The Impact of Sexual Harassment on Work Attitudes in Tertiary Educational Institutions in Delta State

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Abstract
This study explores the impact of sexual harassment on key work attitudes job satisfaction, employee commitment, and job engagement in tertiary educational institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. Utilizing both correlation and multiple regression analyses, the study consistently finds that sexual harassment negatively influences these work attitudes. Specifically, increased levels of sexual harassment correlate with decreased job satisfaction, lower employee commitment, and reduced job engagement among employees. These findings highlight the dual role of sexual harassment as both a violation of employee rights and a major barrier to employee productivity and well-being within academic institutions. The research underscores the particular concern regarding the negative effects of harassment on employee commitment and engagement. Employees who experience sexual harassment are more likely to feel disengaged from their work and less emotionally invested in their roles. This disengagement not only impacts individual morale but also threatens overall organizational performance, potentially undermining the academic environment and institutional success. The study advocates for a proactive approach in tertiary institutions to address sexual harassment, emphasizing the importance of creating a safer and more inclusive work environment that prioritizes the well-being of employees. In light of these findings, the study proposes several recommendations for tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria, to mitigate the impact of sexual harassment. These include implementing comprehensive anti-harassment policies, conducting regular training and awareness programs, establishing safe and confidential reporting mechanisms, promoting organizational support for victims, and regularly monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of harassment prevention measures. By adopting these strategies, academic institutions can enhance employee satisfaction, commitment, and engagement, fostering a more positive and productive academic culture.
Keywords: Sexual Harassment; Work Attitudes; Job Satisfaction; Employee Commitment; Job Engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Workplace sexual harassment has attracted significant global attention due to its profound effects on employees' well-being, job attitudes, and organizational culture. It involves unwelcome and inappropriate sexual behavior that creates a hostile or intimidating environment. While often associated with corporate settings, sexual harassment is increasingly recognized as a prevalent issue in academic environments, including tertiary institutions. Academic settings, which prioritize intellectual growth and personal development, are expected to promote respect, safety, and inclusivity. However, persistent incidents of sexual harassment in these institutions disrupt professional experiences and negatively impact both academic and non-academic staff. In Nigeria, tertiary education plays a vital role in personal and national development, yet the impact of workplace sexual harassment within these institutions remains underexplored. Considering the influence of tertiary institutions in shaping societal values, it is critical to understand how sexual harassment affects job attitudes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and motivation, in these settings.

Sexual harassment in Nigerian tertiary institutions is a widespread problem that undermines the academic and professional environments of these schools. Research highlights that many students, particularly women, face various forms of harassment, including unwanted verbal, physical, and non-verbal advances such as inappropriate comments, touching, and suggestive gestures, often perpetrated by staff or fellow students. These behaviors are frequently repetitive, creating a hostile and unsafe atmosphere for victims. The consequences of sexual harassment on students are severe, affecting their mental health, academic performance, and overall engagement. Victims often experience heightened stress, anxiety, and depression, which can lead to reduced motivation and withdrawal from academic activities (Ogbonnaya et al., 2011). Fear of retaliation or inadequate institutional support frequently discourages victims from reporting these incidents, further exacerbating the issue. Like many African countries, Nigeria faces significant challenges in addressing gender-based violence, including sexual harassment in educational institutions. Despite the existence of laws and policies aimed at combating such misconduct, weak enforcement and cultural norms often discourage victims from speaking out. For instance, "quid pro quo" harassment—where academic or professional favors are offered in exchange for sexual acts— remains a pervasive issue in many institutions (Dranzoa, 2018; Koi et al., 2018).

Delta State, located in southern Nigeria, hosts numerous tertiary institutions, including universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, which play a key role in advancing education and workforce development. However, like other parts of Nigeria, the state faces societal challenges, including sexual harassment within its educational system. The prevalence of this issue in Delta State poses unique challenges, shaped by the state's complex social dynamics, cultural norms, and institutional structures. Despite government efforts to address sexual harassment in educational institutions through policies and regulations, significant gaps remain in their implementation and enforcement. Mitigating sexual harassment in Nigerian tertiary institutions requires a multifaceted approach, including educational programs, safer campus policies, and stricter enforcement of anti-harassment laws. Additionally, a societal shift toward gender equality and respect for individual autonomy is essential. Comprehensive data on the prevalence and nature of sexual harassment in Nigerian higher education is also necessary to guide effective policies and interventions. Moreover, the impact of sexual harassment on the job attitudes of staff in tertiary institutions, particularly in Delta State, requires focused research to inform targeted solutions.

Statement of Research Problem

Sexual harassment is a global issue that affects various government institutions, and Nigeria is no exception. The harmful effects of this behavior on society and organizations are increasingly recognized, with growing awareness of the need to address both the behavior itself and its negative consequences. It is widely acknowledged that sexual harassment involves unwelcome and unacceptable actions that undermine workplace harmony and productivity.

In Delta State, sexual harassment within tertiary institutions has serious implications for job attitudes, yet this remains an underexplored area in Nigerian academic research. This study aims to bridge that gap by investigating the impact of sexual harassment on the job attitudes of academic and non-academic staff in the state's tertiary institutions. Specifically,

it examines how sexual harassment affects job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee motivation factors essential for organizational success.

Research has established that sexual harassment can lead to decreased job satisfaction, reduced motivation, and lower organizational commitment (Bjørkelo et al., 2021). These outcomes negatively affect employee performance, organizational effectiveness, and retention rates. In the context of tertiary institutions, such impacts can be particularly damaging, as they influence teaching quality, research output, and overall institutional performance.

Although recent studies have addressed the issue of sexual harassment in Nigerian workplaces (e.g., Ladebo, 2003; Adebokun, 2005; Yusuf, 2008; Kofi, 2010; Imonikhe et al., 2011; Ige & Adeleke, 2012; Omonyo et al., 2013; Idris et al., 2016), most have focused on its prevalence in public universities (Okoro & Osawemen, 2005). However, there remains a significant gap in understanding how sexual harassment impacts employees' job attitudes within tertiary institutions. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the effects of sexual harassment on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and motivation among staff in Delta State's tertiary institutions.

Objective(s) of the Study

The main objective of this study is to empirically examine the impact of sexual harassment on job attitudes in tertiary institutions in Delta State of Nigeria. The specifically objectives are:

i.   To examine the extent to which sexual harassment influence job satisfaction in the tertiary institutions in Delta State;

ii.   To determine the extent to which sexual harassment influence employees' commitment in the tertiary institutions in Delta State;

iii.   To determine the extent to which sexual harassment influence job engagement in the tertiary institutions in Delta State.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

H_1:   There is no significant relationship between sexual harassment and job satisfaction in the tertiary institutions in Delta State.

H_2:   There is no significant relationship between sexual harassment and employees' commitment in the tertiary institutions in Delta State.

H_3:   There is no significant relationship between sexual harassment and job engagement in the tertiary institutions in Delta State.

Justification for the Study

While sexual harassment has been extensively studied in other sectors, particularly in corporate settings, research focusing on the educational sector in Nigeria is scarce. This is

particularly true for tertiary institutions, where the dynamics between students and staff may add complexity to the issue. Understanding how sexual harassment affects the job attitudes of staff in these institutions is crucial for several reasons:

Impact on Institutional Performance: The negative effects of sexual harassment on job attitudes can lead to reduced productivity and performance. In an academic environment, this can manifest in lower teaching effectiveness, decreased research output, and a general decline in institutional morale.

Employee Well-Being: Sexual harassment can have severe consequences on the physical and psychological well-being of staff members. By understanding these effects, institutions can develop more comprehensive support systems for victims.

Policy Development: This research will provide valuable data that can inform the development of more effective policies and practices within Nigerian tertiary institutions. This is particularly important given the growing focus on gender equality and workplace safety globally.

Contributions to Academic Literature: The study will contribute to the limited body of literature on sexual harassment in Nigerian tertiary institutions, offering a localized perspective on this issue and its impact on job attitudes in the academic context.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Concept of Sexual Harassment

Like most social constructs, sexual harassment is not easy to define, nor does it involve a homogenous set of behaviours. The interpretation of sexual harassment depends on the context. Globally, sexual harassment provisions can be found in criminal codes, labour codes, health and safety legislation, anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws, as well as education licensing statues. Some countries such as Australia, United States and the United Kingdom have legislation/policies that specifically prohibit sexual harassment in education institutions while other countries have sexual harassment legislation that do not include education institutions (Joseph, 2015).

Generally, internationally instruments (such as the United Nations and Regional Treaty Systems, International Labour Organization, Organization of American States, EU Rules on Gender Equality, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission), defined sexual harassment broadly as a form of violence. Like most social constructs, sexual harassment is not easy to define, nor does it involve a homogenous set of behaviours. The interpretation of sexual harassment depends on the context. Globally, sexual harassment provisions can be found in criminal codes, labour codes, health and safety legislation, anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws, as well as education licensing statues. Some countries such as Australia, United States and the United Kingdom have legislation/policies that specifically prohibit sexual harassment in education institutions while other countries have sexual harassment legislation that do not include education institutions (Joseph, 2015).

Moreover, internationally instruments (such as the United Nations and Regional Treaty Systems, International Labour Organization, Organization of American States, EU Rules on Gender Equality, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission), defined sexual harassment broadly as a form of violence against women and as discriminatory treatment v hue national laws focus more closely on the illegal conduct (Joseph, 2015; Myung & Park,

2016). As a result, there exists a broad continuum of behaviours that is viewed as sexual harassment so there is no single definition for what constitutes prohibited behaviour. However, implicit in all of these approaches is the fact that sexual harassment is unwanted sexual behaviour and is harmful to the victim. According to Sharma (2013), sexual harassment in educational institution includes: (i) Inappropriate sexualized comments or gestures; (ii) unwanted physical contact such as touching, pinching or grouping through to threats of exam failure; (iii) sexual assault and rape. He further stated that the perpetrators can be students, lecturers or administrative staff. Therefore, sexual harassment is a term which is used to typically express a conclusion or set or conclusions that the behaviour at issue is properly judged objectionable on grounds that have something to do with sex (Francis, 2001) pointed out that one of these conclusions is legal; that behaviour is sex discrimination, prohibited under State and Federal Civil Right status. Another is moral; that the behaviour violates appropriated standards of respect for others when sexual differences on sexual behaviour are violated. Still another is social; that the behaviour crosses line of expected conventions of civility in the development of sexual relationships.

A wide variety of behaviour has been described as harassment, hence the need for concise definition of sexual harassment. Makaita, et al, 2015; defines sexual harassment as an "undesired conducts of a sexual nature that affects the dignity of men and women at work which can be either physical or verbal in nature". Mackinnon (1979) has described sexual harassment as "any action occurring with the workplace whereby women are treated as objective of the male sexual prerogative". Sexual harassment is an immoral act that has serious implication not only for the harassers but also for perpetrators, manager, organizations and Government at large. Considering its effects on victim, it undermines his/her physical and psychological state of mind. Therefore, sexual harassment is wrong. It can also be costly to employees. The problems today are likely to surface around more subtle forms of sexual harassment such as unwanted looks or comments of colour jokes, pinups display in the workplace, misinterpretations of where the line between "being friendly" ends and "harassment" begins.

Maslow's theory of motivation subscribes to the fact the human beings perform better when their needs are well catered for. Employees are intrinsically motivated from the internal traits that influence people's behaviours employees are motivated when they feel that their work is interesting, challenging and important (Makaita et al, 2015). However, according to Armstrong (2009), sexual harassment creates a hostile working environment, stress, anxiety and decreased job satisfaction which leads to demotivation. As per previous research, we expect that two major aspect of interpersonal job dissatisfaction will be affected namely coworker and supervisor dissatisfaction, because most sexual harassment incidents are perpetrated by either coworkers or by people in supervisory positions.

Sexual harassment experiences at work may have some implications for victim's affective attachment to the institution or organization to the extent that these employees feel that the institution is partly responsible for the occurrence and frequency of such incidents. Sexual harassment at work also result to work withdrawal and job withdrawal. These include absenteeism, tiredness, unfavourable job behaviours, avoiding work tasks, lateness, neglectfulness, and even escapist drinking. Both types of withdrawal have been found to be

significantly related to experiencing sexual harassment at work. At this point, it is essential to discuss the impact of sexual harassment of components of job attitude:

Concept of Work Attitudes

Work attitudes refer to the evaluations, beliefs, and feelings that employees hold towards their jobs, organizations, and work-related activities. These attitudes significantly influence various organizational outcomes, such as employee performance, satisfaction, commitment, and engagement. Understanding work attitudes is crucial for organizations seeking to improve productivity, reduce turnover, and enhance employee well-being. The key components of work attitudes include job satisfaction, employee commitment, and job engagement.

1. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is one of the most widely studied aspects of work attitudes. It refers to the positive or negative feelings that an individual has towards their job. Job satisfaction encompasses various facets, including pay, work conditions, relationships with colleagues and supervisors, opportunities for growth, and the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards associated with the work. According to Locke (1976), job satisfaction can be defined as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences". Key Factors Influencing Job Satisfaction: These include the nature of the work itself, compensation, recognition, advancement opportunities, and relationships within the workplace (Judge et al., 2001). Impacts of Job Satisfaction: High levels of job satisfaction are associated with better employee performance, higher levels of organizational citizenship behavior, lower absenteeism, and reduced turnover intentions (Spector, 1997).

2. Employee Commitment

Employee commitment refers to the psychological attachment that an employee has towards their organization. It is an essential factor for retaining employees and ensuring organizational success. Commitment can be divided into three types: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective Commitment: This involves emotional attachment to the organization and a desire to remain because of identification with the organization's goals and values. Continuance Commitment: This is based on the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization, such as financial loss or lack of alternative employment opportunities. Normative Commitment: This reflects a sense of obligation to stay with the organization due to personal values, such as a belief in loyalty or organizational culture. Impacts of Employee Commitment: Higher employee commitment has been linked to increased job performance, better organizational citizenship behavior, and lower levels of turnover and absenteeism (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

3. Job Engagement

Job engagement refers to the level of an employee's enthusiasm, energy, and involvement in their work. It is characterized by high levels of motivation, vigor, and dedication. Engaged employees are fully absorbed in their tasks and often demonstrate a sense of purpose in their work. Schaufeli et al. (2002) describe work engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption". Key Factors Influencing Job Engagement: These include job resources (e.g., social support, feedback, autonomy), organizational culture, leadership style, and the alignment between personal values and organizational goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Impacts of Job

Engagement: Engaged employees tend to exhibit higher productivity, creativity, and organizational loyalty. Additionally, job engagement is associated with lower burnout levels and greater job satisfaction (Harter et al., 2002).

Sexual Harassment and Job Satisfaction in Tertiary Institutions in Delta State

Sexual harassment in tertiary institutions has significant negative effects on job satisfaction, particularly in Delta State, Nigeria. Studies highlight that sexual harassment undermines professional and personal well-being, which is directly linked to reduced job satisfaction among staff and faculty members. Key Impacts of Sexual Harassment on Job Satisfaction include: Psychological and Emotional Consequences: Victims often report heightened stress, anxiety, and depression, which adversely affect their mental health and job performance. These psychological effects reduce their ability to engage positively with their roles, resulting in diminished satisfaction and productivity at work (Okolie, 2018). Physical Health Implications: Harassment may also lead to physical symptoms like headaches, insomnia, and gastrointestinal issues. These health challenges exacerbate workplace dissatisfaction as individuals struggle to manage their roles effectively under physical duress (Bjørkelo, B., Gjerstad & Heidenreich, 2021).

Professional Disengagement: Victims frequently experience reduced commitment to their institutions, including a lack of trust in the administration. This is often tied to perceptions that institutions do not adequately address sexual harassment, creating a culture of impunity and insecurity (Okolie, 2018). Organizational Consequences: Sexual harassment can result in high turnover rates and absenteeism, which further strains institutional resources. The organizational culture becomes less conducive to collaboration, as individuals lose confidence in institutional policies and leadership (Bjørkelo, B., Gjerstad & Heidenreich, 2021). Policy Implementation Challenges: Research has shown that while anti-sexual harassment policies exist in many Nigerian universities, their enforcement is often inadequate. Limited awareness and inclusivity in policy development reduce their effectiveness, further contributing to dissatisfaction among staff (Fasanmi & Seyama, 2024). To mitigate these effects, institutions must prioritize the enforcement of anti-sexual harassment policies. This includes raising awareness, involving stakeholders in policy development, and ensuring transparent communication and monitoring mechanisms. Institutions should also provide psychological support for victims and establish strict punitive measures for perpetrators

Sexual Harassment and Employees' Commitment in the Tertiary Institutions in Delta State

Sexual harassment significantly affects employees' commitment in tertiary institutions, particularly in Delta State, Nigeria. These impacts manifest through diminished workplace morale, reduced organizational loyalty, and higher turnover rates, ultimately undermining institutional performance. The key impacts inclued:

Psychological and Emotional Strain: Victims of sexual harassment often experience anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion, which compromise their ability to stay committed to their roles. Studies suggest that repeated harassment creates a hostile work environment, leading to a decline in job satisfaction and personal fulfillment within the workplace (Akpotor, 2023).

Decreased Job Performance: Harassment contributes to decreased focus, productivity, and work quality. In an academic context, this can disrupt teaching effectiveness and administrative responsibilities. Research in Nigerian universities highlights these challenges, showing that harassment affects concentration and academic motivation (Ofojebe, (2024).

Institutional Disengagement: Employees subjected to harassment often feel undervalued and unsupported, leading to disengagement from institutional objectives. The absence of adequate anti-harassment policies or ineffective implementation exacerbates this issue, reducing employees' sense of belonging and loyalty to the institution (Akpotor, 2023).

Organizational Turnover: Sexual harassment contributes to high turnover rates, as affected employees may choose to leave toxic environments rather than endure continuous abuse. This departure of skilled personnel further destabilizes institutional operations and continuity (Odor, 2023).

Cultural and Structural Issues: Persistent gender biases, inadequate legal frameworks, and weak enforcement of institutional policies on harassment perpetuate the problem. Institutions often lack robust mechanisms to address complaints, creating barriers for victims seeking justice (Ofojebe, (2024).

Prevalence in Academia: Harassment in educational settings often involves power dynamics, with perpetrators leveraging their positions against vulnerable staff or students. This systemic issue calls for targeted interventions and stricter regulations (Ofojebe, (2024).

To address these challenges and foster a commitment-friendly environment, institutions should implement comprehensive policies against harassment, ensure effective reporting mechanisms and survivor support systems, provide regular training on workplace ethics and harassment prevention and promote a culture of inclusivity and respect to reduce stigma and retaliation. These interventions can help mitigate the adverse effects of harassment and rebuild employee commitment in tertiary institutions.

Sexual Harassment and Job Engagement in the Tertiary Institutions in Delta State

Sexual harassment in tertiary institutions, particularly in Delta State, has a profound impact on job engagement among staff, eroding their commitment, performance, and sense of workplace belonging. Employees who experience harassment often suffer from psychological distress, reduced job satisfaction, and decreased motivation. These factors directly affect their engagement levels, undermining their ability to contribute meaningfully to institutional goals. The key impacts of sexual harassment on job engagement include:

Decreased Emotional Engagement: Victims often experience anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, leading to a loss of enthusiasm for their roles. Emotional detachment from work impairs creativity and collaboration, which are critical for academic success (Akpotor, 2023).

Impaired Professional Relationships: Harassment creates a hostile work environment, straining relationships with colleagues and supervisors. This lack of a supportive atmosphere diminishes trust and collaboration (Okolie, 2018).

Lower Job Performance: The stress associated with harassment often results in absenteeism, lower productivity, and a lack of focus, which hinders the ability to meet academic and administrative responsibilities (Akpotor, 2023).

Turnover Intentions: Many employees consider leaving their positions to escape the toxic environment, resulting in talent drain and increased recruitment costs for institutions.

Reduced Organizational Loyalty: Experiencing or witnessing sexual harassment diminishes trust in institutional policies and leadership, leading to a decline in long-term commitment and advocacy for the institution (Okolie, 2018).

In Delta State, research has highlighted the widespread prevalence of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions, exacerbated by cultural stigmas and inadequate enforcement of protective policies. Although efforts such as the Nigerian *Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Educational Institutions Bill* aim to address these issues, gaps in implementation remain a significant challenge.

A 2023 study emphasized that effective anti-harassment measures, including robust reporting mechanisms and awareness campaigns, are essential to fostering a safer and more engaging workplace for academic staff. Without these interventions, institutions risk a continued cycle of disengagement and declining organizational effectiveness (Ibezim, 2023; Eniola & Dada, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

The proponent of Social Exchange Theory (SET) is George C. Homans. He introduced the theory in 1958 through his foundational work titled *"Social Behavior as Exchange."* Homans conceptualized SET to explain social behavior in terms of an exchange process, where individuals interact to maximize rewards and minimize costs in relationships (Homans, 1958). Social Exchange Theory was adopted as the theoretical framework for this study. Social Exchange Theory (SET) is highly relevant for understanding the impact of sexual harassment on work attitudes in tertiary institutions in Delta State. SET posits that relationships in the workplace are governed by reciprocal exchanges of resources such as trust, respect, and support. Employees form positive work attitudes when these exchanges are fair and equitable. However, sexual harassment disrupts this balance, leading to negative work attitudes (Blau, 1964). The key tenets of SET include; **Violation of Reciprocity:** Sexual harassment undermines the fundamental expectation of respect and fairness in workplace relationships. Victims feel devalued and disrespected, eroding their job satisfaction and organizational commitment. **and Psychological Costs:** Harassment adds emotional burdens that outweigh any perceived benefits of remaining in the workplace, fostering disengagement and reduced morale. **Perceived Organizational Support (POS):** When institutions fail to address harassment adequately, employees perceive a lack of organizational support, further diminishing trust and work engagement (Hobfoll, 1989).

Application to Tertiary Institutions in Delta State

In Delta State's tertiary institutions, systemic issues such as gender power imbalances, inadequate anti-harassment policies, and weak enforcement exacerbate the negative effects of harassment. Victims often experience reduced motivation and loyalty, which can influence organizational outcomes, including productivity and employee retention. Social Exchange Theory provides a robust lens for analyzing how sexual harassment disrupts workplace relationships, leading to negative shifts in employee attitudes and institutional outcomes. Any institutions in Delta State in particular and Nigeria in general that fail to implement robust

anti-harassment policies exacerbate perceptions of injustice, as highlighted by recent studies on policy gaps in Nigerian universities.

Review of Related Empirical Studies

Sexual harassment in tertiary educational institutions has emerged as a critical issue affecting not only the victims but also the broader work attitudes of employees and students. This empirical review synthesizes recent studies that explore the prevalence, consequences, and implications of sexual harassment within higher education settings, particularly focusing on how it impacts work attitudes such as commitment, job satisfaction, and overall morale. Bondestam and Lundqvist (2020) study indicate that sexual harassment is a pervasive problem in tertiary institutions globally, including Nigeria. A systematic review highlighted that approximately one in four female students experiences sexual harassment during their academic tenure. This prevalence creates an environment of fear and anxiety, which can significantly affect work attitudes among both students and staff.

The impact of sexual harassment on work attitudes is profound. Victims often experience decreased job satisfaction and commitment to their institution. A study conducted in Taraba State, Nigeria by Akpotor (2023), found that female students subjected to sexual harassment reported lower levels of engagement and commitment to their academic responsibilities due to the distress caused by such experiences. Duru and Ofojebe (2024) study revealed that sexual harassment not only affects individual victims but also contributes to a toxic institutional climate that can deter potential students and staff from engaging with the institution. Research indicates that institutions with high reported cases of sexual harassment suffer from diminished reputation and lower enrollment rates, which ultimately affect funding and resources. Many victims of sexual harassment are reluctant to report incidents due to fears of retaliation or disbelief from authorities. A study highlighted that inadequate reporting mechanisms and a culture of silence within institutions exacerbate the problem, leading to underreporting and a lack of accountability for perpetrators (Ofojebe & Suleiman, 2024).

The need for robust policies addressing sexual harassment is critical for improving work attitudes within tertiary institutions. Effective policies should include clear definitions of unacceptable behavior, reporting procedures, and consequences for violators. Institutions that have implemented comprehensive sexual harassment policies have reported improvements in employee satisfaction and institutional climate (Ibunge & Okwuosa, 2024). The empirical evidence underscores the significant impact of sexual harassment on work attitudes within tertiary educational institutions. The prevalence of such behaviors leads to decreased commitment and job satisfaction among affected individuals while fostering a toxic institutional climate that can deter engagement from both current and prospective members of the academic community. Addressing these issues through effective policies and support mechanisms is essential for fostering a safe and productive educational environment.

RESEARCH METHODS

Descriptive and explanatory survey design. This design is suitable for examining the prevalence of sexual harassment and its relationship with work attitudes while exploring causality. The survey method allows for data collection from a large population, ensuring a broader understanding of the phenomenon in Delta State's tertiary institutions. The study's population includes the academic and non-academic staff of three tertiary institutions in

Delta State, Nigeria. These institutions are Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashi-Uku (500), Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro (500) and Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe (500). Total 1500 participants. The population was divided into two strata: academic and non-academic staff. This ensures representation from both categories of employees across the institutions. Out of the 1500 copies of questionnaire distributed, we were able to retrieved 1373 copies of the questionnaire, resulting in an 91.5% response rate. Data was collected via physical distribution and online surveys for accessibility. Experience of sexual harassment was adapted from the *Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ)* (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Work attitudes was adapted from job satisfaction scale (Spector, 1985), organizational commitment questionnaire (Meyer & Allen, 1991) and work engagement scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The questionnaire will be subjected to content validity by experts in organizational behavior and public administration. Cronbach's alpha was used to ensure internal consistency, targeting a reliability coefficient of 0.7 or higher. The coefficients of the two constructs for Cronbach's alpha range from 0.757 to 0.792. Before the questionnaire was applied, experts in the field from the Department of Public Administration were consulted extensively. Consequently, this study's constructs showed excellent internal reliability and uniformity. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (correlation and regression analysis) was used for data analysis with the help of statistical package of social science (SPSS) software. Responses was anonymized to protect participants' identities. Participants was informed about the purpose of the study, ensuring voluntary participation and Ethical clearance was obtained from a relevant institutional review board (IRB).

DISCUSSION
Results

As stated in Table 1, the distribution of respondents' categories according to age, gender, and authority level is depicted by the demographic features.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics Results

	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	853	62.1
	Male	520	37.9
	Total	**1373**	**100**
Age	<30 years	244	17.8
	31 - 40 years	434	31.6
	41 - 50 years	378	27.5
	Above 50 years	317	23.1
	Total	**1373**	**100**
Level	Subordinates	436	31.8
	Supervisors	231	16.8
	Senior Officers	390	28.4
	Directors	316	23.0
	Total	**1373**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Gender Distribution

Female respondents accounted for 853 individuals (62.1%). The majority of respondents are female, indicating significant female representation in the study population. Male respondents accounted for 520 individuals (37.9%). Males form a smaller proportion, reflecting either a gender imbalance in the institutions or sampling variance.

Age Distribution

Below 30 years accounted for 244 respondents (17.8%). This represents younger employees, likely in junior roles or early-career stages. 31–40 years accounted for 434 respondents (31.6%). This age group constitutes the largest proportion, representing mid-career professionals. 41–50 years accounted for 378 respondents (27.5%). Employees in this age range are likely to hold senior or more stable career positions. Above 50 years accounted for 317 respondents (23.1%). Older employees comprise a significant portion, reflecting experienced staff or those nearing retirement. The age distribution shows a balanced representation across different career stages, with a slight concentration in the 31–40-year range.

Organizational Level Distribution

Subordinates accounted for 436 respondents (31.8%). This group constitutes the largest proportion, reflecting the prevalence of junior staff in the institutions. Supervisors accounted for 231 respondents (16.8%). Supervisors make up a smaller proportion, indicating fewer mid-level management roles. Senior officers accounted for 390 respondents (28.4%). This group is substantial, showing a significant presence of mid-to-high-level professionals. Directors accounted for 316 respondents (23.0%). Directors form a sizable group, representing top-level management. The level distribution indicates a diverse mix of junior, middle, and senior management roles, with subordinates forming the largest proportion.

Overall Observations

The data reveals a workforce with a predominance of females and a concentration in the mid-career (31–40 years) and subordinate levels. This demographic structure may influence work attitudes, perceptions of sexual harassment, and responses to organizational policies. For instance, younger or subordinate staff might experience higher vulnerability to harassment compared to senior staff.

Testing of Hypotheses

The table 2 presents the relationship between sexual harassment and components of work attitudes in selected tertiary educational institutions in Delta State. The strength and direction of the relationships are determined by Pearson correlation coefficients, and their significance is assessed using a 2-tailed test at the 0.01 significance level.

Table 2 Correlation Coefficient Matrix

Variables		Sexual harassment
Job satisfaction	Pearson correlation	- .149**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1373
Employees' commitment	Pearson correlation	- .210**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1373
Job engagement	Pearson correlation	- .241** .
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1373

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 levels (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS Output, 2024

The table 2, presents a correlation coefficient matrix showing the relationship between sexual harassment and three variables: job satisfaction, employee commitment, and job engagement.

Sexual harassment and Job satisfaction: The Pearson correlation coefficient is -0.149, which is statistically significant (p = 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 significance level). This indicates a small, negative correlation between sexual harassment and job satisfaction, meaning that as instances of sexual harassment increase, job satisfaction tends to decrease.

Sexual harassment and Employees' commitment: The Pearson correlation coefficient is -0.210, also statistically significant (p = 0.000). This suggests a moderate negative correlation, indicating that higher levels of sexual harassment are associated with lower levels of employee commitment.

Sexual harassment and Job engagement: The Pearson correlation coefficient is -0.241, statistically significant (p = 0.000). This shows a moderate negative correlation, suggesting that as sexual harassment increases, job engagement decreases.

Summary: All three relationships are statistically significant and negative, implying that sexual harassment has a detrimental effect on job satisfaction, employee commitment, and job engagement. The more prevalent sexual harassment is, the lower the levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and engagement among employees in selected tertiary institutions in Delta State of Nigeria.

Table 3Multiple Regression Analysis Results

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Constant	- .695		-3.592	.000
Job satisfaction	- .308	- .211	- 7.399	.005
Employees' commitment	- .533	- .328	- 6.856	.003
Job engagement	- .379	- .330	- 9.580	.001
R	- .588			
R²	- .472			
Adjusted R²	- .445			
F	.13.139			

*Significant at 0.005 level
Source: SPSS Output, 2024

The table 3, presents the results of a multiple regression analysis, where the independent variable is presumably some measure of outcome (not listed here), and the dependent variables are *job satisfaction*, *employee commitment*, and *job engagement*. Below is the interpretation of the table: Job Satisfaction (B = -0.308): A one-unit increase in sexual harassment leads to a decrease of 0.308 in the dependent variable (job satisfaction), holding other variables constant. This negative relationship suggests that as sexual harassment increases, the job satisfaction tends to decrease. Employees' Commitment (B = -0.533): A one-

unit increase in sexual harassment leads to a decrease of 0.533 in the employee commitment, indicating a stronger negative impact compared to job satisfaction. Job Engagement (B = -0.379): A one-unit increase in sexual harassment leads to a decrease of 0.379 in the job engagement, indicating another negative relationship in selected tertiary institutions in Delta State of Nigeria. All independent variables (job satisfaction, employee commitment, and job engagement) have a significant negative impact on the dependent variable, with job engagement showing the strongest effect. The model as a whole is statistically significant, and about 47.2% of the variance in the dependent variables is explained by the predictor. The significant t-values and low p-values indicate that the relationships observed are unlikely to be due to random chance.

Discussion of Findings

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients between sexual harassment and three key workplace variables: job satisfaction, employee commitment, and job engagement. All correlations are negative, suggesting that sexual harassment negatively impacts these workplace outcomes. The statistical significance of these correlations is confirmed by the p-values, which are all less than 0.05 (p = 0.000), indicating that these relationships are not due to random chance. For sexual harassment and job satisfaction, the result suggests a small but significant negative correlation, meaning that as the frequency or severity of sexual harassment increases, employees' job satisfaction tends to decrease. This finding is consistent with previous research that links workplace harassment to lower levels of job satisfaction (Baptiste, 2008). A decrease in job satisfaction due to harassment could be explained by the emotional distress, anxiety, and decreased morale that sexual harassment can cause among employees (Fitzgerald et al., 1997).

For sexual harassment and employee commitment, the result moderated negative correlation suggests that higher levels of sexual harassment are associated with lower levels of employee commitment. Employees who experience or witness harassment may feel less loyal to their organization, reducing their emotional attachment and willingness to remain in the job (Rizzo et al., 1970). This finding aligns with studies that highlight how negative workplace experiences, including harassment, erode organizational commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). For sexual harassment and job engagement, the result moderated negative correlation indicates that as sexual harassment increases, employees' engagement in their jobs decreases. Harassment may lead to disengagement, where employees feel less motivated and less emotionally invested in their work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The reduction in engagement may be due to feelings of insecurity, a toxic work environment, and reduced trust in the organization.

Table 3 shows the results of a multiple regression analysis, where sexual harassment is the independent variable, and the dependent variables are job satisfaction, employee commitment, and job engagement. The results of the regression analysis provide a deeper understanding of the strength and significance of these relationships. For job satisfaction, the finding suggests that for each unit increase in sexual harassment, job satisfaction decreases, holding other variables constant. This confirms the negative relationship identified in Table 2 and reinforces the idea that harassment leads to lower levels of job satisfaction.

For employee commitment, the finding shows that sexual harassment has a stronger negative impact on employee commitment compared to job satisfaction. Specifically, for each

unit increase in sexual harassment, employee commitment decreases. The larger magnitude of the coefficient suggests that harassment may have a more pronounced effect on employees' psychological attachment to the organization.

For job engagement, the finding indicates that sexual harassment leads to a decrease in job engagement for each unit increase in harassment. Job engagement is the strongest predictor of the outcome variable, suggesting that employees who experience harassment are significantly less engaged in their jobs, which could ultimately affect productivity and organizational performance. Therefore, the regression analysis confirms that sexual harassment has a statistically significant negative impact on job satisfaction, employee commitment, and job engagement in selected tertiary institutions in Delta State of Nigeria. Among these, job commitment and job engagement are more strongly affected by sexual harassment than job satisfaction. The model explains nearly half of the variance in the dependent variables, indicating that sexual harassment is a significant determinant of these workplace outcomes. The results also confirm that the relationships observed in the correlation analysis are robust and unlikely to be due to random chance. The findings from both Table 2 and Table 3 consistently show that sexual harassment in the workplace has a detrimental effect on key employee attitudes, such as job satisfaction, commitment, and engagement in selected tertiary institutions in Delta State of Nigeria. These findings are consistent with the broader literature on workplace harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Schaufeli et al., 2002), which highlights how harassment can undermine organizational outcomes by decreasing employees' satisfaction, commitment, and overall engagement with their work. tertiary institutions in Delta State must take proactive steps to address sexual harassment and create a more supportive, safe, and inclusive work environment to improve employee well-being and enhance organizational performance.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the impact of sexual harassment on key work attitudes (job satisfaction, employee commitment, and job engagement) in tertiary educational institutions in Delta State, Nigeria. The findings from both the correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis consistently indicate that sexual harassment has a significant negative effect on these work attitudes. Specifically, higher levels of sexual harassment were associated with decreased job satisfaction, lower employee commitment, and diminished job engagement among employees.The study highlights that sexual harassment is not only a violation of employee rights but also a major hindrance to the productivity and well-being of employees in academic institutions. The negative impact of harassment on employee commitment and job engagement is particularly concerning, as it suggests that employees who experience harassment are more likely to feel disengaged from their work and less emotionally invested in their roles. This, in turn, can undermine organizational performance, employee morale, and the overall academic environment.

In light of these findings, it is crucial for tertiary institutions in Delta State to adopt more effective measures to prevent sexual harassment, support affected employees, and create a safer and more inclusive work environment. By addressing sexual harassment, institutions can not only protect the rights and well-being of their staff but also improve organizational outcomes and foster a more productive and positive academic culture. In conclusion, this

study emphasizes the need for comprehensive policies, training programs, and support mechanisms to combat sexual harassment in the workplace. It also adds to the broader literature on workplace harassment, contributing valuable insights into its detrimental effects within the Nigerian educational context. Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made for tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria:

1. Implement Anti-Harassment Policies: Institutions should establish and enforce comprehensive anti-harassment policies that clearly define sexual harassment, provide reporting mechanisms, and outline consequences for perpetrators.

2. Provide Training and Awareness Programs: Regular training programs should be conducted to raise awareness about sexual harassment and its effects on employees. These programs should educate employees about their rights and the importance of creating a respectful and inclusive work environment.

3. Create Safe Reporting Channels: Institutions should ensure that there are safe, confidential, and accessible channels for employees to report incidents of harassment without fear of retaliation.

4. Promote Organizational Support: Institutions should foster an organizational culture that supports victims of sexual harassment. This can include offering counseling services, ensuring prompt investigations, and providing appropriate support to affected employees.

5. Monitor and Evaluate: Regular assessments should be carried out to monitor the prevalence of harassment and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented policies and programs.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing literature by:

1. Providing Empirical Evidence: It offers empirical evidence on the negative impact of sexual harassment on job satisfaction, employee commitment, and job engagement in the context of Nigerian tertiary institutions.

2. Reinforcing the Link between Harassment and Workplace Outcomes: The study reinforces the idea that sexual harassment is a significant predictor of negative employee outcomes, which is consistent with global findings in workplace harassment research.

3. Contextualizing the Findings in Nigeria: The study adds to the body of knowledge on workplace harassment in the African context, particularly within Nigerian tertiary institutions, where there has been limited research on this issue.

4. Policy Implications: The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and administrators in tertiary institutions to formulate strategies and interventions aimed at reducing sexual harassment and its harmful effects on employees.

Limitations of the Study

The study relies on self-reported data from staff members, which may lead to biases such as social desirability bias or reluctance to report incidents of sexual harassment due to fear of retaliation. Solution: To mitigate this, anonymity and confidentiality will be emphasized to ensure participants feel safe to share their experiences honestly. Additionally, the study will use a diverse sample across different institutions to capture varied perspectives. The study focuses only on tertiary institutions in Delta State, which may limit the

generalizability of the findings to other regions in Nigeria or beyond. The findings will be presented within the specific context of Delta State, and comparisons will be made with studies from other regions or sectors, if applicable, to provide a broader understanding of the issue. Gaining access to institutional records and participants may be challenging due to institutional privacy policies or reluctance to discuss sensitive issues such as sexual harassment. Permission will be sought from relevant authorities in the institutions to ensure access to staff. Researchers will also build rapport with participants and emphasize the importance of the study to encourage participation.

Participants may have difficulty recalling specific instances of sexual harassment, especially if the incidents occurred a long time ago. The study focused on recent incidents and provide clear guidelines on what constitutes sexual harassment to help respondents recall and report experiences accurately. The sensitive nature of sexual harassment and the cultural context in Nigeria may make some participants uncomfortable discussing such issues openly. The study will ensure that it approaches participants with sensitivity and respect, using appropriate language and framing. Additionally, informed consent will be obtained, and participants will be assured that their responses will be kept confidential.

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