

EFFECTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON TEACHERS BY STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE MANZINI REGION

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate the effects of sexual harassment of teachers by students in high schools in the Manzini region. The objectives were to determine the extent, effects of sexual harassment and teachers' coping strategies. The study applied mixed method design that employed self-administered questionnaires and semi-structured interviews for the victims. Random sampling technique, which involved a total of 80 teachers. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS while qualitative data were analyzed using Framework Analysis. Results show that teachers do suffer sexual harassment from learners mostly through verbal utterances that indicate sexual advancements and sending teachers nude pictures and make sexy gestures that lure teachers into having sex. Teachers react by punishing, avoiding learners and confronting the student. Sexually harassed teachers feel embarrassed, develop fear and anger, tend to avoid school. It is, therefore, recommended that government need to protect teachers and develop policy regarding sexual harassment.

KEYWORDS

Sexual harassment, sexual advancement, abuse, exploitation

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Holland and Cortina (2016), sexual harassment as a tactic used by the far right to suppress, alienate, or hurt people that don't conform to Social Conservative Views on American Society and decide to live their life as they see fit. Parker, (2008) also stated that sexual harassment involves, death threats, intimidation, targeting those who don't conform to conservative views to unnecessary verbal abuse when they go out into the public, vandalism. This suggests that sexual harassment can be verbal (comments about your body, spreading sexual rumors, sexual remarks or accusations, dirty jokes or stories), physical (grabbing, rubbing, flashing or mooning, touching, pinching in a sexual way, sexual assault) or visual (display of naked pictures or sex-related objects, obscene gestures) (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). Sexual harassment can happen to both genders. Perpetrators of sexual harassment in the school environment can be fellow students, teachers, principals, janitors, coaches, and other school officials. However, this study will focus on sexual harassment between teachers and students.

Sexual harassment can be easily confused with sexual abuse. However, the latter is limited to unwanted physical acts of sexual nature and is easily detectable and punishable, sexual harassment is a complex, fluid, appearance which does not lend itself to precise legal definition and that can be collected in all (Powell & Henry, 2017). Over the years, there have been cases reported about students being sexually harassed by their teachers, and other learners. This has got to the point where when headlines are made that a student was sexually harassed at school, the

first suspect it's the teachers. However, we do not blame people views and ideology due to the numerous cases reported about teachers sexually harassing and abusing learners at school. With the numerous cases of sexual harassment reported, we will look into sexual harassment at school. Sexual harassment is a serious problem for students at all educational levels. Students in elementary and secondary schools, as well as vocational schools, apprenticeship programs, colleges and universities can be victims of sexual harassment (Smit & Plessis, 2011). Sexual harassment can be requests for sexual favors or unwelcome sexual behavior that is bad enough or happens often enough to make you feel uncomfortable, scared or confused and that interferes with your schoolwork or your ability to participate in extracurricular activities or attend classes. Both males and females do suffer from sexual daily bases. There is, however, limited evidence on sexual harassment towards males and or teachers (Powell & Henry, 2017).

1.1 Problem Statement

The existence of sexual harassment in our society is undeniable, but what needs to be investigated further are the precise extent, effects, teacher's reaction, attitude and coping strategies that teachers use particularly in learning institutions when dealing and handling sexual harassment. Previous studies have mainly viewed sexual harassment in schools from the perspective of the students as victims of sexual harassment and have mainly been conducted in regular schools. The perspective of teacher as a victim of sexual harassment in schools has largely been ignored.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of sexual harassment on teachers by students in high school in the Manzini region

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following objectives which are:

1. To determine the extent in which teachers are sexually harassed by learners.
2. To determine the effects of sexual harassment on teacher's social life and professional life.
3. To determine the coping strategies, use when dealing and handling the incidences of sexually harassment

2. LITERATURE

Researches have shown that teachers also are victims of sexual harassment by students in the work place. Research proved that learners even go to certain extent when sexually harassing teachers. This comes in form of giving unwelcomed hugs to teachers, bush teachers private parts. According to Shane (2009), teachers at some point of sexual harassment receive unwelcomed love notes from learners, inappropriate gifts which may include man underwear or female underwear. In addition, Lipson (2001) elaborated that learners go to the extent of saying sexist jokes in the present of teachers and thus attracting sexual advancement from the teachers. These studies indicate that even though their studies does not have conclusive evidence that teachers can be victims of sexual harassment, their findings are an eye opener to the world and their countries as to what extent learners go to when sexually harassing their teachers at school.

In the kingdom of eSwatini, teachers did try to voice out their concern towards learners sexually harassing them in the story headline which were made in the times of eSwatini about Ngcoseni high school in the highveld. The issue of teachers being sexually harassed by learners seems to

have been there but has been over looked at over the years in the kingdom of eSwatini. Numerous headlines have been made where teachers state that they have been receiving nude pictures, from learners. However, these were revealed from an unclear point of view in media. Instead, teachers were not considered as victims of sexual harassment in schools but rather the students only were viewed as such, particularly the girl child. Due to this, the extent of sexual harassment has been unlooked into the society thus the issue of sexual harassment is a pending issue that needs to be looked into in depth.

Sexual harassment has adverse psychological and physical effects on the victim, irrespective of the victim being a teacher or student, male or female. Studies and reports (Edwin, 2009; Monks et al, 2009; Hand & Laura, 2000), have asserted that sexual harassment has negative impact on the victims. They highlight some of these effects that could affect the victims' psychological, health and academic life and professional life. Psychologically, a victim may lose self – esteem, be depressed may fear for personal safety, have anger and hostility towards the perpetrators and may even contemplate suicide.

In health, Ruto (2009) and Kamau, Amusa and Elijah (2014), reveal that violence and harassment can lead to damage of adolescent health and increase risk of HIV infections and other sexually transmitted diseases. There is, however, lack of literature of the effects of sexual harassment on teachers health-wise. Academically, sexual harassment will make learners and other victims in the school environment to avoid school (for example in case of pregnancy or embarrassment or fear), not want to talk in class, experience low performance, diminish in education and co-curriculum activities and lowers their dedication to academic pursuits (Kamau et al, 2014). The effects of sexual harassment go way beyond than what the eye can see. This is to say the effects are physical, emotionally and mental wise disturbing on the victim.

This therefore suggests that teachers may develop a negative attitude towards the learner who is sexually harassing him or her. As a result, the teacher will not view that learners the same way as he or she would with the other learners (Edwin, 2009). The teacher, however, do not suffer alone but other learners also get affected in that the teacher becomes distant or repulsive towards creating an inter relationships with the learners. As a result, learners will only know what is in the course outline as the teacher will only educate them about academics and not about life skills and guidance which others learners need especially the once that are conceded to be young for that class (Lipson, 2001).

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey so as to determine effects and extent of sexual harassment of teachers by learners at high school level in regular secondary and high schools in of the kingdom of Eswatini. Creswell and Chery (2016), defined survey research as a form of quantitative research in which an investigator identifies either the sample or the population, collects data through questionnaires or interviews and draws conclusions or makes inferences about the population.

To gather data from a large population of respondents the researcher used mixed method design yielding both quantitative and qualitative data. A total of eight schools (4 rural and 4 urban schools) were selected randomly in the Manzini region of Eswatini. From each school, a sample of twenty (20) teachers were selected randomly thus making a total sample size of 80 (n=80). Since this study utilized a mixed method approach, both qualitative and quantitative instruments were used. A survey questionnaire was developed from literature review to collect quantitative data. Also, an interview guide was developed to generate qualitative data. Responses from the questionnaire were used to select the victims of sexual harassment and face to face interview was

conducted. This allowed the study to have a clear feel and in-depth understanding of how teachers handled sexual harassment in schools bearing in mind that they were still professionals and that learning took place in the school.

The instruments face, content and construct validity were achieved by consulting experts and professionals in the faculty of consumer science studies of sexual harassment and other professionals in the faculty of Consumer Science in Luyengo campus. A pilot test was carried out to establish the reliability of the questionnaires with only 20 teachers from the Lubombo region. To calculate reliability coefficient, Cornbrash Alpha was used. Transferability posed a great challenge in qualitative research, owing to the subjectivity from the researcher as the key instrument. The researcher therefore overcame this threat by providing a detailed research method used, offering a rich description of the settings and context of the Consumer science educators interview. Since sexual harassment is a sensitive topic, a consent letter was given to the teachers ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and also encouraged honest responses to very personal questions. The teacher's identification was only to be their gender and their age. No personal identification was required from them. To analyze the extent and the effect of sexual harassment by learners the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24.4 was used to compute means, standard deviation and to make comparisons using ANOVA. The results were then tabulated and clearer presentation. For qualitative data from the interviews, a Framework analysis guided the familiarization, formulation of themes, mapping and interpretation of findings.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Extent of Sexual Harassment

The Table 1 shows results for the first objective (extent of sexual harassment) on teachers by students stated the following results. A legendary scale was used to give a summary of the results. The mean and standard deviation was calculated based on 80 teachers. The results presented in Table 1 generally indicate that the reaches sometimes experience incidences of sexual harassment. Further, teachers sometimes get unwelcomed hugs from learners; receive love notes from learners; get inappropriate gifts from learners; teachers do get sexist jokes/cartoons from learners; learners open their legs when sitting such that you can easily see their undergarments; teachers receive phone calls of a sexual nature from learners and that learners often ask teachers about their sex life learners and utter sexual comments about your dress code. These results do prove or show the extent that learners go to when sexually harassing teachers and the actions they do towards harassing the teachers sexually more especially in school.

Table 1. Extent of sexual harassment on teachers

	\bar{X}	SD	DE
1. Get unwelcomed hugs	2.85	0.45	S
2. Get brushing sexual parts of the body	1.84	0.22	R
3. Receive love notes from learners	3.29	0.54	S
4. Get inappropriate gifts (boxers, underwear's, sex toys	2.44	0.19	R
5. Get sexist jokes/cartoons from learners	3.01	0.28	S
6. Learners open their legs when sitting such that you can easily see their undergarments	3.38	0.55	S
7. Learners send nude pictures to me	2.25	0.55	R
8. Learners say sexual comments about your dress code	4.08	0.55	O

9. Learners have leading on sexual statements	3.68	0.35	O
10. Receive phone calls of a sexual nature from learners	3.40	0.60	S
11. Learner ask me about my sex life learners	4.03	0.60	O
12. Get pornographic pictures from learners	3.25	0.66	S
13. Learners look under my skirt or dresses through a mirror underneath	2.59	0.18	S
14. Get followed by when going back home by learners	2.51	0.22	S
15. Get bribes for unwanted sexual activity from learners	2.78	0.54	S
16. Get neck or shoulder massage from learners	2.79	0.60	S
17. Get called by name calling, bitch, whore, slut	3.09	0.47	S
18. Learners try to block or stand very close to me when coming towards me	3.36	0.43	S
19. Learners attempt to kiss me	2.74	0.25	S
Average	3.02	0.433	S

Legend; scale limit	Descriptive Equivalent (DE)
0-1.49	Never (N)
1.5- 2.49	Rarely (R)
2.5-3.49	Sometimes (S)
3.5-4.49	Often (O)
4.5-4.49	Always(A)

On the extent of sexual harassment, the study shows that learners mostly go to the extent of saying comments about the teachers dress code, have leading on sexual statements and even ask teachers about their sex life when sexually harassing teachers in schools, which is totally unethical and not acceptable. However, teachers also mentioned that learners do go to the extent of sending teachers their pornographic pictures. This finding concurs with Coetzee (2019), who investigated the factors that contributes towards closing the gap between various interpretations of sexual offences, forms of sexual misconduct and contraventions of ethical and professional standards. This study also noted that learners do send porn videos and utter words related to teacher dress code. One young female teacher lamented that. *I personally did have hardship and was a victim of sexual harassment. This is because when I was doing my field attachment (teaching practice third year second semester), for me the learners would even go to the extent of buying me unwelcoming gifts that had romantic settings or spoke of love yet they were from my opposite sex and not proper to receive as a teacher.*

Investigation on sexual harassment by college students toward faculty members using modified versions of the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire also discovered that a female faculty reported experiencing significantly more unwanted sexual attention from students (Matchen & DeSouza, 2000). These proves that teachers can be victims of sexual harassment by learners and can go to serious extremes towards sexually harassing teachers. This perpetrating act needs to be dealt with in the kingdom of eSwatini before it gets worse. Coetzee (2019) stated that sexual harassment manifests itself in many forms both overt and subtle. The government needs to be aware of such and find a solution towards protecting her employees towards such behavior from learners. With this study, it will be an eye opener to even the community, parents, guardians that teachers are also victims of sexual harassment and as to what extent the learners go to when sexually harassing teachers. Timmerman, (2003) assert almost 40% teachers reported being the target of sexual harassment. A total of 74% of those incidents were perpetrated by students. A higher percentage of male teachers reported personal incidents of student-to-adult sexual harassment.

4.2 Effects of Sexual Harassment

The results presented in Table 2 generally indicate that teachers slightly agreed that they are affected by sexual harassment. Teachers were able to identify the effects of sexual harassment have on them.

The results specifically show that teachers tend to have frustration due to sexual harassment, lack supported from community members, spouses and the school towards the teacher as a victim of sexual harassment and thus react they giving less attention or ignore the child who is sexually harassing them. Further, it was established that teachers punish the learner for sexually harassing them as they develop anger and hostility towards the learners. The teachers sees sexual harassment as sores of depression and it makes them loose self-confidence.

Table 2. Effects of sexual harassment on teachers by students.

Effect of sexual harassment	Mean	S	DE
1. View the learner (offender) negatively than the other learners	3.90	0.34	SLA
2. Feel depressed by the learner who is sexually harassing me	3.94	0.54	LA
3. Fear for personal safety	4.43	0.79	SLA
4. Have anger and hostility towards the perpetrators (learners)	4.40	0.70	SLA
5. Get teachers giving me negative impression about me being sexually harassed	4.33	0.67	SLA
6. Am not supported by colleges (teachers) towards me being a victim	4.33	0.68	SLA
7. Have feelings of embarrassment when being sexually harassed	4.60	0.58	A
8. Tend to have frustration due to sexual harassment	5.00	0.58	A
9. Feel loss of self-confidence due to sexual harassment	4.45	0.65	SLD
10. Have anger towards the learner who is sexually harassing me	4.86	0.64	A
11. Am not supported by both community members towards me as a victim of sexual harassment	5.03	0.66	A
12. Am unsupported by family and friends	4.55	0.51	A
13. Seem less trusting of people in general due to sexual harassment	4.49	0.58	SLD
14. Punish the learner for sexually harassing me in the first attempt	4.63	0.50	A
15. Give additional punishment to the learner when I punish him or her	4.26	0.75	SLA
16. Am not supported by spouse towards me being the victim	4.38	0.70	SLA
17. Give less attention or ignore the child who is sexually harassing me	4.55	0.73	A
Average	4.48	0.59	SLA
Legend; scale			
0-1.49	Descriptive Equivalent (DE)		
1.5- 2.49	Strongly Disagree (SD)		
2.5-3.49	Disagree (D)		
3.5-4.49	Slightly Disagree (SLD)		
4.5-5.49	Slightly Agree (SLA)		
5.5-6.0	Agree (A)		
	Strongly Agree (SA)		

Teachers mentioned in the story that learners did have leading on sexual statements towards them and even comment sexually about their dress code which learners took no shame in doing so. This

was a that teachers were making the eSwatini government as to what is happening in schools and also making the public aware of this practice by learners that is becoming common. Victims often become future harassers themselves. Sexual harassment should be eradicated from the education sector in order to ensure a safe learning environment. This was to emphasize on the effects of sexual harassment in schools. Teachers noted that they get feelings of embarrassment when being sexually harassed, tend to have frustration due to sexual harassment and have anger towards the learner who is sexually harassing him or her. This is because majority of teachers noted that they do suffer from these effects of sexual harassment from learners. Participant 7 voiced out the aggregate of such effects. This happened when she was doing her field attachment (teaching practice). As a result, she developed anger, felt unsafe, depressed by the learners who were sexually harassing me yet she was their teacher.

Psychologically, a victim may lose self – esteem, be depressed may fear for personal safety, have anger and hostility towards the perpetrators and may even contemplate suicide. Vohlídalová (2015), victims of sexual harassment need support from family and friends as this can affect them psychologically and later result in mental problems. Teachers, however, are not supported by other community members, family, spouses and friends. This suggests that once a teacher is a victim of sexual harassment, they are highly likely to be unsupported by the people living around them. This is emotionally frustrating and draining as being the victim, support is also one of the pillars they need in order to deal and handle the effects that comes with being a victim of sexual harassment. Edwin (2009, p89) stated that victims feel "unsupported by school staff, seem less trusting of people in general, and less enthusiastic about pursuing their education". Hand and Laura (2000) also discovered that these effects of sexual harassment on teachers who are victims of sexual harassment can psychologically cripple a human being.

4.3 The Coping Strategies

Teachers were asked to narrate on the coping strategies they use when dealing or handling sexual harassment from students at work place. Based on the interview response with the teachers, the study findings developed into three themes/strategies practiced and or suggested that are: confrontation, beating/punishment, and ignoring the student.

4.3.1 Confrontation

Majority of the respondents stated that they would confront the learner individually or learners at large through talking about the implications of sexual harassment towards the teachers and the students at large. This was meant to discourage the learners from continuing harassing the teachers and bringing awareness of how wrong it is. Participant 2, stated that *"I make the learner see and understand how wrong it is to sexually harass an elder or teacher"*. Participants 4,5,7,6.8 and 9 shared same sentiments with participant 2. Participant 7 further noted that *"I would talk to the learner to make him realize my principles"*. In as much as the teachers saw this as one of the ways to deal with sexual harassment, confronting the learner in private may be preferred and not in front of other learners.

4.3.2 Beating/punishment

Some respondents stated that they would even go to the extent of beating the learner *"I would beat the learner"*, stated participant 8. She further stated that she would also report the learner to the Head of Department or the career guidance teacher that the learner is sexually harassing her. The learner would be punished in front of other children to witness and discourage learners from doing so. This was the coping strategy that the respondent used or suggested. Though teachers see this

as coping strategy, spanking learners in Eswatini schools is not allowed while positive discipline is encouraged.

4.3.3 Ignore

Lastly, teachers opt to ignore sexual advancements from learners for few reasons. Participant 3 believes that ignoring the learner will help in time, *“I would just ignore the learner until he stops and give him less attention”*. However, other teachers felt that ignoring the learner may not help but develops into bullying. Other teacher hired on contract bases preferred to remain silent as that may suggest that they are unable to control students and thus their contracts may not be renewed. Participants 6 responded by *“For job security I just ignore the student because her level of understanding is not the same as mine”*. She stated that she respects her calling as a teacher. Vohlídalová (2015) stated that the most used copying strategy is avoiding the harasser. However, there are some that are against beating, ignoring and befriending of learners. This is because firstly, the Eswatini education policy is against beating of learners in schools. Ignoring the learner, may not be a favorable coping strategy, because some learners are so persuasive to the extent that they don't give up. So, ignoring a persuasive learner will not solve anything as the learner will not stop harassing the teacher, which at the end it does not solve the problem or put a stop to the unlawful act.

Again, it is difficult to ignore a learner that you are teaching. Befriending the learner is also a good coping strategy as stated by participant 8. This is because, in the teacher training institutes teachers are educated to be open, welcoming towards learners especially in career guidance. This is to help learners to be able to open up to teachers about any difficulties that the learners might have both academically, socially and personally. In career guidance, teachers are taught to be a friend, parent and a guardian towards the learners, but also be professionals as well. This is supported by Vohlídalová (2015), and Smit and Plessis (2011) who stated that education should safely shape the minds and attitudes of young adults and children with regard to sexual harassment.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The existence of sexual harassment in our society is undeniable, there was a need to be investigated further are its precise nature, extent and impact particularly in learning institutions. Previous studies have mainly viewed sexual harassment in schools from the perspective of the students as victims of sexual harassment and have mainly been conducted in regular schools. The perspective of teacher as a victim of sexual harassment in schools has largely been ignored. Yet, achievement of school effectiveness demands, among others, a secure environment for teachers, which in turn impacts positively on teacher performance. Teachers, as evident in this study, do suffer sexual harassment from learners mostly through verbal utterances that indicate sexual advancements. Students ask teachers about their sex lives, send them nude pictures and make sexy gestures that lures teachers into having sex with them. Teachers react differently to these actions such as punishing the perpetrator, avoiding learners, confronting the student and even suspecting that the learner is possessed by some demons that make her/him act wayward. It can therefore be concluded that sexual harassment has almost similar effects on teachers as it is on learners. The teacher feel embarrassed, develop fear and anger, tend to avoid school/class and they are less likely to be supported by either friends or family. Sexual harassment in schools by students on teachers does really occur in high levels which really need to be addressed. This does not only affect the learning process but also greatly affects the victim (teachers). This makes the learning environment not proper for learning operations based on the teachers view, thus this issue should not be ignored but rather, teachers should try to voice out their grievances unto the government and country at large.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Eswatini Education Policy Sector of 2018 details government's urge to provide and promote a good working conditions for teachers through various teacher welfare services. The school environment is a key area for effective teaching and learning. It is, therefore, recommended that government need to protect teachers from sexual harassment by students and that learners need to be made aware that sexual harassment of teachers is unacceptable in Eswatini schools. The educational policy needs to have a stream that will talk in-depth about protecting teachers in schools. There is also a need for further studies that look in depth on the effects of sexual harassment of teachers, look for better ways as to how teachers can deal and handle the stress of them being a victim of such. This will help teachers to be able to know how to cope and respond to the effects of sexual harassment.

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