

Sexual Harassment of Female Student Teachers in Teacher's Colleges in Zimbabwe and its Implications on Quality of Teacher Preparation: Myth or Reality?

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the prevalence of sexual harassment in Zimbabwean teacher education institutions and its impact on the quality of teacher preparation. To gather data, questionnaires, focus group discussions and individual interviews with female students were conducted, including open-ended questionnaires were filled by student teachers as participants. In total, forty student teachers took part in the study, five were interviewed, fifteen answered questionnaires, and twenty took part in focus group discussions. The participants were selected purposively due to their stage of teacher training and proximity to the researchers. Data were qualitatively and quantitatively analysed. The study found out that sexual harassment was prevalent in Teachers' Colleges in Zimbabwe. The major causes revealed were that female students were lazy, male lecturers demanded sex from female students, negative peer influence from other female students, and female students' desire for a flamboyant life. Participants proposed adoption of legislation governing behaviour of lecturers and students, the introduction and implementation of policies against sexual harassment, and educating students about sexual harassment. The study also advocated establishing reporting processes and holding lecturers and students accountable for their behaviour.

Key Words: sexual harassment, student teacher, Quality, Teacher preparation

INTRODUCTION

This study was prompted by my dissertation on the quality of teacher preparation in Zimbabwe. While sexual harassment was not a primary focus of the study, some of the female participants raised the issue. Sexual harassment is described as unwanted sexual attention or practices that negatively impact the educational environment (University of California Sexual Harassment Policy, 2011). Any unwanted and inappropriate sexual conduct that could be regarded or interpreted as unpleasant or humiliating to another individual person is considered sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment can occur, between lecturers and students, or between administration staff and students. Sexual harassment can occur verbally, physically, or in writing. It involves actions that have a reasonable chance of offending, humiliating, or intimidating someone else. Statements of communications via phone, fax, video, internet, SMS, and email may be included, along with spoken and visual elements. Sexual harassment can happen to both men and women. Comments on someone's sexual life, physical appearance, suggestive behaviour like staring, and needless physical contact like brushing against someone are all behaviours that can be connected to sexual harassment (University of California, 2011). Sexual harassment can take many forms, including physical acts like fondling, grabbing, flashing or sexual gestures, sexual

suggestion, or persistent solicitations for dates. Sexual harassment includes unwanted sexual advances and stalking, sexual jokes, indecent assault or rape, offensive phone calls or photos, and sending sexually suggestive jokes or images. It's critical to remember that sexual harassment is not a behaviour that results from respect, friendship, or shared interests. Sexual harassment does not include amicable, reciprocal, and consensual interactions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The hierarchical organisation of teacher training colleges is typified by the authoritative positions that lecturers have over student teachers as articulated by (Bourdieu, 1991). Sexual harassment occurs when those in positions of authority have the capacity to affect or influence the welfare of others. Because of this hierarchy, there is an imbalance of power, with lecturers having more authority to decide and exert control. According to Bourdieu (1991), there is an imbalance of power because lecturers occupy positions of authority. Regarding this, instructors have the authority to assess student performance and assign and recommend students to the next level. More than just having this authority, instructors also have knowledge and experience, which makes students dependent on them for direction and mentoring. Therefore, the hierarchy in teacher colleges is really to blame for the disparity in power where lecturers have more authority over students and may make more decisions. Johnson (2005) agrees that because of their status, training, and duties in assessment, lecturers have a great deal of influence over their pupils. In conclusion, power relations can influence how students and lecturers interact. Nevertheless lectures frequently direct this conversation by defining objectives and future interactions that are related to sexual harassment. According to California University (2011), sexual harassment can happen in an office, a classroom, residence halls, a sports field, a bus, or off campus. In certain instances, it happens when someone in a position of authority uses that authority to force a student or subordinate to perform sexual favours. The weaker party won't be able to say "no" because of the power disparity.

Indecent dressing, which is defined as clothing that is too revealing and encourages the influence of the other sex to initiate sexual contact, exposure to sexual material that arouses sexual emotions, and engaging in activities in secluded areas where sexual harassment is likely to occur are among the behaviours noted by Alhaji and Ali, (2014). Fiske (2007) also examined how individuals read and comprehend nonverbal cues, such as clothing. Occasionally, men may interpret provocative attire as a request for attention. Furthermore, some males might interpret certain wardrobe choices as signs that female pupils are luring them sexually. In conclusion, a person's clothing choices could be misinterpreted, leading to negative attitudes and actions.

Connell (1987) postulated that sexual harassment of female student teachers by male lecturers is a result of societal standards that support masculine dominance and feminine submissiveness. Consequently, being obedient can result in male instructors at teacher colleges pestering female instructors in a sexual manner. In this case, male instructors have the authority and clout to sexually harass women. In the African context, men are also taught to assert their dominance, while women submit.

Bartlett (2011) asserts that when regulations and procedures for reporting harassment are unclear, institutional cultures may tolerate or even encourage harassment. It can be easy for ambiguous organisational policies to give rise to misconceptions regarding the exact meaning of harassment in certain situations. Similarly, when reporting processes are confusing, victims are discouraged from reporting harassment. To put it briefly, poor reporting practices may make it harder to report sexual harassment, which in turn may cause the abuse to continue. According to Buchanan (2013), effective reporting systems are essential.

According to Koss (1993), unsupervised encounters, including private meetings, increase susceptibility. As a result of the imbalance that exists between the student and the lecturer; isolated settings provide the ideal

environment for individuals who abuse the power that they possess. Private settings, in which the perpetrators are able to conceal their actions from other people, further restrict the victim's ability to flee the dangerous scenario.

Social beauty standards and media portrayal frequently depict women as objects for male gratification, claim Fredrickson and Roberts (1997). Social norms might be a major cause of sexual harassment of female students in this situation. Mackinaw (1982) supports this as well, by stating that social norms devalue women and that men normalise violence against women and maintain their supremacy in order to foster an atmosphere that is favourable to sexual harassment. Sexual harassment against women is viewed as normal or acceptable in most societies. According to Brownmiller (1975), the relationship between demonisation and subordination is initially learnt and internalised at the patriarchal level, which is the fundamental limit. As a result, society produces an imbalance that sustains men's dominance over women's bodies, lives, and decisions. Mackinnon (1982) supports this as well, emphasising that sexual harassment is about power and control rather than sexual attraction.

According to Ladson-Billings (1995), deficit thinking reduces students to their difficulties rather than recognising their, intellectual capacity, and resources. Therefore, deficit thinking has an impact on students' self-efficacy. This view of laziness is supported by Delpit (1995), who notes that being lazy diminishes one's intellectual capacity and lowers one to a crude stereotype of being uninspired. It must be recognised, however, that sexual harassment may also be exacerbated by the tardiness of female students. In reality, it is a harmful myth that blames the victim, ignores power dynamics, and promotes victim sharing the notion that someone's behaviour, such as being lazy or negligent, can result in sexual harassment.

Due to their financial dependence, students from low-income families may be more vulnerable to sexual harassment and other forms of exploitation (Kabidi et al., 2018). When students depend on financial help, they become more vulnerable to manipulation or coercion by people in positions of financial power, in this case, male lecturers. Murry et al. (2014) also backed this notion, arguing that poverty can increase vulnerability by limiting access to social services, healthcare, and education.

Sexual harassment produces far reaching effects such as emotional, physical and functional repercussions. It can result in feeling upset, embarrassed, anxious, vulnerable and unsafe. Some students will experience anxiety, distress and confusion, helpless and even depression. Some will shun places where harassment tends to take place. Physically some can experience stomach aches or headaches.

Collaboration between institutions, governments, and communities is emphasised by Campass (2020). Karz (2006) also endorsed this collaborative approach and advocated for community involvement. To effectively address sexual harassment, a collaborative effort is essential, requiring joint action from government, community and institutional authorities.. Institutions of higher learning are responsible for establishing a secure and healthy learning environment, free from sexual harassment, and ensuring prompt corrective action for sexual harassment incidents.

Murray et al. (2017) emphasise the need of confidentiality and anonymity when reporting sexual misconduct. Confidentiality really increases trust between victims and support services. Furthermore, victims' comfort when seeking help is ensured by privacy. Building confidence between victims and mental health practitioners requires confidentiality (Foa et al., 2013pp234).Mackinnon (1989) also backed the issue of secrecy, highlighting its significance in establishing safe spaces for victims.

Online reporting platforms are recommended by Freyd (2018) as a means of boosting reporting rates and giving survivors a feeling of independence and control. According to Fitzgerald (2017), internet reporting platforms can also aid in lowering obstacles to reporting, like social shame or fear of reprisals. Higher education administrators are consequently urged to set up online reporting platforms so that students can

anonymously report instances of sexual harassment.

Gregory (2011) argues that by raising awareness, altering attitudes, and encouraging bystander action, workshops and training programs can effectively prevent sexual harassment. Additionally, Fitzgerald (1993) highlights the significance of training programs for staff in order to identify and address sexual harassment. Fitzgerald (1993) went on to say that training can support the development of an accountable and respectful culture. Workshops and training programs are crucial for combating sexual harassment and promoting a respectful learning environment.

Laws and procedures are crucial for stopping and dealing with sexual harassment, according to MacKinnon (1989) an expert on the law and sexual harassment. Levy (2017) also highlights how crucial it is to create and implement legislation that shields students from sexual harassment, especially in educational settings. One should not undervalue the importance of laws and regulations in preventing and dealing with sexual harassment and guaranteeing a respectful and safe learning environment. Organisations should have effective and transparent policies against sexual harassment in the workplace, claim Mahomed et al. (2014). All forms of sexual harassment must be prohibited in colleges and schools under the guidelines. In order to prevent and address harassment, AAUW (2020) emphasises the importance of having clear policies and procedures. To this end, schools and colleges should implement zero-tolerance policies regarding sexual harassment. In summary, institutions need to have explicit rules and processes in place for reporting and dealing with instances of sexual harassment.

AAUW (2020) recommends the use of anonymous reporting mechanisms, such as suggestion boxes, to encourage students to report incidents of sexual harassment. A report by the U.S. Department of Education (2017) suggests that colleges and universities can use suggestion boxes or other anonymous reporting mechanisms to allow students to report incidents of sexual harassment without fear of retaliation. To encourage students to report instances of sexual harassment, AAUW (2020) suggests using anonymous reporting tools like suggestion boxes. According to U.S. Department of Education Report, (2020), schools and institutions can enable students to report instances of sexual harassment without fear of reprisal by implementing suggestion boxes or other anonymous reporting systems. One possible way to identify and resolve instances of sexual harassment involving male instructors in colleges and universities is through the usage of suggestion boxes. Suggestion boxes can enable students to report harassment without fear of reprisal by offering a private, anonymous, and secure reporting system. Ultimately, establishing a culture of equality, respect, and zero tolerance for sexual harassment in educational institutions requires the implementation of suggestion boxes.

According to Buchanan (2013) avoiding isolated setting for both students and lecturers as much as possible reduces the risks of sexual harassment. In this regard one-on-one meetings in isolated areas between the student and the lecturer is a recommended strategy to reduce sexual harassment. Cardina and Berdahl (2006) also emphasised the importance of avoiding situations that could be perceived as compromising or vulnerable.

Research Questions

- Is sexual harassment prevalent in Teachers' Colleges in Zimbabwe?
- What type of sexual harassment is found in Teachers Colleges and what related factors contribute it to its prevalence?
- What measures should be put in place to combat sexual harassment in teachers colleges?

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative and quantitative research approaches were employed in the study, which included interviewing

individuals at their workplaces, gathering bio-data, and analysing it. The researcher focused on students on teaching practice from various Teachers Colleges in Zimbabwe. These offered to take part in the study either individually or in groups.

Research Design

A multiple case study design was used in this study to focus on students from three Teachers' Colleges on teaching practice. The case study design was preferred because it allowed the research to focus on key players female student teachers on teaching practice. The researcher wanted to get the views of student teachers without fear of victimisation.

Sampling Procedure

To select participants, the researchers employed purposive sampling approach. The homogeneous sampling technique was used targeting female student teachers in with more than two years in teacher training. To ensure that the data gathered was relevant, the researcher was able to engage student teachers who had important information attributable to the purposive sampling technique. The participants were female student teachers who were enrolled at Teacher's Colleges at the time of the study.

Data Generation and Analysis

Open-ended questionnaires, focus group discussions and interviews were utilised to gather data. The researcher was able to follow up on the participants' responses and provide clarification on unclear questions. Female students were interviewed and took part in focus group discussions during data gathering. Both closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires were used to solicit responses from students. Data were qualitatively and quantitatively analysed. The qualitative data were analysed using interpretative study analysis, and quantitative data used frequencies and percentages to tally and analyse responses. Interpretive analysis involved coding data, identifying themes and then interpreting data.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 Forms of Sexual Harassment

	Yes to me	Yes to someone	Not at all
· Sexual comments, jokes, gestures, looks	4(8,8)%	3(28,9)%	28(62,2)%
· Lecturer brushed against you in a sexy way	1 (2,2)%	6(13,3)%	38(84,4)%
· Touched or grabbed you in a sexual manner	0	7(15,6)%	38(84,4)%
· Received sexual picture, photos, or messages	0	5(11,1)%	40(88,9)%
· Rumours of sexual nature about you and lecturers	0	14(31,1)%	31(68,9)%
· Forces kissing	0	3(6,7)%	42(93,3)%
· Forced to do other sexual things than kissing	0	3(6,7)%	42(93,3)%
· Unwanted sexual advance	1(2,2)%	7(15,6)%	37(82,2)%
· Demand for sexual favours	0	8(17,8)%	37(82,2)%

Trainee teachers were asked to list the types of sexual harassment they had either personally experienced or saw others engage in. According to Table 1 above, shows the nature of sexual harassment experienced. These include unwanted sexual advances, sexual remarks, jokes, gestures, sexual photos or images, and requests for sexual favours. These were discovered to be common in colleges for teachers. One participant said that one lecturer said "Ukasandida you will continue to do rewrites" meaning if you do not comply with my sexual demands you will not pass the assignments. Another participant revealed "I had to comply kuti

course iende pamavhiri” meaning I had to comply for me to successfully complete the training course. Hence some students were threatened with failure if they did not accept sexual proposals from lecturers. The findings show prevalence of sexual harassment in Teachers’ Colleges.

Table 2: Causes of Sexual Harassment

	SA	A	NS	DS	SDA
Poverty	13(30)%	19(45)%	25(50)%	0	8(19)42%
Provocative dressing	18(45)%	11(27,5)%	0	1(2,5)%	10(25)40%
Laziness of female students	10(26,3)%	15(39,4)%	2(5,2)%	1(2,6)%	10(26,3)%
Lust of male lecturers	13(36)%	10(27,7)%	5(13,8)%	0	8(22,2)%
Bad influence by other students	13(30,9)%	17(40,5)%	4(9,5)%	0	8(19,1)%
The desire for flash life by female students	17(43,5)%	13(33,3)%	0	1(2,6)%	8(20,5)39%

The participants identified laziness, poverty, laziness of the female student, bad influence by other students s major contributory factor to sexual harassment Sexual harassment’s primary causes were determined by student teachers. One participant said “ Female students should do their assignments in time and avoid going to lecturers to ask for favours” This shows that sexual harassment can be promoted by lazy students who ask for favours after failing to meet set dealines. The students believe that sexual harassment is a direct result of poverty. Kabudi et al. (2018) and Murray et al. (2015) also brought up the subject of poverty. Another participant indicated that” Female student teachers should be self-dependent and be people with vision and succumb to poverty” Inadequate financial resources can lead student teachers become victims of sexual harassment.

The study also revealed sexual harassment to female students is as a result of lust. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) also noted that society views women as objects for men to enjoy. Similar conclusions were reached by Macknnon (1982), who discovered that social norms discount women. According to the findings sexual harassment was identified as provocative clothing. A participant said” Female students should dress properly to avoid tempting male lecturers” This finding is supported by Alhaji and Ali, (2014) also discovered that sexual harassment can result from indecent clothing which can be considered as a stereotype as a result patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean society. Other factors found in the study are desire for a glamorous lifestyle and negative peer pressure. Students should be contented with their financial status not desire flashy life

Effects of Sexual Harassment

	YES	NO
Depression	4(8,9)%	41(91,1)%
Trauma	2(4,4)%	43(95,6)%
Withdrawal	5(11,1)%	40(88.(0)%
Loss of self confidence	17.8%	37(82,2)%
Being aggressive	5 (11,1)%	40(88,9)%

As a result of sexual harassment, students experienced despair, training, retreat, loss of self-confidence, and violent behaviour. These have a negative impact on their learning and the acquisition of teaching abilities. The participants the need for counselling services to be availed to student teachers who report having experienced sexual harassment and its related effects. One participant suggested” Lessons for guidance and counselling should give students an opportunity for sexual harassment victims to open up and get relevant

assistance” Because of loss of self-confidence and fear to fail the training course students do not come out in the open reveal sexual harassment.

How can sexual harassment be curbed?

A suggestion box at the college was proposed by the participants as a means of reducing sexual harassment. The participants stated that “using a suggestion box can assist in identifying instructors who engage in sexual harassment”. In their study, the US Department of Education (2017) and AAU W (2020) both advocated for the use of suggestions as a means of combating sexual harassment. According to the report, colleges should establish professional conduct standards for lecturers and students. Mackinnon (1989) and Levy (2017) both addressed the use of guidelines, arguing that laws should be created to direct instructors and students on how to behave. Policies that protect against sexual harassment are also necessary, according to Mahomed et al. (2014).

Another point raised by participants was the necessity of educating students about the types of sexual harassment. They had this to say “students need workshops and awareness campaigns to educate teach them of the consequences of sexual harassment”. The notion of teaching students through workshops was also proposed by Gregory (2011) and Fitzgerald (1993), who both stressed the need of increasing awareness through training programs such as workshops. The necessity of establishing a setting where students may voice their concerns without worrying about being victimised was also brought up by participants. In addition to highlighting the importance of secrecy and mentioning the principle of reporting without fear, Murray et al. (2017) and Foe et al. (2013) also recommended the following tactics to stop male lecturers from sexually harassing female students. The survey also revealed that students should avoid attending tutorials alone in remote and isolated offices. In their studies, Buchanan (2013) and Cordina & Bergdahl (2008) similarly underlined the significance of avoiding remote locations when attempting to lower the number of sexual harassment cases. The participants also revealed that encouraging female students to dress professionally can help prevent sexual harassment by discouraging male instructors. The necessity for instructors to receive student work evaluations was also brought up by the participants

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the findings of the study indicate that sexual harassment is prevalent in Teacher’s Colleges in Zimbabwe. Sexual harassment of female students is mostly committed by male lecturers. Some female students sexually harass male lecturers as well to obtain academic favours, such as undeserved ratings on an assignment. The study also found out that indecent female dressing can be a factor of sexual harassment that is female students dressing provocatively. Poverty results in female students finding ways to support themselves financially hence poverty serves as a catalyst for sexual harassment. Male lecturers’ use of position power to pursue sexual fulfilment is another contributor to sexual harassment. The study also found that teacher’s college principals can use suggestion boxes to find male lecturers who are sexually harassing students. The survey also came to the conclusion that universities ought to have explicit policies for how to handle instructors who commit sexual harassment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Clearly defined comprehensive rules against sexual harassment, including , reporting procedures, and consequences, should be established by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science, and Technology Development.
- Teachers’ colleges ought to provide regular training sessions on identifying, preventing, and handling sexual harassment for lecturers, staff, and students.
- Lecturers need to be made aware of the effects of sexual harassment of student learning and

performance and condon it

- Authorities should hold lecturers and staff accountable for their actions with clear consequences for perpetrators of sexual harassment
- A more inclusive research can be done focussing on male students and the lecturers

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