



Sexual Harassment at a Growing Rural University in Eastern Cape, South Africa

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ABSTRACT Sexual harassment is not a new phenomenon, yet it remains a burning issue in institutions of higher learning: continually grabbing the attention of researchers and the media. This study was triggered by a notice on the university noticeboards informing both staff and students to report any incident related to “marks for sex or sex for marks”. The study investigated the occurrence of sexual harassment and its impact on the academic system. The study was informed by the exchange theory. The paper adopted a qualitative approach and a case study design. The convenient sampling technique was utilised to choose thirty participants- lecturers and students. Interviews were used to collect data. Data were thematically analysed. The study established that female students were harassing male lecturers and that sexual harassment was rife. The university should come up with a sexual harassment policy and orientate the university community about the dangers and effects of sexual harassment.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment remains the most pervasive form of violence against women today, often encompassing other forms of violence in its ambit (Fitzgerald 2017). Globally, sexual harassment is not a new phenomenon, but it remains a burning issue even in institutions of higher learning. Akpotor (2013) observes that sexual harassment is a recurring decimal in tertiary institutions while Smit and du Plessis (2011) postulate that sexual harassment has been silenced for years but continues to pose a problem (Mellins et al. 2017). The above authors agree that sexual harassment is a common social problem that is prevalent in most societies and is rampant in tertiary institutions and workplaces. Women are harassed in schools and universities by their teachers and professors and even in their homes by their landlords and property managers (Fitzgerald 2017). In support of the above, Taiwo et al.-(2014), in their study, established that sexual harassment was a global issue that has permeated the fabric of higher education institutions and many workplaces as long as humans have reasons to interact (Maslen 2018). Sexual harassment is viewed as a problem that has always confronted human society with little or no solutions (Akpotor 2013) and as a silent disease that is seriously eroding academic excellence in tertiary institutions (Imonikhe et al. 2012). Sexu-

al harassment occurs even in the most diligent of universities (Nature 2017). There is a large body of literature showing that sexual harassment is rife and that in some cases it is not exposed. As sexual harassment is a global challenge and a critical issue it needs to be researched, hence the study joining the ongoing debate on sexual harassment.

Theoretical Framework

The study is informed by the Social Exchange Theory (SET) which argues that all relationships have an element of give and take (Thibaut and Kelly 1959b in Griffin 2008). The Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a social psychological and sociological perspective that explains social change and stability as a process of negotiated exchanges between parties (Rusbult 1983) though the exchange is not always equal. This means that in a relationship, people weigh and value what they are going to benefit out of that relationship. It can be equated to an economic point of view called cost-benefit analysis, which calculates the value of a relationship in terms of rewards and costs (Cherry 2016; Rusbult 1983; Thibaut and Kelly 1959a). People weigh the potential benefits and risks of social relationships. When risks outweigh the rewards, then people terminate the relationship because the purpose of this exchange, similar to barter, is to maximize

benefits and minimize costs. This theory is relevant to the study because it has a sense of exchange, that is, marks for sex or sex for marks, sex to get university accommodation and sex in order to get a bursary or National Student Financial Assistance Scheme (NSFAS) and so on as was written on the noticeboards of that particular Campus. So, students or staff may concede to sexual harassment either to get marks or sex benefits, so the theory suits this study significantly.

Statement of the Problem

A study that was conducted by Adetunji (2008) established that sexual harassment was prevalent in educational institutions, in the workplace and in other sectors of the society. Recent studies showed the same problem especially in institutions of higher learning (Fitzgerald 2017; Cantor 2015; Joseph 2015; Kheswa 2014; Taiwo et al. 2014; Akpotor 2013; Sharma 2013; Leach 2013). Their observation was in line with the information that was on the noticeboards of the University (Campus) which triggered the undertaking of this study. The notice was put by the Campus Director of Operations advising students and staff to report any incident on: Marks for sex or sex for marks, sex to get university accommodation and sex in order to get a bursary or NSFAS. Given such a scenario, this paper, therefore, sought to investigate the occurrence of sexual harassment, unpacking the issue of who harasses who between lecturers and students in this Campus: and its impact on the academic system. Apparently, sexual harassment at this particular rural Campus was never researched and the issue of 'who harasses who' between staff and students is under-researched as observed too by Akpotor (2013) and Maslen (2018). Few studies have investigated incidents of sexual harassment in a small growing rural university.

Goal of the Study

The goal of the study was to:

- ♦ Investigate the occurrence of sexual harassment, unpacking the issue of who harasses who between lecturers and students in the institution under study.

- ♦ Recommend possible mitigation strategies in order to curb sexual harassment.

Literature Review

As alluded to earlier, sexual harassment is prevalent in institutions of higher learning across the globe, and this has attracted the attention of researchers and the media (Sendo and Meleku 2015; Akpotor 2013; Smith and du Plessis 2011). Mellins et al. (2017) acknowledge that sexual assault victimization among college students in the United States is higher than before. This prevalence has prompted universities to enhance or develop policies and programmes to prevent sexual assault. This paper defines sexual harassment, forms of sexual harassment, causes of sexual harassment, effects and ways to curtail sexual harassment.

Defining Sexual Harassment

According to Joseph (2015), the term sexual harassment is not used uniformly across the globe because countries have defined it differently. For the purpose of this paper, the fused definition from definitions below shall be used: Aluede (2000) as cited in Imonikhe et al. (2012) define sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature (Mellins et al. 2017). The behaviour sometimes, according to Aluede, is unwelcome, unsolicited and repeated. Similarly, Willness (2007) in Kheswa (2014) defines sexual harassment as a form of gender discrimination that involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and so on. In addition to the above definitions, Sharma (2013) defines sexual harassment as inappropriate sexualised comments or gestures, unwanted physical contact such as touching, pinching or groping through to threats of exam failure, sexual assault and rape, sexual favours in exchange for good grades or preferential treatment in class. The above authors observe that the behaviour is sometimes unwelcome or unwanted but there is an exchange for something: hence, the study adopted the Social Exchange Theory (SET), which argues that all relationships have a give and take element, although the balance of this exchange is not al-

ways equal (Rusbult 1983). From what has been stated above, it can be concluded that sexual harassment is uncalled-for behaviour which manifests delicately and indelicately. Taiwo et al. (2014) go further to state that usually, such advances come from an individual with power or one who is at a vantage position, directed at a less privileged individual. In this case, it could mean a lecturer/staff member having a higher position with power viz-a-viz a student. For the purpose of this study, sexual harassment refers to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, verbal or non-verbal physical conduct of a sexual nature, unwanted physical contact, threats of exam failure, sexual assault and rape.

Forms of Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Institutions

Sexual harassment in institutions of higher education comes in different forms. A study by Glaser and Thorpe in Taiwo et al. (2014) which was carried out in the United States of America revealed a higher prevalence of sexual harassment and unethical intimacy between postgraduate students and their supervisors due to face-to-face interaction when seeking advice on their research studies. This is affirmed by a study that was carried out by Mellins et al. (2017) which established that sexual assault victimization among college students in the United States was higher than before. This prevalence had prompted universities to enhance or develop policies and programmes to prevent sexual assault. Sharma (2013) confirms that even in Nigeria, such tendencies in tertiary institutions are a reality and the male lecturers perceive themselves as gods. Such tendencies normally spring from unequal power relations associated with gender-based violence and violation of human rights (Gaba 2010; Imonikhe et al. 2012; Leach 2013). Fitzgerald (2017) states that women are the most vulnerable group in any society to experience sexual harassment. Nature Report (2017) states that sexual harassment occurs even in the most diligent of universities and perpetrators can be powerful and influential. It is argued that the harasser generally is older, powerful and possesses something of value that is beneficial to the harassed (Smit and du Plessis 2011). Literature agrees that there is male lecturer-female student sexual harassment. Imonikhe (2012) believes

that sexual harassment is a silent disease that is seriously eroding academic excellence in tertiary institutions (Mellins et al. 2017).

Smit and du Plessis (2011) establish another form of sexual harassment between male students and female lecturers or male learners sexually harassing female educators. Smit and du Plessis argue that the above-stated form of sexual harassment of females in educational institutions has not yet received the attention it should. This type of sexual harassment is believed to have stemmed from the traditional patriarchal belief that men have power to control women because authority is male dominant. Historically, women could not control and discipline men since authority and discipline were predominantly defined in hegemonic masculine terms (Smit and du Plessis 2011). In her study on public perceptions towards children brought up by single mothers, Marongwe (2017) found out that single mothers had issues with their boy-children who did not want to take instructions from them after the circumcision rite of passage. Culturally, these children thought that they were now men and therefore, could not be told what to do by women hence, the incidences of male learners harassing female educators.

Another form of sexual harassment is when a male student harasses a female student (Taiwo et al. 2014). Literature reveals that this form of sexual harassment is often not reported and that many of the cases go unpunished and the victims are left to deal with the trauma. Leach (2013) agrees that incidents of sexual harassment from male students to female students are a manifestation of unequal power relations and gender-based violence as discussed above. The argument is that traditionally, men used to harass women sexually in societies and this translated into institutions of learning (Smit and du Plessis 2011).

Taiwo et al. (2014) identify another form of sexual harassment as that one of male lecturers/non-academic staff to female lecturers and or non-academic staff or to female students. In support of Taiwo et al. Smit and du Plessis (2011) posit that this form of sexual harassment often occurs when, in the eyes of male colleagues, the woman's sex role overshadows her role as an employee. Joseph (2015) argues that sexual harassment of this form undermines the integrity

of the academic environment and makes victims feel embarrassed and discriminated against, hence the need to address the issue. This form is the most common type of sexual harassment and as such, it has received attention (Schuffer 2000).

There is also a relatively new form of sexual harassment that has surfaced. This form is whereby gays and lesbians are sexually harassing other gays and lesbians (Taiwo et al. 2014). A relatively new form of sexual harassment similar to gay-to-gay or lesbian-to-lesbian is whereby a female student or female lecturer sexually harasses a male student/lecturer. This type of sexual harassment appears to reverse the norm of a male figure that sexually harasses a female figure. Mellins et al. (2017) established that existing evidence suggests that most sexual assault incidents are perpetrated against women; however, a few studies have examined college men as survivors of assault. Mellins et al. (2017) further state that their understanding of how sexual orientation and gender identity relate to the risk of sexual assault was limited, despite indications that lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB), and gender non-conforming (GNC) students were at high risk (Mellins et al. 2017). As pointed to earlier on by Smit and du Plessis (2011), this form of sexual harassment has not yet received the attention it should. This brings in the question of who harasses who in institutions of higher learning (Akpotor 2013). Few studies have reported incidents of sexual harassment between female students/lecturers harassing male students/lecturers and the effects it has on male students/lecturers.

Factors that Perpetuate Sexual Harassment in Institutions of Higher Education

Literature holds that there are varied reasons why sexual harassment manifests. Sexual harassment is driven by lust, pursuit of happiness/pleasure, lack of norms of morality, lack of conscience, habit, disorder, inferiority complex, immaturity, cheapness, abuse of power and suffering from demonology (Leach 2013; Ogunbameru 2006). Some authors have argued that sexual harassment is sometimes provoked by indecent dress among female students who walk around campuses scantily dressed and almost naked

(Taiwo et al. 2014). It is alleged that many female students are so morally bankrupt that they want to achieve higher grades without due preparation but rely absolutely on their womanhood for pass marks (Joseph 2015). This idea is supported by Beninger (2013) who holds that some such female students are very lazy and would do anything to motivate/provoke male lecturers into an unethical relationship with the view to use what they have to get what they want. Mellins et al. (2017) found out that female students who often or always had difficulty paying for basic necessities had increased chances of being sexually assaulted. Akpotor (2013) observes that it is common to find unserious students who seldom attend lectures, attempt class assignments, write class tests and even deliberately absent from examinations. For such students to avoid probation and withdrawal from the programme due to poor performance, they begin to scout around for shortcuts. Akpotor found that such behaviour makes them vulnerable to sexual harassment and its aftermath.

Another driving factor that seems to perpetuate sexual harassment is the weak system of redressing sexual harassment in the higher education sector (Maslen 2018; Mellins et al. 2017; Nature Report 2017; Sendo and Meleku 2015; Taiwo et al. 2014). It is argued that victims are not confident to report incidences due to lack of trust in the institutional structures. They do not believe that perpetrators will be punished and that victims will get justice. In line with the idea above, Akpotor (2013) comments that perpetrators in institutions of higher learning capitalize on the waning educational system, the academic laxity of the female students who are desperate to move forward. Akpotor further states that the continuous indulgence of such lecturers was also due to the weak administrative system that had no policy to expose and impose punishment on perpetrators who adopted students as their 'fringe benefits' in the workplace (Nature Report 2017). Studies conducted on sexual harassment in institutions of education have reported a similar observation that countries with weak educational systems, low levels of accountability and poorly trained personnel were likely to perpetuate sexual harassment Leach (2013); Beninger (2013) and Sharma (2013).

Mellins et al. (2017), Leach (2013) and Leach et al. (2000) established that high levels of poverty and gender inequality were also driving forces for sexual harassment. This calls on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) guiding this study. The theory argues that economic survival rests on sexual barter. Shumba and Matima (2002) also found that female students' poverty provides ideal pre-conditions for sexual bartering. In agreement with the above, Taiwo et al. (2014) acknowledges that poverty was a major reason for female students yielding to sexual advances even when they were dissatisfied with such actions. Their argument was that most female students from poor backgrounds who had not developed clear values and future goals were a particular target of negative peer influence. Such students also succumb to influence of bad friends who motivate them to engage in unethical conduct. All the authors agree that poverty is a key factor that perpetuates sexual harassment in institutions of higher learning. From the literature reviewed, it can be concluded that sexual harassment sometimes originates from both males and females if left unchecked and uncontrolled in institutions of higher education.

Effects of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is often associated with negative experiences on the harasser and the harassed and leaves them with painful memories that devastate the psychological and emotional well-being of the affected individual, especially the harassed (Maslen 2018; Fitzgerald 2017; Taiwo et al. 2014; Akpotor 2013; Beninger 2013; Imonikhe et al. 2012) established that sexual harassment impacted negatively on the academic performance of victims. It has been found that female students/girls may be deterred from participating in class and seeking academic excellence for fear of attracting unwanted attention from lecturers/teachers (Leach 2013). Leach argues that sexual harassment creates a stressful and intimidating learning environment, lowers concentration and motivation and contributes to poor performance. According to the Transparency International's Global Corruption Report in Sharma (2013), sexual harassment in educational institutions is an abuse of power by teachers and lecturers corrupting the education

system leading to some girls and women dropping out. The victim may lose trust in school officials, become isolated, and the experience may prevent the student from achieving her maximum potential (Taiwo et al. 2014). The above shows that the victim's education is compromised, and this has an effect on her future career. Consequently, the experience may ruin her life.

Leach (2013) and Taiwo et al. (2014) agree that sexual harassment undermines the integrity of the academic environment and subsequently prevents victims from achieving their full potential. It is argued for example, that graduates with certificates obtained through favours or sexual consent are not worth the certificates they have been conferred (Taiwo et al. 2014). Authors consulted established that this was clearly demonstrated in the performance of the half-baked graduates produced into the labour market in recent times (Taiwo et al. 2014; Joseph 2015; Leach 2013; Sharma 2013). Moreover, Imonikhe et al. (2012) state that it was often assumed that lecturers have turned the educational system into a goldmine demanding sexual gratification before awarding pass marks to graduate their victims and, therefore, producing half-baked graduates. It is believed that this may negatively impact on national productivity and economic development due to poorly skilled employees who create problems for the labour market (Taiwo et al. 2014; Akpotor 2013; Imonikhe et al. 2012).

Furthermore, the sexually harassed persons may suffer a number of psychological effects ranging from irritation and frustration to anxiety, stress, trauma and so on (Fitzgerald 2017; Taiwo et al. 2014; Akpotor 2013; Imonikhe et al. 2012). The psychological effects may cause the victim to develop symptoms of persistent sadness, negative outlook, mood swings, emotional flooding, anxiety, fear of loss of control, excessive guilt and shame, crying spells, self-doubt, diminished self-confidence, helplessness, vulnerability, alienation, persistent anger and fear. (Taiwo et al. 2014; Smit and du Plessis 2011; Leach 2013). The harasser may lose his/her job if reported. In their study, Taiwo et al. (2014) reported that many seasoned lecturers and researchers had lost their careers through cases of sexual harassment. They further said the images of those involved in sexual harassment and those

of their family members were often tarnished within their immediate environment. From literature consulted, it is evident that sexual harassment impacts negatively on the victim, perpetrator, national productivity and the immediate family of those involved in it.

Ways to Curtail Sexual Harassment

According to Maslen (2018), Mellins et al. (2017), Akpotor (2013), Imonikhe et al. (2012), Leach (2013) and Taiwo et al. (2014), all sexual harassment incidents must be reported and appropriate action must be taken in order to deter others from committing the same offence. The above authors agree that incidents of sexual harassment are not reported and that therefore, this allows perpetrators to go free. Maslen (2018) and Leach (2013) in line with the above argue that sexual harassment is high in tertiary institutions because many of the cases of sexual harassment go unpunished and the victims are left to deal with the trauma alone. Institutions of education are urged to introduce strong management systems, formulate clear sexual harassment policies, and introduce dress code that would abolish seductive and provocative dressing (Maslen 2018; Sendo et al. 2015; Akpotor 2013; Adetunji 2008; Leach 2013; Taiwo et al. 2014).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the qualitative approach and the case study design aimed to investigate and understand the qualitative nature of a phenomenon in a subjective manner (sexual harassment at a growing rural university) rather than to explain it in terms of the laws of cause and effect as adopted in quantitative research (Babbie and Mouton 2013). Qualitative research provides depth and is suited to revealing unique meanings that underlie the university's victims and perpetrators' experience. Given the need for disclosure of intimate life experiences in this type of research, it was deemed necessary to use qualitative research techniques in this study.

Qualitative case designs use case selection and identification which this study employed as suggested by Rule and John (2011). Case studies are ideographic research methods; that is,

methods that study persons as individuals rather than members of a population (Terre Blanche et al. 2006). The cases were conveniently selected since the sampling technique suits a qualitative study and results were for this particular university under study and participants were willing to participate in the study (Babbie and Mouton 2013). The study involved thirty university participants at the particular institution. A sample size of this nature is suited to qualitative investigation (Devers and Robinson 2002). According to Terney and Dilley (2002: 461), the sample of thirty participants is "small but theoretically significant" to this particular university. Patton (2002) also suggests that in qualitative phenomenological research a researcher can even use single cases of $N=1$; with only one participant. The study connected itself with what Creswell (2008) and Leedy and Ormrod (2005) recommend that the use of 5 - 25 cases, as they feel that the range is large enough to assume that most or all of the perceptions that might be important are uncovered. Purposive selection is apt for a qualitative study as it grants the researcher in-depth information of specific life experiences of participants. It was advantageous to use purposive or judgemental selection as it allowed the researcher to select unique cases satisfactory to the study needs (Cohen et al. 2007).

Data was gathered through interviews and narratives considering the sensitive nature of the topic that it is still a topical and problematic issue in most societies. Five academics, five non-academics and ten students were interviewed, and ten students wrote narratives. The aim of qualitative interviews is to see the world through the eyes of the participant (Maree 2007). Narratives were used as one of the biographical methods to collect data. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) define the biographical method as "the studied use and collection of life documents, which describe turning-point moments in individuals' lives. The biographical methods are valuable in understanding major shifts in the lives of participants as they sometimes detail sensitive and private experiences (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). They were valuable in this study as some of the participants presented more vivid private experiences than they dared give in the interviews. In support, Rule and John (2011: 65) contend

that story telling gives participants the freedom over the data generated and that it produces rich data in a “rather informal, non-directive and non-threatening manner.”

Data Analysis

Data were thematically analysed. Beginning with content analysis the researcher sought to extract themes and metaphors that organise and make sense of the data obtained. Responses were put into categories on the basis of the meaning they conveyed. Thematic frames were employed to analyse the interview transcripts and narratives. This analysis focuses on identifying recurrent themes across transcripts. Recurrent themes are the similar and consistent ideas, thoughts, images, and accounts shared (Moustakas 1994). On the same note, Rule and John (2011: 150) suggest that “Themes are recurrent and distinctive features of participants’ accounts, characterizing particular perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the goal of the study.” Thick descriptions were used to analyse data.

RESULTS

From the findings, themes related to the problem statement emerged. Emerging themes are discussed below and illustrated through quotations from the interviews and narrative texts. The quotations are presented verbatim. Coding: The participants were identified as follows to ensure anonymity: Academic Interviewee- (AI 1-5), Non-Academic Interviewee (NAI 1-5), Student Interviewee (SI 1-10) and Student Narrative- (SN 1-10). Themes that emerged from the data centred on:

- ◆ Prevalence of sexual harassment incidents
- ◆ Victims of sexual harassment (who harasses who? Reporting of incidents and effects of reporting)
- ◆ Measures that could be adopted to reduce the occurrence of sexual harassment

Prevalence of Sexual Harassment

All participants indicated that sexual harassment was prevalent and very common that it had become a norm at the particular Campus

only that the incidents were not reported. **AI 3** highlighted that, “*The extent of sexual harassment is very high because of the location of the Campus and the background of our students. Our students are living in poverty*” (**AI 3**). **NAI 5** clearly indicated:

There are so many incidents of sexual harassment at this Campus because if you want a favour then you must also give in kind. The university community here uses shortcuts, wants an easier way of getting things and there is nothing for ‘mahala’ (meaning for free).

The interviews held with students and the narrative texts explicitly substantiated the above opinions. **SI 7** indicated that, “*No one wants to fail, no one wants to lose accommodation, everyone wants to get NSFAS, we want to look good and have money, so you see it’s clear that sexual harassment issues are prevalent here, there is a lot of corruption and evil things are happening to get recognised*”.

SN 8 wrote, “*My heart bleeds, this issue is too sensitive it is re-opening my wounds. I failed two modules not because I didn’t make it but because I didn’t succumb to the advances and a certain lady in my class who later became the victim and consented to moves passed those two modules even if she wasn’t regularly attending lectures. We see it even when they are allocating accommodation, they give first to those they are sleeping with, that is why you saw the notice on the noticeboards that report any case of marks for sex, sex for accommodation*”.

Victims of Sexual Harassment

The participants were asked to respond to the question, “Who are the victims of sexual harassment, ‘who harasses who?’” It emerged from the study that currently it is no longer male lecturers or workers who only harass students sexually, with the new developments and changes the society is going through, also female students are now harassing university male workers. **AI 4** vehemently pointed out that:

Us as male lecturers are being sexually harassed by students, they come to class and sit strategically wearing short skirts without panties and open their legs fishing us. This is abuse, the whole front row from corner to corner will be occupied by female students, and then oth-

ers occupy the middle row and others at the back with wide open legs, where do we look then? They are lazy they do not want to work so they try to get us and naturally the flesh responds, and we fall into a trap. When it's discovered, it is as if the male lecturer initiated it yet it was started by the female students. Ask all male lecturers here they know what I am telling you now.

NAI 6 revealed, *'These days it is very difficult to point out who are the victims. In short, both males and females are victims. Our female students have lost 'Ubuntu' (humanity); the way they wear their dress is disgusting and provocative. They come to our offices wearing a thirty-centimetre skirt with uncovered breasts. They talk in a suggestive manner and their body language speaks volumes. There are also members of staff we know from the support system who are taking advantage of some innocent girls. They know they are in charge of transport, accommodation and other facilities then you find them sleeping around with more than twenty university female students, it sucks'.*

The above ideas were reflected in the responses of some students who were interviewed and from the narrative excerpts. **SI 7** remarked that:

Sometimes we are quick to blame the male academics and non-academics forgetting that our sisters are the ones who provoke them. Some of our sisters want easy things, are in a competitive environment, therefore, they make it a point that they lure lecturers to get some favours and money. However, the non-academics are abusing the girls especially those girls who do not afford are prone to sexual harassment. Anyone can be a victim it is not guaranteed. The girls dump us because we cannot afford to take them out, buy expensive things for them and promise them heaven on earth.

SN 10 also wrote and expressed the same views as above. She wrote, *'Now you cannot tell because you can see girls abusing men sexually through actions and men are very weak and there are also men who are loose and greedy who want to sleep with every girl at the Campus. The problem is men cannot report because culturally it was unheard of for men to report being sexually harassed by females; it was the other way round'.*

SN 4 reiterated the sentiments expressed above and went on to narrate that:

Sexual harassment affects not only the victim and the harasser but also the other students, their attention is drawn, and they are often carried away. You may perform badly in class or be victimised if you want to talk about it, the system has become weak and everyone seems to enjoy it, no reports are made.

Measures that Could be Adopted to Reduce the Occurrence of Sexual Harassment

All the participants were asked to give their opinions as to what could be done to reduce cases of sexual harassment at this growing rural university. **AI 2, AI 4, NAI 5, NAI 3, SI 1, SI 6, SN 8 and SN 1** pointed out that, *'The University should come up with a Campus based policy speaking specifically to sexual harassment issues and both students and the academic and non-academic staff should be addressed on this issue'.* **AI 5** suggested that punitive measures be taken against the perpetrators. **SN 7** wrote, *'Students ought to be addressed on the importance of dressing modestly, working hard, resisting temptations and tempting lecturers, there should be a weekly hour dedicated to that and administered by the Campus Rector'.* **SI 5** proposed that Heads of Departments (HODs) should strictly monitor the marking of tests, assignments and examinations to ensure that some students will not be victimised.

DISCUSSION

It emerged from the findings that sexual harassment was rife at this particular rural university and incidents were not reported but just swept under the carpet. Sexual harassment was taken as a norm and as fashionable because of the weak system. This finding is in line with what was established by Maslen (2018), Mellins et al. (2017), Fitzgerald (2017) and Taiwo et al. (2014) that sexual harassment was very high in institutions of higher learning in Australia, United States of America and Nigeria respectively. These findings are consistent with other recent studies that found that sexual harassment was prevalent in educational institutions (Cantor 2015; Joseph 2015; Sendo and Meleku 2015;

Kheswa 2014; Leach 2013). Furthermore, Adetunji (2008) established that sexual harassment was a problem prevalent in educational institutions. This shows that sexual harassment is a problem that is not disappearing but recurring probably because the institutions of higher learning today have lost control and the system has become so weak to the extent that people have view sexual harassment as a norm and accept it as such. Akpotor (2013) argues that the continuous indulgence of sexual harassment is due to the weak administrative system that has no policy to expose and impose punishment on perpetrators who adopt students as their 'fringe benefits' in the workplace. Jenkins (2018) comments that sexual assault and sexual harassment are far too prevalent in university settings as they are in the broader community. There is significant under-reporting of sexual assault and sexual harassment in the university; and universities need to do more to prevent such abuse from occurring in the first place, to build a culture of respect and to respond appropriately by supporting victims of abuse and sanctioning perpetrators (Meredith and Samantha 2017). The above view is similar to the observations made in this study that the diminishing educational system is being taken advantage of by the university community and it is being used to plant a seed of debauchery.

Another finding highlighted by the study is why victims consent to sexual harassment. The participants pointed out factors such as the location of the university and background of students admitted at the Campus (Leach et al. 2000). Other factors highlighted were poverty, short-cuts used by the university community, people wanting an easier way of getting things, students scrambling for accommodation, priority to get NSFAS, students wanting to look good, money, higher marks and other favours. The relationship is that of give and take as suggested by the theoretical framework adopted in this study of social exchange theory. Imonikhe et al. (2012) who established in their study that in higher education, sexual harassment involves sex in exchange for good grades or leaked exam questions and admission to an institution advance the same line of thought. Taiwo et al. (2014) also fingered poverty as one of the key drivers of sexual harassment in higher learning education-

al institutions as highlighted in this current study. This explicitly shows how corrupt the higher education system has become and how the location (geographical setup) of a university can influence the students to indulge in such practices. The university is in an impoverished rural area and draws students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The implication is that such students succumb to pressures experienced at university and fall prey to them to meet university demands and fit into university life.

A significantly important dimension that stemmed from the study is that gone are the days where female students used to be victims and male lecturers, perpetrators. This study established that there are many female students who are sexually harassing the male staff at this university only that male victims do not report the incidents. This is in tandem with the finding by Mellins et al. (2017) who established that existing evidence suggests that most sexual assault incidents are perpetrated against women; however, few studies have examined college men as survivors of assault. There are men who are sexually harassed. Both female and male participants who participated in this study acknowledged that things have changed; female students are not ashamed of provoking the lecturers in order to get what they want. Joseph (2015) in his study acknowledged that perpetrators could be students, lecturers or administrative staff. This finding contradicts what was established by Sendo and Meleku (2015) in their study which showed a high prevalence of sexual harassment against female students of Hawassa University in Ethiopia. Most studies that were conducted elsewhere prior to this one indicated that quite a number of female students were being harassed by male lecturers because of gender and power related issues (Sharma 2013; Leach 2013; Kheswa 2014). This form of harassment of male lecturers and other non-academic male staff at this Campus has overturned the tradition and has not yet received much attention. Traditionally and historically, women could not control, discipline or sexually harass men since authority and discipline were predominantly defined in hegemonic masculine terms and confirmed by the sexual division of labour (Smit and du Plessis 2011). The implication is that the society has changed, tables have turned upside

down. According to this study, some women are now making sexual advances towards men and it is not easy for men to come out in the open that they are being sexually harassed for fear of becoming a laughingstock and that no one may take them seriously. Moreover, some maybe enjoying the flirting. Akpotor (2013) observed that some victims enjoy being sexually harassed due to the benefits as also pointed out earlier by the social exchange theory adopted in this study. Sex for benefits is a silent problem and killer that is equivalent to a sexual harassment as established by Smit and du Plessis (2011) where a male learner harasses a female educator.

It further emerged from the study that sexual harassment does not only affect the victim and the perpetrator but also the other students and the running of university business. This finding is in tandem with the observation made by Fitzgerald (2017) who comments that victims of sexual harassment and people surrounding them in organisations normally experience shock, disbelief and psychological trauma. It was revealed that some students' attention to their studies will be distracted subsequently leading to failure. Other students are deliberately failed while undeserving individuals are passed. Some university community members who may want to report these unethical practices maybe victimised. The perpetrators will not perform their duties effectively while the victims experience psychological and emotional turmoil. The image of the Campus is tarnished and labelled as weak and dysfunctional. This finding is in line with the observations made by Sharma (2013) that sexual harassment corrupts education worldwide. In support, Maslen (2018), Merllins et al. (2017) and Leach (2013) hold that every sexual harassment case undermines the integrity of the educational system in that it creates a stressful and intimidating learning environment, lowers concentration and motivation and contributes to poor performance (Taiwo et al. 2014).

Finally, the participants stressed the dire need for a Campus based policy to be formulated speaking specifically to sexual harassment. This is in line with the findings by Weiss and Lasky (2017), Meredith and Samantha (2017) and Maslen (2018) that most universities did not have a sexual harassment policy. A policy protects and takes measures against the perpetra-

tor thereby protecting the image of the Campus, victims and the interest of the university community. It was explicitly expressed by participants that the Campus did not have its own policy since it was an extension of another Campus. Failure to have a Campus based policy could also be attributed to the fact that there were no proper systems in place and the management was new. Without a policy, people tend to behave haphazardly and carelessly knowing that there is no instrument to govern them. In line with the above view, Akpotor (2013) states that without a policy, the system becomes weak because perpetrators cannot be exposed, and punishment imposed on them. In the same vein, Fitzgerald (2017) and Leach (2013) posit that sexual harassment in education is higher in countries with weak educational systems and low levels of accountability. The implication is that a strong management system is needed to formulate and enforce the policy.

CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that in although sexual harassment is not a new phenomenon, it is still rife in institutions of higher learning particularly at the Campus used in the study. It can also be concluded that not all institutions of higher learning have a sexual harassment policy which is functional. The study also established that at this Campus, female students are sexually harassing the male workers and that the victims seemed to enjoy the harassment because of the benefits thus fulfilling the social exchange theory's arguments adopted in this study of barter-give-take. There are also key drivers that facilitate the recurrence of sexual harassment. Incidents of sexual harassment are not reported due to the weak systems that are in place at this particular Campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ There is need to formulate and enforce a sexual harassment policy to safeguard the interests of all stakeholders.
- ◆ The Campus ought to orient both students and university workers about the dangers and effects of sexual harassment.
- ◆ The management should realistically implement strict quality evaluation and monitor-

ing mechanisms to ensure that marking of tests, assignments, projects and examinations is done impartially.

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