

COMBATING SEXUAL HARASSMENT FOR OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF WOMEN IN TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

¹Iro-Idoro, Charlotte B. & ²Jimoh, Ibrahim B.

Department of Office Technology and Management
The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State, Nigeria

¹charlotte.iroidoro@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng or iro_lotte@yahoo.com

²jimohibrahim0201@gmail.com or ibrahim.jimoh@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng

¹08037133216 & ²08065075070

Abstract

Achieving a considerable level of operational effectiveness of female workers in the employment of technical and vocational education is essential to the management of institutions. This study, therefore, considered combating sexual harassment for the operational effectiveness of women in the employment of technical and vocational education in Ogun State. Three hypotheses were formulated; the population of the study consists of female employees' in Technical Vocational Institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria. Sample of one hundred twenty (120) female staff was randomly selected from three technical vocational educations in Ogun State (Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro and College of Education Osiele, Abeokuta) currently in service of the institutions. Two-structured questionnaires tagged Situation-Specific Assessment of Sexual Harassment (SSASH) Suzanne (2001), and Questions for Operational Effectiveness (QOE) Connie (2013) was adapted. Z-test at 5% level of significance was employed to test hypotheses for validating sexual harassment and the effectiveness of workers. The result shows that sexual hostility and unwanted sexual attention harms employees' efficiency on the job. Sexual coercion was found to be statistically insignificant, which induce that sexual coercion does not have any effect on the operational effectiveness of women in technical education. It was concluded, that combating sexual harassment for effective job performance of female employees' in specialized training needed to be geared towards other directions rather than rape and coercion. It was therefore recommended that employers should provide education and information about harassment to all staff. The study also sensitized females on types of sexual harassment that goes on in the workplace and how to prevent it from happening.

Keywords: Combating, Sexual Harassment, Operational Effectiveness, Technical and Vocational Education

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Understanding gender differences are a product of the conversion of inputs into outputs in the form of products and services for organisational success, which is known as operational efficiency and job satisfaction. Studies have shown that the wave of public accusations of sexual harassment and assault has rolled across workplaces in Nigeria, the prevailing silence on sex-based harassment in the workplace has continued to affect workers, particularly women negatively, personally and professionally (Rizzo, Theodore, Stevanovic-Fenn, Smith, Glinski, O'Brien-Milne, and Sarah, 2018). Sexual harassment issue has become more prominent in the last ten years. As the increasing number of cases reported, several countries have taken legal action to recognize it as misconduct and at the same time to punish and prevent it. Sexual harassment has frequently been reported as a critical problem, particularly in educational institutions (Siti, Zainuddin, Ahmad, Nur & Suzila, 2015).

Sexual harassment is an unwelcome behaviour, sexual nature, which is offensive, embarrassing, intimidating or humiliating and may affect an employees' work performance, health, career or livelihood (Sabitha, 2008). The definition applied to both gender and addressed the effects of sexual harassment on the victims. Siti et al. (2015) point out that an individual has different perceptions of what constitutes sexual harassment, and a definition is almost impossible to construct.

Sexual harassment includes a wide range of behaviours, from glances and rude jokes to demeaning comments based on gender stereotypes to sexual assault and other acts of physical violence (Iro-Idoro, 2018). Although the legal definition varies by country, it is understood to refer to unwelcome and unreasonable sex-related conduct. Sexual harassment is considered as "any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or

gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another. Such harassment may be but is not necessarily, of a form that interferes with work, is made a condition of employment, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment" (World Bank. Women, Business and the Law, 2014).

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that applies to harassment by a person against another person of the opposite sex as well as harassment by a person against another person of the same sex. It also occurs when an employee is subjected to unwelcome or unwanted sexual conduct that is sufficiently pervasive or severe to alter the terms or conditions of the employees' employment, such manner unreasonably interferes with an employee's work performance or creates an abusive, intimidating, offensive or hostile work environment. A manager, supervisor, co-worker, or even a non-employee such as a vendor, customer or third party can create a hostile environment (Jimoh, Jolaade, Durowaiye, Iro-Idoro, 2015).

Sexual harassment is defined by law and includes requests for sexual favours, sexual advances or other sexual conduct when submission is either explicitly or implicitly a condition affecting academic or employment decisions. The behaviour is sufficiently severe or pervasive as to create an intimidating, hostile or unfriendly environment and when the practice persists despite objection by the person to whom the conduct is directed. The University considers such behaviour, whether physical or verbal, to be a breach of its standards of conduct and will seek to prevent such incidents and take corrective measures when sexual harassment occurs (Office of Institutional Equity, University of Michigan, 2019).

Sexual harassment is divided into two major types, namely *Quid pro quo* and hostile work environment. *Quid pro quo* (this for that) harassment occurs when an employee is offered some job benefit such as promotion, pay raise, etc., in return for sexual favours or is subjected to some adverse action because of a refusal to submit to a request for sexual favours (Jimoh et al., 2015 and Iro-Idoro, 2018) . *Quid pro quo* sexual harassment also occurs when it is stated or implied that an individual must submit to conduct of a sexual nature to participate in a University program or activity. So, for example, if an employee is made to believe that a promotion is likely if the employee goes on a date with the supervisor, the employee is possibly being subjected to "quid pro quo" sexual harassment (Jimoh et al., 2105 and Iro-Idoro, 2018).

Hostile environment sexual harassment occurs when unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive working or learning environment or is so severe, persistent or pervasive that it affects a person's ability to participate in or benefit from a University programme or activity. The harasser can be a peer of the person being harassed. Sometimes the harasser is harassing a person who has power over them. For example, a supervisee can sexually harass a supervisor, or a student can sexually harass a faculty member (Office of Institutional Equity, University of Michigan, 2019).

Effectiveness is doing the right thing or occupying oneself with the right thing. The concept of effectiveness' is linked to the assumption that organisations are goal-oriented. The focus is on the actual attainment of organisational goals and not so much on the means necessary to reach them or the speed at which they are achieved. For this reason, not everything useful has to be efficient; but everything dynamic has to be effective (Lodewijk, 2016). Measuring your employees' effectiveness is an essential part of managing a team, and ensures your organisation is running at its most productive. Employee effectiveness must be maintained and measured to ensure that not only are employees effective in their roles and in meeting the objectives of the organisation but also that they are engaged and challenged (Gina, 2016).

Effectiveness is conceptualized in four approaches, and these are the Goal Achievement Approach, which is the fulfilment level of organisational objectives and the final achievements of the organisation. Systematic Approach is the ability in using and processing data to achieve and maintain stability within the organisation. Strategic Factors Approach is the ability to fulfil the expectations of external factors on which organisation stability depends. Competitive Values Approach is identifying all fundamental variables which influence the performance of the organisation and the connection of these variables (Tahereh, Khalil, & Zahra, 2012).

Organisations have also come to realize that to be relevant in the current competitive and globalized business environment; there is a need to reassess their competing imperatives to remain viable and competitive continually. Management is fully aware that enhancing its employees' effectiveness through a performance management system

and policy implementation can facilitate its efforts to sustain and improve organisational efficiency. Compton (2005) opined that there is ample evidence to suggest that companies which utilize performance management systems and policy implementations can strategically perform more effectively (Teo & Low, 2016).

The organisational performance involves the recurring activities to establish corporate goals, monitor progress toward the goals, and make adjustments to achieve those goals more effectively and efficiently. While examining the relationship between quality principles and practices and performance, scholars have used different performance types such as financial, innovative, operational and quality performance (Rula, 2017). Employee effectiveness can be assumed as an enhanced level of employee performance that would lead to higher productivity. Employees' effectiveness will survive and flourish if each organisation gains meaning from the employees. Thus, the closer the objectives of employees and those of manager and organisation to each other, the expert power is, the easier it would be to achieve those objectives; therefore, the goals of managers and employees would be realized.

The incidents of sexual harassment have also been related to withdrawal from the organisation (Gruber, 2003). Two different constructs usually measure removal, firstly, work withdrawal which is being late, neglectful, avoiding work tasks while the second construct is job withdrawal that is turnover or intention to leave the organisation (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990). Workers' productivity will reduce the quantity and quality of work, lessen the willingness to cooperate and work with others as well as low level of productivity is another cost of sexual harassment (Lengnick, 1995). Studies have shown that some of the victims are aggressive and reactive, as well as task avoidance (Siti, 2015). Suzanne, Mindy, Nicole, Fritz, & Louise, (2001) identifies four tools for measuring sexual harassment as Sexist Hostility, Sexual Hostility, Unwanted Sexual Attention and Sexual Coercion but for this study, the last three will be considered while the first one will be dropped for further research.

Sexual Hostility occurs when unwelcome comments or conduct based on sex, race or other legally protected characteristics unreasonably interferes with an employee's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. It is a work environment created by unwelcome sexual behaviour or behaviour directed at an employee because of that employee's sex that is offensive, hostile and intimidating and that adversely affects that employee's ability to do his or her job (Jimoh et al., 2015 and Iro-Idoro, 2018).

Unwanted Sexual Attention is any sexual attention that makes you feel uncomfortable or intimidated and can often result in victims experiencing health problems. Unwelcome sexual attention covers a vast range of behaviours from being touched without permission, causing fear, alarm or distress; sexual name-calling or harassment to rape and sexual assault. Unwanted sexual attention can happen to both women and men and between people of the same and opposite sex (Hantsweb, 2019).

Sexual coercion is an unwanted sexual activity that happens when you are pressured, tricked, threatened, or forced in a nonphysical way. Compulsion can make you think you owe sex to someone. It might be from someone who has power over you, like a teacher, landlord, or a boss. (Office of women health, 2019). This occurs when an employee is offered some job benefit such as promotion, pay raise, etc., in return for sexual favours or is subjected to some adverse action because of a refusal to submit to a request for sexual favours. In a relationship where sexual coercion is occurring, there is a lack of consent, and the coercive partner does not respect the boundaries or wishes of the other. This is often referred to as quid pro quo sexual harassment (Jimoh et al., 2015 and Iro-Idoro, 2018).

Hence, the objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between awareness of sexual harassment, namely; Sexual Hostility, Unwanted Sexual Attention and Sexual Coercion and Employees effectiveness in the organisation.

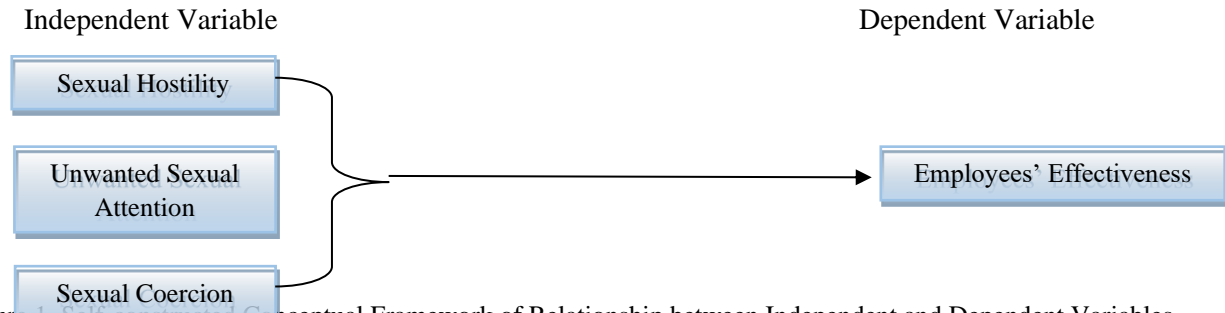


Figure 1. Self-constructed Conceptual Framework of Relationship between Independent and Dependent Variables

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Significant efforts have been made in addressing the problem of sexual harassment; the research has not been straightforward concerning its effect on the job performance of an employee. Despite the increasing interest in the different areas of employees' related issues, job performance, effective and efficient performance, work ethics, compensation, training and development, etc. very little attention is given to sexual harassment of female staff in technical educational vocation as an essential factor in enhancing some of the employees' related issues

Employees in the educational sector often work long, irregular hours with alternating peak and slack times, which involve night; they are expected to have a better relationship with boss and colleagues for organisational success. In such conditions and situations, the line between appropriate and inappropriate familiarity may be crossed more easily (Siti et al., 2015). Therefore, employees who often report incidents of sexual harassment possibly exposed to the act due to some of these conditions. However, a study on sexual harassment of female staff for effective performance in technical vocational education is insufficient. Hence, it is essential to examine the various areas in sexual harassment and whether it significantly contributes to and determine the effectiveness of female employees' in technical and vocational education in Ogun State.

1.3 Hypotheses

- H₀₁: Sexual Hostility of sexual harassment positively influences employees' effectiveness.
 H₀₂: Unwanted Sexual Attention positively influences employees' effectiveness.
 H₀₃: Sexual Coercion positively influences employees' effectiveness.

2.0 Methodology

A survey design was adopted for the study, which consists of one independent variable sexual harassment and one dependent variable – employees' effectiveness. Two-structured questionnaire tagged Situation-Specific Assessment of Sexual Harassment (SSASH) (Suzanne, 2001) and Questions for Operational Effectiveness (QOE) (Connie, 2013). A sample of one hundred twenty (120) female staff was randomly selected from three technical vocational educations in Ogun State (Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro and College of Education Osiele, Abeokuta) currently in service of the institutions. In descriptive research, a sample size of 10-50% is acceptable (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A sample of 120 questionnaires was distributed to female employees in various departments of the three selected Technical Vocational institutions in Ogun State, Nigeria and was completed and returned. Respondents were required to answer each item using four-Likert scale, ranging from 4 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. Z-test at 5% level of significance was employed to test hypotheses for validating such sexual harassment and the efficiency of workers. The use of such a method was based on satisfying conditions of known population standard deviation, and sample size of the study was found higher than thirty.

3.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Presentation, Interpretation and Discussion of Results

Out of the total one hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires administered, all the 120 questionnaires were returned yielding a retrieval rate of 100%. The Z-test statistic was performed, and the results displayed in Table 1. Hypotheses were tested using probability values from z-test analysis. From the result in Table 1, it was discovered that the use of sexual hostility and unwanted sexual attention are significant with the operational effectiveness of workers. This is confirmed by the rejection of null hypotheses formulated for meaningful strategies. However, the acceptance of the null hypothesis that the coefficient of sexual coercion is not significantly different from zero indicates that such is an insignificant sexual harassment determinant to the operational effectiveness of workers in the study area.

Table 1: Z-Test Result for Hypotheses Testing

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Z-value	P-value	H ₀	Decision
Sexual Hostility	120	2.551	1.234	9.433	0.000	H ₀₁ = 0	Rejected
Unwanted Sexual Attention	120	3.282	1.268	6.908	0.000	H ₀₂ = 0	Rejected
Sexual Coercion	120	3.539	1.148	3.550	0.073	H ₀₄ = 0	Accepted

Source: Author's Computation from STATA 12 Outputs, 2019

Decision Rule: If the p-value is less than the 5% level of significance, the H₀ will be rejected, but if the p-value is more than the 5% level of significance, the H₀ will be accepted.

H₀₁: Sexual Hostility of sexual harassment positively influences employees' effectiveness.

Decision: The p-value of H₀₁ is 0.000, and this is less than the 5% level of significance. This means that the null hypothesis would be rejected.

H₀₂: Unwanted Sexual Attention positively influences employees' effectiveness.

Decision: The p-value of H₀₂ is 0.000, and this is less than the 5% level of significance. This means that the null hypothesis would be rejected.

H₀₃: Sexual Coercion positively influences employees' effectiveness.

Decision: The p-value of H₀₃ is 0.073, and this is more than the 5% level of significance. This means that the null hypothesis would be accepted.

3.2 Discussion of Findings

The current study developed and evaluated the relationship between awareness of sexual harassment, namely; Sexual Hostility, Unwanted Sexual Attention and Sexual Coercion and Employees effectiveness in the organisation. The result shows that sexual hostility has affected employees' effectiveness on the job negatively. This means that female employees experience series of sexual aversion like telling original stories or jokes that were offensive, staff making crude and offensive sexual remarks e.t.c which sometimes embarrasses them and in return affect their efficiency and effectiveness. Jimoh et al. (2015) and Iro-Idoro, (2018) affirmed that when this behaviour is directed at an employee because of that employee's sex, it adversely affects that employee's ability to do his or her job

Based on the result, the study shows that unwanted sexual attention has caused operational inefficiency of women in technical education. This implies that female employees in professional training usually experience unwanted sexual attention from either their male colleagues or boss despite an effort to discourage them from making advances. Touching and hugging without permission, asking for a date or drink during working hours are examples of female

employees experiences. The result of this is directly on the effectiveness of the female employees, loose of commitment or interest in the organisation if not total withdrawal from the organisation (Gruber, 2003). Two different constructs usually measure removal, work withdrawal being late, neglectful, avoiding work tasks and job withdrawal that is turnover, or intention to leave the organisation (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990).

However, sexual coercion is found to be statistically insignificant, which induce sexual coercion does not have any effect on the operational effectiveness of women in technical education. This result may be due to strict implementation of legal action for misconduct by the management or understanding of the implications of such work by the employees since it a formal and educational. The issue of sexual harassment has undoubtedly become more prominent in the last decade. As the increasing number of cases reported, many countries have taken legal action to recognize it as misconduct and at the same time to punish and prevent it. Sexual harassment has frequently been reported as a critical problem, particularly in educational institutions (Siti, 2015).

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

It may be concluded, from the preceding, that the combating sexual harassment for effective job performance of female employees in technical education needs to be geared towards other direction. Workplace sexual harassment is costly to employees and institution and is legally prohibited. Employees who are sexually harassed suffer a range of negative psychological and physical health consequences. Sexual harassment reduces individual and group effectiveness. Survey evidence shows that workplace sexual harassment is quite common. Much attention had been given to sexual coercion is it more noticeable and evident by the public. Indeed the management of the institutions had done a lot in the area of rape, duress and undue influence for abuse. However, the technical and vocational educations could pay much attention to other areas of sexual harassment in order not to create a hostile work environment and boost employees' effectiveness.

4.2 Recommendations

Prevention is the best tool to eliminate harassment in the workplace. Employers are encouraged to take appropriate steps to prevent and correct unlawful harassment, the researcher, therefore, recommends the following:

1. Employers are responsible for providing their staff with a work environment that is discriminate and free of harassment. Management of technical and vocational educations should continue to pay attention to the increasing cases of sexual harassment by creating policies directed at prevention rather than correction.
2. Employers should provide education and information about harassment to all staff regularly. Female Employees should be educated and sensitized on the types of sexual harassment that goes on in the workplace and the techniques to prevent it from happening.
3. Employers should provide a mechanism for addressing sexual harassment confidentially and sensitively after the staff has filed a grievance.
4. Employers should establish a valid complaint or grievance process, providing anti-harassment training to their managers and employees, and taking immediate and appropriate action when a female employee is harassed.

References

- Gina, A. (2016). Measure and Manage Employee Effectiveness. <https://www.ginaabudi.com/measure-manage-employee-effectiveness>. Retrieved.
- Hantsweb (2019). Unwanted sexual attention. <https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/getiton/relationships/unwantedsexualattention>
- Iro-Idoro, C. B. (2018). Causes and Manifestations and Preventive Measures against Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Institutions: A Paper Presented at a 2-Day Retreat Programme for Heads of Department and School Officers

Organised by the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State at YEWA Frontier Hotels & Resorts Conference Hall, KM 4-5, Ilaro-Ibese Road, Ilaro, Ogun State, Friday, 31st Aug – Sunday 2nd Sep.

Jimoh, T. A., Jolaade, I. A., Durowaiye, D. A., Iro-Idoro, C. B. (2015). *Fundamentals of People Communication Skills*. O'BASIT Publication Series. Ilaro

Lodewijk, N. (2016). *What is employee effectiveness?* <https://www.effectory.com/knowledge/themes/what-is-employee-effectiveness>. Retrieved.

Love is respect (2014). What is Sexual Coercion? <https://www.loveisrespect.org/content/what-sexual-coercion/>

Office of women health (2019). University of Michigan

Phillip C. Wright, Shirley Ann Bean, (1993) "Sexual Harassment: An Issue of Employee Effectiveness", *Journal of Managerial Psychology*. 8 (2), pp.30-36,

Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness (2019). *What is Sexual Harassment?* Office of Institutional Equity, University of Michigan

Sexual coercion. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/relationships-and-safety/other-types/sexual-coercion>. Retrieved

Siti, R. O., Zainuddin, Z., Ahmad S. M., Nur S. M. & Suzila M. S. (2015). The Effects of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: Experience of Employees in the Hospitality Industry in Terengganu, Malaysia. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. Vol. 6(4).

Suzanne, E. M., Mindy E. B., NiCole T. B., Fritz D., and Louise F. F, (2001). Situation-Specific Assessment of Sexual Harassment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 59, 120–131

Tahereh N., Khalil A. and Zahra Nobakht R. (2012). Employees' Effectiveness. *World Applied Sciences Journal* 18 (10): 1400-1411.

The World Bank. Women, Business and the Law (2014). *Removing Restrictions to Enhance Gender Equality*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013.