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Article

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SEX FOR GRADE EXCHANGE IN SOME TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA: DYNAMICS AND SOLUTION

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Abstract

Sex for grade or sex for mark: Refers to the unfair use and or molestation of female students, particularly for the purpose of obtaining sexual favours in exchange for academic benefits. It involves a cost-benefit relationship where one party (the lecturer or authority figure) gains personal satisfaction or advantage, while the other (the student) suffers harm, coercion, or loss of dignity in the process. The objective of this study was to examine factors that push female students into sexual relationships. The study adopted mixed methods of data collection with a sample size of 362 respondents for both quantitative and qualitative methods. Social exchange theory was adopted as the theoretical framework. The study found that the majority of the female students who present themselves to male lecturers seeking favour against the regulations of the institutions are weak students with poor academic performance. The study established the existence of a strong relationship between poor academic performance of female students and their vulnerability to exploitation by some lecturers. The paper concluded that our desperation to pass exams has made some female students easy prey for lecturers who have the habit of exchanging grades for sexual gratification. And recommended strict implementation of the law that stipulates expulsion of both lecturers and students who are caught in cases of sexual harassment and trade by barter with sex and grade. Parents should desist from sending their female children to tertiary institutions if they know they do not have the mentality, ability, and brilliance to cope with studies at the tertiary institutions of learning.

Keywords: Exploitation, Female Students, Higher Institutions, Sex-Grade Exchange, Sexual Exploitation.

Introduction

Immoral acts by both students and lecturers in tertiary institutions of learning have become increasingly prevalent in various parts of Nigeria. In some instances, it is harassment by the lecturers to compel female students to have sexual relationships with them, while in others, it is the female students who offer themselves to the lecturers to obtain good grades. It is contained in the glorious Qur'an (Q: 4, V: 1) O people be cautious of (your duty to your Lord, who created you from a single being and created its male of the same (kind) and spread from these two, many men and women; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, by whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship; surely Allah ever watches over you. As observed from the *Ayah*, it teaches humanity the pious duty of a leader towards their followers, without demanding anything from them or misleading them, and without attributing guilt to them for what they have not done. The Holy Bible says that, in the beginning, God created male and female and gave them charge to go into the world and be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth. It is therefore general knowledge that whatever setting or environment male and females interact, there will be some level of sexual advances. These modes of sexual interest between men and women/ boys and girls can be observed between medical doctors and nurses on the one hand and between medical doctors and nurses and their patients (opposite sex) on the other hand. It can also be seen between the clergy and worshippers. It can also be seen between managers and secretaries. Hence, in an editorial, Madubuko (2019), affirmed that across the nation's tertiary institutions, the public service, the police, the armed forces, politics, all strata of society, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence have taken deep root. There is, however, nothing that will make or justify immorality, sexual harassment, lasciviousness, and/ or sex-for-grades a welcome development. However, this writer states that it is not a new phenomenon in the Nigerian nay, world social milieu. It has therefore over the years acquired numerous labels such as sexual abuse, sexual harassment, gender-based violence (GBV), sexual exploitation, office romance, sex-for-marks, sex- for- admission, sex-for-employment, to mention but a few.

This misbehaviour, which obviously is antisocial and amorous, has over the years been seen as old habits that will never die. However, previous studies on this subject have produced numerous definitions of the concepts used. For instance, sexual harassment has been defined as an unsolicited, unwelcome, and unreciprocated sexual overture from a person to elicit unwanted sexual relations from another person. This includes inappropriate sexual overture, subtle and unsubtle persistent behaviour, assault, and actual sexual abuse that may be expressed physically, verbally, or nonverbally, usually from someone with higher power or at a vantage position to a less privileged person (Aluede, 2000). In the same vein, sex-for-grades as the name implies, is a situation where a lecturer (usually male lecturer) verbally or behaviourally informs the female student that he is ready, willing and capable of enhancing her marks, scores and grades from both the continuous assessment and examination proper, if only she is willing to sleep with him before, during and /or after the final examination. In other words, it is a phenomenon of using what you have to get what you need to the satisfaction of both parties. The issue of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions is not something new, it is an undeniable reality with laudable evidence on a quotidian basis. The issue has been in history over the years, with little attention paid for various reasons and factors. From the year 2000 to date, there has been an increasing concern about the problem of sexual harassment of students on campuses. Indeed, the evidence suggests that campuses are becoming notoriously unsafe and hostile ground,

rather than providing a protected environment where students would acquire knowledge and develop healthy life-long mutual friendships in a respectful atmosphere. Studies are abundant in several countries that identified sexual harassment (as a common form of gender-based discrimination routinely encountered by students (in particular, women/females) in their everyday lives on campus. For example, a nationwide survey of female students' experience of violence in UK campuses found that one in four respondents had experienced unwanted sexual behaviour (Biden, 2010).

Similar reports were expressed by Taylor et al, (2017) in the USA; Steinkamp, (2010) in South Africa; Norman et al, (2013) in Ghana; (Mamaru et al, 2015) in Ethiopia; and (Nwagbara, 2011) in Nigeria. Both boys and girls are victims of sexual misconduct, though in many instances, experiences of sexual victimisation are more common among women than men Mitchell et al, (2014). There are reported cases of male staff taking advantage of their superior position, or their economic superiority, to lure, coerce, or sexually intimidate girls. In some instances, male students are found to sexually intimidate fellow female students Kheswa, (2014). However, data on the prevalence of campus-based sexual harassment has remained circumscribed because of underreporting of cases. Rather than reporting, victims would maintain silence or avoid the harasser out of fear or embarrassment Cortina & Wasti, (2005). According to Dziech & Weiner (in the book *Lecherous Professor* cited in Smith & Plessis, (2011): Sexual harassment by university professors of their female students is a fact of campus life and that the silencing thereof is part of the reason for the historical invisibility of the problem: silence, promoted by the fear that somehow they (the victims) are responsible for the sexual harassment in one way or the other, and/or the fact that students know they are subordinate to faculty staff and administrators.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of sexual harassment of female students in the tertiary institutions of learning is a violation of their integrity, a disgrace to the lecturer involved, and a destruction of the dignity and credibility of the teaching profession. In many cases, female students themselves become contributing factors to the practice of offering sexual favours to lecturers. This may arise from reasons such as poor academic performance, which leads some of them to view such behaviours as a means of obtaining higher grades through unethical means. Others, on the other hand, may present themselves in ways that encourage exploitation by using their bodies as objects of attraction, for instance, through indecent dressing, which reflects a lack of moral guidance and religious upbringing. Nevertheless, parents also have a hand in the issue of sexual harassment. They know that their children are not academically sound, yet they still insist that they obtain a bachelor's degree or any other higher qualification. This situation leads to two outcomes: if the student has money, they use it to bribe lecturers who are after money, while others fall victim to lecturers who are in the habit of sexual harassment. A dozen studies indicate that female students face various forms of harassment, which makes them vulnerable to engage in many illegal activities, such as prostitution (commercial sex worker), drug addiction, issues of lesbianism, and others.

Conceptual Explication

Exploitation: Refers to the unfair use or molestation of younger female students, particularly for the purpose of obtaining sexual favours in exchange for academic benefits such as grades or marks. It involves a cost-benefit relationship where one party (the lecturer or authority figure) gains personal satisfaction or advantage, while the other (the student) suffers harm, coercion, or loss of dignity in the process.

Female Students: This refers to young women enrolled in various higher institutions of learning across the globe. Female students often face numerous challenges that affect their academic performance, personal integrity, and overall well-being. In some cases, when they seek to obtain higher academic achievements, they become vulnerable to exploitation, including demands for sexual favours in exchange for grades.

Higher Institutions of Learning: Refers to places or environments for acquiring knowledge, both formal and informal. They are places that accommodate different ethnic groups with different modes of behaviour and civilisation, and other aspects that individuals are willing to be addressed in such a manner.

Sexual Favours: Refers to mating or having a desire for sex with a lady in exchange for giving her something that benefits her career.

Supporting Factors that Pushed Female Students into Sexual Behaviour

Many individuals are concerned about the prevalence of supporting factors and the dangers of sexual behaviour among female students across the institutions, because female students, as an institution, should be holy and free of all sorts of risky sexual behaviour. Some conditions, however, may drive female students to engage in dangerous sexual activities. Hall (2021) cited economic hardship, sexual violence (forced sex), and paid sex as variables that might entice female students to engage in hazardous sexual practices. Many sex partners, unprotected sex, premarital sex, adulterous sexual connections, and other dangerous attitudes are characteristics of risky sexual activities. These sexual activities frequently result in negative health effects such as HIV/AIDS. Because of the increased frequency of sexually transmitted infections, assessing the prevalence of risky sexual activities is important. It is believed that one in every four sexually active women in Pakistan has a sexually transmitted infection such as chlamydia or human papillomavirus (Haberland, 2020). The supporting factors of female students on the issue of sexual behaviour contain many things, which may include the following: economic hardship, lack of understanding, indecent dressing, among others. These are the necessary factors that lead them into such behaviours, which may expose them to sexually transmitted diseases instead of helping them achieve good grades, for 'soap has not paid for decoration'.

A Man can have Sexual Intercourse without the Consent of a Woman

The Answer is a Capital No. There is no room or chance for a man to have sexual intercourse without the permission of the woman, except in the case of rape. If this happens, he may not be satisfied or achieve his proper desire, which he intends to fulfil during the process. In many circumstances, women are the driving force in attracting men to sex, especially when they have something to gain from the men. No, sex cannot occur without an agreement between a man and a woman. Wherever there is an issue of sex, both parties usually show some level of interest, unless one side has no way to resist or demand otherwise.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the Social Exchange Theory proposed by Blau in 1964. The theory posits that human interactions are based on a cost-benefit analysis and expectations of rewards from the parties involved. The exploitation of female students through sexual favours in academic grading is undeniable in our society. The theory seeks to explain the key assumptions and violations of female students' integrity when they are schooling in higher institutions. Many lecturers take advantage of academically weak students by molesting

their integrity through sexual exploitation. Furthermore, the theory makes an in-depth investigation by pointing out that many female students become involved in sexual behaviour when they enter higher institutions. Some of them have limited freedom while living in their parents' homes, but once in school, they gain the privilege to do whatever they like due to the distance from their families and relatives. For ethical considerations, the names of the tertiary institutions of learning where the data were obtained are withheld.

Methodology

Research Design: The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional design with a sample size of 362 respondents drawn from higher institutions of learning within Katsina metropolis. Data were collected using both open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires. The purpose of the study was to obtain balanced insights from the perspectives of the respondents.

Table 1: Supporting Factors that Pushed Female Students into Sexual Behaviour

Responses	Items	Percentage (%)
Economic hardship	117	32.4
Sexual violence	72	19.9
Lack of understanding	112	30.8
Paid sex	61	16.9
Total		362
100		

Source: Field Work, (2025)

The table indicates that 63.2% of respondents identified economic hardship and lack of understanding, 19.9% mentioned sexual violence, and 16.9% indicated sex paid. This suggests that sex for grade are caused by various factors negatively affect the academic performance of female students in higher institutions. During a Key Informant Interview session, a lecturer affirmed that:

The academic performance of female students has been linked to engagement in sexual behaviour and financial conditions. Many female students engage in such activities due to economic hardship, as they lack relatives or other forms of support to sustain their academic pursuits. Others participate with the intention of generating income, which they plan to use to start a business after graduation, in case they do not secure employment before marriage or obtaining a job. (KII, with a lecturer, 2025).

Table 2: Implication of Sexual Intercourse without Proper Protection

Responses	Items	Percentage (%)
HIV/AIDs	127	34.9
Gonorrhoea	118	32.6
Chlamydia	65	17.8
Human papillomavirus	53	14.7
Total		362
100		

Source: Field Work, (2025)

The above table represents responses obtained for the implications of sexual intercourse without proper protection. Among the respondents, 34.9% mentioned HIV/AIDs, 32.6% indicated gonorrhoea, and 32.6% identified other infections such as chlamydia and human papillomavirus (HPV). This implies that engaging in sexual intercourse without the proper

use of a condom may lead to different types of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). A Key Informant Interview conducted with a female student stated that:

Of course, sexual intercourse without proper protection can lead to different types of diseases. We feel there is no way to achieve what we want without engaging in such sexual activity. We are facing two main challenges: how to eat and how to get good grades. This makes many female students turn to men, either to get money from or to obtain better grades. In my department, there are many lecturers and students, both male and female. We cannot talk to the lecturers freely because they are very harsh. Even in the lecture hall, they do not tolerate nonsense from students. If you make noise or talk with someone, they will send you out and ask for your registration number. (KII, with female student, 2025).

Table 3: Can a man have Sexual Intercourse without the Consent of a woman?

Responses	Items	Percentage (%)
Yes	267	73.8
No	95	26.2
Total	362	100

Source: Field Work, (2025)

Table 2 shows that a man cannot engage in sexual intercourse without the consent of a woman, where 267% respondents (representing X %) said Yes, while 72% of the respondents said No. This implies that the majority of the respondents believe that sexual intercourse should be based on the woman's consent. During an interview session, a lecturer revealed thus:

No, sex cannot occur without an agreement between a man and a woman. Wherever there is an issue of sex, both parties usually show some level of interest, unless one side has no way to resist or demand otherwise. This often happens when a lecturer develops an interest in a female student, and the student knows that without giving in, she may not pass the course. In such situations, the lecturer may take advantage of her weakness. However, even though the lecturer desires the students, there is no open room to confront her directly about sex because it is considered a serious academic crime. At the same time, some relationships between lecturers and students happen under the guise of love. In these cases, the female students may not be weak or financially unstable but may still engage in the relationship because the lecturer possesses certain things she needs or values in a man. (KII with lecturer, 2025).

Table 4: Measures to Reduce the Issue of sex for grad in Higher Institutions

Responses	Items	Percentage (%)
Parental & community engagement	121	33.5
Counselling & guidance services	81	22.4
Economic & welfare support	100	27.7
Strict institutional policies	35	9.6
Comprehensive sex education	25	6.8
Total	362	100

Source: Field Work, (2025)

Table 4: represents measures to address the issue of sex for in higher institutions. A total of 83.6% of respondents identified parental and community engagement, counselling and guidance services, as well as economic and welfare support, as effective strategies. Additionally, 10.4% of the respondents emphasised the importance of strict institutional policies and comprehensive sex education. This implies that these measures are considered key approaches to mitigating sexual behaviour challenges in higher institutions of learning. The key informant interview held with a principal officer says:

The community members and the school management of higher institutions at all levels should provide strict institutional policies for both male and female students to discourage sexual misconduct. Such policies can be implemented by principal officers of the institutions to sanction any student or lecturer found guilty of engaging in sexual activities within the academic environment. This is necessary because some students are often in the habit of seeking relationships with men or women seeking women for sexual purposes, which undermines the integrity of the institution. (KII, with principal officer, 2025).

Discussion of the Major Findings

This study has identified the factors that lead to the exchange of grades with sex in some tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria. The sexual behaviour contains many things which include the following: economic hardship, poor academic performance, indecent dressing, absenteeism from lectures, pressure from parents to graduate with a desired class of degree, desperation to graduate together with course/mates. These are major factors that lead them into such behaviours, which expose them to sexually transmitted diseases instead of helping them achieve good grades, for 'soap has not paid for decoration'. Similar to the work of Hall (2021), cited economic hardship, sexual violence (forced sex), and paid sex as variables that might entice female students to engage in hazardous sexual practices. Many sex partners, have unprotected sex, premarital sex, adulterous sexual connections, and other dangerous attitudes. These sexual activities frequently result in negative health effects such as HIV/AIDS. Because of the increased frequency of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), assessing the prevalence of risky sexual activities is important. It is believed that one in every four sexually active women in Pakistan has a sexually transmitted infection such as chlamydia or human papillomavirus (Haberland, 2020).

The study found that, sex cannot occur without consent between a man and a woman in tertiary institutions of learning. This is the reason these cases of exchange of sex for grades are rarely reported by the female students to the authorities, because they often occur with the consent of the female students. It could be deduced from the findings that some of the female students expressed appreciation to the lecturers for assisting them to pass, even though they had sex. Wherever there is an issue of sexual interaction, both parties usually show some level of interest, unless one side has no way to resist or demand otherwise, in the case of rape or compulsion/under duress. This often happens when a lecturer develops an interest in a female student, and the student knows that without giving in, she may not pass the course. In such situations, the lecturer may take advantage of her weakness. However, even though the lecturer desires the students, there is no open room to confront her directly about sex because it is considered a serious academic crime. At the same time, some relationships between lecturers and students happen under the guise of love. In these cases, the female students may not be weak or financially unstable but may still engage in the relationship because the lecturer possesses certain things she needs or values in a man. This is similar to the literature of Madubuko (2019), who affirmed that

across the nation's tertiary institutions of learning, the public service, the police, the armed forces, politics, all strata of society, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence have taken deep root. There is, however, nothing that will make or justify immorality, sexual harassment, lasciviousness, and/ or sex-for-grades a welcome development. However, this writer states that it is not a new phenomenon in the Nigerian nay, world social milieu. It has therefore over the years acquired numerous labels such as sexual abuse, sexual harassment, gender-based violence (GBV), sexual exploitation, office romance, sex-for-marks, sex- for-admission, sex-for-employment, to mention but a few.

Nevertheless, parents also have a hand in the issue of sexual harassment. They know that their children are not academically sound, yet they still insist that they obtain a bachelor's degree or any other higher qualification. This situation leads to two outcomes: if the student has money, they use it to bribe lecturers who are after money, while others fall victim to lecturers who are in the habit of sexual harassment. A dozen studies indicate that female students face various forms of harassment, which makes them vulnerable to engage in many illegal activities, such as prostitution (commercial sex worker), drug addiction, issues of lesbianism, and others.

Conclusion

The exchange of sex for grades in some tertiary institutions of learning in Nigeria is prevalent because of the pressure from parents and peers on some female students who are educationally weak or have no interest in studies to obtain a desired educational qualification. In this situation, some female students have no option but to devise illegal means of passing the examinations, including offering themselves to the willing academic staff to have sex with them to pass the paper. This exchange largely happens among female students who lack confidence. Sex-for-grades, as the name implies, is a situation where a lecturer (usually male lecturer) verbally or behaviourally informs the female student that he is ready, willing and capable of enhancing her marks, scores and grades from both the continuous assessment and examination proper, if only she is willing to sleep with him before, during and /or after the final examination. In other words, it is a phenomenon of using what you have to get what you need to the satisfaction of both parties. The study explanation sex for grade on the basic of social exchange theory.

Recommendations

- i. Many individuals are concerned about the prevalence of supporting factors and the dangers of sexual behaviour among female students across the institutions, because female students, as an institution, should be holy and free of all sorts of risky sexual behaviour.
- ii. The government should put eye in the government ministry especially where a combination of males and females staff exist in working place, over the years principals officer use advantage during recruitment period to satisfy their desires through such activities such as sexual abuse, sexual harassment, gender-based violence (GBV), sexual exploitation, office romance, sex-for-marks, sex- for- admission, sex- for-employment to mention but a few.
- iii. The parents should avoid sending their children, both males and females, to higher institutions, especially females, if they understand they have poor performance and are slow learners.

- iv. The students should avoid wearing transparent clothes within the school premises, as this can help minimise the attraction of male lecturers toward engaging in sexual advances with them.

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