

Lecturers' Perception of Causes and Consequences Of Sexual Assault In Tertiary Institutions Of Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study survey the perception of lecturers on the causes and consequences of sexual assault in tertiary institutions of Kwara State, Nigeria. The population for the study comprised all tertiary institutions owned by Kwara State Government. Researcher purposively sample three tertiary institutions (Kwara State University, Kwara State College of Education Ilorin and Kwara State Polytechnic Ilorin) out of four institutions owned by the state. 300 respondents were randomly selected. Researcher designed questionnaire was used to elicit information from respondents. The finding of the study reveals that inadequate security in the school premises, decline in the school cultural values and alcohol/drug consumption are the major causes of sexual assault in tertiary institutions. The study also reveals that sexual assault in the tertiary institutions brings about their poor projection image and lack of concentration in the study by the victim. The study therefore recommended that adequate security measure should be ensured in all nook and crannies of the school premises, provide Close Circuit Television (CCTV) in strategic places so as to monitor most ongoing activities. Schools, in conjunction with the students' affairs unit, should organize workshop on the evils of sexual assault which will make them aware of the danger inherent in it. School authority should set up counseling centre in the school premises that will be dealing with issues of sexual assault. These are the best strategies to curb sexual assault in tertiary institutions.

Key words: Sexual assault, Rape, Perception, Causes and Consequences.

1. Introduction

The extent of increase in sexual assault in our tertiary institutions remains a great disappointment and embarrassment to the nation. The menace continues to damage the good image of Nigeria abroad. The act of this nature, on the other hand, poses danger to the life of students and needs to be addressed immediately. Sexual assault has been a cankerworm that is eating deep in Nigerian tertiary institutions. It is seen as a global common social problem in educational settings. While it is well addressed in college and university campuses in most developed countries of the world through specific policies and mechanisms of enforcement, it remains a taboo topic in African colleges and universities particularly in Nigeria (Carina, 2011).

Sexual harassment in Nigeria's higher institutions appears to be under-researched and even less reported (Adamolekun, 1989). However, the Commission on the Review of Higher Education in Nigeria (CRHEN) (1991, as cited in Ladebo, 2001) suggests that the phenomenon is gradually assuming critical dimension in Nigeria's higher institutions of learning. This assault of such, led to the protest of some students of higher institutions in Nigeria. Information Nigeria (2012) reported that about 2000 female students of Cross River University of Technology have come out to protest over alleged sexual harassment, molestation, extortion of female students by staff of the institution. They forged ahead to the Government House to register their grievance with some placards carrying inscriptions such as enough of sexual harassment of female students, female molestation, e.t.c.

Sexual assault is defined as an act of sexual nature committed without consent of the other party. Although, sexual assaults most frequently are by a man against a woman, it may involve a combination of two or more men, women and children. The term sexual assault is used, in public discourse, as a generic term that is defined as any involuntary sexual act in which a person is threatened, coerced, or forced to engage, or any sexual touching of a person who has not consented. This includes rape (such as forced vaginal, anal or oral penetration),

inappropriate touching, forced kissing, child sexual abuse, or the torture of the victim in a sexual manner. According to Ado, Anthonia and Babagana (2010), sexual assault may include rape, forced vaginal, anal or oral penetration, forced sexual intercourse, inappropriate touching, forced kissing, child sexual abuse, or the torture of the victim in a sexual manner. It is a gender based issue and a violent crime against both the individual and the society. They further said that an estimated 300,000 women are raped and 3.7 million are confronted with unwanted sexual activity annually, the actual magnitude of female sexual assault world over is unknown because it is one of the offences not often reported.

In legal terms, sexual assault is the name of a statutory offence in various jurisdictions, including Canada, England and Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Texas. The legal definition of the crime of sexual assault is determined by each jurisdiction (Wikipedia, 2012). Esere (2009) opined that marital rape and other forms of sexual abuse are often accompanied by violence. The immediate consequences for the woman may include unwanted pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease. The long-term effects are depression, other mental health disorders and suicide. Outside of law, the term rape ("an assault by a person involving sexual intercourse with another person without that person's consent") is often used interchangeably with sexual assault, a closely related (but in most jurisdictions technically distinct) form of assault typically including rape and other forms of non-consensual sexual activity.

Agbonna (2008) stated that female victims are much more likely to be assaulted by an acquaintance (such as a friend or co-worker), a dating partner, an ex-boyfriend or an intimate partner than by a complete stranger. In a study of hospital emergency room treatments for rape, Kaufman et al. stated that the male victims as a group sustained more physical trauma, were more likely to have been a victim of multiple assaults from multiple assailants, and were more likely to have been held captive longer.

Studies have shown that the psychological damage is often particularly severe when sexual assault is committed by parents against children due to the incestuous nature of the assault. Sexual intercourse between a child or adolescent and a related adult has been identified as the most widespread form of child sexual abuse with a huge capacity for damage to a child. Agbonna (2008), in his own contribution, stated reasons among others why sexual assault on a child is not reported by the child:

- a. children are too young to recognize their victimization or put it into words
- b. they were threatened or bribed by the abuser
- c. they feel confused by fearing the abuser but liking the attention
- d. they are afraid no one will believe them
- e. they blame themselves or believe the abuse is a punishment
- f. they feel guilty for consequences to the perpetrator

Moreover, the student affected by this assault finds it difficult to report the issue to appropriate authorities because of the fear of stigmatization. The effects of the assault on student are so severe to the extent that they may lead to the lack of concentration on academic activities, truancy, unwanted pregnancy, decreased functionality and participation in group activities. This immoral act may make the future of the victim looks grim, ominous and unsafe unless the laws against sexual assault are strictly enforced by all those saddled with the enforcement responsibilities (Aluedo, 2000).

Many researches have been conducted to describe the Causes and consequences of sexual assault in Kwara state. However, little or nothing had been done comparing three tertiary institutions owned by Kwara state government. This justifies the need for this study.

2. Research Questions

1. What do Lecturers perceived as causes of sexual assault in tertiary institutions of Kwara State?
2. What do Lecturers perceived as consequences of sexual assault in tertiary institutions of Kwara State?

3. Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive (survey) study. Data for this study were obtained quantitatively and qualitatively from a simple randomly selected sample of 300 lecturers from government owned tertiary

institutions in Kwara state of Nigeria during the 2011/ 2012 academic session. Specifically, of the 300 respondents who participated in this study, 100 lecturers were selected from the Kwara state university, 100 from Kwara State College of Education Ilorin, and the remaining 100 were from the Kwara State Polytechnic. A research designed questionnaire titled Causes, Consequences and Control of Sexual Assault Questionnaire (CCCSAQ) was used. The instrument has four sections A, B, C, and D. Section A of the questionnaire elicited information on the biographical information of the respondents, Section B elicited information on the causes of sexual assault, section C elicited information on the consequences of sexual assault and section D collected information on the possible control of sexual assault. Each item has four (4) options of response ranging from Strongly Agreed (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). Frequency and percentage were used to answer all research questions raised for the study. The validity of the instrument was determined by face and content approaches while its reliability was found to be $r = 0.78$ using test re-test method.

Results

Table 1: Perceived causes of sexual assault

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	SA		A		D		SD			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
1	Decline in school cultural values	35	11.66	20	6.66	2	0.66	1	0.33	58	19.31
2	To fulfill sexual pleasure	16	5.33	11	3.66	5	1.66	3	1	35	11.65
3	General ideologies of male sexual entitlement	4	1.33	2	0.66	14	4.66	6	2	26	8.65
4	Inadequate security	54	18	17	5.66	-	-	-	-	71	23.66
5	Stress and disturbed emotion	30	10	11	3.66	-	-	-	-	41	13.66
6	The strong spirit of familiarity with lecturers and other peers	-	-	-	-	3	1	2	0.66	5	1.66
7	Alcohol and drug consumption	36	12	8	2.66	3	1	1	0.33	48	15.32
8	Faulty vetting process	-	-	-	-	7	2.33	9	3	16	5.33

Table 1 shows the main reasons why many people in the campus engage in sexual assault. It is shown that out of 300 respondents, 71 (23.66%) were of the opinion that inadequate security in the school environment is the major cause of sexual assault, 58 (19.31) identified decline in the school cultural values and 48(15.32) perceived that alcohol/drug consumption and 41 (13.66%) were of the opinion that academic stress and disturbed emotion lead to engagement in sexual assault. However, 5 (1.66%) partially believed and saw the strong spirit of familiarity with lecturers and other peers as a least factor responsible for sexual assault in tertiary institutions.

Table 2: Perceived consequences of sexual assault

S/N	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS	SA		A		D		SD		N	%
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
9	Unwanted pregnancy	22	7.33	10	3.33	-	-	-	-	32	10.66
10	Reduced self-esteem	13	4.33	14	4.66	3	1	1	0.33	31	10.32
11	Poor image of the institution	44	14.66	17	5.66	-	-	-	-	61	20.32
12	Post traumatic stress disorder	2	0.66	6	2	4	1.33	1	0.33	13	4.32
13	Drop out of school	33	11	12	4	7	2.33	-	-	52	17.33
14	Lack of concentration in the studies thereby leading to poor academic performance	51	17	14	4.66	-	-	-	-	65	21.66
15	Difficulty in the personal relation and in sexual adjustment	8	2.66	20	6.66	5	1.66	5	1.66	38	12.64
16	Lost of studentship	3	1	2	0.33	4	1.33	2	0.66	11	3.32

As indicated in Table 2, sample respondents were of the opinion that engaging in sexual assault can cause devastating effect on the victim and to the perpetrator. Out of 300 respondents, 61 (20.32%) believed that where sexual assault frequently occurs, it can lead to poor projection image of tertiary institutions. Also, 65 (21.66%) strongly believed that the victims of sexual assault will lack concentration in their study and

consequently poor academic performance. 38 (12.64%) believed that the victim of sexual assault will find it difficult in the personal relation and in sexual adjustment. However, 11 (3.32%) of the respondents perceived loss of studentship as a least consequence of sexual assault.

4. Discussion

Findings in this study revealed that sexual assault in tertiary institutions mostly happen as a result of inadequate security. This finding is in line with the assertion of Sherrif (2010) who opined that poor policing by a poorly paid staff, and armed Nigeria Police Force gives undesirable elements like rapist-students and lecturers a field day to terrorize female students on campus. This also corroborates the submission of Agbonna (2008) who said that multiple cases abound of female students that have been raped in broad daylight by a lecturer in his office or by male students (usually cultists) in an obscure location on campus. It is also observed in the study that decline in the school cultural value system tends to encourage sexual assault in tertiary institutions. It is also revealed in the study that sexual assault is caused by alcohol and drug consumption. It is always believed that drinking of alcohol and drug consumption like cocaine are the root causes of evil. In this case, alcohol plays disinhibiting role in certain types of sexual assault. Some researchers have noted that alcohol may act as a cultural break time, providing the opportunity for antisocial behaviour. Thus people are more likely to act violently when drunk because they do not consider that they will be held accountable for their behaviour. Some forms of group sexual violence are also associated with drinking. Respondents identified academic stress and disturbed emotion as causal agents of sexual assault in tertiary institutions.

Sexual assault is a crime of violence that puts the victim at risk and for poor image of the institutions where it frequently occurs. Lack of concentration in the study, which in turn leads to poor academic performance of the victim. It also brings about hatred which can lead to difficulty in interpersonal relation and difficulty in sexual adjustment, physical injury, psychological disturbance, emotional disturbance, unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

5. Conclusion

From the finding of this study, it can be concluded that majority of the respondents held that sexual assault is mostly caused by inadequate security, drinking of alcohol and drug consumption, academic stress and disturbed emotion in higher institutions. Where this kind of antisocial act persists, it could lead to poor image projection of the institution and the society where it is situated, creates suspicion, hatred and difficulty in interpersonal relation and difficulty in sexual adjustment. Lastly, it leads to increase in poor academic performance and in turn brings about reduction in the standard of education in Nigeria. Eradication of this act could make people, most especially female students' heave a sigh of relief, build confidence in the pursuit of their career and make the institutions violence free, redeem its integrity and become enviable citadel of learning.

6. Recommendations

Adequate security measure should be ensured in the nook and crannies of the school premises. To adequately maintain security, school authorities should install Close Circuit Television (CCTV) in strategic places so as to monitor activities going on. Schools in conjunction with student affairs unit should, from time to time organize workshop on the evils of sexual assault. This invariably will enable the perpetrators of the evils to be aware of the danger inherent in it. School authority should set up counseling centre in the school premises to deal with issues of sexual assault.

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