

## LIFE SKILL EDUCATION AS A PANACEA TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT AMONG STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

BY

**Abubakar, Muhammed-Sanni**, Ph.D: Department of Educational Psychology, Federal College of Education (T), Umunze, Anambra State. [abubakarmuhammedsanni@gmail.com](mailto:abubakarmuhammedsanni@gmail.com)

**Ibe Sylvia Ugochinyere**, Federal College of Education (T), Umunze, Anambra State, [sylviaibe2@gmail.com](mailto:sylviaibe2@gmail.com)

**Ugboaku, Patrick Uzoka**, Department of Early Childhood and Care Education, Federal College of Education (T), Umunze, Anambra State, [uzokaugboaku2021@gmail.com](mailto:uzokaugboaku2021@gmail.com).

**Ezinwoke, Justina, Chimeucheya**, Federal College of Education (T), Umunze, Anambra State, [ezinwokeJustina@gmail.com](mailto:ezinwokeJustina@gmail.com)

### Abstract

*It is so disheartening that despite the efforts of the various authorities of tertiary institutions and the legislative actions by Nigerian government against sexual harassments, the menace still persists unabated. Worst still sexual harassment is taking reformed dimensions by the perpetrators, making many victim students helpless. This paper focuses on life skill education as a panacea to sexual harassment among students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. In this paper, the following were discussed: Concepts, forms and consequences of sexual harassment. Also, the paper examined the theoretical framework of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, link of sexual harassment and life skill education among others. The paper concluded that the sexual harassment perpetrating staffs quite cheaply subjected their victim undergraduates to sexual harassments due to their observed inadequate life skills and to control the menace the undergraduate students should be regularly trained on life skills education.*

**Keywords:** *Life skills education, Sexual harassment, Undergraduates, Tertiary institutions, Nigeria*

### Introduction

World-wide, the tertiary institution environment is designed as a place where individuals are trained in learning and character for self-development to be instrumental to the nation socio, political, economic, scientific and technological growths. The increasing reported cases of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions in Nigeria are fast igniting heartbeat in the minds of the parents as to the fear of their girl children not becoming victims of sexual harassment. The horrible sex-for-grade act in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is no more a news; as several male lecturers have used their academic authority and power to lure tolls of female students in to gratifying their sexual urges. The ugly effect is that, the victims of sexual harassment live the rest of their lives traumatized. Many of the sexually harassed female undergraduates ignorantly lay themselves off as cheap preys of the harassers due to their careless inviting dispositions and others indulge in sexual scandal for attaining academic goal but pretend to be harassed when caught in the act. Although, the authorities in tertiary institutions of learning have over the years been penalizing sexual harassers but still, the act is still waxing stronger. Hence, inculcating life skills education becomes imperatives in the lives of the female students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

### Concept of Sexual Harassment

In every human society where there is interaction between opposite sex, some levels of sexual attraction are expected. When these occur, mutual interest and reciprocal response defines a civilized and socially acceptable sexual behaviour (Omotosho, 2015). However, the increasing manifestation of social vices of sexual nature in societies continuously undermine the expected dignity and serenity of human existence, one of such is sexual harassment that has continued to attract the attention of researchers and the media as a common phenomenon in all domains of human community including higher institutions of learning (Taiwo, Omole & Omole, 2014).

Sexual harassment is a term used to describe behaviours such as a form of sexual coercion and exploitation that can be very stable, even confusing to identify and yet highly up-setting. These behaviours include but not

limited to unwanted touch, unwanted sexual advances, suggestive, sexually motivated physical contact, request for sexual favours, or coercion of another person by another, particularly in the academic settings or the workplace (Kelly, 2004). According to Pierce (2003), sexual harassment may include some request for sexual favours either directly or by implication: sometimes ordered in exchange for rewards such as academic success or promotion. In this context, the female student may be deliberately touched, kissed or fondled and brushed against her will by male students or lecturers. Very often, sexually oriented or obscene comments, for example comments about a person's physical appearance or sexuality may be directed at her coupled with being questioning persistently about her private life. Furthermore, uninvited visits, displays of erotic materials such as posters, photographs and pornography and threats of physical assault via cell phones; they all amount to sexual harassment. For many young women, the most common place where sexual coercion and harassment are experienced is in schools or campuses (Omotosho, 2015). There are array of empirical evidences showing the prevalence of sexual harassments among the students. Owoaje and Olusola Taiwo (-2010) found that the majority of female respondents (69.8%) had been sexually harassed by male classmates and lecturers in several tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Of these, 48.2% experienced physical sexual harassment, while 32.2% had requests to do something sexual in exchange for academic favors. Imonikhe, Idogho, and Aluede (2011) reported that the majority of the respondents agreed that sexual harassment is prevalent in these institutions. They also found that "the range of sexual harassment reported by teachers and students in tertiary institution was extensive. Likewise, Okeke (2011) found in her study on sexual harassment of women undergraduates in the Anambra State of Nigeria that 64 percent of the participants had been touched inappropriately by a faculty member, 71 percent had experienced inappropriate gestures directed to them and 80 percent had inappropriate jokes told in front of them. Omonijo and associates (2013) found that the majority of female students experienced sexual harassment on campus, but many did not report it to the institutions. Taiwo, Omole, and Omole (2014) study revealed that 97 percent of the respondents were aware of incidences of sexual harassment and of these 98.8 percent were male lecturers sexually harassing female students. The respondents also reported that poverty (55%), provocative dressing (20%), and lust from the male lecturers (12%) were the main reasons for sexual harassment in these institutions.

### **Forms of Encountered Sexual Harassment by Female Undergraduate Students**

As observed by Omotosho (2015), there is usually more than one forms of sexually harassing behaviour. So a single harasser will often fit more than one category. These are brief summations of each type.

**Mother/Father Figure (a.k.a. The Counselor-Helper)** - These harassers will try to create mentor-like relationships with their targets, all the while masking their sexual intentions with pretences towards personal, professional, or academic attention.

**Serial Harasser** - Harassers of this type carefully build up an image so that people would find it hard to believe they would do anyone any harm. They plan their approaches carefully, and strike in private so that it is their word against that of their victims.

**Groper** - Whenever the opportunity presents itself, these harassers' eyes and hands begin to wander, engaging in unwanted physical contact that may start innocuous but lead to worse acts of indecency.

**Opportunist** - Opportunist use physical settings and circumstances, or infrequently occurring opportunities, to mask premeditated or intentional sexual behaviour toward targets. This will often involve changing the environment in order to minimize inhibitory effects of the workplace or school or taking advantage of physical tasks to 'accidentally' grope a target.

**Bully** - In this case, sexual harassment is used to punish the victim for some transgression, such as rejection of the harasser's interest or advances, or making the harasser feel insecure about himself or herself or his or her abilities. The bully uses sexual harassment to put the victim in his or her "proper place."

**Confidante** - Harassers of this type approach subordinates, or students, as equals or friends, sharing about their own life experiences and difficulties, sharing stories to win admiration and sympathy, and inviting subordinates to share theirs so as to make them feel valued and trusted. Soon these relationships move into an intimate domain.

**Situational Harasser** – sexually harassing behaviour begins when the perpetrator endures a traumatic event (psychological), or begins to experience very stressful life situations, such as psychological or medical problems, marital problems, or divorce. The harassment will usually stop if the situation changes or the pressures are removed.

**Pest** - This is the stereotypical "won't take 'no' for an answer" harasser who persists in hounding a target for attention and dates even after persistent rejections. This behaviour is usually misguided, with no malicious intent.

**Intellectual Seducer** - Most often found in educational settings, these harassers will try to use their knowledge and skills as an avenue to gain access to students, or information about students, for sexual purposes. They may require students participate in exercises or studies that reveal information about their sexual experiences, preferences, and habits.

**Incompetent** - These are socially inept individuals who desire the attentions of their targets, who do not reciprocate these feelings. They may display a sense of entitlement, believing their targets should feel flattered by their attentions. When rejected, this type of harasser may use bullying methods as a form of revenge.

### **Consequences of Sexual Harassment on the Undergraduate Female Students**

The consequences of sexual harassment can vary depending on the individual students, and the severity and duration of the harassment. However, many situations can, and do, have life altering effects particularly when they encounter severe/chronic abuses, and/or retaliation against a victim who does not submit to the harassment, or who complains about it openly (Omotosho, 2015). In their 2006 report, "Drawing the Line" the American Association of Tertiary institution Women (AAUW) (2006) found physical and emotional effects from sexual harassment: 68% of female students felt very or somewhat upset by sexual harassment they experienced; 6% were not at all upset. 57% of female students who have been sexually harassed reported feeling self-conscious or embarrassed, 55% of female students who have been sexually harassed reported feeling angry. 32% female students who have been sexually harassed reported feeling afraid or scared. The AAUW also found that sexual harassment negatively affects academics and achievement of the victim: "Students experience a wide range of effects from sexual harassment that impact their academics including: have trouble sleeping, loss of appetite, decreased participation in class, avoid a study group, think about changing schools, change schools, avoid the library, change major, not gone to a professor/ teaching assistant's office hours. Students may experience multiple effects or just one. The wide range of experiences lowers the percentage of students who experience any particular effect "16% of female students who have been sexually harassed found it hard to study or pay attention in class. 9% of female students dropped a course or skipped a class in response to sexual harassment. 27% of female students stay away from particular buildings or places on campus as a result of sexual harassment (AAUW, 2006). The high level of awareness of the occurrence of sexual harassment did not translate into a change in behaviour for the perpetrators. Many of the cases of sexual harassment go unpunished and the victims are left to deal with the trauma, which stay with many of them for a long period and sometimes relapses into a psychological condition and mental health challenge. This has negative effect on the academic achievement and future sexual relationship (Taiwo, Omole & Omole 2014).

### **The Link of Sexual Harassment and Life Skill Education**

Most victim of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions confused and baffled by the exposure to the limitless information and choices based on that orientation. Although not lacking in knowledge, the learner certain times find it difficult to face the challenges of the day to day life. Formal education these days are inadequate to prevent the learner from the menace of sexual harassment and as such they sadly dwell in the hand the sexual harassers. The emphasis should be given on creative thinking and reasoning and personal growth of the individual. Every individual is capable of thought and reason, a free will and is capable of making choices and taking decisions (Pradeep, 2017). To enable these behavioural transformations in the child, the system needs to enrich the school curriculum with a highly researched and effective life skills training programme. An empowered (empowered with life skills) child has the competence to cope with the challenges of life using the available resources even amidst such adversities.

### **Life Skill Education Defined**

Life skills cover a broad range of abilities, competencies and approaches. Life skills is concerned with the education, health, and social sectors and generally represents a set of skills for empowering cognitive, emotional, personal and interpersonal skills. These skills are essentially the abilities that promote mental and social well-being in difficult situations encountered in life (Wiedemann, 2013) Life skills are personal and social skills needed by all people to act with confidence and competence with themselves and within the

society. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 1993), life skills are useful in several areas of life and a broad range of issues, like prevention of drug and substance abuse, prevention of HIV and AIDS, prevention of sexual violence, reduction of teenage pregnancy, prevention of suicides, peace education, environmental education, livelihood and income generation. WHO (1993) defines life skills based education as basically being behaviour change or behaviour development. Generally the term life skill refers to a group of psycho-social and interpersonal skills which can help people make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and think critically (James. 2010).

Life skill refers to a positive behavior that encompasses a mix of knowledge, behaviour, attitude and values and designates the possession of certain skills and knows how to do something positively, or reach a goal. The strength of positive behavior depends upon the depth of skills acquired by the individual. Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enables individual to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Life skills are essentially those activities which help to promote mental wellbeing and competence among young people as they face the realities of life. It is based on the philosophy that young people should be qualitatively trained to take responsibility for their action. Most development professionals agree that life skills are generally applied in the context of health and social events (Spence, 2003). They can be utilized in many content areas: prevention of drug use, sexual violence, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS prevention and suicide prevention. The definition extends into consumer education, environmental education, peace education or education for development, livelihood or income generation. In short, life skills empower young people to take positive action to protect them and promote health and positive social relationships (Francis, 2007).

### **Components of Life Skills**

Life skills include psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive manner. The Ten core Life Skills as lay down by WHO (1993) are: 1. self-awareness 2. empathy 3. critical thinking 4. creative thinking 5. decision making 6. problem solving 7. effective communication 8. interpersonal relationship 9. coping with stress 10. coping with emotion.

On the other hand, Life skills fall into three basic categories, which complement and reinforce each other:

- (i) Social or interpersonal skills, including communication, negotiation/refusal skills, assertiveness, cooperation, empathy;
- (ii) Cognitive skills, including problem solving, understanding consequences, decision making, critical thinking, self-evaluation;
- (iii) Emotional coping skills, including managing stress, managing feelings, self-management and self monitoring (Mangrulkar, Whitman, & Posner, 2001).

As submitted by Francis (2007), life skills education is meant: 1. To provide young people with strategies to make healthy choices that contribute to a meaningful life, 2. To enable young people to analyze their capacities to enhance the function in a most productive way, 3. To allow the youth get along with other people, able to adjust with their environment and making responsible decision, 4. To enable the learner to develop a concept of oneself as a person worth and dignity, 5. To help one to understand oneself and lead to growth in personal responsibility, 6. To help the young people to empower in challenging situations. Youths require both formal and informal education for development of their life skills as well as other individuals who are at different age groups. The objective of life skills education is to help young people cope with daily problems in a successful manner and thus provide to their development (Gazda & Brooks, 1985).

### **Strategies for Adapting Life Skills Education for Controlling Sexual Harassments**

Efforts to inculcate life skill education should receive holistic and collaborative approaches by the school, home, print, electronic media, and etcetera.

- i. As a matter of urgent, orientation should be organized for all the female undergraduates on adapting life skill education to prevent sexual harassment.

- ii. Yearly, the newly admitted undergraduates female students should be exposed to the life skill education adapting the skill to gain self consciousness think critically and make informed decision on issues of sexual harassment in the school.
- iii. The counselling unit of every tertiary institution should be functional with personnel who are experts and sound in life skill education and be available for the female students experiencing sexual harassment.
- iv. The teaching of the life skill education should be included in the General Studies (GS) and course and should be taught at the first semester in year one.
- v. Most students like to confide in their parents. To this end, the tertiary institution authorities should device a means to expose the students' parents to the various forms of sexual harassment in Universities and how to adapt life skill education on their children to prevent them from being victims

### Conclusion

Against all odds, the future of the graduates in the Nigerian Universities seems squalid. Many of the female undergraduates are victims of sexual harassments in the hands of the Universities staffs, more especially the lecturers who devised several means not to be caught in the act and when caught even go extra miles to avert punishment. The perpetrating staffs are quite aware that the penalty is grievous but cheaply invading and victimizing the student due to their observed ignorance and inadequate life skills. Exposing the undergraduates to the training in life skill education will expose them to skills acquisition on self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationship, coping with stress, and coping with emotion to save and prevent them from victimization of sexual harassments while they are in the school.

### References

- Adedokun, O. (2004) Sexual Harassment in Nigerian Educational Settings: Preliminary Notes from qualitative Lagos State University. *Sexuality in Africa Magazine*, pp. 11-12.
- Akanle, F. F. Ola, T. M. & Adewumi, A. (2018). Campus sexual assault and the legal solution in Nigerian universities. *Int. J. Adv. Res.* 6 (12), 1181-1185
- Aluede O., Imokhire J. & Idogho P. (2011). A Survey of Teachers' and Students' Perception of Sexual Harassment in University of Edo State, Nigeria: [URL:http://dx.doi.org/105539/ass.v8n1p268](http://dx.doi.org/105539/ass.v8n1p268)
- American Association of Tertiary institution Women (AAUW) (2006). Drawing the Line: Sexual Harassment on Campus, the American Association of University Women.
- American Association of University Women (AAUW). (2011). *Sexual harassment is part of everyday life in middle and high schools*. Retrieved November 9, 2011
- American Association of University Women, AAUW (2006). Drawing the Line: Sexual Harassment on Campus, the American Association of University Women.
- Beninger, C. (2013) Combating Sexual Harassment in Schools in Sub-Saharan Africa: Legal Strategies Under Regional and International Human Rights Law. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 13, pp. 281-301.
- Dhlomo, T., Mugweni, R.M., Shoniwa, G., Maunganidze, L., Sodi, T. (2012) Perceived Sexual Harassment among Female Students at a Zimbabwean Institution of Higher Learning. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 2, pp. 269-272.
- Douglas, M., & Wildavsky, A. (1983). *Risk and culture: An essay on the selection of technological and environmental dangers*. Univ of California Press: Berkeley.
- Francis, M. (2007). Life Skills Education. [www.changingminds.org](http://www.changingminds.org). Received date: January.02.2020.
- Francis, M. (2007). Life Skills Education. [www.changingminds.org](http://www.changingminds.org). Retrieved: 13.12.20019.
- Gazda, G.M., & Brooks, D.K. (1985). The development of the social/life skills training movement. *Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama, & Sociometry*, 38(1), 1-10.
- Imonikhe, J., Idogho, P., Aluede, O (2011) A Survey of Teachers' and Students' Perception of Sexual Harassment in University of Edo State, Nigeria. *African Research Review*, 5, pp. 412-423.
- Jamela, C. (2011) Zimbabwe -Sexual Harassment in Higher Education. Available at: [http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05\\_11/05\\_16/051611\\_zimbabwe.htm](http://www.wunrn.com/news/2011/05_11/05_16/051611_zimbabwe.htm), page accessed January 11, 2020.

- James O. (2010.). Awareness and application of life skills education in primary schools in post-conflict areas: A case of Kalaki county Kaberamaido district'. Thesis of M. Ed. in science education submitted to the Makerere University, Uganda.
- Kelly, M. & Par, H. (2004) Sexual Harassment in Academia in Nigeria. *African Journals online*.2000 www.ajol.info./ 19905 Retrieved; 29/0/202020.
- Luke N, Goldberg, R.E., Mberu, B.U., Zulu, E.M., (2011). Social Exchange and Sexual Behavior in Young Women's Premarital Relationships in Kenya. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 73(5):1048-1064
- Mamaru, A., Getachew, K., Mohammed, Y. (2015) Prevalence of Physical, Verbal and Nonverbal Sexual Harassments and Their Association with Psychological Distress among Jimma University Female Students: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Ethiopian Journal of Health Sciences*, 1, pp. 29-38.
- Mangrulkar, L., Whitman, C.V., Posner, M. (2001). Life Skills Approach to Child and Adolescent Healthy Human Development. Pan American Health Organization, USA
- Norman, I.D., Aikins, M., Binka, F.N. (2012) *Faith-based organizations: sexual harassment and health in accra-tema metropolis*. *Sexuality & Culture*, 1, pp. 100-112.
- Norman, I.D., Aikins, M., Binka, F.N. (2013) Sexual Harassment in Public Medical Schools in Ghana. *Ghana Medical Journal*, 3, pp. 128–136.
- Okeke, C.M.A (2011) Impact of Sexual Harassment on Women Undergraduates' Educational Experience in Anambra State of Nigeria. Seton Hall University Dissertations and Theses (ETDs), paper 6. Available at: <http://scholarship.shu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=dissertations>, page accessed January 28, 2020.
- Omonijo, D.O., Uche, O.C.O., Nwadiafor, K.L., Rotimi, O.A. (2013) A Study of Sexual Harassment in Three Selected Private Faith-Based Universities, Ogun-State, South-West Nigeria. *Open Journal of Social Science Research*, 9, pp. 250-263.
- Omotosho, I. K. (2015). Sexual harassment and coping strategies among students of the school of nursing, University college hospital, Ibadan. a master dissertation submitted to the to the department of Health Promotion and Education, Faculty of Public Health, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Owoaje, E.T, Olusola-Taiwo, O. (2009-2010) Sexual Harassment Experiences of Female Graduates of Nigerian University *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*, 4, pp. 337-348.
- Pierce, K. J. (2003). Labor and employment review: Title VII and Same-Sex Sexual Harassment After Oncale-Uncertainty Lingers. *COLORADO LAWYER*, 32(6), 87-92.
- Pradeep, K. (2017). Morality and Life skills: The need and importance of life skills education. *International Journal of Advanced Education and Research*, 2; (4) 144-14
- Shimekaw, B., Megabiaw, B., Alamrew, Z. (2013) Prevalence and Associated Factors of Sexual Violence Among Private College Female Students in Bahir Dar city, North Western Ethiopia. *Health*, 6, pp. 1069-1075.
- Spence, S.H. (2003). Social Skills Training With Children and Young People: Theory, Evidence and Practice. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*.8 (2):84-96.
- Swarr, A., & Nagar, R. (2004). 'Discriminating Assumptions: Interrogating "Lesbians ". Struggles for Identity and Survival in India and South Africa'. *Signs*, 29 (2), 491-517.
- Swartz, L., de la Rey, C., Duncan, N., Townsend, L., & O' Neill, V. (2011). *Psychology: an introduction*. (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press: Cape Town.
- Taiwo M. O, Omole O. C, Omole O. E (2014). Sexual Harassment and Psychological Consequence among Students in Higher Education Institution in Osun State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Applied Psychology* 4 (1): 13-18
- Taiwo M. O., Omole O. C., Omole O. E. (2014) Sexual Harassment and Psychological Consequence Among Students in Higher Education Institution in Osun State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Applied Psychology*, 1, pp. 13-18.
- Tora, A. (2013) Assessment of Sexual Violence against Female Students in Wolaita Sodo University, Southern Ethiopia. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 11, pp. 2351–2367.
- Wiedemann N. (2013.). Life Skills – Skills for Life: A handbook, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support, Copenhagen Denmark.