

Targets, Perpetrators and Effects of Sexual Harassment in Select Mass Communication Departments in South-East Nigerian Universities

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Abstract: The survey of female undergraduates of mass communication in South-East Nigerian Universities aimed at determining the targets, perpetrators and effects of sexual harassment on the harassed. It used a sample of 240 final year undergraduates drawn through simple random sampling. Findings suggest that targets of sexual harassment are younger in age, single of low and average academic statuses and of parents of low socio-economic status. The perpetrators are mostly senior academics. Sexual harassment adversely affects the academic well-being of the harassed. The findings support Feminist Theory that sexual harassment is an exercise of power. It is recommended among others that a policy against sexual harassment be formulated in mass communication departments of universities and other institutions of higher learning.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment is one problematic issue threatening academic and moral standards in tertiary institutions around the world. It is a complex issue because even though it really goes on, its extent and direction remain an issue of heated debate. It is in this light that Shishima (2005) sought an answer to the question sexual harassment in the university campus: who is harassing who? Shishima's answer is that both women and men, female and male lecturers and students harass each other sexually. He is however, quick to point out that women appear to be more harassed due to their low level of education and low status in different jobs.

This complexity partly arises from the different meanings given to the concept. While some scholars see sexual harassment as directed only to the female folk, others see it as directed to both female and male folks. Fairly, for example Shishima (2005) sees it as unsolicited non-reciprocated male behaviour which places a female's sexual role over and above her role as a worker. Another definition of the concept by New Responses Inc by Shishima (2005) holds that it is a behaviour that makes an individual feel that her employment situation will in some way suffer unless social demands are met. These two definitions see sexual harassment as being targeted at the woman. On the contrary, other definitions see it as being targeted as both the man and the woman. This is the case in Catherine Mackimmon's definition by Griffin (2000) that it refers to the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power. Similarly, Shishima (2005) holds that sexual harassment is a situation where the opposite sex (mostly

in a privileged position) demands sex from the other persistently with threats in which sexual submission is made as a condition for one to enjoy ones rights and submission or refusal affects decisions on one. This could either be a man or a woman. One other complex issue about sexual harassment has to do with the acts that really constitute sexual harassment. Acts that pass for sexual harassment in the advanced countries of Europe and North America may not be the case in less advanced countries of Africa and South America. Brown and Flatow (1997) identify five types of sexual harassment as physical, verbal, threatening, non-verbal and environmental. Of these five types, only physical and threatening may be seen as sexual harassment from the African point of view. All the five have been identified as sexual harassment in America (Brown and Flatow, 1997). Physical sexual harassment occurs when a person is unwillingly touched. Some examples include touching a person's clothing, hair or body, hugging, kissing, patting or stroking, massaging a person's neck or shoulders, standing close or brushing up against a person. Verbal sexual harassment include referring to an adult as a babe, girl or honey; wolf whistles; turning work discussions to sexual topics; telling sexual jokes or stories; asking personal questions of sexual nature; making sexual comments about a person's clothing, anatomy or looks; asking someone repeatedly for dates and refusing to take no for an answer; making kissing sounds and smacking lips. In threatening sexual harassment, a person is offered rewards (promotions, raises, good exam grade, etc.) in return for sexual favours. Non-verbal sexual harassment includes looking at a person up and down, prolonged staring at someone, giving personal gifts, winking,

throwing kisses or licking lips and making sexual gestures with hands or through body movements. Environmental harassment includes suggestive cartoons, suggestive calendars, nude centerfolds, etc.

Within the discipline of mass communication, the issue of sexual harassment has not really been a much discussed one. Media men feel reluctant to disseminate news of sexual harassment especially when the news concerns them (Brown and Flatow, 1997). This does not mean that the problem is not within the mass communication field. The few studies found in literature mostly in the United States show that sexual harassment is widespread throughout the academia and the workplace. One such study is the Associated Press Managing Editors Association Harassment Study (Kossan, 1992). The survey of 640 male and female journalists from 19 US newsrooms found that 95% of the victims of sexual harassment were women and 2% of the men and 11% of the women said sexual harassment or the fear of harassment had affected their daily work habits. Another study of women journalists in Washington D.C. by Adams and Beasley (1994) found that 80% of the respondents said they believe sexual harassment is a problem for women journalists. The study by Walsh-Childers *et al.* (1996) came out with similar finding. The survey of 227 women newspaper journalists in the US revealed that >60% believe sexual harassment is at least somewhat a problem for them personally. Two-thirds experience non-physical sexual harassment at least sometimes and about 17% experience physical sexual harassment at least sometimes. News sources were the most frequent harassers and harassment ranged from degrading comments to sexual assault.

In the academia, the very few studies conducted do not show remarkable difference in findings. Arguably, the first of such studies was conducted by Andsager *et al.* (1997). The findings of the survey of 1,388 graduate students and faculty members (lecturers) in mass communication in the US showed that only 14.2% of the respondents reported receiving sexual advances from their faculty members. As many as 84.8% reported no advances from or intimate/sexual relationships with their faculty members. Of the number who reported receiving advances from or having had intimated sexual conduct with faculty members, 92.3% were females and 7.7% were males.

Findings with respect to effects of the advances show that 74.1% of the respondents who experienced advances said the advance hindered the working relationship with the faculty member while 8.7% said the contrary. About two-thirds (65.7%) of the respondents said however that they experienced no punitive actions

from declining the advances. Only 5.1% said they experienced strong punitive action as a result of declining the advances.

What is clear from the findings of Andsager *et al.* (1997) on sexual harassment, generally is that it is a function of power dynamics between the harasser and the harassed with the harasser wielding power over the harassed. It is with this notion that sexual relationships between lecturers and their students are frequently considered as a taboo, given the implicit power differential between lecturers and students (Barak *et al.*, 1992). The closer the relationship between lecturers and their students, the more complex the issue becomes. This is because in a closer relationship, the potential for coercion is greatly increased but perhaps so subtle that students fail to recognize lecturer-initial sexual advances or relations as sexual harassment (Andsager *et al.*, 1997). Keller (1990) puts it more aptly when she noted that power differential is such that what appears to be an adult consensual and private relationship may actually be the product of implicit or explicit duress.

Whatever can be said about sexual harassment in mass communication departments in educational institutions is a product of limited researches. In Nigeria, where research on the subject is virtually absent, we can only talk of opinion about sexual harassment not formed on the basis of empirical research. It is in this regard that Rush (1993) has called for further research on sexual harassment in mass communication education. This study is a response to this call. The rationale is to provide a clearer understanding of the issue of sexual harassment in mass communication education on the basis of empiricism. This understanding would assist find solutions to the problem. Sexual harassment is largely a feminist issue. Research into it in the black world is neglected as observed by Valdivia cited in Aldoory and Parry-Gills (2005) that feminist work has centred largely on white women and ethnic and race studies. Herein lays another rationale for this study which is an attempt (no matter how little) to close the gap in feminist media research in the developing world. To comprehensively understand sexual harassment in mass communication education this study investigated targets, perpetrators and effects of sexual harassment in mass communication departments in South-East Nigerian universities. The idea of studying targets, effects and perpetrators of sexual harassment in mass communication education came from Brown and Flatow (1997)'s study of targets, effects and perpetrators of sexual harassment in newsrooms. This study, therefore replicated Brown and Flatow's methodology with modifications to suit a universities situation in the context of a developing country, Nigeria.

Theoretical base: This study is anchored on the overall feminist theory, a theory which according to Anderson and Ross (2002) explains communication variables (e.g., language, non-verbal immediacy, media effects and ethnic) from the perspective of gender relationships. Feminist Theory often focuses on the overt and covert power implications of cultural patterns. The theory holds that male-female differences are attributable to conditions of power and powerlessness (Frank and Anshen, 1983).

The various strands of the Feminist Theory emphasize this power and powerlessness conditions of male-female relationship. The standpoint theory of Sandra Harding and Julia Wood for example claim that one of the best ways to discover how the world works is to start the inquiry from the standpoint of women and other groups on the margins of society (Wood, 1999). The standpoint of women, according to this theory is that women are a marginalized group (Griffin, 2000). The muted group theory of Cheris Kramarae advances the argument further that language is literary a man (male) made construction. Women's voices can be silenced by the political dominance of men's interpersonal perceptions and behaviour (Anderson and Ross, 2002). According to this theory as noted by Griffin (2000), males and not females have the power to name experiences even those that concern only women and a male not a woman serves as gatekeepers of communication. What is clear from the Feminist Theory is that men who are powerful define the world and women who are powerless accept men's definition passively, unchallenged. This study is an attempt to understand the definition of sexual harassment from the standpoint of women. This is in response to achieving the ultimate goal of the Muted Group Theory which is to change the man-made linguistic system that keeps women in their place.

The powerful and powerless relationship between men and women respectively emphasized by the Feminist Theory may also manifest within and among women as a social group. In other words, some women can be powerful and others within the same social entity powerless. This power relationship between the haves and the have-nots is the main point of argument in Marxist Theory (McQuail, 2005) which is the root of Feminist Theory. The assumption in this study, in relation to the foregoing discuss is that among the women studied the weaker (powerless) ones may be the greater targets and may suffer more adverse effects from sexual harassment perpetrated by men. The powerless ones in this study are defined as the academically weak female students who may find willing or unwilling submission to acts of sexual harassment as a viable option to escape

failure or obtain good grades. The powerful female students (the academically strong ones) may not find succumbing to acts to sexual harassment as the only means of academic success hence may refuse to succumb. This study has tested this assumption.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of the study was to investigate the targets, perpetrators and effects of sexual harassment in mass communication departments in South-East Nigerian universities.

Research questions:

- Who are the targets of sexual harassment in mass communication departments in the South-East Nigerian universities?
- Who are the perpetrators of the harassment?
- What are the effects of the harassment on the academic environment and performance of the harassed?

Research hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between the extent of sexual harassment and age, marital status, parental socio-economic status and academic status of the harassed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The sample survey method was used in the study. Three out of the seven mass communication departments in the nine federal and states government-owned universities in the South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria were studied.

The departments selected through simple random sampling were those in University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), Anambra State University (ANSU), Uli and Abia State University (ABSU), Uturu. In each of the department, 80 female students from the final year undergraduate class were purposively selected for study. The sample size was determined from the population of each class using Krejcie Robert and Margan Daryle's samples size calculator (Baumgartner *et al.*, 2002). The idea to study only the final year students arose from the fact that final year students have stayed longer in school and are more likely to experience heavier amounts of harassment in the department. Postgraduate students were not studied because not all the mass communication departments in the region studied ran postgraduate programmes as at the time of the study. About 80 students were selected through simple random sampling technique.

In all, 240 female students were administered with the questionnaire which was found reliable after subjecting it

to test-retest method of calculating reliability. Items in the questionnaire addressed all variables of interest in the study. For the harassment variables, respondents were asked if as students, they had been victims of sexual harassment in any of the following forms; verbal, non-verbal, threatening, environmental and physical harassment.

Respondents were also asked how often during the past academic session they had experienced each type of sexual harassment. To measure targets of harassment, items on demographic variables such as age, marital status, parents socioeconomic status and academic status were included in the questionnaire. Parents' socioeconomic status was defined as parents level of economic and political influence in society. Hence, parents who held political offices like state commissioner, local government chairman or councilor, university lecturer, traditional ruler, community leader, wealthy business person, etc., were considered to be of high socioeconomic status.

Academic status of respondents was determined through their Grade Point Average (GPA) scores obtained from the Examination and Records Unit of the three universities studied. On a 5 point scale, a GPA of between 3-5 points was considered high; 2.4-2.99, average and <2.4, low.

To address the variables of effects of harassment, respondents were asked if they had ever considered changing department or university due to harassment. Respondents were also asked if they feel free with lecturers who harass them to discuss academic issues and pay attention to such lecturers in class. The variables of harassment perpetrators was measured by

asking respondents who harassed them academic staff or non-academic staff or fellow students. If academic staff or non-academic staff, respondents were asked their rank (professor, senior lecturer, lecturer 1 and 2 or assistant lecturer for academic staff, senior or junior non-academic staff). Quantitative data generated from the questionnaire were subjected to simple percentage computation and Chi-square (χ^2) test of independence to test for relationships among variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All the 240 copies of questionnaire administered were returned but only 224 were found usable yielding 93.3% usable response rate. The socio-demographic data on respondents in Table 1 shows that most of them were between 21 and 24 years (45.1%), single (87.5%), of low socioeconomic parents (57.1%) and of average academic status (45.5%).

Targets of sexual harassment: Data to identify targets of sexual harassment is shown in Table 1. The results show that targets of general sexual harassment are more of those younger in age (16-24), the unmarried, those whose parents are of low socio-economic status and those of average and low academic statuses. The results are not remarkably different from the different forms of sexual harassment.

Threatening and physical harassment were the most cited forms of harassment by respondents. The younger respondents (16-20 years) indicated they experienced more of threatening than physical harassment. More of the single respondents experienced both threatening and

Table 1: Targets of general and different forms of sexual harassment

Targets	General harassment				Forms of harassment			
	Yes F (%)	No F (%)	Verbal F (%)	Non-verbal F (%)	Threatening F (%)	Environmental F (%)	Physical F (%)	Total F (%)
Age in years								
16-20	39 (95.1)	2 (4.9)	2 (4.9)	4 (9.8)	28 (68.3)	00 (00)	7 (17.0)	41 (100)
21-24	94 (93.1)	7 (6.9)	4 (3.9)	8 (7.9)	55 (54.5)	2 (2.0)	32 (31.7)	101 (100)
25-29	54 (79.4)	14 (20.6)	0 (0)	5 (7.4)	39 (57.3)	3 (4.4)	21 (30.9)	68 (100)
30-34	4 (44.4)	5 (55.6)	0 (0)	1 (11.1)	5 (55.6)	0 (0)	3 (33.3)	9 (100)
35+	3 (60)	2 (40)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (80)	0 (0)	1 (20)	5 (100)
Marital status								
Single	185 (94.4)	11 (5.6)	2 (1.0)	12 (6.1)	109 (55.6)	6 (3.1)	67 (34.2)	196 (100)
Married	7 (30.4)	16 (69.6)	4 (17.4)	2 (8.7)	12 (52.2)	0 (0)	5 (21.7)	23 (100)
Widowed	2 (40)	3 (60)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (60)	0 (0)	2 (40)	5 (100)
Parents' SES								
High	87 (90.6)	9 (9.4)	3 (3.1)	6 (6.3)	58 (60.4)	1 (1.0)	28 (29.2)	96 (100)
Low	107 (83.6)	21 (16.4)	3 (2.3)	2 (1.6)	62 (48.4)	0 (0)	61 (47.7)	128 (100)
Academic status								
High	41 (91.1)	4 (8.9)	8 (17.8)	10 (22.2)	11 (24.4)	6 (13.3)	10 (22.2)	45 (100)
Average	92 (90.2)	10 (9.8)	2 (1.9)	6 (5.9)	57 (55.9)	4 (3.9)	33 (32.4)	102 (100)
Low	61 (79.2)	16 (20.8)	1 (1.3)	30 (3.9)	47 (61.0)	2 (2.6)	24 (31.2)	77 (100)
Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	224 (100)

Table 2: Relationship between extent of sexual harassment and socio-demographic (age, marital status, parents' SES and academic status) variables of the harassed

SDV	Extent of harassment			Df	U level	Cal. χ^2	Crit. χ^2	Remarks
	A lot F (%)	A little F (%)	Total F (%)					
Age (years)								
16-20	27 (69.2)	12 (30.8)	39 (100)	-	-	-	-	-
21-24	60 (63.8)	34 (36.2)	94 (100)	-	-	-	-	-
25-29	32 (59.3)	22 (40.7)	54 (100)	-	-	-	-	-
30-34	1 (2.5)	3 (7.5)	4 (100)	-	-	-	-	-
35+	1 (33.3)	2 (66.7)	3 (100)	-	-	-	-	Not
Total	121 (62.4)	73 (37.6)	194 (100)	4	0.05	4.54	9.49	Significant
Marital status								
Single	117 (63.2)	68 (36.8)	185 (100)	-	-	-	-	-
Married	2 (28.6)	5 (71.4)	7 (100)	-	-	-	-	-
Widowed	0 (0)	2 (100)	2 (100)	-	-	-	-	-
Total	119 (61.3)	75 (38.7)	194 (100)	2	0.05	44.01	5.99	Significant
Parents' SES								
High	35 (40.2)	52 (59.8)	87 (100)	-	-	-	-	-
Low	74 (69.2)	33 (30.8)	107 (100)	-	-	-	-	-
Total	109 (56.2)	85 (43.8)	194 (100)	1	0.05	17.64	3.84	Significant
Academic status								
High	11 (26.8)	30 (73.2)	41 (100)	-	-	-	-	-
Average	55 (59.8)	37 (40.2)	92 (100)	-	-	-	-	-
Low	45 (73.8)	16 (26.2)	61 (100)	-	-	-	-	-
Total	111 (57.2)	83 (42.8)	194 (100)	2	0.05	32.47	5.99	Significant

physical harassments more than the married ones. While respondents whose parents were of high Socio economic Status (SES) experienced more of threatening than physical harassment; those with parents of low SES suffered more of physical harassment than threatening ones. In terms of academic status, respondents of high academic status experienced less threatening and physical harassments than those of average and low academic statuses. The verification of hypothesis below further explains the results.

Hypothesis verification: Result of the hypothesis verification (Table 2) shows that with the exception of age, other Socio-Demographic Variables (SDV) were found to be significantly related to the extent of sexual harassment. A close observation of the data in Table 2 explains the direction of the relationship. With the variable of marital status, it is seen that single ladies experienced more harassment (63.2%) than the married (28.6%) and the widowed (0%). With the variable of parents' SES, ladies whose parents are of low SES experienced more harassment (69.2%) than those with parents of high SES (40.2%). In terms of academic status, ladies of low (73.8%) and average (59.8%) academic statuses experienced more harassment than those of high academic status (26.8%).

Perpetrators of sexual harassment: Data in Table 3 provide information which explains perpetrators of sexual harassment. According to data in Table 3, close to one-third (32%) responses indicated lecturers 1, 2,

Table 3: Perpetrators of sexual harassment

Perpetrators	Frequency	Percentage
Professor/reader	59	17.1
Senior lecturer	83	24.0
Lecturer 1,2, assistant lecturer and graduate assistant	111	32.0
Senior non-academic	46	13.3
Junior non-academic	16	4.6
Fellow student	31	9.0
Total	346	100.0

assistant lecturer and graduate assistants as the highest perpetrators of sexual harassment in the mass communication departments studied. They are followed by senior lecturers (24%), professors and readers (17.1%), senior non-academic staff (13.3%), fellow students (9%) and junior non-academic staff (4.6%) in that order. Effects of sexual harassment on the harassed data shown in Table 4 contain information on the different kind of effects on the harassed.

Data in Table 4 suggest that the respondents (the harassed) feel that sexual harassment has a number of negative effects on them. An overwhelming majority of them (80.3%) feel the practice prompts them to think of changing course of study and even institution of learning. A more number (86.6%) feel the practice makes them not to be free with harassers who have been found to be mostly academic staff. A good number (57.2%) also said the practice contributes in reducing their attention to studies just as 63 and 62.9% said the practice gives them underserved grades and makes them feel inferior, respectively. On the contrary, only a small number of the respondents (40.6%) indicated that the practice makes them regret to have been born a woman. The study has produced interesting findings, some agreeing with

Table 4: Effects of sexual harassment on the harassed

Effects	SA F (%)	A F (%)	D F (%)	SDF (%)	U F (%)	Total F (%)
Prompts me to consider change of course/university	77 (34.49)	103 (45.9)	25 (6.2)	14 (6.2)	5 (2.3)	224 (100)
Makes me not free with harassers	119 (53.1)	75 (33.5)	14 (6.2)	9 (4.0)	7 (3.2)	224 (100)
Reduces my attention to studies	58 (25.9)	70 (31.3)	45 (20.1)	37 (16.5)	14 (6.2)	224 (100)
Gives me underserved grades	62 (27.7)	79 (35.3)	41 (18.3)	34 (15.2)	8 (3.6)	224 (100)
Makes me feel inferior	57 (25.4)	84 (37.5)	42 (18.8)	29 (12.9)	12 (5.3)	224 (100)
Makes me regret being a woman	39 (17.4)	52 (23.2)	64 (28.6)	51 (22.8)	18 (8.0)	224 (100)

those of previous studies and others not on the subject of sexual harassment. This study found that age and marital status have some influence on the level of sexual harassment ladies in mass communication department face. With regards to age the study found with raw data that younger respondents were more likely to report incidents of harassment than older respondents. However, statistical analysis did not show a significant difference between younger and older ladies. A similar result was obtained by Gail Flatow in 1993 in a study of sexual harassment in mainstream dailies in Indiana, USA (Brown and Flatow, 1997).

A likely explanation for the insignificant difference found between younger and older respondents as victims of sexual harassment is that the age range studied (16-35 years) is not wide enough to show any difference. A lady of say 20 years and another of say 28 years may have similar appeal to men. The same thing cannot be the case with a girl of 20 years and that of 40 years. In the case of marital status, the study found that single ladies (excluding widows) faced more incidents of harassment than married ladies. This finding agrees with many others in literature (Adams and Beasley, 1994; Walsh-Childers *et al.*, 1996; Brown and Flatow, 1997). Still on the targets of sexual harassment, the study found that parents' Socio-Economic Status (SES) and the academic status of the harassed are factors. Ladies whose parents were of low SES reported large extent of harassment than those whose parents were of high SES. A likely explanation is that high SES is associated with a high knowledge of one's right and ability to protect those rights. Harassers may have been aware of this and kept off such ladies. This therefore explains the power dynamic in the process of sexual harassment. Another issue of power dynamic was shown in the finding that female students of low and average academic statuses were more vulnerable to sexual harassment than those of high academic status. Findings regarding perpetrators of sexual harassment show that the academic staff who have direct and more contact with the female students were the greater perpetrators than the non-academic staff often without direct and with less contact with the female students. Among the academic staff, the senior ones (professors, readers and senior lecturers) are greater perpetrators than the junior ones (lecturers 1, 2, assistant

lecturers and graduate assistants). This also explains the manifestation of power dynamic in the affair of sexual harassment in mass communication departments.

The findings show that sexual harassment has effects which may not be conducive to the learning activity of the harassed. A significant number of the female students studied said that as a result of sexual harassment they have contemplated changing their course of study or university entirely.

A significant number also said sexual harassment made them not to be free with harassers, reduced their attention to studies and was responsible for their underserved grades. These findings agree with those of Andsager *et al.* (1997) who found in a study of sexual advances in graduate programmes that targets of sexual advances perceived that the advances had hindered their working relationship with the faculty member and had detrimental effects on their academic experience.

Rubin and Borgers (1990) have argued that the above effects become the case only when the sexual advances are done in a coercive manner against the wish of the lady. But when a lady has sexual contact with a lecturer without a feeling of coercion, adverse effects on the part of the lady cannot be said to be the case. On the whole, the findings of this study fall in line with the main proposition of the Feminist Theory which has provided anchorage to this study. The main proposition of the theory attributes male-female relationship to conditions of power and powerlessness. As found in this study, the targets of sexual harassment are targets because they are powerless. The perpetrators are perpetrators because they exhibit powerful influences. The effects are adverse on the harassed because the harassed are powerless and the more powerless ones experience the more adverse effects.

CONCLUSION

The survey of undergraduate females of mass communication in South-East Nigerian universities was aimed at determining the targets, perpetrators and effects of sexual harassment. The study found those female undergraduates who are younger, single of low and average academic statuses and whose parents are of low SES as the primary targets of sexual harassment. The main perpetrators of sexual harassment, the survey found are

senior academics (professors, readers and senior lecturers), junior academics (lecturers 1, 2, assistant lecturers and graduate assistants). Senior and junior non-academics as well as fellow students are other perpetrators of sexual harassment found by the survey but to a lesser extent.

The findings of the survey also show that sexual harassment has psychological and real effects on the harassers. The effects include those that prompt the harassed to consider change of course/university make the harassed not free with harassers, reduce the attention of the harassed to studies, give underserved grades to the harassed and make them feel inferior. The Feminist Theory, based primarily on the idea that sexual harassment is an exercise of power receives large support from the results of this survey. This situation leads to the conclusion that stakeholders in mass communication education in universities and other institutions of higher learning should consider arrangements that obstruct harassing conduct.

As much as possible the stakeholders should make efforts to create an academic environment where few opportunities for harassment exist.

RECOMMENDATION

The universities in general and mass communication departments in particular should formulate a policy against sexual harassment. Where such a policy already exists, it should be invoked. Such a policy should be an extension of a strong conviction among those in position of power at mass communication departments that sexual harassment harms specific female students, diminishes academic morale undermines academic productivity and ultimately has a detrimental social impact on the department. Such a policy should also provide for sexual harassment training programmes in mass communication departments. The programmes should place huge emphasis on encouraging female students to feel free to report incidents of harassment and provide support and protection to the harassed. The policy should also provide for very stringent sanctions on harassers in established cases of harassment.

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