

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF LEARNERS. A CASE STUDY OF
NYARUKOMA SECONDARY SCHOOL, KYENJOJO DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the impact of sexual harassment on performance of students in higher institution. This study was supported by the secondary objectives to assess the effects of sexual harassment on the performance of students in Nyarukema secondary school, Kyenjojo district, to determine gender differences in perceptions of sexually harassing behaviour in Nyarukema secondary school, Kyenjojo district and to determine the prevalent forms of sexual harassment in different learning environments in Nyarukema secondary school, Kyenjojo district. The study applied descriptive design that employed self-administered questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Packages of Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.5 while qualitative data was analyzed and presented thematically. Findings indicated that Sexual Harassment has got various effects on the performance of female students in tertiary institutions. Such effects on victims of sexual harassment are far reaching and can be devastating in both the immediate situation and in the long run. They reduce the quality of education and diminish academic achievement. The researcher therefore recommends that mass sensitization programme extending to the grass root levels is of utmost importance. Education in the nature and effects of sexual harassment ought to be provided to both males and females.

Key words: Sexual Harassment, Learners and Academic Performance.

Background of the study

Globally, sexual harassment is a serious social and public health problem that occurs in all countries of the world, across all racial, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic groups (Martin & Matovu, 2023a). It is a problem that has become almost epidemic in higher institutions in various countries (Martin & Matovu, 2023b) and is considered a risk factor for lifelong problems including low self-esteem (Joyline et al., 2023a). According to (Joyline et al., 2023b), sexual harassment is a "burning problem" and a "silent problem" that is still under-addressed in the education sector and impacts on the performance of students, especially girls, leaving them upset and disappointed (James, 2023).

Sexual harassment (s h) of children and adolescents is a worldwide problem. Jones (2008) noted that in a global context, WHO estimates that 150 million girls and 73 million boys under the age of 18 have experienced forced intercourse or other forms of sexual violence worldwide (Tumusabe et al., 2022). (Mark et al., 2023) conducted a mega-analysis of 217 publications between 1980 and 2008 as well as 331 independent samples with a total of 9,911,748 participants. They reported an overall prevalence of 127/1000 in self-report child sexual abuse and 4/1000 in informal studies. The prevalence of sexual abuse is high worldwide. (Joyline et al., 2023b), in a study of the relationship between childhood and adolescent physical and sexual abuse before age 18 and psychological functioning in mid-adolescence (age 15) and early adulthood (age 21), previously observed that at age 21, nearly 11 % reported physical or sexual abuse, and approximately 80% of abused young adults met DSM-III-R criteria for at least one psychiatric disorder and demonstrated significant impairment in functioning at both 15 and 21 years of age. the number of out-of-school students increased from 20 million in 1990 to 24 million in 2012 (Joyline et al., 2023a). The report also showed that 83% of all out-of-

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school girls in the world live in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific (John et al., 2023). Many have had to withdraw because they were forced into early marriage, while some are abused by their guardians, such as teachers and guardians, making girls less interested in schooling and those who choose to stay in school performing poorly. Some boys are bullied and harassed in their institutions and neighborhoods, which always affects their psychological well-being as well as their performance (Juliet et al., 2023). In studies on sexual harassment in higher institutions, different issues are at the fore, such as unwanted pregnancy or HIV prevention or different direct and indirect consequences of poverty (access problems, support requirements) (Joyline et al., 2023a). More specific problems are also regularly addressed, for example lecturers' demands for sexual services from female students in order to obtain a valid certificate from their studies (James, 2023).

Problem statement

Schools are supposed to provide conducive learning atmospheres where students are protected from all forms of harm (Sylvia & Kimwise Alone, n.d.). Nonetheless, studies from various countries across the globe continue to demonstrate that SH directed at students is on an upward trajectory. This seems to be particularly true in secondary school learning institutions. Consequently, this has negatively impacted on students' academic performance which results into low scores and failure in class room thus often occasioning their inability not only to cope with the stigma but sometimes leading to their withdrawal from schools in which they are enrolled in Sexual harassment can also bring about stigmatization (Martin & Matovu, 2023b; Pauline, 2023). Despite the progress that is being made to avert the problem of sexual harassment in schools all over the world, it still remains a big challenge and various cases of sexual harassment have been reported in secondary schools where students especially female students are more sensitive to sexual harassment than male students (Christopher, Moses, Muhindo, & Komunda, 2022). It is clear that sexual harassment comes along with various effects not only on the side of the student but also the integrity of the school (James, 2023). This study therefore seeks to establish the effects of sexual harassment on the academic performance of students in secondary schools in Uganda.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess the effects of sexual harassment on the performance of students in Nyarukema secondary school, Kyenjojo district.
2. To determine gender differences in perceptions of sexually harassing behaviour in Nyarukema secondary school, Kyenjojo district.
3. To determine the prevalent forms of sexual harassment in different learning environments in Nyarukema secondary school, Kyenjojo district.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The descriptive survey design involved collecting information from a group of people in order to describe some aspects or characteristics of the population of which that group is a part through asking questions from a sample rather than every member of the population (Ronald & Julius, 2023). Quantitative approach was used to process data which was quantified and was numeric in nature. For example, the respondents' age, income, number of times they have visited a given destination in a given period of time, etc, quantitative research helped in getting an in-depth analysis of the problem under investigation. Qualitative approach was used to describe qualitative data which cannot be

quantified in numbers. This included respondents' opinions and ideas. The population of the study was made up of head teacher, teachers and students of Nyarukema Secondary School and it was totally up to 190 respondents. Therefore, the study used a sample size of 100 respondents as determined by the Krejcie and Morgan table of 1970 on sample size determination. To arrive at the sample size, the researcher used random sampling method. With this method, the researcher randomly selected 1 head teacher, 10 teachers and 39 students. The study therefore used total of 50 respondents. The researcher used simple purposive sampling method because it gives an equal opportunity to all members of finite population which was used in the sample. The collected data was processed using a combination of SPSS (Nelson et al., 2022). The processing stage was involved editing, classification, coding, transcription and tabulation. In the analysis of data, descriptive analysis was employed and the results was presented in frequency tables against percentages.

Results.

Prevalence of Sexually Harassing behavior by Age

Table 1: Showing Prevalence of Sexually Harassing behavior by Age

Nature of Behavior	18-23 n=30	Prevalence Rates		
			24-27 years n=20	
	Frequency		frequency	
Verbal comments	20	66.70/0	15	750/0
Sexual Remarks	15	500/6	12	
Suggestive Looks	25	83.30/0	19	950/0
Whistling	29	96.7%	15	75%
Intentional body Contact	23	76.6%	13	65%
Un desirable sex jokes	20		13	
Un wanted offers	22	73.3%	13	
Un Welcome Invitations	19	63.3%	7	
Making sex a Condition	10	33.3%	5	25%

Forced into Sex by a usual partner	10	33.3%	6	
Forced into sex by use of a weapon	5	16.7%	2	100%

Source: Primary Data

From the results, it was found out that there are different sexually Harassing behaviors experienced by female students in tertiary Institutions. Examples of these Sexually Harassing behavior include Verbal comments, Sexual remarks, Suggestive Looks, Whistling, Intentional body contact, Un desirable sex jokes, Un wanted offers, Un welcome Invitations, Making Sex a condition for good results, forced into sex by a usual partner, and being forced into sex by use of a weapon. Whistling (96.7) was the widest spread behavior in the age category of 19 -

2:3 years followed by suggestive looks (83.3%) from men. Other behaviors that had a prevalence rate of over 60% includes intentional body contact, unwanted offers, verbal comments on sexuality and un welcome invitations (Oromo et al., 2023). In the 24-27 years' category, suggestive looks (95%) had the greatest prevalence rate. Verbal comments (75%) also had high prevalence

Sharing emotional Reactions of female students who experience sexual harassment**Table 2: Sharing emotional Reactions of female students who experience sexual harassment**

Emotional reaction	Frequency	Percentages
Angry and upset	20	50%
Undisturbed	5	12.5%
Helpless and frightened	15	37.5%
Total	40	100

Source: primary data, 2022

From the results, it was found out that there are different Emotional Reactions of female students to experiences of Sexual Harassment. Examples of these Emotional Reactions include feeling of Anger and being upset, undisturbed, Helpless, and Frightened. In the case of female students, 50% of those harassed sexually are always angry and upset. Table 5 shows that a greater proportion of females who experience Sexual harassment always feel angry and upset. This is because it has the highest percentage of 50%. However, other emotional reactions to sexual harassment include being undisturbed helpless and frightened. But being angry and upset has the highest percentage (Christopher, Komunda, et al., 2022).

Category of Harasser by Age of victim**Table 3: Category of Harasser by Age of victim**

Category of harasser.	Age group			
	19-23 n=30		24 -27 n=20	
	Freq		freq	
Friend	18	600/0	15	500/0
Workmate	12	400/6	10	330/0
Classmate	15		15	500/0
Subordinate				
Stranger	22	730/0	20	
Supervisor	1	0.3%	1	0.3%
Lecturer	2		1	0.3%

According to the results, it was found out that there are different categories of people who harass female students in Tertiary Institutions (Gracious, 2023). Among the harassers include Friends, Workmates, Subordinates, Strangers, Supervisors and Lecturers. Generally, the Harasser is more likely to be a friend or a stranger than any other like the Subordinate

Prevalent forms of sexual harassment in different learning environments**Table 4: Prevalent forms of sexual harassment in different learning environments**

Prevalent forms of sexual harassment in different learning environments	F	SA %	F	A %	F	NS %	F	D %	F	SD %
Physical acts of sexual assault	30	60%	20	40%	0	0%	0	0	0	0
Request for sexual favours	20	40%	15	50%	5	10%	0	0	10	20%

Psychological harassment	30	60%	10	20%	5	10%	5	10%	0	0
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Source: Primary data

According to the table above 60% of the respondents strongly agreed that physical acts of sexual assault is one of the common forms of sexual harassment in different learning environments, 40% agreed with the statement. 40% of the respondents strongly agreed that request for sexual favors is one of the forms of sexual harassment, 50% agreed with the statement, 10% were not sure while 20% strongly disagreed with the statement (Richard et al., 2023).

Summary

According to the results, sexual harassment has got various effects on the performance of female students in tertiary institutions. 90% of the respondents agreed that sexual harassment has got an effect on the performance of female students. Sexual Harassment of female students has got an impact on their performance (Victoria et al., 2023). These include Anger, Psychological torture, being Upset, Frightened, lack of concentration drops out of school, dodging lectures, loss of self-esteem, and low performance in class (Christopher, Moses, Muhindo, & Nturanabo, 2022). All these effects therefore are far reaching and can be devastating in both the immediate situation and in the long run. They reduce the quality of education and diminish academic achievement (Faridah et al., 2023). There are also gender differences in perceptions of sexually harassing behavior among Ugandan people. According to the results, there are differences in the way men and women view social exchanges in institutions of learning (Richard et al., 2023). This is because behavior that is objectionable or offensive to one person may not be so to another. According to the study, some of the behaviors that were known to be sexual harassment to females were not considered to be so by the males, for example, some male students commented that when they make sexual advances towards females, they are only expressing their feelings towards the females but not sexually harassing them, and yet other wise, females consider this as sexual harassment.

Conclusion

Sexual Harassment is a wide spread problem in Uganda. Over half of the female population has experienced this undesirable situation at least once in their lives. It takes a variety of forms ranging from verbal comments through unwelcome invitations closer interactions to threats, demand for sexual intercourse and forceful sex, Sexual harassment can be broken into four broad categories i.e., teasing, negotiation harassment, unwanted gestures and coercive harassment. The more coercive forms of sexual harassment to the extreme that involve sexual intercourse showed lower frequency. This also indicates that Sexual Harassment is behavior motivated by the desire to have power and control rather than sexual satisfaction. Anger is the most predominant emotion experienced by victims and nobody would ever wish to be subjected to any of the harassing situations. Peer harassment and harassment by strangers are quite common in all categories of females. This is brought about by the nature of socialization in the culture.

Recommendations

The study was carried out in Busoga University. It is important to note that subsequent studies include other tertiary institutions, secondary and primary schools need to be considered so that the picture at that level can be examined.

A mass sensitization programme extending to the grass root levels is of utmost importance. Education in the nature and effects of sexual harassment ought to be provided to both males and females.

Assertiveness training about the dangers of sexual harassment should be provided in institutions of learning including schools.

Management in tertiary institutions must provide channels through which information regarding sexual harassment can be received in such a way that victims are not threatened by relation.

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