

Relationship Between Sexual Harassment And Psychological Adjustment Of Undergraduates Of Enugu State University Of Science And Technology Enugu Nigeria

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Abstract

The study sought to find out the relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of undergraduates of Enugu State University of Science and Technology Enugu Nigeria. Three research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The subject of the study was 614 undergraduates composed using a screening instrument adopted from American Association of university women sexual harassment scale 1993. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researchers titled sexual harassment and psychological Adjustment questionnaire (SHPAQ). In analyzing the data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Results showed that undergraduates experienced moderate level of sexual harassment with a low level of psychological adjustment. Also, the result showed that sexual harassment relates negatively with psychological adjustment of undergraduates. Based on the findings recommendations were made.

Key words: sexual, Harassment, psychological, Adjustment.

INTRODUCTION

Psychological adjustment could be seen as positive inter-personal relationship and emotional expression of maturity by an individual. Michael (1990), perceived it as the coping ability of man in coming to terms with his or her behaviours, emotions, mental reasoning and wellness. Relating psychological adjustment to temperament and attitudes, Ikejiaku and Ayebami (2006), defined it as behaviours that enable a person to live harmoniously in his particular social setting or environment. Therefore, behaviours such as depression in encounter with academic pressures, withdrawals from students and staff of same or opposite sex, nervousness in faces of new experiences and other related moods which students encounter could be regarded as issues related to psychological adjustment.

When students are withdrawn, nervous and depressed, it may imply that their abilities to function adequately in school works and other related activities may be reduced as well. In the context of this study, psychological adjustment is taken to mean the growth and development of social behaviours, emotional characters and mental wellness capable of enhancing the proper adaptation of students in the schools in which they are.

It is expected that a psychologically adjusted person (student) actively integrate into the school system to achieve the essence of being in the school. This means that the students should have a good self-esteem, be diligent, pleasant, loving, rational and co-operative. When a student is capable of striking such balance in his/her daily activities in the school, such a student is said to have achieved adequate psychological adjustment that enhances positive outcome in life within and outside the school. On the contrary, a psychologically maladjusted student may develop feelings of helplessness which may as well propel such student to form negative attitudes towards school works and other people.

Many factors could be associated with students psychological adjustment. Personal traits and attitudes of the student were pointed out by Onyenze-Chukwu (2003) as factors influencing adjustments when the researcher asserts that some students are naïve and courageous enough to discuss their academic, social and emotional problems with their fellow students, or even lecturers at a point when it is inevitable to do so. The ability to interact actively in the community of students and other school personnel, self esteem, family background, peers, personal decisions due to self conviction, type of environment among others may also go a long way to influence psychological adjustment of students (Salami, 2002; Olayinka and Omoegun, 2006).

However, while there are these findings linking these factors with students poor psychological adjustment, little attention seems to be given to one sexual phenomenon that ravages Nigerian Universities. It is cases of sexual

harassment. It is also common to speculate that most of the adjustment problems which challenge university students in Nigeria today are as a result of incidents of sexual harassment. Njoku (2001) reported how some female undergraduates of faculty of Biological Sciences, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, skip or drop classes to avoid male harassers. This corroborated the report of Ursua (1994) that female students in science and technology are constantly under intense sexual pressure from the male classmates and lecturers.

The term sexual harassment has been variously defined by experts. Action Health Incorporated (2003) describe it as a deliberate or repeated unsolicited verbal comments, gestures or physical contact of sexual nature which includes touching against a person's wish, verbal pressures for sexual relationship or even physical assault. Fagothy (1994) also defined sexual harassment as any sexist behaviour directed to another person which conveys insulting, degrading, belittling or sexist attitudes.

Students as beneficiaries of education enterprise complain about their ugly experiences of sexual harassment in their various universities. Its psychological trauma and academic setbacks to the students have also been explored and reported by researchers. Tang (2003) revealed that victims of sexual harassment may start to skip or drop classes to avoid the harassers, may have low self confidence or self image as well as feeling of depression, in security and poor sense of belonging to the institution subsequent to their harassment experience. It is against this background that this study is set to provide answer to the following research questions.

1. What is the level of sexual harassment of undergraduates?
2. What is the level of psychological adjustment of undergraduates?
3. What is the relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of undergraduates?

1. Hypothesis

There will be no significant relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of undergraduate students in Enugu state University of Science and Technology.

2. Methods

The design of this study is correlation survey. It attempts to explore whether relationship exists between sexual harassment and psychological adjustments of undergraduates. The study was conducted in Enugu state university of science and technology. The population is 12,864 undergraduates of the Universities. A multi-stage sampling techniques involving stratified random sampling and random sampling techniques as well as sexual harassment screening instrument was used to sample undergraduates from both 200 and 400 levels respectively. This gave a composed sample of 614 undergraduates. The sexual harassment screening instrument was adopted from American Association of university women sexual harassment scale (AAUW) (1993) as well as McMaster, Connolly, Peppier and Craig (2002). The essence was to use students with history of sexual harassment in them.

The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire developed by the researchers and titled Sexual Harassment and psychological Adjustment Questionnaire (SHPAQ). The questionnaire is a rating scale measure of a five points response option of Never (N), Rarely (R), Occasionally (OC), often (OF) and Always (A). The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha statistics to establish the coefficient of internal consistency. The reliability index showed sexual harassment 0.83 while psychological adjustment as 0.88.

The data collected for the study were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Research questions 1 and 2 were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation while research question 3 was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment correlation (r) method. Regression analysis was used in testing the hypothesis.

Key: 4.50-5.00 (very high), 3.50-4.49 (high), 2.50-3.49 (moderate), 1.50-2.49 (low), 0-1.49 (very low)

3. Result:

Mean (X) rating and standard deviation (SD) of the level of sexual harassment of undergraduate students

Data as in Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the level of sexual harassment among the students of Enugu State University of Science and Technology. The overall mean score of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 0.51 implies that students experienced moderate level of sexual harassment. Indications on the Table show that apart from items 1,2,3 and 16 with high level scores of 3.67,,3.79,3.63 and 3.54 respectively, all other items were rated moderately with none at low level. These are items 4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,17,18 and 19 with their mean scores as 3.24,3.32,3.15,3.40,3.27,3.47,3.49,3.48,3.26,3.37,3.31,3.44,3.47,3.36 and 3.31 respectively. This shows that students feel sexually harassed highly when calls of sexual requests are sent to them, fail courses for declining sexual requests, confronted by rapists and lured to sexual intercourse through promises of marks by lecturers. However, they feel moderately harassed when they are confronted with idle talks of sexual nature, tricked to attend

parties centred on sexual behaviours, unwelcome sexual looks about body shape, spreading sexual rumour about them among other items as shown on the Table.

Mean (X) Rating and Standard Deviation (SD) of the Level of Psychological Adjustment of Students in Enugu State University of Science and Technology

Key: 4.50-5.00 (very high), 3.50-4.49 (high), 2.50-3.49 (moderate), 1.50-2.49 (low), 0-49 (very low)

The analysis on Table 2 above shows the level of psychological adjustment of undergraduate students of Enugu State University of Science Technology. The cumulative mean is 2.27, while standard deviation (SD) is 0.86. These show that the level of students adjustment psychologically is low. Out of the 22 items that tested their level of psychological adjustment, only items 20, 21 and 24 with their means scores 2.50, 2.56 and 2.50 respectively were moderately rated. All other ones were rated low. This implies that when criticisms are passed on them, difficulties are piled up and when things are not working out as expected, students are moderately adjusted psychologically. All other items 22,23,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40 and 41 with their means as 2.32,2.48,2.25,2.08,1.90,1.89,2.38,1.87,2.11,2.06,2.14,2.60,2.86,2.26,2.13,2.05,2.48,2.11,2.09 respectively were low. The result suggested that when issues such as keeping close friends, scared of appearing before a crowd, over excited and disturbed over issues of life, having the ability of being oneself in the crowd among other items as indicated on the Table, 2 are raised, degree of students psychological adjustment are low. The standard deviations showed closeness indicating little differences in the variability of the respondents scores. This shows homogeneity of responses of the respondents.

Result of the Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Relationship Between Sexual harassment and Psychological Adjustment of Undergraduates

In answering research question three which sought to determine the relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of students Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient was used. As shown in Table 3 above, sexual harassment relates negatively with psychological adjustment of undergraduates. This is shown by the calculated r-value of -.25 which indicate a negative relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of undergraduates. This suggests that the higher the level of sexual harassment, the more undergraduates are psychologically maladjusted.

A corresponding hypothesis formulated to further address this research question is:

4. Hypothesis

There will be no significant relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of undergraduates of Enugu State University of Science and Technology.

Stepwise linear regression analysis of the relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of undergraduates

Data presented on table 4a above indicated that there is negative relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of university undergraduates. This is shown by the calculated r value of -.25. The data also show that the calculated r^2 (r square) is .06. The calculated r square indicates that 6% of the change observed in the psychological adjustment of undergraduates is as a result of sexual harassment.

To further determine whether sexual harassment as a predictor variable significantly predicated psychological adjustment, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted as shown in table 4b. The calculated f-value of 40.67 which is significant at .000 and also significant at 0.05 level of probability indicates that sexual harassment significantly predicts psychological adjustment of university undergraduates. This also indicates a significant relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment.

Data on table 4c also indicates that the calculated t-value of 23.96 which is significant at .000 is also significant at 0.05 level of probability, thus, indicating a significant relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of undergraduates. Thus the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of undergraduates in Enugu State University of Science and Technology is rejected and alternative hypothesis of a significant relationship accepted

5. Discussion

The study was guided by three research questions and one hypothesis which focused on level of sexual harassment among undergraduates, level of psychological adjustment among undergraduates as well as relationship between sexual harassment as psychological adjustment of undergraduates. The results are discussed under the headings below:

The level of sexual harassment among undergraduates

The findings of the study on the level of sexual harassment among undergraduates revealed that their opinions are at moderate level. Such revelations include such statements as receiving calls of sexual requests from mates, failing courses for declining sexual demands by lecturers, being confronted by rapists, not being threatened for declining sexual requests spreading sexual rumours about me and being embarrassed by sexual looks among others. The identified sexual harassment issues among the students are thoughts and feelings a person has in relation to other persons. By implication, sexual harassment could be seen as an overt or covert, verbal or non verbal, violent or non violent behaviour which an individual displays towards person of opposite sex in order to gain sexual satisfaction.

This findings is in consonance with Ellen and Ellen (1992) and also Wieten (1991). Ellen and Ellen (1992) for instances sees sexual harassment as behaviours which may not involve touching, but could just be spoken words, actions and gestures. Also Wieten (1991) stated that sexual harassment occurs when employees and students are submitted to unwanted sexually oriented behaviour ranging from suggestive comments or looks to unwanted touching or overt pressure for sexual favour.

This opinion of undergraduates is understandable in the sense that these behaviours tend to bother someone in a sexual way and tend to bring discomfort and embarrassment to the person to whom these actions are directed especially when the person is not interested in such a relationship.

The level of psychological adjustment among undergraduates

The result of the study on the level (degree) of psychological adjustment of undergraduates indicates a low level responses among the respondents. The item statements which students responded to and which indicated this result are keeping to problems till they are solved, enjoying social functions a lot, not taking disappointments so keenly, not disturbed by criticism, easily provoked to anger, uncomposed to do things rightly among other similar statements. What these findings imply is that when these psychological issues are raised among the respondents, their adjustment psychologically is at a low level. Thus indicating that seemingly the students are psychologically maladjusted.

These adjustment problems of students by implication could infer those problems affecting the personal efforts of the individual to achieve success. These can be manifested when students are over excited over issues of life, finds no pleasure in working with others, enjoys social functions a lot among other similar issues such as not feeling comfortable of being in the crowd. These psychological state of the minds among the respondents could lead to dissatisfaction in school due to the fact that there is lack of proper orientation on the part of the students on the proper ingredients of a healthy psychological growth.

This finding is line with Gitzel (1985) who opined that this can be part of a large picture of psychological discontent, probably caused by lack of affection from significant others in the life of the students, rejection by home or poor school relationships with fellow students and their teachers. These may suggest that proper orientation emphasized at home, school and the communities could go a long way to produce psychologically adjusted students than maladjusted ones.

Relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of undergraduates

The result of the analysis on the relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment showed that sexual harassment relates negatively with psychological adjustments of university undergraduates. This suggests that the higher the experience (level) of sexual harassment among the undergraduates the more they are psychologically maladjusted. This may imply that there is a negative indulgence in sexual behaviours against personal and interpersonal relationship that should normally exist among students thereby resulting to low psychological adjustment. The poor regard of other peoples worth as persons but viewing them as sexual object through unnecessary display of sexual harassment could bring about unhealthy psychological growth likely to make both male and female students unnecessarily excited, tensed up, anxious, angry and hostile. In this circumstance students psychological adjustment may be endangered. The result of this study confirms the earlier works of Williams, Connolly, Pepler and Craig (2005) as well as Effah-Chukwuma and Osarenren (2001). For instance Effah-Chukwuma and Osarenren (2001) revealed that majority of the victims of sexual harassment consider these actions embarrassing and belittling. The authors revealed further that many have become victims of courses failures as a result of their non compliance to others sexual requests. Also Williams et al (2005) reported psychological symptoms such as anxiety, loss of trust and nervousness as consequences of sexual victimization among the victims. Implying that due to experiences of sexual harassment, victims may develop some emotional problems such as depression, anger, loose of confidence among other psychological signs.

The fore-going discussions, supported by the finding of this study highlight the contextual risks associated with sexual harassment in accounting for emotional and behavioural problems in the undergraduate population.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusively, it is important to note that sexual harassment whether verbal or non-verbal, violent or non-violent vary from one behaviour to another and in turn affects psychological adjustment of students. By implication a psychologically unadjusted students may turn to be delinquent and involved in anti-social behaviours.

In view of the above, intervention measures through functional counselling units should be made available by school authorities to assist students encountering and wishing to settle sexual harassment and psychological adjustment problems. It is therefore recommended that curriculum at the basic levels should be modified to accommodate this view.

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Results

Table 1: Mean (X) rating and standard deviation (SD) of the level of sexual harassment of undergraduate students

N/S	Term Description	X	SD	Decision
1	Receives calls of sexual requests from mates	3.67	1.38	H
2	Fails courses for declining sexual requests from lecturers	3.79	1.27	H
3	Being confronted by rapists	3.63	1.31	H
4	Being confronted with idle talks of sexual natures	3.24	1.33	M
5	Lured to sexual intercourse through gifts	3.32	1.36	M
6	Unwelcome sexual jokes about body shapes	3.15	1.33	M
7	Unwelcome touching of intimate body parts by others	3.40	1.31	M
8	Physical threats for declining sexual requests	3.27	1.33	M
9	Tricked of going to parties centred on sexist behaviour	3.47	1.36	M
10	Threatened of failing exams by lecturers for not complying to sexual demands	3.49	1.43	M
11	Being embarrassed by sexual looks	3.48	1.48	M
12	Spreading sexual rumours about me	3.26	1.38	M
13	Not lured to sexual intercourse through pornographic shows	3.37	1.28	M
14	Not embarrassed with texts of sexual requests	3.31	1.30	M
15	Not confronted by rapists	3.44	1.40	M
16	Not lured to sexual inter-course with promise of marks by lecturers	3.54	1.35	H
17	Not lured into sexual intercourse through unwelcome discussion of condoms	3.47	1.30	M
18	Not threatened for declining sexual requests	3.36	1.30	M
19	Not failing courses for declining sexual requests	3.31	1.40	M
Cluster (Total) Mean (X)		3.42	0.51	M

Table 2:
Mean (\bar{X}) Rating and Standard Deviation (SD) of the Level of Psychological Adjustment of Students in Enugu State University of Science and Technology

N/S	Term Description	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
20	Do not loose out on things but makes up my mind easily	2.50	1.41	M
21	I am not disturbed by criticism	2.86	.68	M
22	Inclined in taking things easy and calm	2.32	.36	L
23	Do not take disappointments so keenly	2.48	1.40	L
24	Easily overcomes difficulties no matter how piled up	2.50	1.52	M
25	Keeps to problems till it is solved	2.25	1.44	L
26	Do not allow unimportant things to bother me	2.07	1.46	L
27	Enjoys social functions a lot	1.90	1.29	L
28	Likes keeping close friends	1.89	1.32	L
29	Having the ability of being oneself even in the crowd	2.38	1.47	L
30	Interacts freely with others	1.87	1.27	L
31	Over excited and disturbed over issues of life	2.11	1.40	L
32	Easily tensed up and jittery	2.06	1.42	L
33	Not content and happy as others are	2.14	1.52	L
34	Feeling uncomfortable at school social functions	2.60	1.52	L
35	Finds no pleasure in working with others	2.86	1.69	L
36	Scared of appearing before a crowd	2.26	1.49	L
37	Hardly work with mates during labour	2.13	1.42	L
38	Hardly can manage without friends	2.05	1.38	L
39	Easily provoked to anger	2.48	1.47	L
40	Worry too much about unimportant matters	2.11	1.52	L
41	Lack composure to do things very well	2.09	1.43	L
Cluster (Total) Mean (X)		227	0.86	L

Table 3
Result of the Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Relationship Between Sexual harassment and Psychological Adjustment of Undergraduates

		Sexual Harassment	Psychological Adjustment
Sexual Harassment	Pearson correlation	1	-.25
	Sign. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	614	614
Psychological Adjustment	Pearson correlation	-.25	1
	Sign (2-tailed)	.000	
		614	614

Table 4a

Stepwise linear regression analysis of the relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of undergraduates

Model	R	R square	Adjustment square	Std. error of the estimate
1	-.25	.06	.06	.39

Table 4b

Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

	Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sign
1	Regression	6.097	1	6.097	40.67	.000
	Residual	91.603	611	.150		
	Total	97.700	612			

Table 4c

Coefficients

		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		
Model	B	Std. error	Beta	T	Sign
1 (constant)	2.537	.106	.611	23.96	.000
Harassment	-.195	.031	-.25	6.377	.000