

# “Four of my Lecturers Including my HOD Took Sexual Interest in Me”: Factors Facilitating Sexual Harassment and Exploitation in Nigerian Higher Education Institutions

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**Abstract:** For decades, Nigerian higher education institutions (HEIs) have featured as places where sex is used to determine who gets decent marks and who gets the opposite in what is popularly known as “sex-for-marks” in the country. It is common knowledge to Nigerians that many female students have been prevented from passing their coursework or completing their programmes of study for refusing to engage in sexual activities with their lecturers when demanded. Many male lecturers, including professors, have been dismissed, suspended, put on probation, or prosecuted for sexually harassing or exploiting female students. Available evidence suggests that this phenomenon cuts across both public and private institutions across the country although it is more common in public institutions. This current study explored this phenomenon. The qualitative approach was adopted. Both primary and secondary data were utilised. Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews of 22 female graduates and undergraduates of 11 HEIs. Secondary data came from 8 media outlets. The data were thematically analysed. Nine themes were developed from the data, which denoted the primary factors contributing to this menace, and these are (i) project supervision, (ii) being unique, (iii) being a fresher, (iv) tuition fee debt, (v) failed assessment, (vi) exam malpractice, (vii) missed submission deadline, (viii) failing to purchase handout, and (ix) sexual obsession. These themes were analysed in depth and supported with excerpts containing the original words of the victims while pseudonyms or fictitious names were used to replace the real names of the participants. Recommendations were made on how the authorities of HEIs can effectively address this social problem.

**Keywords:** Higher education institutions, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, sex-for-marks, lecturers, female students.

## INTRODUCTION

Sexual exploitation by persons in positions of authority is a global issue. However, this social problem seems more serious in some societies than in others, which can be explained by the differences in policies, laws, and deterrence strategies. A dysfunctional government has been identified as one of the factors contributing to sexual exploitation (Koning & van Wilsem, 2022; Min-Harris, 2010). Thus, sexual exploitation is likely to be more common in weak states than in strong states. Nigeria is one of the countries where sexual offences against women and girls constitute serious social problems (Agazue, 2016; Agazue, 2021; Akin-Odanye, 2018; Amucheazi, 2019; Kunnuji & Esiet, 2015; Manyike *et al.*, 2015; Odeyemi *et al.*, 2016; Ogunyemi, 2000) and facilitated by poor deterrence strategies (see Tade & Udechukwu, 2020). Cases abound of potential employers demanding sex from potential employees before the former can offer a job to the latter (Momah, 2013; Smith, 2007) in what is termed “sex-for-job” in the country (Momah, 2013). Stories are also often heard about bosses demanding sex from female employees to safeguard their positions or get promoted. Police officers are suspected of

enabling female criminal suspects to evade justice more easily after sexual exchanges. Cases of medical doctors and female patients are common knowledge in contemporary Nigeria, which increasingly feature on social media.

In recent years, several Nollywood actors and actresses have publicly discussed how sex is used to decide who can get a movie role or not in the industry in what Nigerians have termed “sex-for-role”. For example, in October 2023, a former Nollywood actress, Cynthia Amadi granted an interview to a popular Nigerian online personality, Daddy Freeze saying that women with the willingness and energy for sexual intercourse do well in the movie industry (YouTube, 2023).

For decades, Nigerian higher education institutions (HEIs) have featured as places where sex is used to determine who gets decent marks and who gets the opposite. Available evidence suggests that sexual exploitation of female students by male lecturers in Nigeria “cuts across public, private and faith-based institutions, regardless of the geographical locations” (Akpambang, 2021, p.31) although some studies suggest that it is more common in public institutions compared to private ones (see Aina-Pelemo *et al.*, 2021). A collaborative survey conducted in six tertiary education institutions in Lagos State by the Africa

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Polling Institute (API, 2019) and Heart Minders Advancement Initiative found that 56 percent of the 1,642 participants in the study acknowledged the prevalence of rape in their institutions, while 39 percent acknowledged sexual harassment and molestation. More recently, Okafor *et al.* (2022) found that more than 60 percent of 1,200 female undergraduates in their study stated that they were sexually harassed by male staff. Although female students were not the only victims of these offences, they were considered victims in 79 percent of cases (API, 2019). A previous study by Owoaje & Olusola-Taiwo (2010) found that female students were perceived as victims in about 89 percent cases and about 69 percent had personally experienced victimisation in their institutions. A more recent study by Suleiman (2017) found that 80 percent of female students they studied were victims. Further, lecturers were not the only perpetrators of these offences; several empirical studies have found that both male and female students also committed these offences (see API, 2019; Farinloye & Omobuwa, 2016; Muoghalu & Olaoye, 2017).

With the increasing targeting of female students for “sex-for-mark” by male lecturers, many Nigerians believe that in some HEIs in the country, a female student could hardly graduate with a decent grade if she fails to offer sex to her lecturers. While this is not entirely true, the perception is informed by the numerous complaints by too many female students in many HEIs across the country about sexual harassment by their lecturers. Dike *et al.* (2018) have published in *The Sun* newspaper the names of several high-ranking academic staff, including professors at top Nigerian universities whose cases have appeared in the media in recent times. An undercover investigation by BBC (2019) Africa Eye exposed the nature of the sexual harassment of female students by male lecturers in some prestigious West African universities of which a top Nigerian university, the University of Lagos (UNILAG) was one. The BBC team spent nine months interviewing both former and current students at the time, which eventually led them to identify a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Arts as one of those who had sexually exploited several students. The lecturer was also a former pastor of Foursquare Gospel Church, Dr Boniface Igbeneghu. BBC shows the lecturer caressing a student in his office, asking her to “switch off this light, lock the door” before telling her “I’ll kiss you for a minute”. The voice of Professor Richard Akindele of Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) was recorded by his victim as the former was demanding

“five rounds of sex” from the latter before he could enable her to pass as reported by CNN (see Adebayo & Busari, 2018).

Cases of students becoming pregnant for their lecturers, including allegations of abortion are not uncommon in the Nigerian press. The case of a nursing student (an orphan) who was impregnated by her lecturer at the Ogun State College of Health Technology attracted much media attention and reactions. Several groups got involved in the case, including college staff, the police, human rights groups, and more. Similarly, a lecturer at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was arrested in 2021 for sexually harassing a student, threatening the student that she would not be able to graduate without having sex with him before impregnating the student (see Uzodinma, 2021). Some lecturers have also served jail terms for such offences (see Bamigbola, 2018).

Indeed, the phenomenon of sex-for-marks in Nigeria is common knowledge but the specific factors facilitating this immoral practice have not been well researched. Academic research on this phenomenon so far has employed mostly quantitative methods, which will be reviewed in the main body of this article. While these studies have presented intriguing findings, there are hardly details explaining the processes involved in the “sexual transactions” because quantitative studies are not concerned with such details. Even among the few studies that have utilised qualitative methods, the supposed explanations from the victims were simply summarised. Thus, this current article aims to explore the precipitating and facilitating factors for sex-for-marks through semi-structured interviews of the victims. This social problem has too many negative impacts on the victims (Farinloye & Omobuwa, 2016; Muoghalu & Olaoye, 2017; Owoaje & Olusola-Taiwo, 2010; Udechukwu *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, understanding the causes of this problem from the victims’ points of view is essential to assisting the victims and finding lasting solutions to this menace.

## THE EXTENT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN NIGERIAN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS

Several studies have been conducted in Nigeria on the issue of rape, sexual harassment, and abuse of female students by male lecturers. However, some of these studies also considered the actions of other perpetrators and victims who were not necessarily lecturers and students, respectively. A study by API (2019) in collaboration with Heart Minders

Advancement Initiative is a good one to start this review with because of the number of tertiary institutions included in the study. They surveyed up to six tertiary institutions in Lagos State and these included two universities, one polytechnic, and three colleges. A total of 1,642 students participated in the study. The results show that 61 percent of the participants believed that rape incidents on the campuses were as high as 61 percent while sexual abuse incidents were about 56 percent. Up to 79 percent or 8 in 10 participants viewed female students as the major victims of these offences.

Owoaje & Olusola-Taiwo's (2010) study found that up to 69.8 percent of their 398 respondents had experienced sexual harassment in different forms. They selected their participants from Ibadan (Oyo State). However, the participants were not only the indigenes or residents of the state, rather, they could be said to be representative of most Nigerian female students because the participants were female graduates participating in the mandatory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme at the time. Graduates undertaking the NYSC programme are posted to different states of the federation as part of the rules. Therefore, the results of Owoaje & Olusola-Taiwo's (2010) study indicate that this is a general problem in the country. Further, Owoaje & Olusola-Taiwo's (2010) participants included graduates of universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, and the findings suggest that the menace was equally present in those types of institutions.

A more recent study by Muoghalu & Olaoye (2017) found that 46.7 percent of their participants had experienced sexual harassment. Although this rate was not as much as those reported by other sources above, it is still high considering the environment (educational establishments) and the social status of the people in such an environment. The study had 152 participants – all of whom were students of Obafemi Awolowo University. So, the participants were not as diverse as those who participated in the studies by the API (2019) and Owoaje & Olusola-Taiwo (2010). Nevertheless, all the studies have made important contributions to the knowledge of this phenomenon.

### **PERPETRATOR CHARACTERISTICS**

In terms of the characteristics of perpetrators of sexual harassment in Nigerian HEIs, API (2019) found that cultists were considered the main perpetrators (33 percent) followed by male students (23 percent) and

male lecturers (21 percent). However, 14 percent of the participants also stated that female students do get involved in these offences as perpetrators in some cases. Owoaje & Olusola-Taiwo's (2010) study found that male classmates of the female victims were the perpetrators in 61 percent of cases and lecturers in 59.7 percent of cases. Farinloye & Omobuwa (2016) found that fellow students were the offenders in 80 percent of the cases followed by lecturers (13.3%) and administrative staff (6.7%). Farinloye & Omobuwa (2016) did not break down the perpetrator's demographics in terms of gender. Nevertheless, their data provides insights into the high-level involvement of students in this menace. Muoghalu & Olaoye (2017) found that male students were the main culprits (49.2%) followed by female students (36.8%), and lecturers (14%).

Farinloye & Omobuwa (2016) and Muoghalu & Olaoye (2017) could not provide the genders of the lecturers. However, most studies consistently show that male lecturers are almost always the culprits. Some authors might consider it unnecessary to mention the gender of the perpetrators when lecturers are involved due to the common knowledge that male lecturers are the offenders. However, it must be acknowledged that the victimisation of male students by female lecturers has appeared in the media (see Usman, 2018). The male victims, however, are exceptional in some ways, such as being handsome and/or coming from rich homes (Usman, 2018). Udechukwu *et al.* (2020) found that their participants (2,500; 1,221 male and 1,279 female undergraduates selected from five HEIs, including universities, polytechnics, and vocational colleges in Anambra State) believed that male students were approached by female lecturers for sex-for-marks in 62.4 percent of cases compared to 98.8 percent of cases involving male lecturers to female students. The participants also believed that female students have approached male lecturers for the same reason in 55.6 percent of the cases. Although this article did not focus on sexual harassment, it provides insights into how different genders engage in sex-for-marks, which sometimes facilitates sexual harassment. The involvement of male students in this study was also interesting because some of them might have witnessed this and responded based on personal experiences as opposed to perceptions.

The differences in the offender characteristics reported by different researchers whose works were discussed in this subheading might reflect trends in different institutions. Muoghalu & Olaoye (2017)

studied 152 students of Obafemi Awolowo University. Farinloye & Omobuwa's (2016) data for this study came from 279 undergraduates of Osun State University. Owoaje & Olusola-Taiwo's (2010) study involved 398 participants and their data seemed much more representative as it was collected from NYSC members from across the country. The perception of what constitutes or does not constitute sexual harassment by students in particular institutions as well as the researchers' definitions of the term might also account for the variations in the findings. Some of the participants responded based on experiences of victimisation while others responded based on personal perceptions. Some of the data collection instruments were restricted and this meant that answers could not be distributed based on certain offender categories. For example, "cultists" as perpetrators were not common in the questionnaires used by several researchers. Further, some studies had only female participants while others had both male and female participants.

#### **FACTORS AND CIRCUMSTANCES ENABLING SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Several factors have been identified as contributing to sexual harassment at Nigerian HEIs. Muoghalu & Olaoye's (2017) survey of university students found that the students identified several factors, including the desperation to pass, the tendency to exploit, lack of integrity and self-esteem, lack of respect for the opposite sex, socialisation problems, absence of deterrence measures, victims' failure to report incidents, substance abuse, provocative dressing among others. Some of the above findings were also collaborated by Okafor *et al.*'s (2022) study more recently. The latter found that only 10.4 percent of the victims in their study attempted to report the incidents. The 1,200 participants came from 8 institutions (federal, state, and private universities and colleges) across the five southeastern states of Nigeria. They found that the victims tried to report or not to report depending on whether the institution had a place where the victim could report or not, and also based on the victims' perceptions of how the authorities of the institution would handle the matter. However, it is to be noted that not all the participants were victims although the majority (more than 60 percent) were victims. Up to 71 percent of the participants stated that there were no known designated places to report sexual harassment in their institutions.

Several media reports based on victims' accounts have shown that lecturers exploit an opportunity to

supervise students' dissertation projects to demand sex (see Salaudeen, 2018; Usman, 2018) usually with a threat that the student would fail if she failed to yield to this demand. Poor academic performance has been identified as a factor facilitating sexual exploitation. Muoghalu & Olaoye's (2017) study found that 26.4 percent of their participants who were all undergraduates identified the "desperation to pass" as one of the factors responsible for sexual harassment at universities. This can be understood on the basis that sex-for-marks is sometimes a form of transaction between male lecturers and female students who are unable to pass their assessments. Academic laziness was more recently identified as a factor facilitating sex-for-marks by student respondents of Udechukwu *et al.*'s (2020) study. The former executive secretary of the National Universities Commission, Professor Peter Okebukola blamed academically weak students for the menace of sex-for-marks in Nigerian universities: "All those girls who run after those lecturers or can be harassed by lecturers are those who are academically weak" (Onyechere, 2018). He added that such students are desperate to offer sex to lecturers even when the latter seems uninterested. While this is a factor with empirical support, Professor Okebukola's statement is problematic because he presented this as a sole factor without acknowledging that multiple factors are at play. He failed to consider that some victims are academically sound and hardworking but deliberately frustrated by their lecturers with the aim to engage in sexual activities with the students.

Among the factors blamed for sexual harassment of female students, provocative dressing seems to rank very high if not highest in terms of research on the phenomenon. Too many academic reports exist on this (see Akpambang, 2021; Anadi *et al.*, 2011; Ewulo, 2016; Farinloye & Omobuwa, 2016; Fareo & Jackson, 2018; Muoghalu & Olaoye, 2017; Obeta & Uwa, 2015; Ojogbane *et al.*, 2020; Okafor & Uwalaka, 2021; Owoaje & Olusola-Taiwo, 2010; Udechukwu *et al.*, 2020) unlike the case with other facilitating factors. This particular factor has also generated many debates and policies in many Nigerian HEIs. It has also attracted much empirical research. For example, the study by API (2019) in six tertiary institutions in Lagos found that 63 percent of the participants, particularly the female students among them, attributed the increasing rape and sexual abuse, and harassment of female students on campuses to provocative dressing.

Muoghalu & Olaoye's (2017) participants rated provocative dressing as the strongest factor (44.3%)

promoting sexual exploitation. About 76 percent of Farinloye & Omobuwa's (2016) research participants considered provocative dressing as the major factor contributing to this menace. Based on the perceptions of students and staff, Ojogbane *et al.* (2020) reported that provocative dressing seduces lustful lecturers, leading to them meeting the students to request sex-for-marks. They also reported that provocative dressing distracts students during lectures. Similarly, Yohanna *et al.* (2020) found that both students and lecturers believed that provocative dressing seduces lecturers and contributes to sex-for-marks. While it is believable that lecturers could be seduced by provocative dressing, it is a case of the lecturers not having self-control (Akpambang, 2021). It can be said that the lecturers who harass students due to the way the latter dress can be said to lack discipline or self-control (Akpambang, 2021). As the evidence from this current article suggests, lecturers most often target students who are vulnerable or who come into close contact with them, such as students whose projects the lecturers supervise. The issue of meeting students to demand sex as a result of provocative dressing could be attributed to poor deterrence techniques or its lack entirely in some of the institutions where this act is commonplace.

Nevertheless, many Nigerian academic institutions seem to believe that provocative dressing is a contributor to the social problems they face of which sexual harassment is one. Lawal (2019) has detailed in *The Guardian*, several universities that have produced a dress code as a way of addressing these problems, including the University of Ilorin, the University of Ibadan, and Abia State University. Rivers State University is also among the academic institutions banning provocative dressing in recent years (Ogwo, 2022). The University of Jos not only banned provocative dressing on campus but also instructed the university security team to "arrest" any offenders (Ogwo, 2022). In August 2023, the management of the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro warned female students against being on campus without pants and bras (Punch, 2023). Many other academic institutions have banned provocative dressing and sexual harassment featured as part of the reasons for the ban.

There have been clashes between the management of these academic institutions and the students regarding the dress codes, particularly female students who are most often targeted with these codes. Academic reports consistently suggest that female students more often dress provocatively compared to

their male counterparts (see Anierobi *et al.*, 2021; Farinloye & Omobuwa, 2016; Nwikipo *et al.*, 2022). Some female students have identified themselves as adults who should not be controlled. However, the management also presented their defences. For example, a senior hall supervisor of Queen Elizabeth II Hall of the University of Ibadan, Mrs Odu who observed that female students dressed by "putting on just a top without pants even when the top will only cover her bum a bit", argued that these students need to be corrected at this stage to create a better world (Lawal, 2019).

## MEASURES TO ADDRESS SEXUAL HARASSMENT

There seem to be wide variations among different Nigerian HEIs on the issue of addressing sexual harassment. Some of the institutions are proactive with preventive measures in place while others are not. Some HEI authorities are reluctant to admit reports from students and/or discipline the perpetrators but others take swift action. In 2016, the National Board for Technical Education of Auchu Polytechnic dismissed 12 lecturers, demoted 16 and warned 4 due to sex-for-marks (Premium Times, 2016). In the same year, the disciplinary committee of Delta State University recommended the sack of 5 lecturers for sexual harassment of female students and financial extortion of students for marks (Brisibe, 2016). About a year earlier, the authorities of this same university dismissed 3 lecturers for similar offences, including one caught naked in the room of a final-year female student (Brisibe, 2016). In 2019, the authorities of the University of Ilorin recommended the dismissal of a lecturer who raped a female student in his office (Ekott, 2019). In that same year, the Ekiti State University authorities questioned a lecturer whose video appeared on the internet as he attempted to engage in sexual activities with a female student in return for marks (Ekott, 2019). In 2022, the vice chancellor of the University of Abuja, Prof. Abdul-Rasheed Na-Allah described how the university has become very serious about the issue of sexual harassment, stating that he had dismissed two professors in connection to sexual harassment since his appointment as a vice chancellor (Vanguard, 2022).

Akpambang (2021) observed that the increasing incidences of sexual harassment in HEIs have sparked a debate whereby many have called for the criminalisation of sexual victimisation by lecturers in HEIs. In May 2016, the Nigerian Senate came up with a Bill against sexual exploitation by lecturers, which

would see offenders receiving a five-year jail term for sexually exploiting students. However, the Academic Staff Union of Universities kicked against the bill, arguing that it would undermine the autonomy of universities (Usman, 2018). The bill was also described as restrictive for targeting only male lecturers for a behaviour that is so widespread in the country (Usman, 2018). In 2023, however, a group known as the Anti-Sexual Harassment Advocacy Cluster asked the Nigerian president to give assent to the Bill to deter this offence after observing that this social problem has persisted (Odogwu, 2023).

Several professionals believe that academic institutions are not doing enough to curb this menace. For example, the former acting executive secretary of the Nigerian Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO), Louis Eriomala stated that higher institutions “are not doing enough” to address this issue (Blueprint, 2021). While multiple factors could be responsible for the reluctance, it was also possible that the involvement of some influential lecturers in these offences might be responsible for the hesitation. API (2019) suggests based on anecdotal evidence that the authorities of some institutions fail to admit allegations of sexual harassment and abuse “in the spirit of collegial camaraderie”. Further, some of the victims of these offences “who reported such cases are further victimized by the same academics, their colleagues, and often the institutions” (API, 2019).

Although the reluctance to address this issue has been widely reported, it is important to note that some HEIs have anti-sexual harassment policies. Akpambang (2021), for instance, details such policies put in place by several universities, including some of the prominent universities in the country, such as the University of Lagos, Obafemi Awolowo University, the University of Port Harcourt, and the University of Ibadan. Muoghalu & Olaoye (2017) observed that several other Nigerian universities have also developed policies aimed at tackling this menace. However, they also noted that “sexual harassment policies do not exist in most educational institutions in Nigeria”, which makes it difficult to prosecute offenders due to a lack of “defined structure” (Muoghalu & Olaoye, 2017, p.141). Further, Nigeria is termed a “lawless society” due to the high level of impunity in rule-breaking behaviours. Nigeria is also well-known for endemic corruption (see Agazue, 2015; Akindede, 2005; Momah, 2013; Osoba, 1996; Smith, 2007) endorsed by many individuals and institutions. This applies to the most educated and least educated citizens, the rich and the poor alike. Many

individuals and institutions have little regard for due process. This can partly explain why sexual harassment in HEIs has remained a serious problem in both HEIs without anti-sexual harassment policies and those that have developed such policies.

## METHODS

### Research Design

The qualitative research paradigm was adopted for this current article. The qualitative approach emphasises meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Willig, 2013). Thus, it is indispensable when there is a need to understand the complexities of human behaviour that require answers to “why” and “how” questions (Lakshman *et al.*, 2000). The existing studies on the phenomenon of sex-for-marks in Nigeria are mostly based on quantitative research as previously stated and this meant that much was not known about the underlying processes of this unholy transaction. Thus, the current research aimed to explore this with linguistic data to be able to allow the participants to provide a detailed account of how they were approached by the lecturers and why the lecturers presented sexual activities as an option for their assessments, as well as sexual harassment in other forms.

### Sampling and Data Collection Methods

Both primary data and secondary data were used in this current study. Primary data were chosen because the researcher needed first-hand accounts of the phenomenon from individuals who were the real victims of this menace. Purposive sampling was adopted in this current study. In purposive sampling, the researcher targets a certain network (Barratt *et al.*, 2015) based on the purpose of the study and the researcher’s belief that the members of that network have the “largest potential” for providing insights into the phenomenon of interest (Palys, 2008, p.698). Thus, a group of undergraduates and graduates who had experienced sexual exploitation by lecturers in different HEIs in the southeastern part of Nigeria were purposively recruited. The research data were gathered through semi-structured interviews. In semi-structured interviews, questions are predetermined and phrased in a way to enable responses that tap into a particular topic area (Longhurst, 2016). This method of interview was chosen to enable the researcher to phrase questions in a way that would enable the participants to explain the process in depth (see appendix). A total of

22 participants took part in the interviews. The participants were all women comprising graduates and undergraduates of different HEIs. The participants came from a total of 11 institutions consisting of 6 universities, 4 polytechnics, and 1 nursing institute.

Secondary data were collected from media reports. While academic reports containing qualitative accounts of the victims of this social problem are scanty, some students have narrated their experiences to journalists who reported them in different news outlets. This provided the researcher with resources to collaborate on the first-hand account he received from the victims. The secondary data contained accounts of victims in other regions of the country unlike the primary data that focused on the experiences of the victims in the southeastern part of the country only. The secondary data came from a total of 8 media outlets, and these included the BBC (2019), Blueprint (2021), CNN (cited as Adebayo & Busari, 2018), Premium Times (cited as Ukpong, 2015a), Punch (cited as Folarin, 2017), Stears (cited as Salaudeen, 2018), The Sun (cited as Dike *et al.*, 2018), and Vanguard (cited as Usman, 2018). The researcher selected media articles not older than 10 years to ensure that the incidents were current.

### **Ethical Considerations**

As a UK-based psychology researcher, the current researcher adhered to ethical guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2021) in its Code of Human Research Ethics throughout the fieldwork and the drafting process. The interviews were recorded with a Lenovo tablet with the participants' permission. The purpose of the research, the reasons for choosing the participants, and all other relevant information were provided to the participants before the interviews. Their consent was sought and obtained before their participation. It was made known to the participants that their words would be published as part of a journal article but without their names and any other personal details. Thus, their real names were replaced with pseudonyms. Some of the participants mentioned the names of several victims of these offences (such as their coursemates); they also mentioned the names of the institutions where the incidents took place; and in some cases, the lecturers' names were also mentioned. However, the researcher removed all these personal details during the analysis in line with the BPS Code on confidentiality.

The researcher also considered the issue of "harm". While there was no physical harm as the research

involved only interviews, the researcher considered the possibility of "psychological harm". This was due to the recognition that the experience was generally unpleasant and made the victims to feel frustrated during the process. The researcher then considered the possibility that recalling such unpleasant experiences might make some participants feel upset. Therefore, he observed the participants carefully during the interviews should any of them show signs of psychological breakdown. He planned to terminate the interview should this happen in addition to referring the participants to a psychological organisation for psychological support. Fortunately, the participants felt strong. Interestingly, most of them seemed passionate about narrating their experiences.

### **Data Analysis Method**

The data were analysed via thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a "method for identifying and analysing patterns in qualitative data" (Clarke & Braun, 2013, p.120). In thematic analysis, the data are searched for co-occurring patterns of meaning or issues that are of interest to the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The current data were searched in the like manner after transcribing it from the Lenovo tablet. The researcher searched the data for patterns. Microsoft Word's "track changes" tool was used to code the patterns after identifying them. The researcher first searched for co-occurring responses or meanings and then highlighted them and used the "comment" tool to give the highlighted passages names that broadly suggested the meanings in the data. These names appeared in the right margin of the document. He did this repeatedly and then merged codes that appeared to refer to quotes with similar meanings. Thereafter, the researcher introduced the codes in the manuscript and analysed them.

### **ANALYSIS**

In this section, the themes developed from the data were analysed, and discussed. A total of 9 themes were developed from the data. The experiences of some of the participants appeared in one theme only while others' appeared in two or more themes. For example, students whose victimisation was caused by *project supervision* as a theme spoke only about it, and their words could not appear under other themes because the themes did not apply to them. Those whose accounts appeared under more than one theme were those victimised multiple times. An example could be a student who was targeted for "being a fresher" in

her first year and was also targeted during her “project supervision” in her final year. Nevertheless, some students were victimised up to three times or more times. The participants’ words were included verbatim as evidence of their experiences. However, their original accounts were much longer than presented in this analysis but to ensure that the excerpts were not too long, only the most important aspects of their statements indicating clearly “why” they were targeted were added as quotes in this analysis.

### **Project Supervision**

Several participants mentioned *project supervision* as a factor that brought them closer to their lecturers in ways that were not previously possible, eventually creating an opportunity for the lecturer to demand sex from them. The supervision involved dissertation projects and practical works that needed one-on-one interaction between the parties. In all the cases, direct contact with the supervisor facilitated conversations that eventually led to the lecturers making sexual advances:

Like my own, I’m not the kind of person that goes personally with lecturers. So, I actually started going to his office because he was my project supervisor. ... You know that personal encounter transcended to that thing [demand for sex]. So he was kind of “Okay, have you paid me for the course?” I was like, sir, I did your quiz, I did your assignments ... Then he called one morning that I should come to his house that his wife is not around. Hahaha! I was like Jesus Christ! I don’t understand! So it started like that and it became more serious and I had to meet him. I really do have to meet him. ... That’s my project (Uju).

The way we do our project is that they will ask you to go and write maybe Chapter One. The problem I have with the lecturer is after writing Chapter One, you’ll go and show him what you’ve done. The person will not even care to check what you write. He will not even look at it. He just tell you “Go and rewrite it” even though the lecturer knows about the topic, he doesn’t even check it to see whether you made a mistake and correct you.... They just find a way to punish you. ... He would tell you to go and meet the class rep. It’s the class

rep that will tell you what he wants [i.e., sex]. ... (Jane).

Mine started in my OND Two. So that was during my project period and the lecturer I was assigned to supervise me. The lecturer taught us during my ND One. ... he told me that I should meet him in school. Then he started saying that I had to cooperate that kind of thing. That he can’t just supervise me like that without two of us not getting to know each other well [i.e., getting intimate] (Vivian).

There’s this lecturer, I went to meet him when we had two projects. ... So he was now like the scene we’re going to put in the thing should be real. Like if you’re going to use a scene about airport, you should go to airport to shoot the film. Who is going to allow us? ... He said we’re going to do the documentary. ... he said that we’re going to really stop cars. ... I had to meet him to say that these things are very technical. These are mini projects, they’re not normal projects. We went to call his attention to this. Then he tried to drift. He was now like “Okay, you know I’m learned, I’m a professor, you know but this one here [referring to his penis] has a mind of his own”. Hahaha! He was drifting and I tried to call back his attention to the issue at hand and he goes again “You know that I’m learned, all of us we went to school ... but this young man down here [his penis] didn’t go to school; he has a mind of his own” (Kamsi).

It is worth noting that the lecturer’s request to Vivian to meet him at the university was unconnected to the supervision of her project but sexual activity and that was why the participant described it in this interview. Project supervision as an opportunity for sex-for-marks as described by the current participants also supports what some victims had previously reported to journalists. For example, similar cases have appeared on *Vanguard* as presented by Usman (2018), and also on *Stears* as presented by Salaudeen (2018). Salaudeen presented the case of a student, Derin Adewale whose project supervisor pinned down and attempted to strip in his office during a supervision meeting at UNILAG. According to the student:



He said he had been waiting for a chance to get me. I managed to get away from him and applied to have my supervisor changed. ... (Salaudeen, 2018).

However, Adewale did not escape the lecturer entirely as he followed her up, targeting her in another area. Another point made by Ebube is the idea of presenting cash to the lecturer as an alternative for sex:

The most important thing is during project topic. That's what [sex] they demand during project topic. Like me, the man that supervised me, the lecturer that supervised me, he asked me several times but I gave him money. I know he want that but I felt like if I gave him this kind money, he will leave me. I didn't even have money; I collected the money from my friend and gave him. An old man that was old enough to be my father yet he wanted to have sex with me (Ebube).

One of the students described below how her lecturer refused to hand in her project to her at the institution despite all her attempts to collect it, rather, he asked her to visit her at a certain hotel in a nearby town with the aim to have sex with her:

During the project defence, I called him to collect my work ... and he asked me to come to Aba. I told him no, that I need my project work so that I can have time to go through it before the defence. He said that I should come and collect it at Aba. ... I told him: "Sir, my route for travelling is not Aba area, I'm going towards Owerri area". He was like, I should come now, he can't bring it for me, I should come to Aba and he will give it to me (Vivian).

Hotels have also featured in several cases that have appeared in the media and beyond. For example, Usman (2018) described in *Vanguard* the case of a senior lecturer at the Osun State University who met his female student for sex at a hotel and was recorded by the student without his knowledge. The nursing student of Ogun State College of Health Technology who was impregnated by his lecturer described their hotel meetings as well as that of another lecturer and his student as follows:

I met him with another lecturer in my department. I observed that the lecturer

also had a female student with him. From the hotel, we went to different places before we finally lodged in another hotel along Ilese Road. While I was with Adu in a room, my other classmate passed the night with the second lecturer in another room (Folarin, 2017).

Grace's case below concerned the supervision of a practical engineering class. The participant brought this up because according to her, it was an opportunity for the lecturer to students who had avoided direct contact with the lecturer for fear of sexual harassment.

It's during the class, ehm, it's a practical work, an engineering drawing. Something that you have to be in class for him to teach. ... So, he has to be in class to supervise it. ... He has the time to go to students' desks and I think it's that time he had to go to students' desk is when he targets those students. ... he would feel like it's like this girl is beautiful. Then he would leave there and come closer and would say: "Let me see your work". While you're concentrating on your work, he's sizing you up and all that and you wouldn't know and you would think he has genuine concern about what you're doing (Grace).

This participant observed that the lecturer asked the students he found sexually appealing to meet him in his office after the workshop and although she avoided going to his office, she bumped into him on her way out of the canteen on a certain day:

After lectures, I went to the canteen. ... on my way coming back, I did not see him on time ... immediately I turned back, he called me by my surname. ... When I wanted to run away, he asked me to stop there. ... The first thing he said is that I should give him my number. That day was Friday. The next morning, I woke up around 7 on Saturday and I saw that this man called me around 5:30 am in the morning. ... around 5:30 till 6 o'clock. Why would you call student by that time? ... He didn't get through to me but what he told my course mates is that they should meet him in a particular hotel and pay for the room. ... during the next class, he just walked up to my desk and called my name

“Betty [real name changed] alright, no problem” After that issue, I failed that course that year (Grace).

This theme has demonstrated that direct contact with lecturers is instrumental in sexual exploitation in the university environment. The findings indicate that lecturers who sexually harass and exploit their students might not find this convenient until they meet such students for supervision, which enables one-on-one interactions between the parties.

### **Being Unique**

The participants suggested that their lecturers picked upon them because they appeared unique or different from the rest of the students in their classes. The participants described the common factors they believed made them appear different from others, thereby making them targets:

Another thing is appearance .... Again, in class, if you're the type that is being noticed by the lecturer, maybe, you have an ass, then he may target you (Ebube).

You know some lecturers, once they see a lady that is attractive, they can't control themselves. Once they see those apples [breasts] in front of her, they can't control themselves anymore (Chiaza).

Some of the ladies are exceptionally beautiful. They are likely to seduce lecturers and the lecturer will go after her. As a lecturer, he can influence her and make her succumb to his demands. So this is sexual exploitation (Stella).

Another participant described how her large breasts led to her lecturer picking on her. The lecturer approached her to joke about her breasts and followed her up with multiple phone calls:

I noticed him coming and he was looking at my breasts and asked me: “Why are you bouncing?” I was like bouncing in what way? He didn't say anything. ... he called me, I was at home. I was washing my clothes. I told him I was washing. He called me again and I told him that I hadn't finished washing. He called me again. He called me roughly five times (Vivian).

It is worth noting that the student had told the researcher that the lecturer was already supervising

her projects before this incident. That was also how the lecturer was able to acquire her mobile number. It could be that the lecturer was able to notice the large breasts on that particular day for some reason (e.g., the lady's dressing) and developed a sexual interest that led to the joke and demand for sex thereafter. The lecturer later asked the student to meet her in a nearby town.

Provocative dressing featured in the words of two participants in this study. This is a form of unique appearance because the students were noticed for appearing different from their coursemates due to the way they dressed:

Maybe lecturer comes into the class, his attention might be in that student due to the way she dresses. Then he will ask you to wait behind or see him in his office. They do this. Then he will start telling you about this thing [sex]. That happened to me with one lecturer like that in my year one (Tina).

Like the one looking at a lady's lap. It actually happened in exam because it distracted the man from invigilating us. So that was how he was just there looking at her laps. The lady was wearing gown but you know that kind of gown, when sitting down everything was up like that and you could see everything up her laps like that and the girl in particular, she's very plumpy. ... Later on, he asked for the girl's number, she refused but later the girl noticed that the man was about taking it serious, then she had to go and report to the school authority. ... (Chiaza).

Chiaza did not describe a personal experience but the experience of her coursemate. It is not surprising that many participants did not describe provocative dressing because it might be difficult for a student to know that she was targeted due to the way she dressed.

### **Being a Fresher**

Some of the current research participants linked their victimisation to their status as *freshers* in their respective institutions. Students who were freshers in the institutions were particularly targeted and promised help. The victims described their experiences as follows:

For me, my own little experience in school, ... I feel on the part of the lecturer, he felt, okay because I'm a new student, you know. I'm new and stuffs like that, he just started telling me about this. Like he will lecture you [privately] so that you will do well and make sure you pass your exams and stuffs like that. I don't think it's coming from a place of love. ... Just because he's a lecturer here, he has upper hand to get what he wants. ... Actually, it's exploitation from my own point of view because there are too many students he does this to. He just push them to pass (Eliza).

My first degree, you know as a fresh student, I just came in and in my department, we're assigned academic mentors. So the academic mentor each year will guide you in every academic decisions, both in choosing courses, get everything, passing courses too even with difficult lecturers. In that case, imagine when academic mentor who is supposed to guide you, help you handle difficult lecturers has been the one to get you into that difficult situation (Muna).

The issue started when I went to his office to ask some questions I don't understand about the course as a new student in school as per new student and he's my course mentor. I didn't have anything in mind but he started using some kind of language that got me worried. Then at the end of the whole thing, he asked if I don't mind meeting at a hotel somewhere. He said I should pay for hotel and wait for him there (Lucy).

I was just on my own. ... I was a fresher at the school. They were two, actually. Two lecturers. So both of them, I was just on my own and they approached me that they want this, they want that. Maybe if I said no, they would want to frustrate me in school. They actually tried anyway. They tried to frustrate me (Ann).

It is, however, difficult to be so sure whether all these experiences stemmed from the students' status as freshers in their institutions. Muna, for instance, walked into the lecturer's office to make some inquiries

and with the practice of demanding sex from students being common in these institutions, it could be that the lecturer did what he would normally do when female students came close to him irrespective of whether the student was new or not. As demonstrated under previous themes, such as *Project supervision*, some lecturers suggested sex when they had opportunities to have direct contact with their students.

### **Tuition Fee Debt**

Some participants talked about tuition fee debt as a factor that precipitated their sexual exploitation. In some institutions, students are allowed to continue their studies if they are unable to pay their tuition fees by the deadline, but this is only possible with approval from a member of staff, such as a lecturer. The staff member would serve as a guarantor to the Finance Office. Lecturers use this as an opportunity to sexually exploit students as illustrated by the victims below:

I was owing some money for my school fees and the lecturer wanted to send me out because of that money. I went to him and begged him please sir, I don't want to fail this course. I cried, I cried. He told me: "If you cannot pay your school fees, meet me in a hotel". I was begging him, please give me another option as I can't do bad thing. He asked for my number. The lecturer now called me and said: "Can I meet you in the hotel at 6 o'clock because I don't want you to fail? I pity you". He told me go and book the hotel. I would be the one to pay. ... I will pay the hotel room and I will now invite him. I did not have this money. I begged him saying: "Please sir, I don't have this money and I haven't finished paying my school fees". He said: "Okay, you don't have money, you don't want to do it". Then I decided to obey him. I borrowed money from my neighbour and paid the room because he told me that this is the only option left for me to pass and he said: "You cannot tell me that you have money or don't have money" (Nenye).

I went to one of my lecturers to explain to him that if he could give me another alternative, maybe to write the exam and pay that fee later. Like in my school, I just noticed, if you meet your lecturer, he will now write a letter and tell you to give to your HOD. Then your HOD will write

another one and submit to the rector. So during that time, that lecturer did not even tell me that such thing is being done in our school. He would just say do this one and do that one, have sex with me ... I cried and cried. It led me to do what I don't want to do (Alice).

One of the participants described below the common ways of resolving tuition fee debts in Nigerian HEIs in addition to how corrupt lecturers might abuse their position in this respect:

Students sought for mercy and waiver pending when they get the fees but ended up being exploited by some bad lecturers they approached. ... If a student happens to approach a lecturer for such allowance on her course's exam day, there is a high likelihood he could ask her to see him at his office after exams. Any event that happens afterwards can be termed under these categories: The lecturer is giving her the cover and doing her a favour by allowing her write even when owing the school or the lecturer holds her at ransom as the one who knows she owes the school and still wants to write exams and third, he may offer to pay for her and demand she returns the favour in kind (Maria).

Lecturers' position in situations of debt could be described as a form of guardianship whereby those responsible for collecting the debt from students rely on references from lecturers to decide whether to allow the debtor to remain at the institution or not. This is in line with the practice in many other organisations. Unfortunately, the experiences above indicate that this is an important factor precipitating sexual exploitation.

### **Failed Assessment**

Failing an assessment is presented by the participants as a well-known factor that promotes sexual harassment and exploitation. Lecturers could demand cash from any students who failed an assessment irrespective of gender. Sex is also an option but mostly for female students dealing with male lecturers. However, in extreme cases, a lecturer might demand both cash and sex from a student. Evidence could be seen from the participants' accounts below:

I had carryover with that course. So I went to his office to meet him. I told him that I

had carryover and I will be writing knock-up exam tomorrow. He told me that he will like us to hang out, do this, do that. We will go to a hotel. Then I was like asking him is that how you meet your student? He told me that I should know lecturers very well. That they like sleeping with students. Then later on, I told him that I will come to that hotel (Nenye).

It started in my final year. It's a borrowed course. ... What actually happened was that after the exam, he told us that we failed woefully and if you want to pass, you can do something. ... Somebody called me on phone and said: "Can you come to my office?" I asked who is that and he said: "Are you coming? Are you able to?" I said I don't understand. He said I should come to school the next day. ... I then entered his office and he was saying that most of my course mates did not do well and only three people that really tried to impress him, that I have to pay naa. I told him I don't have money ... and I started laughing. He told me that he was not joking. .... He said it's either I gave him something here in the office or he will fail me. Hahaha. The man said I should give it [sex] to him here in the office (Oge).

I didn't have that money. If I had that money, I would be like, just take it and give me score. ... Normally if I had the money, I would have given them, just give me my scores and a lot of people actually gave in. They gave both money and sex. I had this friend of mine, she gave money but that's not enough (Chiaza).

Some of the comments above seem to suggest that corrupt lecturers could fail students deliberately with the intention to frustrate such students, which could lead to the student meeting the lecturer for a bargain. The case of a female student and her lecturer who demanded "five rounds of sex" as reported by CNN also came about because the student failed her course (Adebayo & Busari, 2018). However, this student according to CNN, believed that the lecturer "deliberately gave her low marks so she would agree to sleep with him to raise them" (Adebayo & Busari, 2018). When the student sounded reluctant about the professor's request for sex, the professor told

her: "I gave you an opportunity and you missed it. Forget about it. You will do it next year" (Adebayo & Busari, 2018), i.e., the student should repeat the course the following year since she failed to offer sex as requested.

A current participant stated that weak students and those who seem desperate to pass their assessments were too vulnerable to sexual harassment and exploitation:

I think the problem is ladies who perform poorly in their academics are desperate to leave the university [i.e., to graduate]. Then they seek help from lecturers. So they will start coming close to each other. They walk into the office of the lecturers and start to talk about "I want to pass this course". Then either you offer your body, that's sex or you offer money. So either of them. If the lecturer is that type, he will go for sex and forgo money (Stella).

Stella, however, could not describe personal experience but the common pattern based on the experiences of other students as observed. The words of Louis Eriomala, the former acting executive secretary of NICO on the issue of sex-for-marks are also in this direction:

... there are situations where the lazy female student lures an unwilling lecturer. There are also cases where a randy lecturer lures an unwilling lazy female student. In these cases, the person making the offer is guilty (Blueprint, 2021).

The statement above corresponds to the words of one of the participants in the current study who described this as a kind of transaction, which students do not consider as sexual exploitation:

The thing is that most of the girls don't think having an affair with a lecturer is a sexual exploitation. Some of them are desperate to pass their examination. There are students who get serious with their studies without selling their bodies and they are the ones who feel sexual exploited (Stella).

One of the student victims of the UNILAG lecturer investigated by BBC (2019) Africa Eye had earlier mentioned weak students as the predominant victims of the lecturer:

He likes to pick on struggling students because he knows that they are very vulnerable and there's nothing they can do (BBC, 2019).

However, the BBC investigation does not indicate that the students were happy with the lecturer just because they were academically weak. Cases differ. While some lecturers engage in sex-for-marks with struggling students consensually, others indeed harass or exploit weak students because even though the students were weak, they did not call for such treatment. It is also important to stress that the issue of weak students is only one part of the sex-for-marks phenomenon. Some students regarded as weak or struggling are not necessarily lazy because evidence from the victims' interviews in this current study shows that some of them were denied the guidance they needed to work on their projects as tactics to frustrate them and put pressure on them to engage in sexual activities while others were threatened with "fail" for turning down sexual advances. Some students could visit their lecturers in their offices with the genuine intention of establishing what they needed to do to pass their failed assessments without sexual activities in mind but the lecturer might misinterpret such a visit to mean that the student had come to pay him for marks with sex and might end up molesting or raping such student. This also featured in the findings by BBC (2019) Africa Eye when a student who attempted suicide following repeated molestation by her lecturer saying the following: "I never ever give my consent once".

A disturbing case in the media involving failed assessment as a precipitating factor for sexual harassment and exploitation came from a nursing student of the Ogun State College of Health Technology, Ilese Ijebu who was impregnated by her lecturer:

When I got to second semester, 300 level, he awarded me 38 in one of his courses. I went to his office in August 2016 to know why I failed the course. I needed to pass all my courses to be able to go for my board exam. He asked me if I thought I could just come to the school and go like that. He said if I dated him, he would waive the course. He said he didn't approach me in 100 level because another lecturer was interested in dating me. The lecturer he mentioned told me in 100 level

that it was either I paid him money or used my body to pass his course. Because I didn't agree, I failed his course. I didn't pass it until I got to 300 level. I told Adu that I would date him, but I didn't want to have any problem, and he assured me that there would be no regret (Folarin, 2017).

However, while weak students might solicit sex from lecturers to pass their assessments, the response that the lecturer provided to the nursing student above does not suggest that the student was academically weak or lazy, rather, the lecturer seemed to have failed her as a way of putting pressure on her to accept his sexual advances. Similar cases also abound in media literature. For example, Wande Ebe, the founder of Wanda Adu Foundation (NGO for the victims of gender-based violence) described personal experiences to *The Sun* that matched those provided by some of the victims of the current study. According to Ebe: "I ended up with a third class after I had spent six years in school for four years programme" (Dike *et al.*, 2018). She described how it all started as follows:

My experience in school was awesome until my second year when four of my lecturers including my HOD took sexual interest in me. It was a horrible experience. They tried all they could but I vowed not to succumb and I paid for it. They worked against me. One continuously recorded me absent on his assessments and exams. Even when I wrote exams, he will claim that attendance sheet had gone missing. My grade point (GP) was so bad by 300 level that I contemplated dropping out because I lost interest in school (Dike *et al.*, 2018).

Ebe's account of her unpleasant experiences is considered necessary in this analysis to demonstrate that the students that are sometimes labelled "weak" or "lazy" due to their poor grades are not always so because corrupt lecturers could deliberately give them low grades with ulterior motives. As previously stated, the student who recorded her lecturer's demand for "five rounds of sex" told CNN that she believed that the professor failed her deliberately as a way of getting her to have sex with him so he could pass her (Adebayo & Busari, 2018).

### **Exam Malpractice**

Involvement in examination malpractice was mentioned by current participants as a situation that brought students closer to lecturers. Different institutions have ways of dealing with examination malpractice – from deducting marks from the student's actual score to destroying the student's scripts right in the examination hall. However, corruption in these institutions means that even a student whose script had been destroyed might still pass if the examination was invigilated by a corrupt lecturer. The participants explained how female students who engaged in examination malpractice were willing to offer sex to their lecturers when demanded as a "trade by barter".

In exam, if you engage in examination malpractice and he [lecturer] catches you, he will threaten you that you will fail or something like that and if you don't want such to happen, he may demand sex from you. Then if you are ready to give him that, you will pass the exam. I met one lecturer like that when I failed. Ehm, I actually met him just to discuss how to pass this as a carryover but he asked me if I'm really ready for that [i.e., to offer sex as an option] (Ebube).

Other participants described the procedures for examination malpractice in their institutions but not necessarily based on their personal experiences:

The way things go with that, in my school whenever you're being caught in exam malpractice, number one, depending on the lecturer and number two, depending on the exam you're taking at that moment. ... If you're with money, you can sort the lecturer, depending on the lecturer anyway. Being caught for exam malpractice like during our theory exam, I know some of my course mates that were being caught. Most of them, they sort it out through money. ... There's this lecturer I know. His name is ... [name removed by researcher]. He come into the exam hall with malpractice form. So once you're being caught, you must sign. In my school, if you engage in exam malpractice, you'll be expelled from the school. So some students would be like, okay, instead of me being expelled, let me just go in for it

[i.e., sex]. If he's not having anything [sex] from you, he will just charge you. There's another lecturer, they call him .... [name removed by researcher]. That man, once he catches you in exam malpractice, he will tear your paper and that is final because once he tears your paper, you must have a carryover with that course except if he wants something from you, then he will just seize your paper so that you can meet him later and both of you will discuss business [i.e., sex or money] (Chiaza).

For instance now, in an exam this thing, malpractice. If a student is caught, some lecturers may tear the paper. Some may deduct marks outrightly there on the paper. ... actually, it's being done before the students but afterwards, the student can go back to approach the lecturer. ... because nobody would want a carryover especially with the tearing of the paper or so much deduction that you cannot get any serious mark to pass. In that situation, the dubious lecturers, maybe they have had an eye on the student or something like that, then the student would not have what else to do if she really wanna pass. The lecturer may say: "I will allow you to rewrite or I will give you a mark". But it's now happening away from the audience of the classroom. .... So that's when something like that [sex-for-marks] can happen (Maria).

Although some students engage in examination malpractice and decide to pass by engaging in sexual activities with the invigilating lecturers, evidence from the media also shows that corrupt lecturers might fraudulently accuse innocent students of examination malpractice as a way of forcing the student to meet the lecturer one-on-one for sexual activities. For example, Usman (2018) described in *Vanguard* the case of a senior lecturer at the Osun State University who accused a student of examination malpractice, which led to the student's suspension and on her return, the lecturer put pressure on the student to meet him for sex, which later took place at a hotel and was recorded by the student (see Usman, 2018). What appears to be one of the most highly publicised cases in the media was a case between Professor Eniefiok Essien and Linda Onyebuchi Essell (a female student) at the

University of Uyo in 1995 when Essell was in her second year of a Law Degree. Essien invigilated Essell's examination during which he accused her of examination malpractice (Ukpong, 2015a). Essien was the accuser and also the chair of the Examination Malpractice Panel which recommended Essell's expulsion from the university. Essell maintained that she did not engage in examination malpractice, rather, she described the incident as a ploy by Essien after Essell failed to offer him sex as demanded. Essell provided her account of the incident as follows:

Sometimes in April, 1995 around 1pm, Essien, after our lectures on Contract of which he was a lecturer, summoned me to his office. He told me that I had the last opportunity to redeem my career which was billed for a doom by expulsion if only I could accede to his simple love overtures which will take nothing from me (Ukpong, 2015a).

Essell was later expelled from the university following the outcome of the panel hearing. However, she later took the case to court and succeeded as the court faulted the University's handling of the matter in addition to indicting Essien for doctoring the panel process as well as forging the signature of one of the panel members (Ukpong, 2015b). Essien was indicted for sexual assault and forgery by the Court of Appeal in Calabar in 2005. With the court's judgement, Essell was allowed to return to the university to complete her programme. Interestingly, Professor Essien was later made the vice chancellor of this university in 2015 despite his criminal records. This seemed to be the reason this case became one of the most publicised cases of sexual harassment and exploitation by lecturers in the Nigerian press.

### ***Missed Submission Deadline***

Academic institutions have submission deadlines for coursework. Missing such deadlines comes with serious consequences, including automatic failure for the particular assessment. The current participants described how some students are ready to bargain with their lecturers to ensure that they still pass the assessment despite missing the submission deadline. This provided an opportunity for sexual activities:

Again, if there's an assignment being given by the lecturer and if you didn't submit your own at the right time, then he will not collect it from you unless you give

him sex. Some lecturers, ... that's their national anthem. Some of them collect money from you. Even if you're with the money, some of them prefer sex. ... They will tell you that if not, you will not pass the exam, that you will have carryover. If you don't want to do that, eventually, they will frustrate you (Ebube).

It depends on the lecturer. If it's a lecturer you can just go to his office and say, please sir I missed this because of so so issue. So if it's a lecturer that believes that all is money, they'll be like "Okay, bring the money and let's sort it out". For another lecturer, it could be sex he wants. That's how it works and I was unlucky to meet one of them that could not listen to you unless you can dance to his tone [i.e., offer sex as demanded] (Chiaza).

Another point that emerged from the participants' experiences is the idea that lecturers could bring submission deadlines forward and with very short notice, making it almost impossible for some students to meet such deadlines.

The guy [lecturer] in question had to bring forward the deadline. Let's say we're to submit Monday and he did the submission for Friday and a good number of people didn't know because we're not always online and somebody couldn't reach me on phone on time. Let's even say that someone reached me on that Friday but people like us who were working, you can't actually leave your office or wherever you are at that moment to rush to school to submit the work because you could be in Enugu or Onitsha. I eventually took a drop from Onitsha to .... [name of the town removed by researcher to protect the institution] and still I didn't submit because I couldn't meet up. ... On Monday, we came back again begging him to collect the papers and he refused. They usually have all these errand boys and it was one that came to us and said that we should contribute money and put it in envelope to appease him and that was what we did. We contributed and put in envelope and gave to the guy. This is the kind of things we see. ... Anything that puts student at a

disadvantage that the student had to plead for the mercy of the lecturer. ... then you're paying in cash or paying in kind (Maria).

This case is a typical example of a lecturer lacking empathy for his students and bent on exploiting them as opposed to helping them. The above participant rightly described the lecturer as someone not committed to the profession:

It's not everybody that is committed to the profession. Some are there for satisfy themselves whichever means, including sex (Maria).

It is expected that a lecturer should know the consequences of bringing a deadline forward, particularly when the students had to submit their work within a couple of hours following the announcement of the new deadline, which was several days behind the original deadline. Thus, it seemed that the lecturer deliberately planned to exploit the students with such a decision.

### ***Failing to Purchase Handout***

In many Nigerian academic institutions, it is a normal practice for lecturers to publish course materials popularly called "handout". These course materials contain information that the students need to pass certain modules taught by the lecturer. In some institutions, lecturers sell these materials to students. In fact, this set of lecturers makes it mandatory with a threat that whoever fails to purchase it must fail the course. Some institutions have been able to abolish this practice due to its connection to financial and sexual exploitation. However, there remain institutions that still allow this. For female students, this is another source of sexual exploitation as they narrated below:

My own starts from handout. He wanted me to buy his handout and if you don't have handout, he will send you out of the class. So he started frustrating me. I went to his office to ask him not to send me out of the class. ... Then he told me that I have two options: It's either I bought the textbook [referring to handout] or he would have sex with me. Since I don't have money, I don't have any other option than to do it (Tina).

However, the account provided by another student suggests that even having sufficient money for the



handout might not save a student from sexual exploitation if the lecturer definitely wanted sex. She described a case involving her course mate as follows:

Some lecturers, the one I knew that happened during my year one. The woman, she paid for the handout. Asking the man for the handout. The lady paid for the handout ... lecturer refused to give her the handout. He asked her to come and meet him instead (Chiaza).

As some institutions have abolished the sale of handouts, corrupt lecturers quickly devised another means by publishing what they now term textbook since the ban was connected to handouts only and not textbooks. Vera's words suggest that there was hardly a difference between the exploitation of students with handouts and with the so-called textbooks:

Originally, handout used to be so pronounced in Nigeria. That is, once you're coming in then you know every lecturer is selling handout but as at when I was in ... [university's name removed by researcher] was already phasing out their handouts but then some of the lecturers were then turning them to books. They did fast publication that you should buy the book instead of handout. ... So some of the lecturers would give to the course rep to sell but for some, you have to come to his office to buy, yea, yea. So either when you're not buying from course rep or when you have to buy from him [lecturer] if he's the one selling, then that's the opportunity [i.e., direct contact]. I didn't buy one time and I got E for that course. ... The man called me to his office and said: "Why didn't you buy this book?" So I said I didn't have the money. Then the man said it's compulsory for everybody to buy the book. ... The man actually told me that I wasn't going to leave his office without the textbook. ... two thousand Naira was a lot of money. Then we were in the North, and I was going back to Minna. So paying for that book that time was like giving him my transport fare (Maria).

Chiaza's account below where she used her coursemate as a case point indicates that some lecturers firstly target money and if they found the

student sexually appealing when she turned up with the cash, they could also demand sex:

Handout will make you to meet the lecturer. Then he will demand something else. The annoying thing there is you've told the lady this is what you want and the lady pleaded with you and then said: "Take this money, I can't do this". You refused. You collected money for the handout, you refused to give the lady the handout and still wanting to sleep with the lady. When the lady refused to sleep with him then, the lady failed the course. She repeated it because her set were in their finals then but she had to come back to year one carryover the course and that means she has been carrying the course over for like three years. The lady was like "What do you want? Apart from this [sex] now, what else do you want?" And he said: "It's you" (Chiaza).

Handouts or mandatory textbooks facilitate direct contact, providing an avenue for sexual exploitation. Although Maria's case did not involve sexual demands, similar cases with other students resulted in such requests. Understandably, not all lecturers exploit students sexually. Further, even among those who do so, they might not have a sexual interest in every student that they meet.

### **Sexual Obsession**

The idea of sexual obsession as a theme came about because some of the experiences narrated by the participants suggest that lecturers who targeted them did not have any special duty to them, such as project supervision or that the student failed an assessment, engaged in examination malpractice or other issues that usually force students to have direct contacts with their lecturers. Cases within this theme involved situations whereby the lecturers looked for the students purely based on sexual interest after seeing them. The lecturers used different tactics to get the students to meet them.

So towards second semester exam that year, we wrote exams. ... So one day I was in class, the course rep said he [lecturer] was looking for me. ... So we came in. He said we didn't write reg number. So me, you know someone who has done up to second year. If you're

telling me this for my first semester first year, then I would understand. ... First of all, I tried to question that: "Are you sure I didn't?" He said I should write this here. So my script, he didn't bring out well where you're supposed to write all these things. So it was at the edge, the edge on top was where he said I should write. So I wrote. ... My friend that came with me. ... So I really don't know. So I started walking out. As we were going, he spoke in a dialect I understand, which my friend wouldn't have understood. So he said when I go out, I should come back without my friend. ... I didn't go. Afterwards, anywhere he runs into me then, he would be like "I thought I sent for you?" (Jesse)

Some of the students were picked up for reasons not clear to them as can be seen from their accounts below:

... what he usually does is to identify you and ask you to see him in his office. I don't even know why. Honestly, I don't know how because I'm not participatory in class. ... I don't go to lecturers' offices, you know because I don't want their trouble to start (Alice).

He was like "I want to see you in my office" ... If you decide not to go, maybe you fail the course. ... In the class like this, maybe the lecturer likes you and he'll be like "I want to see you in my office?" He told me (Nenye).

This man did tell me come and meet him in his office. Then when I went there, he asked me if I really want to pass this course and I said yes. Then he said that I will come and make love with him when I'm ready and I was like is this a joke or something just in my mind? That man gave me hard time. ... This man did not allow me to enjoy my time there. He was all over me all the time and said I will not pass this course without that (Dera).

He picked some students. ... I was the third person he picked to be in school to represent my department. ... That day I was well stressed. ... So the person called, I mean the speaker, the speaker of

the school and the speaker called me also. When I got to the Dean of the Students Affairs Office, he asked me to arrange some things. There are files and some other things. He later dismissed the speaker and it was only me. Only me was the one in his office. He went to close his office (Ada).

Ada was selected alongside a few other students with a claim that they would represent their department in an event. However, how the student was treated and the lecturer's decision to have sex with her after bringing her into his office and closing the door in readiness for sexual activity, led to a suspicion that the lecturer selected her out of sexual obsession and not for the acclaimed representation.

Another participant described the experience of her coursemate, which also falls within sexual obsession:

The other girl was that the lecturer told her that she would get her by all means. ... Then through the course rep, they were able to meet the school authority to take up the matter. I don't really know how that matter ended. ... Once they say they need the person, they need the person. ... Like the one that happened when I was in my two hundred level (Chiaza).

One of the participants below described how her lecturer picked upon her the day he claimed to have recognised her in the class the first time:

It was after our lecture that day that he saw me outside and said: "I have not seen this face in my class before". Then he asked me: "How do you think you will pass this course?" I didn't understand him and I said: "Excuse me sir" and he said: "You know my office, right?" I said: "Sir, I don't know", and he said: "Ask around naa". I didn't know what else to say. ... When I eventually met him, he started using that language they use. ... He is never straightforward about it but of course, I know where he's going. ... Some of them won't mention it straight like that but they know you'll understand where they're going, of course (Emilia).

This was a case of sexual obsession because the student was minding her business but was approached

by the lecturer with a claim that her face was unfamiliar. The participant below explained that the obsession could lead to a gang-up for revenge when a student tries to escape a certain lecturer:

If it's like ... and you don't want to go the lecturer's way [i.e., not willing to offer sex] like you just want to go away. Ah, the lecturer might not even do you anything but he will go and discuss with another lecturer because he would be like if he do it, you may go and query them but this one now, they will come through another lecturer (Chiaza).

Ada's experience below occurred during her project defence. In Nigeria, it is common practice for students, including undergraduates to do oral presentations of their dissertation projects. The oral examination is called *project defence*. Ada described how one of the examiners picked on her during the process and demanded that she meet him in his office with a language that made the student suspect that the meeting could be connected to sex:

This one now happened during my four hundred level. So during defence, they will need to call your supervisor, they need to talk to your supervisor. So then I was calling my supervisor because the Dean of Student Affairs was the one that was leading the defence for us. So I was calling my supervisor was not picking. So this Dean of Student Affairs was asking for the form and I was explaining to him that my supervisor was not around. You know what this man did? He said that I have to come to his office (Ada).

There was a possibility that a lecturer might want to see a certain student in his office for genuine reasons. However, the student was well convinced that the Dean wanted sex from her judging from the Dean's language. The student's supervisor was already on his way to the project defence venue with the form, but none of them was aware of this until he turned up.

So fortunately for me, my supervisor came in. Immediately he came, I gave him the form. ... I gave the form to HOD. ... Then I gave the Dean of Student Affairs ... He was like he needs my pen to check the work. ... Later, I asked the man what about my

pen and the man told me to come to his office to pick my pen. I know that the man had another agenda. When I told some of my friends what happened and they were like "Chika [real name changed by researcher], you're bigger than fifty Naira [the cost of the pen], leave that pen alone". That was how I left the pen (Ada).

Another participant also talked about her lecturer's request to return a "pen" to him as a ploy to get her sexually. This also falls within sexual obsession because unlike cases involving direct contact with lecturers discussed previously, the lecturer targeted her in the classroom:

Imagine this man [lecturer] left that front area where he was talking to us and walked down to the sitting area as he's rounding up the lecture. Then all of a sudden, his pen fell in front of me exactly. Me being Good Samaritan rushed to pick the pen for him thinking it slipped off from him without even knowing that this man dropped it by himself to get me. This becomes clear when he started walking out so fast and then telling me to bring it to his office. Some students were just laughing. I know this man has been targeting me all the while. ... (Ndidi).

Students' fears whenever lecturers mentioned "office" might be connected to the reports of sexual molestation and rape in lecturers' offices. The investigation by BBC (2019) Africa Eye shows examples with Dr Igbeneghu of UNILAG. BBC team engaged several female graduates of UNILAG who were victims of Dr Igbeneghu to describe what he did to them in his office. Below is an example from one of his victims:

He would tell you to come to his office. He would lock the door. Sometimes he would want to grope you. Sometimes he would want to dry hump you. He likes to pick on struggling students because he knows that they are very vulnerable and there's nothing they can do (BBC, 2019).

Students have disclosed in the media and social media how they were sexually assaulted or raped in lecturers' offices (see Ekott, 2019; Onodjae, 2023). Several participants in this current article also

mentioned lecturers' offices as previously discussed in the previous themes. However, some lecturers who invite students to their offices for the purposes of sex do not attempt this in their offices, rather, they might make the demand in their offices (see Ukpong, 2015a) while presenting hotel as the venue.

## DISCUSSION

The current findings, to a certain extent, support previous findings on the factors promoting the sexual exploitation of female students by male lecturers in Nigeria. The current findings support previous reports on how provocative dressing is sometimes blamed for sexual harassment in Nigerian HEIs. Existing research reports on this were previously reviewed in this article, such as API's (2016) findings that up to 63 percent of student participants attributed sexual harassment and abuse of students to provocative dressing. This particular finding also supports previous findings (see Akpambang, 2021; Anadi *et al.*, 2011; Ewulo, 2016; Fareo & Jackson, 2018; Farinloye & Omobuwa, 2016; Muoghalu & Olaoye, 2017; Obeta & Uwa, 2015; Ojogbane *et al.*, 2020; Okafor & Uwalaka, 2021; Owoaje & Olusola-Taiwo, 2010) discussed in the earlier section of this journal article.

The current finding that students who failed their assessment might be vulnerable to sexual exploitation supports Muoghalu & Olaoye's (2017) finding that desperation to pass assessments could encourage sexual exploitation. Hence, "sexual bribery" (see Aina-Pelemo *et al.*, 2021) seems to have become normalised among corrupt lecturers and their students. Like those who failed their assessments, those who missed assessment submission deadlines and those caught engaging in examination malpractice also engage in sexual bribery. While the students were sexually exploited within these unfortunate circumstances, some of them were not necessarily harassed because both parties engaged in what might be rightly termed "consensual offence". The current study has provided insights into these offences. Factors, such as failed assessment and exam malpractice have occasionally appeared in media literature but could hardly be found in academic literature. Thus, the current research has bridged this important gap.

In addition to providing an in-depth account of why and how students are being sexually exploited, this current study also made some findings that appear scanty or non-existent in existing academic literature.

The current finding that students are targeted for their *being unique* could be hardly found in existing academic literature although this theme also included provocative dressing, which has been widely studied. Being picked upon for being a *fresher* in an institution and for owing a debt are also uncommon in academic literature. Some of the factors, such as project supervision could be found in media reports (see Salaudeen, 2018; Usman, 2018) but uncommon in academic literature. The use of a qualitative approach in the current study means that the reader would have the privilege of understanding the circumstances leading to students being sexually and financially exploited in the words of the victims themselves. These details are also important for working out how to address this phenomenon.

The current data indicates that female students are targeted by male lecturers with "impunity". This term seems appropriate because from what the victims explained in this study, they were mostly left with no option – it is a case of "do it" or "fail". The students were threatened or given the impression that their success depended on their willingness to offer sex as requested irrespective of their academic performance or potential. While this is condemnable, it is necessary to understand this in the context of the power distance culture in Nigeria and what this means in the relationships between teachers and their students; bosses and their staff; jobseekers and their potential employers; doctors and their patients; prosecutors and criminal suspects and many more. A person who is not familiar with the high level of corruption in Nigeria and the impunity that goes with it might begin to wonder what makes the lecturers so hardened to the extent that they would threaten and even fail students who have worked so hard for refusing them sex. Sex-for-marks is only one part of the numerous uses of sex to force a vulnerable or desperate person to obey the other person to be able to succeed. It reflects the highly corrupt Nigerian society where certain unacceptable behaviours are normalised even where they are least expected.

In November 2023, the video of a Nigerian man burning his original Degree certificate surfaced online. The man deliberately videorecorded his action while calling the certificate "rubbish". According to him, he earned his Degree more than thirteen years ago but was unable to secure a job with it. The video went very viral and generated so many reactions in the form of comments on microblogs, mainstream media, and more. When the man felt that many people

misinterpreted his action or insulted him, he produced a new video to explain why he burned his certificate. He explained that it was a case of corruption on the part of employers that frustrated him out of the job market with his certificate. He narrated how the job market, particularly government offices financially exploited him and other job seekers. According to his words:

I said all these things from my personal experience and what people around me have experienced. I know the number of times I have tried to apply to government offices and as a matter of fact, I have personal experience where I applied to a government parastatal and what did they tell me? Go and bring 2.5 million [Naira] before we give you a job! ... Where on earth do I get the 2.5 million? ... I never worked. ... I just finished school.

He also talked about his female friend who risked both financial and sexual exploitation, simultaneously. For the woman, the middleman who contacted the employer on her behalf demanded that the lady should bring one million Naira to the employer, and in addition to this, he (the middleman) must have sex with the lady before she could be given the job. These are daily experiences of Nigerians and it is important to discuss this to be able to put sexual harassment and exploitation in an appropriate context. Terms, such as “bribe-for-job” and “sex-for-job” (see Momah, 2013) are what average Nigerians hear frequently and as shocking as these might sound to foreigners, they are normalised in Nigeria. This means that as I have previously stated, the lecturers are not “exceptionally” wicked, rather they follow the common trend in their society. In his response to the increasing incidences of sex-for-marks in Nigerian universities, Dr Kabiru Danladi of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria described this immorality as “not different from the general societal decay we see everywhere” in Nigeria (Blueprint, 2021). The endemic corruption in the country also means that people who are not expected to hold certain posts end up holding them. Maria, a participant in this current study seemed right with her following words: “It’s not everybody that is committed to the profession”. This statement is in line with Dr Danladi’s words as follows: “So you have people who have nothing to do with teaching in higher institutions being employed to teach; people who are morally weak and professionally poor and the result is what we see today” (Blueprint, 2021).

Sexual harassment and rape of neighbours, employees or clients of powerful politicians, civil servants, businessmen, celebrities, and pastors, are commonplace in Nigeria and it is often difficult for the victims to get justice because police often work hard to protect powerful individuals and oppress their victims. Police corruption inadvertently encourages sexually-motivated crimes by the powerful in Nigeria (Agazue, 2021). Laws are made to deter offenders and potential offenders firstly assess the chances of being caught and/or punished and will likely only engage in the act after underestimating the chances of punishment (Beccaria, 1963). Amucheazi (2019, p.277) identifies rape as a “major problem in contemporary Nigeria” and suggests prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators as an effective means of curbing this crime. Unfortunately, police corruption in Nigeria means that potential offenders who believe that police can work in their favour are not deterred by the laws on rape and other sexual offences as they are confident that they are very likely to get away with prosecution or punishment (Agazue, 2021). Of all 155 rape incidents recorded by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Anambra state, for example, only 12 were taken up by the police, and none was successfully prosecuted (Tade & Udechukwu, 2020). Although some states might achieve higher success in prosecution and conviction than others, Nigeria is not one of the countries where victims of sexual offences achieve justice easily, especially when the offender is wealthy or influential in some ways (Agazue, 2021).

Although many Nigerian lecturers are not wealthy, they are respected as learned and sometimes influential members of society. Professors are influential in some ways and their victims know this and with their knowledge of the endemic corruption in society where police often work so hard to please the rich and the powerful, they could easily give up their quest for justice. Different calibres of lecturers, including heads of departments and deans of faculties commit sexual offences against their students. The BBC investigations and other cases that had appeared in the media and courts involving senior lecturers, particularly professors some of whom were also pastors, are another source of evidence that this is a serious matter involving the calibre of people whom members of society would least expect to engage in such immorality. Although the involvement of powerful personalities in these institutions might suggest that help is very difficult, this is not always the case. The news of academic institutions sacking lecturers

following complaints from students and subsequent investigations by the institutions, frequently appear in the press. News of arrests and prosecutions of these lecturers appear in the press, sometimes. Akpambang (2021) and Muoghalu & Olaoye (2017), for instance, have documented several such cases. However, Akpambang (2021) has also described cases where efforts made by victims of these lecturers to get justice failed or were ignored. So, it is a matter of who is in charge of investigating and addressing these allegations. Thus, it can be argued that when those in charge of addressing sexual harassment cases at certain institutions have zero tolerance for sexual harassment, they would not ignore the allegations or spare the suspects. The opposite might be the case in institutions where designated persons condone such offences or commit them themselves.

The sexual harassment and exploitation of female students by male lecturers also reflects the power distance in Nigerian society where those in authority see those under them as objects to be used to achieve their goals. Sometimes, the perpetrator could justify the dubiousness with cognitive distortions, such as seeing himself as doing the victim a favour in a certain way. Male police officers are known to demand sex from female suspects as a condition to close their cases. Nigerian women currently take to social media to discuss sexual molestation by medical doctors during medical assessments and treatments.

A section of men in authority in Nigeria has come to view sex as a quick remuneration for any favour done to a woman even when the supposed favour forms part of the man's official duty towards the victim. For example, cases of sexual exploitation, abuse, and rape of dozens of women and girls living in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) (those fleeing attacks by Boko Haram terrorists and other violent criminals) in Maiduguri, Borno state, were recorded by Human Rights Watch (2016). A situational assessment of IDPs by Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala's (NOI) Polls in the region in July 2016 found that 66 percent of the 400 displaced persons in three states in northeastern Nigeria (where Boko Haram terrorists are active) reported that the women and girls at the camps were being sexually exploited and abused by camp officials (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Among the perpetrators were government officials, soldiers, police officers, vigilante groups, and camp leaders (Human Rights Watch, 2016) whose main roles were to protect these vulnerable people.

While corruption is a "way of life" in Nigeria in addition to the endemic lawlessness that enables many offenders to get away with punishable offences, as far as sexual transactions are involved, this discussion would not be complete without discussing the patriarchal structure of the Nigerian society. In fact, some scholars (see Muoghalu & Olaoye, 2017; Okafor *et al.*, 2022) have chosen to discuss the menace of sexual harassment in HEIs with feminist theories because the high rate of sexual harassment of female students by their male lecturers is connected to the subordination of women in such highly patriarchal society. Muoghalu & Olaoye's (2017) participants specifically identified a "lack of respect for opposite sex" as a facilitating factor. Lecturers have developed a habit, which they could easily justify by thinking that these are females who could be used for fun, after all. As previously discussed, many victims could not get help after reporting their victimisation. According to Muoghalu & Olaoye (2017, p.143): "It is still this same patriarchal orientation that makes it almost impossible for the female victims of sexual harassment to report or complain because of fear of stigma – a situation which one can tag the act of blaming the victim".

## CONCLUSION

This current study aimed to explore the factors contributing to the sexual harassment and exploitation of female students by lecturers in Nigeria. The real victims of these offences were recruited and interviewed. The study has made some intriguing findings. While sexual exploitation of students is a global issue, the Nigerian case comes with much impunity. Lecturers project sex to their students with so much authority and punish students for failing to offer sex to them when demanded. They project it to students as if this supposed offence is a right. This article has demonstrated that supervising students' projects offers the lecturers the opportunity to have direct contact with students, making it easier for them to sexually exploit the students. This current study found that some particular students were vulnerable to sexual exploitation due to their unique appearances. Likewise, being a fresher requiring some kind of mentorship from a lecturer could make some students vulnerable. This is like project supervision in the sense that such mentorship offers the lecturer the opportunity to meet the student on one-on-one basis. However, freshers did not always need mentorship, rather, some the lecturers considered them novices to the system, and approached them with the pretence of guiding them.

Another important finding is how tuition fee debt provided lecturers the opportunity to exploit students who approached them for references to the Finance Offices to allow them more time to pay the debt. Failed assessment, missed assessment deadlines, and engagement in examination malpractice were different but similar factors that contributed to sexual exploitation as discussed by the students. This was because the lecturers involved were corrupt and as a result, would allow those who failed the assessments, missed deadlines, or cheated in examination to pass once the student agreed to a sexual request or in some cases, a cash request, or both. The issue of failing to purchase a handout was also discussed. Lecturers sexually exploited students who could not afford their handouts. While some institutions have banned lecturers from selling handouts to students, other institutions still allow this practice, making it a source of worry for female students. The last theme in this article is *sexual obsession* where the victims described how they were targeted even without any known reasons other than the lecturers' obsession to have sex with them. This current study has provided the victims of sexual harassment and exploitation the opportunity to explain in detail how the incident started and what led to it, and this has reduced the speculations on why female students are targeted by male lecturers for sexual harassment and exploitation.

The current findings have refuted some myths about sexual harassment and exploitation in Nigerian HEIs. For example, Professor Peter Okebukola had earlier blamed academically weak students for sexual harassment as previously discussed without acknowledging how some lecturers deliberately frustrate academically sound and hardworking students with an intent to have sex with them. Evidence from current data demonstrates that students who were neither academically weak nor wanted sex from their lecturers were forced into it, such as those owing tuition fees, unable to afford a handout, and those specifically targeted out of sexual obsession. Refuting such a myth is very important because such unfounded beliefs could mean that innocent victims might be stigmatised as opposed to being assisted. The stigma could mean that the victims might choose to suffer in silence, allowing the perpetrator to target more victims due to a lack of deterrence.

#### **LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

While this study has provided some insights into the sexual exploitation of female students in Nigerian HEIs,

it has some limitations. The first limitation is a lack of representativeness. As discussed in the methods section, all the participants came from only HEIs in the southeastern part of Nigeria. Although the quantitative studies reviewed in this article indicate that sexual exploitation of students in HEIs is widespread in Nigeria, it is unclear whether the same or different factors precipitate and perpetuate it in different regions of the country. Nigeria is a big country with more than a hundred tribes and cultures and although HEIs have their supposedly academic cultures, one cannot deny the fact that students and lecturers could bring their cultural worldviews into their institutions, which might also play a role in how a lecturer approaches a student for sexual harassment and exploitation. If this is the case, then there might be differences between southeastern Nigeria and the rest of the country. Therefore, future qualitative studies will be needed to interview students in other parts of the country to see whether their experiences were similar or different before conclusions can be made on the main factors facilitating this social problem.

Further, future researchers should design new interview questions based on some of the themes produced in this current study. The interview questions for the current study were relatively too open-ended as the researcher did not have much knowledge of the patterns relating to this social problem by the time he commenced the research fieldwork. Thus, he relied heavily on the participants to disclose them. This also meant that the responses in some of the themes came from only a few participants and in some cases, the responses were not based on personal experiences but those of course mates. For example, responses about provocative dressing the *being unique* theme came from only two participants and one was based on coursemates' experiences. Although I have previously explained that it could be difficult for a student to know whether she was targeted due to her dressing or not, some students might be aware due to the circumstances surrounding the request by the lecturer. This study did not provide much insight into these because the interview questions were not tailored in such a way that the participants could be asked those questions explicitly, enabling them to search their memories, rather answers came from only the few who were able to identify provocative dressing as factors.

The interview questions for the current study asked the participants questions, such as "Can you tell me what led to you being sexually exploited by your lecturer?" (see appendix). This question seemed too

open-ended. However, it was useful in the sense that it allowed different participants to delve into different factors. As the specific factors have now been identified, it is necessary to ask future participants questions that would explicitly tap into these factors. If future participants can be asked a question, such as "Tell me what you know about provocative dressing and sexual exploitation", this may enable them to remember this as a factor and then talk about it assuming that particular student had experienced it. This can also be said about some other factors identified in the current study. Interestingly, some of the factors discussed by the participants in the current study had not featured in previous studies on this phenomenon. As they are entirely new, the idea is to gain more insights into the different ways in which lecturers communicate with students when demanding sex or the circumstances leading to the lecturers making such requests.

Sexual harassment and exploitation persist in Nigerian HEIs due to inadequate or lack of policies against this act. Although some institutions have made policies against this offence, it has persisted in such institutions due to poor enforcement or its lack entirely, or the failure of the victims to report incidents due to a lack of trust. HEIs that are serious in tackling this menace should stress their seriousness to their students, including providing students with updates on cases that have been successfully resolved, and offending lecturers dismissed in line with their policies on addressing this issue. Such real-life examples are likely to convince the students that the institutions are serious about addressing this menace and may encourage more victims to come forward. Academic institutions should create new posts or at least find suitable persons to be made designated persons where students can report the matter without any fear of repercussions. The persons should be thoroughly vetted to ensure that they have zero tolerance for sexual harassment in all its forms. The authorities of the institutions should also ensure that the persons are not corrupt in other ways, such as being willing to accept bribes from suspects and close the case thereby letting the victims down.

It is important that the HEIs introduce moderation of assessment scripts. This practice is already in existence in some countries. In the UK higher education institutions, for instance, assessment materials are moderated after they are submitted by students and marked. This is done by lecturers passing on assessment scripts they marked to other colleagues

for cross-checking. This process ensures that mistakes are corrected or at least minimised. It also ensures consistency in the marks or grades given to students. For example, when Marker B moderates scripts marked by Marker A, the former would ensure that scripts graded as "fail" by Marker A meet the criteria for fail. In other words, Marker B would cross-check that the students failed by Marker A because they did not meet the assessment criteria set for the course and not due to any technical errors or some unexplainable reasons. The lack of moderation in Nigerian HEIs seems to give the lecturers so much power to deliberately fail their students as the lecturers knew that they would get away with such corrupt practice. The common practice in these institutions is for a designated panel to request the script of a certain student when an incident is reported assuming such an institution is not among those that ignore victims' complaints. Unfortunately, many victims are not ready to report their experiences due to a lack of trust in the system. It is to be acknowledged that the moderation system I am recommending here might have its limitations when introduced, such as Marker A meeting Marker B to discuss the outcomes of the result of a certain student they are determined to fail, then Marker B would ensure to uphold the mark originally awarded by Marker A. This is possible due to the high level of corruption in Nigerian society. Nevertheless, the moderation system is still recommended as the implementation of such a system is likely to reduce future incidents.

## APPENDIX

### Interview Questions

Research title: Understanding factor contributing to sexual harassment and exploitation of female students in higher institutions.

1. Can you tell me what led to you being sexually harassment or exploited by your lecture?
2. Which of you approached each other first and what was the reason?
3. Can you describe how the process started?
4. What can you was the reason for the man wanting to have sex with you?

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