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Original Research Article

Determinants and effects of sexual exploitation among female students of tertiary institutions in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

Background: Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are social vices that are common in our society and have rendered several havocs on our youths and the active labour force. The aim of the study was to evaluate the determinants and effect of sexual exploitation among female students of tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Methods: A well-structured questionnaire containing demographics, determinants and effects about sexual exploitation were administered to each participant. The participants were educated on how to fill the questionnaires and each student had one questionnaire to fill appropriately and independently after instructions were given to them by the researchers.

Results: A total of 104 female students participated in the study. The result shows that 35% of the participants were between the age 21-25, 58.8% were single and 47.6% of the participants put on mini skirt, 28.2% put on short gown and 24.3% put on normal skirt. The study also revealed that most of the participants were in 400 level of study representing 42.6%, 71.6% exposed their cleavage, 51.9% asked for grade upgrading, 62.1% requested for financial assistance from their male counterpart, 65.4% were impregnated while in school. 50% of the participants were sexually harassed and 30.6% were raped.

Conclusions: A total of 104 female students participated in the study and results showed that one out of two female students have faced sexual exploitation and about 30% of the population have been raped which had several effects on them including pregnancy.

Keywords: Determinants, Effects, Female, Sexual exploitation, Students

INTRODUCTION

Sexual exploitation is any abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes; this includes profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.¹ Sexual abuse is actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature by force or under unequal or coercive conditions

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) occurs when a position of power (such as being a staff member of an NGO) is used for sexual purposes against a beneficiary or vulnerable member of the community Sexual harassment occurs when differences in power are abused between staff members (verbally, through touch, use of inappropriate images, etc.).¹

Sexual abuse is a form of violence, which has mostly affected females.² Sexual abuse is associated with adverse psychological and physical consequences like public health, clinical care and human rights issues. Sexual abuse may involve acts of sexual contact and/or noncontact and acts of sexual contact include, fondling of genitals, oral-genital sex, penetration with a finger or object, sexual intercourse and sodomy and other acts such as the touching of breasts or buttocks are also sexually abusive acts.³ Non-contact involves exhibition of sexual organs by the abuser or exposing of genitals to the abuser, watching the abuser masturbate, looking at pornographic material, being filmed for pornographic use and sexual harassment.⁴

Sexual assault is a crime of violence that puts the victim at risk for physical injury, psychological disturbance, emotional disturbance, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.⁵ Sexual assault may include rape, forced vaginal, anal or oral penetration, forced sexual intercourse, inappropriate touching, forced kissing, child sexual abuse, or the torture of the victim in a sexual manner.⁶⁻⁸ All females of all age groups are at risk of sexual assault but the most vulnerable are the adolescents, children and the physically handicapped including those in educational institution.^{3,9} It has been found that women are more likely to be raped by someone they know than by someone they do not know.^{10,11} In addition to extra-genital trauma, the survivors of sexual assault may suffer from psychological trauma and genital trauma.⁵ In fact, victims of sexual assault were found to be 3 times more likely to suffer from depression and 6 times more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.¹

METHODS

Study type

This was a cross-sectional study (descriptive study) involving 103 female students.

Study place

The study place was carried out in tertiary institution in Rivers state, South-South, Nigeria. The study lasted for a period of eight weeks, from October 2022 to November 2022.

Selection criteria

Inclusion criteria were female students in tertiary institution in Rivers State, Nigeria whose ages were between 16 years to 40 years and exclusion criteria were male students, non-female students and female students whose ages are less than 16 years of age and above 40 years of age.

A well-structured questionnaire containing demographics, determinants and effects about sexual exploitation were administered to each participant. The participants were educated on how to fill the questionnaires and each student

had one questionnaire to fill appropriately and independently after instructions were given to them by the researchers.

Ethical approval

There was no ethical approval because the study was conducted in more than one tertiary institutions.

Statistical analysis

Data was done using Microsoft excel. P value <0.05 was considered significant for data.

RESULTS

The participants ages were 16-20 years, 11%; 21-25 years, 35%; 26-30 years, 26%; 31-35 years, 13% and 36-40 years, 15% (Table 1).

Table 1: Demography.

16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40
11	35	26	13	15
11%	35%	26%	13%	15%

Table 2: Educational level.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
9	9	28	43	12
8.9%	8.9%	27.7%	42.6%	11.9%

Table 3: Mode of dressing.

Mini skirt	Normal skirt	Short gown
49	25	29
47.6%	24.3%	28.1%

Table 4: Exposed parts of cleavage.

No	Yes
29	73
28.4%	71.6%

58.8% of the participants were single and 42.6% were in level 400. 47.6% of the participants put on mini skirt, 28.2% put on short gown and 24.3% put on normal gown (Table 3) and 71.6% exposed their cleavage (Table 4). 48.5% of the participants visit their lecturers in their offices and 51.9% asked for marks upgrading (Table 5). 62.1% requested for financial assistance from their male counterpart. 62.8% of the participants have carried over a particular course about 1-2 times (Table 6).

Table 5: Participants who asked for grade upgrading.

Yes	No
54	50
51.9%	48.1%

Table 6: Number of times participants carried over a particular course.

1-2 times	3-4 times
59	35
62.8%	37.2%

Table 7: Participants who were impregnated while in school.

Yes	No
53	28
65.4%	34.6%

Table 8: Participants who contacted sexually transmitted infection.

No	Yes
21	60
25.9%	74.1%

Table 9: Determinant and effects of sexual exploitation.

Determinants	Number	Percentage
Mode of dressing		
Mini skirt	18	37.255
Normal skirt	14	27.451
Short gown	20	39.216
Expose part of cleavage	20	39.216
Wear loud make up	35	68.527
Visit male lecturer in office	36	70.589
Ask for grade upgrading	37	72.549
Request financial assistant	37	72.549
Often miss class assessment	30	58.824
Always attend lecture	28	54.902
Carried over a course		
1-2 times	30	58.824
3-4 times	18	35.294
An average student	42	82.353
Combining both study and work	19	37.255
Been raped	19	37.255
Effects		
Did it affect grade?	45	88.235
Was pregnant in school	28	54.902
Aborted the pregnancy	18	37.255
Drooped out of school	13	25.490
Contacted std	18	37.255
Affected academic performance	37	72.549

50% have been sexually harassed and 30.8% of the participants have been raped. 64.1% of the participant have poor performance due to sexual harassment and 65.4% were impregnated (Table 7). while in school. 23.2% of the participants dropped out of school due to unwanted pregnancy. 74.1% contacted sexually transmitted disease

(Table 8) and 53.7% of the participants who aborted the unwanted pregnancy have their academics affected.

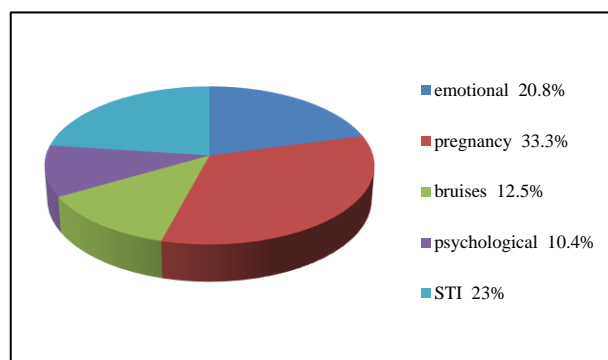


Figure 1: Effects of rape.

DISCUSSION

Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are social vices that are common in our society and have rendered several havocs on our youths and the active labour force sex is commonly practice among youths, men and women both married and unmarried.¹ Sex is a taboo among unmarried couple in certain part of the world. Sex can be carried out successfully among two persons (married or unmarried) when both partners agreed or consented. However, sex can be abuse or harass when consent is not given by one of the partners and because one did not consent to it, one who may be superior may carry out sex exploitation through the use of power, wealth, employment offer, upgrading of marks and others.

Sexual exploitation is an act in which a superior person of any age uses economic, academic, political or financial power to force or entice another person in need into sexual activity in exchange for something received by the person. It is a form of sexual abuse.³ Also, sexual exploitation is a process that culminate into sexual intercourse if the need arises. In sexual exploitation, the boss may initiate the move and the needy who decide whether to accept base on her pressing need or resist the temptation of been exploit sexually. In this context, the boss will accept to offer the needy's demand in exchange for sex.

It is important to note that sexual exploitation (SE) is not seen in isolation from other concepts such as sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. Sexual exploitation is different from other forms of sexual abuse in that the perpetrator offer material things or cash or marks upgrading to the needy, or anybody involved in exchange for sexual activity.

Sexual exploitation involves a person benefiting from the use of another person's body by enticing the person in a sexual activity. In sexual exploitation, the perpetrator of the sexual act takes advantage of their victim's dependable state or helpless state.

Sexual exploitation is common in our society especially in schools, work place and in politics and because the victims are always in dependable state or hopeless state, the perpetrator will always have their way. Sexual exploitation could occur when the needy come to his or her superior, master or boss and request for help or assistance and in return the boss place an irresistible option of sex as an exchange for the request. Sexual exploitation could also be induced by the mode of dressing to lecture's theatre, lecturer's office or politician's office and work places. Sexual exploitation on the side of students is trigger when students the not perform well in their class assessment or in their examinations due to the fact that they refuse to attend lectures and study.

The study revealed that 47.6% of the participants put on mini skirt, 28.2% put on short gown and 24.3% put on normal gown (Table 3). This attitude of inappropriate dressing by students to lecture's theatre, lecturers' office and other offices could initiate the process of sexual acts, like sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual assault and rape. These miniskirts and short gown put on by the female students exposes some part of their body. This study is in consonant with previous study that revealed that indecent dressings by the female students could seduce the lecturers and this may result in sexual favours between the lecturers on one hand and students on the other hand.¹²

Also, 71.6% of the participants exposed their cleavage (Table 4). This the most important part of the lady which was not supposed to be exposed are been exposed by majority of the students and this ugly trend carried out by the said students give the perpetrators, the impetus to initiate and carry out this heinous act called sexual exploitation. Exposing parts of their body may seduce the men and also be a turning point to the perpetrators to initiate or think of sexual exploitation. The study shows that 48.5% of the participants visit their lecturers in their offices and 51.9% asked for marks upgrading (Table 5). Majority of these students why knowing that their academic performance is low, initiate the visiting agendum by putting on sexy clothes that exposes parts of their body and this called for attraction and may change the narrative of the lecturers, and the need for sexual exploitation arises in exchange for the request made by the students. This attitude of students visiting lecturers in their offices with sexy and transparent clothes and requesting for grade upgrade is uncalled for and need to be caution.

Also, 62.1% of the participants (students) requested for financial assistance from their male counterpart and 62.8% of the participants have carried over a particular course about 1-2 times. These conditions such as request for financial assistance and spill over courses experienced by the students may give room for sexual exploitation because the perpetrators may demand sex in exchange for any help rendered or gifts item to be given to needy, leading to sexual exploitation and sometimes when the said students have been offered the request and go further to say no sex, the perpetrators may opt for plan B which could be sexual

abuse or sexual harassment. Again, spill over courses by some of the students proof that students are no longer taking their academic programme serious while in school and this may also induce sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation could only happen when the students or any other category of person (female) failed to do the needful appropriately and turn around to get it by requesting for help. If the students do the needful, sexual exploitation will be very difficult to initiate by any person be it lecturers, politicians and other powerful person in the society. The study revealed that putting on mini skirt, short gown, exposing their cleavages, visiting their lecturers' offices, asking for marks upgrading, requesting for financial assistance, poor academic performance, missing class assessment, and spill over course by the students are the determinants of sexual exploitation among the students by their boss or lecturers.

However, the research findings revealed that 50% of the participants have been sexually harassed and this harassment may be due to the mode of dressing by the participants to lecture's theatre and offices. It is noted also that for sextual harassment to occur there might have been an early background sexual exploitation that may metamorphous into sexual harassment and also 30.8% of the participants have been raped. This raping could also be due to pattern of dressing, refusal to engage or accept to be sexually exploited and this could bring several calamities to the victim. 65.4% of the participants were impregnated (Table 7) while in school and this is because the participants could have been sexually exploited and raped. Though not all the pregnancy that came from the process of sexual exploitation, it could be that some of the pregnancy arose from the negligence of both partner by not putting on protective device after both partners have agreed to have sex. It is well established that the moment a student is impregnated out of wedlock while in school it may affect the student's academic performance and may also bring some isolation, depression. 23.2% were dropped out school due to unwanted pregnancy because some of the affected participants when into isolation due to shame, some passed through psychological trauma and some were rejected by their parents or guidance. 57.3% of the participants who aborted the unwanted pregnancy have their academics affected. This might be that in course of carrying out the abortion process lost much of blood, making them to be hospitalize or have infection due to the use of unsterilized instrument for the abortion or also may have some complications and of course academic activities is ongoing while they are facing these problems. Therefore, their academics could be affected and the study shows that 64.1% of the participants have poor academic performance.

74.1% of the participants contacted sexually transmitted disease and this could be that both partners were in hast to carry out the unlawful act or refuse vehemently to put on protective device that resulted in getting this infection. and 57.3% of the participants who aborted the unwanted pregnancy have their academics affected. The study

revealed that unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease and poor academic performance by the participants are the effects from the process of sexually exploitation among students.

There were few limitations. It was difficult to get information from the participants. Funding was a big challenge. Research assistants were not willing to actively participate in carrying out the study since there was no funding from external source.

CONCLUSION

A total of 104 female students participated in the study and results show that one out of two female students has faced sexual exploitation. about 30% of the population have been raped which had several effects on them including pregnancy.

The study revealed that putting on mini skirt, short gown, exposing their cleavages, visiting their lecturers' offices, asking for marks upgrading, requesting for financial assistance, poor academic performance and spill over course by the students are the determinants of sexual exploitation among the students by their boss or lecturers.

The study also, revealed that unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease and poor academic performance by the participants are the effects from the process of sexually exploitation among students.

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