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Okechi, Okafor Samuel

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Sexual Harassment Myths and Social Justice among College Students in Southeast Nigeria: Implication to Gender-based Sexual Violence and Sustainable Development

Mitos do Assédio Sexual e Justiça Social entre Estudantes Universitários no Sudeste da Nigéria: Implicações para a Violência Sexual de Gênero e o Desenvolvimento Sustentável

Mitos sobre el acoso sexual y justicia social entre estudiantes universitarios en el sudeste de Nigeria: implicaciones para la violencia sexual de género y el desarrollo sostenible

Okafor Samuel Okechi

Department of Sociology/Anthropology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria
Samuelokey200@gmail.com

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Abstract

Research objective: The paper studied sexual harassment myth and social justice among undergraduate students in southeast Nigerian campuses with a focus on the factors supporting sexual harassment myths and its implication to social justice and sustainable development in the region.

Theoretical framework: The study is guided by Structuration/Collective conscience models. Sexual harassment myths as tools of social injustice are perpetuated by the patriarchal structure and false collective conscience among the youth in educational institutions. This has over the years, entrenched sexual violence against women in the everyday interactions among the youth and the general population in the developing world.

Methodology: In order to understand the prevalence and developmental consequences of sexual harassment myths, the present study focused on the college students (a group that may be expected to be more progressive in its thinking about sexuality and gender differences/relations than the general population), involving 1716 students (17+) of 44 higher institutions of learning in southeast Nigeria. Survey design with questionnaire instrument was applied to manage the study and data collection procedure. Appropriate statistics were applied to check the relationship of the substantive variables to the study.

Results: From the findings, (a) there is a prevalence of acceptance of sexual harassment myths (72.3%/55.6%) among the students (b) sexual harassment myths 1&2 explained about 98%/94% variance of consciousness towards social justice against sexual harassment (c) predictors of gendered attitude towards sexual harassment myths acceptance are gender, age, source of sex education and perceived institutional sexual harassment policy (d) the predicting factors to consciousness towards social justice against sexual harassment included age, religious affiliation, type of secondary school attended and source of sex education.

Originality: The findings of the study presents a robust understanding of the underlying factors such as sexual harassment myths to the prevalence of sexual harassment in the developing nations such as Nigeria where patriarchal structures have sustained dominant gender inequality paradigm for decades.

Theoretical and practical contributions: Sub-Saharan Africa has been missing in the orbit of sexual-gender equality and social justice paradigm evidence in the definitional framework lapses due to dearth of context specific research on the issues however, this study fills such lapses and highlights the inalienable need for commitment to these issues for the actualization of the United Nations sustainable goals-5&16. By implication, the study provokes sustainable policy agenda for Nigeria and other developing nations on gender equality and social justice.

Keywords: Sexual harassment myths, Gender inequality, Gender-based sexual violence, Community development, Social justice, Sustainable development.

Resumo

Objetivo da pesquisa: O artigo estudou o mito do assédio sexual e a justiça social entre estudantes de graduação nos campi do sudeste da Nigéria, com foco nos fatores que sustentam os mitos do assédio sexual e suas implicações para a justiça social e o desenvolvimento sustentável na região.

Enquadramento teórico: O estudo orienta-se pelos modelos de Estruturação/Consciência Coletiva. Os mitos do assédio sexual como ferramentas de injustiça social são perpetuados pela estrutura patriarcal e pela falsa consciência coletiva entre os jovens em instituições educacionais. Ao longo dos anos, isso consolidou a violência sexual contra as mulheres nas interações cotidianas entre os jovens e a população em geral no mundo em desenvolvimento.

Metodologia: A fim de compreender a prevalência e as consequências do desenvolvimento dos mitos do assédio sexual, o presente estudo concentrou-se nos estudantes universitários (um grupo que se pode esperar ser mais progressista em seu pensamento sobre sexualidade e diferenças/relações de gênero do que a população em geral), envolvendo 1.716 alunos (17+) de 44 instituições de ensino superior no sudeste da Nigéria. Foi utilizada a pesquisa do tipo *survey* com aplicação de questionários para nortear o procedimento de coleta de dados. Estatísticas apropriadas foram aplicadas para verificar a relação das variáveis substantivas com o estudo.

Resultados: A partir dos resultados, (a) há uma prevalência de aceitação de mitos de assédio sexual (72,3%/55,6%) entre os alunos (b) mitos de assédio sexual e explicaram cerca de 98% e 94% respectivamente da variação de consciência em relação à justiça social contra o assédio sexual (c) preditores de atitude de gênero em relação à aceitação de mitos de assédio sexual são sexo, idade, fonte de educação sexual e política de assédio sexual institucional percebida (d) os fatores preditores para a consciência em relação à justiça social contra o assédio sexual incluíram idade, afiliação religiosa, tipo de ensino secundário escola frequentada e fonte de educação sexual.

Originalidade: As descobertas do estudo apresentam uma compreensão robusta dos fatores subjacentes, como os mitos do assédio sexual e a prevalência do assédio sexual nas nações em desenvolvimento, como a Nigéria, onde as estruturas patriarcais sustentaram o paradigma de desigualdade de gênero dominante por décadas.

Contribuições teóricas e práticas: A África subsaariana tem faltado na órbita da igualdade sexual e de gênero e o paradigma da justiça social falha na estrutura de definição devido à escassez de pesquisa específica de contexto sobre as questões. No entanto, este estudo preenche essas lacunas e destaca a necessidade de compromisso com essas questões para a atualização dos objetivos sustentáveis das Nações Unidas-5&16. Por implicação, o estudo provoca uma agenda política sustentável para a Nigéria e outras nações em desenvolvimento sobre igualdade de gênero e justiça social.

Palavras-chave: Mitos do assédio sexual, Desigualdade de gênero, Violência sexual de gênero, Desenvolvimento comunitário, Justiça social, Desenvolvimento sustentável.

Resumen

El objetivo de la investigación: El documento estudió los mitos sobre el acoso sexual y la justicia social entre los estudiantes universitarios en los campus del sureste de Nigeria, centrándose en los factores que respaldan los mitos sobre el acoso sexual y su implicación en la justicia social y el desarrollo sostenible en la región. **Marco teórico:** El estudio se guía por modelos de Estructuración/Conciencia colectiva. Los mitos del acoso sexual como herramientas de injusticia social son perpetuados por la estructura patriarcal y la falsa conciencia colectiva entre los jóvenes de las instituciones educativas. A lo largo de los años, esto ha arraigado la violencia sexual contra las mujeres en las interacciones cotidianas entre los jóvenes y la población en general en el mundo en desarrollo. **Metodología:** Para comprender la prevalencia y las consecuencias en el desarrollo de los mitos sobre el acoso sexual, el presente estudio se centró en los estudiantes universitarios (un grupo del que se puede esperar que sea más progresista en su pensamiento sobre la sexualidad y las diferencias/relaciones de género que la población general), involucrando a 1716 estudiantes (17+) de 44 instituciones superiores de aprendizaje en el sureste de Nigeria. Se aplicó un diseño de encuesta con instrumento de cuestionario para gestionar el estudio y el procedimiento de recolección de datos. Se aplicaron estadísticas apropiadas para comprobar la relación de las variables sustantivas con el estudio. **Resultados:** A partir de los hallazgos, (a) existe una prevalencia de aceptación de los mitos sobre el acoso sexual (72,3%/55,6%) entre los estudiantes (b) los mitos sobre el acoso sexual e2 explicaron alrededor del 98%/94% de variación de la conciencia hacia la justicia social frente al acoso sexual (c) los predictores de la actitud de género hacia la aceptación de los mitos sobre el acoso sexual son el género, la edad, la fuente de educación sexual y la política de acoso sexual institucional percibida (d) los factores predictivos de la conciencia hacia la justicia social contra el acoso sexual incluyeron la edad, la afiliación religiosa, el tipo de educación secundaria escuela a la que asistió y fuente de educación sexual. **Originalidad:** Los hallazgos del estudio presentan una sólida comprensión de los factores subyacentes, como los mitos sobre el acoso sexual y la prevalencia del acoso sexual en los países en desarrollo, como Nigeria, donde las estructuras patriarcales han sostenido el paradigma de desigualdad de género dominante durante décadas. **Contribuciones teóricas y prácticas:** El África subsahariana ha estado ausente en la órbita de la igualdad entre sexos y géneros y el paradigma de la justicia social. La evidencia en el marco definitorio falla debido a la escasez de investigaciones específicas del contexto sobre los temas. Sin embargo, este estudio llena esos vacíos y destaca lo inalienable. Necesidad de compromiso con estos temas para la actualización de los objetivos sostenibles de las Naciones Unidas-5 y 16. Por implicación, el estudio provoca una agenda política sostenible para Nigeria y otras naciones en desarrollo sobre igualdad de género y justicia social. **Palabras clave:** Mitos del acoso sexual, Desigualdad de género, Violencia sexual de género, Desarrollo comunitario, Justicia social, Desarrollo sostenible

Introduction

Sexual harassment, one of the social problems in modern society with social justice implications, has been accrued to the invisible problem of sexual violence facing women across the globe; it is covertly sustained in developing nations by the patriarchal system (Okafor, 2020). This is reified in the factor of sexual harassment myths backing the male-dominated society among developing nations (Santos et al., 2021; Cusmano, 2018; Ajayi, Chantler, & Radford, 2022). The menace of sexual harassment as well as violence against women covertly spurred by the phenomenon of sexual harassment myths, is quite enduring. From relevant statistics published by the World Health Organisation in conjunction with some Non-Governmental Organisations, there are startling evidence of the prevalence of sexual harassment, which is spread among the regions of the globe such that, each of the regions has its own burden of sexual harassment (WHO, 2015). Almost one-third (30%) of all women who have been in a relationship have experienced physical and sexual violence by their intimate partner while in some regions, 38% of women have experienced intimate partner violence. Globally, 7% of women have been sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner. Owing to the patriarchal system, which has little or no regard for sexual harassment involving women in most developing nations, dimensions, and degrees of sexual harassment tend to be more highlighted and reported in the developed nations according to the available data and statistics due to knowledge and measurable policy framework, powered by gender equality and enlightenment on social justice principles among the population (Sikka, 2022; Marrot, 2019; United Nations Women, 2020a; Benya, Widnall, & Johnson, 2018; United Nations Women, 2020b; Palermo, Bleck, & Peterman, 2014). Meanwhile, in the developing nations, sexual harassment is enshrouded in the cultural hegemony enslaving women's rights as well as making their voice void in the system fraught with patriarchal principles (Ademiluka, 2018; Jayachandran, 2015).

The unseen infringement of women's rights and domination over women in the interpersonal relationship, communal and societal settings as it affects sexual rights is advanced by sexual harassment myths domicile in the sub-consciousness of the youth. Sexual harassment myths as a counter measure to social justice and gender equality against women in developing nations are not only a threat to the prospects of development among these nations, but also a global concern with implications for the United Nations sustainable development goals (United Nations Women, 2020a&b).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs no.5& no.16), which champion gender equality for women and girls as well as a just, peaceful, and democratic world, and justice for all (General Assembly of the United Nations, 2015), are already threatened among the developing nations such as Nigeria where sexual harassment involving the female folks is swept under the carpet in the cloud of sexual harassment myths. While this injustice is much blamed on the patriarchal system marginalizing women (Okafor, 2020), this is exacerbated by the passivity of the youths in the institutions of higher learning communities who are invariably the future of the war against sexual harassment and sexual violence against women in the ongoing orientations and war against sexual violence and offence. Specifically, youth in the higher learning institutions may be expected to be more progressive in their thinking about sexuality and gender differences/relations than the general population. However, in most cases, they seem to lack knowledge and capacities to prevent sexual violence as a social injustice against the female folk due to gender sensitivity powered by the patriarchal structure (Huhtanen, 2020).

This, to some extent, is reinforced by the myths surrounding the problem of sexual harassment, such as rape mythology and sexual harassment mythology, which in one way or the other, hinders the ability of the victims of sexual harassment and concerned fellows in reporting the matter and openly denouncing them (Crittenden, 2009). Sexual harassment myths, limited legal and policy frameworks, as well as definitional frameworks, have all together made the observation and reporting of sexual harassment blurred and fluidly complicated with enduring negative implications to social justice (Marrott, 2019; Madrid, Joanpere, de Botton, & Campdepadrós, 2020; McGlynn & Westmarland, 2018).

Rape myth, which is more visible in the capturing of the sexual offence, cruelty, violence, and the likes of which sexual harassment is involved, has been specifically framed by scholars across the time on measurable scales and eventually, capturing the strings of everyday linguistic and behavioural interactions promoting sexual harassment myths (Recalde-Esnoz, Héctor, & Gemma, 2021). Among the scales and measures projecting the indices of rape/sexual harassment myths and acceptance are the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS) (Burt, 1980), Attitude Towards Rape scale (ATR) (Field, 1978), the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance (IRMA) (Payne et al. 1999), Acceptance of Modern Myth about Sexual Aggression (AMMSA) (Gerger et al., 2007), Alcohol and Sexual Consent Scale (ASCS) (Ward et al., 2012), Illinois Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance (ISHMA) (Lonsway et al., 2008), Acceptance of Myths about Sexual Violence (AMSV) (Janos & Epinoso, 2015) and the more recent Acceptance of Myths of Sexual Assault on University Campuses (AMSAUC) (Recalde-Esnoz, Héctor, & Gemma, 2021).

Sexual harassment myths as an enduring challenge to women's freedom are not only a threat to sustainable development but a segmented injustice against women with some implications for social justice. This is anchored on the common morality and collective conscience of contemporary society. Social justice, as one of the enduring concepts and realities with contemporary relevance, is captured in need for the empowering of the populace in the collective approach and management of justice in a rather proactive and pragmatic manner (Hong & Marine, 2018; Prakash, 2015). While justice as captured in extant rules and laws of the societies of antiquity and the contemporary societies appeared to be passive and perhaps selective/segmental, social justice is active and proactive in dealing with the overbearing circumstances surrounding the population in question to maintain a collective, sustainable, and trusted justice system (Harris & Linder, 2017; Hong & Marine, 2018; Hassan & Mojtaba, 2016).

Beyond the passivity of traditional justice, the pragmatic approach of social justice to perceived and observed elements of injustice incorporates the institutional factors, context, and individual dynamics of the factors of injustice as well as using counter-narratives, incorporation, cooperative and transformational approach to prevention, culturally differing methods informed by insight and oversight as well as sustainable moral courage build-up in managing, countering and preventing injustice (Hong, 2017; Harris & Lynder, 2017). As a matter of empirical relevance, social justice modelling has been domesticated and applied by various institutions and organizations as a counter sexual harassment program; this includes NASPA Culture of Respect CORE Bluepring, Berkowitz Social Norm Approach, Harvard University OSAPR Approach, San Francisco State University Title IX Program, Emory University RespectCon, etc. of which majority of them have proved sustainability in countering sexual harassment as social injustice (Hong & Marine, 2018; NASPA, 2017).

Sexual harassment myths have been prevalent among undergraduate students of higher institutions of learning, a group expected to be more progressive in its thinking about sexuality and gender differences/relations than the general population in developing nations. While the social justice implication of sexual harassment myths is found within the region of collective conscience and cult of morality among the youth, the information yet lacking in social justice and sexual violence literature is the resilient factors to sexual harassment myths among the supposedly anti-social injustice (modern youths) in the institutions of higher learning in the developing nations such as southeast Nigeria. The imperativeness of investigating this in southeast Nigeria anchors on the fact that this is a much-neglected area of the widespread sexual violence and violence against women in relation to justice for all, which is invariably captured as a serious concern in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 5&16. The paper aimed to empirically approach the sexual harassment myth concept and social justice among undergraduate students in southeast Nigerian campuses with a focus on the factors supporting sexual harassment myths and the overall perception of such among undergraduate students in Southeast Nigeria.

In view of the aforementioned, the study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the prevalence of sexual harassment myths acceptance among the Undergraduate students on campus among the institutions of higher learning in Southeast Nigeria?

- ii. What is the correlation between sexual harassment myths acceptance and attitude towards social justice among the Undergraduate students on campus among the institutions of higher learning in Southeast Nigeria?
- iii. What are the predicting factors for gendered attitudes towards sexual harassment myths acceptance among the Undergraduate students on campus among the institutions of higher learning in Southeast Nigeria?
- iv. What are the predicting factors to social justice consciousness among the Undergraduate students on campus among the institutions of higher learning in Southeast Nigeria?

Theoretical Framework (Social Justice in the context of Giddens Structuration/ Durkheim Conscience Collective Models)

Different societies over the years have been unconsciously patterned to function in a particular way, which the members of the society grow into, and unconsciously sustain. In Sociological parlance, structures represent the unseen webs, networks, supporting elements to the overall societal way of life and pattern of operation (Okafor, 2020). According to Giddens, society is the product of invisible structures unconsciously designed by the members of society to determine how, why, when and where certain activities should take place among the members of society (Giddens, 1984). Structuration theory, a middle range theory and the byproduct of structuralism and structural functionalism, explains the society as a whole sustained by the parts, with the structures holding it. While the parts in the structural-functionalism parlance can be summed as the social institutions in the society such as family, education, governance, religion, and economy, in the structuration theoretical orientation, the elements of the structures are more of the micro and structurally relevant factors operating to sustain the system towards a particular direction. Using the concept of rules and resources, Giddens maintained that the human agents in the social system sustained the societal structures through rules and maintained the elements of the societal structures through the resources, which are the human beings growing in the system.

Conscience collective or collective effervescence among the thematic focuses of Emile Durkheim is on the possibility of unified understanding, observable in prevalent moral obligation among a group. From Durkheim's *l'âme collective* in which the original meaning and intention, was the understanding of the coming together of individual minds in the society, to create a consistent moral commitment (Wortmann, 2016), society is seen as the creation from the minds of men from which the material and non-material social facts emerged and became reified (Hagens, 2006). According to Parsons (1949), Durkheim was interested in the process by which society at different levels and stages is created by the human mind. This, according to him, moves from the stage of individual perception and interpretation of the realities around them to giving credence to the importance of the prevailing phenomenon. Once the majority of the members of the society adopt such understanding, it becomes a dominant moral order at least for the time (Ritzer, 2011). According to Hagens (2006), at the centre of the collective effervescence theme in Durkheimian Sociological doctrine, one can find a collective consciousness that makes up a 'social fact' and contains socially instituted morality within itself.

Sexual harassment myths that contradict the principles of social justice as the byproduct of patriarchy has induced among the African population, the idea of male supremacy. Boys are trained to see the girls as weaklings; girls are trained to see themselves as susceptible to the male folks and therefore live at their (male folks') mercy wherever they meet them. These training are unconsciously introduced through a number of social traffic lenses such as the language, dressing, family etiquette, educational institutions, communal life anchored on male dominance, and the invisible overarching pressure of submission to, and isolation from male folks. As obtainable among the developing nations such as in southeast Nigeria, the children are trained into unseen gender inequality and male supremacy through language, dressing, family etiquette, and communal lifestyle dominated by male supremacy, which in the long run generate other social crises among the population such as building sexual violence against the women into the moral cult (collective conscience) of the youth from which the error of sexual harassment myths are upheld.

Sexual harassment is still perceived as the error and fault of the victims, especially when it involves female folks who are seen as supposed to be isolated from men except in the circumstances of marriage and family relationship. This can be seen in the high schools in the southeast region of Nigeria, where girls go together and boys go together such that, within the subconscious mind of the youth, women are expected to appear as slaves to men, ostensibly to maintain decency. The structural disposition of the society as it is obtainable in southeast Nigeria hinders social justice against women. While the males are trained into anti-social justice behavior in matters such as sexual harassment and moral justification of injustice affecting the opposite sex, the girls are automatically trained into the passivity of social patriarchy contradicting gender equality as well as their freedom. The structuration model as well as the conscience collective models is relevant to this paper as they point to the way the society unknowingly trains the members into the acceptance of sexual harassment myths and maintains this in the moral cult (collective conscience) of men against social justice principles as far as the female gender is concerned.

Methodology

The study was carried out in the southeast Nigerian region. Nigeria as federation/country comprises six geopolitical zones: northeast, northwest, north-central, southwest, southeast, and south-south. Each of the regions comprises at least five administrative states; in southeast Nigeria, there are five administrative states, which made up the region. The study focused on the federal, state, and private sponsored institutions of higher learning in the region. In the southeast Nigeria, there are 5 federal Universities, about 9 state Universities, more than 18 private Universities. In the category of polytechnics, there are 9 federal polytechnics, about 14 state polytechnics, more than 20 private polytechnics in the region. In the category of colleges of health, technology, Agriculture and education, there are more than 15 federal colleges, more than 17 state colleges and more than 16 private colleges in the region.

The study focused on the federal government approved institutions as elimination method to create sampling frame for the study. The federal ministry of education has the power to accredit every institution of higher learning across Nigeria in order to safeguard the public against unhealthy institutions of higher learning. Using the federal government accredited higher institutions of learning for the sampling frame; there are 71 federal approved higher institutions of learning in the region from which the study drew 44 institutions of higher learning. The study involved 1716 male and female undergraduate students from 44 federal, state, and private Universities, polytechnics, and colleges from southeast Nigeria. Simple random sampling was applied in selecting 44 institutions of higher learning from the approved 71 federal, state, and private sponsored institutions of higher learning in the region, while equal probability sampling technique was applied in selecting 39 respondents from the faculties/colleges, departments and units across the 44 selected institutions of higher learning.

The age limit for the study was put at 17years in recognition of the federal government of Nigeria's ministry of education benchmark for undergraduate admission, which is 16years. The study was motivated by the rampant cases of sexual harassment in the institutions of higher learning and the observed attitude of the youth towards sexual harassment, which in most cases encourages the menace, especially when it involves the female folks. As such the study sort for study area as well as study design, which will focus on the youth in a sufficient manner so as to understand the phenomenon of sexual harassment myths among the youths, which in itself, is the trigger for other forms of sexual violence and offences across the region. The study adopted a survey design, which utilized a questionnaire as a data collection instrument. The questionnaire instrument helped the study to elicit the necessary information on sexual harassment myths for the study.

In view of the nature of the population involved in the study and level of development in the region, which imply the understanding and knowledge of issue of sexual harassment, the study applied the combination of the sexual violence, sexual harassment and rape myths scales' indices applicable to the environment of the study in order to accommodate the population and collect the rightful information for the study. The questionnaire was designed on an ordinal scale with such indices as the acceptance of sexist

comments, sexual coercion, sexual imposition, sexual solicitation, gesture, images, threats, etc. among the study participants. These were captured in the questionnaire instrument on a Likert scale. The questionnaire instrument was tested in a pilot study involving 5 institutions of higher learning and with 105 students for internal consistency and familiarity among the students. From our observation, 102 (97.1%) of the questionnaires were properly filled by the students without a guide from the researchers, which showed a commendable level of familiarity with the questionnaire instrument to the targeted respondents. The overall consistency of the questionnaire items according to Cronbach alpha value is (0.89). However, according to the item-by-item analysis, the reliability values of the major variables are sexual harassment (0.81) as well as sexual harassment myth (0.84). The collected data were analysed using statistical software, while the substantive issues to the study were accorded appropriate attention using the appropriate statistics and models such as linear model, correlation analysis (*rho & r*), and descriptive statistics.

Presentation of the Findings from the Study

Table 1: The Socio-demographic information of the Study Participants

Table 1
The Sociodemographic information of the Study Participants

	Items	N	Percentage
Gender	Males	857	49.9%
	Females	859	50.1%
Age	17-22	667	38.9%
	23-28	762	44.4%
	29 and above	287	16.7%
Year of study	1stYear	191	11.1%
	2ndYear	285	16.6%
	3rdYear	572	33.3%
	4thYear	191	11.1%
Religious affiliation	Above 4years	477	27.8%
	Christianity	1049	61.1%
	Islam	477	27.8%
	African Traditional Religion	95	5.5%
Type of secondary school attended	No Religion	95	5.5%
	Private and Faith-based Secondary school	763	44.5%
	Private but not Faith-based secondary school	381	22.2%
Sex education	Government/Public secondary school	572	33.3%
	No sex education	381	22.2%
	Moderate sex education	764	44.5%
Source of sex education	High sex education	571	33.3%
	From peers and other people around	571	33.3%
	From the parents and other relations	381	22.2%
Parents religiosity	From classroom and other public organized programs	764	44.5%
	Non religious	285	16.6%
	Moderately religious	955	55.7%
Total	Extremely religious	476	27.7%
		1716	100.0%

The study spread across 857 (49.9) of males and 859 (50.1%) of the female students selected from the institutions of higher learning in the region. Among the study participants, 38.9% were in the age category of 17-22 years, 44.4% were in the age category of 23-28years while, 16.7% were in the age category of 29years and above. From the table1 above, 11.1% of the participants are in the first year of study, 16.6% are in their second year of study, 33.3% are in their third year of study, 11.1% are in their fourth year of study, while27.8% are in the 5th and more years of study. Majority of the study participants (61.1%) are

Christians, 27.8% are Muslims, while about five percent are African Traditional Religion and non-religion adherents respectively. The type of secondary/high school attended by these students was important in this study owing to the need to observe the impacts of mixed sex education, which come from religious and non-religious based high schools. As such, the inclusion of this variable in the study was to know the proportion of the students in the study who were trained in the religious based, private as well as public high schools and the implication of this to the overall issues of sexual harassment and sexual harassment myths. From table 1 above, majority of the study participants (44.5%) were trained in private and faith-based secondary schools, 22.2% were trained in the private but not faith-based high schools, while 33.3% were trained in public high schools.

Sex education was measured in the study by the participants' voluntary information that they have been educated on sexual rights and sexual activities as part of life and human existence, observing the rights and limitations of individuals' engagement in sexual activities with others. 22.2% of the respondents indicated that they do not have sex education, 44.5% indicated that they have moderate sex education, while 33.3% indicated that they have high sex education. Source of sex education in the study was necessary to know the dimensions and types of foundations these students have in sexual education, which in one way or the other, affected their approach and understanding of sexual harassment myths. 33.3% of the participants indicated that they learnt about sexual matters from their peers and other people around them, 22.2% indicated that they did from the parents and other relations, while 44.5% learnt from classroom and other public organized programs. Parents' religiosity as it concerns the present study focused on the understanding of the relationship of the religious status of the parents and its impacts on the knowledge, attitude, and perception of sexual harassment among these students. 16.6% of the participants indicated that their parents are not religious, 55.5% indicated that their parents are moderately religious, while 27.7% indicated that their parents are extremely religious.

Table 2
other Substantive Issues to the study

Items		N	Percentage
Respondents' acceptance of sexual harassment as normal on campus	Strongly disagree	285	16.6%
	Disagree	287	16.7%
	Agree	858	50.0%
	Strongly agree	286	16.7%
Respondents' perception of sexual harassment as unharmed	Strongly disagree	190	11.1%
	Disagree	381	22.2%
	Agree	669	39.0%
	Strongly agree	476	27.7%
Sexual harassment experience	Not at all	95	5.5%
	Not sure	382	22.3%
	Somehow	954	55.6%
	Certainly	285	16.6%
Belief that sexual harassment involving women can be blamed on the indecent dressing and behaviour among the women: sexual harassment myth ¹	Strongly disagree	95	5.5%
	Disagree	380	22.1%
	Agree	1049	61.1%
Belief that women do exaggerate their encounter with men as sexual harassment: sexual harassment myth ²	Strongly agree	192	11.2%
	Strongly disagree	286	16.7%
	Disagree	476	27.7%
Total	Agree	954	55.6%
		1716	100.0%

Sexual harassment scale indices were compiled to test the participants' attitude towards acceptance of sexual harassment as normal on campus. From the findings, 16.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed to the acceptance of sexual harassment as normal on campus, 16.7% disagreed, 50% agreed to the acceptance of sexual harassment on campus as normal, while 16.7% strongly agreed. The finding here is further explained by other extraneous variables. The system as obtainable in southeast Nigeria has degenerated to accommodate many abnormalities to be normal due to lack of social justice awareness among the youth.

For instance, the case of sexual harassment across the institutions of higher learning in southeast Nigeria are simply swept under the carpet for reasons such as saving the image of the institution, fear of victimization, the collaboration of the faculty members against the students as well as the issue of patriarchy, which has eventually made women to be ready to accept all manner of molestations as pleasantries (Okafor, 2020; Okafor et al., 2022).

Equally, the background of these students in most cases lacks opportunities for extant knowledge of sexual rights and sexual harassment, which makes it difficult to differentiate between the indices of sexual harassment and other behavioural abnormalities in their relationship with others. This is further explained by the following variable on the table, which is the perception of sexual harassment on campus. 11.1% strongly disagreed to sexual harassment as unharmed, 22.2% disagreed, 39% agreed to sexual harassment as unharmed, while 27.7% strongly agreed to sexual harassment as unharmed on campus. The finding shows the gradual acceptance of this problem as normal in the face of social injustice faced by the victims of sexual harassment on campus as is obtainable in southeast Nigeria. In any case, seeing the situation over the years and lacking the capacity to confront same in the social justice framework, the students seem to have adapted to seeing it as unharmed, especially as they can manage to graduate and leave the system after some time; they do not consider it as part of their wellbeing issues. As a matter of fact, more than 70% of the students have been sexually harassed on campus.

Meanwhile, on the issue of the blame apportioned to the victims of sexual harassment, the study was interested in understanding the prevalent of this as well as the dimensions of the sustaining factors. This was achieved by developing the concept in two levels of sexual harassment myths 1&2.

While sexual harassment myth1 dealt with the overall perception of women as responsible for their being sexually harassed, sexual harassment myth2 dealt with the overall perception of reporting of sexual harassment by women as exaggeration. Over 70% of the respondents agreed as well as strongly agreed that women are responsible for their being sexually harassed by men through their indecent dressings and behaviours. Equally, 55% of the respondents believed that women do exaggerate their encounter with men as sexual harassment. Again, this showed the operant condition among the students, which is the spillover of structuration of the society out there through training and domestication of anti-gender equality behaviour and perception (Giddens, 1977).

The youth have been conditioned through traditional patriarchal system to believe that women in their perceived and socially defined condition are more or less the properties of men lacking freedom or whatsoever in their relationship with others especially with the men. The proportion of the participants (70%) who see sexual harassment as the fault of women, included the females themselves of which the training and adaptation has made them to accept that sexual harassment from men should be understood from women's error and temptation. This is one of the pieces of evidence of lack of, and hindrances to social justice especially among the youth. While the fear and the erstwhile traditional patriarchal system dominant in the developing nations keep the vulnerable (women) in perpetual social injustice and fear, observing the same system becomes a hindrance to the aspiration and desire for social justice among the vulnerable.

Table 3
Correlation on Consciousness towards social justice and sexual harassment myths 1&2

Spearman's rho		Consciousness towards social justice	Sexual harassment myth ²	Sexual harassment myth ¹
Consciousness towards social justice	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-0.047*	-0.099**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	0.049	0.000
	N	1716	1716	1716
Belief that women do exaggerate their encounter with men as sexual harassment: sexual harassment myth ²	Correlation Coefficient	-0.047*	1.000	-0.031
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.049	.	0.201
	N	1716	1716	1716
Belief that sexual harassment involving women can be blamed on the indecent dressing and behaviour among the women: sexual harassment myth ¹	Correlation Coefficient	-0.099**	-0.031	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.201	.
	N	1716	1716	1716

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed); **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The study cross examined the implication of sexual harassment myths 1&2, to consciousness towards social justice on campus. From the findings, there is a negative correlation between sexual harassment myth. and consciousness towards social justice (openly denouncing sexual harassment) ($\rho = -.099$, $**P = 0.01$). In magnitude of the effect, the finding showed that sexual harassment myth. explains about 98% of consciousness towards social justice against sexual harassment on campus. Equally, there is a negative correlation between sexual harassment myth. and consciousness towards social justice ($\rho = -.047$, $*P = 0.05$). This is translated to sexual harassment myth. explaining about 94% variance of consciousness towards social justice among the undergraduate students in southeast Nigerian institutions of higher learning. The finding indicated the huge gap created between the observations of sexual harassment and openly denouncing same. This revealed the extraneous factors in the earlier findings by Okafor et al, (2022), which revealed that majority of the study participants preferred to report sexual harassment to their friends and parents other than the appropriate authorities. By implication, there is gap between social justice aspiration and sexual harassment countering measures on campus (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2019; McGlynn, 2019).

Table 4

Coefficients of Gendered attitude towards sexual harassment myths acceptance and other variables

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	6.476	0.412	6.476	15.704	0.000
Gender	0.356	0.050	0.250	7.071	0.000
Age	0.675	0.027	0.675	25.017	0.000
Year of study	-0.317	0.022	-0.591	-14.354	0.000
Religious affiliation	-0.049	0.024	-0.058	-2.092	0.037
Secondary school attended	-0.079	0.016	-0.098	-4.962	0.000
Sex education	-0.288	0.044	-0.298	-6.590	0.000
Source of sex education	0.343	0.027	0.421	12.745	0.000
Parents religiosity	-0.804	0.032	-0.743	-24.992	0.000
Frequency of awareness about sexual relationship/ harassment	-0.591	0.031	-0.571	-18.994	0.000
Consciousness towards social justice	-0.388	0.079	-0.271	-4.926	0.000
Preferred confidant to report sexual experience	-0.339	0.046	-0.360	-7.444	0.000

Dependent Variable: Gendered attitude towards sexual harassment myths acceptance

R² = 0.727 (72.7%), F = 165.780, P = 0.000.

From table 4 above, factors predicting gendered attitude towards sexual harassment myths were explained by 72.7% according to the model. From the P.value of the table, only religious affiliation appeared insignificant. However, other factors were either positively or negatively correlated with gendered attitude towards sexual harassment myths acceptance. Among other factors, gender, age, and source of sex education are positively correlated with gendered attitude towards sexual harassment myths acceptance among the students. Years of study, type of secondary school attended, sex education, parents' religiosity, frequency of awareness of sexual relationship and harassment, consciousness towards social justice and preferred confidants to report sexual harassment experience were all negatively correlated with gendered attitude towards sexual harassment myths.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	6.585	0.034	6.585	196.410	0.000
Gender	-0.474	0.006	-0.477	-85.632	0.000
Age	0.181	0.006	0.259	32.204	0.000
Year of study	-0.322	0.003	-0.860	-128.954	0.000
Religious affiliation	0.221	0.003	0.369	81.287	0.000
Secondary school attended	0.017	0.002	0.030	6.832	0.000
Sex education	-0.402	0.004	-0.596	-102.064	0.000
Source of sex education	0.244	0.003	0.429	77.302	0.000
Parents religiosity	-0.420	0.005	-0.556	-89.232	0.000
Frequency of awareness about sexual relationship/ harassment	-0.469	0.006	-0.648	-79.379	0.000
Preferred confidant to report sexual harassment experience	-0.538	0.004	-0.818	-146.742	0.000
Sexual harassment myths ¹	-0.073	0.004	-0.105	-18.983	0.000
Sexual harassment myths ²	-0.254	0.004	-0.386	-70.343	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Consciousness towards social justice

R² = 0.988 (98.8%), F = 5674.433, P = 0.000.

With 98.8% explanatory power over the included variables, the above model showed the relationship between consciousness towards social justice and other variables included in the model. Factors in the model such as age, religious affiliation, type of secondary school attended, and source of sex education were all positively related with consciousness towards social justice. However, gender, years in school, sex

education, parents' religiosity, frequency of awareness about sexual relationship and harassment, preferred confidant to report sexual harassment experience, sexual harassment myths 1 and 2 were all negatively correlated with consciousness for social justice.

Discussion of the Findings and Conclusion

Sexual harassment myths before now have been one of the hidden factors yet to be addressed in the search and fight against sexual harassment, sexual violence against women and social justice mostly in developing nations. While much attention has been given to sexual harassment in its generic appearance, Rape Myth Acceptance (Burt, 1980), Attitude Towards Rape (Field, 1978), Acceptance of Modern Myth about Sexual Aggression (Gerger et al., 2007), Alcohol and Sexual Consent (Rose Marie Ward et al. 2012), Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance (Lonsway et al., 2008), Acceptance of Myths about Sexual Violence (Janos & Epinosa, 2015) and the more recent, Acceptance of Myths of Sexual Assault on University Campuses (Recalde-Esnoz, Héctor, & Gemma, 2021), sexual harassment myths categorized according to their other of perception and effects as well as in connection with social justice has not been empirically approached in developing nations such as southeast Nigeria, where the problem of sexual harassment is a hitch to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal-5&16 and the overall globalization of sexual health and social wellbeing of all citizens.

Sexual harassment and violence against women enshrouded in the sexual harassment antics, creates a platform for injustice against women, supported by both women and men in society. This is empowered by the unconscious incorporation of the youth into the patriarchal structure, which stealthily form a common collective consciousness among the youth and subsequently play out in their relationship with the opposite sex. Gender, age, and source of sex education are positively correlated with gendered attitude towards sexual harassment myths acceptance among the students. This finding showed the chronic problem of patriarchal structure against social justice in developing nations such as the southeast Nigeria. The youth grow into the system as a false collective consciousness, which they uphold in other settings outside the family and communal lives and, this shown in their age progression. According to the study by Arisukwu, Igbolekwu, Adebisi and Akindele (2021), youth among developing nations are cultured into social injustice against women including the women themselves. Equally, following the systematic family structures in developing nations, youth tend to learn gender inequality from home and perpetuate this as they progress in life (Arisukwu et al., 2021; Crooks, Peter, Dunlop, Kerry, & Exner-Cortens, 2018). Source of sex education among the students, which is more lenient on the family structure rather than verified sources, tend to be training the female folks into passivity sustained by patriarchal structure, while the males are empowered towards anti gender equality line as it applies to sexual harassment acceptance myths. In the study by Crittenden (2009) it is believed among the male participants that sexual harassment involving the female folks is majorly the fault of the female folks. In a further probe, the study discovered that the majority of the male participants were from the family background where sex education is offered with gender bias.

Consciousness towards social justice in relation to sexual harassment, which is displayed by publicly denouncing sexual harassment and reporting to the appropriate authorities for action (Harris & Linder, 2017), is a factor in understanding the sexual harassment myths among the undergraduate youth. From the findings, age, religious affiliation, type of secondary school attended, and source of sex education were all positively related with consciousness towards social justice among the students. In essence, much experience and observations encapsulated in age, plays a role in confronting sexual harassment acceptance myths among these students. Equally, religion, private and public secondary schools and verified sex education have grown to be countermeasure to injustice among the population. In affirming this, the study by Bondestam and Lundqvist (2020), Santelli et al. (2018) and Rouhparvar, Javadnoori, and Shahali (2022) revealed that verified sex education and pragmatic religious teachings offered a leap to social justice against sexual abuse and harassment.

Reporting sexual harassment incidence to the appropriate authorities, which is one of the ways of exercising social justice, seems to be difficult among the youth especially, the female undergraduate students in the institutions of higher learning in the southeast Nigeria according to the earlier findings by Okafor et al. (2022) however, the extraneous variable has been unraveled in this study. For instance, believing that sexual harassment involving women can be blame on the women's indecent dressing and behaviour explained about 98% variance of the possibility of reporting sexual harassment incidence among the undergraduate students in this region. More importantly, this relationship is in the negative direction ($r_{ho} = -.099, P = 0.01$), indicating that the more the incidence of sexual harassment myth., the less the willingness to report sexual harassment incidence among the population. Of course, this is an impedance to the possibility of social justice as the system here stealthily corrupt the learning and moral commitment for social justice. This situation is also found in the relationship between reporting sexual harassment and sexual harassment myth., which explained about 94% variance of the sexually harassed reporting their experiences to the appropriate authorities among the students in the region. In any case, the finding of the study at this point showed the continuous threat to social justice in the case of sexual harassment against the female folks.

Community development equally is threatened here especially as it involves the SDGs-5&16 which champions inclusive and just society. While the higher institutions of learning in this part of the world is the model for the urban and rural communities within the region, whatever is promoted in the higher institution communities like sexual harassment myths is invariably injected into the rural and urban communities in the region. As a matter of fact, sexual harassment and rapes of different degrees have become an emerging social menace in the recent times among the rural and urban communities across Nigerian six geopolitical zones. By implication, the incidence of sexual harassment and the reifying factors among the students are in sum, anti-community development as the trajectory of community development in the developing nations such as Nigeria follows the dominant behavioural disposition in the communities of institutions of higher learning from where the youth draw inspiration and extend to their communities of origin. Based on the findings of the study, the study recommends that more studies be carried out in the areas of childhood experience and perception of sexual harassment myths as well as social justice and gender-based violence.

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