

Sexual Harassment: The Prevalent and Insidious Phenomenon among Student Teachers on Teaching Practice in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT Research shows that the sexual harassment of student teachers on teaching practice is a prevalent and seemingly insidious phenomenon. The Zimbabwean student teachers, regardless of their sex, are victims of sexual harassment but are generally reluctant to formally report the sexual harassment being perpetrated against them. The aim of the study was to explain the sexual harassment phenomenon as experienced and expressed by the victims who are the student teachers on teaching practice in Zimbabwe. The focus was on the phenomenon's prevalence and insidiousness. The study adopted a quantitative methodology. A sample of 127 student teachers, then fresh from a teaching practice phase of their teacher education course mainly in selected Zimbabwean rural schools, was asked to complete a questionnaire about their sexual harassment experiences during teaching practice. Chi-square tests were used to test hypotheses and in answering research questions on the prevalence and insidiousness of sexual harassment among the student teachers. Results showed that student teachers regardless of their sexes experienced sexual harassment of various forms from their superordinates but are generally reluctant to formally report the acts. The acts of harassment range from subtle or non-physical forms such as lustful stares that make the victim uncomfortable and to comply with the assertive acts that are the abuse of professional status. The study implores institutions to sensitise victims of their legal obligations in such cases.

INTRODUCTION

The legal definition of sexual harassment according to Shane (2009: 358) citing Shoop and Hayhow (1994) is "... any unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that interferes with an individual's life". Such behaviour could be "verbal, visual or physical contact, and [is] pervasive and affects the working conditions or creates a hostile work environment" (ERA: Sexual Harassment at Work 2011). Sexual harassment occurs in the context of a relationship where one person (offender) has more formal power than the other (for example the head of the school and the mentor are bearers of formal power). Harassment can also occur when the offender wields more informal power than the other person (victim) such as is the case with school teachers in relation to

their pupils and those in lower ranks (DeGue et al. 2010; Shane 2009; Whelan 2002). People wielding formal and informal power in education circles include heads of schools, lecturers, mentors, teachers at the practising school and the education officers. These individuals act as supervisors and, according to the authors' experiences, influence the teaching practice assessment regime of the student/learners.

Background to the Study

There seems to be a dearth of literature about the phenomenon of sexual harassment of Zimbabwean student teachers on teaching practice. Even though Chireshe and Chireshe (2010), Shumba and Matina (2002) and Zindi (1994), conducted studies on sexual harassment in Zimbabwean tertiary education institutions, they did not focus on harassment by perpetrators of the hosting ministry during the teaching practice phase. The student teachers on teaching practice have myriad people who supervise their work. The legal definition of sexual harassment to some extent, perceives the student teacher as vulnerable. The students on teaching practice are therefore, potential victims of sexual harassment (ERA: Sexual Harassment at School 2011; Makura and

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Zireva 2011). The people who supervise them are normally, the perpetrators. While on teaching practice, the student teachers, particularly females, are perceived as desperate for passing the teaching practice component by these supervisors hence are considered easy sexual prey. With the position power they wield over the student teachers (which they very often abuse) (Makura and Zireva 2011; Shumba 2006, 2004), some Zimbabwean school authorities or supervisors become the perpetrators of sexual harassment particularly in rural schools.

In the Zimbabwean context, the student teachers are initially 'aliens' within the Ministry of Education, Arts, Sport and Culture as they do not administratively belong to this Ministry officially but to that of Higher and Tertiary Education. As 'aliens', the student teachers are found to be on the receiving end and are thus vulnerable to the non-physical (implicit) form or coercion (explicit) (DeGue et al. 2010; Herbert 1989) we refer to herein as sexual harassment. The student teachers or any victims for that matter, are reluctant to report sexual harassment perpetrated against them for fear of embarrassment, stigmatisation, and victimisation (ERA: Sexual Harassment at School 2011; Makura and Zireva 2011). Reese and Lindenburg (2005) have positioned that females are more likely to avoid reporting sexual harassment than men with the latter being more contented with being flattered. Some unscrupulous supervisors take advantage of the situation of the student teachers to sexually harass them. Females are reportedly afraid of reporting any harassment fearing retaliation and non-action by those entrusted to protect them (Reese and Lindenburg 2005). And yet, and paradoxically so, mentees perceive the mentors as the major source of emotional and cognitive support for professional learning though the institutional culture may not be supportive of rural teaching (Hererra and Bayaga 2011; Rajuan et al. 2008).

The sexual harassment of students during teaching practice is quite evasive and insidious (ERA: Sexual Harassment at School 2011). The perpetrators are conscious of what it constitutes and the repercussions thereof and thus perpetrate it cautiously. The perpetrators have somehow developed the tactics of committing the harassment safely. They do some pilot testing on the victims by testing some mild sexual harassment strategies. These include making some

lustful stares or gestures that make the victim uncomfortable, verbal threats, punishing the victim, deceit, sexual humour, casual touching and passing some comments of a sexual nature sometimes in a derogatory manner and ignoring pleas to desist from a practice (DeGue et al. 2010; Herbert 1989; Makura and Zireva 2011; Mukasa 2011; Romero-Sanchez et al. 2009). Reese and Lindenburg (2005) opined that women are prone to sexual harassment due to their unique attention to physical appearance and posture (looks, staring or excessive eye contact, pinups and comments about the body).

The student teacher most likely does not repel the sexual harassment explicitly and yet the perpetrator intensifies the coercion or aggression. The perpetrators exploit on the implicit repulsions since they are aware that they are legally covered as far as pervasiveness is concerned. Zimbabwean law focuses mainly on the physical forms of harassment. Implicit repulsions obliterate the pervasiveness of the sexual harassment acts. The perpetration of the 'quid pro quo' type of harassment [conferment of privileges at work in return for sexual favours] (ERA: Sexual harassment at school 2011; Reese and Lindenburg 2005), could, to some extent, conceal the pervasiveness of sexual harassment. This could be the case since there could be some professional explanations that the victim is either performing well in the case of being awarded a high mark or performing badly in the case of being awarded a low mark. The 'quid pro quo' type of sexual harassment could be quite insidious.

The severity of sexual harassment or abuse could be quite a contentious issue (Prekel 2001; Shumba 2000; Zindi and Shumba 1999). The criterion of severity of sexual harassment or aggression seems to be biased towards physical tactics (DeGue et al. 2010) such as forcible rape. The severity of sexual harassment should to a large extent be determined by the impact it has on the victim (Prekel 2001). When sexual harassment is such that the student teacher gets into a state of alienation at the practicing school, it should be categorised as severe. Hence, DeGue et al. (2010) have concluded that sexual aggression is the most severe and harmful form of sexual violence. The understanding of severity of sexual harassment should involve the *emic* descriptions by the victim.

According to Prekel (2001), sexual harassment usually relates to intimidation, exploitation

and power. The student teachers on teaching practice, are thus, sexually exploited by the powerful perpetrators who intimidate them in various ways (Makura and Zireva 2011; Shumba and Matina 2002; Zindi and Shumba 1999). The victims feel apprehensive to the extent that they are reluctant to report the acts of sexual harassment perpetrated against them. Hence, the pervasiveness of the sexual harassment acts is not exposed. Most students' understanding of what constitute sexual harassment is narrow and excludes a range of abuse they experience (Mukasa 2011). Moreover, research shows that perceptions on sexual harassment among men and women are a function of age and gender (Reese and Lindember 2005). The young student victims, particularly females, are thus in a cruel dilemma of either enduring the harassment, attempting to oppose it and make the situation worse or leave the practicing school (Roberts and Mann 2000). Naturally, the student teacher victims do not feel empowered to report the sexual harassment perpetrated against them for fear of victimisation (Shumba and Matina 2002). Empowering student teachers on teaching practice is thus imperative. Empowerment involves giving (disenfranchised) people the authority, opportunity and motivation to take initiative to solve problems they encounter at the workplace (Robbins and Coulter 2001). When the student teachers are not empowered, they are exposed to various forms of domination by the perpetrators (Higgs and Smith 2002). They become manipulated and hence exploitable since they would have been reduced to the status of 'things' (Freire 1970). With these issues in mind, the researchers sought to investigate the magnitude of the sexual harassment scourge among selected student teachers in Zimbabwe. It is a socially and legally proscribed scourge (DeGue et al. 2010) whose prevalence should be nipped in the bud.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the prevalence of sexual harassment perpetrated against student teachers by their supervisors during teaching practice. Such knowledge has implications on sexual harassment theory, research and educational practices/policies particularly in Zimbabwe. Education supervisors particularly class mentors, school heads or other officials with authority to supervise or assess

the student teachers are expected to execute their work ethically. They are role models whose educational impact should be worthy of emulation by their subordinates. The study sought to retrieve, from alleged victims, the negative job related behaviours of supervisors particularly aspects that constitute sexual harassment. The researchers sought to report on the subtle or insidious forms of harassment hitherto underreported in an African teacher education context. The pervasiveness and severity of this evil were examined to illuminate the prevalence of sexual harassment in Zimbabwe's teacher education programmes. It is against this background that this study sought to answer the following research questions:

- (a) How prevalent is the sexual harassment of Zimbabwean student teachers during their teaching practice?;
- (b) Who are the perpetrators of sexual harassment of the student teachers?;
- (c) What are the sexual harassment tactics by the perpetrators and how prevalent are they?;
- (d) What constitutes the severity of sexual harassment according to the student teachers' interpretations?; and
- (e) What is the rate of formal reporting of sexual harassment perpetrated against the students, by the students themselves?

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

Null Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the number of male and female students who are sexually harassed.
2. There is no significant difference between the numbers of students harassed and not harassed under respective male and female supervisors.
3. There is no significant difference on the basis of marital status, between victims of sexual harassment being for or against formal reporting incidences of sexual harassment.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Research Design

The quantitative research methodology was employed in this study. Thus the data obtained were principally numerical. The research design

that was used was the randomised cross-sectional survey. In this design the questionnaire is the instrument used to collect data.

Participants

The stratified sampling technique (De Vos et al. 2002; Jegede 1995) was used in choosing the ex-teaching practice group while excluding those without such experience. From a population of 345, a sample of 127 student teachers then fresh from a twenty month teaching practice stint volunteered to participate. Of these, forty-three (43) were male and eighty-four (84) were female students. This strategy ensured that the sample contained both sexes.

Instruments

The researchers crafted a questionnaire for the respondents to complete. The questionnaire contained questions that elicited the student teachers' teaching practice experiences concerning sexual harassment at their former practising schools. Before administering the questionnaire, it was scrutinised by some education experts on the subject and pilot tested to confirm if the items could produce valid and reliable results. The reviewers' suggestions were favourably considered. After the items had appeared to have content validity, reliability was considered. Focus was on equivalence reliability which addresses the question, 'does the measure yield consistent results across different indicators' (Neuman 1997). Equivalence reliability was estimated by computing the equivalent forms reliability coefficient, using the split-halves procedure. The half test scores were used to calculate the coefficient using the Spearman-Brown double length formula. The questionnaire reliability coefficient was found to be 0.74.

Procedure

After securing permission to conduct research at the concerned institution, the lead researcher posted a notice on official notice boards inviting interested post-teaching practice students to participate in the study. The sampled respondents were assembled in the studied college's lecture hall. The lead researcher explained to them the purpose of the study and acknowledged their voluntary participation. The research

ethics guiding the study were also explained. The consent of the respondents for their involvement in the study was also formally sought. Each respondent was then issued with a questionnaire to complete. All respondents returned the questionnaires which were all found to be usable. The researchers categorised and enumerated the respondents' answers to the posed questions. The responses were categorised with respect to some aspects of the respondents and those of their supervisors. The categorisation of the responses implied the formulation of hypotheses in relation to the research questions. The quantities of the responses in the categories were used to test some hypotheses about the proportions of the responses. A research hypothesis is a scientifically formulated expectation derived deductively from experience concerning a relationship between variables. In this research, the variables are the categories in which the students were assigned, for example, sex and marital status. The Chi-square tests were employed to test hypotheses about the comparisons of pairs of proportions of dichotomous groups and responses (Mulder 1993). Some 2 x 2 contingency Tables with observed and subsequent expected frequencies were constructed. Then the null hypotheses that the proportions being compared were equal were tested at 5% level of significance. The hypotheses were used to illuminate answers to some research questions.

RESULTS

The research findings revealed that forty three of the sampled students (which constitute 34%) were sexually harassed in one way or the other. That means that one in every three students on teaching practice was sexually harassed at the practising school. According to these findings, the prevalence of sexual harassment is high. The perpetrators of sexual harassment were found to be the heads of schools, mentors and other teachers at the schools where the students were practising. Table 1 shows the statuses of the perpetrators and the prevalence of the tactics of sexual harassment that were employed.

The percentages of the students who were sexually harassed by the mentors, the heads of schools and the other teachers at the schools are 42%, 32% and 26% respectively.

The mentors were the greatest perpetrators of sexual harassment as revealed in Table 1. This was revealed by the highest rate of 42%.

Table 1: The nature of perpetrator and number of victims

<i>Perpetrator</i>	<i>Number of student teachers sexually harassed</i>	<i>% of students sexually harassed</i>
Head of school	41	32
Mentor	53	42
Other teachers at the practicing schools	33	26

The heads of schools were second in the line of perpetration of sexual harassment of student teachers. The kind of sexual harassment that they perpetrate is the 'quid pro quo'. The student is threatened (DeGue et al. 2010; Mukasa 2011) with a lower grade or is treated to a lower grade or is treated worse than other students for refusal to go along with requests for sexual favours (ERA: Sexual Harassment at School 2011).

Only 26% of the students who were sexually harassed were harassed by the other teachers at the school. These perpetrators cause a hostile working environment to the students who are prevented from participating fully and freely in some school activities like co-curricular activities (ERA: Sexual Harassment at School 2011). The other teachers follow up the students teachers during these school activities. Hanging around a student teacher who is doing his/her work constitutes a physical sexual harassment act (Whelan 2002).

Research findings revealed that there are mainly four tactics of sexual harassment that were employed against the student teachers. Table 2 shows the tactics of sexual harassment, their prevalence (percentage of students exposed to the harassment act, pervasiveness (percentage of students who were exposed to the tactics more than once) and severity (percentage of students who posited that the tactics was severe).

The most prevalent tactic of sexual harassment experienced by student teachers on teaching practice is the narration of sexually suggestive stories (33%) by the respective perpetrators. Another tactic involved the giving of unwanted sexual attention and compliments to the victim. This was reported by 25% of the respondents. These most prevalent tactics or non-physical tactics (DeGue et al. 2010) have characteristics that are more of "pilot-testing" and are perpetrated mildly. If there are conspicuous repulsions from the victim, the magnitude and prevalence

of these assertive tactics are reduced. Other forms of sexual harassment reported by the student teachers in the study included being asked for dates (22%) and 'touching the victim' (20%).

Table 2: Prevalence, pervasiveness and severity of tactics of sexual harassment (N=127)

<i>Tactics of sexual harassment</i>	<i>Prevalence% of students exposed</i>	<i>Pervasiveness % of students exposed to the tactic more than once</i>	<i>Severity% of victims that consider the tactic as severe</i>
Asked for dates	22	13	2
Told sexually suggestive stories	33	28	9
Given unwanted sexual attention and compliments	25	25	6
Touched in a way that caused discomfort	20	8	11

Table 2 also reveals that the victims were exposed to the respective tactics or techniques on more than one occasion. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the victims reported being told 'sexually suggestive stories' on more than one occasion. Twenty-five percent (25%) reported being given 'unwarranted attention' by the perpetrators while 13% were asked for dates on more than one occasion. Eight percent were involuntarily touched more than once. Hence, the researchers concluded that the tactics of sexual harassment that have the greatest prevalence also have the greatest pervasiveness. The perpetrators test their "innocent" antics more than once in order to confirm whether the victims would "play along" their desires.

The severity of sexual harassment should be considered from a phenomenological viewpoint – that is when all theories and prejudices are put aside and the impact of sexual harassment on the victim is put to the fore (De Vos et al. 2002; Hoberg 2001). Eleven percent of the students who were sexually harassed perceived that being touched was a severe tactic. The tactic that was second to severity was the narration of sexually suggestive stories with 9% of the students. The

act perceived to be least severe was the request for dates with only 2% of the students. About severity of the tactic, it is not the nature of the tactic that counts, but how the tactic was employed and how it affected the victim. Being asked for dates appears mild but some victims experienced it as severe.

As alluded to earlier on, to illuminate the answers to some of the research questions, hypotheses were formulated, tested and the findings subsequently presented and interpreted. To determine the relationship between sexual harassment and the sex of the student, a null hypothesis was formulated. The null hypothesis was that there was no significant difference between the number of male and female students who were sexually harassed. The results are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Sexual harassment of male and female students compared

	Male students	Female students	Chi-square	Df	p>0.05
Harassed	17	26	0.57	1	
Not harassed	26	58			

The chi-square value of 0.57 suggests that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at 5% level of significance. Thus there is no significant difference between the numbers of male and female students harassed and not harassed. Both male and female students are victims of sexual harassment in the schools where they do teaching practice. Of the male students that were sexually harassed, 12% claimed that they were harassed by supervisors who were of the same sex as them. All the other tactics were employed by supervisors of a different sex. "Cases have been reported of men being harassed by women and by other men or women by women" (ERA: Sexual Harassment at the Work 2011; Gwirayi 2010; Shumba 2004). Perpetration of sexual harassment of females against females is difficult to detect (Mukasa 2011) from an "Ubuntuist/Unhuist" cultural perspective. There could be nothing sinister for a female to pass on compliments to another female about clothing or body structure, asking for dates or hugging. The same cannot be the case with the male gender.

To determine the relationship between sexual harassment and the sex of the supervisor, the null hypothesis that there were no significant

differences between the numbers of students harassed and those not harassed under male and female supervisors was considered. Tables 4 and 5 show the numbers of students harassed and not harassed under male and female supervisors.

Table 4: Sexual harassment of students under male and female heads of schools compared

	Harassed	Not harassed	Chi-square	Df	p<0.05
Male head	36	57	3.49	1	
Female head	7	28			

Table 5: Sexual harassment of students under male and female mentors compared

	Harassed	Not harassed	Chi-square	Df	p<0.05
Male mentor	24	22	9.37	1	
Female mentor	19	62			

The empirical findings reveal that there is a significant difference at 5% significance level between the numbers of students under male and female heads. The null hypothesis is rejected. Sexual harassment of student teachers under male school heads is more prevalent than the harassment of students under female heads.

The perpetration of sexual harassment by the head of school, if suspected by the junior supervisors influences them to be perpetrators. There would be some sort of the 'scramble' of a scarce resource for exploitation: the student teacher. Men tend to have competitive behaviours (Sergiovanni and Starratt 1983).

The Chi-square value of 9.37 suggest that the null hypothesis is rejected at 5% significance level. There is a significant difference between the numbers of students harassed and not harassed under male and female mentors. The situation can be attributed to the leader-behaviour approach discussed about the heads of schools' behaviour.

Research findings reveal that no student formally reported sexual harassment perpetrated against them. About 77% of the sexually harassed students are against formal reporting of sexual harassment perpetrated against them. Formal reporting calls for red-tape that culminates in embarrassment of the victim.

To determine the relationship between the marital status of the female students and the attitude towards formal reporting, a null hypothesis was formulated: that there was no relationship between the two variables. A Chi-square value of 12.2 indicated that there was significant difference between these numbers of those for and against formal reporting of sexual harassment and their marital status. All the unmarried students were against the formal reporting of sexual harassment perpetrated against them. They could probably be avoiding the embarrassment that normally accompanied possible investigations. During the investigations the victims could be labelled negatively as prostitutes by the communities in which they work.

All the divorced students supported the formal reporting of sexual harassment. The divorced could have been victims of failed marriages and would probably not want to be further victims of sexual harassment. The numbers of married students who are for and against formal reporting of sexual harassment were essentially the same. Some married students are afraid of the embarrassment that goes with investigations. The other married students would want a stop to the sexual harassment acts that can jeopardise their marriages. The numbers of widowed students who are for and against formal reporting of sexual harassment are the same. All the male students were against the formal reporting of sexual harassment.

DISCUSSION

The study sought to explain the sexual harassment phenomenon as experienced and expressed by student teachers who are on teaching practice in Zimbabwe. Mentors were found to be the greatest perpetrators of sexual harassment as Table 1 reveals. The mentors are always with the students and are at the vantage point of their licentiousness (Dorsey 1989; Manwa 2002; Makura and Zireva 2011; Mukasa 2011). The mentors have power [position] to control all the activities in the classroom. The power could be indiscriminately transferred to wanting to control the students' sexual lives which result in sexual abuse of students (Makura and Zireva 2011). When a student teacher exhibits some deficiencies in his or her work (Gwarinda 1995; Heeralal and Bayaga 2011; Shumba and Matina 2002), some unscrupulous mentors take it as the basis

for blackmail for sexual harassment (Makura and Zireva 2011; ERA: Sexual Harassment at the Work 2011). School heads and 'other teachers' were cited by student teachers as perpetrators as well. Anyone with an educational supervisory role is a bearer of authority. Such person influences the behaviours of the supervisees by his or her normative behaviour (Griessel et al. 1986; Robbins and Coulter 2001; Young 1998). The supervisors who are the perpetrators of sexual harassment most likely tend to confuse the authority that they have with power. The supervisors who are the bearers of authority tend to offer unconditional professional assistance to the supervisee. The bearers of power tend to be corrupt and exploit the power differentials between them and the supervisee (Griessel et al. 1986). The supervisors do not realise the material benefits of mentorship. Mentorship, to some of them, is an extra burden that is not remunerated. The supervisors could be recompensing their efforts by sexually harassing the student teachers. Mentorship in Zimbabwe is not contractually formalised between the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education and that of Education Arts, Sport and Culture. The student teachers on teaching practice are thus aliens in the other ministry and are at the mercy of its personnel. The student teachers are thus vulnerable to the '*quid pro quo*' type of sexual harassment. The supervisors who are power bearers expect the student teachers to offer something before and/or after supervision (ERA: Sexual Harassment at School 2011). Thus the student teachers are supervised favourably provided they do something favourable- such as giving sexual favours.

Findings from this study revealed that there were mainly four main tactics of sexual harassment employed against the student teachers by the cited perpetrators. These included narrating sexually suggestive stories, unwanted sexual attention and compliments to the victim, asking for dates and 'touching the victim'. The tactic of discussing sexually suggestive stories has been dubbed by Romero-Sanchez et al. (2009) as sexual humour or woman disparagement humour. According to them, such humour disguises sexual harassment and abuse as trivia thus escape social criticism. Exposure to sexist humour (DeGue et al. 2010) enhances anti women behaviours such as rape proclivity, that is, the hypothetical self-reported propensity of men to commit rape under the guise of favourable circumstances.

The results also showed that the victims were harassed on several occasions. However, there was no significant difference between the numbers of male and female students harassed. Both sex groups were victims of sexual harassment in the schools they did teaching practice. Data also revealed that sexual harassment of student teachers under male school heads was more prevalent than under female school heads. According to the leader-behaviour approach the gender of the leader tends to fulfil the relationship and task leadership roles (Koshal et al. 1998). Of the two dimensions of leadership (Fiedler 1967; Greenburg 1996; Park 1996; Silver 1983) women leaders are inclined towards the human relations dimension and men towards the task dimension (Rimmer and Davies 1985; Young 1993). The male school heads are likely to be assertive, expecting productivity from the student teacher thus exposing student teacher's to a scrutiny of their 'deficiencies'. The deficiencies could be used as the basis for sexual harassment (Gwarinda 1995; Madziyire et al. 1995; Maphosa et al. 2007; Nyagura and Reece 1989; Shumba and Matina 2002; Ozi 1983).

Findings herein also revealed that no student formally reported instances of sexual harassment perpetrated against them to any authority. Seventy seven per-cent of the victims expressed being too scared to report. This finding implies that the prevalence rate of sexual harassment could be far higher as potential victims are scared or too embarrassed to report sexual harassment (ERA: Sexual Harassment at the Workplace 2011). Being 'aliens' in the ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, the students do not have full professional rights. As regards marital status of the victim vis-à-vis formal reporting, data revealed that unmarried females were against reporting sexual harassment while divorced females were for the idea. The married cohort was divided on the issue. It is probable that the divorced group would not wish to conceal further pain on issues around their romantic lives as they could have experienced sexual abuse previously. The other groups probably have 'names to protect' and would not wish to be associated with controversial issues that may be misconstrued or misinterpreted.

CONCLUSION

The prevalence of sexual harassment of student teachers is such that one in every three

student teachers was sexually harassed. There is no difference in the prevalence of sexual harassment perpetrated against male and female student teachers. The perpetrators who were identified are; the heads of schools, the mentors and other teachers at the school. The mentors are the worst perpetrators. The most prevalent tactic of sexual harassment is the non-physical form involving a narration of sexually suggestive stories to the victim.

The second prevalent tactic is the giving of unwanted sexual attention and compliments to the victim. A more aggressive or severe tactic was when a victim was touched in ways that caused discomfort. The researchers therefore concluded that the severity of a tactic could be described and understood more from the perspective of the victim than the perspective of the outsider. The impact a tactic has on the emotions of the victim should be considered as constituting severity. There has been no formal reporting of sexual harassment perhaps due to fear of reprisals by the perpetrator, who, in this case, wielded position power. The Zimbabwean student teachers in the main are afraid of victimisation since they are aliens in the hosting Ministry. Consequently, they do not report cases of harassment and aggression.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The student teachers should be empowered by both ministries they operate in to report any cases of sexual harassment. Legal instruments that protect potential victims do exist and academic institutions should sensitise their students on these. The first course of action to this end, is crafting an institutional gender policy. Such policy should cover students that are on teaching practice. An institutional gender policy can thereafter be augmented by the existing but related national laws and by-laws. The researchers are of the opinion that Zimbabwean teacher education institutions do not have such gender specific policies. Generally, existing rules do not address gender abuse *per se*.

Secondly, college and teaching practice school links should be strengthened through frequent interactions. There are certain 'normal' or 'typical' behaviours or practices in patriarchal societies (for example, Zimbabwe) such as when a man [single or married] proposes 'love' to a woman or expects to be greeted or served by a

woman. Such practices are profoundly anathema and are social constructions premised on unequal power and gender relations. They only serve to undermine the unique character of the feminine gender. Such tendencies amount to sexual harassment. Education officials should develop more formal legal instruments that abhor and proscribe these practices and gender ideologies or cultures.

A critical recommendation relates to researchers. Sexual offender literature is replete with cases of violent forms of sexual aggression. The researchers implore researchers to highlight the non-physical, subtle and insidious form as these could be the prelude to the more violent forms by the perpetrators masquerading as academics or professionals in our respective education systems. Because patriarchy tends to mask abuse, harassment and aggression of a non-physical form, researchers should make concerted effort to highlight its side effects. This may go a long way in protecting and conscientising the women folk in Zimbabwe and elsewhere.

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