Exploring the Pattern of Sexual Harassment in Lagos State Higher Institutions: A Structural Model

(Meneroka Corak Gangguan Seksual di Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Negeri Lagos: Model Struktur)

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the pattern of sexual harassment in higher institutions in Lagos state. Hypothesising, unlike researchers that there shall be a direct relationship between all identified categories of sexual harassment behaviours thus: physical, verbal, non-verbal and quid pro quo and sexual harassment; and the report of sexual harassment is predicted by gender, physical sexual behaviour and quid pro quo. Six hundred students randomly selected from six higher institutions in Lagos State, responded to Pattern of Sexual Harassment Questionnaire (PSHQ). Results were analysed by the use of path analysis. The produced model adequately fit the hypothesised model; the chi-square result $\chi^2(6) = 13.02$, $p = 0.043 < 0.05$, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) $0.044 < 0.06$, the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) 0.99, Adjusted GFI (AGFI) 0.97, Normed fit index (NFI) 0.99, Comparative fit index (CFI) 0.98 and Incremental fit index (IFI) 0.100 all > 0.9 all indicate sufficient good fitness of the model. Based on the findings of the study counsellors are challenged to become more responsive than before to counselling needs of students in order to discourage sexual harassment and encourage reporting of sexual harassment.

Keywords: Sexual harassment; quid pro quo; physical harassment; verbal harassment; non-verbal harassment

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meneliti corak gangguan seksual di institusi pengajian tinggi di negeri Lagos. Secara hipotesis, kebanyakan penyelidik tidak berminat untuk mengkaji secara langsung antara tingkah laku gangguan seksual dengan semua kategori yang dikenal pasti tingkah laku sebagai gangguan seksual, iaitu fizikal, lisan, bukan lisan, status qua pro dan gangguan seksual, laporan gangguan seksual mengikut jantina, tingkah laku seksual dan fizikal qua pro. Seramai 600 orang pelajar dipilih secara rawak terpilih daripada enam institusi pengajian tinggi di Lagos Negeri, dipilih untuk menjawab soal selidik Soal Selidik Corak Gangguan Seksualiti. Analisis keperluan digunakan untuk menganalisis data. Analisis data telah menghasilkan satu hipotesis model yang tepat, iaitu chi kuasa dua (6) = 13.02, p = 0.043 <0.05, RMSEA 0,044 <0.06, GF = 0.99, AGFI = 0.97, NFI = 0.99, CFI = 0.98 dan IFI = 0.100 bagi semua menunjukkan kecergasan yang cukup baik daripada model. Dapatan kajian ini memberi cabaran kepada para kaunselor supaya menjadi lebih responsif daripada sebelumnya seperti memberi kaunseling kepada pelajar bagi menggalakkan gangguan seksual dibuat serta galakkan laporan gangguan seksual dibuat.

Kata kunci: Gangguan seksual; status qua pro; gangguan fizikal; gangguan lisan; gangguan non-lisan

INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment has been defined differently by several writers and context; *Denga and Denga (2004)* refer to sexual harassment as the use of influence, position or power by a male to get a female to satisfy his sexual desires. They note that in societies where homosexuality and lesbianism are practised, a male may harass another male just like a female may harass another female sexually. Hill and Hill (2005) define sexual harassment as unwanted sexual approaches including touching, feeling, groping or repeated unpleasant, derogatory voyeuristic remarks directed toward an employee with the implied suggestion that the target's employment status, promotion or favourable treatment depends upon their positive response and cooperation.

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (1984) on the other hand defines sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or participation in a University-sponsored educational program or activity, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for academic or employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic or work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or working environment.

The consensus is that sexual harassment takes place in two major ways, quid pro quo, and hostile environment. Quid pro quo is a Latin word for "this for that" which implies that a woman or man offers sex in return for academic progress, keeping a job or for other academic or employment benefits. Hostile environment is on the other hand a term coined by Catharine MacKinnon a radical feminist and foremost writer on sexual harassment, it occurs when a co-worker, schoolmate, lecturer or supervisor in the work or academic environment makes unwelcome sexual advances or comments which interferes with work/academic performance or creates a nerve racking work or learning environment for the concerned individual (Kane-Urrabazo 2007).

The two forms are interrelated, the demand for sexual pleasure in return for favour also known as quid pro quo could be verbal, non-verbal or physical sexual demands which may eventually result to discomfort and embarrassment for the victim otherwise known as hostile environment. A very good Nigerian example is the case of a Professor at the Ahmadu Bello University - Nigeria who was dismissed from the institution for sexually harassing a pregnant married postgraduate student of his. The Professor is said to have constantly made advances towards his student inciting her, calling her often and sending her love mobile phone text. The student and her husband plea to the Professor to desist from his sexual advances were up to no avail. The Professor was eventually reported to the police who apprehended him and charged him to court. He was sentenced to two months imprisonment and was later dismissed from the university (Akannam 2013).

In general, the harasser is often in a position of power or authority over the victim and the conduct of harassment is always verbal, non-verbal or physical. Sexual harassment is "*verbal*" when an individual makes sexual comment(s) about a person's clothing, anatomy or looks.

Non-verbal harassment is actions intended for an effect or as a demonstration. It usually involves movement of the body, head, arms, hands, fingers, face or eyes to express the individual's idea, opinion or emotion. *Physical harassment* is a conduct such as unnecessary touching, patting, hugging or brushing against a person's clothing that results to discomfort or humiliation of the concerned person.

Nevertheless, according to Denga and Denga (2004) most of the behaviours classified as sexual harassment above are not regarded as sexual harassment by students in higher institutions in Nigeria. For example 800 out of 1000 students who participated in the study did not regard verbal, non-verbal and visual sexual harassment behaviours as sexual harassment. Only conducts of physical sexual harassment is regarded as sexual harassment. Table 1 presents Denga and Denga's findings on comparative analysis of Nigeria versus Western students' view of sexual harassment.

In addition, Okoro and Osawemen (2005) in their study of sexual harassment among out-of-school teenagers found out that up to 71% of their respondents, perceived sexual harassment as a normal occurrence in the Nigeria society, even though they feel bad and angry about it. This position has been attributed to cultural influence or traditional gender roles which taught girls to keep silent and overlook boys' behavioural excesses (Webb 1994; Noah 2008; Kofi 2010; Ige & Adeleke 2012). Webb (1994) further asserts that sexual harassment is inextricably linked with power and takes place in societies that often treat women as sex objects and second-class citizens.

Ige and Adeleke (2012) added that sexual harassment behaviours and perceptions rooted in African culture which discourages the discussion of sexually related issues in public and stigmatised women who identify themselves as being sexually active. Nigeria is a patriarchal society that favours men above women, a man is the leader and the

TABLE 1. Comparative view of what constitutes sexual harassment in the West and in Nigeria

No	Western View	Nigerian View
1	Verbal harassment or abuse	This is not sexual harassment.
2	Subtle pressure for sexual activity	Too mild to constitute sexual harassment.
3	Sexist remarks about a woman's clothing or body	May even be deemed desirable by the woman in Nigeria.
4	Unnecessary touching or pinching	This may constitute sexual harassment depending on the degree applied.
5	Leering or ogling of a woman's body	This is regarded as foolishness, not sexual harassment.
6	Constant brushing against a woman's body	This constitutes sexual harassment
7	Demanding sexual favours accompanied by threats to life	This is sexual harassment or intended rape.
8	Physical assault to a woman	This is treated as normal physical assault, not sexual harassment.
9	Giving low grades to a woman for refusing to grant sexual favours	Sheer corruption or wickedness, not sexual harassment.
10	Stalking a woman	This is superfluous affection.

fountain of authority while a woman is the subordinate and must settle for submissive roles. No wonder Nigerian men can have sex with numerous partners or have extramarital affairs but women are stigmatised and devalued for the same behaviour (Kofi 2010). These double standards have left Nigerian women viewing some forms of sexual harassment as normal and only considering physical sexual harassment as sexual harassment. This explains why conducts such as stalking of a woman is regarded as superfluous affection and bigoted remarks about woman's clothing or body deemed desirable by Nigerian women in Denga and Denga's study.

Furthermore, disclosure of sexual harassment is also attributed to cultural influence and the individual's perception of the event (Brooks & Perot 1991; Young et al. 2004; Noah 2008; Kofi 2010). Brooks and Perot (1991) proposed and found in their study that the likelihood of reporting any event largely depends on how the event is perceived. That is labelling an incident as sexual harassment will be the pre-requisite requisite for reporting such a case. Hence, a victim of sexual harassment will not deem it fit to report the incident unless they perceived the occurrence as sexual harassment. One must first identify themselves as a victim before they can report. Noah (2008) asserts that many Nigerians still do not recognize that sexual harassment is an actionable offence; therefore, victims are reluctant to come forward with complaints, fearing that they will not be believed, their charges will not be taken seriously or they will be subjected to reprisal.

Kofi added that for the fear of embarrassment and humiliation within the society, many victims of harassment find it very difficult and highly uncomfortable to report their experiences. For example it is a taboo for Nigerian women to engage in sexual discussions in public. Women who disclose their sexually inappropriate behaviours before the public are considered shameful to their family. Society considers these types of women as whores. As a result, they rarely report sexual harassment to anybody for fear of being blamed for the incident (Kofi 2010). This position was confirmed by the study of Ige and Adeleke's study where above 62.5% of the respondents reported their harassers in less than 24 hours of the incidence but no serious action was taken against them by relevant authorities. Such reports are normally either laughed off or the victim chastised for arousing the sexual drive in harasser. Young, Allen and Ashbaker (2004) earlier noted that men may also find it more difficult to report being sexually harassed because socially it is assumed that males should enjoy the sexual attentions of females, they are expected or better, obligated to toughen up and put up with sexual harassment otherwise such men are categorised as wimpy.

This article argues that female Nigerians in general and students of higher institutions specifically irrespective of cultural and societal undertone are more informed about sexual harassment and are more inclined to expose their harassers especially when it has to do with physical sexual

behaviours or exchange of grades for sex; quid pro quo as in the earlier highlighted Professors' case.

On the issue of gender and sexual harassment, studies (Abe 2012; Young et al. 2004; Ladebo 2003; Dey et al. 1996) have reported varied experiences for males and females. The general consensus is that females are usually the victims of sexual harassment but Dey et al. (1996) assert that victims of sexual harassment in most cases have been women but to a lesser extent men have also been the targets of harassment too. The opinion of Young et al. (2004), males and females are experiencing sexual harassment at about the same rate although their experiences may be different. Females for example are more likely than males to be physically harassed by being touched, grabbed, pinched or brushed up against in a sexual way, and are also more likely to be harassed by adults while males will experience verbal harassment in form of sexual innuendos, sexual teasing, kissing sounds, provocative compliments and dressings. They also reported that women are more likely to view potentially harassing behaviour as inappropriate compared to men. Abe's (2012) study supports this position; between 95%-100% of the respondents, both male and female, indicated that they would be indignant if they were targets of sexual assault, rape or attempted rape. Gender differences were also found in regards to feelings and response towards specific sexual harassment. A greater number of female 85%, 81% and 4% of females indicated that they had experienced sexually harassing behaviour in physical, verbal and sexual assault respectively while only 23% and 4% males had the same experience in physical and verbal harassment and none have been sexually assaulted.

The discussion formed basis for this research however, unlike Denga and Denga (2004), Okoro and Osawemen (2005) the study proposes that all categories of sexual harassment behaviours: physical, verbal, non-verbal, and Quid pro quo sexual harassment behaviour shall be regarded as sexual harassment. Also that disclosure of sexual harassment shall be influenced by gender. That females will most likely report cases of sexual harassment more than males and only physical sexual harassment behaviour and quid pro quo shall be reported. Figure 1 presents a likelihood model of the sexual harassment pattern in Lagos state higher institutions.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Research (Denga & Denga 2004; Okoro & Osawemen 2005) has shown that behaviours that are generally defined as physical sexual harassment is the only conduct that is perceived as sexual harassment by Nigerians. In addition, research has shown that the disclosure of sexual harassment is attributed to cultural influence and the individual's perception of the event (Brooks & Perot 1991; Young et al. 2004; Noah 2008; Kofi 2010). The concern of this study is

reflected in Figure 1, which illustrates the proposed model of the pattern of sexual harassment in higher institutions of learning in Lagos state.

This piece of writing unlike Denga and Denga (2004) and Okoro and Osawemen hypothesised that all the four categories of sexual harassment behaviours from Quid pro quo, physical, verbal, and non-verbal shall have direct path to sexual harassment. In other words sexual harassment shall not be perceived as harassment only when the behaviours exhibited by the harasser are physical, rather, other forms of harassments shall also be seen as sexual harassment. It is also hypothesised that only physical sexual harassment and quid pro quo behaviours shall be reported most especially by females. Females shall also be more disposed to reporting sexual harassment than males. It is assumed that students are now more informed about sexual harassment as such their responses would be different from what has been reported theoretically and empirically.

HYPOTHESIS

Figure 1 presents the proposed model to predict pattern of sexual harassment in Lagos state higher institutions. It was hypothesised that:

1. Sexual harassment shall have a direct relationship with the four categories of sexual harassment behaviours (non-verbal, verbal, quid pro quo and physical).
2. Sexual harassment behaviour types shall each influence the other in sexual harassment.
3. Report of sexual harassment shall be predicted by gender and other sexual behaviour types except non-verbal sexual behaviour whose impact is expected to be indirect through physical sexual behaviour.

METHODS

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed the use of descriptive design to predict and describe the pattern of sexual harassment in higher institutions in Lagos State.

SAMPLE

The sample selected for this study consists of 600 students, 321 males and 279 females randomly selected from six higher institutions in Lagos State, two Universities, two polytechnics and two Colleges of Education. A total of 100 students were randomly selected from each institution.
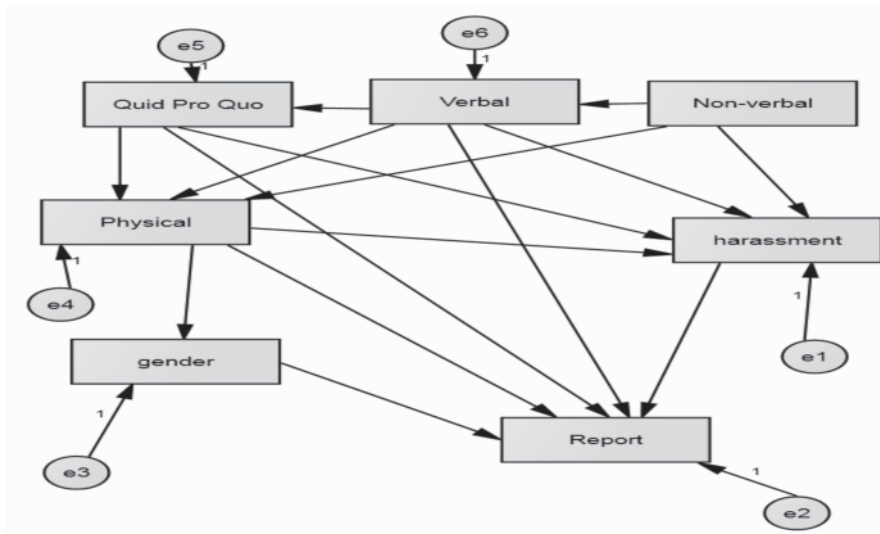

FIGURE 1: Model to predict pattern of sexual harassment in higher institutions

INSTRUMENT

Pattern of Sexual Harassment Questionnaire (PSHQ) was the instrument used for the study. PSHQ is a compilation of consensus (Denga & Denga 2004; Webb 1994; Hill & Hill 2005; EEOC 1984; Catharine MacKinnon 1979, 2004) on specific behaviours which constitute specific type of sexual harassment. For example the consensus was that verbal sexual harassment is exhibited when an individual makes sexual comment(s) about a person's clothing, anatomy or looks, such as telling sexist jokes or stories or making

kissing sounds, howling and smacking lips. PSHQ is a 35 items questionnaire of five sections, sections A-D present statements describing behaviour traits of each category of sexual harassment outlined for analysis in this study, while section E had statements on disclosure of sexual harassment. Respondents were expected to tick statements that mostly express the type of sexual harassment which operates in their institution. The number of ticks for each respondent on each section was totalled and recorded. To ensure internal consistency, content validity was re-established by a panel of experts consisting of members

of the Faculty of Education, Lagos State University. Reliability of the instrument was conducted with a sample of students who were not part of the sample for the study. A reliability coefficient score of r = 0.89 was established for the instrument.

METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Data obtained was analyses using AMOS 18 for Windows for Path analysis otherwise known as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). All analyses were held significant at 0.05 and 0.001 levels of significance.

RESULTS

The model hypothesised for the study (Figure 1) and the data generated through the use of PSHQ was built into AMOS 18 for Windows. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was performed on the data using the Maximum Likelihood Method of Estimation, the path generated is presented in Figure 2. In order to ascertain fitness of the hypothesised model six different fit indices were employed, this is to

conform to the position of Bryne (2009) that the of use of an index provides limited guidance in determining the fitness of the model. Therefore in addition to the use of chi-square the use of six other fit indices were employed.

Chi-square test in SEM is a badness-of-fit test; hence smaller values indicate better fit. Chi-square result of this study displayed a value of $\chi^2(6) = 13.02$, p = 0.043 < 0.05 which indicates no significant difference between the hypothesised model and the final model. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is related to the residual in the model. According to Hu & Bentler (1999) RMSEA values range from 0 to 1 with a smaller RMSEA value indicating a better model fit. Acceptable model fit is indicated by a RMSEA value of 0.06 or less. Therefore, a RMSEA value of 0.044 < 0.06, further indicates good fit of the model. Unlike REMSEA other fit indices such as GFI, AGFI, NFI and CFI are goodness-of-fit indices where larger values closer to 1 mean better fit. Result of the study presents a Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) 0.99, Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) 0.97, Normed Fit Index (NFI) 0.99, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) 0.98 and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) 0.100 all > 0.9 indicate good fitness of the model, since all the values are closer to 1 (Tabachnick & Fidell 2001).
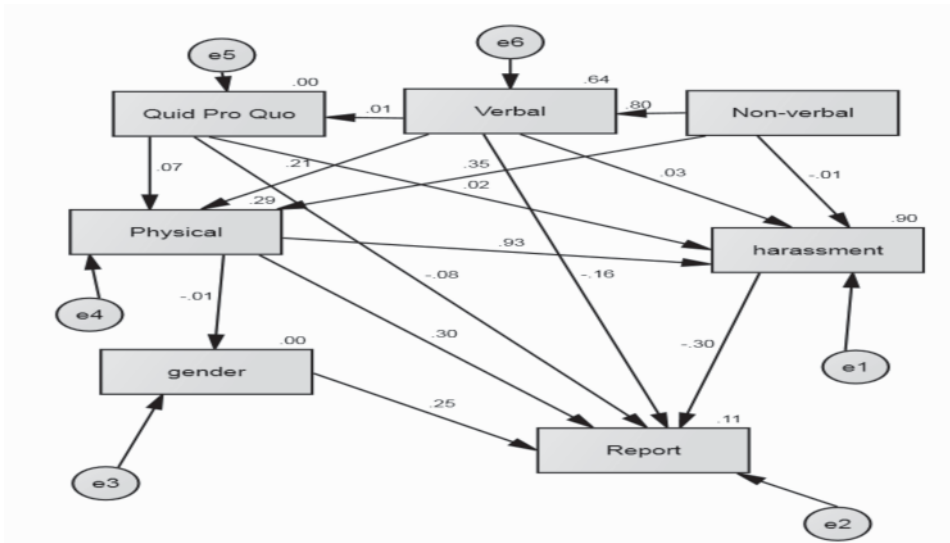

FIGURE 2: Produced path model of pattern of sexual harassment in higher institutions

According to Suhr (2008), the higher the values of the standardized path coefficient the stronger the direct effect of the variables of measure, a standardized path coefficients with absolute values less than 0.10 indicate a small effect, while values greater than 0.50, depicts a large effect. As shown in Table 2, six direct paths are statistically significant for sexual harassment. Statistically significant path exist from nonverbal → verbal (β = 0.80), verbal → phys (β = 0.21), nonverbal → phys (β = 0.35), phys → harass (β = 0.94), gender → report (β = 0.25), and verb → report (β = -0.16). Physical sexual harassment behaviour has the greatest direct path to sexual harassment (.94) and to report (.30) followed by non-verbal sexual harassment

behaviour with a direct effect on verbal sexual behaviour (.80) and physical sexual behaviour (.35). Verbal sexual harassment behaviour has a direct path to physical sexual behaviour (.21), while gender and sexual harassment are directly in path to report (.25) and (.30) respectively. Quid pro quo has the lowest value .02 and .08 indicating less effect on sexual harassment and report.

The model accounted for 0.90% of the variance in sexual harassment, 0.64% of the variance in verbal sexual behaviour 0.29% of variance in physical sexual behaviour and 0.11% of the variance in report of sexual harassment.

TABLE 2: Estimate of path coefficient of the model on sexual harassment

			Un-standardised Estimate (β)	Standardised Estimate (β)	S.E.	P
verb	<---	nonverb	.715	.797	.022	***
verb	<---	quid	.003	.013	.009	.756
phys	<---	quid	.290	.072	.139	.037
phys	<---	verb	.189	.205	.052	***
phys	<---	nonverb	.293	.354	.047	***
harass	<---	phys	.941	.935	.015	***
gender	<---	phys	-.002	-.007	.011	.871
harass	<---	verb	.031	.034	.020	.112
harass	<---	quid	.086	.021	.052	.100
harass	<---	nonverb	-.006	-.007	.018	.752
report	<---	phys	.209	.305	.085	.014
report	<---	gender	.648	.251	.100	***
report	<---	quid	-.231	-.083	.108	.032
report	<---	harass	-.208	-.305	.084	.014
report	<---	verb	-.102	-.162	.028	***

N = 600 *** $p < 0.001$

DISCUSSION

As reported above, results revealed a perfect fit between the data, the hypothesised model and the final model. As hypothesised, the four categories of sexual harassment behaviours: physical, verbal, non-verbal and quid pro quo have direct path on sexual harassment. However, physical sexual behaviours (p.94) appeared to be the strongest path to sexual harassment. Though one may be tempted to conclude as in Denga & Denga (2004) that only conducts of physical sexual harassment is regarded as sexual harassment by students in higher institutions but the relationship between the four sexual behaviour forms; non-verbal, verbal, quid pro quo and physical imply as hypothesised that sexual harassment behaviour types are interrelated and that the direct path expressed between sexual harassment and physical sexual behaviour is a result of the relationship between non-verbal sexual behaviour and verbal sexual behaviour (β = 0.80), between verbal sexual behaviour and physical sexual behaviour (β = 0.21) and between non-verbal sexual behaviour and physical sexual behaviour (β = 0.35). It is obvious that verbal sexual behaviour is a product of non-verbal sexual behaviour and both sexual behaviours have statistically significant effect on physical sexual behaviour which in turn impacts on sexual harassment.

It is not surprising that direct paths exist as hypothesised between sexual harassment behaviours, gender and report of sexual harassment. It is eminent that the perception of and attitude of students to sexual harassment is changing. Though majority of the men in this study are not willing to report some males still indicated that they shall report any case of sexual harassment except non-verbal as hypothesised (Figure 3). This finding is in line with that of Brooks and Perot (1991) who found out that the likelihood of reporting any event largely depend on how the event is
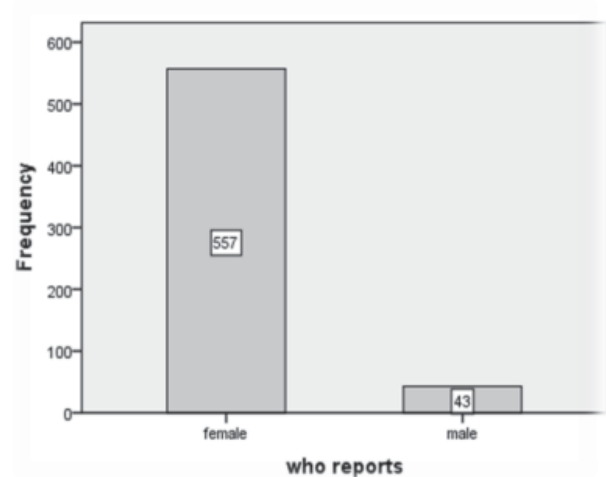

FIGURE 3: Distribution of respondents by report of sexual harassment

perceived. This implies that students in this study perceived sexual harassment behaviours as harassment and are willing to report if they are sexually harassed.

That females represent the largest percentage of those that are willing to report contradicts the positions of Noah (2008), Kofi (2010) and Ige and Adeleke, (2012) who assert that sexual harassment behaviours and perceptions are rooted in African culture which discourages the discussion of sexually related issues in public and stigmatised women who identify themselves as being sexually active (Figure 3). However, the study is in agreement with the position of Young, Allen and Ashbaker (2004) in relation to willingness to report incidence of sexual harassment by men. Results of this study show that irrespective of culture or societal dispositions females are willing to report incidence of sexual harassment but men are not willing.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Results of this study have great implications for counselling, counsellors are challenged to become more responsive than before to the needs of students to discourage sexual harassment and encourage reporting. There is need to develop programmes that will further create awareness on sexual harassment and enhance willingness to report on the one hand and the teaching of skills that would help mitigate sexual harassment on the other hand. It is eminent that unlike Denga and Denga (2004) it is not only physical sexual harassment behaviour which is categorised as sexual harassment but all the other forms. The result of this study established a strong relationship between non-verbal and verbal harassment with verbal harassment having strong influence on non-verbal harassment, this may be an indication of actions preceding words.

Therefore, students generally should be taught different skills such as assertiveness, decision making and appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication. Training for victims should begin by ensuring confidentiality and resounding empathy, which begins by letting the victim understand that he/she is not the cause of the harassment.

The counsellor must work in collaboration with the media to ensure that appropriate and up to date information on sexual harassment is disseminated to the general public. The media is should help dispel the cultural beliefs associated with sexual harassment by constantly emphasising the implications of not reporting on the victim. It is necessary to emphasis specifically that not reporting means aiding the victim and encouraging others.

The school authority is challenged to adopt a zero level tolerance on harassers and there is need for a draft and implementation policy on sexual harassment. The policy should clearly state conducts that shall constitute sexual harassment and the escorting penalties for those found guilty. In conclusion, all concerned should work towards making the institutions of learning, work places and the society at large a sexual harassment free environment.

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