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**SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN TERTIARY EDUCATIONAL  
INSTITUTIONS: IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES**

*BY*

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**ABSTRACT**

*Factors which enhance sexual harassment have been identified. There are different dimensions of sexual harassment. There is female - male or male - female sexual harassment. However Teacher - Student sexual harassment is very popular. Suggestions to minimize the menace have been clearly considered because of its consequences and implications in the learning establishments.*



## INTRODUCTION

The index of power and authority of one over the other can be exhibited in several ways. Head of schools or state can exhibit terrorism or democracy. Similarly, a class teacher may practise one form of harassment or the other. He can be a strict disciplinarian. It is common that harassment of students by teachers can take several forms including securing of free labour (students) to work for the teachers as practised in rural schools and colleges. However, sexual harassment is ever popular.

Sexual harassment can be claimed to be initiated by a teacher when he has immediate or advanced sexual intent and applies as such with a learner with a view for academic compensation. In other words teacher - student sexual harassment occurs when there is a deviation from the role of a teacher to illicit social affairs with any interested or uninterested learner with a view to render academic or other measurable assistance in appreciation. Smart et al (1973) stated that sexual harassment encompasses soliciting for sex or coitus for the sole purpose of granting some other services to the donor.

The teacher occupies an eviable position of authority in the school system. If the ladder of hierarchy is drawn this makes the teacher the king over the students irrespective of the students parental background. The students may become loyal or disloyal to the king's harassments. Hence it is common to hear about lecturers embarrassment by students or parents relating with sexual harassment in schools.

Schools are supposed to be models for moral conduct so any mustard seed of immoral act must be magnified by the society. Sexual harassment is not only limited to schools. It can also apply in offices, markets, places of worship and where ever the mature opposite sexes contact each other for a purpose. Sexual gratification can be applied be-

fore employment or promotion is granted. Many people world over use it as the easiest means of making an achievement in life endeavour.

Therefore, this paper reviews the causes, consequences and the implications of sexual harassment in tertiary educational institutions. The solutions are also discussed in different dimensions.

## WHAT CONSTITUTES SEXUAL HARASSMENT ?

Sexual harassment is a blanket term that covers a wide variety of sexual habits in schools. However, Mackinno (1979) is more definite in his assessment. He sees sexual harassment as the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements as the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power.

Sexual harassment will include in addition to the act of physical intercourse such as direct and indirect approaches:

- Nicknaming of female students e.g beauty, apple, etc. with sexual motives,
- Sexual threats,
- Subtle pressure and unauthorized activity,
- Unnecessary and unauthorized touching of the body,
- Making unnecessary remarks about a lady's dressing, body or sexual activities.

However, Ekpo (1996) classifies sexual harassment into two forms: physical and verbal. Physical sexual harassment has to do with physical sexual intercourse, physical romances of all sorts and other forms of body contact. On the other hand, verbal sexual harassment deals with those acts carried out with speech as the main instrument of per-forms.



It is my personal opinion that when a teacher expresses a sexual desire with a student especially with an intent to punish if she refuses, amounts to sexual harassment and even when an interest to punish does not exist should the student refuse still amounts to sexual harassment because this sexual favour is asked from the human relation of a teacher - student relationship; one on higher position and the other on a lower.

Not only does verbal sexual demand constitute harassment but sexy comments to lure the students into the act. These comments could be made to show the teacher's desire or self motive. Gestures may also constitute sexual harassment. This could involve facial displays and bodily movements aiming at achieving attraction or indications for sex desire.

#### **CAUSES OF TEACHER - STUDENT SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

There seem to be as many causes of sexual harassment of students by teachers as there are cases of the harassment themselves. The first seems to be the general indiscipline in the wider society and in the school in particular. Esen (1980) sees discipline as the maintenance of the quality of atmosphere necessary for the achievement of goal. He further says that if members of an institution generate and maintain an atmosphere which will help them to work optionally towards the achievement of their goals, we can then say that there is discipline in a school.

Indiscipline is a negative attribute which can easily be defined as the absence of discipline. Teachers who find themselves in the midst of many female students can decide to take undue advantage of the situation. It is observed that cases of sexual harassment of students by male teachers are least in male schools (Ekpo 1991).

The second reason can be traced to the victims of sexual harassment themselves especially in the cases of male teachers harassing female students. These female students directly or indirectly look for a short cut to pass examination without necessarily deserving a pass. The price they pay is sexual gratification or cash or both.

Greed for material things is another reason for sexual harassments. Mmaduokonam (1986) agrees with this view and says that most girls run after younger men and 'sugar daddies' for money and that they use the money to buy costly dresses, shoes and ornaments. In schools, they are many men who look attractive before the young school girls. Sometimes, the young teachers can also afford presentation of gifts to the young school girls. The concerned girls now regard the concerned teachers as daddies or darlings, hence sexual harassment has taken place. The girl now has developed a personal identity and regards herself as 'Special Students'. This self popularity is envied by other female students who seek for such equal opportunity. In whatever perspective one looks at it the teacher is an actor since he has the choice to overcome the temptation with his education at hand as a powerful weapon to choose between good and evils.

Another supporting factor lies on the psychological age of the female students. Oladele (1989) describes the period of adolescence as 'stress and storm'. It is a period of dramatic ups and downs through which every teenager must pass in order to develop into a balanced mature adult. The adolescence characterized the population of secondary schools and their day-dream is nothing than the opposite sex which are readily available in either Urban or Community Secondary Schools. They also harass their teachers sexually to meet their day dreams. This habit is cultivated and passed over to the higher educational institutions since their sexual tendency is still high at their youthful ages.



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Influence of peer group and social gang on the part of the female students also enhance sexual harassment in schools. There is a cut throat competition even within the peer group for number of teachers trapped by each member of the group.

Parents who over protect their children against young boys at home without proper Orientation to the implications of early sex do more harm to their children when they leave home for schools. They constitute the group who are sexually susceptible to their teachers and even to their colleagues.

Lack of ethical conduct on the part of most school teachers can also be considered. Teaching is regarded as a noble profession not on the strength of economic benefit but on the platform of moral conducts, integrity and personality. Today, very few teachers are disciplined and moral conduct therefore suffers, hence sexual harassment is on the daily increase as moral decadence increases among school teachers. Even female students also harass young school teachers or male colleagues sexually because of their youthful outburst, the teachers or the male colleagues then behave like monkeys waiting for ripe banana.

Broken homes also enhance sexual harassment of students by teachers. Ekpo (1991) holds that children from broken homes may deceive one parent that she is with the other when actually she is in between. This hide and seek game affords these children the opportunity to demand for lustful teachers or other sex partners.

Closely related to the above point is the fact pointed out by Ekpo (1996) that children in Urban Centres are more involved in sex offences than children in the rural areas. These youths according to Ekpo (1991) and Mmadoukonam (1986) get exposed to sexual activi-

ties earlier than those in the rural areas. This exposure is through films, video, and even from the adult society where women pay for certain favours with sex.

The inadequacy of moral teaching in the school curriculum does not help to shape one's sexual desire in the school system. Today, some school teachers and students reserve no slightest acceptance that sexual harassment is immoral since family planning is not limited to unmarried under graduates.

## CONSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

### Missing words to be supplied.

No matter what the causes may be has some consequences and implications on the teachers, students, the school system and the wider society.

To a lustful teacher, the refusal of sexual demand by a female student can force him to commit rape. The culprit may face job dismissal and/or serving a long term imprisonment. This is a typical example of how sexual harassment can lead to sexual embarrassment. Similar example is the allegation against a teacher in connection with abortion committed by his student partner. In this situation, the emotional fooling of the teacher is likely to hinder normal teaching and learning process. In addition, such teachers lose their due personality and dignity due to sex scandal.

Academic favouritism of all sorts including examination leakages can be rendered by a teacher to a female student in appreciation for sex. This is illegal and indiscipline on the part of the teacher. He can face immediate expulsion if he is convicted.

From the viewpoint of the teacher, there is a corrupting influence. It



further adds to the deterioration of school and general discipline of the society. Ultimately half baked graduates are produced from schools because the students passed examinations out of sexual gratification and not through hardwork. The concerned graduates are not worth their certificates.

Those female students who refused sex may be victimized and could be forced out of school particularly when the student is academically weak. The expelled students became frustrated and roamed the streets causing nuisance within the school environment or in the wider society as school dropouts.

Male students can equally be victimized for alleged sexual harassment with a female students belonging to the teacher. This adds to the number of dropouts who may cause serious social vices in the society. The emphasis here is that the dropouts can get hardened; woman constitute the prostitutes and the men become hardened criminals. Sometimes, the teacher may be forced to pay the price of his stewardship by the affected students and this may result in loss of life or property.

Another consequence is that early marriage and unwanted pregnancy are often associated with sexual harassment among students. With others sexual gratification female students can achieve easily what others described as being difficult and impossible. When this practice is demonstrated in the wider society those students often exchange their bodies for jobs, promotions, and other fulfilment of life. This is indecency in the sight of men and sinful by the judgement of God.

On the school system, the school now becomes factory which employs and produces indisciplined sex menace. The school no more moulds characters but destroys the little which was shaped at disciplined homes. Ideal standard of education and academic atmosphere cannot be achieved.

The management staff of the school system are not left out in the context. Sexual gratification can afford admission to undue candidates and provision of employment to discredited ladies. Consequently, admission standard and productivity suffers while justice can also be denied in a case of allegation against a female students.

It is undisputable that sexual harassment can enhance sexually transmitted diseases in a school community leading to insecurity to one's health and sometimes death.

The effect of sexual harassment in a school system is disservice to the growth of the society because the function of a school in the socialization of a child will be defeated.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

To minimize the problem of sexual harassment there is need to reorder our priorities. Less emphasis should be laid on paper qualification. Employer of services should seek to employ the very best. It should never be on the basis of having the right connections or bottom power.

There is also need to adequately expose the teacher to the moral aspect of his profession. Teachers ethics or code of conduct must be made known to the teachers. Monitoring of teachers to ensure strict compliance to the code of conduct is essential. Teachers and students who indulge themselves in the act should be thoroughly dealt with according to law.

One way of motivating teachers to exhibit good behaviour in the school is by rewarding the good ones and punishing the odd ones. The school curriculum should address the issue of moral values adequately in a general course for all the students.



The macro society (the outside world) is corrupt and the cleansing if started at a micro environment (school) can be ineffective. It calls for a concerted all round effort to eliminate sexual harassment which is only one aspect of immorality. The policemen should be punished for collecting bribe. The Ministry personnel asked to explain the source of the car drives when his salary for 20 years put together cannot buy it, etc. Religious leaders should live exemplary lives. The situation is the same in a school system. Head of schools, the Ministry of Education, the Parents, the Students, and the teachers can work together to minimize this ugly and embarrassing situation by perpetuating high moral values and by encouraging discipline in examinations.

### **CONCLUSION**

Sexual harassment is seen to be based on unequal authority between the teacher and the students. While the teachers share some blame with the students for these immoral acts, the root of the problem is embedded in the wider society where sexual gratification is the order of the day for solving most pressing problem. Teachers, students and management staff of the school community should refrain from the illicit act. Therefore, only self discipline and repentance can eradicate the menace.

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