



Influence of Cultural Values Promotion on Curbing Sexual Harassment Among Female Workers of Tertiary Institutions in Delta State

Pemedede O & Onyema Patience Chinedu

*Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling Psychology,
Faculty of education, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria
Department of Educational Foundations, School of Education, Federal
College of Education (Technical), PMB 1044*

KEYWORDS:

Cultural values, sexual harassment, female workers and tertiary institutions

WORD COUNT:

200

CORRESPONDING EMAIL ADDRESS:

ptobitobi@yahoo.com

ORCID NUMBER:

ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of cultural values promotion in curbing sexual harassment among female workers of tertiary institutions in Delta state. Descriptive survey research design was adopted to conduct the study while the study population comprised lecturers from selected tertiary institutions in Delta state. Three research questions were raised to guide the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select three tertiary institutions while stratified random sampling technique was used to select three hundred lecturers of different ranks as respondents for the study. 14 items structured questionnaire was designed by the researcher and forwarded to two research experts from the Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka in Anambra state and Department of Educational Psychology, School of Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba Delta state for face and content validation. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents after validation. Analysis of data collected was carried out with frequency counts and mean scores. It was found among others that cultural values promotion can contribute to the curbing of sexual harassment among female workers in tertiary institutions. It was further recommended among others that tertiary institutions management should intensify efforts in promoting cultural values through aggressive sensitization of workers.

HOW TO CITE

Pemedede O & Onyema P.C. (2025). Influence of Cultural Values Promotion on Curbing Sexual Harassment Among Female Workers of Tertiary Institutions in Delta State. *Educational Perspectives*, 13(2B), 573-.582.



Introduction

Human actions and inactions are often determined by the cultural anticipations of such social environment or better put, the set standards of norms and values that are obtainable in different societies. Every society has that which she holds in high esteem and as sacrosanct for the wellbeing of the social system and her people's peaceful co-existence.

Over time, human societies are noted to have operational practices which could be referred to as cultural values.

However, there have been established cases of total departure from the cultural practices and expectations by some members of societies. This has in most cases resulted in friction and conflicts not only with the laid down rules and regulations of society but to the entire existence social order. Sex is one of the requirements for expansion and continuation of societies as it leads to procreation. However, when sexual practices are abused, that is carried out immorally or outside the confines of social standards and laws, it becomes harassment and violation on the rights others. Unfortunately, sexual harassment is one of such most prevalence practices in societies and a total departure from social norms which has over time, been condemned globally and even at the domestic levels. No community offers rewards to those who violate others sexually. Sexual harassment was not a common concept in the middle of 1970s but has come to stay in all societies, the United States and other developed countries inclusive (Joseph, 2015).

Today, sexual harassment is prevalent, not only in the workplace, but in educational institutions as well, which is supposed to teach and project moral values. The impact of this development is felt greatly within and outside tertiary institutions in Nigeria to the extent that legislative bodies have deliberated and attempted passing laws against sexual harassment in

academic institutions. Sexual harassment applies to both sexes though it more pronounced against the female. Thus, adopting good cultural values could be a significant way of facilitating the fight against sexual harassments in the Nigerian society in general and tertiary institutions in particular here in Delta state and beyond. This paper attempts to work within the confines of restoring social order by proffering solutions to sexual harassment against female workers in tertiary institutions which has been perceived as a common practice in Delta state in particular and other Nigerian tertiary institutions in general, through the promotion of cultural values.

Concept of Cultural Values

Culture according to Andersen and Taylor (2015) is defined as the complex system of meaning and behaviour that defines the way of life of a given group or society. It includes among others, beliefs, values, knowledge, art, morals, laws, customs, habits, language, and dress codes. Culture extends to way of thinking as well as patterns of behaviour. Thus, examining or observing culture means studying what people think, how they interact and the objects they use in day-to-day life activities.

Culture therefore, embodies the totality of a people's response (values inclusive) to nature and social environment (Ogbujah, 2014). Simply put, culture is what makes people who and what they really are. In other words, culture is the totality of peoples' ways of life which includes their laws, customs, conventions and values. Hence, every society needs to promote culture in order to achieve a decent social and physical environment. This could be made possible through cultural reproduction. Reproduction as it is applied to culture according to Omokhodion, Nwokeocha & Pemedede (2015) is the process by which aspect of culture are passed on from society to society.



It has been established that values reflect the totality of what a people stand for; their aspirations and their decisions as to what should be judged as good or bad, right or wrong. Thus, different cultures reflect different values. In African society for instance, cultural values refer to those social ideals that are indigenous to Africans. However, this is not to say that there is homogeneity of cultures among various African nationalities but there are certain principles that cut across African nations.

These range from their sense of communality, to sense of the sacredness of life, hospitality, time, respect for authority and elders in particular, from their sense of sacredness and of religion, to their sense of language and use of proverbs among others. African community – based living style is one of the strengths of social integration and unity as it explains the need for being brothers’ keepers. The survival and progress of individuals rests on the assistance and support of other members of the community and a person is known and identified in, by and through his or her community (Okere, 2005; Ogbujah, 2006). Thus, the value system in Africa encourages love for one another. To a large extent, in African traditional society, “a man’s achievements depend primarily on how much of his community’s standards he accommodates. He sees as his community see, and acts as his community acts” (Ogbujah, 2006). One who loses fellowship in the community according to Ache (1958), is like a fish cast out on a dry sandy beach. Community is the custodian of lives and values in African societies.

Values

Values on the other hand, are the abstract standards in society or group that defines ideal principles. Values actually define what is desirable and morally correct and explain as well, what is not desirable in human societies. In other words, values determine

what is right or wrong, beautiful, ugly, good and bad (Andersen & Taylor, 2015). Values offer a general outline for expected behaviour in society even though they are abstract in nature. Values can be seen as assumptions that form the basis of ethical actions. They are extensive preferences concerning appropriate courses of action or outcomes. Thus, values reflect a person’s sense of justice, rationality and humanity. People’s values produce certain types of attitudes which generate specific kinds of behaviours (Ogbujah, 2014).

Respect for authority and elders

In Nigeria and most societies in Africa, strong attachment is often given to constituted authorities and elders.

Authority and elders are held as sacrosanct, this has been since the ancient Yoruba, Hausa, Ibo, Benin and other kingdoms in Nigeria. Examples are also found in the Ashanti kingdoms of Ghana as well as the East, West and South of African nations as it were. Hence, adherence to traditional institutions set values, helps to moderate social actions and human behaviours to suit societal standards in Africa as repercussions are often not pleasant. The implication of respect for authorities and elders in African context is that the pronouncements of elders are regarded as those from supernatural sources thereby making people to take them seriously to avoid regrettable consequences.

Meaning of Sexual harassment

There is of course, no single definition attaching to sexual harassment. However, for the purpose of this paper, some would be considered and adopted. For instance, sexual harassment according to MacKinnon (1979 in Joseph, 2015) refers to the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power. Central to the concept is the uses of power derived from one social sphere to lever benefits or impose deprivations on another. Dosunmu & Onyema (2021) asserted



that “sexual harassment is ... unsolicited non-reciprocal male behaviour that asserts a woman’s sex role over her function as worker. Similarly, LaFontaine and Tredeau proposed that sexual harassment can be defined as “any action occurring within the workplace whereby women are treated as objects of the male sexual prerogative. Furthermore, given that women are invariably oppressed by these actions, all such treatment is seen to constitute harassment, regardless of whether the victim labels it as problematic.

Also, sexual harassment in educational institutions has been defined as the use of authority to emphasize the sexuality or sexual identity of a student or female staff in a manner which prevents or impairs their full enjoyment of educational benefits, climate or opportunities (Till, 1980:7). The Working Women United Institute (1978) for example, has equally defined sexual harassment as repeated or unwanted verbal or physical sexual advances, sexually derogatory statements or sexually discriminatory remarks which are offensive or objectionable. It can include the following: “verbal sexual suggestions or jokes, constant leering or ogling, accidentally brushing against your body, a friendly pat, squeeze, pinch or arm around you, catching you alone for a quick kiss, the explicit proposition backed by the threat of losing your job, and forced sexual relations”.

At the European level, sexual harassment refers to a situation where unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, which violates the dignity of a person and creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Incidentally most of the definitions here seem to be lopsided in favour of women as though sexual harassment only occurs to the female sex alone. Indeed, there have been cases of sexual harassment on the part of women against

men in work places including the institution of higher learnings even though the proportion is not as high as that of the women.

Theoretical Perspective

Karl Marx (1818_1883) propounded conflict theory. The theory looks at social and economic factors as the causes of deviance and crime. Unlike functionalists, conflict theorists do not see these factors as positive functions of society. They see them as evidences of inequality in society. They also challenge social disorganization theory as well as control theory and argue that both ignore racial and socioeconomic issues and oversimplify social trends (Akers 1991).

Conflict theorists also look for answers to the correlation of gender and race with wealth and crime. That is, some members of society commit deviant and do crimes without being punished while the poor ones are punished over a minor deviant behaviour in the same society. From the position of this theory, majority of those who indulge in sexual harassment are often superior in one way or the other to their victims and in most cases they go unpunished. Hence, the continued spread of sexual harassment menace in tertiary institution and the Nigerian society at large.

Sexual harassment in tertiary institutions

Sexual harassment has come to stay in tertiary institutions globally irrespective of several measures put in place by different countries to curtail its prevalence. In Nigeria for example, sexual harassment was not prominent before 1980s but today, it has become part and parcel of the tertiary institutions which are microscopy of the larger society (Owoaje & Olusola – Taiwo, 2010). Leach (2013), reported that sexual harassment in the education sector is higher in countries with weak educational systems, low levels of accountability, high levels of poverty, and gender inequality. Also,



it is more prevalent in institutions where educators are poorly trained, underpaid, and severely under sourced (Beninger, 2013). In the views of Sharma (2013) sexual harassment in education includes: inappropriate sexualized comments or gestures; unwanted physical contact such as touching, pinching or groping through to threats of exam failure on the part of students; or sexual assault and rape.

Sexual harassment could also include sexual favours in exchange for good grades or preferential treatment in class. The perpetrators can be students, lecturers, teachers or administrative staff. Thus, sexual harassment in Nigeria by these findings is sustained by the reason advanced as possibly responsible for the scourge (Omonijo, Uche, Nwadiafor & Rotimi, 2013).

Implications of sexual harassment

The negative consequences of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions and other work places cannot be over emphasized. Apart from undermining productivity of female workers, it can as well, affect the psychological state of victims thereby impacting negatively on their social life. Furthermore, students who are harassed or abused sexually if you like, has been reported with poor performances in their academic activities. Perpetrators who in most cases are superior officers from the work environment may also lose their reputation and this can equally create opportunity for lukewarm attitudes in the work places. Victims can suffer from perpetual fear and trauma (Taiwo & Omole, 2014).

Sexual harassment reporting

Sexual harassment is peculiar to Nigerian tertiary institutions alone. In the UK for instance, the National Union of Students (NUS) reveals that sexual harassment and “lad culture” exist in university campuses with more than a third of

women reporting being subjected to unwelcome advances in the form of touching, including inappropriate groping. The NUS explains the lad culture as consisting of behaviours and attitudes that belittle, humiliate, joke about or even seem to condone rape and sexual assault (Weale, 2014). It is common knowledge that sexual harassment is underreported in Nigeria generally and tertiary institutions in particular yet that does not suggest its absence and dangers in larger societies and academic institutions in Nigerian society and other societies of the world.

Some of the reasons for this reluctance in reporting sexual harassment could be that of victimization, intimidation on the parts of the perpetrator and stigmatization on the part of the campus communities. Unfortunately, this has helped to escalate the practice in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Addressing sexual harassment in tertiary institutions

Various policies have been made to checkmate sexual harassment in the larger society and tertiary institutions but there seems to be a lacuna in the areas of implementation. The implementation of sexual harassment policies in higher education institutions are ineffective in most countries. (Thus, strict implementations of the existing tertiary institution rules and regulations would provide remedy to sexual harassment. In practical terms, it could be stressed that most of the policies in Nigerian society at large and tertiary institutions in particular on sexual harassment are grossly neglected and subjective judgement are often given by tertiary institutions management (Taiwo & Omole, 2014. Poor implementation could be adduced as part of the reasons therefrom.

As such, the trend of harassment on sexual grounds continue to escalate over time. Maintaining good cultural values will offer remedy to sexual



harassment in tertiary institutions (Omonijo, Uche, Nwadiafor & Rotimi, 2013). In as much as Africa generally, Nigeria inclusive has high regard for traditional institutions which emphasizes on the promotion of cultural values, there is need to project respect for people's culture so as to distance ourselves from every practice such as sexual harassment, that is inimical to the moral standard of Africa and Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Sexual harassment appears to have become a common phenomenon in many societies both in the developed and developing nations. In developing countries of which Nigeria is part for example, sexual harassment seems to have taken a radical dimension as it has been extended to academic institutions particularly, tertiary institutions which ordinarily should serve as windows of socialization and character moderation.

Although, sexual harassment affects both sexes, female workers appear to be more prone to series of sex related harassments. Unfortunately, the supposed policies put in place to curb cases of sexual harassment among female workers in tertiary institutions do not indicate much of success. The problem is further more complex with relative societal negligence of some cultural values that ought to have been promoted to contribute towards stemming sexual harassment from societies and in particular, tertiary institutions. Thus, this study was set to investigate the influence of cultural values promotion in curbing sexual harassment among female workers in tertiary institutions with Delta state as a point of examination.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to establish the influence of cultural values promotion in curbing sexual harassment among female workers of tertiary

institutions in Delta state. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Establish how promotion of cultural values will help to curb sexual harassment among female workers in tertiary institutions.
- Ascertain the extent to which promotion of cultural values would help to curb sexual harassment among female workers in tertiary institutions in Delta state.
- Find out the efforts put in place by tertiary institutions management to promote cultural values for curbing sexual harassment among female workers in Delta state.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. How will promotion of cultural values contribute to curbing sexual harassment among female workers in tertiary institutions in Delta state?
2. What extent will promotion of cultural values help to curbing sexual harassment among female workers of tertiary institutions in Delta state?
3. What efforts have tertiary institutions management put in place to promote cultural values to curb sexual harassment among female workers in Delta state?

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used to carry out the study. Population of the study comprised lecturers from selected tertiary institutions in Delta state. Three research questions were raised to guide the study while purposive sampling technique was employed to select three tertiary institutions which included; Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba, Delta state university Abraka and Agbor respectively. Stratified random sampling technique was also used to select 300 lecturers as the study



sample. 14 items structured questionnaire designed by the researcher and validated by research experts from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka in Anambra state and Department of Education Psychology, School of Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba Delta state was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two parts with section 'A' taking care of demographic details while section 'B' focused on subject items with a view to answering the research questions earlier posed. Cronbach alpha statistic was used to measure the reliability of the instrument and 0.76 was obtained as reliability coefficient score. This established the reliability of the instrument. Data collected were analysed with frequency counts and mean scores.

Result

Demographic data analysis

Table 1: Sex distribution of Respondents

ez	Frequency	Percentage
Female	146	52.0
Male	135	48.0
Total	281	100

Table 1 shows that 146 (50.2%) were females while 135 were male respondents. Thus, female respondents participated more in the study than their male counterparts.

Analysis of research questions

Research Question 1: How will promotion of cultural values contribute to curbing sexual harassment among female workers of tertiary institutions in Delta state?

Table 2; Promotion of cultural values and curbing of sexual harassment among female workers

SN	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
3.	Promoting cultural values will help reduce having urge for other women.	122	92	32	35	3.1	Agree
4.	Projecting cultural values makes one to be faithful to one's life spouse.	89	140	22	30	3.0	Agree
5.	Practicing good cultural values helps one to moderate one's sexual life.	91	106	50	34	2.9	Agree
6.	Promoting cultural values makes people to abstain from multiple sex partners.	87	98	47	49	2.8	Agree
Grand mean						3.7	Agree

Table 2 reveals that promotion of cultural values can help to curbing sexual harassment among female workers in several ways such as reducing having sexual urge for other women, being faithful to one's spouse, moderating sexual life and abstaining from keeping multiple sex partner. Respondents agree

with all the items ranging from 3 to 6. Grand mean score of 3.7 further makes this position clear.

Research Question 2: What extent will promotion of cultural values help to curbing sexual harassment among female workers of tertiary institutions in Delta state?

**Table 3;** Extent to which promotion of cultural values helps to curbing sexual harassment among female workers

SN	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
7.	Promoting cultural values helps to reduce sexual harassment against female workers.	102	91	43	45	2.9	Agree
8.	Cultural values make men to respect married women greatly in work places.	94	110	40	37	2.9	Agree
9.	Observing cultural values helps one to avoid intimidating female workers in schools.	96	87	52	46	2.8	Agree
10.	Promoting cultural values makes people to fight against female sexual harassment in academic institutions.	88	100	48	45	2.8	Agree
Grand mean						2.9	Agree

Table 3 shows that the respondents were in agreement with items 7 to 10 which implies that promoting cultural values helps to a great extent in curbing sexual harassment among female workers in tertiary institutions. The mean score of 2.9 also reveals that sexual harassment can be curbed through promoting cultural values.

Research Question 3: What efforts have tertiary institutions management put in place to promote cultural values to curb sexual harassment among female workers in Delta state?

Table 4; Efforts made by management of tertiary institutions to promote cultural values for curbing sexual harassment among female workers

SN	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
11.	Management of tertiary institutions have made policies against sexual harassment.	130	106	20	23	3.2	Agree
12.	Tertiary institutions management set panels to try cases of sexual harassment.	140	120	18	3	3.4	Agree
13.	Adequate punishments are not often given to defaulters of sexual harassment against female workers.	143	97	21	20	3.3	Agree
14.	Management of tertiary institutions give selective judgement to those who sexually harass female workers.	84	144	31	24	3.0	Agree



Table 4 shows that the respondents were in agreement with items 11 to 14 which reveals that management of tertiary institutions have made some efforts towards addressing issues of sexual harassment in general. The mean score of 3.2 further indicates that several efforts are in place to curbing sexual harassment cases in tertiary institutions. However, responses to items 13 and 14 reveals that adequate punishments are not given to defaulters and accused person are offered selective judgement at times.

Summary of findings

The study found that:

1. Promoting cultural values can help in several ways to curbing sexual harassment among female workers of tertiary institutions in Delta state. This is supported by the affirmation that the values of African system encourage love for one another (Ogbujah, 2006).
2. Promotion of cultural values goes to a great extent in curbing sexual harassment among female workers of tertiary institutions in Delta state.
This is in agreement with the views of Omonijo, Uche, Nwadiafor and Rotimi, (2013) that maintaining good cultural values will offer remedy to sexual harassment in tertiary institutions.
3. Managements of tertiary institutions have made some efforts which is not enough in curbing sexual harassment among female workers in Delta state. This corroborates the position of Taiwo and Omole (2014) that managements of tertiary institutions have put policies in place to check sexual harassment.

Culture is the basis of societal existence and as such, no human society can be referred as cultureless in nature. Every society has that which she holds in high esteem and others that are abhorred in totality. With effective application of good cultural values, the chances of addressing so many practices and actions that are considered injurious to society would have been achieved. Thus, the paper submits that Nigerian cultural values should be promoted and radical awareness created in tertiary institutions to be specific and the nation in general to abate the scourge of sexual harassment against female workers in different environments. Proper explanations of the traditional and cultural implications and consequences of negative practices such as sexual harassment should be portrayed and emphasized in general courses like “the Nigerian people’s culture” at tertiary institutions. The sanity experienced in the ancient African societies where emphasis was placed on cultural values promotion would serve as reference points.

Recommendations

It was recommended that:

- Tertiary institutions management should intensify efforts in promoting cultural values through aggressive sensitization of staff to curb sexual harassment among female workers.
- Management of tertiary institutions should jettison selective judgement when it comes to treating cases of sexual harassment among female workers.
- Management of tertiary institutions should ensure that adequate punishment is given to perpetrators of sexual harassment in general.

References

Conclusion



- Akers, R. L. (1991). "Self-control as a general theory of crime." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*. 1 (3): 201–11.
- Andersen, M. L. & Taylor, H. F. (2005). *Sociology: The essentials* 3rd edn. Belmont, USA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Beninger, C. (2013). Combating sexual harassment in schools in Sub-Saharan Africa: Legal strategies under regional and international human rights law. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 13 (1), 281 - 301.
- Dosumu S. A. & Onyema P. C. (2021). "Sexual Harassment of women leaders: Perception of staff in tertiary institutions in Delta State". In M. Sule, T. Edun, S. Dosunmu & S. Oni (Eds) (2020). *Wither Nigerian education? Random thoughts*. Lagos. Og Kreative Printing and Publishing.
- Joseph, J. (2015). Sexual harassment in tertiary institutions: A comparative perspective. *Ostale teme*, 125 – 144.
- Leach, F. (2013). Corruption as abuse of power: Sexual violence in educational institutions. In: G. Sweeney, K. Despota, S. Lindner (EOS). *Transparency International, Global Corruption Report: Education*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 88-98.
- Ogbujah, C. (2014). African cultural values and inter-communal relations: The case of Nigeria. *Developing Country Studies*, 4 (24), 208 – 217.
- Omohodion J. O., Nwokeocha S. & Pemedede O. (2015). *Sociology of Education*. Lagos, *Nigerian Academy of Education (NAE)*.
- Omonijo, D.O., Uche, O.C.O., Nwadiafor, K. L. & Rotimi, O.A. (2013) A study of sexual harassment in three selected private faith-based universities, Ogun-State, South West Nigeria. *Open Journal of Social Science Research*, 9, (1), 250-263.
- Owoaje, E.T, Olusola-Taiwo, O. (2010). Sexual harassment experiences of female graduates of Nigerian tertiary institutions. *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*, 4 (2), 337 – 348.
- Sharma, Y. (2013). Harassment, sexual abuse corrupts education worldwide. *University World News*. Available at: <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20131001155054992>, page accessed 20/08/2021.
- Taiwo, M. O., Omole, O. C., & Omole, O. E. (2014). Sexual harassment and psychological consequence among students in higher education institution in Osun State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Applied Psychology*, 1 (1), 3-18.
- Till, F.J. (1980). *Sexual harassment: A report on the sexual harassment of students*. Washington, DC: National Advisory Council of Women's Educational Programme.
- Weale, S. (2014). Sexual harassment rife at UK universities. *The Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/sep/15/sexual-harassment-rife-universities-nus-survey>. Accessed on 20/08/2021.