



SEXUAL HARRASSMENT AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AKURE, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

Gender based violence and Sexual harassment have been long standing issues in Sub Saharan African Universities. Gender inequality appears to be a strong invisible benchmark that prevents women from attaining the top positions in all professions and it is clear that women are not making sufficient progress in breaking it, cracking it, or even raising it significantly. Gender mainstreaming is a process that involves policies and documents on how to proffer solution, control and power for those have been marginalized. Implementation of equal opportunity, affirmative policies, and quotas in training programmes selection and promotion exercise had been jeopardised. This work hereby identified gender and sexual harassment and related problems by providing platforms to adequately address these problems especially in the area of Science and Technology in Nigeria Universities using Federal University of Technology Akure (FUTA), Ondo state in Nigeria as one of agents of change in Gender Mainstreaming. The Centre for Gender Issues in Science and Technology (CEGIST) in FUTA was established to address the issues relating to gender gaps and disparities in social; cultural and economic opportunities between male and female in the University; review policies and regulations and also conduct research on sexual harassment. It has been recognized that sexual assault is the most unreported crime on University campuses affecting an upward of 12% of females. Hence, in a University of Science and Technology such as Federal University of Technology Akure (FUTA) where male students dominate, the figures are unimaginable. We therefore provide the strategies and activities of Centre for Gender Issues in Science and Technology (CEGIST) in tackling these issues.



Keywords: Centre for Gender Issues in Science and Technology, Gender Mainstreaming, Sexual harassment, University.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, attention has been shifted to sexual harassment and Gender based violence in Nigeria and African Universities in order to promote gender sensitive culture in University communities. According to Wikipedia, Sexual harassment is bullying or coercion of sexual nature, or the unwelcome or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favours while Sexual harassment can also be seen as an unwanted sexually motivated conduct, touching and expressions capable of undermining a person's freedom, rights and privileges while Violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in Nigeria and in the world as a whole.

Worldwide, an estimated one in three women will experience physical or sexual abuse in her lifetime. Gender-based violence undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims, yet it remains shrouded in a culture of silence, victims of violence can suffer sexual and reproductive health consequences, including forced and unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, traumatic fistula, sexually transmitted infectious diseases including HIV and even death.

Gender Mainstreaming is an act of promoting a gender-sensitive institutional culture by providing equality between men and women. So many works have been carried out on Gender Mainstreaming in order to overcome the issues of sexual harassment and gender based violence. Adamolekun (1989) has addressed the social problems relating to sexual harassment on Nigerian Campuses, Taljunaite (2005) provided answers on gender mainstreaming by providing a gender policy formation and women's participation in Lithuanian political and civil life. Ryan (2007), examined how Action Aid Kenya (AAK), a non-governmental organisation administers their programme, implements and develops gender mainstreaming and empowerment from governmental to district in a Kenyan society. Zindi (2002) in his work showed how sexual harassment takes place in institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe, it was established that there exists a significant number of male lecturers who sexually harass female student.



Since these two subjects are interweaving, Sexual harassment and Gender based violence, Universities in Nigeria and Africa are committed to the attainment of making universities environment respect the dignity of all members of the community.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to discuss these two issues and the activities of Federal University of Technology, Akure, (FUTA) management in addressing the situations through the Centre for Gender Issues in Science and Technology (CEGIST) .

MOTIVATION FOR CREATING A GENDER MAINSTREAMING OFFICE (GMO) IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AKURE (FUTA), ONDO STATE, NIGERIA.

In SUB-SAHARAN African, the gender based violence that were recorded in recent times are:

- 24 million girls cannot afford to go to school
- 38% of women have no formal education.
- A girl may marry as young as 13 and has one in 22 chance of dying in childbirth
- One in Six of her Children will die before the age of five.
- Mental rape is not considered a crime

While in Science and Technology, we have :

- At Secondary school level, 5% are female
- Tertiary level, 15% are female
 - Over representation in arts and education
 - Under-representation in Science and Technology

WHAT ARE WE DOING IN FUTA?

The Federal University of Technology Akure, Ondo state, Nigeria established a Gender Mainstreaming Office (GMO) called Centre for Gender Issues in Science and Technology (CEGIST) in January, 2009 following the directive of Nigerian University Commission (NUC). The objectives of the centre are:



- Educate and sensitise relevant stakeholders on the global trends in gender issues especially those relating to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).
- Encourage and promote education of the girl child especially in STEM disciplines at all levels.
- Collaborate with relevant organs within and outside the University to ensure positive attitudes towards the female and male
- Support increased participation of women in the academia and leadership positions in the University
- Conduct programmes on gender value systems towards promoting societal and moral ethics.
- Consulting and counselling services in moral, ethical and related issues especially those bothering on fundamental human rights.

SOME OF FUTA COLLABORATORS ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING

- Organization for women in science for the Developing world (OWSD): Popularising science among females at all levels
- Ministry of Agriculture: Training of Community women in food processing

ANY POLICY BY GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA ON SEXUAL HARRASSMENT?

The National Assembly are working on the issue of Sexual Harassment in Nigerian Universities and the bill will impose a stiff penalties on offenders in its overall objectives of providing tighter statutory protection for students against sexual hostility and all forms of sexual harassment in the tertiary institutions and this said bill have passed reading.

ANY POLICY BY FUTA ON SEXUAL HARRASSMENT AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE?

Presently, no policy yet on Sexual harassment but on the issue of Gender-based violence, policy is in place while these policies are bounded over staff (academic and non-academic) and students, the vision and mission of the policy are:

VISION

- To become a leading Centre for gender mainstreaming in the Nigerian University system towards assuring organisational effectiveness and improved productivity



MISSION

- To promote gender equality in Science and technology within the Federal University of Technology, Akure and the community at large

CONCLUSION

Science has developed better with slight increase in women participation due to their precision and creativity in scientific research and thereby there is an urgent need to build a critical mass of women scientists who will be agents of change in their environments. Governments of developing countries need to formulate practical and implementable policies to promote affirmative action that will ensure equity in science and technology.

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