

Sexual Harassment as Predictor of Psychological Adjustment Among Undergraduates of Ebonyi State University Abakaliki



Education

KEYWORDS :

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ABSTRACT

The study determined sexual harassment as predictor of psychological adjustment among undergraduates of Ebonyi state university, Abakaliki. The design is correctional survey research. Three research questions and a hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. The subjects of the study comprise 614 undergraduates comprising 394 males and 220 females. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. Mean score statistics was used in analysis research questions 1 and 2, while question 3 was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation (r). A hypothesis that guided the study was analyzed using linear regression analysis. Results showed the levels of sexual harassment among students to be moderate while the level of psychological adjustment was low. The relationship between sexual harassment was negative leading to a rejection of null hypothesis and acceptance of alternative hypothesis of significant relationship. Based on the findings it was recommended that replication of the study be made in other universities to accommodate generalization of findings.

INTRODUCTION

Adjustment could be seen as a state in which the behaviours of a person (s) and the environment of experiences are at equilibrium. Psychological adjustment could be seen as 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 behaviours, emotions, mental reasoning and wellness. Relating psychological adjustment to temperament and attitudes Ikejiaku and Ayebami (2006) defined it as positive emotional behaviours that enable a person to live harmoniously in his particular social setting or environment.

It is being speculated that when a student is capable of striking a psychological balance in his daily activities in school he might have come to a stage that enhances positive out come in life within and outside the school. on the contrary a psychologically maladjusted student may develop feelings of helplessness, nervous, withdrawn and depressed, going by research records. Olyinka (2005) opined that a psychologically maladjusted person may manifest lack of affection, worry, anxiety, drunkenness, sexual misbehaviour among other related psychological problems.

Many factors may be associated with students' psychological problems such as family background, peer pressures, personal decision due to self conviction. Another factor that may implicate students psychological adjustment is sexual harassment according to research findings. Nworgu (2004) reported a case of sexual harassment toward student where a female students of Ebonyi State university, Abakaliki withdraw from schooling when she can no longer bear the pressure of constant sexual harassment from male university staff and students.

In the context of this work, sexual harassment is any sexist behaviour that is viewed as offensive, selfish and exploitative by the victim. It may involve unwanted kissing, flattering and offensive physical threats. Action health incorporated (2003) describe it as a deliberate or repeated unacceptable verbal sexual comments and gestures and even physical assault. Also Brownmiller (1975) sees it as any verbal or physical contact of sexual nature by an individual or a group which is judged by the recipient to have resulted in mental, physical, emotional and social discomfort.

The psychological trauma of sexual harassment among students have been explored and reported by researchers. Tang (2003) revealed that victims of sexual harassment may start skipping classes to avoid harassment, may have low self confidence, feeling of insecurity and poor sense of belongings. In spite these reports the problem of students' adjustment still persist due to dearth of research works on relationship of sexual harass-

ment with students' psychological adjustment. It is against this background that this work is set to determine whether sexual harassment predicts psychological adjustment of students.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of sexual harassment of undergraduates of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki?
2. What is the level of psychological adjustment of undergraduates of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki?
3. What is the relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of students in Ebonyi State University?

Hypothesis

A hypothesis guided the study and was tested at 0.05 level of significance

H_{01} : There will be no significant relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of undergraduates of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

Method

The design of this study was correlational survey research. The study was conducted in Ebonyi State University Abakaliki among undergraduate students. The population comprised all the undergraduate students of the university (2011/02 session). A multi-stage sampling procedures was used to sample 304 students in 200 and 400 levels.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled sexual harassment and psychological adjustment questionnaire. The questionnaire has two sections of A and B. section A seeks information from the respondents on sexual harassment while section B seeks information on psychological adjustment. The items which were scored on five points likert response option has 41 statements in all. The face validity of the instrument was determined by giving the draft copies to two experts in educational foundations and one expert in measurement and evaluation of Ebonyi State university Abakaliki. Using Cronback Alpha, the average reliability of the instrument was 0.70. Copies of the instrument were distributed to the respondents personally by the researchers. Mean score statistic was used to analyze the research questions 1 and 2 with a critemon mean of 2.50 above as acceptable and below 2.50 as unacceptable. Research question 3 was analyzed person product moment correlation (r) while the only hypothesis that guided the study was tested using linear regression analysis.

Results

Table 1: Mean (\bar{X}) rating and Standard Deviation (SD) of the Level of Sexual Harassment of Students in Ebonyi University.

S/N	Item Description	\bar{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 (\bar{X})	3.42	0.51	M

Data as in Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the level of sexual harassment among the students in state universities in Enugu and Ebonyi States. 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. This implies that with a cluster mean of 3.42 and a standard deviation of 0.51, students' level of sexual harassment is moderate.

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

S/N	Item 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 criticisms	2.86	1.68	M

22.	Inclined in taking things easy and calm	2.32	1.36	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	2.85	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 (\bar{X}))	2.27	0.86	L

The analysis on Table 2 above shows the level of psychological adjustment of undergraduate students in state universities in Enugu and Ebonyi States. 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, 2.86 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 results 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, level 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.

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 Sign. (2-tailed) N	1 614	-.25 .000 614
Psychological adjustment	Pearson correlation Sign (2-tailed)	-.25 .000 614	1 614

answering research question four which sought to determine the relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment of students in state universities in Enugu and Ebonyi states, Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient was used. As shown in Table 4 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.

Table 4 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

Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

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

Coefficients

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

Data presented on Table 5a 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 5. The calculated F-value of 40.67 which is significant at 0.05 level of significance 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 5 also indicates that the calculated t-value of 23.96 which is significant at 0.05 level of significance, 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 state universities in Enugu and Ebonyi states is rejected and alternative hypothesis of a significant relationship accepted.

Discussion

The study was guided by three research questions and a hypothesis which focused on levels of sexual harassment, levels of psychological adjustment, relationship between sexual harassment and psychological adjustment. The result showed that the level of sexual harassment of undergraduates was moderate while the level of psychological adjustment was low. The result supports the findings of Valsa (2008) that helplessness, nervousness and academic expectations relates to psychological adjustment.

The result also showed that sexual harassment relates negatively with psychological adjustment. This suggest that the higher the students experience sexual harassment, the more they are psychologically maladjusted. This result support the earlier work of Williams, Connolly, Pepper and Craig (2003) who report that psychological symptoms such as anxiety and loss of trust are consequence of sexual victimization among victims'.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the result of the study it was concluded that one of the social behaviours that implicates psychological adjustment of students was sexual harassment. The implication of the finding is that experiences of sexual harassment by students provokes psychological maladjustment among them. Thus sexual harassment predicts psychological adjustment.

The present study was limited by the fact that the scope was only a state university in the south east which cannot be generalized to other universities in the country. It is therefore recommended that a similar study be replicated to other state universities and even federal universities in the geo-political zone to create room for generalization.

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