was also stressed.

Keywords: Perception, sexual harassment, gender, family type, adolescents.

Introduction

Sexual harassment has become a serious contemporary issue confronting many adolescents in recent times. Often many of youths are sexually abused either by grown ups or their counterparts in their different communities. Some are abused at a very tender age and often find it difficult to disclose the issue to anyone. Oko and Ugboaku 2012 see sexual harassment as an unwanted verbal or physical behaviour of a sexual nature that occurs in the workplace or in an educational setting under certain conditions. Such behaviour is illegal if it creates an environment that is hostile or intimidating. Sabitha (2008) also defined sexual harassment as an unwelcome or unwanted behaviour of sexual nature, which is offensive, embarrassing, intimidating, and it affects an employee's work performance, health career or livelihood. It is equally seen as unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conducts of a sexual nature (Street, Stafford, Mahan & Handricks, 2008). While Oko & Nwankpa (2012) observed sexual harassment in the humanist view as an unwanted verbal or physical behaviour of a sexual nature that occurs in the work place or in an educational setting under certain conditions. According to Owuamanam (1995) sexual harassment is seen as a form of sexual exploitation in Nigeria occurring in virtually every place, among children and adolescents in school and outside the school system.

Sexual harassment is now a common phenomenon, most especially among adolescents in the secondary school settings. As a school counsellor it has been observed that some of these adolescents have been exposed to sexual harassment even from the primary school. This is in agreement with the observation of Kelly (2014) that opined that forcing people to have non consensual or sexual activity is a behaviour found in nearly every culture studied. UNICEF (2003) study found from all available data that one out of three females and one out of five males had been victims of child sexual abuse and that girls were twice as likely to be victims of sexual victimization than boys throughout childhood but eight times more likely during adolescence.

The family type that an adolescent belong could to a large extent determine his/her exposure to sexual harassment. It has been observed that adolescents from illiterate parents may be forced to engage in street trading which often expose these teenagers to terrible and horrible things which may include sexual harassment. Many of these adolescents come in contact with desperate heartless and inhuman individual who are ready to pollute and defile many of these innocent and unassuming adolescents. Ebigbo and Abaga cited from Okunola & Ojo (2012) opined that street hawking by children is another form of abuse. They asserted that street hawking encourages sexual abuse. This they observed could occur at three levels; exposure to over genital seduction, exposure to genital stimulation and witnessing adults in the act of sex.

The issue of discussing sexual education among children and adolescents has been a serious problem in the Nigerian society. Akanle (2010) asserted that children are often reluctant to report sexual abuse, they lack the verbal development to explain clearly what happened. Olley (2007) also noted studies in Nigeria have shown that sexual abuse of children is prevalent in the country and is under-reported. Poor communication between parents and their adolescents on sexual issues has not been helping to create awareness about sexual harassment

among adolescents. Olubayo Fatiregun (2012) observed that sexual education and services for adolescents remains a controversial issue in Nigeria and a taboo in many communities. It is noted that there is a wide spread fear even among the educated parents that discussing sexual issues might stimulate children and adolescents' sexual interest. Moronkola and Idris (2000) also asserted that parents are not forthcoming as expected to act as primary sexuality educators for their children. According to Owuamanam & Bankole (2013) asserted that owing to a constant breakdown of the family unit, there is a decrease in parent/ adolescent communication and sharing which results in lack of sex education within the home, intra family communication can be associated with adequate knowledge of sexual issues. They also noted that the family as an institution provides role models for the children. The role of the family in the provision of sex education to the adolescents could be shelved or set aside as unimportant. Although, some families fail in this regard to give adequate and relevant sex education to their adolescents.

It has been observed that many adolescent have been abused sexually due to poverty. In a bid to meet their daily needs, some adolescents get involved with elderly people just to provide them with the financial wherewithal to cater for themselves and even their parents. The abject poverty in the Nigerian society has made many adolescents to become bread winners early in life. Roles and responsibilities in homes have been changed due to lack and poverty. According to Abu & Akerele (2006) they observed that some parents encourage their teens into early sexual abuse and harassments, unknowingly, by neglecting their responsibilities towards them. Yet another problem they noted is the communication gap between parents and adolescents on reproductive health issues. Before this time ,sexual harassment was found to be common among females but seldom found in males. But this is contrary to the present observation where both the males and females are abused on daily basis. Ajuwon, Olley, Akin & Akintola (2001) stated that sexual coercion is a serious public health and human right issue. Sexual coercion is the act of forcing or attempting to force another individual through violence, threat, verbal inconsistency, deception, cultural expectations and economic circumstances to engage in any sexual activity against his/her will. Lunenburg (2010) stated that men and women often view sexual harassment differently. He noted that women tend to perceive a broader range of behaviour as sexual harassment than men. Both men and women tend to agree that sexual propositions and coercion constitutes sexual harassment. Whereas Sabitha (2008) considered that women have broader definitions of sexual harassment than men, have more negative attitudes, are less tolerant and consider teasing, looks, gesture, unnecessary physical contact and remarks to be sexual harassment.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of sexual harassment among adolescents in Nigeria has become a serious problem that needs serious intervention. Many of these youths have been impregnated through this harassment. There is an increasing rise in the number of teenage pregnancy. Some have had to drop out of school due to untimely and unplanned pregnancy. The parents and the government do not have adequate programmes for many of these youth. Hence many cannot care for themselves talk less of caring for their children. Therefore, there must be adequate care and programmes to help these teenagers who become mothers/fathers unprepared.

Sexual harassment could lead to psychological and emotional problems for these youths. Many of these youths live with this problem perpetually and find it extremely difficult to live a normal and proper life much later. It may prevent some of these youths in achieving maximum capacity in their life endeavours. Some tend to see themselves as failures that cannot amount to anything in life.

Some of these teenagers could be very secretive about the issue of sexual harassment that they would not discuss their plight with parents. Some have been so intimidated that they are often banned from discussing such with their parents. Thus they live with regret and some may not be confident enough to want to get married in life.

Hypotheses

- (1) There would be no significant difference on the perception of sexual harassment among in-school adolescents on the basis of family type.
- (2) There would be no significant difference on the perception of sexual harassment among in-school adolescents on the basis of gender.

Methodology

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The target population of this study comprised all adolescents in Ondo State, Nigeria. The samples were gathered from five local government areas of Ondo State randomly selected from Akoko South West, Akoko South East, Akure North and South, Okiti-pupa North East and Owo North East Local Government. Total of 473 adolescents were involved in the sample used for the research. A school each was chosen from each of the five local government areas selected.

Instrumentation

The instrument for data collection was a self-report inventory with a four-point Likert type scale titled Perception of Sexual Harassment among Adolescents Inventory (PSHAAI) it was developed for the purpose of this research, this was done after careful review of relevant literature on the topic. The validity of PSHAAI was established by requesting some lecturers in Test and Measurement in Guidance and Counselling Department to vet it for content validity. Content validity is the extent to which test performance is related to some other value in order to ascertain the validity of the instrument. This was then subjected to the test-retest method to establish its reliability. About 25 students were administered with the instrument. At an interval of four weeks, the instrument was administered again to the same group of students, the two sets of scores so obtained were correlated by means of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Coefficient of stability (r) was computed. A Pearson ' r ' of magnitude 0.70 at 0.05 level of significance was obtained. The respondents were instructed to tick the various options as appropriate on a four-point Likert-type scale.

The instrument is a self-report inventory which enables respondents to indicate their perception of sexual harassment among adolescents. Section A of the inventory was used to gather demographic data (including age) from respondents. Section B was sub-group into three parts. In all there were thirty-five items. For each of the item 1 was the lowest while 4 was the highest score. The total item is 35, that is $1 \times 35 = 35$ was the score for the lowest while the highest was $4 \times 35 = 140$. The midpoint was 52.5.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using frequency, counts, percentage and mean. The first hypothesis that there would be no significant difference on the impact of family type on the perception of sexual harassment among adolescent

Table 1

Frequency Distribution by Family Type

Family type	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Parents staying together	293	61.9	61.9
Divorced	51	10.8	72.7
Staying with single parents	47	9.9	82.7
Both parents are dead	26	5.5	88.2
One of the parents is dead	25	5.3	93.4
Parents living separately	31	6.6	100
Total	473	100	

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics (Family Type)

Family type	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Parents staying together	72.42	293	20.22
Divorced	62.49	51	16.79
Staying with single parents	70.00	47	18.31
Both parents are dead	71.58	26	20.36
One of the parents is dead	72.48	25	17.52
Parents living separately	72.48	31	16.22
Total	71.09	473	19.48

Table 3

ANOVA Table (Family Type)

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Tab value F
Between groups	4494.215	5	898.843	2.405	
Within groups	174567.692	465	373.807	2.41	4.36
Total	179061.907	472			

Table 1 – shows the results obtained from the frequency distribution by family type. Respondents that their parents are staying together had the highest frequency of 293 with 61.9%. Those that their parents were divorced were 51 with 10.8% while about 47 of the adolescents were staying with a single parent with 9.9%. 26 of the adolescents recorded that their parents were dead, that is 5.5% while 25 of these youths recorded that one of their parent was dead which was 5.3%. 31 adolescents had their parents living separately which is 6.6%.

Table 2 - indicated the descriptive statistics based on family type.

Those students whose parents were staying together had the highest mean of 72.42 and standard deviation of 20.22. Those whose parents were divorced have the mean score of 62.49 and a standard deviation of 16.79. Adolescents staying with single parent had the mean of 70.00 and a standard deviation of 18.31. Those whose parents were dead had the mean of 71.58 and a standard deviation of 20.36. Those who had lost one of their parents had the mean of 72.48 with a standard deviation 17.52. Adolescents whose parents were living separately had the mean of 72.81 and a standard deviation of 16.22.

Table 3 – shows the result obtained from analysis of the data which indicates the calculated F-ratio of 2.41 was less than the critical F- ratio of 4.36 at the 0.05 level of significance. On the basis of this result, the null hypothesis that there would be no significant difference on the impact of family type on the perception of sexual harassment was accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There would be no significant difference on the basis of gender on adolescents' perception of sexual harassment.

To analyze this result the following statistical analysis were carried out to test the hypotheses.

Descriptive Statistics based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error mean
Male	169	65.62	19.21	1.48
Female	304	74.13	18.98	1.09

Table 5:t-test scores of respondents' on their perception of sexual harassment based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t	Crit t
Male	169	65.62	19.21			
Female	304	74.13	18.98	471	-4.65	1.96

Table 5 indicates the results obtained from analysis of the data which shows that the t calculated of -4.65 was less than the critical t of 1.96 at the 0.05 level significance. On the basis of this result, the null hypothesis that there would be no significant difference on the basis of gender on adolescents' perception of sexual perception was accepted.

Discussion

The study revealed that there would be no significant difference on the impact of family type on sexual harassment among adolescents. Therefore the null hypothesis was accepted. The result of this findings runs contrary to the findings of Owunaman & Bankole (2013) that owing to a consistent breakdown of the family unit, that there is a decrease in parent/adolescent communication and time sharing which results in lack of sex education within the home. This could also mean that there may be no adequate knowledge of sexual harassment among the adolescents. Again Abu & Akerele (2006) found variables like family history, parental education and type of parental care could affect sexual behaviour of adolescents. They further stated that if teens feel parental support, feel a connection to their parents and are aptly supervised by them, they are less likely to have early sexual exposure and become pregnant. The differences in the findings of this research and those of Owuamanam & Bankole (2013) and Abu & Akerele (2006) could be because of the differences in the variable used among the adolescents. The former research is on sexual promiscuity of adolescent while the later deals with parental influence on adolescents' sexual behaviour. The location and time could also influence the difference in the result recorded.

Again, the second hypothesis found that there would be no significant difference on the perception of sexual harassment among adolescents on the based on gender. The null hypothesis was accepted. Although the mean result revealed that the females had higher perception than the males, although this was not significant. This lead credence to the findings of Abu & Akerele (2006) that observed that many parents subject their adolescents children especially females to child labour and make them hawk in market places, street and motor parks. This expose these adolescents to sexual harassment from older males. Lunenburg (2010) also found that men and women often view sexual harassment differently. That woman tends to perceive a broader range of behaviours as sexual harassment than do men. Although the hypothesis stated was not significant which also mean that both the male and female adolescents had the same perception of sexual harassment.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Family type did not have any significant difference on the perception of sexual harassment among in-school adolescents.

- Gender did not have any significant difference on the perception of sexual harassment among in-school adolescents.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Although the result of the findings indicated that family type did not have any significant difference on the perception of sexual harassment among in-school adolescents. However, the issues of adolescents having close family ties cannot be underestimate.
- Adolescents' family type tends to have great influence on their perception of sexual harassment. Those from monogamous homes or parents who are staying together tend to have more intimate relationship with their parents and siblings than those from a polygamous home. Whereas adolescents from broken homes tend to be more at risk with the issue of sexual harassment. Openness of parents with their adolescents tends to assist these ones to be more bold and confident in disclosing their challenges and difficulties with their parents.
- Although gender did not have any significant difference on the perception of sexual harassment. There is the need to counsel and expose these adolescents to the evil of sexual harassment. Adolescents whether male/female should be given adequate sexual education that will equip them to be more aware about their sexuality and how they can keep themselves from being exploited and coerced into sexual harassment by those of the opposite sex or people of the same sex.

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