



## **Curtailing the Effect of Sexual Harassment on Academic Performance of Female Students in Nigeria: Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti in Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

The rate of sexual harassment against female students in Nigeria tertiary institutions is becoming increasingly worrisome. Despite the progress that is being made to avert the problem of sexual harassment in schools all over the world, it still remains a big challenge and various cases of sexual harassment have been reported at Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti where female students are equally more vulnerable to sexual harassment than male students. It is clear that sexual harassment comes along with various effects not only on the side of the students but also the integrity of the Polytechnic at large. This study therefore sought to establish the effects of sexual harassment on the academic performance of female students in Nigerian tertiary institutions with a focus on Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. The study employed a cross-sectional case study design to collect both qualitative and quantitative approaches in collecting data from the female students of the Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. Findings revealed that the most common form of harassment experienced is unwanted physical touch, followed closely by verbal comments and intimidation; there is clear evidence that sexual harassment in Nigerian tertiary institutions significantly disrupts normal patterns of class attendance and participation; there is an overwhelming consensus among respondents that sexual harassment is not just a personal violation but an academic one, where grades are used as a weapon for coercion and punishment; in addition finding shows that sexual harassment acts as a significant cognitive barrier, and disrupts concentration, creates mental blocks towards understanding course material. The implication of these findings is that sexual harassment is not a minor or perceived issue; it is a widespread and severely impactful phenomenon in Nigeria tertiary institutions with real consequences across multiple facets of student life. Hence it was recommended that management in tertiary institutions should launch an awareness campaign by means of posters, seminars, and student orientations to clearly define sexual harassment, outline reporting procedures, and affirm the institution's zero-tolerance policy. Also, there should be provision of emergency counselling to create psychological support services easily accessible and specifically advertised for victims of harassment.

**Keywords:** Sexual Harassment, Female Students, Academic Performance, Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti

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### **Introduction**

#### **Background to the Study**

Sexual harassment is one of the many social vices plaguing our higher institutions of learning as well as the society at large. The consideration of this area of study was coherently driven by some existing facts about sexual harassment among tertiary students in Nigeria. Hence, there is need to curtail the cankerworm that is silently eroding academic excellence in our tertiary

institutions, especially in the context of Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. The school system has the responsibility to ensure that it creates a safe and conducive environment for learning for all of its students. Sexual harassment is an unwelcome sexual behaviour that is offensive, humiliating or intimidating. It can be written, verbal or physical, and can happen in person or online. Sexual harassment, although not peculiar to Nigerians alone, it appears to have established itself as a norm in the society today.

Considering its high incidence in our tertiary Institutions, places of employment and places of worship. It has become a contemporary challenge in our higher institutions of learning; hence the need to draw the attention of the public to the cankerworm that is now one of the biggest threats to the development of education and academic excellence in our society. In a bid to curtail the wave of sexual harassment and its concomitant effect. Sexual harassment in the Nigerian tertiary institutions is not a new phenomenon. Over the years, it has increasingly received widespread attention in the media, consequently resulting in a dramatic increase in public awareness (Ajao *et al.*, 2019). There have also been several research works carried out to address issues relating to sexual harassment in tertiary institutions and the outcomes of these studies have suggested clearly that sexual harassment the victims negatively, and in most cases downgrade students' performance academically. There is therefore, a need to investigate the effect of sexual harassment in the context of Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti to unfold the various dimensions of sexual harassment peculiar to the institutions with a view to coming up with strategic recommendations that put pay to this ignoble act and stand out Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti as institution free of sexual harassment syndrome.

### Statement of the Problem

Generally, the rising incidence of rapes and other forms of sexual harassments has assumed an alarming dimension in Nigeria and globally. To this end, higher education institutions in Nigeria are not left out of this saga, for instance, it has been affirmed that, in Nigeria sex for grades in the tertiary institutions is a reality and the male lecturers in particular, perceived themselves as thin gods and such unprofessional behaviour can be perpetuated unchecked (Gaba, 2010; Imonikhe *et al.*, 2012) <sup>[6]</sup>. A similar study by Adetunji (2008) reported a high prevalence of sexual harassment both in the education institution and in the workplace. Sexual harassment takes on various trends and nature, but most importantly, it emanates from unequal power relation that is also associated with gender-based violence and violation of human rights. In most cases, the harasser is usually older, powerful and poses something of value that is beneficial to the harassed (Schuffer, 2000). The effects of these phenomena manifest in increased school drop-out, low skills of graduates, low productivity, aggression, and mal-adjustment among young adults who are not capable of contributing to socioeconomic development of the country (Obodo, 2009).

In addition, sexual harassments affect the class attendance as those harassed take some time to get back to class and lastly the students demonstrated that those harassed find it hard to concentrate in class. From findings no investigation has been carried out to empirically detect the causes of sexual harassment, especially in the context of Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti; further investigations revealed that most of the

punishments meted out to the perpetrators of sexual harassment have not deterred people from engaging in this ignoble adventure why the victims have not been subjected to further interrogations to see if they, in the first instance contributed to their own sexual harassment by seeking favour for academic or other form of assistance from the perpetrators. Hence, further research should be conducted to investigate deeply the underlying factors that force the perpetrators to sexually harass the female students. This study consequently seeks to contribute to the discourse on sexual harassment in the Nigeria tertiary institutions by establishing evidences on the causes of sexual harassment among the students of Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti with a view to proffering concrete solutions for curtailing its rising incidence of sexual harassment.

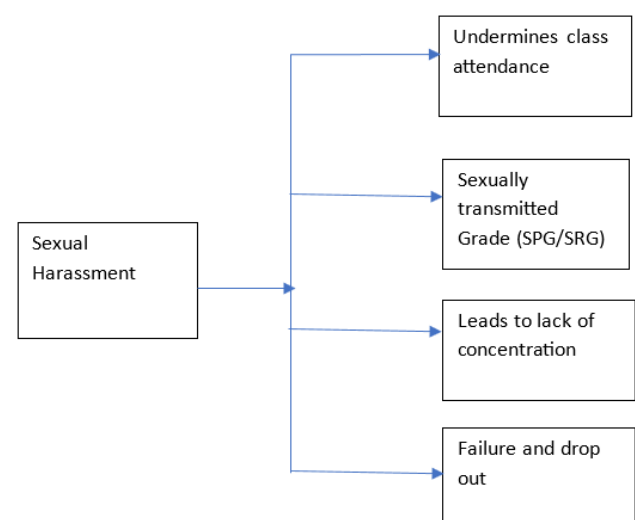
### Research Objectives

The overall aim of this study to examine the effect of sexual harassment on the academic performance of female students with a view to proffering solutions that are potent to curtail this menace in Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. Other specific objectives are to:

1. find out the effects of sexual harassment on the class attendance of female students
2. investigate the effects of sexual harassment on the academic grades of female students
3. find out the effects of sexual harassment on the level of academic concentration of female students
4. examine the effects of sexual harassment on the emotional stability of female students
5. describe the forms of sexual harassment experienced by female students.
6. Proffer concrete solutions for curtailing sexual harassment in Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti.

### Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for the proposed study is depicted in the schemata below:



**Fig 1:** Effect of sexual harassment on academic performance of Female students

### Literature Review

#### Conceptual Review

that sexual harassment is often associated with assault, bullying, coercion, discrimination, favoritism; exploitation

and intimidation as vices that play out in the sexual encounter leaving the victims with long-term pains that devastate their psychological well-being (Taiwo, *et al.* 2014). Within the context of an academic environment, sexual harassment can be regarded as enforcing through bullying or coercion, unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical sexual advances conduct in exchange for employment, academic performance or better living condition. It is a very demeaning and inappropriate act, particularly because the perpetrators are authority figures and models to the students who are most often their victims.

Menon *et al.* (2011) described Sexual Harassment as unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conducts of a sexual nature, when submission to or rejection, explicitly or implicitly affects a person's employment or education, unreasonably interferes with a person's work or educational performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or learning environment.

Sexual Harassment can take the following forms:

- touching, grabbing or making other physical contact with you without your consent
- making comments to you that have a sexual meaning
- asking you for sex or sexual favours
- leering and staring at you
- displaying rude and offensive material so that you or others can see it
- making sexual gestures or suggestive body movements towards you
- cracking sexual jokes and comments around or to you
- insulting you with sexual comments
- Committing a criminal offence against you, such as making an obscene phone call, indecently exposing themselves or sexually assaulting you.

On types of sexual harassment, Ajao *et al.* (2019) explain that there are two key categories of sexual harassment which are "quid pro quo" and a hostile environment. These two forms are briefly explained below:

### Quid Pro Quo

Quid pro quo literally means "this for that" in Latin. Other similar interpretations are: "give and take", "tit for tat", "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch your back." Quid pro quo sexual harassment happens when it is stated or implied that an academic performance of a student depends upon whether the student consent to conduct a sexual act.

### Hostile Environment

A hostile environment sexual harassment occurs when an unwanted sexual conduct creates an intimidating, threatening or hostile working or learning environment or its severe, persistence or pervasiveness affects a person's ability to participate in or benefit from an academic program or activity. The learning environment is considered hostile, when a staff, does or says something discriminatory that unreasonably interferes with an individual's educational experience or creates an intimidating environment. When submission to or rejection, explicitly or implicitly affects a person's employment or education, unreasonably interferes with a person's work or educational performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or learning environment, Menon *et al.* (2011).

Furthermore, sexual harassment permeates all levels of education – down to nursery school. Sexual harassment has been in existence in the school system for several years. Hence, sexual harassment is not an emerging trend in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Studies have shown that sexual harassment in education is higher in countries with weak educational systems, low levels of accountability, high level of poverty and gender inequality. It was further discovered that sexual harassment is more prevalent in institutions where educators are poorly trained, underpaid and severely under sourced (Beninger, 2013; Lynch, 2013 & Sharma, 2013) [5].

In one survey of female graduates in Nigeria's higher institutions, at least 69.8 per cent said they had been sexually harassed by their lecturers and male classmates. It added that about two-thirds experienced the non-physical sexual harassment (in the form of sexual comments and requests to do something sexual in exchange for academic favours); 48.2 per cent experienced physical sexual abuse. But statistics only scratches the surface of the ugly practice (Lawal, 2018) [8]. Another survey of female undergraduates with a focus on experiences of sexual harassment while in their various tertiary institutions in Nigeria higher institution revealed that the majority (69.8%) of the respondents had been sexually harassed, with the main perpetrators being male classmates and lecturers. About two-thirds experienced the non-physical type of sexual harassment; 48.2% experienced the physical type. Non-physical harassment included sexual comments (57.8%) and requests to do something sexual in exchange for academic favours (32.2%). Physical forms of sexual harassment included unwanted sexual touching (29.4%) and being intentionally brushed against in a sexual way (28.9%) (Owoaje, & Olusola-Taiwo, 2011).

The increasingly wide spread use of social media in Nigeria, has given more women a platform to be more outspoken on their experiences with sexual harassment. Social media trends such as the #MeToo movement where victims share their experiences with sexual harassment has further revealed the prevalence of sexual assault in our institutions and shone light on its silent culture.

### Effects of Sexual Harassment

The effects of sexual harassment can be profound, and can range from uncomfortable to severe distress. If unchecked, female students would carry physical, emotional and mental scars that will affect their academic performance and likely their future relationships with the opposite sex which can last for a short or long time.

- For victims, being sexually harassed can have demoralizing effects on Physical well-being, Psychological health and education.
- Psychological effects include: depression, denial, anxiety, shock, anger, frustration, fear, irritability, insecurity, embarrassment, shame, guilt, self-blame, isolation.
- Furthermore, physiological effects include: headaches, lethargy, weight fluctuations, nightmares, panic reactions, sexual problems. Effects on education: include absenteeism, withdrawal from school, drop in academic performance due to stress (North Michigan University, 2019),
- Sexual harassment can also generate a "ripple effect" of negative impact on the overall development of Nigeria itself as a nation in achieving sustainable development. The issue of sexual harassment is a threat to achieving

the girl child education. It has created non conducive and unsafe learning environment for the female students which has promoted slow and uneven progress towards attaining gender equality of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that it is detrimental to sustainable development.

Therefore, it is pertinent to note that sexual harassment is a threatening social phenomenon in the Nigerian educational sector, Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti inclusive; which has severe psychological and social consequences on the victims as well as economic and political consequences on the nation in achieving sustainable development. Mohammed (2017)<sup>[10]</sup>. Unfortunately, nothing concrete is being done legislatively at national level more than a bill which is still languishing in the National Assembly years after passing through the first reading. In the context of Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti, although their punishments for sexual harassments, especially if this is coming from male lecturer to female students, nevertheless, the harassment of female students still goes on without detection and the victims of these harassments suffer in silence with negative consequence for their academic performance. Victims of sexual harassment for instance has no access to a whistle blowing mechanism through which they can 'codedly' report any form of sexual harassment they face to the appropriate quarters for necessary investigations and actions. There is therefore an urgent need for this study which is aimed at investigating the various ways of perpetrating sexual harassment in Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti with a view to coming up with concrete recommendations capable of curtailing this social menace that have negatively impacted the academic performance female students and denigrate the ivory towers in Nigeria.

This is because the main reason for the continuous perpetuation of this cruel act is the existence of weak mechanisms and redress in tertiary institutions. Taiwo *et al.* (2014) agree with the foregoing and argue that incidence of sexual harassment is not always reported and perpetrators are allowed to go free. This could be responsible for the unchecked reoccurrence of the behaviour deficit.

Unfortunately, sexual harassment weakens the integrity of the ivory towers. The primary responsibility of curtailing incidences of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions falls on the leaders of these institutions who have the will to rid their campuses of sexual harassment. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the management of all the tertiary institutions in Nigeria to reduce the occurrences of sexual harassment to the lowest possible rate in order to create an environment that is conducive for female students.

### Empirical Review

Awe (2020) examined the emotional stability or instability of students who have been sexually abused in some selected tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. Primary and secondary sources of data collection were applied in this study. The study made use of descriptive survey design with structured Likert scale questionnaire administered to 396 students randomly selected across three tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The hypothesis of this study was analysed using simple linear regression as statistical technique with the aid of SPSS version 22.0 for Windows. The findings of the study showed that sexual harassment of female students exerts statistically significant negative effects on emotional stability of the

victims. The study concluded that sexual harassment of whatever dimensions exerts severe consequences on mental health of victim. In the light of the lingering effects of the vice on the victim's mental health, counseling units should be established across all tertiary institutions with professional caregivers employed to provide listening ears to helpless victims as well as succor to their predicament.

Fasiks *et al.* (2015) empirically identified factors affecting female students' academic achievement in Aberuswolkite high school. To do so, to make the sample representative enough; the study used were used as the main tool of data gathering instrument. The findings of this study show that the decreasing in enrolment, increasing in dropout and class repetition from time to simple random sampling technique school female students through lottery method and purposive sampling techniques for school directors and city education head officer. The study is descriptive type research. Primary and secondary data were used as data source. Questionnaire and structured interview time and different causes were identified such as female students were took household responsibility, and inadequate support from their family, lack of teacher's instructional support (regular tutor for female students), inadequate guidance and counseling. All these taken as caused female students' poor academic performance in the study area

Mondol *et al.* (2020) examined the SH experiences and its impact on academic performance (AP) of female students. Contingency analysis, factor analysis and logistic regression analysis are used to examine the factors effect on AP. Contingency analysis has revealed that facing SH in campus or outside and victim's AP have significant relationship with various types of SH like sexual indicative eve teasing, sexual indicative fun, and sexual indicative email, mobile or telephone. Logistic regression analysis has shown that family members mentality, permanent residence, sexual indicative fun, and sexual indicative email, telephone/mobile have significant effect on AP. It is clear that a good number of female students are being harassed at campus area and it has negative impact on their AP. University authority should take initiatives for prevention of this type of harmful offence.

Taiwo *et al.* (2014) investigated the occurrence of sexual harassment and its psychological implication among students in five higher education Institutions in South West, Nigeria. A total number of 2500 (M=1221, F=1279) students selected through systematic sampling participated in across-sectional survey that used semi-structured, self-administered questionnaire in September 2012. Respondents' average age is 22 years with high knowledge and awareness of incidences of sexual harassment (97%) that fails to translate into behaviour change, as sexual harassment continues unchecked. Significant trend of sexual harassment occurrence is from a male lecturer to a female student (98.8%). Poverty and negative peer influence are also key drivers of sexual harassment in higher educational institutions. Fear and trauma were rated highest as the psychological consequences of sexual harassment on the victims.

Omorogiwa (2018) explored the prevalence, underlying social factors of sexual harassment and its prevention in the University of Benin, Nigeria. The main objective is to ascertain whether psychosocial factors are perceived as correlates of sexual harassment by university undergraduates. The study adopted the descriptive survey research method.

The sample of 380 undergraduate students was drawn from the Faculties of Social Sciences, Engineering, Arts and Basic Medical Sciences of the University of Benin, Benin City. Using the non-proportionate stratified random sampling procedure, 95 undergraduate students were randomly selected from each of the faculties. The instrument for the study is a 30-item questionnaire with a four-point Likert-type scale. Results show the prevalence of sexual harassment of university students as moderate. The psychosocial factors influencing sexual harassment of students include financial insufficiency, moral deficit, lust and a weak system of redress. Result showed that occurrence of sexual harassment tended to be directed more towards females than males; and females were more negatively affected than males. The study identified awareness, propriety in dress and punishment for offences as necessary institutional responses to prevent sexual harassment.

Mshenga (2022) focused on investigating the sexual harassment of students in higher learning institutions in Tanzania. The researchers conducted the survey among the students in the Zanzibar School of Health, which included 186 respondents who completed the survey. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this study. The study used questionnaires for students in the quantitative method by compiling, editing, coding, classifying, and tabulating the data using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics that test the hypothesis of the data before drawing a conclusion. Then the raw data from the questionnaires was entered into the SPSS version 20 program so as to be analyzed. A focused group interview in the qualitative method for lectures was applied as the main data collection instrument. This study found out that revealed the existence of sexual harassment in students' studies in higher learning institutions. However, sexual harassment is a result of the nature and culture of male dominance. 43% of the respondents agreed that there are types of sexual harassment in learning institutions in Tanzania that students face. Also, there is a probe into the causes of sexual harassment at the Zanzibar School of Health in Zanzibar, whereby 90 (48.7%) of the respondents commented on sexual harassment in learning institutions in Tanzania. 45.6% of respondents acknowledged the existence of this problem in their institutions.

## Methodology

### Research Design

Cross sectional survey design was adopted for this study as this enabled the researcher to collect data using a 21-item questionnaire constructed on five-point Likert-type scale titled "Curtailling Sexual Harassment in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions" (CSHNTI).

## Population and Samples

The study population comprised of the female students across various schools including School of Business studies, Engineering, Science, Environmental, Agriculture in Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. A purposive random sampling method was used in selecting the samples for this study. Five hundred and sixty (560) female students were selected from each of the five schools that make up Federal Polytechnic with exception of School of Agriculture where only 260 students were randomly selected due to female population constraint. Thus, overall, a total of 2,500 students who must consent participated in the study.

## Sample size and Sampling Technique

The sample of undergraduate students was selected across all the seven schools in Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. Using the disproportionate stratified random sampling procedure, 2,500 undergraduate female students were randomly selected across all of the faculties,

## Instruments of Data Collection

A self-developed, well-structured questionnaire with six themes and seven items per theme was administered on the respondents. The themes include: Socio-demographic information, awareness of incidence of sexual harassment, trend of occurrence of sexual harassment, causes of sexual harassment, level of acceptance and reporting of sexual harassment and academic consequences of sexual harassment.

## Administration of the Instruments

The instrument was administered to the respondents by the trained research assistants engaged. The Assistants were first trained on the purpose and significance of the study and provided with guidelines on how to ensure successful data collection to achieve the objectives of the study.

## Validity Test

Three different experts in field of research and statistics were engaged to help scrutinize the instrument so as to ensure the validity of the instrument before actual administration.

## Reliability Test

The extent to which the research instrument produces the same results on repeated trials is referred to as reliability, according to Orodho (2009). To ensure the questions within each section reliably measure the same underlying construct (e.g., "Attendance Impact"), we calculate Cronbach's Alpha for each multi-item section. A score above 0.7 is generally considered acceptable. The reliability results are presented below:

| Section | Construct                  | Cronbach's Alpha | Interpretation           |
|---------|----------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| B       | Attendance Impact          | 0.62             | Questionable Reliability |
| C       | Grades Impact              | 0.85             | Good Reliability         |
| D       | Concentration Impact       | 0.92             | Excellent Reliability    |
| E       | Emotional Stability Impact | 0.88             | Good Reliability         |
| F       | Forms of Harassment        | 0.79             | Acceptable Reliability   |

From the above, it is obvious that most scales show good to excellent internal consistency. This means the items in sections C, D, E, and F are consistently measuring the same thing. The lower alpha for Section B suggests that "skipping

class," "sitting at the back," and "avoiding assignments" may be distinct coping mechanisms rather than a unified "attendance" construct.

## Method of Data Analysis

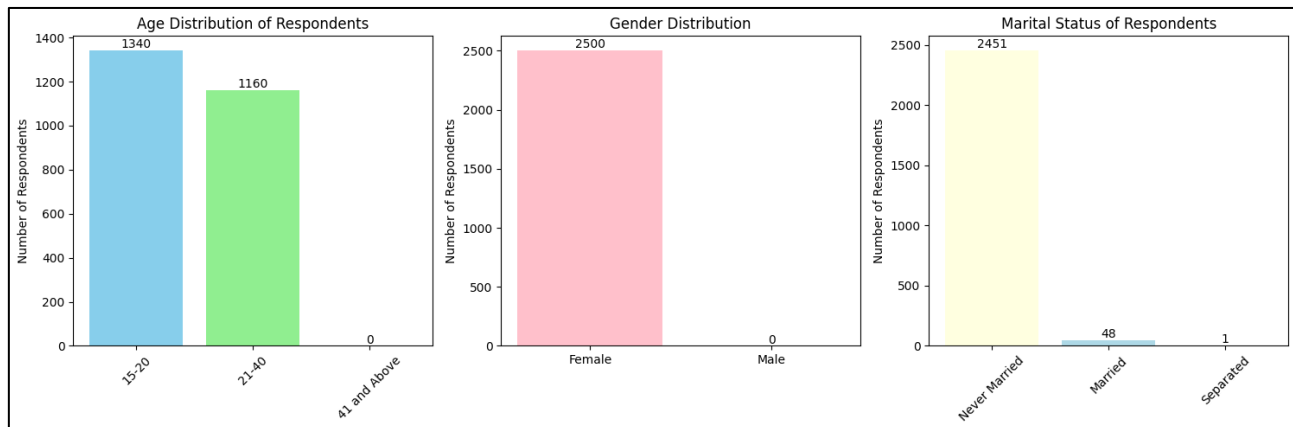
The data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics treatment of mean and standard deviation. Furthermore, inferential statistics like correlation and regression would be employed to draw cause and effect relationship between sexual harassment and academic performance of victims in Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. Statistical Package for Social

Sciences (SPSS) was used in this regard to its capacity to handle analysis of this nature efficiently.

## Results and Discussion of Findings

### Demographic Information of the Respondents

The demographic information of the respondents is presented in the bar charts below



**Fig 1:** Bar Charts representing the demographic data of the respondents

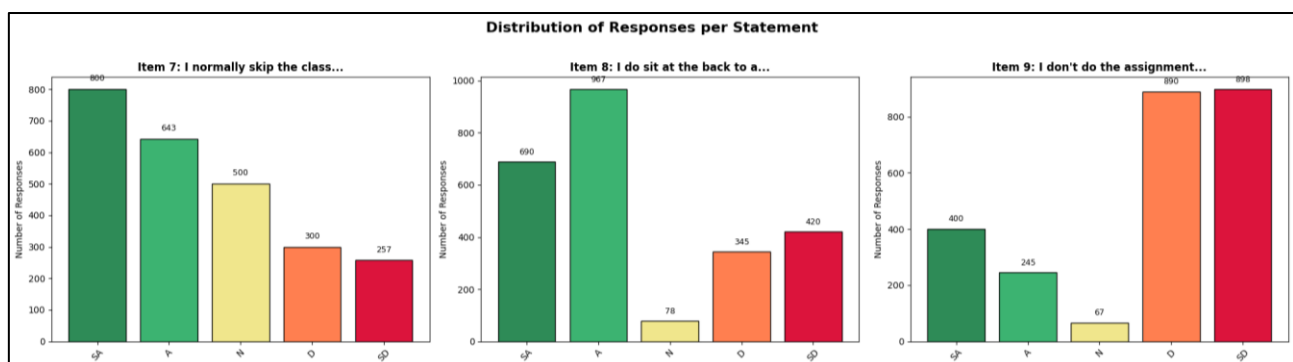
Figure 1 reveals that the age of the respondent between 15–20 years are about 1340, representing 53.6% of the total respondents. Also, about 1160 respondents are between 21–40 years, which is about 46.4% while no respondent has her age between 41 and above. This result shows that the majority of respondents are young female students between 15–20 years old, followed closely by those aged 21–40. This reflects the typical age range of polytechnic students in Nigeria. With respect to gender distribution, the bar chart shows that all the respondents are female 2500 respondents (100%) with 0 male respondents. This attests to the fact that the survey was administered exclusively to female students, which aligns with the research focus on sexual harassment against female students. On marital Status, about 2451, representing 98% of the respondents are never married, while 48 or 1.92% of the respondents are married, only 1 or 0.04% of the surveyed

respondents is maritally separated. Hence, the vast majority of respondents are unmarried, which is consistent with the student demographic in higher education institutions. Consequently, the demographic profile indicates that the respondents are predominantly young, unmarried female students, which is the target population for this study on sexual harassment. This sample is appropriate for investigating the research objectives related to female students' academic experiences.

### Descriptive Statistics Result

**Research Question:** What is the effect of sexual harassment on the class attendance of female students?

The responses to this question are presented in Figure 2 below:



**Fig 2:** Effect of sexual harassment on the class attendance of female students

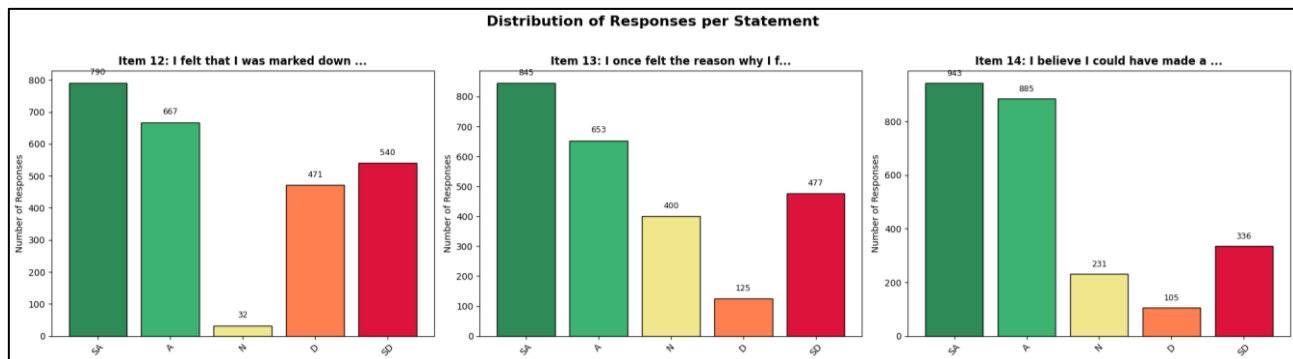
Figure 2 reveals a strong perceived link between sexual harassment and negative impacts on class attendance and engagement. On class skipping due to sexual harassment, a majority of respondents which is 1443 (SA=800 + A=643) agree that they skip the class of a lecturer who has harassed them. This is a direct and severe impact on attendance. Also, while asking if the respondents prefer to sit at the back during the class of their sexual harasser, this question received the

strongest agreement in this section with about 1657 (SA=690 + A=967). This indicates that even when students do attend class, they adopt avoidance strategies to minimize interaction with the harassing lecturer, which can hinder their learning experience. On avoidance of assignments due sexual harassment, the response is polarized but leans towards disagreement. While a notable number agree (645: SA=400 + A=245), a larger majority, which is about 1788 (D=890 +

SD=898) disagree with the statement. This suggests that despite the fear, most students feel compelled to complete required assignments, even at potential personal risk. The high disagreement could also indicate that not all assignments require problematic "personal submission." Overall trend in the responses to this question shows that there is clear evidence that sexual harassment in Nigerian tertiary

institutions significantly disrupts normal patterns of class attendance and participation. The primary coping mechanisms are avoidance (skipping class, hiding in the back) rather than confrontation.

**Research Question:** What is the effect of sexual harassment on the academic grades of female students?

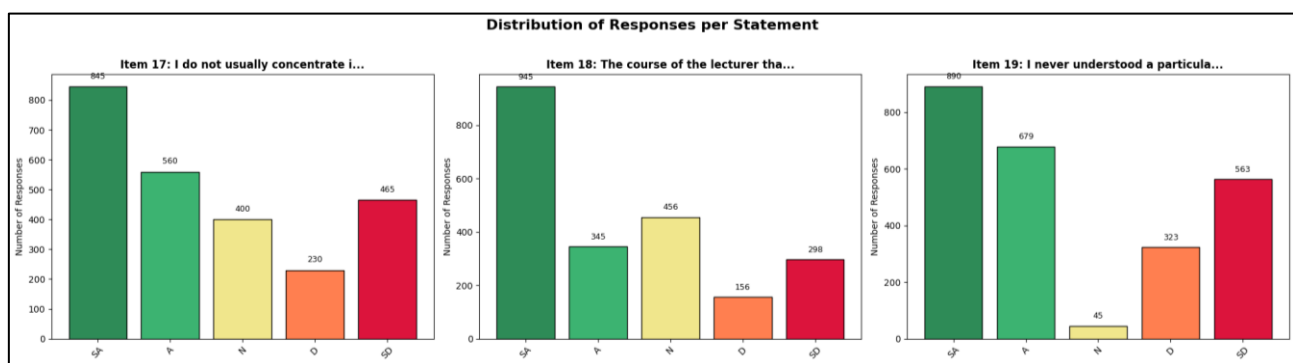


**Fig 3:** Effect of sexual harassment on the academic grades of female students

Figure 3 shows a powerful and damaging perception that sexual harassment directly and negatively impacts academic grades. A strong majority (1457: SA=790 + A=667) of the respondents believe they have been unfairly marked down by a lecturer who harassed them. This points to a direct abuse of power affecting academic evaluation. Asking the respondents if they felt they failed courses because of rejection of sexual advances from lecturers received one of the most agreed-upon statements in the entire survey (1498: SA=845 + A=653). The low number of disagreements (602: D=125 + SD=477) reinforces the perception that academic failure is sometimes used as a punishment for rejecting advances. On whether they could have done better on their academic grades but for their refusal of sexual advances, this question received

the highest agreement (1828: SA=943 + A=885). Nearly three-quarters of respondents believe their grades suffered because they rejected sexual advances, indicating a widespread belief that academic success is contingent on sexual compliance. With the foregoing result, there is an overwhelming consensus among respondents that sexual harassment is not just a personal violation but an academic one, where grades are used as a weapon for coercion and punishment. This creates a toxic learning environment where academic achievement is perceived to be inseparable from sexual exploitation in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

**Research Question:** What is the effect of sexual harassment on the level of academic concentration of female students?



**Fig 4:** Effect of sexual harassment on the level of academic concentration of female students

Figure 4 reveals that sexual harassment severely damages students' ability to concentrate and learn effectively as a strong majority (1405: SA=845 + A=560) report an inability to concentrate in the class of a lecturer who has harassed them. This directly impacts knowledge acquisition and academic performance. Also, a total of 1290 (SA=945 + A=345) respondents linked sexual harassment to finding the course difficult to understand. This suggests that the psychological distress caused by the harasser creates a mental barrier to learning the subject matter. Also, a majority of the respondents (1569: SA=890 + A=679) highly agreed that they could not understand courses taught by their harasser. The very low "Neutral" responses (45) indicate that this is a

sharp, definitive issue for students. It shows that harassment can completely block a student's academic progress in a particular course. Overall trends in the responses of the obtained show that sexual harassment acts as a significant cognitive barrier. It disrupts concentration, creates mental blocks towards understanding course material, and can lead to a complete failure to grasp academic contents, thereby directly undermining the core purpose of education in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

**Research Question:** What is the effect of sexual harassment on the emotional stability of female students?

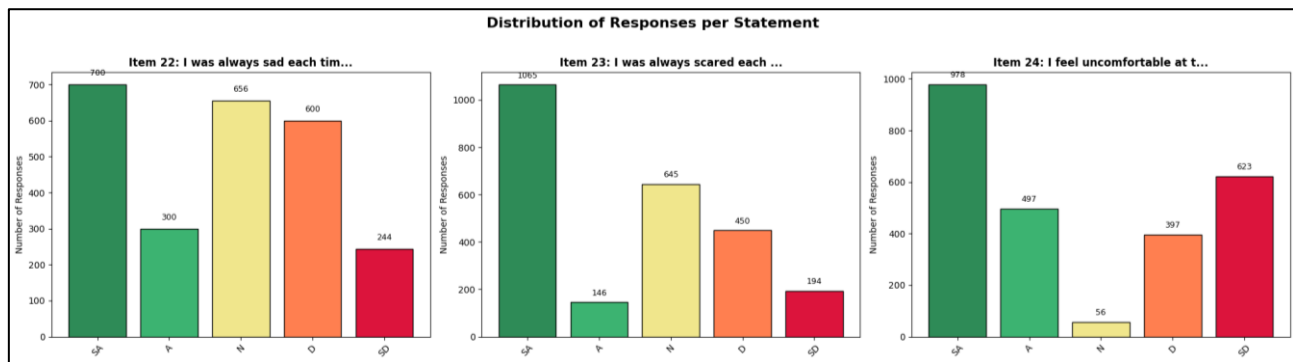


Fig 5: Effect of sexual harassment on the emotional stability of female students

Figure 5 shows the impact of sexual harassment on emotional stability is profound, with feelings of fear and discomfort being particularly dominant. A total of 1000 (SA=700 + A=300) respondents reported experiencing sadness associated with the harasser's class. The significant number of Neutral (656) and Disagree/Strongly Disagree (844) responses suggests a more varied emotional response to this specific trigger compared to fear. In addition, fear is the most agreed-upon statement in this part (1211: SA=1065 + A=146). The overwhelming "Strongly Agree" response indicates an intense and pervasive sense of fear is the most common emotional reaction to encountering the harasser. When asked if sexual harassment leads to lasting discomfort,

a strong majority (1475: SA=978 + A=497) report lasting feelings of discomfort from the memory of the harassment. This indicates that the emotional trauma is not temporary but persists long after the incident(s), affecting the student's overall well-being. Hence, the primary emotional responses to sexual harassment are fear and lasting psychological discomfort. This creates an environment of constant anxiety for students in Nigerian tertiary institutions, which is detrimental to both their academic life and personal mental health.

**Research Question:** What are the different forms of sexual harassment experienced by female students?

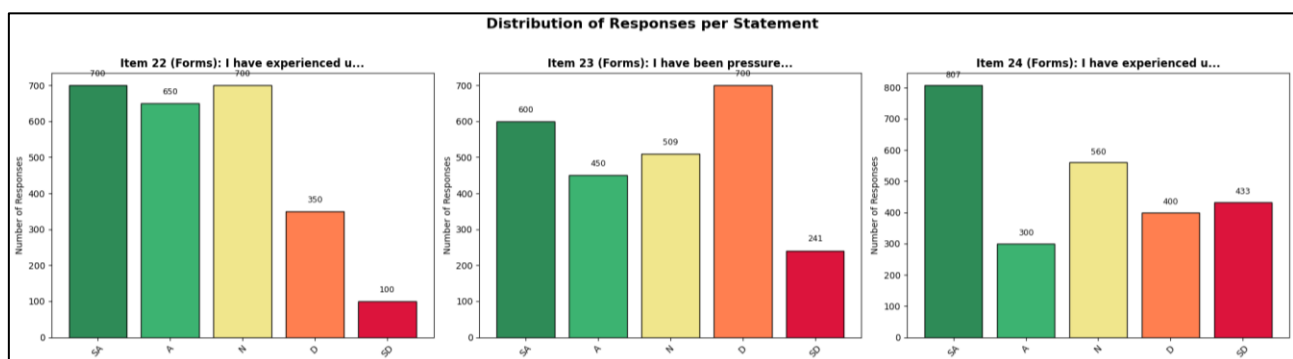
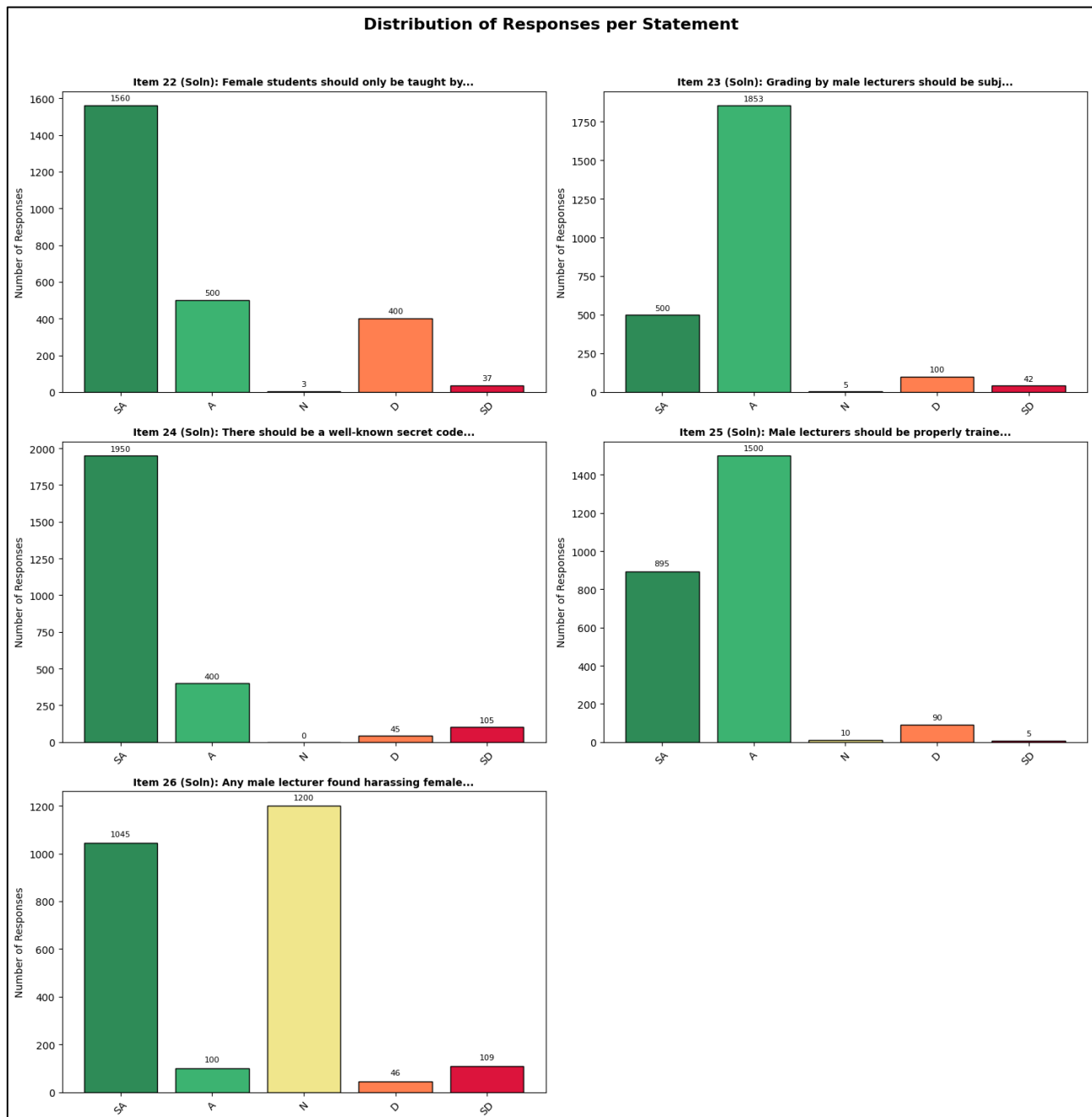


Fig 6: Different forms of sexual harassment experienced by female students

The data shows that female students experience a range of harassing behaviors, with unwanted touching being the most prevalent form reported. For unwanted touch, a majority (1350: SA=700 + A=650) report experiencing unwanted physical touch. The high agreement confirms that physical violation is a common form of harassment in Nigerian tertiary institutions. With respect to verbal pressure for grades agreement (1050: SA=600 + A=450) is significant, but notably lower than for unwanted touch. The high number of Disagree (700) and Neutral (509) responses suggests that while this "quid pro quo" harassment is a serious problem, it may be slightly less prevalent than physical forms or more hidden. Item 24 (Unwelcome Comments): A total of 1107

(SA=807 + A=300) respondents have experienced sexually charged or intimidating comments. This indicates that verbal harassment and the creation of a hostile environment are also widespread issue in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Overall, the most common form of harassment experienced is unwanted physical touch, followed closely by verbal comments and intimidation. The "quid pro quo" harassment (grades for sex) is also a significant and severe problem.

**Research Question:** What are the concrete solutions for curtailing sexual harassment among female students in Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti?



**Fig 7:** Solutions for curtailing sexual harassment among female students.

The responses illustrated by Figure 7 show strong support for systemic changes, strict consequences, and protective measures, with overwhelming consensus on some solutions. Making use of female lecturers only, there is a highly divisive solution. While it has the highest "Strongly Agree" (1560), the significant number of "Disagree" (400) and "Agree" (500) suggests a split opinion on this segregationist approach. For peer review of grading approach, this solution receives massive support (2353: SA=500 + A=1853). It is seen as a practical, fair, and non-segregationist way to prevent the manipulation of grades. By using secret whistle-blowing code, this is the most popular solution, with near-universal approval (2350: SA=1950 + A=400). It addresses the critical issue of fear of reporting by promising anonymity and safety to victims. With respect to providing training for lecturers' approach, this also receives very strong support (2395: SA=895 + A=1500). Respondents believe in preventative

measures through education and awareness for staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Also, the response regarding adopting summary dismissal method is interesting. While a strong majority supports it (1145: SA=1045 + A=100), the very high "Neutral" response (1200) suggests significant hesitation or uncertainty about the practicality or implementation of such a strict punitive measure. Overall, the result shows that respondents strongly advocate for a multi-pronged approach, including safe reporting mechanisms via secret code; Systemic checks and balances by peer review of grades; Education via training for lecturers as well as strong punishment via dismissal though this has more cautious support. The least supported solution is the gender-segregation of teaching where female students are expected to be taught only by female lecturers, indicating a desire for reform rather than exclusion.

### Discussion of the Key Findings

The analysis reveals severe and multifaceted impacts of sexual harassment on female students in Nigerian tertiary institutions. According to the findings of this study, respondents were exclusively female (100%), predominantly young (aged 15-20 and 21-40), and mostly unmarried (98%), confirming the study's focus on the at-risk population. The study further found that a majority skip classes (57.7% agree) or hide at the back (66.3% agree) to avoid harassers. While polarized, a significant number (25.8% agree) avoided assignments requiring personal submission due to fear of advances. A strong majority (58.3% agree) believed they were unfairly marked down by harassing lecturers. Also, nearly 60% agreed that they failed courses for rejecting sexual advances while 73.1% believe they could have performed better academically if not for sexual harassment. With respect to impaired concentration, 56.2% agree they cannot concentrate in the class of a harasser, just as 51.6% agreed they found courses harder due to harassment. About 62.8% directly attribute course failure to harassment while 48.4% are scared at the sight of the harasser; approximately 59% feel lasting discomfort. Around 40% report sadness associated with the harasser's class. On different forms of sexual harassment, the study found that about 54% of the respondents have experienced unwanted touching, 42% are pressured for sex in exchange for grades while 44.3% experience unwelcome sexual comments. On preferred solutions, the study found that 94% support a secret code for reporting, on accountability mechanisms, 94.1% of the surveyed respondents supported independent peer review of grading. On training deterrence for perpetrators of sexual harassment, about 95.8% want mandatory training while 45.8% of the respondents strongly support summary dismissal, just as about 82.4% support female-only lecturers, though this is more divisive.

### Policy Implications

The findings imply an urgent need for institutional reform since the perception of biased grading found in this study undermines academic integrity. Hence, policies must introduce checks and balances. Also, widespread emotional distress requires dedicated counselling services for victims. In addition, fear of reprisal is a major barrier; hence, policies must guarantee anonymity and protection for complainants. Furthermore, there is a critical need for mandatory ethical training and a clear code of conduct for all staff in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Zero-Tolerance enforcement actions are required in form of strong disciplinary measures, including dismissal, must be clearly outlined and enforced to act as a deterrent.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the conclusions and recommendations are presented as follows:

As revealed by this study, the perception of sexual harassment in Nigerian tertiary institution, is not an isolated issue but a systemic problem that profoundly damages the academic and emotional well-being of female students. It creates a hostile learning environment where academic success is perceived as contingent on sexual compliance rather than merit while fear and anxiety replace curiosity and concentration. The authority of lecturers is abused, eroding trust in the educational system. The data paints a clear picture: sexual harassment is a significant barrier to

educational achievement and gender equality in Nigerian educational system.

Based on the findings, the following concrete recommendations are proposed:

There should be establishment of an anonymous reporting system and implementation of a widely publicized, confidential whistle-blowing platform (e.g., a dedicated hotline, email, or secret code system as suggested by respondents). Management in tertiary institutions should launch an awareness campaign by means of posters, seminars, and student orientations to clearly define sexual harassment, outline reporting procedures, and affirm the institution's zero-tolerance policy. Also, there should be provision of emergency counselling to create psychological support services easily accessible and specifically advertised for victims of harassment. Also, Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti should be highly commended for introducing script audit exercise in its academic system which is a form of grading review mechanism. Nevertheless, there is a need to strengthen the existing grading review mechanisms across Nigerian tertiary institutions, especially, for courses taught by male lecturers, implement a mandatory random review of grades by a committee that includes female faculty members to ensure fairness. Finally, mandatory training and retraining for Staff is required by conducting compulsory workshops and training for all academic and non-academic staff on gender sensitivity, professional boundaries, and the consequences of sexual harassment. By implementing these recommendations, Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti, can begin to dismantle the culture of harassment, restore a safe and conducive learning environment, and protect the academic futures of its female students.

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