



COUNSELORS, EDUCATION AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF THE GIRL-CHILD IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: THE NEED FOR REFORMATIVE STRATEGIES

EGBULE, Elizabeth Osita (Ph.D.)

DEPARTMENT OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING, DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY, ABRAKA

Original Article

ABSTRACT

Sexual harassment is an organizational issue since it mostly impacts women and has a social and cultural basis for its frequency, expression, and perception. If proper steps are not done to mitigate its effects, it will impede females' academic success. In this context, the study looks at counselors, education, and sexual harassment of girls in secondary schools. It also highlights the necessity for school administrators to use reformatory techniques to lessen the impact of sexual harassment of students when it does occur. Secondary data were used in the paper's study. The article made notice of the prevalence of sexual harassment in secondary schools and called for effective ways to lessen its impact on pupils, particularly female ones. The article came to the conclusion that sexual harassment mostly affects young girls, and it recommended that female students act to prevent it by not acting provocatively or seductively, and by avoiding traveling alone whenever possible, especially at night and on lonely paths. In order to prevent sexual harassment in schools, the document recommended that strict measures be put in place. Additionally, the Ministry of Education should hire counselors with proper training and relevant expertise and assign them to secondary schools to propose reformatory solutions to current and potential instances.

KEYWORDS

Education, counselling, girl-child, sexual harassment, reformatory strategies.



Introduction

Sexual harassment is the unwanted or inappropriate offer of incentives in return for sexual favors. It also includes compulsion of a sexual character. Sexual harassment is forbidden, and it is especially wrong to target a person only because of their gender. More harassment targets girls than boys. In recent years, sexual harassment has acquired a new dimension. It is upsetting to read and hear reports of children being sexually assaulted by their guardians, instructors, siblings, and other family members. What was once considered to be immoral and against culture is now in style (Egbule, 2013). Although there are instances of sexual harassment between males and females, as well as between males and females, it is more typical for males to harass females, which has an impact on the education of girls. The females are impacted psychologically, physically, and socially by this unfavorable viewpoint. Its psychological and scholastic torment of helpless females cannot be overstated; it continues to negatively impact girl children even after they are married. Some people don't even want to get married because they don't want to interact with people of the opposite sex as a result of harassment they experienced in the past. The stigma of being a rape victim causes many individuals to suffer in silence after the incident, which can lead to despair and a loss of self-worth, both of which have an impact on females' scholastic success (Egbule & Egbule, 2008). Due to the stigma attached to such actions, people would not report them to the relevant authorities, giving the offenders the opportunity to engage in further heinous behavior toward the feminine sex of their victims. As a result, those who do the deed continue to do so while pretending that the young girls find it amusing. Socially, it frustrates and threatens the Sexual harassment is the unwanted or inappropriate offer of incentives in return for sexual favors. It also includes compulsion of a sexual character. Sexual harassment is forbidden, and it is especially wrong to target a person only because of their gender. More harassment targets girls than boys. In recent years, sexual harassment has acquired a new dimension. It is upsetting to read and hear reports of children being sexually assaulted by their guardians, instructors, siblings, and other family members. What was once considered to be immoral and against culture is now in style (Egbule, 2013). Although there are instances of sexual harassment between males and females, as well as between males and females, it is more typical for males to harass females, which has an impact on the education of girls. The females are impacted psychologically, physically, and socially by this unfavorable viewpoint. Its psychological and scholastic torment of helpless females cannot be overstated; it continues to negatively impact girl children even after they are married. Some people don't even want to get married because they don't want to interact with people of the opposite sex as a result of harassment they experienced in the past. The stigma of being a rape victim causes many individuals to suffer in silence after the incident, which can lead to despair and a loss of self-worth, both of which have an impact on females' scholastic success (Egbule & Egbule, 2008). Due to the stigma attached to such actions, people would not report them to the relevant authorities, giving the offenders the opportunity to engage in further heinous behavior toward the feminine sex of their victims. As a result, those who do the deed continue to do so while pretending that the young girls find it amusing. Socially, it frustrates and threatens the education of these underprivileged girls, especially when it leads to unforeseen pregnancies and the acquisition of sexually transmitted illnesses. Such behaviors harm young girls and cut their academic careers short.

Concept of education and the girl-child

Education is the foundation for a country's progress since it represents enlightenment. It is a vehicle for information and character change. Adesemowo and Sotonade (2000) note that education has much to contribute for the benefit of humanity and consider education as a crucial step in human progress. Education, according to Omolewa (2003) and Egbule (2013), is unquestionably still the

most important factor in the growth of Nigeria and Africa. He continued by saying that, regardless of a person's sex, the main goal of education in human growth is to enable them to acquire the necessary information, attitudes, and values to become the subject of development.

Education for girls has been a contentious topic throughout time. Though education is not restricted to the classroom alone because there are formal and informal methods of education provided to a kid, our predecessors foolishly believed that education was intended for boys while the girls are domestically oriented and skilled (Egbule & Egbule, 2008). The girls were given the informal type at that time so they would have the ability to properly govern the family. However, over time, schooling has changed, and the fewest female limitations still apply. The current anthem of the world is "Education for All" because, according to Obanya (2014), education aims to qualitatively alter those it serves, including girls. According to him, "whatever we sowed into education is what we reap because quality process will lead to quality outcomes" Therefore, if girls are given access to their right to an education, they will significantly contribute to the growth and development of the country.

Since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was enacted in 1948, education has been seen as a fundamental human right. The gross national product, life expectancy, and the enrollment of girls in elementary education are all positively correlated. The biggest portion of society's investment in human capital is now represented by enrollment in schools (Schultz, 2003). It has been noted that a nation's capacity for rapid socioeconomic growth and development depends on the quality of the girl-child, women, and their education in that nation (Nussbaum, 2003). Women inherit from education a desire to acquire information, beliefs, attitudes, capabilities, and skills throughout their lives (Aliu, 2001). According to Orji (2011), investing in a girl's education helps the person, society, and the entire world since it is thought that by educating a girl, you are educating and successfully equipping a whole country. One of the most effective methods for reducing girl-child poverty and inequality is broad-based, high-quality education. Contrary to the outdated belief that girls should be domestically oriented, women make effective managers and significantly contribute to economic growth and development. For these reasons, it is important that girls acquire a proper and uninterrupted education. According to Ekong (2006), women are both the true engine powering Nigeria's economy and the keys to the country's growth and development. The implication is that girls will perform even better than males provided they receive great education without being the target of harassment or other forms of mistreatment.

Patterns of Student Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment incidents frequently happen in schools as a result of some students choosing to act in an unusual way toward other students, especially when such behaviors are of a sexual character (SHIPS, 1999). Students' sexual harassment behaviors are the same as those that other students find unacceptable and can take many different forms, including verbal, physical, and other forms (Witkowsk as quoted in Espelage et al., 2016). Inappropriate behavior is defined by Espelage et al. (2016) as touching, tugging trousers, and sexual assault in addition to verbal and physical homophobic name-calling, insults, and rumors. Additionally, Strauss (2012) and Egbule (2013) indicate that sexual harassment can take on a variety of verbal, nonverbal, or physical forms, including remarks, ogling, and physical contact. According to AAUW, which was mentioned by Strauss (2012), there are four categories of student sexual harassment conduct in schools that might help us understand it better:

Verbal Sexual Harassment - The form of verbal sexual harassment by the students includes the following;

- Making comments, movements or gazes on the victim's body
- Spreading sexual rumours about the victim
- Saying that victims likes the same sex
- Broadcast the victims.

It can be challenging to comprehend verbally the victims of verbal sexual harassment when students minimize or accept the behavior from their peers (Rolfe & Schroeder, 2017). Sexual harassment behavior is unacceptable behavior. As a result, this must be kept to a minimum in schools as it is impossible to predict changes in pupils' psychological health.

Physical Sexual Harassment - Not all physical contacts of touching or performing common acts are included in the sexual harassment (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). The physical form of student sexual harassment amongst others includes

- Touching, holding, pinning the victim sexually,
- Deliberately stroking the victim's body sexually
- Drawing the victim's clothes with sexual intent
- Urging the victim to kiss the perpetrator
- Urging the victim to do something other than sex than kissing (AAUW, 2001).

Of course, this behaviour can be observed directly in view of the exact condition without having to perform any procedure.

Non-Verbal Sexual Harassment – This form of student sexual harassment behaviour includes but not limited to:

- Show, give, submit pictures, photos, illustrations, messages, or sexual notes to the victims
- Write messages or sexual strokes about the victim in school equipment and so on
- Peek at the victim when dressed or look at school (AAUW, 2001).

Of course, this form of action can be seen with certainty so as not to cause different views on this action.

These forms of sexual harassment of students mentioned above, is not only experienced by female students but also male students become victims. There is no correlation between the social background of students with sexual harassment occurrence in both male and female students (Lee, et al., 1996). AAUW (2011) explained that female students become victims of sexual harassment as much as 56% and men as much as 40%. (Vega-Gea et al., 2015)

Counsellors' Reformative Strategies and Sexual Harassment in School

Given that sexual harassment of other pupils by students and their guardians has a detrimental effect. For the school counselor, this has consequences. A school counselor's responsibility includes facilitating students' optimal development, which includes addressing the problem of sexual harassment. Without the victim reporting the incident immediately to the school counselor, it will be impossible to address the issue of sexual harassment. In this situation, the school counselor must pay more attention to the pupils' physical and psychological growth (Egbule & Egbule, 2008). In order to handle student sexual harassment behavior, a school counselor's professional performance is required.

The school counselor can essentially employ data collecting tools in the form of tests and non-tests to reveal the issues that the pupils are facing. The school counselor will be considerably helped in understanding the psychological condition of the pupils by the data gathering tool that is

used during the exam. The degree and scope of sexual harassment in schools may really be determined using a variety of tools (Egbule, 2013). In light of this, there is a need for a unique reformative plan to monitor pupils' daily physical and psychological growth as this would aid in halting the harassing trend in the school. In light of this, a school counselor can use the following approach to deal with student sexual harassment behavior in schools:

Gathering Information:- To analyze connected incidents of student sexual harassment behavior, observation data and test results are crucial in addition to looking at the assessment findings of the preceding program. Additionally, the subsequent step of information collection can be carried out by making a direct or indirect approach to students (through the media). The school counselor must interact with pupils in person so that the issue may be resolved right away. If communication is directly hampered, the school counselor can facilitate student communication by using media like the phone, text messaging, and internet services. Given that the victim of sexual harassment frequently lives nearby, doing this is crucial. When poor self-esteem sets in, the victim could believe that the occurrence is no longer relevant and that no one needs to know about it. However, the presence of excellent communication might offer a channel for contacting the school counselor about sexual harassment concerns.

Treatments:- After the information received by the school counsellor, students who become victims of sexual harassment, is then given reformative treatment in the form of counselling services. Some counselling approaches that can be employed as noted by AAUW (2011) are as follows:

- The Centered Client Counselling Approach
- The Cognitive Behavioural Counselling Approach
- The Logo Counselling Approach
- The Rational Emotive Counselling Approach

It is important to remember that the aforementioned counseling techniques are seen to have reformative tendencies when dealing with and consoling adolescents who have been sexually harassed at school. The school counselor has the discretion to select one of these strategies based on how well it will serve the kids (counselees) and their current conditions. The inference is that the school counselor will decide on the reformative strategy to use to deal with sexually assaulted pupils. With these strategies, it is hoped that students who experience sexual harassment can continue to function academically at their best and develop themselves without experiencing any kind of self-hostility.

Evaluation and Follow Up:- After providing counseling to kids who have experienced sexual harassment, it is important to keep track of the students' physical and mental growth to see whether they are moving in the correct way with their own development. In order to guarantee that the counslee perceives and understands that the occurrence has not negatively impacted his or her life to the point that a remedy becomes a mirage, a follow-up counseling procedure is crucial. Naturally, responsive services will be able to assist pupils in moving in the direction of their growth that is more ideal and fruitful.

School Counsellor and Sexual Harassment Prevention

Counselors in schools are responsible for guiding students' emotional, social, and physical behavior toward the objectives of education. Here, the focus is on how girls experience sexual harassment at school, whether it comes from other students, faculty, or staff, or from those outside the school setting. According to Egbule (2013), a school counselor may stop sexual harassment behavior in schools by providing a variety of counseling services, one of which is fundamental services. Giving

students traditional information services, group counseling, orientation, and other services while focusing on the issue of "sexual harassment phenomenon by students in the school" can help them better understand what sexual harassment implies. The delivery of school policies and the effects of behaviour on incidents of sexual harassment should get special attention throughout the execution of this service (Egbule & Egbule, 2008). Of course, it will increase students' awareness of his friends' and staff members' propensity for and behavior toward sexual harassment.

The school counselor, who is the most important component of sexual harassment prevention, must be reachable in addition to educating kids. Since research has shown that children are better at ease discussing stressful situations with a friend, school counselors should be a comfortable sharing partner for all students. In the end, children will trust school counselors with their concerns and have faith in their ability to follow through on the problems. Because of this, pupils will always discuss their situation with the school counselors at any moment. The school counselors' connection with their students must be reciprocal in order for the counselors to be able to tackle the student's concerns right away, particularly when it comes to issues of sexual harassment at the school.

Implication of Sexual Harassment on the Girl-Child's Education

Depending on the recipient's unique characteristics, the intensity, and the length of the harassment, the effects of sexual harassment might vary. Sexual harassment cases frequently fit the description of being "merely annoying" (Egbule, 2013). According to psychologists and social workers, severe sexual harassment can have the same psychological effects as rape or sexual assault. In other circumstances, harassment may result in temporary or prolonged stress and/or depression depending on the recipient's psychological capacity to cope with the harassment, its nature, and the presence or absence of social support (Koss as cited by Ekong, 2006). If the victim refuses to comply with the harassment, they may potentially face bullying and other forms of retribution. The education of girls is critical and significant, and it must be administered with jealousy from the outset. A barrier to the educational advantage of girls is sexual harassment. It is becoming worse and is having a negative impact on the girls' academic achievement. Because more girls than boys drop out of school each year, there is a gender imbalance in the number of students who finish their education, according to UNICEF (2004).

A concerning study on education from various African countries, including Nigeria, where the number of females not in school increased from 20 million in 1990 to 24 million in 2002, was presented by UNICEF. The study also revealed that 83% of the world's uneducated females reside in Africa, South Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific. Many of them had to leave school because they were pushed into young marriages, and some of them were being abused by the people in charge of them, such as instructors and guardians, which made the girls disinterested in learning. Some of them experience bullying and harassment from the guys in their school and neighborhood, which always has an impact on their mental health. The bullying becomes more severe and causes the class to lose focus. According to UNICEF (2013), many girls are still unable to go to school and finish their education because of threats to their safety, lack of funding, institutional and cultural impediments, pressure to be married young, sexual harassment, and violence both inside and outside of schools. In light of the aforementioned, UNICEF proclaimed on the International Day of the Girl Child in South Sudan that innovation is essential to ensure that more girls finish their education and achieve their goals.

The fear of not telling someone that they are being harassed or of paying a high price for doing so makes up part of the sex harassment (Egbule, 2013). A girl with exceptional academic talent could start to slip and eventually leave school. Some of the females had the choice to leave the school setting after being raped and becoming pregnant. Some women are too humiliated to return to school after having a kid, so they start learning a profession or a skill instead. As a result, she keeps having unwanted pregnancies and lives on the edge of poverty. Some of these young women, unable to bear the stigma of an unplanned pregnancy, choose to have an abortion, which may result in death or permanently disfigure them, rendering them infertile. Some people get a venereal illness. Teenage pregnancy, in accordance with Antwi-Danso and Edet (2001), is a significant factor in the issue of school dropout. In their investigation, they discovered that the majority of females who left school did so because they were pregnant, and some of them did so as early as primary 6. The study by Maliki (2011) also discovered a strong association between pregnancy and school abandonment. Most often, girls give in to male harassment because of poverty. According to Odoemene (2008), females are easy targets for sexual assault since indigenous people who have succeeded in the oil industry and security personnel openly harass them. Some of the girls commit suicide as a result of the harassment which takes their self-esteem. Judith Coflin committed herself in 1995 as a result of ongoing sexual harassment by her coworkers and superiors. Despite the fact that their family was subsequently given six million dollars in punitive and compensatory damages, they were unable to get their daughter returned. Recently in Nigeria, cases of females who couldn't handle the disgrace of being raped and committed suicide have also been documented.

Conclusion

The study discusses the necessity for corrective measures in secondary schools in relation to counseling, education, and sexual harassment of girls. Accordingly, the report made notice of the fact that sexual harassment mostly affects young girls and advised female students to help prevent it by not acting provocatively or seductively and, to the greatest extent possible, avoiding strolling alone, particularly at night and on lonely paths. The report also discusses the corrective measures that counselors should do in situations of sexual harassment in schools since doing so would assist the victims' kids lessen the impact of the stigma on their personality and academic performance.

Suggestions

Arising from the conclusion, the paper suggested that stringent measure be put in place to discourage sexual harassment in schools. And also, well qualified counselors with adequate cognate experience be engaged by the Ministry of Education and posted to secondary schools to proffer reformative solution to existing and prospective cases.

REFERENCES

- Adesemowo, P.O. & Sotonade, O.A.T (2000). The Meaning and Scope of Education. *Journal of Education Social*, 3 (1).
- Aliu, S. (2001). The Competitive drive, New Technologies and Employment. the human capital. A Paper presented at the Second Tripartite Conference of Manpower Planners: Chelsea Hotel, Abuja.
- American Association of University Women (AAUW) (2001). *Hostile Hallways, Bullying, Teasing, and sexual Harassment in school, United States*. American Association of University Women Educational Foundation
- American Association of University Women (AAUW) (2011). *Crossing the line, Sexual harassment at school. United States*; American Association of University Women
- Antwi-Danso, S., & Edet, P.B. (2011) Perceived causes and Effect of School Drop-Out among girls in the Koforidua Municipality, Ghana. *The Calabar Counsellor*, 5,(5),17-27.
- Egbule, E. O. (2013). Counselling for appropriate dressing on campuses of institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. *Delta Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 1(1), 77-83
- Egbule, J. F. & Egbule, E. O. (2008). Clinical counselling: A psychotherapeutic approach. Real Choice Concept.
- Ekong, F. (2006). A gender Appraisal of the Disbursement of bank loans. *Ibom Journal of Social Issues*, 7(2), 87-101.<http://www.iav.nl/epublications/2004/scalingup.pdg>Koss,
- Maliki, A.E (2011). The effect of teenage pregnancy on adolescents in Amassoma community of southern Ijaw LGA of Bayelsa State. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences* 1, 62-66.
- Obanya, P. (2014) *Educationeering: Quality issues in education*. Nigeria: HEBN Publishers Plc.
- Odoemene, A. (2008).*The Nigerian Military and Sexual Violence in ogoni land of niger delta, Nigeria*. Paper presented at an International Conference on rape in war time: A history to be written. Institute Historique Allem and, Paris, France.
- Omolewa, M. (2003). The roles of faculties of education in African universities. In O.A Bamisaye, I.A Nwazuoke, A. Okediran: *Education this millennium innovation in theory and practice*. Ibadan: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Ltd.
- Orji, LA. (2011) *Importance of girl-child education to nation building*. Retrieved from www.phieamaka.blogspot.com March 2nd 2020
- Rolfe, S. M. & Schroeder, R. D. (2017). Sticks and Stones may break my bones, but word will never hurt me. Verbal sexual harassment among middle school students. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. www.doi.org/10.1177/0886260517709802
- Schultz, T. P. (2012). "Why governments should Invest more to Educate Girls". *World Development*, 30(2), 207-225
- Stop Harassment in Public Schools (SHIPS) (1999). *Sexual harassment in school: what students suffer and what schools should do*. A guide for student and their parents. Texas; Texas Civil Rights Project

- Strauss, S. L. (2012). *Sexual Harassment and Bullying*. United Kingdom: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2008). *Sexual Harassment, It's not Academic*. America; Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education
- UNICEF (2013). International Day of the Girl-Child in South Sudan. In Uterhalter, E., Kioko, E., Pattman, R., Rajagopalan, R., "Scaling girls' education in the commonwealth", London Commonwealth Secretariat, Retrieved from: <http://www.i.av.nl>
- UNICEF, (2004). *The state of World's Children*. <http://www.unicef.org>
- Vega-Gea E., Ortega-Ruiz, R & Sanchez, V. (2015). Peer sexual harassment in adolescence: Dimensions of the sexual harassment survey in boys and girls. *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology*
- Witkowska, E. (2005). *Sexual Harassment In Schools: Prevalence, structure and perceptions*. Sweden: National Institute for Working Life.