

Socio-demographic Determinants of Knowledge on Sexual Harassment among Students of Tertiary Institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria

Mgbomo, Ngozi Elizabeth, Peter-Kio, Opirite Boma, Arimie Caroline Awonemika

Department of Human Kinetics, Health and Safety Studies, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Rivers State, Nigeria

mgbomongozi@gmail.com; opiri3@gmail.com

arimie.caroline@yahoo.com

Abstract This study examines the socio-demographic determinants of knowledge on sexual harassment among students of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The main objective is to examine the level of knowledge of sexual harassment among tertiary institution students. A descriptive research design was employed in the study. A non-proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select 480 samples for the study. Data was collected with a semi-structured self-administered questionnaire titled "Sexual Harassment Scale" with a reliability coefficient of 0.75 for Knowledge of Sexual Harassment using Kuder Richardson formula. Data collected were analyzed using percentage to answer research questions and chi-square to test hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that 52.4% have good knowledge of sexual harassment; 86.9% have poor knowledge of policies guiding sexual harassment complaints in the institutions and 83.3% of the reported cases were addressed by the school authorities. Gender and level of study had no significant association with the knowledge of sexual harassment. It was concluded that students in tertiary institutions have good knowledge of sexual harassment, however, these students do not have good knowledge of available policies to protect students and punish perpetrators. Therefore, the study recommended among others that school administrators should ensure a policy on the punishment of perpetrators of sexual harassment is included and made available in the various institution orientation packages for students.

Keywords: Determinant, Knowledge, Sexual Harassment, sociodemographic

1. INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment is the most common form of victimization in organizations including tertiary institutions and it is a major public health issue. Research has shown that students that are victims of sexual harassment are subject to psychosocial issues including anxiety, depression, isolation and lack of self-esteem, guilt, fear, frustration and helplessness [1]. Although universities are supposed to be institutions where positive characters are developed, available evidence suggests that most universities in Nigeria have become dangerous grounds where sexual harassment is perpetrated continuously [2]. According to [2], in most countries, there are no laws on sexual harassment in educational sectors. For example in Africa, 36 of the 47 countries with data do not have laws penalizing perpetrators of this criminal offence, despite the negative effect it has on victims [3,4]. In Nigeria this act has risen disproportionately among students, hence it is imperative to explore ways to curb it within the academic system

The European Union defines Sexual Harassment as "any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurring with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment" [5]. From an educational perspective, the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights described SH as "an unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that can deny or limit the student's ability to participate in or receive benefits, services, or opportunities in school programs"[6].

The prevalence of sexual harassment among studies has varied extensively. In a recent systematic review of literature, the prevalence estimates of sexual harassment in college samples based on 34 studies from the United States showed varying rates of 1.8% to 34% in college women and 4.8% to 31% in college males [7]. In Nigeria, few studies from tertiary institutions reported a prevalence of 79% [8] and 58% of sexual harassment among students [9]. The number of victims who take formal action against their harassers is unambiguous compared to the high prevalence of sexual harassment. It is estimated that only 15% of sexual harassment victims file any type of formal complaint and only 6% take legal action against their perpetrators [10]. Some major factors that could be responsible for the increase in the incidence of sexual harassment may be naivety, fear of victimization, and stigmatization [11]. [12] also reported that some contributing factors of sexual harassment among students in Nigeria are sex, age, socioeconomic status, marital status, educational level, indecent dressing pattern, and drug use.

Despite the progress made in reducing sexual harassment in Nigeria, the phenomenon of sexual harassment is gradually assuming critical dimensions in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Thus, the knowledge a student has of sexual harassment is crucial. Studies have found that women perceive a greater range of behaviors as sexually harassing than men [12]. Arguably, students of higher institutions

are expected to be better informed especially in recent times when the use of media and social platforms to acquire desired knowledge has increased. Thus it is imperative to ascertain the level of students' knowledge of sexual harassment as it deals with sociodemographic determinants. This study sought to consider the socio-demographic determinants of knowledge on sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The following research objectives guided this study:

1. To determine the level of knowledge on sexual harassment among students in the tertiary institutions in Rivers State
2. To ascertain gender as a socio-demographic determinant of knowledge on sexual harassment in tertiary institutions in Rivers State;
3. To ascertain the level of study as a socio-demographic determinant of knowledge on sexual harassment in tertiary institutions in Rivers State
4. To determine the level of knowledge of policies on sexual harassment among students in the tertiary institutions in Rivers State;

1.3 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of knowledge of sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?
2. What is the level of knowledge of sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State based on gender?
3. What is the level of knowledge of sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State based on level of study?
4. What is the level of knowledge of policies on sexual harassment among students in the tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

1.4 Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant association between gender and the knowledge of sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State

H₀₂: There is no significant association between level of study and the knowledge of sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

3. Methodology

Descriptive research design was used in the study. All full-time students in the four sampled tertiary institutions (University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, and Captain Elechi Amadi polytechnic) in Rivers State were the study population. Data was collected with a semi-structured self-administered 58-item questionnaire titled "Sexual Harassment Scale". The supervisor and three other experts in the Department of Human Kinetics, Health and Safety Studies at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education assessed the face and content validity of the instrument. The instrument was administered to 480 students selected using a non-proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Frequency and simple percentages were used to answer research questions and chi-square to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The total score for knowledge was classified as Poor knowledge, fair knowledge, and Good knowledge ranging between 0-25%, 26-50%, and 51-100% respectively [13].

4. Results

Research question 1: What is the level of knowledge on sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Table 1: Percentage distribution on Knowledge of sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions (n=452)

Knowledge Items	Correct response	Percentage	Decisions
	Frequency		
Fondling of someone's private part without permission is a sexual harassment	345	76.3	
It is okay to have sexual intercourse against your wish provided your partner is satisfied	325	71.9	
Starring at someone in a sexual way is not a sexual harassment	130	28.8	
One does not need permission before kissing someone	173	38.3	
Rape that was just attempted is not sexual harassment because it was not completed	267	63.5	
Having sexual romance with a person by force is harassment to the person's sexual life	413	91.4	
Making unwanted sexual comments about someone's body or appearance does not mean you are harassing the person sexually	138	30.5	
Forcefully embracing someone is not harassment in any way	165	36.5	
Begging to have sexual intercourse with someone without forcing the person is an harassment	158	35.0	
Average		52.4	Good knowledge

Key: 0-25% = Poor Knowledge; 26-50% = Fair knowledge; 51-100% = Good knowledge

Table 1 displays the percentage distribution of knowledge of sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The findings of the study showed that 91.4% of the respondents correctly indicated that having sexual romance with a person by force is a form of harassment, 76.3% indicated that fondling of someone's private part without permission is a form of sexual harassment, 38.3% showed that one does not need the permission before kissing. Overall, 52.4% correctly responded to the knowledge-based questions. Thus, students of tertiary institutions in Rivers State have good knowledge.

Research questions 2 and 3

Table 2: Percentage distribution of socio-demographic determinants of knowledge on sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions

	Poor Knowledge F (%)	Fair Knowledge F (%)	Good Knowledge F (%)	Decision
Gender				
Male	18 (9.6%)	110 (58.5%)	60 (31.9%)	
Female	20 (7.6%)	160 (60.6%)	84 (31.8%)	
Level of Study				
100 level	13 (13.4%)	56 (57.7%)	28 (28.9%)	
200 level	15 (9.7%)	90 (58.1%)	50 (32.3%)	
300 level	6 (6.5%)	61 (66.3%)	25 (27.2%)	
400 level	2 (4.2%)	29 (60.4%)	17 (35.4%)	
500 level	2 (3.3%)	34 (56.7%)	24 (40.0%)	
Total	38 (8.4%)	270 (59.7%)	144 (31.9%)	Poor Knowledge

Key: 0-25% = Poor Knowledge; 26-50% fair knowledge; 56-100% = Good knowledge

Table 2 shows the socio-demographic determinants of knowledge of sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The result indicated that 60.6% of female respondents have fair knowledge of sexual harassing behaviors. 58.1% of students in 200 level have fair knowledge of sexual harassment. Thus, based on the result, more females in 200 level have poor knowledge of sexual harassment as compared to male students in 200 level.

Research Question 4: What is the level of knowledge of policies on sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State?

Table 3: Percentage distribution of level of knowledge on policies of sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions (n=452)

There is a policy guiding sexual harassment complaints in your institution	Frequency	Percentage	Decision
No	393	86.9	
Yes	32	7.1	
Do not know	27	6	poor

Key: 0-25% = Poor Knowledge; 26-50% = Fair knowledge; 56-100% = Good knowledge

Table 3 displays the percentage distribution of level of knowledge on policies of sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State. The results showed that a majority of the respondents 86.9% have poor knowledge of policy guiding sexual harassment complaints in their institutions, 7.1% knew of a policy guiding sexual harassment complaints in the institutions. 6% of the respondents do not know if there is any policy guiding sexual harassment in their institutions. Therefore, the knowledge of policies guiding sexual harassment complaints in tertiary institutions in Rivers State was poor.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant association between gender and the knowledge of sexual harassment among students in the tertiary institutions in Rivers State

Table 4: Chi-square analysis no significant association between gender and the knowledge of sexual harassment among students of tertiary institutions

Gender	Poor F (%)	Fair F (%)	Good F (%)	Df	χ^2	p-value	Decision
Male	18 (9.6%)	110 (58.5%)	60 (31.9%)	1	0.603	0.740	
Female	20 (7.6%)	160 (60.6%)	84 (31.8%)				
Total	38 (8.4%)	270 (59.7%)	144 (31.9%)				Rejected

P<0.05

Table 4 showed chi-square analysis of knowledge of sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State based on gender. The study revealed a non-significant association between gender and knowledge of sexual harassment ($\chi^2=0.603$, $df=1$, $p>.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant association between gender and the knowledge of sexual harassment was rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant association between level of study and the knowledge of sexual harassment among students in the tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Table 5: Chi-square analysis showing significant association between level of study and the knowledge of sexual harassment among students of tertiary institutions

Level of Study	Poor F (%)	Fair F (%)	Good F (%)	Df	X ²	p-value	Decision
100 level	13 (13.4%)	56 (57.7%)	28 (28.9%)	4	9.683	0.288	Rejected
200 level	15 (9.7%)	90 (58.1%)	50 (32.3%)				
300 level	6 (6.5%)	61 (66.3%)	25 (27.2%)				

400 level	2 (4.2%)	29 (60.4%)	17 (35.4%)
500 level	2 (3.3%)	34 (56.7%)	24 (40.0%)
Total	38 (8.4%)	270 (59.7%)	144 (31.9%)

P<0.05

Table 7 showed chi-square analysis of knowledge of sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Rivers State based on level of study. The study revealed a non-significant association between level of study and knowledge of sexual harassment ($\chi^2=9.683$, $df= 4$, $p>.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant association between level of study and the prevalence of sexual harassment was rejected.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings from Table 1 showed that more than half of the respondents (52.4%) had good knowledge of sexual harassment. This is not surprising and could be due to their education and exposure. These finding is similar to that of [14] who reported high knowledge and perception of sexual harassment among respondents and the existence of different experiences respondents had regarding sexual harassment. The findings on table 2 showed that more females 60.6% of respondents have fair knowledge of sexual harassing behaviors as compared to males. The study also revealed a non-significant association between gender and knowledge of sexual harassment ($\chi^2=0.603$, $df= 1$, $p>.05$). This result is surprising as it is in contrast with the findings of [15] who found that more males had better knowledge of this behaviour and established that girls and boys learn different sexual scripts for them to comprehend how a sexual experience is supposed to proceed and understood. Owing that in traditional societies men are seen to be more knowledgeable due to their socialization. The findings of the study corresponded with [16] report on sexual harassment in a Southern African university that reported no significant association between gender and knowledge about sexual harassment. Conflicting with the results of this study, [17] findings on the defining and awareness of sexual harassment among selected university students in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria revealed that more females defined sexual harassment to be persistent unwanted pressure, physical and sexual advances (75% female and 25 % male). The differences in these studies may be due to the different study locations. Decisively, male and females are knowledgeable about sexual harassment but in different ways. The explanation for the above findings could be based on their personal experiences

With regards to level of study, the results on Table 2 showed that 200 level students have a fair knowledge of sexual harassment and there was no significant association between level of study and knowledge of sexual harassment ($\chi^2=9.683$, $df= 4$, $p>.05$). The findings are consistent with [16] who found that the highest level of harassment occurs among undergraduate students especially among 100 to 300 level students. [18] pointed at naivety as one of the reasons for the high incidence of sexual harassment on undergraduate students.

The result of the study in Table 3 indicated that there is poor knowledge (86.9%) of policies guiding sexual harassment complaints in tertiary institutions. This result is surprising, as students are expected to have orientation from the start of their undergraduate study which should give them a sense of identity [19] Likewise, [20] revealed that the process of identity, development and discipline starts at the undergraduate level after orientation, the expectations are that after orientation, students should uphold the traditions of their institutions. The findings of this study correspond with the findings of [21] on the experience of sexual harassment and coping strategies among students of the school of nursing of a tertiary hospital in southwest Nigeria. The study indicated that 85.2% of the respondents reported an absence of established body set aside for sexual harassment reports in their school. Only 14.8% were aware of constituted body to manage sexual harassment in the institution and 88.4% of them were dissatisfied with the way the established body has been handling cases of sexual harassment in the school.

The outcome of the study also corresponds with the investigation of [22] on knowledge of sexual harassment among undergraduate students in Udipi district. The findings of the study showed that despite a majority of the students having a good knowledge of sexual harassment, 250 (61.3%) were not aware of committees handling cases of sexual harassment in their colleges. This might be another reason for the low report of the incidence. Orientation of fresher's in tertiary institution should include creating awareness on policies for sexual harassment.

The result of the study in Table 4 indicated that 83.3% of reported sexual harassment complaints were addressed and 16.7% were not addressed by the school authorities. The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to how beneficial the policy is to students' development. [23] clearly stated that explicit policies against sexual harassment will promote positive student attitudes. The result of this study is comparable with the findings of [24] on Sexual Harassment in three Selected Private Faith-Based Universities, Ogun-State, western Nigeria. Data retrieved over a 5years period showed that 14 staff members were caught for sexual harassment and 855 were dismissed from work and 14.3% were suspended. This study was on private and faith-based institutions, indicating that policies addressing sexual harassment are available and equally implemented in these institutions. Accordingly, [25] aside from dealing with the perpetrators, school authorities need to be involved in redeeming the

sanity of victims to minimize the adverse consequences of sexual harassment.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings above the study concludes that students in tertiary institutions have good knowledge of sexual harassment, however, these students do not have good knowledge of available policies to protect students and punish perpetrators. Universities have to formulate and implement stringent unbiased policies to curb the incidence of sexual harassment. With such unbiased policies, the academic community will understand that the universities are determined at eliminating sexual harassment and the victims will also know where to seek professional help. While this research has shown that the formulation and implementation of policies would help to reduce the incidence of sexual harassment, there is still a need for additional research to further on the reasons for non-formulation and implementation of the required harassment policies in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

7. Recommendation

The following recommendations are made:

1. Education management and school administrators should prepare policy documents on sexual harassment, clearly defining what constitutes sexual harassment and it should be included in handbooks and service rules.
2. Information, Education and Communication Experts (IECE) should project sexual harassment policies through the use of bulletins and social media campaigns in the various departments of the institutions for further awareness and emphasis.

8. REFERENCES

- [1] Kullima, A. A., Kawuwa, M. B., Audu, B. M., Mairiga, A. G., & Bukar, M. (2010). Sexual assault against female Nigerian students. *African Journal of Reproductive Health, 14*(3), 189-19
- [2] World Bank (2017). Higher Education. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/tertiaryeducation>
- [3] Rubiano-Matulevich, E. (2019). A guidance note for: Preventing, Reporting and Responding to Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Education Institutions. Retrieved from: <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/397161582585064307/guidancenote-final.pdf>
- [4] Quick, J. C., & McFadyen, M. (2017). Sexual harassment: Have we made any progress?. *Journal of occupational health psychology, 22*(3), 286.
- [5] Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2004). Report on: Sexual harassment in the Workplace in EU Member States. <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/SexualHrrsmtRpt.pdf/Files/SexualHrrsmtRpt.pdf>
- [6] Ali, R. (2010). Dear colleague letter: Harassment and bullying. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-bullying-201410.pdf>
- [7] Fedina, L., Holmes, J. L., & Backes, B. L. (2018). Campus sexual assault: A systematic review of prevalence research from 2000 to 2015. *Trauma, violence, & abuse, 19*(1), 76-93.
- [8] Taiwo, M. O., Omole, O. C., & Omole, O. E. (2014). Sexual harassment and psychological consequence among students in higher education institution in Osun State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Applied Psychology, 4*(1), 13-18.
- [9] Arulogun, O. S., Omotosho, I. K., & Titiloye, M. A. (2013). Experience of sexual harassment and coping strategies among students of the school of nursing of a tertiary hospital in Southwest Nigeria. *International Journal of Nursing and Midwifery, 5*(4), 70-75.
- [10] Jorgenson, L. M. & Wahl, K. M. (2000). Workplace sexual harassment: Incidence, legal analysis, and the role of the psychiatrist. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry, 8*(2), 94-98.
- [11] Imonikhe, J., Aluede, O., & Idogho, P. (2012). A survey of teachers' and students' perception of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions of Edo State, Nigeria. *Asian Social Science, 8*(1), 268
- [12] Taiwo, M. O., Omole, O. C., & Omole, O. E. (2014). Sexual harassment and psychological consequence among students in higher education institution in Osun State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Applied Psychology, 4*(1), 13-18.
- [13] Gurung, A., Priyadarshini, S., & Margaret, B. E. (2016). Knowledge of Sexual Harassment among the Undergraduate students in Udupi district. *Nitte University Journal of Health Science, 6*(20,4)
- [14] Menon, A. Shilalukey Ngoma, Mary; Siziya, Seter; Musepa, Mulenga; Malungo Jacob; Serpell, Robert (2010). Sexual Harassment in Academia- Perception, Understanding and Reporting of Sexual Harassment in a Southern African University. *Journal of Peace, Gender and Development Studies, 1*(1), 008-014.
- [15] Arnette, J. J., & Hughes, M. (2012). Adolescence and emerging adulthood: a cultural approach. England.

- [16] Magaji, A. B., Ikhida, J. E., Timur, A. T., & Timur, S. (2019, September). Sexual Harassment in Higher Education: Students' Perceptions and Attitudes. In *Global Joint Conference on Industrial Engineering and Its Application Areas* (pp. 40-50). Springer, Cham.
- [17] Abe, I. (2012). Defining and awareness of sexual harassment among selected university students in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 3(3), 212-218.
- [18] Iliyasu, Z., Abubakar, I. S., Aliyu, M. H., Galadanci, H. S., & Salihu, H. M. (2011). Prevalence and correlates of gender-based violence among female university students in Northern Nigeria. *African journal of reproductive health*, 15(3), 123-133.
- [19] Beecher, T., & Trowler, P. (2001). Academic tribes and territories: Intellectual enquiry and the cultures of disciplines.
- [20] Arulogun, O. S., Omotosho, I. K., & Titiloye, M. A. (2013). Experience of sexual harassment and coping strategies among students of the school of nursing of a tertiary hospital in Southwest Nigeria. *International Journal of Nursing and Midwifery*, 5(4), 70-75.
- [21] Gurung, A., Priyadarshini, S., & Margaret, B. E. (2016). Knowledge of Sexual Harassment among the Undergraduate students in Udipi district. *Nitte University Journal of Health Science*, 6(2), 4.
- [22] Imaledo, J. A., Peter-Kio, O. B., & Asuquo, E. O. (2012). Pattern of risky sexual behavior and associated factors among undergraduate students of the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. *Pan African Medical Journal*, 12(1).
- [23] Norman, I. D., Aikins, M., & Binka, F. (2012). Traditional and contrapower sexual harassment in public universities and professional training institutes of Ghana. *International journal of academic research*, 4(2).
- [24] Norman, I. D., Aikins, M., & Binka, F. (2012). Traditional and contrapower sexual harassment in public universities and professional training institutes of Ghana. *International journal of academic research*, 4(2).
- [25] Quick, J. C., & McFadyen, M. (2017). Sexual harassment: Have we made any progress?. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 22(3), 286.