IMPLICATION OF WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF THE WORKING WOMEN IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Worldly, sexual harassment (SH) in the workplace has long been an issue of concern and a major challenge to most organisations. SH is a persistent unwelcome sexual behaviour or advance directed to the workers including job seekers, at workplace by either their colleagues, superiors, supervisors, employers, among others, that may potentially hamper or compromise the capacities to work or actively participate in the organisational activities. It is with no doubt that such a sexual relationship is degrading and influenced by male in position of authority, taking advantage of the female workers. The theoretical framework for the paper is Robert K. Merton's Perspective of Functionalism which assumes that the inability of the organisational structures including the employers, supervisors, managers, and other workers, to harmoniously function creates sexual harassment; a dysfunction to organisational goals. The issue has seriously affected the contribution of working women in the workplace. The paper concludes that when women are faced with SH in the workplace, the consequences are felt on their social and psychological wellbeing and the level of productivity both within and outside the organizational settings. Additionally, SH in the workplace threatens women's job security, their earning potentials and productive capacity, thereby exposing them to weak morale and unhealthy organizational atmosphere. It is recommended that the harassed workers boldly speak out, organize support networks and take effective action against SH.

Keywords: Sexual harassment, Workplace, Women, Implication, Individuals, Organisation, Working women

Introduction

Globally, harassment in the workplace has long been a problem of concern and a serious challenge to most organisations (Mezie-Okoye & Alamina, 2014). Sexual harassment (SH) is a severely traumatic experience that disproportionally affects both male and female workers.

In this paper, harassment is situated within the workplace where workers or job seekers are harassed by their colleagues, superiors or their employers. Within the lens of this paper, SH refers to a persistent unwelcome sexual behaviour or advance directed to the workers including job seekers, at the workplace by either their colleagues, superiors, supervisors, employers, among others, which will potentially hamper or compromise their capacities to figure or actively participate within the organisational activities. The unwelcome sexual advances as stated within the definition include unwanted and unwelcome words, deeds, actions, gestures, symbols, or behaviours of a sexual nature that make the target, specifically a female staff, feel uncomfortable.

The act of SH within the workplace is usually made either explicitly or implicitly, where a potential victim is conditioned to give in, to secure favours such as employment, promotion and any other opportunities. Wherein an individual's submission or rejection of any act of SH, such conduct is employed as the basis for employment, promotion and other decisions affecting the individual. It is on this note that Ladebo (2003) expresses that such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with the individual's organisational or professional performance or of making an intimidating hostile or offensive environment. Most of the world's women have experienced SH. This statement is supported by Chamie (2017), who revealed that not less than 75 per cent of the world's 2.7 billion women aged 18 years and older, or a minimum of 2 billion women, have been sexually harassed.

SH frequently occurs within the workplace, where perpetrators include colleagues, managers and employers. In studies from around the world, including Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, they have documented that substantial proportions of women reported to have experienced SH and abuse on their way to and from work, as well as in the workplace, by their supervisors, colleagues, among others (European Commission, 1998; Snyder, Scherer & Fisher, 2012; United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [US EEOC], 2019). Several studies (Ajuwon, Olley, Akin & Akintola, 2001; Mezie-Okoye & Alamina, 2014; Taiwo, Omole & Omole, 2014) have been carried on SH in elementary schools and institutions of higher learning in Nigeria, but little attention has been paid to working-class women, thus, SH is not only confined to students.

Furthermore, the entire area of SH and non-consenting sexual relationships particularly as it relates to implications on the working-class women and organisations, has not been adequately explored. The very fact that SH remains pervasive particularly within the context of the workplace, it is usually taken for granted and believed to be normal to the extent that victims are left to tackle the problem on their own. Where they feel discomforted to the act, they are faced with challenges which inhibit their report to authorities.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine the phenomenon of sexual harassment of Nigerian women in the workplace. The specific objectives are to examine the implications of workplace sexual harassment on individuals and organisations, assess the challenges associated with the report of SH experienced by employees as well as determine the strategies to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. The paper is organised through a conceptual clarification of sexual harassment in which detailed information on the activities that constitute sexual harassment is explicated. Also, the paper was designed in line with the objectives stated. The study relied on secondary data derived from various sources.

Concept of Sexual Harassment

There is no universally accepted definition of sexual harassment. Harassment has been conceptualized as any unwelcome comment, conduct or gesture directed towards an individual or group of individuals, which is insulting, intimidating, humiliating, malicious, degrading or offensive, and is either repeated or of such significant nature, that adversely affect someone's performance (Latcheva, 2017). Harassment is a form of discrimination that consists of words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation, physical actions or violence that is directed at an employee due to any protected characteristic (New York State, 2019). The harassment may be based on age, race, creed, colour, national origin, sexual orientation, military status, sex, disability, marital status, domestic violence victim status, gender identity and criminal history. Harassment includes offensive behaviour based on stereotypes about a protected class and behaviour that is intended to cause discomfort or humiliation because of a protected characteristic. It also includes any expression of contempt or hatred for the group to which the victim belongs based on a protected characteristic (New York State, 2019).

Sexual harassment (SH) is described as any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours or other physical and expressive behaviour of a sexual nature (Bonnie, 2009). Sexual harassment is a particular type of harassment and sex discrimination. Sex discrimination, in general, includes any type of bias based on sex, sexual harassment, sex stereotyping, discrimination based on gender identity or the status of being transgender and discrimination based on pregnancy. The most straightforward definition is a composite of "women-unfriendly behaviours," including sexist but nonsexual comments and gestures (Kauppinen-Toropainen & Gruber, 1993). Many of the more elaborate characterizations isolate nonsexual derogatory actions against women and divide the remaining forms by type, purpose, or severity. For example, Gruber (1992) identified 11 types of sexual harassment in three domains: verbal requests (ranging from subtle expressions to promises and threats), sexual remarks (ranging from jokes to solicitation), and nonverbal displays (ranging from gestures and pictures to forced sex).

Sexual harassment is defined by Gupta (2014) as the unwanted imposition of sexual gratification in the context of a relationship of unequal power. Page and Pina (2015) see sexual harassment as a societal problem that has bedevilled workplaces all over the world, with severe consequences for victims and organisations. However, there is unlikely to be a universal definition of this 'term', due to cultural differences; for example, acceptable greetings in a particular region might be seen as harassment in another. Peters and Bourne (2012) noted that the Jamaican culture is characterised by words / 'pet names' such as 'baby', 'honey', 'sweetheart', 'hotness', 'sexy', as well as vulgar jokes, blowing kisses and winking outside social domains and even at workplaces, making it difficult to define sexual harassment. McCann (2018) defines sexual harassment to include two elements, 'sexual' conduct and 'sex-based' behaviour, which are unwelcome to the recipient.

New York State (2019) defines sexual harassment as any unwanted verbal or physical advance, sexually explicit or derogatory statement, or sexually discriminatory remark that is offensive or objectionable to the recipient, or which interferes with his or her job performance. According to New York State (2019), there are two main types of sexual harassment including hostile environment and quid pro quo.

i **Hostile Environment**

A hostile environment based on sex may be created by words, signs, jokes, pranks, intimidation, physical actions or violence, either of a sexual nature or not of a sexual nature, directed at an individual because of that individual's sex. Hostile environment of sexual harassment includes sexual or discriminatory displays or publications anywhere in the workplace, such as displaying pictures, posters, calendars, graffiti, objects, promotional material, reading materials or other materials that are sexually demeaning or pornographic. This includes such sexual displays on workplace computers or cell phones and sharing such displays while in the workplace.

ii. **Quid Pro Quo Sexual Harassment**

Quid pro quo sexual harassment occurs when a person in authority trades, or tries to trade, job benefits for sexual favours. Quid pro quo is a legal term meaning a trade. This type of harassment occurs between an employee and someone with authority, like a supervisor, who can grant or withhold job benefits. Quid pro quo sexual harassment includes offering or granting better working conditions or opportunities in exchange for a sexual relationship.

To conclude, sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature creating a hostile or offensive working environment. However, sexual harassment has largely been conceptualized as women's issue; this does not mean that men are not harassed, but at a lower frequency and experience fewer negative psychological outcomes of SH compared to women.

Theoretical Framework: Robert K. Merton's Functionalist Perspective

The perspective of Robert K. Merton on structural functionalism has been applied to explain the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the workplace. According to Haralambos and Holbon (2008), structural functionalism is a broad perspective in sociology and anthropology which interprets society as a structure with interrelated parts. The functionalist perspective, as rooted in the works of Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim, Herbert Spencer among several others, was concerned and preoccupied with understanding social order. Functionalism provides a perceptive on society as a whole. It views society as an organism in which all the parts function in a way that ensures the continued well-being of the whole organism, like the various systems in the human body or the parts in a vehicle. Functionalists thus view society as an integrated, harmonious cohesive whole where all the parts function to maintain equilibrium and consensus.

A functionalist looking at any institution in society would, therefore, ask what function that institution performs and how does it serve to maintain equilibrium and consensus? An example can be given of the family as a form of social organisation that serves a host of functions including the stable satisfaction of sexual needs, procreation, socialization, inculcation of religious beliefs, education and the economic function of providing food, clothes and accommodation. The functionalists view the very permanence of such institutions as an index of its usefulness. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that the proponents of functionalism were concerned with order and function, that is, much emphasis was placed on function.

Robert King Merton refined the analysis of functionalism by first putting forth the ensuing criticisms and arguments. Earlier proponents of the functionalist theory indicated that all standardized social and cultural benefits and practices are functional for both society as a whole as well as individuals in society. This assertion maintains that various parts of social systems must show a high level of integration; Merton (1968), however, argued that a generalisation like this cannot be extended to larger and more complex societies. Secondly, there is the claim of universal functionalism which argues that all standardized social and cultural structures and forms have a positive function. Refuting this claim, Merton (1968) argues that this is a contradiction to what is seen in the real world; not every structure, idea, or belief has positive functions. The third claim of functional analysis that Merton challenged is that of indispensable parts of the working whole, which implies that structures and functions are functionally necessary for society. With this claim, Merton further argued that people must be willing to admit that there exist various structural and functional alternatives within society. These claims and arguments set the premise upon which Merton refined the analysis of the Functionalist perspective.

Merton (1968) used the term functions to refer to the beneficial consequences of people's actions that is, functions help keep a group (society, social system) in equilibrium. In contrast, dysfunctions are consequences that harm society, capable of undermining a system's equilibrium. Robert Merton refined the analysis of functionalism when he distinguished between "manifest" and "latent" functions. Functions can be either manifest or latent. If an action is intended to help some part of a system, it is a manifest function. He acknowledged that people are to a great extent conscious and aware of the purpose of many activities. Thus, he defined manifest functions as those consequences which are both intended and recognized. Of course, human actions can also hurt a system. Because such consequences usually are unintended, Merton called them latent dysfunctions. The distinction between manifest and latent functions and/or dysfunctions, therefore, forces the sociologist to go beyond the reason individuals give to their actions.

Concerning the area of interest, Merton posits that as long as the various institutions of the state which include the economic, family, legal, political among others are not working harmoniously and interdependently, sexual harassment in the workplace will remain a problem of organisations. Therefore, in organisations, different departments/structures exist including the accounting, marketing, human resource, management, etc, function harmoniously to ensure that all employees discharge their responsibilities accordingly for the smooth running of the organisations. To Merton (1968), he called it function and a manifest one. He thereby argued that if any of the structures fails to discharge its function as expected, dysfunction is the result which may have both manifest and latent implications on the lives of the workers. For instance, sexual harassment sets in when workers fail to function according to the terms guiding their working conditions. Where SH is perpetrated, dysfunction tends to appear in the forms of job instability, job dissatisfaction, low productivity, among others. This theory sees SH as a dysfunctional element, an intended action that results to unintended/latent consequences. Importantly, the harassers are very much aware of their functions but fail to discharge accordingly, for the purpose of satisfying their sexual urge at the detriment of victims (organisations and individuals). Therefore, SH is a product of

dysfunction in the workplace, capable of rendering the victims less effective in their organisations most especially if they feel threatened by the act.

Merton is of the view that the reason workers keep experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace is associated with the problem in some parts of the organisational structures. The rights of the workers are infringed by the management in terms of implementing the policies capable of preventing and curbing the issue of sexual harassment. Organisations are bureaucratically expected to ensure that issues of sexual harassment are frowned at and perpetrators are severely punished. However, Merton argued that the postulate of the functional unity of society, that is, what is functional for society, considered as a whole, does not prove functional for all individuals or some sub-groups within the society. For instance, Akinfala and Komolafe (2017) reveal that sexual harassment is dysfunctional to individual workers in terms of undermining their dignity at work, creating an offensive or hostile environment, leading to lack of concentration on work activities, unwanted pregnancy, decreased functionality and participation in group activities. Therefore, sexual harassment is not a unifying problem

Moreover, the political institution charged with the responsibility of running the affairs of the nation in terms of policies and programmes, protection of lives and property, only give priority to some quarters of the society. Their actions are only favourable mostly to those who are politically inclined among the top functionaries in the organisations such as managers, supervisors, etc. which are at the detriment of the other vulnerable workers. This informs that for the vulnerable workers such as job seekers, promotion seekers, subordinate staff, etc., to remain functional in the organisations, they are expected to subject themselves to sexual harassment from their superiors. In which failure to ascribe to the advances, they tend to lose focus, called latent consequences. On this note, Bronner et al. (2003) identify latent dysfunctions to include persistent sadness, negative outlook, irritability, mood swings, impulsivity, emotional flooding, anxiety, fears of loss of control, excessive guilt and shame, escape fantasies, compulsive thoughts, rage episodes, obsessional fears, crying spells, among others.

Merton concludes that people work to accomplish certain dreams, ensure adequate social amenities, look for means to survive, depend on the workplace for food, drink, medicine, fuel, building materials and virtually everything. Merton (1968) called all these activities manifest functions. Working women tend to experience sexual harassment in the workplace while relating or interacting with other members e.g. superior colleagues. Where these women are found sexually appealing to the male superiors, advances are thrown to them which unintendedly and consequentially affect workers' performance and the whole system or the organisations. It is the result of their manifest functions that creates a latent or unintended function which is dysfunctional to the organisations. From this explanation, it can be deduced that as long as the organisational structures fail to define acts that constitute harassment, implement policies to tackle it or are dysfunctional, there are likely to be other latent or unintended consequences including quitting jobs, losing promotion, stigmatization, disrupting schooling, unemployment, less income and damaged careers. Merton further states that only by recognizing the dysfunctional aspects of workplace sexual harassment, can we explain the development and persistence of alternatives. On a higher level, dysfunctions can also be manifest or latent.

The strength of Merton's explanation is observed for identifying the origin of sexual harassment, its implication on organisations and individuals as well as proffering solutions. It reveals that organisations cannot achieve their goals, with a part failing to play its role as expected. This implies that leaving the issue of sexual harassment unattended to, organisations or countries can hardly develop. To solve this problem, Merton posits that there is a need for all the departments or workers in organisations to effectively function by identifying the manifest and the latent functions of any actions to eradicate sexual harassment.

The fact that this perspective is suitable for the explanation of the phenomenon under study, it is not free from criticisms. Functionalist ideas almost portray humans (workers) as being autonomous and that only socialisation determines individuals' lives. They do not see humans as the unpredictable creatures they are, not possible to stray away from the predictable ideas that functionalists have of people. Too much stress is placed on harmony and the potential for conflict and its effects are generally ignored. There is no recognition of difference by class, region or ethnic group. The functionalist picture is simply reflective of happy middle-class American families. Feminists also criticise Merton's perspective and functionalism in general for ignoring male dominance that often is present in Nigerian and African societies. Furthermore, the sexual division of labour as described is not universal, with the relative roles of women and men in modern families can be seen to be gradually changing. Many functionalists concentrate primarily on the universal nuclear family in modern societies, with the growing diversity of family types not considered. Functionalists have a problem explaining social change that is capable of contributing to the menace of sexual harassment in the workplace.

The Implications of Workplace Sexual Harassment to Individuals and Organisations

The impact of SH on women can be serious, depending on a variety of factors, in particular, the nature and extent of harassment, the cultural setting, social support and the personal circumstances of the victim. The effects of harassment can be seen for nearly a decade following a harassing event (Gaba, 2010). Harassment in the workplace has far-reaching effects on the health and well-being of workers, as well as on their job tenure, job stability and job satisfaction. It may also have an impact on the overall economy resulting from costs associated with absenteeism, lost productivity and job turnover. This points out that SH in the workplace is extremely a serious issue. Akinfala and Komolafe (2017) note that SH undermines the victim's dignity at work by creating an offensive or hostile environment for the victim and an arbitrary barrier to sexual equality in the workplace. Expectedly, the effects of this assault on victims are so severe to the extent that they may lead to the lack of concentration on work activities, unwanted pregnancy, decreased functionality and participation in group activities. This immoral act may make the future of the victim look grim, ominous and unsafe (Akinfala & Komolafe, 2017).

Sexually harassed individuals can suffer several psychological effects ranging from irritation and frustration to anxiety, stress, and trauma. Depending on the situation, a victim can experience anything from mild annoyance to extreme psychological damage, while the impact on a victim's career and life may be significant and also leave them in ruins. It is in line with this that Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gefland and Magley (1997), Bronner, Perets

and Ehrnfeld (2003) and Gaba (2010) establish the negative effects of SH to include negative mood, eating disorders, alcohol abuse, job withdrawal, greater stress, greater self-doubt, lower self-esteem, and lower overall mental health. Similarly, Bronner et al. (2003) identify persistent sadness, negative outlook, irritability, mood swings, impulsivity, emotional flooding, anxiety, fears of loss of control, excessive guilt and shame, escape fantasies, compulsive thoughts, rage episodes, obsessional fears, crying spells, persistent anger and fear, decreased self-esteem, self-doubt, diminished self-confidence, decreased concentration, feelings of humiliation, helplessness, vulnerability and alienation as the psychological effects of SH.

Sexual harassment in the workplace creates a hostile environment for workers specifically the harassed. The actions taken against an individual who is sexually harassed may interfere with the person by destroying or damaging a person's workstation, tools or equipment, or otherwise interfere with the person's ability to perform the job, sabotage his/her work, lead to bullying, yelling and name-calling (New York State, 2019). Where a worker refuses to accept a sexual relationship, the working conditions of such person are threatened like demotions, shift alterations or work location changes or denial of opportunities. It may also lead to the use of pressure, threats or physical acts to force a sexual relationship.

The toll of SH on women can also result in quitting a job, losing a promotion, stigmatization, disrupting schooling, unemployment, less income and damaged careers (Taiwo et al., 2014). SH of women also has economic costs for employers and countries. Workplace harassment can result in absenteeism, increased turnover, lower job satisfaction, decreased productivity and a barrier to women's labour force participation, retarding the growth of GDP (Schneider, Swan & Fitzgerald, 1997; Taiwo et al., 2014). Also, SH settlements and court damages awards can amount to substantial pay-outs for employers. Schneider et al. (1997) are of the view that SH at work could cause decreased morale, decreased job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, job loss and impacts on relationship with co-workers.

Furthermore, SH impacts negatively on women's psychological wellbeing and employees who make complaints about SH are not necessarily over-sensitive people. Hence, both the victim and the alleged perpetrator of workplace harassment can suffer serious trauma and irreparable damage to their careers, no matter how the case is resolved. On this note, Bell, Quick and Cycyota (2002) observe that SH can also lower organisational commitment, cause physical and mental ill-health and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Akinfala and Komolafe (2017) found that the occurrence of SH causes victims to withdraw from the organisation and will have the tendency to blame the organisation for the harassment for failing to implement its anti-harassment policies.

Bell et al. (2002) classified SH in organisations as a dysfunctional, counterproductive behaviour which they equated to a chronic health problem which deserves the use of the preventive management approach to curb. They associate SH to an expensive problem for any organisation and affirm that the cost of preventing it is thirty-one times less than the cost of permitting it due to its psychological effects on employees, absenteeism, lawsuit and damages awarded to victims as well as the psychological impact it has on other employees who witness it. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the

person's work or performance or creating an intimidating hostile or offensive work, or social environment. The fact that SH is often associated with assault, bullying, coercion, discrimination, favouritism, exploitation and intimidation, it could leave the victims with long-term pains that devastate their psychological well-being (Yuri, Keiki, & Michiko, 2006; Yusuf, 2008).

SH undermines the integrity of the organisational environment, and it prevents its victims from achieving their full potential (Fapohunda, 2014). For instance, workers who get promoted or awarded as a result of sexual consent or favours are not worth the positions/honours they have been conferred. This will demonstrate in the performance of the illegally promoted workers to the rank which requires some levels of training and qualifications. Here, the discharge of administrative duties may become problematic and not well carried out which may, therefore, impede on the organisational missions and goals. Many seasoned administrators and executive officers in whom much resources of their organisations have been expended have got their careers terminated through cases of SH (Gupta, 2014). Also, the image of those involved in SH and their family members are often tarnished within the immediate environment.

In most cases, the consequences for female victims can be reflected in psychological pains, revulsion, or hatred towards the harasser or other men, victims often feel cheap, dirty and vulnerable (Taiwo et al., 2014). Similarly, Burke (2018) observes that SH can threaten a worker's physical and emotional well-being, influence how well she performs at work, and make it difficult for her to achieve her career goals. Besides, the memory hardly fades away rather; it continues to trigger a feeling of depression that can make the victim develop a withdrawal syndrome particularly from men with long-term impact on the decision to be married. As a result of SH, a worker may have trouble in carrying out simple work routines, lose trust in the organisation officials, become isolated, nurse constant fear for personal safety and have low self-esteem which may prevent her from achieving her maximum potential (Ajuwon et al. 2001; Bronner et al., 2003). By extension, SH negatively impacts on the national productivity and economic development due to psychologically ill victims of harassment who keep creating problems for the country in terms of leaving their jobs, painting the image of the nation black which may probably scare investors, low production and investment, poor discharge of duties, to mention a few (Chamie, 2017; European Commission, 1998). It has been observed that those who have been harassed before may react more negatively to harassment than first-time targets because experience diminishes one's ability to cope (Fitzgerald et al., 1997).

Challenges Preventing the Report of Sexual Harassment Encountered in the Workplace
Although many people experience sexual harassment in the workplace, many never report it (Fitzgerald et al. 1997). Explanations for the lack of reporting sexual harassment experience relate to threats to self-esteem and risk of secondary victimization—women fear facing doubts, scrutiny, and blame for the harassment they experience (Fitzgerald et al. 1997; Foster & Fullagar, 2018). These fears influence the individual victims to avoid sharing a sexual harassment encounter which could result in self-blame, shame, and fear of negative judgments from others (Foster & Fullagar, 2018). Indeed, research on SH shows that disclosing a societally stigmatized experience can affect self-esteem such that positive,

validating responses are associated with higher self-esteem whereas negative, blaming, and doubting responses are associated with lower self-esteem (Gaba, 2010). It is often the case that women are reluctant and even afraid to report SH due to embarrassment, humiliation, social stigma, victim-blaming, job loss and retaliation. Young women are frequently afraid of the consequences of SH complaints on their jobs, careers, future promotions and personal lives, especially when it takes place at the workplace. Yuri et al. (2006) observe that SH is pandemic, characteristically underreported, more especially in the low-income countries, because of the enduring culture of male dominance, female social and economic disempowerment and poor or non-prosecution of sex offenders.

There is a strong awareness of SH in the United Kingdom and the United States providing extensive legislation to check and prevent its occurrence (Yusuf, 2008). However, most women do not report their experiences of SH because a majority of the women who are harassed and traumatised by the experience and do not consider it to be SH (Yusuf, 2008). The failure of authorities to prosecute sexual offenders is an inhibiting factor for further report. The evidence is established by Akinfala and Komolafe (2017) who discovered that some victims will fail to report harassment if they believe that reporting it will not help change the situation and may worsen the situation. Women who find themselves in this situation, may view the harasser as 'trouble' and devise ways to manage the trouble. While Yusuf (2008) reveals that the consideration of the consequences of reporting any form of sexual violence such as disbelief by the management and colleagues and retaliation in the form of demotions, salary cuts or dismissal could as well contribute to the increased rate of SH in the workplace.

In traditional societies, women do not report SH because of fear that they would be blamed for it which could damage their reputation and it is considered a taboo for women to engage in sexual discussions because women who disclose their sexual inappropriateness would be deemed to have humiliated their families (Yusuf, 2008). Majority of victims in Nigeria have been found not to report their experiences to authorities but tend to hide their predicament and suffer in silence (Akinfala & Komolafe, 2017). Incidence of SH is not always reported and perpetrators are allowed to go free. This could be responsible for the unchecked reoccurrence of the behaviour deficit. Moreover, women generally recognize that by and large there are little or no consequences to the men who have sexually harassed them, particularly when it tends to be one person's world against another. In many instances, the burden of proof placed on women is considered too high and the legal recourse is seen as too low as well as lengthy and entangling.

In many societies, there is a general tolerance of SH, being viewed as part and parcel of daily life, with many shrugging it off just as another unpleasant fact of a woman's life, especially at the workplace (Peters & Bourne, 2012). Also, some women have come to recognize the pervasiveness of SH and sadly concluded that to get what you want, you need to give them what they want. In Nigeria, for example, it has been reported that if women choose to call out SH, they would be quarrelling with their male counterparts all day (Yusuf, 2008). A notable instance of SH tolerance was observed when a Russian judge threw out a woman's harassment case, ruling, "If we had no sexual harassment, we would have no children". Yuri et al. (2006) documented the challenge of reporting of SH to include the perception that the harassment will stop if it is ignored, afraid no one will believe them,

feeling of intimidation, embarrassment, shame, or helpless, being unfamiliar with labour policies and complaint-resolution producers relating to SH, fear of retaliation from the perpetrator, his or her colleagues and the assumption that the perpetrator will not face any consequences even if the allegations are proven to be true.

Strategies to Prevent Sexual Harassment in the Workplace
Several strategies have been taken by different countries to address the issue of SH of women. For example, 189 countries have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Latcheva, 2017). Many national, regional and international legal systems have made SH illegal. Some 122 countries, including China, India, the United States, member countries of the European Union, and the entire United Nations system have laws and statutes prohibiting SH against women in the workplace with most providing mechanisms for victims to file a complaint with their employer and/or authorities (Chamie, 2017; US EEOC, 2019).

To avoid the SH of their female family members, some communities have gone to extremes with the practice of "purdah", or the seclusion of women from public observation behind high-walled enclosures, screens and curtains within the home (Wilcke, 2012). Others have taken steps to segregate or separate the sexes in private and public places, including schools, offices, religious institutions, sports stadiums, social clubs and even public transportation. Some societies have instituted concealing clothing or strict dress codes for women (Wilcke, 2012; Latcheva, 2017; The Guardian, 2017). However, conservative dress or authorized clothing, including the hijab, chador, the veil, burqa, and sleeved and long dresses, fail to protect women from unwanted attention and SH.

Paradoxically, it seems that the more women cover their bodies, the more women are sexually harassed by men. Some countries are taking additional steps to protect women from SH in public places. In France, for example, a parliamentary working group is preparing a proposal that will penalize men with fines who harass women on the street, including infringing on women's freedom of movement. Mexico, which recently hosted a global forum in its capitol focusing on making urban public spaces safe for women and girls, has launched campaigns in its transit system and elsewhere aimed at changing the thinking and behaviour of men about sexually harassing women.

Another strategy is to avoid, confront or negotiate with the perpetrator or the harassing context if possible, although Gruber (1992) considers this a low intervention strategy. The confrontation/ negotiation with the perpetrators may involve directly asking or insisting that the offensive behaviour ceases. The confrontation involves clear, direct opposition to the harasser—a fairly assertive coping strategy. However, Peters (2019) notes that its success depends on the type of relationship the harassed has with the perpetrator. In a situation where the relationship is cordial, interpersonal, smooth and pleasant, the harassed might find this strategy very helpful.

To avoid being labelled, women use different approaches to prevent SH from occurring or escalating. One of such approaches would be to ignore the harassment either by making light of the situation or by going along with it as a form of joke or by totally avoiding the harasser or situations where the harassment might occur (Akinfala & Komolafe, 2017). Some women communicate with their harasser about their displeasure. However, in recent

researches, strategies against SH among Africans, though poor, with little effect and needing more intervention and organizational/governmental policies to reinforce its efficacy, have included withdrawal from the place of occurrence, confrontation, avoidance, etc. (Gaba 2010). Taiwo et al. (2014) also reported that over 80% of respondents in their study feel comfortable to disclose an experience of SH to their trusted friends and rather than parents or law enforcement agents.

The International Labour Organization (2010) through its guideline advised workers to strictly refuse verbally or by writing with evidence kept on any encounter of SH. It also informs that every organisation should have a sexual harassment compliant unit for filing a complaint of any form of SH in the workplace. This may probably also involve the filing of a suit with the court, showing text message, audio record, evidence of posting of a letter of refusal, the decision of the human resource department on the offending employee and other evidence. ILO (2010) observes that when organisations take relevant actions such as imposing a penalty (fine, warning, transfer of post or dismissal) on the offending employee, it will help to discontinue the act of SH. Besides, victims of SH are also asked to seek help from relevant social organizations, such as city and district working committee on women and children, women federation, women workers' department of the trade union, women's legal aid Non-Governmental Organisations, among others.

The most effective way to avoid SH in the workplace, and also influence the public's state of mind, is for the employer to adopt a clear policy prohibiting SH and to make it very clear to his employees. Many women prefer to make a complaint and to have the matter resolved within the workplace rather than to air out the dirty laundry with a public complaint and be seen as a traitor by colleagues, superiors and employers. Most prefer a pragmatic solution that would stop the harassment and prevent future contact with the harasser rather than turning to the police. More about the difficulty in turning an offence into a legal action can be found in Felstiner and Sarats (1981) study, which describes three steps a victim (of any dispute) must go through before turning to the justice system: naming – giving the assault a definition, blaming – understanding who is responsible for the violation of rights and facing them, and finally, claiming – turning to the authorities. In sexual offences, there is a great difficulty for the victims to go through these steps, and the closer the relationship between victim and assailant, the harder it is to take each step.

SH in the workplace could be brought to an end when many more women are put in positions of power (Peters & Bourne, 2012). Although, this is not an overnight fix but is something that will take years. There is also the need to change attitudes and behaviours towards SH. At whatever level of the organization working-class women experience harassment, they should all be ready to call out inappropriate behaviour or language witnessed in the workplace (US EEOC, 2019). If the clamour from both male and female employees who oppose the behaviour rises, it is hoped that potential harassers are likely to get discouraged in sexually harassing women in the workplace. On a practical level, companies have a legal and moral duty to put articulated and visible policies in place that show that SH on any level will not be tolerated. However, it is not enough to have these policies; they should be regularly reinforced to staff as part of their continuous training. Moreover, companies are also duty-bound to create safe and confidential processes where any victim of harassment, whether female or male, should feel able to report such incidences

without fear of judgment or reprisal. Every member of senior management must be seen to take this issue with the level of seriousness and zero tolerance it deserves.

Conclusion

The difficulty in understanding SH is that it involves a range of behaviour, and is often difficult for the recipient to describe to themselves, and others, exactly what they are experiencing. Moreover, behaviour and motives vary between individual harassers. Sexual harassment presents an amazing and disturbing scene in an environment that is often believed to be an avenue for building one's career and sustaining oneself and family as well as for moulding and developing virile leadership skills, high moral qualities and intellectual capacity for human capital for future leadership. It is important to note that SH can occur between persons of the opposite or same-sex and both males and females can either be the victims or the offenders. However, most SH victims are women and the overwhelming majority of the offenders are men.

Sexual harassment is substantially underreported, in part because workers are justifiably concerned that reporting may lead to retaliation and an even worse work environment. Employers who are supposed to draft, implement and enforce laws on sexual harassment are often caught in the act, creating a hostile environment to their employees. Organisations need to be aware that a hostile environment affects the whole organization, not just the women who are harassed. Most organisations have not instituted departments for the laying of complaints on sexual harassment experiences, and where otherwise, perpetrators are hardly punished, leading to blaming the victim syndrome. Probably, organisations see sexual harassment complaints as something that slows them down and as an unnecessary expense. There is such a reluctance to cooperate and participate. This contributes to the pervasiveness and its triumph daily.

Based on available data, official reports and personal accounts of women, one cannot avoid concluding that SH remains a major global problem impacting most of the world's women. SH is all-encompassing ranging from verbal, visual, to physical abuse of victims. It has grief consequences such as fear, intimidation, low self-esteem, depression, unintended pregnancy, among others.

Recommendations

It, therefore, requires collective and collaborative efforts of intra personal, interpersonal, institutional, community, organizational and governmental efforts to facilitate intervention strategies to curb the menace. While laws, policies and programmes against the SH of women are certainly necessary, they in themselves are insufficient. The Nigerian legal system provides little respite for victims of SH, unlike developed countries where the legal system is more effective.

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