



SEXUAL HARASSMENT: WHO IS HARASSING WHO?

Kehinde AYENIBIOWO

*Department of Psychology
University of Lagos*
Kehinde.ayenibiowo@yahoo.com
+2348023699441

Gbenusola AKINWALE

*Department of Psychology
University of Lagos*
gbenuadunola@yahoo.com
+2348066751389

ABSTRACT

Sexual bullying is no longer seen as a one sided phenomenon, it is a double edge sword that could pierce both the victims and the perpetrators. The study examined sexual bullying in lecturer's student's relationship with 2 vignettes depicting the dressing of students who approached a lecturer in his office. Two modes of dressing were presented, one considered to be scantily clothed while the other is full clothing. The participants were randomly assigned into the two groups. The data were analysed with 2x2 ANOVA to determine the effect of age and gender of the participants on assessment of punishment for the victims and the perpetrators. Clothing was hypothesized on and it was found to be significant, for the punishment of both students and also for the lecturer. The findings suggest stricter punishment for the victim and the perpetrator in full clothing scenario than in scanty clothing scenario. Age was found to be insignificant. The study therefore adjudged both the victims and the perpetrators to deserve punishment.

Keywords: *Sexual bullying, sexual harassment, Gender, age, mode of dressing.*

INTRODUCTION

The University is an institution mostly established and committed to creating and maintaining a community dedicated to the advancement, application and transmission of knowledge and creative endeavours through academic excellence, where all individuals who participate in University programs and activities can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Sexual bullying and sexual harassment violate both law on infringement on human and University policy(AAUP,2015).

This kind of behavior is upsetting no matter what it is called. Like anyone who is being bullied, (people who are sexually harassed) can feel threatened and scared and experience a great deal of emotional stress. Both victim and the harasser can be either a woman or a man, and the victim and harasser can be the same sex. For the person who is being targeted, it is distressing. It does not make much difference whether it is called bullying or harassment. Sometimes schools and other institutions use either of the two for legal reasons. For instance, a school document may use the term "bullying" to describe what's against school policy, while a law might use the term "harassment" to define what is against the law court. Harassment is both against school policy and also against the law. It is unlawful to harass a person because of that individual's sex. Bullying can include "sexual harassment" or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment that are sexual in nature.

Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person's sex. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making



offensive comments about women in general. Sexual harassment doesn't just happen to students. Lecturers can harass students, but students' also can harass lecturers, lecturers may harass other lecturers. Sexual harassment is not limited to people of the same age, either. Adults sometimes sexually harass young people (and, occasionally, adolescents may harass adults, though that is very rare). But most of the time, when sexual harassment happens to teens, it's being done by people in the same age group.

Sexual bullying of females can begin as early as childhood period and continue even till late adulthood. This phenomenon has been a major concern of psychologists, the judiciary, feminists, civil societies. However the seriousness attached to this problem which is reflected in the number of convictions and prison sentences for the crime is in doubt. The percentage of convictions for rape is very low when compared to the actual number of victims.(McGlynn,2011; Cook, 2011) This is partly due to the fact that some of the cases are not reported for fear of stigmatization. Also some cases are dropped either for insufficient proof or weariness on the part of the victims and their family members.

Rape perception by people in any society is a function of how women are perceived in the society. In traditional societies where patriarchy is entrenched, the level of acquaintanceship determines how it is perceived; the closer the level, the less serious the crime is perceived. Unfortunately despite the feminists' agitations to ensure that women are treated justly and fairly, the problem of rape of women still persists.

Sexual bullying of female by authority figures in institutions is one of the most grievous circumstances of rape. It may involve inducement, coercion, threat or a combination of any of these three (Ayenibiowo, Igundunasse & Akinwale,2015). Even in this type of scenario, the victim may be blamed for seduction. The tolerance level of institutions to harassment determines the prevalence of such acts(Ormerod, Collinsworth & Perry 2008).

Some studies have shown that dress style influences perception of sexual bullying and proposition of punishment for the harasser because Provocative dressing is often used to excuse and exonerate the harasser. (Cahoon and Edmunds,1989; Weber, Bauer & Martinez, 2012)

One major factor in rape perception is the gender of the assessor, as women tend to consider it as more grievous than men. (McDonald & Kline 2004 ; Alarape & Lawal 2011) Even where provocative dressing is presented in the scenario, women have greater tendency than men to perceive it as grievous (Cahoon & Edmunds 1989) and to insist on the punishment for the perpetrator (Ben -David & Schneider 2005).

Incidence of rape of in institutions and its criminalization depends largely on the tolerance level of the educational institutions and the authority figures to assault between students and in teacher\ student relationships (Ormerod, Collinsworth & Perry, 2008). The incidence of assault in teacher/ student relationship is often unreported due to fear of negative consequences like victimization and victim blame. Some studies indicate that the victims of rape are sometimes blamed especially for their appearance which may be considered as indecent and provocative. A few have linked men's attitude towards rape to the victim's dressing. Cahoon and Edmunds (1989) found that provocative dressing of the victim influence men's perception of sexual bullying while Weber , Bauer & Martinez (2012) noted that female participants strongly disagreed with no punishment consequence for harasser of a female wearing provocative dress whereas the men agreed with no punishment consequence.

Some studies have shown gender difference in assessment of rape with the male being more tolerant of rape and less lenient towards the perpetrators who in most cases are men.(McDonald & Kline 2004, Ben-David & Schneider 2005, Alarape & Lawal, 2011)



The studies reviewed have shown that gender of the assessor, tolerance level of institution and victim's dressing seem to influence assessment of rape and severity of punishment participants suggest for perpetrators of the crime.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT AND ATTRIBUTION PROCESS

The tendency to find reason for other people's behavior is the core of attribution process. Social psychologists propose that behavior, whether positive or negative may be attributed either to the actor's personality or the environment. In the same vein, assigning of blame and holding people accountable for their actions depends partly on whether the behaviour is attributed to internal or external factors. Hypotheses propounded to explain attribution include the Visual Perspective Hypothesis and the Information Availability Hypothesis. The Visual Perspective Hypothesis suggests that the observer attributes other people's behaviour to internal forces and his own to external forces because he sees the other person as a whole (including the traits and personality) more than he sees himself. Furthermore the observer sees the environmental forces that affect him while he sees less of those forces that affect the other person. The Information Availability Hypothesis propose that the observer is more aware of the environmental forces affecting him than those affecting the other person. Also, the more information the observer obtains, the greater the tendency to attribute other people's behaviour to environmental factors.

Attribution is often determined by categorization of individuals as either in-group or out-group that is the group one belongs to or does not belong to. Negative qualities are often attributed more to the out-group than the in-group. Categorization can be done on the basis of gender, age and ethnic group and these may determine the way actions of persons are rated when a crime like rape has been committed.

In summary research findings have shown that attribution of blame and proposition of punishment depend on the gender of the assessor, the relationship that existed between the victim and the aggressor, the appearance of the victim and the environment in which the crime occurred.

METHOD

The study employed anecdotal method involving two versions of a vignette involving rape cases presented to participants for projection of attribution and assessment of appropriate sanctions.

Instruments

The instrument used comprises two typed versions of a short story depicting scenes of rape involving a student who had gone to a lecturer's office at 6.00 pm to inquire about her missing test script. The lecturer locked the door and attempted to sexual molest her. In the first version(scanty clothed) the student wore a scanty clothed blouse with short skirt while the other wore a fully clothed blouse and a long skirt in the (fully clothed)second version. A 4 point Likert-type scale (SA-1, A-2,D-3,SD-4) was developed to measure the proposition of punishment for the perpetrators (5 items) and the victim (5 items). The total scores the two versions were calculated and used as measure of leniency/harshness of the assessor. The higher the score, the lower the level of leniency.

Participants

The participants for the study were psychology students from University of Lagos, a Federal Universities in South-West, Nigeria. They were in their second and third year of their study in the University. The participant comprises 30 male and 37 female. They were categorized into adolescents (16-19) and emerging adult (20 & above).

**Procedure**

The instrument was administered to the students during practical session in the Psychology laboratory. The students were randomly assigned to two groups through balloting. Group 1 was administered the first version of the vignette to read along with the scale to respond to while Group 2 was given the second version of the vignette with the same scale. Each student submitted after completion. The completed scales were collated, coded and subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS version 20 and results were analysed accordingly.

RESULTS**Sanction for student**

1a. Female participants will propose more lenient sanction for victims of sexual bullying than male participants.

b. Participants will propose more lenient sanction for the fully clothed victim than the

Scantily clothed victim.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics on Punishment for students

Gender	Clothing	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Male	Fully clothed	14.00	1.683	13
	Scanty clothed	11.47	1.625	17
	Total	12.57	2.063	30
Female	Fully clothed	13.85	1.899	20
	Scanty clothed	13.06	2.106	17
	Total	13.49	2.009	37
Total	Fully clothed	13.91	1.792	33
	Scanty clothed	12.26	2.020	34
	Total	13.07	2.069	67

Table 2. Dependent variable :Punishment for students

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	66.900 ^a	3	22.300	6.512	.001
Intercept	11218.061	1	11218.061	3276.083	.000
Gender	8.458	1	8.458	2.470	.121
Cloth	45.084	1	45.084	13.166	.001
Gender * Cloth	12.354	1	12.354	3.608	.062
Error	215.726	63	3.424		
Total	11736.000	67			
Corrected Total	282.627	66			

a. R Squared = .237 (Adjusted R Squared = .200)

The table shows no significant gender differences' in leniency for the victim whereas the second part of the result shows less lenient sanction for the scantily clothed victim than for the fully clothed victim.



Sanction for the Lecturers

- 2a. Male participant will propose less lenient sanction for perpetrators of sexual bullying than female participants.
- b. Participants will propose less lenient sanction for the perpetrator in the case of scantily clothed victim than fully clothed victims

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3. Dependent Variable: Punishment for lecturers

Gender	Clothing	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Male	Full clothed	13.62	2.631	13
	Scanty clothed	11.41	2.033	17
	Total	12.37	2.526	30
Female	Fully clothed	13.50	1.906	20
	Scanty clothed	11.88	2.643	17
	Total	12.76	2.385	37
Total	Fully clothed	13.55	2.181	33
	Scanty clothed	11.65	2.334	34
	Total	12.58	2.438	67

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Table 4: Dependent Variable: Punishment for lecturers

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	62.339 ^a	3	20.780	3.968	.012
Intercept	10390.140	1	10390.140	1983.817	.000
Gender	.516	1	.516	.098	.755
Cloth	59.705	1	59.705	11.400	.001
Gender * Cloth	1.404	1	1.404	.268	.606
Error	329.959	63	5.237		
Total	10999.000	67			
Corrected Total	392.299	66			

a. R Squared = .159 (Adjusted R Squared = .119)

There was no gender difference in the proposed sanctions, but more lenient sanction was proposed for the lecturer than in fully clothed scenario.

3a, Adolescents will proposed more lenient sanction for victim of bullying than emerging adults.



Descriptive Statistics

Table 5. Dependent Variable: Punishment for students

Age	Clothing	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Adolescent	Fully clothed	13.57	1.651	14
	Scanty clothed	12.73	1.794	11
	Total	13.20	1.732	25
Emerging Adult	Fully clothed	14.16	1.893	19
	Scanty clothed	12.04	2.121	23
	Total	13.00	2.263	42
Total	Fully clothed	13.91	1.792	33
	Scanty clothed	12.26	2.020	34
	Total	13.07	2.069	67

Table 6. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Punishment for students

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	51.534 ^a	3	17.178	4.683	.005
Intercept	10664.672	1	10664.672	2907.374	.000
Age	.037	1	.037	.010	.921
Cloth	33.868	1	33.868	9.233	.003
Age * Cloth	6.243	1	6.243	1.702	.197
Error	231.093	63	3.668		
Total	11736.000	67			
Corrected Total	282.627	66			

a. R Squared = .182 (Adjusted R Squared = .143)

Emerging adults proposed more lenient punishment for victim irrespective of the mode of dressing than adolescents, they also proposed harsher punishment for the perpetrator.

4. Adolescents will propose more lenient punishment for perpetrator than emerging adults.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 7. Dependent Variable: Punishment for lecturers

Age	Clothing	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Adolescent	Fully clothed	13.79	1.847	14
	Scanty clothed	11.82	1.834	11
	Total	12.92	2.060	25
Emerging Adult	Fully clothed	13.37	2.432	19
	Scanty clothed	11.57	2.573	23
	Total	12.38	2.641	42
Total	Fully clothed	13.55	2.181	33
	Scanty clothed	11.65	2.334	34
	Total	12.58	2.438	67

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Table 8. Dependent Variable: Punishment for lecturers

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	62.232 ^a	3	20.744	3.959	.012
Intercept	9882.248	1	9882.248	1886.230	.000
Age	1.738	1	1.738	.332	.567
Cloth	55.015	1	55.015	10.501	.002
Age * Cloth	.104	1	.104	.020	.888
Error	330.067	63	5.239		
Total	10999.000	67			
Corrected Total	392.299	66			

a. R Squared = .159 (Adjusted R Squared = .119)



Emerging adults proposed more punishment for perpetrator irrespective of the mode of dressing, although the result is insignificant

DISCUSSION

The results negates our key theoretical prediction on attribution theory, the result shows no gender differences in level of leniency towards the victims, this contradicts the attribution theory which position people according to categories such as age, social class, gender and also suggest that people are more lenient with people in their categories (in-group). The study also show no gender difference leniency towards the perpetrator, this also not in agreement with earlier studies that suggest that male are more lenient towards perpetrator of sexual harassment (McDonalds et al,2004 : Alarape & Lawal, 2011).

The results did not show any influence of provocative dressing on punishment, this is inconsistent with the finding of (Cahoon & Edmunds 1989: Ferguson, et al 1987), on the contrary there was less leniency towards the fully clothed victim, this may be attributed to the nature of participant who were undergraduate in a metropolitan city tend to identify more with scantily clothed individuals than fully clothed ladies. One alternative explanation is that participants might have placed more emphasis on the scenario of going to the lecturer's office than the mode of dressing in the vignette. This is further buttressed by the slight difference that was recorded between the means for perpetrator sanction and victim sanction.

Furthermore, the study did not show any significant age difference in the level of leniency towards both the victim and perpetrator, this may be due to the fact that all participants were all undergraduates and may have been subjected to similar psychosocial factors like social media, internet use, urbanization etc.

Consequently, the study shows that the tendency to blame victim is still prevalence in the society, this shows the need for more sensitization to the plight of victims of sexual harassment, therefore the study has revealed that the blame game menace is still on-going and may be responsible for delay or denial of justice in our society. The proposed legislation against sexual harassment in tertiary institution is insufficient if not backed up by psycho-education within the society. More extensive experience with cultural and ethnic diversity needs to be taking into account in future studies.

The findings have make some significant contributions to the extension of sexual harassment literature, one important implication of this research is that personality differences may play a larger role in predicting the way people propose sanctions/punishment for harassers.

There are few limitations in this research; first, the vignette should be seen as a projective attempt in obtaining comprehensive understanding of the interplay between the victims and perpetrators of sexual bullying/harassment in terms of punishments/sanctions. Second, our article may have some practical value. The fact that high prevalence of sexual bullying/harassment in our tertiary institution has created so many disputes, which induce more fear, corruption and condemnation among lecturers. The result might give a chance to improve the "bad equilibrium" in the justice of sexual harassment which blames only the perpetrators. The current study should be scaled up by expanding the scope and recruiting more samples from a larger number of societies by incorporating other variables and



theories. The study also lays the groundwork for future research to examines the mechanism that account for differences in the outcome of this research and previous research (Cahoon & Edmunds 1989: Ferguson, et al 1987), Finally, our study might be interesting in the light of ongoing discussion on whether the lecturers are the harassers or vice versa.

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