

# The Influence Of Sexual Harassment On Workers' Morale In Hotels In Umuahia Abia State ,Nigeria.

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## ABSTRACT

The study focus on the influence of sexual harassment on worker's productivity in hotels in Umuahia, Abia State Nigeria; while the specific objectives are to examine the causes of sexual harassment in hotels and determine the effect of sexual harassment on worker's productivity in hotels. To achieve these objectives, a descriptive survey research design was used. The researchers adopted primary source of data through the use of well-structured questionnaire. Simple random sampling was used to select 90 respondents from the (5) registered hotels. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as simple percentage, frequencies, mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that the effect of sexual harassment on employee productivity decreases employee productivity and increases team conflict, decreases job satisfaction, undermines ethical standards, increase absenteeism, turn over and decreases employee work performance in the industry. The study conclude that Prevention is the best tool to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace. It was recommended that all employees should be made aware of employer's policy on sexual harassment from the first day of employment and as well management of hotels should observe, listen, reassure the employee, and to act on allegations of sexual harassment which must be vigorously and promptly investigated as it will increase the productivity of workers in hotels.

**Keywords:** Sexual Harassment, Workers, Morale, Hotels, Umuahia, Abia State ,Nigeria.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There has not been a clear definition of sexual harassment since the act is understood in different light based on culture and location. But for the basis of this study, sexual harassment is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited verbal, visual, written, or physical conduct based on sex or of a sexual nature, which occurs With the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, which makes a person feel hostile, degraded, humiliated, intimidated .or offended and unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or, which constitutes an abuse of authority.

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Sexual harassment is bullying or coercion of a sexual nature and the unwelcome or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favors (Wikipedia, 2018). Sexual harassment includes a range of actions from mild transgressions to sexual abuse or assault According to kristjan,(2016). Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. It is crucial that hospitality ethics education strives to create an ethical basis for all work activities in the hotel industry.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2014, report that the rate of women workers reporting some form of sexual harassment or unwanted sexual behaviour in the workplace throughout their working life was as high as 50%. According to evidence presented by the Guardian, (2015) 89 percent of hotel workers reported having experienced one or more incidents of sexual harassment on the job. More than half of the workers are being harassed by a customer; a quarter by a manager. The increased potential of sexual harassment in the hotels is alarming because jobs in hotels, restaurants, guest houses and inns are often low-paying, tip-based shift jobs. Waiters and other hotel workers are forced to rely on managers for shift assignments and customers for tips to earn a living. There are often occasions where workers such as housekeepers may be alone in a room with a guest whose attitude and behavior is uncertain. Workers may be unsure of how they are supposed to react or who they should tell if they are harassed by a guest or customer. The belief that the customer is always right may prevail (Wong & Chan, 2010).

The main objective of this study is to identify the influence of sexual harassment on workers' productivity in hotels while the specific objectives are to examine the causes of sexual harassment in hotels and determine the effect of sexual harassment on workers productivity in hotels. It is quite unfortunate that some hotels in umuahia are not exceptional, workers often complain of being harassed by guest through unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited verbal, visual, and other ugly advances performed by guest that is unwanted. Employees are always on a daily basis at risk of sexual harassment.

This puts workers in a compromising position that could lead to a disproportionate amount of harassment from both customers and superiors. It is so pervasive that many young ladies try to cope with the problem by developing a coordinated strategy which for example, may often include appealing to other housekeepers to be with them when they are assigned to clean the guest rooms. Rob,(2014) opined that employees who are subjected to sexual harassment can suffer from depression and other mental illnesses and also demoralises employees and results in a loss of productivity, as well as preventing all employees from fully participating at work and gaining equal access to work opportunities. It can as well cause damage to a business reputation and loss.

The work place is supposed to be a place of safety where workers/staff feel safe, do their jobs in a relaxed and conducive atmosphere, maintain cordial and professional relationships with co-workers, employers and customers. Unfortunately in hotels, the reverse has been the case; workers are always on a daily basis at risk of sexual harassment. Debates throughout the country have revealed a widespread misunderstanding of what constitutes sexual harassment and an ignorance of the steps that employers can take to minimize the risk of liability for sexual harassment (kristjan,2016). Many hotel employees work during unusual hours and experience peak and slack periods, in an environment of much social interaction.

## 2. RELATED LITERATURE AND ISSUES

The main reasons for urgent action concerning effective sexual harassment policies other than the most obvious attacks on one's rights and physical being, include the huge waste of time and money which may be needed for involved employees to focus on lawyers and lawsuits (Paulson,2010) , rather than on the operation of a hotel. A workplace in which there is inappropriate sexual harassment will surely impact employee morale negatively and result in inefficiency and lower productivity, and if the issue becomes public knowledge, it will be devastating for a hotel's future business.

Lopez, Hodson, and Roscigno,(2010), in addition state that Women are more likely to experience sexual harassment in non traditional work situations involving work other than nurturing or being a sex object. Men are more likely to experience sexual harassment in non-traditional roles involving work that is considered feminine. Causes and risk factors for the high incidence of sexual harassment in hotels by (kristjan,2016) include the following:" The guest is always right" mentality, Alcohol and drugs creates a hostile environment and intoxicated customers that may lead to misbehaviour and unpleasant language, high degree of social contact attracts sociable, energetic, and outgoing personal to the industry.

General hospitality is frequently misjudged and perceived as invitation of sexual advances, long and irregular working hours, involving evenings, nights & holidays, Sexualised environment can encourage customers to treat employees in certain service occupations as sex objects rather than workers, Tipping, especially where workers rely on their customers for their income unsecure and precarious working conditions, non-payment of salaries to workers as at when due ,irregular compensation, non-motivational packages for workers, uninvited physical contact, Sexual assault, displaying sexually explicit media, or objects, intimidation through rude remarks regarding appearance that are gender-related. offering promotions, or special treatment for sexual favors, understated flirting or sexually suggestive conversations that are constant, threatening continued employment, or ability to advance the corporate channels unless sexual favours are given,sexual jokes, comments or defamatory statements about co-workers that are sexually explicit can make a work environment uncomfortable.

### 2.1 Implications of Sexual Harassment on Workers Productivity

It is imperative to address the impacts of sexual harassment on the organization and the individual can cause high turnover, poor working relationship as well as affect the financial cost of the organization. According to Poulson (2010), sexual harassment cost employers in many ways including legal and monetary costs, increase worker's absenteeism and worker sick-days, staff turnover consequence to raise cost of hiring and training new staff, adverse public reaction, employees' productivity reduced and low morale, poor physical and mental health, stress and depression, annoyance and anger, low work satisfaction and among others.

The incident of sexual harassment offer direct effect such as negative feelings towards job satisfaction which lead to job dissatisfaction, turnover intentions, and emotional effect for instance insomnia, headaches and gastric problem. Jacob Tomsy, an ex-hospitality employee stated that housekeepers are assaulted by guests "more often than other employees," and that their employers do not offer much protection(Advocate & Angelo2016). Unfortunately, the true extent of sexual harassment in the workplace is often cloaked in a 'conspiracy of muteness' which veils the issue. The victims often leave the company to escape any further harassment from either guests or colleague (Robb, 2014)

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to determine the influence of sexual harassment on the productivity of worker in hotels.

#### **3.2 Area of the Study**

Abia is a state in the south eastern part of Nigeria. The capital is Umuahia and the major commercial city is Aba. The commercial hub, Aba was formerly a British colonial government outpost in the region. Abia state was created in 1991 from part of Imo State. It is one of the constituent states of the Niger Delta region. Abia city of country Nigeria lies on the geographical coordinates of 5° 57' 0" N, 8° 55' 0" E. Abia State, which occupies about 6,320 square kilometres, is bounded on the north and north east by the states of Anambra, Enugu, and Ebonyi. To the west of Abia is Imo State, to the east and southeast are Cross River State and Akwa Ibom State respectively and to the south is Rivers State. The southern part of the State lies within the riverine part of Nigeria, it is a low-lying tropical rainforest with some oil-palm brush, the southern portion gets heavy rainfall of about 2,400 millimetres (94 in) per year and is especially intense between the months of April through October.

#### **3.3 Population of the Study**

The population of the study is 130, which comprises of all the workers in the 5 selected registered hotels in Umuahia, Abia State, which include Eastern Hotels, Raphe hotels, Villa Roy hotels, Shelton hotels and Benac hotels (Abia Tourism Board, 2022).

#### **3.4 Sample Size Determination**

The sample size that was used for this study was 90 workers sampled from the 5 selected registered hotels in Umuahia, using Taro Yammane formula.

#### **3.5 Data Collection Technique**

The researcher collected data with the help of a trained assistant. The researcher trained the assistant on how to administer the instrument explaining the essence of the study and the location used as well as the formats for providing responses to questions. To ensure high return rate of the instruments, the instruments was collected on the same day it is distributed to the workers

#### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

##### 4.1 Data Analysis Technique

The data collected was analyzed using Mean and standard deviation. The computation of the data was carried out with SPSS package. Any item with the mean of 2.50 or above was considered as agreed while any item with the mean of less than 2.50 was considered as disagreed.

##### 4.1 The causes of Sexual Harassment in the Hotels

**Table 1 Mean responses of the respondents on the causes of Sexual Harassment in the hotel**

S/N	ITEM STATEMENTS	N	X	Sd	Decision
1.	The organizational culture makes sexual harassment look acceptable	90	2.67	0.46	Agreed
2.	Gender can have a great influence on whether or not a person is harassed	90	3.62	0.64	Strongly Agreed
3.	Working late hours (midnight shifts) can cause sexual harassment	90	3.71	0.28	Strongly Agreed
4.	Working regularly with someone of the opposite sex can cause sexual harassment	90	3.83	0.35	Strongly Agreed
5.	Large power differentials in the organization leads to sexual harassment	90	2.92	0.35	Agreed
6.	The leadership style of the organization can cause sexual harassment	90	2.79	0.63	Agreed
7.	Individual factors such as low level of education, type of job, Age and marital status can all cause sexual harassment	90	3.09	0.34	Agreed
8.	Absence of rules and regulations on sexual harassment and its consequences can cause sexual harassment	90	3.34	0.53	Agreed
9.	Inability to act on previous reports and the tediousness of filling for a complaint can prosper sexual harassment	90	3.21	0.37	Agreed
<b>10.</b>	<b>Benchmark Mean</b>		<b>2.50</b>		

**Source:** field survey, 2022. N= number of respondents, X=mean Sd= standard deviation

Table1. shows that the mean responses of the respondents on the causes of sexual harassment in the hotel, the result shows that all the items passed the mean benchmark of 2.50. Items 2, 3, and 4 were strongly agreed with mean of 3.62, 3.71 and 3.83 respectively, which highlighted the important role of gender, working hours and working companion on sexual harassment. Other factors that had higher mean responses were individual factors such as level of education, marital status, age and type of job, absence of clear rules and regulations guiding sexual harassment and inability of the management to act on previous reports. However we can conclude that the major causes of sexual harassment in hotels in the study area includes but is not limited to working late nights, working regularly with someone of the opposite sex and poor working environment where there is no rule and regulations guiding the working environment.

#### 4.2 Effect of Sexual Harassment on Workers' Productivity in the Hotel

**Table 2: Showing mean scores on the effect of sexual harassment on workers' productivity in the hotels**

S/N	ITEM STATEMENTS	N	X	Sd	Decision
1.	Sexual harassment decreases employee productivity and increases team conflict	90	3.75	0.23	Strongly Agreed
2.	Sexual harassment decreases job satisfaction	90	3.78	0.41	Strongly Agreed
3.	Sexual Harassment can undermine ethical standards and discipline in the organization which will lead to disrespect and lack of trust among employees and their seniors	90	3.82	0.12	Strongly Agreed
4.	When sexual harassment prevails, the image of the organization will suffer financially, and reputation-wise when complainants take the issue to court	90	3.65	0.23	Strongly Agreed
5.	Sexual harassment increases loss and absenteeism of staff members and expertise	90	3.71	0.34	Strongly Agreed
6.	Sexual harassment decreases employee's work performance	90	3.56	0.21	Strongly Agreed
7.	<b>Benchmark Mean</b>		<b>2.50</b>		

**Source:** field survey, 2022. N= number of respondents, X=mean Sd= standard deviation

Table 2: Shows results for the mean responses of the respondents on the effect of sexual harassment on employee productivity in the hotel indicates that all the six items were strongly agreed with mean responses above 3.50. invariably the result shows that sexual harassment decreases employee productivity and increases team conflict, decreases job satisfaction, undermines ethical standards, increase absenteeism and turn over and decreases employee work performance.

#### 5. Discussion of Findings

The findings on table 1 on the causes of sexual harassment revealed that among the factors that can cause sexual harassment, the items with higher responses and greater capacity to cause sexual harassment was gender, working time (late hours) and working partner (someone of the opposite sex). Gender is a very important cause of sexual harassment because as stated earlier women are at greater risk of been harassed than men because of the sex role over bias prevalent in the society. In the society, their exist a bias as to the role of women as sex objects and as the lesser ones, so men go to the workplace with this bias always thinking that women are there to do their bidding and satisfy them sexually ad otherwise, while this affects women in that they develop this feeling of inferiority always thinking that they can't exist independently without the men. This findings is in line with the findings of (Lopez et al., 2010). who opined that men harass women because they are used to dealing with women in a subordinate role in the domestic and social environments, and this behaviour carries over into the workplace. Thus, the subordinate feminine role, defined originally and principally in the home, carries over into the workplace and creates scripts for both men and women about how they should interact - scripts that allow or even facilitate sexual harassment. Working hours like working late in the night or early morning hours can facilitate sexual harassment because these are times that sexual urges have been shown to be more intense.

This is also supported by Rob, (2014) who said that being with the customer alone at odd hours increases an opportunity for the staff member to be sexually harassed especially housekeepers. Working regularly with someone of the opposite sex for a prolonged period of time can also lead to sexual harassment most times based on the principles of familiarity, that is why it is important to vary working time for different staff to avoid over familiarity. The findings in table 2 also revealed the effect of sexual harassment on employee productivity decreases employee productivity and increases team conflict, decreases job satisfaction, undermines ethical standards, increase absenteeism and turn over and decreases employee work performance. This is supported by the findings of Poulson (2010), who opined that sexual harassment cost employers in many ways including legal and monetary costs, increase worker absenteeism and worker sick-days, staff turnover consequence to raise cost of hiring and training new staff, adverse public reaction, employees' productivity reduced and low morale. The finding is also consistent with the findings of Rob, (2014) which states that employees who are subjected to sexual harassment can suffer from depression and other mental illnesses and also demoralises employees and results in a loss of productivity, as well as preventing all employees from fully participating at work and gaining equal access to work opportunities. It can as well cause damage to a business's reputation and loss.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The work place is supposed to be a place of safety where workers/staff feel safe, do their jobs in a relaxed and conducive atmosphere, maintain cordial and professional relationships with co-workers, employers and customers. Unfortunately in hotels, the reverse has been the case workers are always on a daily basis at risk of sexual harassment. This is due to the fact that the factors that constitute sexual harassment have not been specifically defined. The maximization of profit remains a pivotal objective for service business activity and as such hotels need to deal proactively with the issue of sexual harassment. This organizational view of treating sexual harassment as a matter of employee effectiveness places the focus on preventive management and protection of the most fundamental resource of the company and personal resource. A service industry requires a happy and well-motivated workforce in order to be successful.

Prevention is the best tool to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace. Employers are encouraged to take steps necessary to prevent sexual harassment from occurring. They should clearly communicate to employees that sexual harassment will not be tolerated. They can do so by providing sexual harassment training to their employees and by establishing an effective complaint, or grievance process and taking immediate and appropriate action when an employee complains. They should also develop and maintain standard operating work policies to support methods that deter sexual harassment.

Supervisors and other responsible department personnel who observe, are informed of, or reasonably suspect incidents of possible sexual harassment should immediately report such incidents and initiate prompt investigation. Supervisors should take effective measures to ensure no further apparent, or alleged harassment of the victim occurs, pending completion of an EEOC investigation, or other legal action. Employers should attempt to maintain privacy of the alleged victim and harasser while a complaint is being investigated. Necessary steps should also be taken to ensure that the employee victim is protected from retaliation for reporting sexual harassment in compliance with federal laws.

## 7. RECOMMENDATION

What follows are a set of recommendations based on the findings from the research

- All employees should be made aware of employer's policy on sexual harassment from the first day of employment,
- Make sure the organization has an objective party that can accept a sexual harassment Complaint in the event a person cannot go to their immediate supervisor, Investigate the complaint.
- Talk with employee who has made the complaint and advise that they should follow up if there is any form of retaliation, assure the accused that an unbiased examination of the facts will occur,
- Employees who face the threat of sexual harassment should report to the management for advice and immediate actions to be taken.
- Posters should be made available for the guest in the front office, restaurant, rooms and other sensitive areas informing them the consequences or penalties of sexual harassment in the hotel.

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