

GENDER RELATIONS AND SEXUAL VIOLATIONS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES. A SITUATION ANALYSIS OF LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA.

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In the last three decades in Nigeria, progressive increase in female enrolment and involvement in the formal business of universities have resulted in a gendered composition of the universities, to the extent that 1 out of every 3 people is female (Pereira, 2002). The female population in Nigerian universities has steadily increased within an overall national context of high female school dropout and the dynamics of gendered power relations, within the university environments, heightened. Such power relations operate at micro (stereotypes, exclusion, lack of voice, participation, powerlessness) and macro levels (expenditure patterns, institutional culture, governance styles, type of learning environment etc) and have been strongly associated with varying patterns of gendered violence.

Bennett (2002) stresses that, it is perhaps rare to find a discussion of gender and higher education in Africa which does not mention sexual harassment, and sexual violence as critical sources of injury to women on campus. Most of these discussions tend to draw on particular incidents. Strategies against the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual abuse address 'gender equity' at its core. In order to promote deep analysis of the meaning of gender within higher education, Bennett asserts that sexual harassment and sexual violence have increasingly been named as forces worth focused research within higher education, and at other levels of education.

The negative attitudes of many male students and some University staff create an intimidating, hostile and humiliating working environment for many women students. Women students and academics are frequently without sufficient strength of numbers or institutional power to challenge male abuse of power.

Peer pressure; poverty and prostitution, a girl – unfriendly’ learning environment; violence in schools; teachers betraying trust; are some of the factors fueling sexual corruption and violations.

In Kenya, while sexual harassment is receiving the first glimmer of official recognition in the workplace there remains a policy vacuum schools and educational institutions. (Omale, 2000). Anderson – Levitt et al (1994) study on gender – related experiences of children in and around classrooms in primary school and in college in the Republic of Guinea. On teachers’ attitudes and behaviours in the school, the assumption made was that it was normal to pressure female students for sexual favours. Observations and interviews showed that girls face classrooms barriers unique to their gender. Girls alone face additional discouraging factors inside the classroom that boys do not content with. These were cases of overt sexism and even hostility towards on the part of some teachers and lower expectations for girls were widespread among urban middle school teachers and among rural teachers at all levels. There were gender stereotypes built into school practices as the expectation that girls should do daily housekeeping, which symbolically punished girls for being girls

This study therefore, is an attempt to understand the relationships between gender relations and sexual violations in the university. The paper tries to answer some basic questions; what specific forms of power relations exist in the university that predisposes different categories of people to sexual coercion? What forms of gender relations encourage sexual corruption in the university?

The population of Lagos State University has steadily grown from less than 2,000 students and staff in 1984, at its inception, to more than 62,000 in 2004. Similarly, the , current gendered composition and the complexity of its academic and social environment have reflected an outstanding transformation, generally associated with a mixbag of academic ,social, religious and heterosexual networks.

The data were derived from two sources, namely in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions. The Study revealed that the increase in the population of students cannot be merged with the academic staffs and facilities on the campuses. This led to an increasing strain on lecture facilities such as classrooms, libraries and hostels. These prevented many of the students from attending lectures and eventually make the female students vulnerable to sexual assaults. The institutional arrangement in terms of checking of results, examinations, code of conducts also creating an environment within which all kinds of transactions (including sexual) take place in the university.

One major finding is that different entry methods especially through distance \part-time learning have allowed the weak students, to have access to university education. This eventually led to commercialization of knowledge in the university. On the basis of this it is concluded that government should increase the allocations to the education sectors and the university should reduce the number of students admitted into the university.