

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN THE NIGERIAN BANKING INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined how sexual harassment affect the career advancement of female employees in banking industry. The paper is anchored on Reactance Theory and Learned Helplessness Theory to explain the problem. Qualitative method of In-depth Interview was used to collect information from forty-three (43) respondents that were purposively picked through snowball method. The respondents were sexual harassed victims that were or had worked in banking sector. The information collected was analysed through content analysis using vivo 6 software. The findings revealed that majority of women who had worked and are still working in the banking sector in Nigeria has experienced sexual coercion and unwanted sexual attentions from male counterparts. This study through an In-depth interview establishes the negative outcomes of sexual harassment as distressing to their mental health and detrimental to their advancement in the banking sector one hand, and also revealed the culture of silenced practised by most sexual harassment victims on the other hand to avoid obstruction on their career path and also due to the fear of being labelled as deviant on the other hand. The study recommends that there should be explicit policies that indicate the various forms of sexual harassment, with grievous penalties to support and establish a sexual harassment –free workplace.

Keywords: Banking Institutions, Career Advancement, Female Employees, Sexual Harassment, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, to continuously thrive, grow and earn superior market shares, organisations have to be proactive in meeting their employees' objectives and aspirations. One of these leading aspirations documented in extant literature is career advancement. Career advancement has been seen to be opportunities for development and mapped promotional steps for employees to achieve their personal development and engender organisational growth (Liu, Shen & Gao, 2020). Therefore, the development of employees' career requires appropriate measures in reaching such goals through consciousness to employee's career advancement process and progress, their self-development abilities among others to enable organisation's competitiveness. According to Yoopetech, Nimsai and Kongarchapatra (2021) organisations rely profoundly on the performance and productivity of her employees which presupposes that organisations will thrive invariably on the efforts, performance and input of its employees towards work related activities

However, there are several impediments that may stall the career advancement and career growth of employees (especially female employees) in financial Institutions. One out of the many hindrances of career advancement in the banking sector is sexual harassment of female employees. Sexual harassment, as discovered in behavioural and extant literatures happen to be one out of the many inter-personal workplace deviant behaviours with its profound consequences on the organisation and the victims (Applebaum, 2017). It is consequential for organisations to lose millions of Naira resulting from court cases and damages and also injurious to the health and wellbeing of employees. Adenugba and Ilupeju (2013) argued that sexual harassment results to losses in the organisation on one hand, and negatively affects individual employees (male and female) on the other hand- giving rise to distress and discomfort for the victims, influencing their career advancement physically and mentally (Mental Health America, 2019, Ogechukwu, 2013). Illnesses, low performance, lack of commitment, absenteeism, truancy and resignation are other negative effects of workplace sexual harassment (Williams 2012).

Workplace sexual harassment has been in existence for several decades, but its effect on career advancement in the banking industry is relatively a new research area for a common setting in a



patriarchal society like Nigeria. In Nigeria, for instance, sexual harassment is seen as an employee-employer problem that can be majorly resolved among both parties in an organisation. In time past, the Nigerian financial industry, especially the banking institutions, many cases of sexual harassment were been discovered and recognised (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2019). A 2019 report the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) that sexual harassment of female employees in the banking sector has increased from 24 percent in 2013 to 28% in 2018. The issue of sexual harassment began when women entered into the labour force and has increasingly become a social problem of higher magnitude in so many ways. A lot of women had in some way or the other experienced sexual harassment of different forms which is usually unfavourable to their personal life, family and career advancement (Jagsi, et al, 2016).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The ILO Gallup Convention (2022) recorded the issue of sexual harassment as a workplace hazard, prevalent in countries across the world with grave consequences on the individual-workers/employees, the organisation, and society at large. The widespread of this phenomenon among individuals, organisations and society will affect the health and mental wellbeing of victims, lead to partial or total loss of earnings, destroy the career path of employees, and also, trigger economic losses. Sexual harassment has become a torturous and obnoxious menace that has continued to spread unrelentingly in the public and private sectors. Indeed, it has become a growing concern in private businesses and the financial institution is not an exception. Sexual harassment has been argued to be a canker-worm that keeps eating up most Nigerian organisations (George, 2021), and if not nipped in the bud, it would become a cog in the achievement of an organisation's success.

Recent findings reported that sexual harassment exists within the Nigerian banking sector (Anierobi, Etodike, Nwogbo, Okeke & Nwikpo, 2021; Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2019; Akinfala & Komolafe, 2017; Bello, 2016). Victims of sexual harassment do not only undergo challenging intentions to leave the jobs they love, but are also confronted setbacks despite quitting and moving on to a different job or work environment. Fapohunda (2014) asserts that perceptions and experiences from past employment may be presumed on the victim's new job, which may habitually affect the interactions, expectations and delivery towards organisational goals of the new organisation, thus affecting the victim's performance, with other effects of stagnation, lack of social support, firing and maltreatment. A lot of female employees in banking sector have been assaulted, raped and killed in the bid to achieve the targets, and most have lost their jobs because of the difficulty in achieving such targets (Ogechukwu, 2013). Sexual harassment victims in Nigeria are often scared to report due to socio-cultural and customary practices (Fapohunda, 2014).

A gap in literature subsists regarding female employee's perception and classification of sexual harassment in banking sector in Nigeria, its implication on their career advancement, and strategies adopted to negotiate sexual advances and requests from male employees in same workplace.

Research Objectives

1. To comprehend how female employees in the banking sector define and classify sexual harassment.
2. To figure out whether there exists an interplay between sexual harassment and the career advancement of female employees in banking sector.
3. To investigate the coping strategies of female employees in banking sector adopted to negotiating sexual harassment.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual Harassment

The Chartered Institute of Bankers in Nigeria (2014, Section 1.6.) defined sexual harassment to include, but not limited to circumstances where an employee or employer utilizes or attempts to use his or her position to seek and/or obtain sexual gratification from another who may succumb in fear of adverse consequences on his or her employment, appointment or business.

However, the U.S Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) provides a broad definition of sexual harassment as; unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of reasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment" (EOCC, 2006). Sexual harassment behaviours are in various forms and could appear as physical (for instance, close contact, touching), verbal (such as sexual remarks, offensive phone calls) and non-verbal (sexual acts or seductive gestures, eye winks, exhibition or projection of sexual objects).

Types of Sexual Harassment]

1. **Sexual Coercion:** This is an unsolicited sexual activity which happens as a result of physical or non-physical pressure, threat, manipulation which is often beyond the recipient's control (Yie & Ping, 2021). Sexual coercion is also known as Quid pro quo that is, job benefits including rise in pay, promotion, work opportunities, incentives, recognition or continued employment subject to exchange for sexual affair, it is regarded as sexual coercion or quid pro quo.
2. **Unwanted Sexual Attention:** According to Cortina and Areguin (2020), unwanted sexual attention is an expressive sexual behavior which is uninvited, hostile, nasty, unreciprocated, terrible and traumatizing sexual interests such as sexual jokes, staring or suggestive looks, flirting, sexual jokes, suggestive comments/innuendoes, fondling, sexual touches, intrusive calls and letters, pulling or playing with someone's hair/jewelry/clothing, making sexual comments about someone's body, clothing, looks, stalking (Ding, Loukaitou-Sideris, Agrawal, 2020).

Career Advancement

Liu, Shen and Gao (2020) employees across the globe views career advancement as the process of developing one's abilities or capabilities, skills, opportunities and promotional path set for employees to meet their personal development and facilitate organisational growth.

According to Yoopetch, Nimsai, and Kongarchapatara (2021), Weng & McElroy (2012), organisation that creates a conducive pathway for employees' career advancement creates a mutual ground for commitment and investment form of relationship with their employees. Weng, Derek and Zhu (2020), Weng and McElroy (2012) in a view of defining career advancement, highlighted four (4) various factors that determines an employee's measure of career advancement which are; meeting one's career goals, development of an individual's professional skills, promotions, and adequate and equitable form of compensation for those skills and abilities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Reactance Theory

An individual employee enjoys freedom based on the value she offers, that is, the values she can give-in which she has control over in terms of abilities, qualifications, relevant skills where she can infer positive outcomes to suit her personal development. The positive outcome in obvious fact is her career advancement which she believes is equitably tied to the values and skills



(Muhlberger & Jonas, 2019). Where this freedom is threatened in form of sexual harassment, it subjects the individual to a reactance where she decides to choose to endure, his freedom to take decisions or control her status and advancement in career is eliminated (Gannon, Heiser & Knight, 1985). Female employees in the banking industry desire growth and possibilities for advancement on their career path which explains the significance of this variable, and a threat to succumb to the unpleasant act of a harasser will be consequential to the career advancement of the female banker(s). The reactance theory establishes the obtain ability of certain opportunities by an individual such as status, promotion, opportunities, rewards, and increments in pay he has control over in terms of her input to the development of the organisation. (Thacker, 1992).

This theory explains that he capabilities female bankers infuses in the banking industry, is worth the desirable outcomes for promotions, incentives, raise in pay, opportunities, and fair treatment, and where these expected desire are threatened, eliminated, or infringed, the freedom and benefits of the females will be jeopardised, translating to having a psychological effect including sleeplessness, depression, aggressiveness, hostility towards colleagues within and outside the organisation or other people in the society (Wortman & Brehm, 1975).

Learned Helplessness Theory

The theory explains recurring challenges, constraints individuals face, and its effect due to the inability to control (even when opportunities later arise to resolve) and change the situation. Thacker (1992) submitted that learned helplessness theory is centred on the fact that-repeated acts or experiences cannot be averted despite one's effort. The female employee believes that relevant desirable expectations (career advancement- raise/increased pay, promotion, rewards, recognition, improved working conditions) are implausible and her qualifications, and efforts will not produce desirable outcomes in the advancement of her career unless she succumbs to the harasser's demands, depression sets in. Also, the discriminatory employment practices the victims are subjected to often times, leads to passivity and doubt that their experience of sexual harassment can be controlled which is subjective to lack of motivation to continue to push through such difficult situation (a state of helplessness despite various means of escape). Passivity is usually exhibited by female bankers or subordinates in cases where the harasser has legitimate power over them, making it difficult to react or control the situation.

Female bankers duly work and equip themselves as a mean to build and garner career prospects which in the long run will help in their advancement. These bankers seek opportunities to advance in their work and thus, believe that the aim or personal goal is to work towards their personal achievement. When the pathway towards the achievement of desired goals is constantly disturbed, passivity, low morale, lack of motivation, depression, disengagement from work or from the job, emotional imbalance and work alienation, hence affecting interpersonal relationships among colleagues, in a current organisation or a new work environment. Inescapability from continuous exposure and sexual harassment experiences could be frustrating to female bankers, especially when their careers and efforts are jeopardized. Learned helplessness on issues of sexual harassment by its victims will lead to turnover intentions and withdrawal from work which will basically affect the organisation also.

Empirical Review

Sexual Harassment and Career Advancement

Globally, women continue to experience different forms of sexual harassment as they constitute part of the workforce, thereby affecting their advancement on their career or jobs (Kiesel, et al,2020). According to Jagsi et al (2016), women reported sexual harassment in their careers compared to men. Harassers are mostly men than women. Men were reported to have encountered sexual attention and propositions from female counterparts in their workplace which was seen as not upsetting, embarrassing or provoking which presupposes that most sexual conducts are often times not sexual harassment which signifies, mistreatment, frights,



intimidation, humiliation (Cortina & Argeuin, 2020). In most case scenarios and sexual harassment related issues, women always complained about recurring experiences of sexual harassment especially through supervisory roles, that is, in organisations where there were few women in upper management and also supervisory roles (an organisation that has a lot of men than women in management positions).

Fernando and Prasad (2018) in their paper found that victims of sexual harassment usually experience discontentment due to inability to speak out due to the culture of silence imposed by third parties (managers, colleagues and hr. representatives). In circumstances where a sexual harassment victim decides to talk to third party actors, these complaints are most times, rendered invalidated and such victims are termed trouble makers or deviant. The trouble maker reputation results to negative consequences on the career of the victims. Sexual attention and sexual coercion victims were silenced in such that, their progress in academia may be shaky because career structure or hierarchy in academia are influenced politically on the goodwill of the senior collaborators and key players, hence support from other people will be seen as impudence. Also, Fernando and Prasad (2018) opined that fear of being regarded as deviant will negatively affect their career because most professional systems like academia, obliquely requires loyalty and compliance.

Heart (2019), also posited that sexual harassment is an issue that remains disadvantageous, challenging, and consequential for victims which in the widest sense becomes a barrier to women's career advancement and also, a negative contributory factor to victims' experiences of financial strains. The barriers of women's career advancement and the resultant effect on their finances automatically contributes to their stalled career growth, unfulfilled desires, inequality, and participation in the labour market. Heart (2019) went further to establish a sense of bias by other employees towards sexual harassment victims and targets; most sexual harassment targets (in cases where they refuse or disallow sexual interactions) are perceived as being unworthy of career advancement.

Kashay, Negarandeh, Nayeri and Hasanpour (2020) carried out a study on sexual harassment against Female Nurses to investigate the prevalence and types of sexual harassment and its consequences against female nurse through an observational method. The researchers discovered that 43.15% of nurses experienced verbal, non-verbal and physical sexual harassment; 35% of nurses were face with verbal sexual harassment in the form of sexual jokes; 37.8% were troubled with sexual remarks; 53% were approached for relationships; 8.4% were asked about personal matters; 5.9 % were accosted for sexual relations involuntarily; 10.34% received unwanted mails and calls of sexual relations; 7.9 % were drawn into sexual related discussions. Nonetheless, 36.2% of nurses experienced visual forms of sexual harassment such as suggestive looks, unwanted sexual attention, other sexual facial expressions and also the habit of sexual perpetrators getting undressed to show body's sexuality and pictures. In addition, a significant number of nurses were harassed physically in cases where the harasser touches their body unnecessarily, or where nurses were raped, some were raped, threatened and assaulted by co-employees, patients and patients' families and/or visitors. The study found the consequential outcomes of harassment to the psychological, mental, social, and emotional wellbeing of the victims which were driven-on by anxiety, headaches, exhaustion, loss/increase of appetite, weight loss/weight gain, sleep difficulties, isolation, anger, self-blame, humiliation, embarrassment which the researchers described as an unacceptable and unhealthy professional burden on the harassed (McLaughlin, Uggen and Blackstone, 2017).

Pineiro and Kitada (2020) in their study on "Sexual Harassment and Women Seafarers: The Role of Laws and Policies to Ensure Occupational Safety and Health" found out that sexual harassment is a form of gender discrimination whereby women suffer gender pay gap in male dominated sectors, making them prone to the quid quo pro, verbal and non-verbal harassment from male counterparts due to unequal pay and several opportunities in the workplace. The study explains the inequitable appropriation of rewards to working women as it reported that women were paid



60.5 pence for every pound earned by the men. Structural gender discrimination could aggravate women feeling helpless, spurring rational or irrational behaviours on accepting sexual favours or frustration to keep pushing in order to earn a worthy pay and recognition.

Adeoye (2021) during an interview with a victim of sexual harassment reported that a respondent complained that she was accused of being too docile on a new and current job due to past sexual harassment experience during previous jobs which left her traumatized, putting her mental health at stake, some respondents who had faced workplace sexual harassment either in form of sexual jokes, sexual remarks about their body, dressings or accessories, physical contacts often experience anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress. Men are also exposed to sexual harassment but in most cases, women are often the targets which is more psychologically traumatizing and damaging for women than men leaving them to wonder what they are doing wrong and the positions that warranted such treatments, thereby damaging the sanity of these victims.

Sharma, Douglas, Hayes, Mehran, Rzeszut, Harrington, Poppas, Walsh, Singh, Parekh, Bluementhal, Mehta (2021) in their research on "Global Prevalence and Impact of Hostility, Discrimination, and Harassment in the Cardiology Workplace", highlighted some major determinants of sexual harassment. The underlining determinants of unwanted sexual attention, emotional harassment and other forms of sexual remarks, forced sexual behaviours experienced by cardiologists discovered are age, marital status and gender. They found in their women cardiologists were twice as prone to experience sexual harassment as men, however men were not invulnerable. Women Cardiologists reported professional dissatisfaction which is relative to cultural silence, environmental toxicity, that is, an unwelcoming work environment, fatigue, hurt, invisibility, deprivation of entitled benefits and negative career outcomes. The researchers opined that sexual harassment is a major and consequential factor of the underrepresentation of women in the labour market; female-dominated workplaces are not grounds for sexual harassment, unlike male-dominated forces.

Yie and Ping (2021) in their work on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, argued that sexual harassment is often seen as a criterion for negotiation of higher positions and increased pays. In most cases, women's career movement on the career ladder could result in stress, intimidation and emotional imbalance due to efforts being frustrated by the harassers. They found out that several policies made to tackle sexual harassment has proved abortive due to the culture, norms and values of the country. They found in their study that victims of sexual harassment often feel upset, threatened, humiliated, low self-esteem, loss of self-confidence and other various negative feelings.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative research method to collect information on sexual harassment and career advancement of female employees in banking sector in Lagos State, Nigeria. A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study are banking institutions located in Lagos State with a sample size of 43 female respondents from various banks in Lagos State who had worked or working (from the Researcher's previous knowledge about the respondents and also with the assistance of other bankers) in some of the banks in Lagos State, such as; Access Bank, United Bank for Africa, Guaranty Trust Bank, Chanelle Microfinance Bank, Wema Bank, First Bank, Zenith Bank and Fidelity Bank. The purposive sampling technique through the use of the snowball method was used in selecting the research elements because most female bankers were not comfortable divulging sensitive information of sexual harassment, and respondents were interviewed through the In-depth- Interviewing method (IDI). The research instrument was an interview guide- structured into two parts. The first part consisted of socio-demographic information for the respondents. The second parts consisted of questions based on the objectives of the research. For validation and reliability of the interview guide, a pilot study was first conducted among female employees in a polytechnic in Ogun State. The responses from

the respondents were tape-recorded after obtaining their consent and a note-taker was also present to take notes before the major interview took place.

Data analysis was done through content analysis and qualitative software Nvivo 6.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Factors	Dimensions	Frequency	Percentage
Age-Group	20- 30yrs	15	34.9
	31-40yrs	12	27.9
	41-50yrs	08	18.6
	51-60yrs	08	18.6
Marital Status	Single	25	58.1
	Married	08	18.6
	Divorce	06	13.9
	Widowed	04	9.03
Educational Qualification	ND/HND	10	23.3
	SSCE/ equivalent	08	18.6
	B.sc/ BA	15	34.9
	Postgraduate/	07	16.5
	Others	03	6.7
Job Experience	5yrs and below	12	27.9
	6-10yrs	10	23.3
	11-15yrs	10	23.3
	16- 20yrs	08	18.6
	20yrs and above	03	6.7
Work Positions	Managerial Positions	10	23.3
	Non-Managerial Positions	33	76.7
Religion	Islam	12	27.9
	Christianity	28	65.2
	Others	03	6.9

Source: Author field work (2023)

Table 1 shows that socio- demographic characteristics was examined across items such as age, marital status, educational qualification, job experience, work positions and religion. The result presented in table I showed that 34.9 % of the respondents were between 20-30 years, 27.9 % were between 31-40years, 18.6% were between 41- 50years and 18.6 % were between 51-60years. This implies that in bank sector in Lagos, there were more young female staff than older staff. The religion distribution of the respondents showed that majority were mainly Christians (65.2%) than Muslims (27.9%). The marital status distribution showed that there were more single female bankers (58.1%) than married female bankers (18.6%). The educational qualification distribution showed that 23.3% of the respondents are Higher National Diploma Degree holders, 34.9% are bachelor degree holders, 16.9% are post- graduate Degree holders. This implies the level at which female banker's places so much priority in education, as their academic qualification qualifies them to seek higher prospects in their career. The working experience of the respondent showed that 27.9% of the respondents have 1-5 years' experience, 23.3% have 6-10 years' experience .76.7% were in non-managerial positions and 23.3% were in managerial positions

Female Employees Views and Classification of Sexual Harassment in Banking Sector

Women generally experience different forms of sexual harassment as they constitute part of the workforce worldwide, thereby affecting their advancement on jobs. Majority of the respondents viewed sexual harassment seriously and also opined that sexual harassment occurred more frequently among female than their male counterparts. All the respondents had experienced sexual harassment at one time or the other while working in the bank. Majority of the respondents



have experienced at least a form of sexual harassment in the workplace by an immediate supervisor or Manager.

The respondents were asked to classify what they considered as sexual harassment

The respondents viewed sexual harassment to include the following: Suggestive looks, unwanted sexual attention, touching of some parts of your body unnecessarily, sexual related discussions, other sexual facial expressions and also the habit of sexual perpetrators getting undressed to show body's sexuality and pictures.

The above findings also support the findings of Aina-Pelemo, Mechanathan, Kulsherestha, and Aina (2019) among lawyers showed the same classifications of sexual harassment and Yusuf (2008) studies that sexual harassment ranges from unwanted touch, sexual related gesture, sexual remarks, money enticement and intimidation.. The results showed that sexual harassment occurred among female employees in workplaces

When asked the respondents to describe their experiences of sexual harassment

Some of the responses below illuminated more on the issue:

A lot of us were more or less sexually harassed. In the bank, as a teller or operation staff, a senior level manager will ask you to bring a deposit/withdrawal slip to his office. On getting to his office, he will begin by professing love, and some point, he will start touching your body unnecessarily (Respondent 12; Customer Relation officer)

Sexual Harassment begins when a senior manager starts saying sensitive utterances like: I love the way you walk, it makes me attracted to you; I love your smile; your figure makes me crazy about you and I want us to hang out (Obviously for sex) on weekend; I would want to sleep with you (Respondent 05; Client Officer)

I would like to state that a significant number of junior female bankers were harassed physically in cases where the harasser touches their body unnecessarily. I and some of my colleagues in whom I have interpersonal relationship with have been harassed mostly by our bosses. One of friends said, whenever she went to her boss office, he will always press his body against her body which she usually finds very inconvenient.

Sexual harassment is usually from supervisors or another super ordinate. Sexual harassment in a workplace often stems through negotiations for promotions and workplace opportunities which presupposes that the existence of power imbalance with an overall effect on female employees and their emotional imbalance.

Effect of Sexual Harassment on Career Advancement of female employees in Banking Sector

Does sexual harassment have any effect on female employee's career advancement? When asked the respondents if failure to succumb to harassment usually have any effect or outcomes on their career advancement. One of the many effects of sexual harassment of women is evaluation sanction which in the context used means lowered work evaluations or denial of promotions.

Some of the respondents interviewed stated their responses below:

Sexual harassment usually hampers career advancement in banking sector. When you refuse to give in to the harasser demands of sexual favours, there is no way positive reports will be written concerning your promotions or increase in your pay. This

usually happens from top level management officials to those at the lower levels because they are in control.

Your boss believes that he is in control of your promotion or pay rise, he will ask that you go out with him in order for your promotion to scale through. Asking sexual favour from you is to negotiate for your promotion or pay rise. When you refused, you are either sacked or frustrated which will eventually lead to you been sacked or resignation.

My experience took place years ago, when I was still very young and single. I really had nobody to report to, but a senior colleague. Eventually, I was 'sacked' by my then boss. If there is a proper framework in place, no young lady should have to experience what I went through, which included near rape. Those responsible for strategizing against sexual harassment in financial institutions should see it as a serious call'.

Yes, I was a victim of sexual harassment in a particular Micro-Finance bank in Lagos. The employer sleeps with quite a number of young ladies working under him. He deliberately created enmity among the young ladies to the extent that we were always suspicious of one another, I got tired of dancing to his tunes since he placed all benefits (Promotion, pay rise, casual or annual leave and other welfare packages) on the employees 'ability to subject herself to his demands. I revolted by confronting him. Then, he first suspended me claiming insubordination and later my appointment was terminated

The above findings supported the findings of Aina-Pelemo et al (2019) and Epelle, Amadi, and Nweke (2020) study on sexual harassment and job performance of office staff in Educational Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

When the respondents were asked to state the negative outcomes of sexual harassment on their career advancement. There was consensus among the respondents that there were negative outcomes of sexual harassment on the career advancement to include the following;

- reduction of job mobility tied to sexual harassment,
- Transferring or firing the harassed employees in the workplace,
- quitting,
- Verbal insults to the harassed which were more prevalent in cases of mishandling the harassed.
- Depression

The study further revealed that there were some few cases of physical assault and manhandling but with a more frequent occurrence of negotiation which harassed women perceives as a serious issue which breeds negative consequences of employee turnover, unpleasant work environment, psychological and physical distress which shows that the more the occurrence of sexual harassment, the more negative outcomes undesirably personal for women which has grave consequences for their career advancement .

The findings from this study are in line with Heart (2019) study, who earlier found out that in most cases, women's career movement on the career ladder could result in stress, intimidation and emotional imbalance due to efforts being frustrated by the harassers stating the consequential outcomes of harassment to psychological, mental, social, and emotional wellbeing of the victims. Most of the victims were driven-on by anxiety, headaches, exhaustion, loss/increase of appetite, weight loss/weight gain, sleep difficulties, isolation, anger, self-blame, humiliation, embarrassment. Mclaughlin, Uggen and Blackstone (2017) had earlier described the state of the victims as an unacceptable and unhealthy professional burden on the harassed. They found in



their study that victims of sexual harassment often feel upset, threatened, humiliated, low self-esteem, loss of self-confidence and other various negative feelings. The findings supported the Learned Helplessness Theory, that when the pathway towards the achievement of desired goals is constantly disturbed, passivity, low morale, lack of motivation, depression, and disengagement from work or from the job will likely occur.

Strategies Adopted by Female Bankers in negotiating Sexual Harassment

Findings showed different strategies adopted by female employees that had been harassed. For those that had been harassed, some reports the incidence to superior authority, others backed down and developed fear because of financial strains especially where they were so many dependants to take cater for.

Some of the respondents justified this reason:

There are some instances where some women are usually comfortable with married top level management staff. For instance, I have been in a situation whereby my friend (Male Banker) was told to increase my salary because I was servicing someone who happens to be a management level official. Three months later, my salary was increased the second time just because he wanted to satisfy me financially as I was warming his bed and satisfying his needs, but when I started refusing his sexual demands, there was no pay rise again (Respondent 10)

I was subjected to torture, and emotional blackmail. I was made to believe I was not good at any other thing than sex. In order to keep my job, I had to play to the dictates of my boss. He even comes at odd hours to my house. I had to endure because I wanted to keep my job. I soon got tired because it was not what I wanted in my life. When I started refusing his sexual advances, it got so bad that he almost assaulted me. Started picking on me, and laying all sorts of accusation against me. Eventually, I had to resign from my place of work'

The experiences expressed from the respondent above supported the findings of Yie and Ping (2021) and Aina–Pelemo: Mechanathan, Kulshresther and Aina, (2019) in their work on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, argued that sexual harassment is often seen as a criterion for negotiation of higher positions and increased pays.

A Culture of Silence

Victims of sexual harassment usually experience discontent due to inability to the culture of silence imposed by third parties (managers, colleagues and human resources representatives). In situations whereby, a victim decides to talk to third party actors, individual complaints are rendered invalidated and as such termed trouble makers.

You cannot report because when you try to report, they make allegations against you and put up series of accusations against you to the management to redeploy you, lower your status or to fire you.

I avoid them so as to cope. I keep telling them that I will think about the request so as to prolong whatever outcome the harasser is expecting. Sometimes, I stay off break to avoid being seen because the more I passed through the offices, the more the disturbances. So, I had to avoid him till I got a better job. I had to keep this to

myself. I had moved on by resigning. The truth is that sexual harassment affects career advancement in rewards and promotion.

The findings from this study also revealed that some female bankers that have been harassed usually maintained silence. Victims were silenced in such that, their progress in the banking sector may be shaky because career structure in the banking sector is influenced politically on the goodwill of the senior level management and key players. Also, the study found that the fear of being labelled as deviant and trouble makers make some harassed female employees to maintain silence because the trouble maker reputation results may impact negative consequences on the career of the victims. This finding supported the earlier findings of Fapohunda (2014) that most victims of sexual harassment in Nigeria are often scared to report due to cultural and customary practices.

Recommendation

1. The study recommends consistent training and roundtable seminars on sexual harassment awareness by enlightening employees on the forms of sexual harassment common in workplaces. The management needs to sensitize its members on appropriate dressings, ethics and behaviours expected of them in the profession with a consensus on the enactment of stringent policies to support and establish a sexual harassment free workplace, such that, employees who flout the rules stated in the policy will be exposed and punished, irrespective of the status or office the perpetrator holds - the exposure will serve as deterrence to others and will help in curbing its spread.
2. Despite the prohibition of sexual harassment by the Criminal Law of Lagos State 2011 and exclusive jurisdiction to the National Industrial court on sexual harassment matters as specified in section 254 (C) (1) (g) of the Nigerian Constitution 1999 (as amended in 2010), the Nigerian labour law gives no provisions for sexual harassment issues and other kind forms of violence in the workplace, hence, there is need for a comprehensive external and internal policy capturing all forms of sexual harassment and a prohibition of quid quo pro with the need for its ratification at national levels.
3. The Chartered Institute of Banking in Nigeria should encourage and make provisions for workplace sexual harassment victims to express and report their experiences of harassment through media outlets or drop boxes where information can be disseminated confidentially so as to protect the identity and integrity of the victims and also make sure, investigations and sanctions are enforced on the harassers or perpetrators.

Limitations and Suggestions for further studies

The strength of this study is that it fills the gap in literature in the Nigerian Banking sector as no prior study has been concluded relating to sexual harassment and career advancement. Qualitative method of data collection was adopted which gives no room for generalisation. Quantitative method of data is therefore proposed with large numbers to study problems. And also, there is need to study experiences of male gender of sexual harassment and if the harassment impacts on their career advancement.

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