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**PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS AS CORRELATES OF SEXUAL
HARASSMENT AS PERCEIVED BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS,
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, ILORIN, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The study investigated psychological problems as correlates of sexual harassment as perceived by the Undergraduate students of University of Ilorin. It examined whether depression, aggression and isolation are implications of sexual harassment. Descriptive research design was employed for the study. A sample of 440 students were selected using proportionate and systematic sampling techniques. A structured questionnaire by the researcher titled "Questionnaire on Psychological Problems and Sexual Harassment" (QPPSH) was used. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Spearman Brown Rank Order which yielded a correlation coefficient of $r=0.76$. Three hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha level of significance. Pearson product moment correlation was used to test the data collected for the study. The findings revealed that: depression (Calc. $r\text{-value} = 0.511 \geq \text{Crit. } r\text{-value} = 0.082$); aggression (Calc. $r\text{-value}=0.421 \geq \text{Crit. } r\text{-value}= 0.082$); and isolation (Calc. $r\text{-value}=0.454 \geq \text{Crit. } r\text{-value}= 0.082$) as a form of psychological effects are significant implications of sexual harassment. Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that depression, aggression and isolation were perceived as a significant implication of sexual harassment by the undergraduate students of University of Ilorin. Based on the conclusion of the study, it was recommended that: students should be educated on their rights to resist any form of sexual harassment and not be down stricken by depression; laws against sexual harassment should be strictly enforced; and students should be encouraged to fight for their right rather than isolate themselves because of shame.

Keywords: Depression, aggression, isolation, sexual harassment, psychological problems

Introduction

Daniel and Emmanuel (2015), defined sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Uduma, Samuel and Agbaje (2015) reported that sexual harassment is a major public health problem that significantly hinders development and education of the girl-child, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa including Nigeria. In consonance with this assertion, the special circumstances in which girl-children find themselves expose them to possible risk of physical, psychological, and sexual harassment, which in turn increases their vulnerability to early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. The authors further opined that female survivors of sexual violence including sexual harassment may experience mental health, behavioral and social consequences.

Psychological Problems as Correlates of Sexual Harassment

However, girls and women bear the overwhelming burden of injuries and diseases from sexual violence and coercion, not only because they comprise the vast majority of victims but also because they are vulnerable to sexual and reproductive health consequences such as unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion and a higher risk of sexually transmitted infections, including from HIV, during vaginal intercourse.

Imonikhe, Aluede and Idogho (2012), revealed that the trend of occurrence takes several forms; from male teacher to female students, from male students to female students from male teachers to female teachers and non-academic staff and so on. In most cases female students are most at risk as victims while the male teachers are more likely to be the perpetrators. This trend presents an amazing and disturbing scene in an environment that is often believed to be a centre of excellence for good character moulding and developing virile leadership skills of high moral qualities, intellectual and human capacity and future leadership.

Taiwo, Omole and Omole (2014) identified certain factors for the perpetuation of sexual harassment. These include Lust, pursuit of happiness, lack of norms of morality, lacks of temperance, passion, habit, personality disorder, inferiority complex, immature abuse of power. In addition, indecent dressing among female students, who almost go naked in their appearances, can also be a driving factor for continued incidence of sexual harassment. Consequently, these have resulted in psychosocial problems borne by the harassed victims like temporary or prolonged stress, depression, isolation and withdrawal syndrome, fear and trauma, nightmare, low self-esteem and aggressive behaviours among others.

The American Association of University Women (2006) maintained that sexual harassment is often associated with assault, bullying favouritism, exploitation and intimidation as vices that play out in the sexual encounter, leaving the victims with long term pains and traumas that devastated their psychological wellbeing. Honor (2010) affirmed that majority of people who are sexually abused will be moderately to severely symptomatic at some point in their life. The author further explained that experiencing sexual abuse creates a feeling of powerlessness in the victims and leaves them with the perception of having little control over what happens. This lack of a sense of control acts as a stressor that has effects on the neurodevelopment of the victims. The author opined that girls are more likely to exhibit internalizing behaviours, such as depression and disordered eating and they tend to isolate themselves from the public.

Houle, Staff, Mortimer, Uggen and Blackstone (2011) affirmed that sexual harassment is associated with increased risk of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder as well as diminished self-esteem, self-confidence, and psychological well-being. According to the authors, different groups of people are affected in different ways because they lack the power or resources to cope with stressors. Group differences in mental health and well-being result from disparities in exposure to stressors and access to personal and social resources that allow individuals to cope with stressful experiences. Stressful experiences are expected to be particularly deleterious to mental health when they are chronic, negative, and unpredictable; are a threat to one's identity; or signify a

failure to achieve a desired goal. Stress theory also predicts that some groups may be more vulnerable to stress than others, particularly if these groups

Statement of the problem

Sexual harassment is a serious issue that is raising a lot of concern. Victims of this dastardly act are left to suffer in silence because they believe no one can come to their aid. Reporting this kind of issues is a problem for fear of ridicule and lowered self-esteem hence victims prefer to keep to themselves and suffer in silence. The researcher has observed that little or no attention is given to the implication of this act on the victims and has therefore deemed it fit to carry out this study.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions were raised for the study.

1. Is depression an implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin?
2. Is aggressive behaviour an implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin?
3. Is isolation an implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin?

Research Hypotheses

The following are the research hypotheses generated to guide the study.

1. Depression is not a significant implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin
2. Aggressive behaviour is not a significant implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin
3. Isolation is not a significant implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin

Methodology

The population of the study comprises of all the registered students in the University of Ilorin as at 2015/2016 academic session. According to the Academic Planning Unit (2015), there are 38, 194 undergraduate students. According to the Research Advisors (2006), for a population of 10,000 and above, 380 respondents is sufficient enough to represent the whole population therefore the researcher selected four hundred and forty respondents because the higher the number of respondents selected the more reliable the result. Proportionate and systematic sampling techniques were used in the selection of the samples for the study across the fifteen faculties in the school. Proportionate sampling technique was used to determine the number of students that were selected from each faculty based on their population while systematic sampling technique was employed in selecting the respondents at various levels and programmes using equal intervals. A validated questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. The

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instrument was subjected to a reliability test using Spearman Brown Rank Order which yielded a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.76$. The completed questionnaire was collected, sorted, coded and analyzed using the inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Results

Hypothesis 1: Depression is not a significant implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin.

Table 1: PPMC analysis of depression as an implication of sexual harassment

Variable	No of respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	Calc. r-value	Crit. r-value	Decision
Depression and sexual harassment	440	24.13	34.12	438	0.511	0.082	H_0 rejected
		12.20	2.331				

Table 1 shows Pearson "r" analysis of depression as an implication of sexual harassment. The table shows the mean and standard deviation 24.13 ± 34.12 and the Calc. r-value of 0.511 with the degree of freedom of 438 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since the calculated r-value is greater than the critical r-value (Calc. r-value = 0.511 $\geq$ Crit. r-value = 0.082), the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that victims of sexual harassment feel unhappy for a long period of time as a result of being harassed sexually.

Hypothesis 2: Aggressive behaviour is not a significant implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin.

Table 2: PPMC analysis of Aggression as an implication of sexual harassment

Variable	No of respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	Calc. r-value	Crit. r-value	Decision
Aggression and sexual harassment	440	22.90	3.714	438	0.421	0.082	H_0 rejected
		43.12	1.141				

Table 2 above shows the mean and standard deviation 22.90 ± 3.714 and the calculated r-value of 0.421 with 438 degree of freedom at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since the calculated r-value is greater than the critical r-value (Calc. r-value = 0.421 $\geq$ Crit. r-value = 0.082), the hypothesis is rejected. This means that people who have been sexually harassed react to others in an aggressive manner and they tend to attack others unjustly due to the harassment they have been exposed to.

Hypothesis 3: Isolation is not a significant implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin.

Table 3: PPMC analysis of isolation as implication of sexual harassment

Variable	No of respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	Calc. r-value	Crit. r-value	Decision
Isolation and sexual harassment	440	24.13	34.12	438	0.454	0.082	H_0 rejected
		12.20	2.331				

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of 24.13 ± 34.12 and the calculated r-value of 0.454 with 438 degree of freedom at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Since the calculated r-value is greater than the critical r-value ($\text{Calc. r-value} = 0.454 \geq \text{Crit. r-value} = 0.082$), the hypothesis is rejected. This implies that victims of sexual harassment shy away from associating with people and prefer to be alone.

Discussion of Findings

Hypothesis 1 stated that depression is not a significant implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin. This hypothesis was rejected, this implies that depression is a significant implication of sexual harassment. This finding is corroborated by the findings of Taiwo, Omole and Omole (2014) who stated that the problems borne by the victims of sexual harassment includes depression, temporary or prolonged stress, isolation and withdrawal syndrome, fear and trauma, nightmare, low self-esteem and aggressive behaviour. The finding is also supported by the submission of Houle, Staff, Mortimer, Uggen and Blackstone (2011) who affirmed that sexual harassment is associated with increased risk of anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder as well as diminished self-esteem, self-confidence, and psychological well-being.

Hypothesis 2 stated that aggressive behaviour is not a significant implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin. This hypothesis was rejected; this implies that aggressive behaviour is a significant implication of sexual harassment as perceived by the students students, University of Ilorin. This finding is in line with the finding of Taiwo, Omole and Omole (2014) who submitted that aggression is an implication of sexual harassment.

Hypothesis 3 stated that isolation is not a significant implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin. This hypothesis was rejected; this implies that there is a significant influence of open dumping of waste on water pollution in Ilorin metropolis. This is in line with the findings of Honor (2010) who opined that girls are more likely to exhibit internalizing behaviours, such as

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depression and disordered eating and they tend to isolate themselves from the public as a result of sexual harassment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that:

1. depression is a significant implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin.
2. aggression is a significant implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin
3. isolation is a significant implication of sexual harassment as perceived by undergraduate students, University of Ilorin.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the researcher recommends that:

1. students should be educated on their rights to resist any form of sexual harassment and not be down stricken by depression.
2. laws against sexual harassment should be strictly enforced to check the menace of sexual harassment.
3. students should be encouraged to fight for their right rather than isolate themselves because of shame.

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