

Prevalence, Determinants And Consequences Of Campus Sexual Harassment In Nigerian Private Universities

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Abstract

This research investigates the prevalence, determining factors, and consequences of sexual harassment in private institutions using the quantitative design that utilizes Weighted Mean Score (WMS) and Chi-Square statistics. Results reveal a systemic institutional problem of sexual harassment, which is not just an occurrence of several individual acts but rather consists of verbal harassment (WMS = 2.60) and online harassment (WMS = 2.27). All forms of sexual harassment correlated significantly ($p < .001$), yet institutional affiliation was non-significant and thus the issue is prevalent across all institutions. Main factors that cause sexual harassment are found to be the lack of reporting (victim silence, WMS = 4.14; $\chi^2 = 500.246$), institutional inactivity (WMS = 4.02; $\chi^2 = 370.743$), and training insufficiency, indicating cultural and structural causes for sexual harassment perpetration and cover-up. Consequences are reported as serious academic and psychological problems, such as low academic achievement (WMS = 4.18), mental well-being issues (WMS = 4.18), and insecurity perception at school (WMS = 4.17). The findings suggest that there exists a repetitive cycle of normalisation, silence, and ineffective organisational responses. In summary, the study recommends that interventions be taken outside the confines of established policy to incorporate survivor-focused reporting mechanisms, mandatory training, and psychological support. It is imperative to view sexual harassment as an institutional problem that needs to be addressed.

Keywords: Campus Sexual Harassment, Consequences, Determinants, Higher Education, Prevalence, Private Universities.

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I. Introduction

The problem of sexual harassment is on the rise within institutions of higher education, and even in other settings beyond academics. According to Ahmed, (2017); Fitzgerald et al., (1997); McLaughlin et al., (2017); and Smith & Freyd, (2024), such harassment takes place in a setting governed by power dynamics, governance, gender culture, norms, and institutional deficiencies, thereby making the act more about structural factors rather than personal misconduct, as asserted by Berdahl & Moore, (2006). Such institutions are seen as hierarchical organisations where there is a high concentration of power, dependency, and evaluation, especially when it comes to the relationship between staff and students because their assessment, progress, and opportunities depend on discretion.

Campus sexual harassment includes a range of unwelcome sexual acts, ranging from gendered hostile actions, unwelcome sexual approaches, sexual coercion, and quid pro quo actions in which sexual submission is demanded in exchange for educational benefits. The authors Fitzgerald et al. (1995) found that such acts are more common among academics who have a high level of power and where lecturers and supervisors possess considerable leverage over marks, guidance, and opportunities.

Studies across the world show that around one-third to over half of the students enrolled in universities, particularly females, are sexually harassed during the course of their university years, albeit the nature of the harassment varies across subjects and universities (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Sivertsen et al., 2020). With increasing efforts being made toward making policies on gender issues, sexual harassment at universities continues to be significantly underreported due to the fear of reprisal and victim-blaming (McLaughlin et al., 2017; Smith & Freyd, 2024).

There have been many studies conducted internationally, which show that sexual harassment affects the academic motivation, psychological state, and institutional affiliation among students, while the non-reporting of these experiences is perpetuated by organisational silence and reputational risk (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Cantor et al., 2019). Further feminist theory highlights that these institutional dynamics reproduce patriarchal power dynamics that create vulnerability for sexual exploitation and discrimination against women and other structurally disadvantaged groups.

Despite the growing number of articles published on campus sexual harassment, there is limited empirical data from other geographic areas and institutional settings. Studies conducted in North American and European institutions dominate the literature in terms of prevalence, forms of sexual harassment, and reporting dynamics, as shown by the results of numerous survey samples (Cantor et al., 2019; Hill & Silva, 2005). The problem with these debates is that they do not offer an explanation for sexual harassment within other institutional settings.

In the case of sub-Saharan Africa, there has been an increase in scholarly work on sexual harassment in higher education institutions over the last two decades (Bhana, 2012; Morley, 2011). The literature indicates that sexual harassment within these institutions tends to be a part of everyday academic interaction and is reinforced by structural inequalities within the institution and prevailing gender roles (Bhana, 2012). These issues are compounded by socio-cultural norms based on gender, lack of regulation, and lack of accountability in the higher education institutions. However, the knowledge base in this regard is still rather disparate. Research on sexual harassment uses single institutions as data sources, has different meanings of sexual harassment, and uses different measures to determine sexual harassment, leading to varied rates of prevalence in different studies (Morley, 2011).

In Nigeria, the nation boasting the highest number of higher education establishments in Africa, the recent national evidence has revealed a startling level of sexual violence experienced among university students, normalization of abusive academic processes, failure to access justice, severe obstacles to reporting, and poor trust towards reporting mechanisms (Ajuwon et al., 2001; Famutimi, 2015; Ogunfowokan et al., 2024). Nevertheless, existing scholarly literature seems to have excessively focused on the issues of sexual violence at the expense of neglecting private universities that tend to be more disciplined both academically and morally.

Private universities represent an important sector within Nigeria's higher education system whose establishments are characterized by stricter supervisory and disciplinary regimes. Nevertheless, the very presence of the former does not guarantee the absence of the latter. On the contrary, greater dependency on academia, hierarchical relationships, campus-based living conditions, and increased image consciousness among private universities can impede the process of disclosing sexual harassment on their campuses even further. The unique context in which sexual harassment takes place in Nigerian private universities requires further investigation.

The bulk of the literature from Nigeria appears to be more concerned with demonstrating the existence of sexual harassment, leaving very little room for exploring the determinants and implications of such conduct within various institutional settings and among different demographics. While the effect of structural elements like gender inequality and ineffective implementation of regulations is recognized, the combined effect of institutional type and environment is underexplored (Famutimi, 2015). As is the case with other studies in Nigeria, while the international literature identifies clear implications for education and psychology, studies in Nigeria tend to rely on indirect inference (Ajuwon et al., 2001; Cantor et al., 2019).

Statement of the Research Problem

Globally, literature reports that one-third to more than half of all university students face harassment (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Sivertsen et al., 2020). In Nigeria, there are several studies that indicate the presence of sexual violence, low reporting of violence, and mistrust in existing procedures (Ajuwon et al., 2001; Famutimi, 2015; Ogunfowokan et al., 2024). Despite this, most of the research is conducted within public universities, thus, private universities have received little attention because of different hierarchies and living arrangements and reputations.

The research in Nigeria is usually fragmented, relies on sample from only one institution, and lacks uniformity in measuring the harassment phenomena, resulting in insufficient knowledge about its occurrence, causes, and results in different contexts (Bhana, 2012; Morley, 2011). Although foreign literature discusses consequences for academic and psychological well-being of the victims of sexual harassment (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Cantor et al., 2019), Nigerian literature lacks the data on such outcomes.

Thus, this research attempts to answer the question by developing empirically-based data on harassment within the private universities of Nigeria. Specifically, it focuses on the following questions:

What is the prevalence of sexual harassment in the universities, and how does it vary across different university settings and demographics, such as gender, geographical location and cultural context?
What are the underlying factors contributing to campus sexual harassment in university settings?

What are the psychological and emotional consequences of sexual harassment on victims and how do these experiences impact their academic and personal well-being?

II. Literature Review

Prevalence of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment continues to occur across the globe, putting the safety, education, and mental health of students at risk. Numerous studies from various regions, including Africa, Europe, and North America, show that most universities have unequal power dynamics, gender inequalities, underreporting issues, and a culture of silence.

For instance, in Nigeria, 63% of females indicated being sexually harassed (Afeez, 2024), while national surveys show that 37% suffered sexual violence (Ogunfowokan et al., 2024). There is also high rate of underreporting in Ghana and Zimbabwe due to lack of trust (Sualihu et al., 2024; Mugodzwa & Ngwerume, 2023). Moreover, there are reports from Europe about frequent occurrences and underreporting (Boskovic et al., 2023; Bergmann et al., 2024). Women continue to face higher rates of sexual harassment than men (Athanasopoulos et al., 2023; Hapsari et al., 2023).

Although numerous studies have been carried out in public universities, new evidence suggests that the problem exists. One study conducted on faith-based private universities within Ogun State found that students were harassed by their academic lecturers and even peers, albeit in more subtle ways (Omonijo et al., 2013). According to a popular study conducted by BBC Africa Eye (2019), a 'sex for grades' system was found to be prevalent in West African universities, including those in Nigeria, and illustrates the abuse of academic power for sexual gratification. Such findings indicate that sexual harassment is a systematic occurrence and is normalized in some cases (Owoaje & Olusola-Taiwo, 2010).

In relation to disciplinary contexts, STEM students have been found to report harassment less frequently, pointing out the role of disciplinary culture and gender in reporting harassment (Aguilar & Baek, 2020). Factors related to university campuses include lack of policy clarity, gender disparity, and lack of climate survey measures (Tashkandi et al., 2022).

Campus structure and lack of supervision make CSH possible (Hapsari et al., 2023). Student vulnerability varies based on their demographic characteristics; women, freshmen, humanities and art students, polytechnic and college students, as well as those with traditionalist values, face greater risks of sexual harassment on the campus (Ogunfowokan et al., 2024). Reporting via electronic means is a preferable way to avoid retaliation (Johnson Baba, 2024).

As shown by the literature review based on empirical data in Africa, Europe, and Asia, campus sexual harassment is prevalent and underreported. Insufficient institution response, unclear policies, lack of enforcement of policies, delays in investigation, and poor victim support all exacerbate the problem even further. Campus sexual harassment can lead to the experience of psychological trauma, dissociation from studies, and even dropping out. Social media-based sexual harassment presents difficulties in prevention and reporting.

Determinants of Sexual Harassment

Persistent problems with sexual harassment imply that they stem from complex structures and processes rather than one-time incidents of inappropriate behaviour. In higher education settings, sexual harassment often has roots in academic hierarchy, which assigns power and authority to lecturers, administrators, and senior students. Such structural, symbolic, and interpersonal power relations create an enabling environment for abuses (European Obstacles Study, 2023; Attala & Nurhaeni, 2024).

Power dynamics allow for sexual harassment and silence. Lecturers and staff can use their authority to intimidate and abuse the students (Karami et al., 2019). Hierarchies and patriarchal cultures in universities promote network silence, which entails the unwillingness to report sexual harassment among both the victims themselves and other members of the community and administration (Duffy et al., 2023).

Private universities are typically linked with strict disciplinary structures, religious or moral codes, and close monitoring of student behaviour. However, these same features may cause institutional silence, as administrations seek to protect their reputation (Akanle et al., 2016). Consequently, incidents of sexual harassment are less visible but not necessarily less frequent.

Institutional culture influences tolerance and response to sexual harassment. Symbolic compliance policies that exist are weakly enforced, and institutional silence continues to cause harm (Fasanmi & Seyama, 2024; Sualihu et al., 2024). Institutional betrayal, by which inaction exacerbates survivor harm, occurs at multiple ecological echelons, including structural and cultural levels (Dufour, 2024).

The culture of norms and gender ideology affects prevalence and silencing. Hierarchical relationships and traditional gender roles normalise the sexual harassment phenomenon and reduce the possibility of the issue being reported (Attala & Nurhaeni, 2024; Atlantis-Press, n.d.). Psychologically weak women suffer from severe

implications (Athanasziades et al., 2023). Marginalising students has a compounding effect due to systematic challenges and a lack of trust in institutions. Economic vulnerability enhances the likelihood of exploitation. Students are compelled to engage in sexual activities in exchange for better grades (sex for marks) (De Klerk et al., 2023). The norms of cultures, the lack of reporting mechanisms, and the gap in status contribute to sexual harassment among college students (Etta et al., 2024).

University characteristics determine the nature and prevalence of sexual harassment in colleges. Although there may be policies about sexual abuse in private universities, the execution is questionable (Omonijo et al., 2013). Survivors prefer self-reliance methods to institutional reporting systems (Okeke, 2011). Findings from research conducted by Tashkandi, Hirsch, Kraus, Schwartz, and Walsh (2022) indicate that factors like university size, accommodation facilities, security arrangements, supervision and social norms within the institution may influence the prevalence rate of sexual victimisation.

Silencing structures theory highlights how students' unwillingness to report harassment results from adaptation to the stigma, fear, and institutional barriers (BMC Global & Public Health, 2025). Retaliation is one of the major reasons victims tend to remain silent, as perpetrators may be high-status individuals at educational institutions, which would imply the possibility of facing negative academic and social consequences (Holland & Cortina, 2013). In addition, shame, stigma, and self-blame are often common among survivors, as in the context of victim-blaming cultures; students may start feeling guilty about the experience of harassment and its potential impact on them (Turchik & Edwards, 2012). Moreover, distrust in the processes within universities hinders reporting, since students may assume that the institution does not handle complaints properly and does not react to sexual violence appropriately (Smith & Freyd, 2014). A lack of awareness is another factor. Many students may understand how to make an appropriate complaint (Cantor et al., 2019). Finally, cultural and family expectations affect the practice of disclosing sexual misconduct, as it is not convenient to talk openly about such matters, and families try to prevent any reports due to possible stigma (Koss, 2014).

Hierarchical structures at universities create environments ripe for harassment. Faculty members have authority over grades, research projects, and educational advancements (Bergmann et al., 2024). Freshmen and other young undergraduate students face a greater risk of harassment. Cultures that overlook unacceptable conduct add to the problem. Unwanted sexual innuendoes, inappropriate comments, and non-verbal signals are seen as trivial matters (Athanasziades et al., 2023). Silence on subtle harassment results from indifference on the part of both faculty and students (Hapsari et al., 2023).

Consequences of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment among students creates stress, feelings of despair, anxiety, and low self-confidence (Athanasziades et al., 2023; Nyakurerwa, 2025; Maposa, 2025). Victims miss lectures, retreat from campus activities, and even withdraw from universities. Poor support structures and widespread prevalence of sexual harassment worsen their mental state. High psychological resilience minimises but does not counter negative impacts (Athanasziades et al., 2023).

Victims of sexual harassment fail to report because they feel scared, ashamed, and distrusting of procedures put in place (Boskovic et al., 2023; HEA, 2021; Bergmann et al., 2024). Cultural barriers and the blame culture contribute significantly to making victims feel unable to come out and report cases of sexual abuse (Ogunfowokan et al., 2024; Hapsari et al., 2023). Therefore, the need for increased awareness and education cannot be overlooked.

Survivor-centred and supportive strategies, including those that ensure there are well-defined policies and increased educational efforts, will be more successful than blaming and stigmatising the victims. The initiatives of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) introduced the Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment Plan (2022–2024) by emphasising survivor-friendly reporting, support services, education and awareness programmes, psychosocial support, and monitoring of the campus climate. Preventive measures include bystander intervention training, sexual consent education, awareness campaigns, and others (Athanasziades et al., 2023; Hapsari et al., 2023). Civil society initiatives such as the ICIR project aim at enhancing reporting and empowerment of survivors and policy change (2025).

Theoretical Framework

Analysing CSH requires wider structures, social norms, and processes. Various theoretical perspectives provide tools for analysis. Hence, in this research, a multi-theoretical perspective has been employed for analysing sexual harassment in the forms of lecturer-student (vertical) and student-student (horizontal) interactions in Nigerian private universities. These include Feminist Theory, Power Imbalance Theory and Institutional Betrayal Theory.

The feminist theory explains sexual harassment, as this act is seen as a result of structural and power inequalities within patriarchy (Mackinnon, 1979). Differences in vulnerability exist between genders, races, disabilities, and socio-economic statuses.

The Power Imbalance theory explores how hierarchical structures contribute to sexual harassment. For instance, faculty members, administrators, and senior students can abuse their positions by threatening or manipulating other people (Cantalupo, 2018). Hierarchy, resource control, and accountability problems foster the emergence of sexual harassment.

The Institutional Betrayal theory provides additional insight into the matter by highlighting the importance of institutional responses. Smith & Freyd (2014) believe that organisations may increase the suffering experienced by victims through ignoring their complaints, protecting offenders, or implementing reporting processes that can make victims feel uncomfortable and insecure. This theoretical approach explains why sexual harassment victims seldom speak about their trauma despite having appropriate policies in place. It is important to note that survivorship narratives may be affected not only by the act itself but also by the institutional reaction to sexual harassment. All of the approaches mentioned above represent a coherent theoretical framework which can be useful in exploring sexual harassment as an issue stemming from gender-based expectations and attitudes, power dynamics, environment, learned behaviours, societal acceptance, organisational responses, and cultural norms, among others.

III. Methodology

A cross-sectional, descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The south-south geopolitical zone of Nigeria, comprising six states: Edo, Delta, Akwa -Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, and Rivers, made up the research area. Six private Universities were randomly selected for this study. A total of five hundred and thirty-three (533) students participated in the study, other participants included guidance counsellors and Deans of Student Affairs. A quantitative method of data analysis was used.

IV. Results

Three research questions were answered in this study using quantitative data analysis. Results of the statistical analyses of the data collected are presented below:

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	188	35.3	36.2	36.2
	Female	332	62.3	63.8	100.0
	Total	520	97.6	100.0	
Missing		13	2.4		
Total		533	100.0		

Source: Authors' computation using SPSS

Out of 533 respondents, 520 provided valid gender data, with 13 (2.4%) missing responses. Among valid responses, females (63.8%) outnumber males (36.2%), indicating a female-dominated sample.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents by Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	16 - 20 Years	324	60.8	63.3	63.3
	21 - 25 Years	168	31.5	32.8	96.1
	26 - 30 Years	18	3.4	3.5	99.6
	36 & Above	2	.4	.4	100.0
	Total	512	96.1	100.0	
Missing		21	3.9		
Total		533	100.0		

Source: Authors' computation using SPSS

Out of 533 respondents, 512 provided valid age data, while 21 (3.9%) responses were missing. Most of the respondents are aged 16–20 years (63.3%), followed by 21–25 years (32.8%), indicating a predominantly young sample.

Out of 533 respondents, 506 provided valid data on the course of study, while 27 (5.1%) responses were missing. The majority of the respondents fall under “Others” (33.2%) and Social Sciences (24.5%), with relatively few in Pharmacy (2.0%) and Engineering (3.4%).

Table 4 Distribution of Respondents by Campus Residency

Campus Residence	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid On Campus	434	81.4	85.9	85.9
Off Campus	71	13.3	14.1	100.0
Total	505	94.7	100.0	
Missing	28	5.3		
Total	533	100.0		

Source: Authors' computation using SPSS

Research Question One: What is the prevalence of sexual harassment in the universities, and how does it vary across different university settings and demographics, such as university, gender, campus residence status and cultural context? (VO =Very Often, OF = Often, UN = Undecided, OC = Occasionally, NV = Never.

Table 5: Prevalence of Sexual Harassment in Frequency, Percentages and Weighted Mean Score

Types of Sexual Harassment	VO 5	OF 4	UN 3	OC 2	NV 1	Weighted Mean Score	Decision
Verbal harassment: inappropriate comments, jokes	95 17.8% 0.89	87 16.3% 0.65	66 12.4% 0.37	83 15.6% 0.31	202 37.9% 0.38	2.6	Prevalent
Physical harassment: unwelcome touching, groping.	36 6.8% 0.34	51 9.6% 0.38	83 15.5% 0.47	70 15.0% 0.26	283 53.1% 0.53	1.98	Not Prevalent
Visual harassment: lewd gestures, displaying pornographic material	45 8.4% 0.42	49 9.2% 0.37	78 14.7% 0.44	64 12.0% 0.24	297 55.7% 0.56	2.03	Prevalent
Online harassment: sending unsolicited sexual content)	66 12.4% 0.62	64 12.0% 0.48	78 14.7% 0.44	61 11.4% 0.23	264 49.5% 0.50	2.27	Prevalent

Source: Authors' computation using SPSS

The prevalence of various types of campus sexual harassment was found in Table 5 with the use of a five-point Likert scale (Very Often = 5; Never = 1) and criterion of mean equal to 3.00. Weighted mean reveals distinct patterns of occurrence of campus sexual harassment.

Verbal harassment proved to be the most frequent type of sexual harassment at universities. While 37.9% of respondents reported it "Never," many of them experienced it "Very Often" (17.8%) and "Often" (16.3%). With "Occasionally" (15.6%) included, it became clear that verbal sexual harassment occurs continuously. Thus, the weighted mean score of 2.60 is placed in the category of prevalence (2.00–2.99) defined in the research hypothesis. Even though the obtained mean score is lower than 3.00, which would mean high prevalence, the score still demonstrates a certain tendency toward the continuous occurrence of sexual harassment. Hence, inappropriate comments and other types of verbal misconduct happen often enough to be considered behaviourally normalised within campus social interactions.

Physical harassment was the type of misconduct that received the lowest weighted mean value of all categories studied. Most participants (53.1%) answered "Never," suggesting that it happens rather infrequently compared to other types of misconduct. However, it should be acknowledged that over 31% of participants experienced physical harassment to some extent, namely, it happened with them either occasionally or very often. Although the mean value is slightly less than 2.00, it cannot go unnoticed that close to one-third of participants have been exposed to physical misconduct.

The form of harassment regarding inappropriate gestures and being exposed to any visual material has been noted to be slightly above the weighted mean of 2.00. Even though the majority of the participants (55.7%) answered "Never," there is an evident percentage of those participants (44%) who consented to having some exposure to the harassment form mentioned. Therefore, the mean of 2.02 shows the fact of visual misconduct approaching its prevalence rate and thus is of high importance.

Online harassment, with the weighted mean score of 2.27, depicts an increase in digitalisation of sexual misconduct. While almost half of the participants admitted never experiencing online sexual harassment, about 39% of the respondents noted having experienced exposure at levels ranging from "Occasionally" to "Very Often." The weighted mean of 2.27 shows that online sexual harassment lies close to the prevalence rate and thus is considered quite prevalent. It should be mentioned that the online harassment form of sexual

misconduct should definitely be taken into account when considering the implementation of cyber behaviour codes in private universities.

Table 6: Chi-Square Test Statistics on Prevalence of SH across Universities, Gender, Campus Residence Status & Culture

University	Gender	Campus Status	Res	Neg. Socio-Cultural Beliefs & Practices	Verbal Harassment	Physical Harassment	Visual Harassment	Online Harassment
7.343 ^a 5	43.168 ^b	322.313 ^b		68.063 ^c	110.252 ^c	417.152 ^c	507.310 ^c	344.473 ^c
	1	1		4	4	4	4	4
.196	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Source: Authors computation using SPSS

The insignificant relationship between private universities and chi-square ($p=0.196$) implies that there is no difference in the prevalence rate for all the private universities included. This confirms the notion that sexual harassment is institutionalized behaviour and does not occur in one university only.

The significance of the relationship between gender and sexual harassment ($\chi^2 = 43.168$, $p<0.001$) implies that this particular variable plays a key role in determining patterned vulnerability since there is significant variation in prevalence among genders.

The chi-square shows a very high figure when campus residence is considered ($\chi^2 = 322.313$, $p<0.001$), which suggests a high correlation between the two variables. This means that residing on campus is a key determinant of sexual harassment vulnerability.

The significance of this relationship implies that social/cultural beliefs and practices are an important determinant of sexual harassment prevalence. Cultures that encourage silence and victim-blaming contribute to the prevalence of sexual harassment.

For individual types of harassment, the values of chi-squares are very high. High chi-squares mean that the distribution of respondents across response options is highly heterogeneous. In other words, the distribution of respondents from "Very Often" to "Never" is nonrandom. Very high values of visual and physical harassments mean that these types are even more heterogeneous than verbal. This suggests that the environment plays an important role in causing harassment.

1. Research Question Two: What are the underlying factors contributing to campus sexual harassment in university settings?

Table 7: Chi-Square Test Statistics on factors contributing to sexual harassment on campus

	Lack of Effective & Efficient Policy	Neg Cult Beliefs & Practices	The Silence of Victims	Lack of Training on Sexual Harassment	Lack of Support for the Victims
Chi-Square	170.953 ^a	68.063 ^a	500.246 ^b	333.807 ^a	370.743 ^a
Df	4	4	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Source: Authors' computation using SPSS

Table 7 shows the chi-square statistics of the study on the correlation between specific institutional and socio-cultural variables and sexual harassment on college campuses. All the analyses of the five variables generated statistically significant results at $p < 0.001$. This implies that the difference in responses is not due to chance. In other words, each factor has contributed significantly to the perpetuation of sexual harassment at private universities. Degrees of freedom of all the variables ($df = 4$) were appropriate for Likert scale data analysis, with no expected frequency problem noted.

Among the factors investigated, the silence of victims recorded the highest chisquare value ($\chi^2 = 500.246$, $p = 0.000$), indicating the strongest association with the prevalence of sexual harassment.

This very high value suggests a substantial difference between expected and observed responses, showing that respondents strongly acknowledge silence as a major contributing factor. When victims fail to report incidents due to fear of stigma, retaliation, academic repercussions, or damage to their reputation, institutional disciplinary processes and procedures are not activated. As a result, perpetrators face no consequences, institutions may underestimate the magnitude of the problem, and inappropriate behaviour

gradually becomes normalised. The findings therefore submit that silence is not only a consequence of harassment but also a structural factor that sustains it.

The next factor, which is deemed to be very important, is the lack of support provided to the victims ($\chi^2 = 370.743$, $p = 0.000$). The results obtained demonstrate the respondents' perception of the insufficiency of the current institutional mechanisms, including counseling, complaints, protection, and adjustments to study schedule. If there is no adequate institutional support available to victims, they will not feel encouraged to disclose an incident; thus, their emotional problems remain unsolved and confidence in university management deteriorates.

Finally, another important factor that emerged during the research was the lack of training related to the problem of sexual harassment ($\chi^2 = 333.807$, $p = 0.000$). A relatively large chi-square shows a great degree of agreement between the respondents as regards the ineffectiveness of preventive training. Training programs play a crucial role in educating people on appropriate behaviour and the ways of dealing with a case of harassment. Without a consistent sensitization policy at all levels, some people may misinterpret certain behaviours and consider them normal social communication.

Nonetheless, although the low effectiveness and efficiency of policies registered a considerably lower chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 170.953$, $p = 0.000$), it is statistically significant and important. Poor policies, either vague, poorly implemented or inconsistently implemented, lead to poor deterrent effect. Policies, which are usually ineffective in practice, tend to be characterised by poorly defined misconducts, poor procedural process, and inconsistently applied punishment. Although policies might be available, their inefficiency leads to limited effectiveness. The findings suggest that private universities need to improve the content and implementation of their sexual harassment policies.

Further, the negative cultural beliefs and practices were also found to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 68.063$, $p = 0.000$), despite scoring the lowest chi-square value among the five categories. This implies that although there are factors of culture, it appears that institutional inadequacies weigh more. However, this does not take away the role of culture, as cultural factors help shape gender expectations, male-female interactions, views on victims of sexual harassment, and tolerance towards sexual misconduct. While culture alone cannot lead to sexual harassment, it creates an environment where such inappropriate behaviours are either reduced, accepted, or justified.

Research Question Three: What are the psychological and emotional consequences of sexual harassment on victims and how do these experiences impact their academic and personal well-being?

Table 8: Distribution of Responses on Psychological and Emotional Consequences of sexual Harassment and their Impact on Victims' Academic and Personal Well-being. {Devastating Impact (DVI), Disturbing Impact (DSI), Undecided (UD), Mild Impact (MI), No Impact (NI)}

Psychological and emotional impact of sexual harassment on victims	VDI 5	DV 4	UD 3	MI 2	NI 1	Weighted Mean Score	Decision
Reduced academic performance and concentration on studies.	299 56.1% 2.80	119 22.3% 0.89	58 10.9% 0.33	30 5.6% 0.11	27 5.1% 0.05	4.18	High Impact
Mental health Issues (e.g., anxiety, depression)	293 55.0% 2.75	131 24.6% 0.98	50 9.4% 0.28	29 5.4% 0.11	30 5.6% 0.06	4.18	High Impact
Poor lifestyle & physical health (e.g., Changes in eating or sleeping habits.	190 35.6% 1.78	154 28.9% 1.16	99 18.6% 0.56	49 9.2% 0.18	41 7.7% 0.08	3.76	High Impact
Poor/unhealthy social relationships (wanting to be alone, fear of relating).	253 47.5% 2.37	119 22.3% 0.89	85 16.0% 0.48	39 7.3% 0.15	37 6.9% 0.07	3.96	High Impact
Low self-esteem and self-confidence	280 52.5% 2.63	122 22.9% 0.92	69 12.9% 0.39	33 6.2% 0.12	29 5.4% 0.05	4.11	High Impact
Deflated career aspirations	176 33.0% 1.65	141 26.5% 1.06	128 24.0% 0.72	45 8.4% 0.17	43 8.1% 0.08	3.68	High Impact
Lack of trust in friends or family	209 39.2% 1.96	126 23.6% 0.95	91 17.1% 0.51	59 11.1% 0.22	48 9.0% 0.05	3.69	High Impact
Feeling of insecurity on campus e.g avoiding certain places on campus	302 56.7% 2.83	108 20.3% 0.81	66 12.3% 0.37	28 5.3% 0.11	29 5.4% 0.05	4.17	High Impact

Source: Authors' computation using SPSS

Table 8 displays the results of the psychological and emotional impact of sexual harassment on a five-point Likert scale, where Devastating Impact corresponds to rating 5 and No Impact is rated as 1. The weighted means of all variables lie between 3.68 and 4.18, meaning high level of impact on all measures. If we take the decision-making threshold $DVI + DSI \geq 50\%$ as High Impact, then all variables surpass this benchmark.

The first indicator was the disruption of academic performance, and it had a weighted mean of 4.18, which corresponds to high perceived impact. When examining thoroughly the frequency distribution of respondents, one can see that 299 students (56.1%) marked devastating impact, and 119 students (22.3%) felt disturbing. Thus, a total number of respondents who answered with these options comes to 418 people (78.4%). As for 27 students (5.1%), they indicated that there were no impacts, while only 5.6% marked mild impact, and 10.9% – unsure about their choice. The result clearly shows that sexual harassment causes great interference in students' concentration, regular class attendance, and intellectual involvement with academics. Distress, fear, and anxiety can certainly shorten attention spans and lessen motivation for academics. With such a relatively high mean score, it can be assumed that academic consequences of sexual harassment are core consequences.

Psychological impacts achieved the same weighted mean score of 4.18, showing similarly strong severity of consequences. About 293 (79.6%) of participants thought that the impact of mental issues resulting from harassment was devastating or disturbing. Only 30 respondents (5.6%) had no impacts at all, while a small number felt the impact was mild (5.4%) or unsure (9.4%). This is one of the highest total responses recorded in the table. It can be easily concluded from this information that sexual harassment has profound psychological impacts such as anxiety disorder, emotional instability, depression, and trauma. A virtually equal weighted mean compared to the academic consequence shows that there is a direct relationship between psychology and academics.

A set of criteria for defining impact was put forth to determine that if there were 50% or more Devastating and Disturbing responses, then the variable can be described as Highly Impactful. Both Devastating and Disturbing have scores well above this criterion, with 78.4% and 79.6%, respectively, which indicates that sexual harassment experienced on campus affects students' performance highly and negatively. The equality in the scores of academic performance and psychological health (both equal to 4.18) strengthens the correlation between them and proves that the negative impact of sexual harassment on the psychology of an individual affects its academic performance.

In regards to poor lifestyle and physical health, especially concerning eating and sleeping behaviours, it should be stated that in this case, a high impact indicator was recorded (3.76). After analyzing the responses in more detail, it turned out that the Devastating category consisted of 190 respondents (35.6%), while the Disturbing one contained 154 people (28.9%). The sum of these two equals to 344 individuals, or 64.5%. In turn, 41 people (7.7%) did not feel any impact at all, and only 9.2% felt it mildly, while 18.6% remained unsure.

The distribution of responses in the "Devastating" and "Disturbing" categories demonstrates that sexual harassment has a profound impact on the wellbeing of the victims' physical health and daily activities. Being under sexual harassment may cause chronic stress, resulting in the body reaction like problems with sleep, appetite change, feeling tired, headaches and so on. This physical reaction is common for victims of traumatic stress, who are prone to embody their psychological distress in their physical wellbeing.

Although the weighted average score value is somewhat smaller than those related to academics and mental wellbeing, nevertheless it significantly exceeds the boundary of the high impact threshold. This means that sexual harassment considerably influences personal wellbeing and the majority of respondents experienced such effect.

Taking into account the criterion established for determining whether an effect has high impact or not, namely that if the sum of the "Devastating" and "Disturbing" percentages is larger than 50%, then the effect is considered highly impactful. In this case the percentage is quite large.

More than half of respondents reported severe effects in terms of negative or poor social relations. Being victims, people can be socially isolated, avoid communicating with peers and others, feel fear to create new contacts.

Also, a total of 75.4% experienced devastating or disturbing effects in low self-esteem and self-confidence. This result shows that sexual harassment diminishes one's personal identity and self-respect. Being constantly subjected to objectification or intimidation could undermine one's confidence and negatively alter his/her perception of oneself, especially within an academic context that requires intellectual self-confidence.

Although lowered career ambition is significantly lower compared to other forms of effect, 59.5% still showed devastating effect. Sexual harassment seems to affect victims' future plans and prospects. They tend to isolate themselves from professional networking, potential leadership and career-related activities because of lack of confidence or the fear of getting sexually harassed again.

Regarding the psychological effects, the weighted mean of 3.69 in the lack of trust in friends and family members signifies that sexual harassment affects one's emotional resiliency beyond the college community into their inner circles. Since 62.8% have devastating or disturbing experiences, it indicates that sexual harassment disrupts trust mechanisms of victims. Trust is crucial when it comes to one's ability to emotionally endure any situation. When someone gets sexually harassed, he/she expects to be doubted, blamed, trivialised and judged by those around him/her.

Of the total, 77.0% reported that their feeling of insecurity on campus is a devastative/disturbing effect. This variable points towards environmental trauma. The avoidance of particular places, excessive vigilance, and behaviour change based on fear all indicate the lack of safety perceptions regarding the campus. Fear-based change of movement patterns indicates the inability to provide a safe learning environment.

V. Discussion Of Findings

This investigation broadens research on campus sexual harassment through the use of Weighted Mean Score (WMS) gradients in combination with Chi-Square inferential statistics, analyzed in terms of qualitative information and theory from the existing higher education gender violence literature. Instead of using the level of statistical significance as a stopping point, the findings analyse questions of magnitude, direction, and structure. The merger of description and inference highlights a structural ecology, rather than a series of isolated incidents.

From prevalence and typology of occurrence, a clear spectrum of exposure emerges: verbal harassment at 2.60 topped the list, followed by online harassment at 2.27, visual harassment at 2.03, and physical harassment at 1.98. Though no index approached the high end of the scale, their consistently raised scores beyond the midpoint clearly indicate normalised repetition. The dominance of verbal harassment in this sample validates the theory put forward by Bondestam & Lundqvist (2020) that sexually tinged speech – in the form of jokes, innuendo, coercive compliments, etc. – is the most common but least recognised means of gender-based violence in academia. Linguistic subtleties belie institutional realities. Normalisation precedes escalation. Such a typology also follows from the understanding of sexual harassment as a continuum of gender aggression wherein subtle linguistic interactions eventually normalise coercive interactions (Kelly, 1988).

It is clear from the prevalence of sexual harassment online that the digital-relational theory posited by Hill and Kearl (2011) is supported in many ways because technology broadens avenues of coercive activities on college campuses. The use of technology, especially in the form of email, texting, and other means of communication, including social media platforms, has provided new arenas for sexual harassment that are less likely to come under the radar of university officials. Cyber-enabled sexual harassment, in this case, involves integration within academic communication networks making them harder to monitor, control, and even report. All types of sexual harassment were found to have significant correlations ($p < .001$). It should be noted that institutional affiliation was not found to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 7.343$, $p = .196$). This is an important analytic point because it demonstrates that sexual harassment is not limited to specific institutions.

It occurs on various campuses, suggesting a systemic problem rather than the problem of specific administrations. Indeed, patterns have been observed in European and American colleges as well, suggesting that sexual harassment is a product of structural elements of academic hierarchies (Bondestam and Lundqvist, 2020; Cantor et al., 2020).

In relation to gender, university residency, and negative cultural attitudes, this demonstrates that vulnerability follows predictable patterns. Considering the higher number of female respondents (63.8%) and most residing within the campus (85.9%), there is evidence for vulnerability as presented by Fisher et al. (2000) in which victimisation had some relationships with gendered closeness and power imbalances. Exposure to sexual harassment is likely to happen among such students since they are more likely to interact with institutional figures and their peer groups. In this case, sexual harassment cannot be regarded as deviant behaviour; rather, it is a social process.

The findings have serious implications for the formulation of policies that need to guide behaviour at the institutional level, especially regarding how people communicate and use digital technology in academic settings. Verbal misconduct is one factor that contributes to an environment in which coercive behaviour becomes socially acceptable. This means that without intervention at an early stage, such behaviours will worsen into severe forms of sexual harassment. Interventions should therefore aim at preventing the normalisation process rather than punishing physical violation in the later stages. This has been emphasised by campus violence prevention programs developed by UNESCO (2019) and WHO (2021).

Considering the structural and cultural factors, while both of these – the silence of the victim and the lack of support, having Weighted Mean Score 4.14 and 4.02 respectively, received greater attention compared to others, all five elements revealed high levels of significance according to the Chi-Square test ($p < .001$). The highest scores were observed in case of the silence of the victims ($\chi^2 = 500.246$), lack of support ($\chi^2 = 370.743$), and lack of training ($\chi^2 = 333.807$). The importance of victim silence is further underlined by the institutional criticism offered by Ahmed (2021) according to which the suppression of complaints is often used as a

defensive measure by institutions. In the hierarchical setting of universities, silence becomes an instrument of survival rather than indifference. Sexual harassment complaints might remain unreported due to students' concerns about receiving grades and ruining reputations.

The other noteworthy association of significant cultural beliefs correlates with the African gender-based violence research by Jewkes et al. (2020), which considers sexual harassment through the lens of the culture of patriarchy, which legitimates coercive sexual behaviour as friendly flirt and places responsibility on the victim for such behaviour. In sum, the significant Chi-Square values suggest several levels of causation, including ineffective policies, weak law enforcement, no training, normalization, and victimization.

All of the above-mentioned corresponds to the preventive-ecological frameworks introduced by Fulu, Kerr-Wilson, and Lang (2014), whereby the existence of violence can be explained by the fact that there are no credible institutions in place.

In terms of policy, reforms must go further than symbolic gestures or documenting procedures. Particularly noteworthy in the case under review is the high value of the Chi-Square coefficient in relation to the silence of victims. For this reason, anonymous reporting, protection against victimization, measures against reprisals, and the presence of sanctions are crucial. Annual training for both faculty members and students are necessary.

Consequences on a psychological, academic, and personal level have similar significance as well. There were three consequences that achieved the highest Weighted Mean Scores; these included decline in academic performance (4.18), mental wellbeing distress (4.18), and feeling insecure about one's campus (4.17). Low self-esteem was also found to be very important and gained 4.11 Weighted Mean Score. The results show high severity as indicated by closeness to the maximum score of the scale. As we see, the number of responses that fall into the "Devastating" and "Disturbing" categories shows that there is disturbance in educational performance because of sexual harassment, which is supported by the findings of Dworkin et al. (2017). According to their study, the symptoms of trauma include anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and disengagement from academic activities.

High correlation between experiences of sexual harassment and academic achievement indicates that such problems are a consequence of systematic failures rather than random ones. Being harassed negatively affects attention, interaction, and motivation to learn. It is noted in institutional-care literature by Campbell and Wasco (2005) that lack of effective reactions can lead to increased psychological problems and, as a result, academic disengagement.

In addition, feelings of insecurity at the institution also emerge as another important problem. With a WMS of 4.17, a large number of respondents have indicated that they avoid going to certain places or have had to change their behaviour. Halls of lecture, administrative and social spaces may turn into spaces of fear as described by Pain (2001) in his "geography of fear." When students feel insecure, their mobility and participation are affected. Studies conducted by Fisher and Sloan (2013) have found out that the problem of insecurity influences a person's sense of belonging, well-being, and trust.

As sexual harassment is not only a problem of gender justice but also one that can negatively impact academic quality, institutions must be prepared to take measures in order to prevent it and ensure better student performance. Thus, anti-harassment policies need to be incorporated into larger mechanisms of quality assurance and student support.

Funding for psychological assistance, accommodation, and other measures must be regarded not as an additional activity but as essential elements of institutional support. The World Health Organisation (2021) and UNESCO (2019) suggest the use of psychosocial support combined with regulation.

From the research questions analysed above, a common trend can be identified. Firstly, regarding prevalence, verbal and digital harassment seem to be normal. Secondly, when it comes to causes of the problem, silence on the victim's part, lack of support from institutions, and culture are responsible for the problem.

Lastly, the impact of sexual harassment is serious, and it affects the psychological as well as the academic well-being of the victims. Based on these observations, we can clearly identify the cycle of normalisation, silence, abuse, and further normalisation. Sexual harassment, thus, operates as a self-sustaining institutional structure rather than an individual occurrence.

It becomes clear from the results obtained from the analysis of the WMS trends and the Chi-Square test that sexual harassment is structurally embedded within the institutions. In other words, in the context of the private universities investigated, it is an institutional process and not an individual action.

VI. Conclusion And Recommendations

From the evidence presented, sexual harassment is a growing concern within the private higher education sector; it is a persistent problem that cuts across various institutions. The WMS and chi-square tests confirm that of sexual harassment is most prominent via verbal and digital platforms than actual physical violations.

The absence of significant differences between the universities confirms that sexual harassment is systemic since it reveals the inherent weaknesses of the higher education system. Inequalities based on gender, campus life, and cultural beliefs can make women more prone to sexual violence, although the power of victims' silence and institutional weaknesses can cause sexual harassment.

The effects of sexual harassment on students and educational institutions range from poor academic performance, psychological issues, and insecurity among other problems. Sexual harassment does not simply affect students in terms of gender but challenges institutional and education integrity in general. The vicious circle of sexual harassment within educational institutions begins from the process of normalisation followed by silence, then sexual violence, trauma and academic performance. Therefore, institutional efforts should be made to overcome the self-replication pattern of sexual harassment and take definite preventive action against it.

VII. Recommendations

From the results of the above research, it can be recommended that the following should be adopted by institutions: These institutions need to create a reporting procedure that is both confidential and survivor-centred. This process must be safe, accessible, and protected against victimisation in any way.

The institutions should incorporate compulsory training about sexual harassment, consent, and digital behaviour, and also codes of conduct for all staff and students. There must be a policy on psychosocial and enforcement mechanisms in place. Victims of harassment should be encouraged to report to the appropriate authorities at all times and perpetrators should be sanctioned without delay to serve as a deterrence.

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