



TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE OF WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT: IMPLICATION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the experience of public secondary school teachers on workplace sexual harassment and the implications for sustainable national development. One research question and one research hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. The study was carried out in the Enugu State. The population for the study 9764 public secondary school teachers. Proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to a sample of 977 respondents. A 17 items structured questionnaire developed by the researchers and titled Workplace Sexual Harassment Questionnaire (WSHQ) was used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts, one expert in Measurement and Evaluation; and two experts in Educational Management, all from the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha method. The instrument yielded reliability indices coefficient of 'r' .78, which shows suitability of the instrument for the study. Copies of questionnaire were administered and retrieved by the researchers and 3 research assistants using direct delivery approach. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question. The null hypothesis was tested using z-test statistics at .05 level of significance. From the result of the findings of the study, it was concluded that both male and female teachers were sexually harassed at work in public secondary schools in Enugu State. It was therefore, recommended among others that development partners should work with Post Primary School Management Board and the State Ministry of Education to design interventions on workplace sexual harassment. This will enable victims to speak up and seek adequate redress as well as build positive organizational culture in the schools devoid of such abusive behaviours.

Keywords: Sexual harassment, secondary school, workplace, sustainable development

Introduction

A teacher is a person who displays his or her knowledge of a subject and helps guide students' learn, by taking a curriculum and presenting it in the most interesting and applicable way (Aguba & Ogbuabor, 2021). Also, Hamza, Sani and Abubakar (2010) defined a teacher as all those persons in schools who are responsible for the education of students. Teachers are crucial to ensuring an effective education. The ability of teachers to effectively discharge their responsibilities will position the country for a sustainable national development.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is a global development framework initiated by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly when it adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in



2015 (Agbedahin, 2019). According to Mensah (2019) sustainable development is progressive transformation process through which nations meets their current needs without compromising their capacity to cater for the future. The SDG 4 aspires to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. To achieve this secondary school teachers are pivotal and need to perform optimally. However, one of the factors that can affect teachers' performance, even when requisite resources are provided for teachers to effectively operate is workplace sexual harassment.

Workplace sexual harassment is a pervasive problem in many institutions including the secondary schools in Enugu State. Mabuza (2020) defined sexual harassment as requests for sexual favours or unwelcome sexual behaviour that is bad enough or happens often enough to make you feel uncomfortable, scared or confused and that interferes with your work or your ability to participate in extracurricular activities. In line with the above definition, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC, 2016) defined sexual harassment as unwelcome verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is severe or pervasive and affects working conditions or creates a hostile work environment. Unlike rape and domestic violence, sexual harassment in the workplace has only recently been recognized as a social problem (Alagappar & Marican, 2014).

Hersch (2015) noted that sexual harassment at work includes sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, questions; sexual looks, gestures; deliberate touching, leaning, cornering; pressure for dates; letters, calls, sexual materials; stalking; pressure for sexual favours; and actual or attempted rape or assault. Also, Hejase (2015), identified several forms of sexual harassment such as sexual innuendoes, suggestive comments, jokes of a sexual nature, sexual propositions or sexual threats, sexual suggestive objects or pictures, graphic commentaries, suggestive or insulting sounds, leering, whistling or obscene gestures, unwanted physical contact, including touching, pinching, brushing the body, coerced sexual intercourse or assault. Such conduct can be humiliating and may constitute a health and safety problem.

Sexual harassment is a sensitive issue in the workplace. Obviously, the absence of sexual harassment complaints at work may not necessarily mean the absence of sexual harassment. Usually, victims of sexual harassment may feel that there is no point in complaining due to fear of social implications, fear that nothing will be done about it, concern that the complainant will be subjected to being ridiculed, and fear of reprisals (Jahan, 2013). Workplace sexual harassment have been predicated on the notion that sexual harassers are males and victims are females (Harrison, 2012). The victims could also be men. Both male and female teachers could suffer from sexual harassment in secondary schools. There is, however, limited evidence on sexual harassment towards male teachers (Powell & Henry, 2017). Men also account for between 16% and 17% of all sexual harassment charges filed with the EEOC annually (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC] 2019). Scarduzio, Wehlage, and Lueken (2018) maintained that these estimates may be highly conservative as male victims of sexual harassment are often reluctant to report their experiences, more than female victims.

It has been reported that people who are sexually harassed at work, fare worse physically and psychologically than people who are not (Cesario, 2020). Mabuza (2020) observed that teachers do suffer sexual harassment from learners mostly through sending teachers nude pictures and sexual gestures that lure teachers into having sex. Moradeke (2014) reported that females are more sexually harassed than males in the workplace. It is pertinent to establish how sexual harassment influence teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Enugu State.

The researchers are worried because workplace bullying is an antithesis of productivity. A bullied teacher may not put in his best in teaching. This is because his integrity and psychological set-up are hurt. In this era of technological advancement, teachers' psychological setting has to be sound and adequate for them to deliver quality education to students. Workplace sexual harassment is an aspect of educational management and administration that appears to have been neglected over the years. Much is not known about sexual harassment of teachers at work. If teachers are exposed to high rate workplace sexual harassment, there is likelihood that their productivity will be low and *viz-à-viz* if the rate of exposure is low. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the teachers' experience of workplace sexual harassment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.



Research question

To what extent does teachers experience workplace sexual harassment in public secondary schools in Enugu State?

Research hypothesis

The null hypothesis stated below, which was tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which they experience workplace sexual harassment.

Research method

Survey research design was used for the study. A survey research design, according to Nworgu (2015) is a design in which data are collected from a relatively large number of people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. The justification for using a survey research design is that questionnaire, will be used to collect data from the sample that represents the population concerning existing condition and that an opinion of the sample will be used to make generalization to the entire population.

The study was conducted in Enugu State. It covers all the public secondary schools in the state. The population for the study was nine thousand seven hundred and sixty-four (9,764) secondary school teachers in Enugu State (Enugu State Ministry of Education, 2021). This number is made up of 3,016 male and 6,748 female teachers. The sample size for the study was nine hundred and seventy-seven (977) secondary school teachers. This sample comprised 301 male and 676 female secondary school teachers. This represents 10% of the population of the study. Proportionate sampling technique was used to select the sample (Nworgu, 2015).

A structured questionnaire titled Workplace Sexual Harassment Questionnaire (WSHQ) developed by the researchers was used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument consists of two sections. Section 1 is on the demographic data of the respondents. Section 2 consists of 17 items which focused on sexual harassment. The questionnaire has response mode of Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2) and Very Low Extent (1).

The instrument was face-validated by three research experts. The validators are one research expert in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Mathematics and Computer Education and two research experts in Educational Management, all from the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). During validation, the items were scrutinized in terms of clarity of the instruction to the respondents, proper wording of items, appropriateness and adequacy of the items in addressing the problem, purpose of the study and the hypotheses of the study. Out of 15 items submitted for the validation, 4 items were modified, while 3 items were removed, which reduced the items to 12. However, 5 new items were introduced, bringing the total number to 17 items.

The reliability of the instrument was carried out by administering 40 copies of the instrument to secondary school teachers (20 male teachers and 20 female teachers), in Ebonyi State, which is outside the area of the study but share similar characteristics with the population of the study. To ascertain the internal consistency of the instrument, Cronbach alpha method was used to compute the reliability estimate of the items, which yielded reliability index of 0.78, indicating that the instrument was reliable and suitable for the study.

The instrument for data collection was distributed to the respondents and retrieved by the researchers with help of three research assistants. The research assistants were briefed in a one-day seminar on the method of administering and retrieving the instrument. Each participant in the data collection was assigned to a particular education zone. Direct delivery and retrieval were used in distributing 977 questionnaires. This will help the researchers to recover the instruments from the respondents without losing any.

The research question was answered using mean and standard deviation (SD). The decision rule for interpreting the result was based on the values of the calculated mean. Responses on the



research question were considered high, when the mean is 2.50 and above; and low when it is less. This is derived from the mean of the weights of the response options, i.e $(4+3+2+1)/4 = 10/4=2.5$. The hypothesis on the other hand, was tested with z-test. The z-test is considered appropriate for testing the hypotheses because the sample size was large (more than 30) and only two levels of an independent variable (gender) were involved in each of the hypotheses (Nworgu, 2015). The hypotheses on the other hand, were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypotheses can only be rejected if and only if the z-statistic is less than or equal to 0.05, otherwise accept (Idoko, 2011).

Results

Research question: to what extent does teachers experience workplace sexual harassment in public secondary schools in Enugu State

Table 1: mean scores of male and female teachers on the extent workplace sexual harassment.

S/ N	I feel uncomfortable to an extent to work if someone:	Male Teachers 301		Female Teachers 676		Total 977		Dec.
		X	SD	X	SD	X	SD	
1	constantly Leer at me.	2.50	1.31	2.56	1.15	2.53	1.23	HE
2	tries to brush sexual part of my body.	2.75	1.28	3.25	1.24	3.00	1.26	HE
3	attempts to friendly path my body.	2.50	1.31	3.25	1.07	2.88	1.19	HE
4	attempts to squeeze parts of my body.	2.75	1.17	3.44	0.89	3.10	1.03	HE
5	attempts to friendly pinch me.	2.63	1.19	2.81	0.83	2.72	1.01	HE
6	tries to place arm around me.	2.63	1.19	2.88	0.81	2.76	1.00	HE
7	attempts catching me alone for a quick kiss.	2.88	1.25	3.31	1.19	3.10	1.22	HE
8	makes explicit proposition backed by threats.	2.88	1.25	3.31	1.19	3.10	1.22	HE
9	makes sexual comments about me.	2.63	1.19	3.19	1.28	2.91	1.24	HE
10	shows me nude pictures.	2.50	1.07	3.13	1.20	2.82	1.14	HE
11	talks about sex all the time in my presence.	2.38	1.30	3.00	1.32	2.69	1.31	HE
12	addresses me by a "pet name".	2.13	0.99	2.56	0.89	2.35	0.94	LE
13	observes me lustfully.	2.63	1.41	3.25	1.24	2.94	1.33	HE
14	gives me a romantic smile.	2.25	0.89	2.69	1.19	2.47	1.04	LE
15	wears sexy dress	2.38	1.06	2.69	0.87	2.54	0.97	HE
16	embraces me in public.	2.63	1.19	2.88	0.72	2.76	0.96	HE
17	talks to me with a romantic voice.	2.25	0.89	2.50	1.10	2.38	0.99	LE
Cluster mean		2.55	1.17	2.98	1.07	2.77	1.12	HE

Table 1 above shows the mean scores and standard deviation of male and female teachers on experience of sexual harassment in public secondary schools in Enugu State. Both groups expressed having experienced sexual harassment in all the items except 12, 14, and 17. The cluster mean of 2.77 and standard deviation of 1.12, indicate that both groups experienced sexual harassment at work in public secondary schools in Enugu State.

Research hypothesis: Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which they experience workplace sexual harassment in public secondary schools in Enugu State.



Table 2: z-test of significant difference between the mean scores of male and female teachers on the extent of workplace sexual harassment experience.

Group	N	Mean	SD	DF	Z-cal	Z-crit.	Dec.
Male teachers	301	2.55	1.17	975	5.44	1.96	Reject Ho1
Female teachers	676	2.98	1.07				

Table 2 above presents z-test analysis of the mean difference in response opinions of male and female teachers regarding the extent sexual harassment influences teachers productivity in Enugu state. The result shows that the calculated z-value (5.44) was more than the critical value (1.96). Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, there is significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female teachers on the extent to which sexual harassment influences teachers' productivity in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This implies that sexual harassment influences female teachers' productivity more than their male counter parts.

Discussion of the Findings

The finding has shown that male and female teachers are sexually harassed at work in public secondary schools in Enugu State. This implies that workplace sexual harassment is not targeted at a particular gender. This opposes the view of Moradeke (2014) who stated that victims of workplace sexual harassment are females. High rate of sexual harassment in secondary schools as portrayed by this finding engenders organizational conflict and also affects teachers' health outcomes which negatively impacts their productivity. The finding agrees with Powell and Henry (2017) that there is limited evidence on sexual harassment towards male teachers. The implication is that if teachers are constantly harassed sexually at work, they would be unhappy and cannot give their best in the process of teaching.

The findings also revealed that sexual harassment influences female teachers' productivity more than their male counterparts. This means that even though both male and female teachers are prone to sexual harassment in public secondary schools in Enugu State, female teachers are more endangered. Also, this implies that perpetrators of sexual harassment in public secondary schools in Enugu State are more of males. This finding agrees with the findings of Scarduzio, Wehlage, and Lueken (2018) that male victims of sexual harassment are often reluctant to report their experiences, more than female victims.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it can be inferred that both male and female teachers experience workplace sexual harassment in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. Hence, without adequately addressing the menace of workplace sexual harassment in the public secondary schools, Enugu State cannot boast of good quality secondary education, and without good quality education, the state cannot achieve the sustainable development goals. As increase in population explosion continues, there is every need to consciously manage the relationships that exist among secondary school personnel in the state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proffered.

1. Development partners should work with Post Primary School Management Board and the State Ministry of Education to design interventions on workplace sexual harassment. This will enable victims to speak up and seek adequate redress.
2. School administrators should organized regular workshops on organizational culture for their teachers. This will help to build positive organizational culture for the schools devoid of such abusive behaviours like sexual harassment.



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