

ATHLETES' LEVEL OF EDUCATION AS PREDICTOR OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT EXPERIENCES IN SOUTHERN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Dr. Ifeanyichukwu Christian Elendu & Agburuga Obi

Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Faculty of Education
University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, NIGERIA

E-mail: dricelendu@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The study investigated athletes' level of education as predictor of sexual harassment experiences in southern Nigerian universities, with highlights of its legal implications. The study was guided with three research questions and three null hypotheses tested at .05 alpha level. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and a structured questionnaire with overall reliability co-efficient of .8735, and subscales $\alpha = .7627$ (gender harassment); $\alpha = .8520$ (unwanted sexual attention), and $\alpha = .9071$ (sexual coercion) was used to collect data from the athletes (N=1,214). Descriptive statistics of percentage and inferential statistics of simple regression were employed to analyze the data. The result showed that undergraduate athletes mostly experienced gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion than postgraduate athletes. Athletes' level of education had significant relationship with sexual harassment experiences. The legal implication is that as long as there is an incidence of sexual harassment among athletes irrespective of their level of education, there may continuously be cases of sexual harassment in the law court. It was recommended among others that sports organizers or managers should pay more attention to undergraduate athletes with technological surveillance equipment such as closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera in and around sports arena. Victims (i.e. sportspersons especially athletes) of sexual harassment should lodge official complaints to appropriate authorities or take a legal action against the perpetrators in the court of law.

Keywords: Sexual harassment, level of education, athletes, legal implications.

INTRODUCTION

History has shown documental evidences of court cases over sexual harassment which negatively affects the sporting behaviours of members of the society. Sexual harassment and abuse occur worldwide (International Olympic Committee, 2007). They maintained that in sport, sexual harassment and abuse give rise to suffering for athletes and others, and to legal, financial and moral liabilities for sport organizations. Athletic Federation of Nigeria (2006) stated among its codes of conduct that sexual harassment amongst athletes, coaches or officials is prohibited. This notwithstanding, sexual harassment is still observed within Nigerian sports setting and is perpetrated by someone. International Olympic Committee (2007) defined sexual harassment as the behaviour towards an individual or group that involves sexualized verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviour whether intended or unintended, legal or illegal that is based upon an abuse of power and trust that is considered by the victim or a bystander to be unwanted or coerced. Robinson (2005) conceptualized as sexual harassment as any physical, visual, or sexual act experienced by a person from another person at the time or later, which asserts a person's sexual identity as a person, which makes him or her feel embarrassed, frightened, hurt, uncomfortable, degraded, humiliated, compromised,

and which diminishing a person's power and confidence. Elendu (2009) noted that it is mostly the recipient and not the perpetrator of a behaviour that determines whether the behaviour is sexual harassment or not. The empirically tested and confirmed categories of sexual harassment namely: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion by Gelfand, Fitzgerald and Drasgow (1995) were adopted. Gelfand, et al. (1995) reported that the categorization was generalizable across settings, job types, and cultures. Gender harassment covers range of verbal and non-verbal behaviours aimed not at getting sexual co-operation, but at denigrating, insulting, or conveying hostility towards men and women (Gelfand, Fitzgerald & Drasgow, 1995), and offensive stories or jokes; discussion of sexual matters and offensive remarks about appearance, body or sexual activities (Gettman, 2003; Cortina, 2001; Fitzgerald, Magley, Drasgow, & Waldo, 1999), and being treated differently because of one's sex (Gettman, 2003). Unwanted sexual attention covers range of verbal and non-verbal behaviour of a sexual nature that is unwanted, unreciprocated and offensive, but with no implication of job related losses or benefits (Gelfand, Fitzgerald & Drasgow, 1995), and attempts to establish a romantic relationship, and attempts to stroke, fondle or kiss (Gettman, 2003). Sexual coercion attempts to get sexual co-operation by bribes or threats (Gelfand, Fitzgerald & Drasgow, 1995), and being bribed to engage in sexual co-operation; treated with retaliation if not sexually co-operative; treated badly for refusing to have sex; and implied better treatment if sexually co-operative (Gettman, 2003). One's level of education can predict sexual harassment experiences.

Timmerman and Bajema (1997) reported that people with lower education level are more exposed to sexual harassment than those with higher education level. On the contrary, Lee, Croninger, Linn and Chen (1996) stated that students in higher grade are harassed severely than those in lower grade. Gunduz, Sunay and Koz (2006) study revealed that the relationship between educational background and incidence of sexual harassment was found to be significant. The disagreements in the findings related to level of education and sexual harassment experiences gave rise to this study for more understanding of the relationship between the variables especially as it has not been established among athletes in southern Nigerian universities.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to find out athletes' level of education as predictor of sexual harassment experiences in southern Nigerian universities, and to highlight its legal implications. In specific terms, the study seeks to:

1. determine gender harassment experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities based on level of education.
2. ascertain unwanted sexual attention experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities based on level of education.
3. establish sexual coercion experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities based on level of education.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the gender harassment experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities based on level of education?
2. What are the unwanted sexual attention experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities based on level of education?
3. What are the sexual coercion experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities based on level of education?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha level.

1. There is no significant relationship between athletes' level of education and gender harassment experiences in southern Nigerian universities.
2. There is no significant relationship between athletes' level of education and unwanted sexual attention experiences in southern Nigerian universities.
3. There is no significant relationship between athletes' level of education and sexual coercion experiences in southern Nigerian universities.

Methods

The study adopted a survey design as it tries to record, describe, and explain phenomena, events, and behaviours as they occur in a natural setting at a point in time. The population for the study was 3,408 athletes in southern Nigerian universities. A sample size of 1,214 athletes was drawn using a multi-stage sampling procedure. A structured questionnaire with overall reliability co-efficient of .8267 was established using Pearson product moment correlation in conjunction with Spearman-Brown prophecy statistic, and inter-scale reliability co-efficients of $\alpha = .7627$ for gender harassment; $\alpha = .8520$ for unwanted sexual attention, and $\alpha = .9071$ for sexual coercion established using Cronbach alpha was used for data collection. Again, 975 out 1,214 copies of administered questionnaire were returned yielding 80.31 per cent return rate. However, 946 copies of the returned questionnaire were properly filled and used for analysis. Descriptive statistics of percentage and inferential statistics of simple regression were used to analyze the data with the hypotheses tested at .05 level of significance. Ejifugha's (1998) criteria for interpreting the correlation co-efficient index were adopted in interpreting the nature of the relationship between athletes' level of education and sexual harassment experiences. According to her, .00 - .19 was considered "very low"; .20 "low"; .40 - .69 "average or moderate"; .70 - .89 "high", and .90 - 1.00 "very high" relationship.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the gender harassment experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities based on level of education?

Table 1: Gender harassment experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities based on level of education (n = 946)

S/no	Items	Undergraduate (n = 759)				Postgraduate (n = 187)			
		Yes		No		Yes		No	
		f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
1	Directing sexist jokes to athletes	581	76.55	178	23.45	2	1.07	185	98.93
2	Displaying and distribution of sexual materials to athletes	278	36.63	481	63.37	3	1.60	184	98.40
3	Sexually suggestive comments about athlete's body	535	70.49	224	29.51	1	.53	186	99.47
4	Being treated differently because of athlete's gender	221	29.12	538	70.88	5	2.67	182	97.33
	Cluster %		53.20		46.80		1.47		98.53

Table 1 shows that 581 (76.55%) of undergraduate athletes and 2(1.07%) postgraduate athletes have experienced sexist jokes directed to them, and 278 (36.63%) of undergraduate athletes and 3(1.60%) postgraduate athletes have experienced sexual materials displayed and distributed to them. Again, 535 (70.49%) of undergraduate athletes and 1(0.53%) postgraduate athlete have experienced sexually suggestive comments made about their body, and 221 (29.12%) of undergraduate athletes and 5(2.67%) postgraduate athletes have been treated differently because of their gender. With the cluster percentages, majority (53.20%) of undergraduate athletes while very few (1.47%) postgraduate athletes have experienced gender harassment.

Research Question 2: What are the unwanted sexual attention experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities based on level of education?

Table 2: Unwanted sexual attention experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities based on level of education (n = 946)

S/no	Items	Undergraduate (n = 759)			Postgraduate (n = 187)			F	%
		Yes	No	F	Yes	No	F		
1	Directing sexualized name-calls to athletes	466	61.40	293	38.60	3	1.60	184	98.40
2	Spreading sexual rumours about athletes	375	49.41	384	50.59	2	1.07	185	98.93
3	Talking about sex all the time in athletes' presence	411	54.15	348	45.85	1	.53	186	99.47
4	Pressuring athlete for sex	156	20.55	6.3	79.45	1	.53	186	99.47
5	Pressuring athlete for a date or relationship refusing to take "No" for answer	299	39.39	460	60.61	5	2.67	182	97.33
6	Pulling athlete's clothings in a sexual way	287	37.81	472	62.19	2	1.07	185	98.93
7	Directing sexual gestures to athletes	318	41.90	441	58.10	3	1.60	184	98.40
8	Attempt to establish romantic relationship with athlete	289	38.08	470	61.92	3	1.60	184	98.40
9	Sending sexually offensive messages or calls to athlete	193	25.43	566	74.57	0	.00	187	100.00
	Cluster %		40.90		59.10		1.19		98.81

It is evident in Table 2 that 466 (61.40%) undergraduate athletes and 3(1.60%) postgraduate athletes have experienced sexualized name-calling directed to them; 375(49.41%) of undergraduate athletes and 2(1.07%) of postgraduate athletes have experienced sexual rumours spread about them, and 411(54.15%) of undergraduate athletes and 1(0.53%) postgraduate athlete have experienced talks about sex all the time in their presence. The table revealed that 156(20.55%) of undergraduate athletes and 1(0.53%) of postgraduate athlete have been pressured for sex; 299(39.39%) of undergraduate athletes and 5(2.67%) of postgraduate athletes have experience pressure for a date or relationship with refusal to take "No" for an answer; and 287(37.81%) of undergraduate athletes and 2(1.07%) of postgraduate athletes have experienced their clothings pulled in a sexual way. The table shows that 318(41.90%) of undergraduate athletes and 3(1.96%) of postgraduate athletes have experienced sexual gestures directed to them; 289(38.08%) of undergraduate athletes and 3(1.60%) of postgraduate athletes have experienced attempts to establish romantic relationship with them, and 193(25.43%) of undergraduate athletes and none (0.00%) of the postgraduate athletes have experienced sexually offensive messages or calls sent to them.

With the cluster percentages, not majority (40.90%) of undergraduate athletes and very few (1.19%) postgraduate athletes have experienced unwanted sexual attention.

Research Question 3: What are the sexual coercion experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities based on level of education?

Table 3: Sexual coercion experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities based on level of education (n = 946)

S/no	Items	Undergraduate (n = 759)				Postgraduate (n = 187)			
		Yes		No		Yes		No	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Offering benefits as incentives to engage in sexual relationship with athlete	290	38.21	469	61.79	4	2.14	183	97.86
2	Threatened athlete with negative consequences for refusing to engage in sexual relationship	196	25.82	563	74.18	2	1.07	185	98.93
3	Forceful attempts to touch or fondle athlete's body	253	33.33	506	66.67	3	1.60	184	98.40
4	Attempted rape or forceful sexual intercourse on athlete	81	10.67	678	89.33	6	2.67	181	97.33
5	Rape or forceful sexual intercourse on athlete	12	1.58	747	98.42	1	.53	186	99.47
	Cluster %		21.92		78.08		1.60		98.40

Table 3 shows that 290(38.21%) of undergraduate athletes and 4(2.14%) of postgraduate athletes have been offered benefits as incentives to engage in sexual relationship with them; 196(25.82%) of undergraduate athletes and 2(1.07%) of postgraduate athletes have been threatened with negative consequences for refusing to engage in sexual relationship; 253(33.33%) of undergraduate athletes and 3(1.60%) of postgraduate athletes have experienced forceful attempts to touch or fondle their body; and 81(10.67%) of undergraduate athletes and 6(2.67%) of postgraduate athletes have experienced attempted rape or forceful sexual intercourse; 12(1.58%) of undergraduate athletes and 1(0.53%) of postgraduate athlete have experienced rape or forceful sexual intercourse. With the cluster percentages, few (21.92%) undergraduate athletes and very few (1.60%) postgraduate athletes have experienced sexual coercion.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between level of education and gender harassment experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities.

Table 4: Simple regression of no significant relationship between athletes' level of education and gender harassment experiences.

Variables	R	R ²	df	F-cal	F-tab	β	t-cal	t-tab	Decision
Level of Education and Gender harassment	.587	.345	1 & 944	201.374	3.84*	.571	61.202	1.960	Rejected

* Significant at $p < .05$

Data in table 4 revealed that the R-value for gender harassment is .587 which going

by Ejifugha's (1998) criteria, showed positive moderate relationship. The F-cal. (201.374) > F-tab. (3.84), df (1 & 944), $p < .05$. The value of regression weight $\beta = .571$ (moderate predictive value), and regression co-efficient of determination (R^2) is .345 showing that 34.5 per cent of the variation in the incidence of GH was accounted for by the variation in athletes' level of education. Also, the t-cal. (61.202) > t-tab. (1.960), $p < .05$, df (944). Hence, there was significant relationship between athletes' level of education and gender harassment experiences.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between level of education and unwanted sexual attention experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities.

Table 5: Simple regression of no significant relationship between athletes' level of education and unwanted sexual attention experiences.

Variables	R	R ²	df	F-cal	F-tab	B	t-cal	t-tab	Decision
Level of education and Unwanted Sexual attention	.611	.373	1 & 944	198.821	3.84*	.602	58.106	1.960	Rejected

* Significant at $p < .05$

Results in table 5 showed that the R-value for unwanted sexual attention is .611 indicating positive moderate relationship. The F-cal. (198.821) > F-tab. (3.84), $p < .05$, df (1 & 944). The value of R weight $\beta = .602$ (moderate predictive value), and regression co-efficient of determination (R^2) is .373 showing that 37.3% variation in the incidence of unwanted sexual attention was as a result of the variation in the athletes' level of education. The t-cal. (58.106) > t-tab. (1.960), at $p < .05$, with df (944). There was significant relationship between athletes' level of education and unwanted sexual attention experiences.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between level of education and sexual coercion experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities.

Table 6: Simple regression of no significant relationship between athletes' level of education and sexual coercion experiences.

Variables	R	R ²	df	F-cal	F-tab	B	t-cal	t-tab	Decision
Level of education and sexual coercion	.621	.386	1 & 944	203.023	3.84*	.611	61.007	1.960	Rejected

* Significant at $p < .05$

It was evident in table 6 that the R-value for sexual coercion is .621 (positive moderate relationship). The F-cal. (203.023) > F-tab. (3.84), df (1 & 944), $P < .05$. The value of R weight $\beta = .611$ (moderate predictive value), and regression co-efficient of determination (R^2) is .386 showing that 38.6 per cent of the variance in the incidence of sexual coercion was due to the variation in the athletes' level of education. Also the t-cal. (61.007) > t-tab. (1.960), $p < .05$, df (944); there was significant relationship between athletes' level of education and incidence of sexual coercion experiences.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

It was found that level of education correlates with incidence of sexual harassment. The study showed that undergraduate athletes mostly experience sexual harassment than the postgraduate athletes. The finding was expected as most of the undergraduate athletes are young and unmarried. They are bound to be more attractive to the harassers than the postgraduate athletes. People may take undergraduate athletes to be those that may not raise alarm if they are harassed and some of them may not complain as they may feel shy to discuss it. The finding is in agreement with Hogbacka et al. (1987) as cited in Timmerman and Bajema (1997) who noted that persons with lower level of education are more exposed to sexual harassment. Again, Diekstra et al. (1994) as cited in Timmerman and Bajema (1997) reported that less well educated people in an organizational sector had a higher risk of sexual harassment. The agreement could be due to the fact that generally most people with lower level of education are young and unmarried. However, the finding is in disagreement with Lauch and Gwartney-Gibbs (1993) who noted that targets of sexual harassment are likely to have higher education. The disagreement could be as a result of cultural differences.

Legal Implications and Challenges

Undergraduate athletes experienced sexual harassment than their postgraduate counterparts. As long as there is incidence of sexual harassment among athletes irrespective of their level of education, there may continuously be cases of sexual harassment in the law court. If reported, perpetrators of sexual harassment are expected to be prosecuted and with appropriate penalties meted out on them if found guilty or legally liable in accordance to the law. Law has always been used to address and interpret human behaviours and protect the fundamental human rights within and outside sports. Law can be used to control or prevent sexual harassment, but there are some challenges.

Most sexually harassed athletes fail to report to constituted authorities for fear of stigmatization and further humiliation. It is only when sexual harassment cases are reported to official authorities with evidences or proofs and witnesses that law can take its course. Hence, failure to lodge a formal complaint about sexual harassment becomes a problem. There is a sexual harassment definitional problem. The socio-cultural interpretation of what constitutes sexual harassment in different and diverse societies is also a problem. Sometimes, sexual harassment in sports especially universities in developing countries takes place in the absence of a witness, not captured with any technological means such as closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera or insufficient evidence or proof except in extreme cases of rape or attempted rape. Prosecution of perpetrators of sexual harassment becomes difficult. Delay or denial of justice on sexual harassment cases in a court of law is a problem. The law has a role to play in controlling and preventing sexual harassment in sports through quick, fair, and impartial adjudication of justice in sexual harassment cases.

CONCLUSION

Sexual harassment occurs among athletes irrespective of their level of education, though with varying degrees. The undergraduate athletes experienced gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion more than postgraduate athletes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it was recommended that:

1. sports organizers or managers should pay more attention to undergraduate athletes with technological surveillance equipment such as closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera in and around sports arena.
2. victims (i.e. sportspersons especially athletes) of sexual harassment should lodge official complaints to appropriate authorities or take a legal action against the perpetrators in the court of law.
3. perpetrators of sexual harassment on athletes should be prosecuted and if found guilty should be punished severely in accordance with the law by government law enforcement agencies.
4. more laws and policies against sexual harassment should be enacted and formed by the necessary government agencies.
5. there should be sensitization workshops, seminars and conferences against sexual harassment of sportspersons organized by sports ministries, associations and other related agencies.
6. The law courts should ensure speedy, fair, and impartial adjudication of justice on sexual harassment matters.

REFERENCES

- Athletic Federation of Nigeria (2006, August 3). Code of conduct for athletes in camp. Accessed from http://www.afn.org.ng/news_media/code_of_conduct.asp
- Cortina, L. M. (2001). Assessing sexual harassment among Latinas: Development of an instrument. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 7, (2), 164-181.
- Ejifugha, A. U. (1998). *Fundamentals of research in health education*. Benin: Barloz Publishers Inc.
- Elendu, I. C. (2009). *Incidence, perception, correlates of, and intervention programme for sexual harassment among athletes in southern Nigerian universities*. Ph.D Thesis, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Fitzgerald, L. F., Magley, V. J., Drasgow, F., & Waldo, C. R. (1999). Measuring sexual harassment in the military: The sexual experiences questionnaire (SEQ-DoD). *Military Psychology*, 11, (3), 243-263.
- Gelfand, M. J., Fitzgerald, L. P., & Drasgow, F. (1995). The structure of sexual harassment: A confirmatory analysis across cultures and settings. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 47, 64-177.
- Gettman, H. J. (2003). Bringing sexual harassment research in line with the service economy: A measure and model of sexual harassment of professional women by their clients. An Unpublished MA Thesis Report, University of Maryland, College Park. Accessed from <http://www.google.com.ng/search?hl=en&q=Bringing+Sexual+harassment+research+in+line+with+the+service+economy&meta>
- Gunduz, N., Sunay, H., & Koz, M. (2006). Incidents of sexual harassment in Turkey on elite sportswomen. A publication of the United States Sports Academy. Accessed from <http://www.thesportjournal.org/2007journal/vol10-No2/Gunduz.asp>
- International Olympic Committee (2007). IOC adopts consensus statement on sexual harassment and abuse in sport. <https://www.olympic.org/news/ioc-adopts-consensus-statement-on-sexual-harassment-and-abuse-in-sport>
- Lauch, D. H., & Gwartney-Gibbs, P. A. (1993). Sociological perspective on sexual harassment and workplace dispute resolution. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 42, 102 – 115.

- Lee, V. E., Croninger, R. G., Linn, E., & Chen, X. (1996). The culture of sexual harassment in secondary schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 33, 385-417.
- Robinson, K. H. (2005). Reinforcing hegemonic masculinities through sexual harassment: Issues of identity, power and popularity in secondary schools. *Gender and Education*, 17, (1), 19-37.
- Timmerman, M. C., & Bajema, C. W. (1997). Sexual harassment in European workplaces: A review of research in 11 member states (1987-1997). Assessed from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/shworkpl.pdf>