PERCEPTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AMONGST FEMALE OFFICER CADETS OF THE NIGERIAN DEFENCE ACADEMY KADUNA

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Abstract

The study examined the prevalence, perpetrators, and relationship between age, battalion, regular course, and arm of service in sexual harassment among female cadets at the Nigerian Defence Academy Kaduna. A cross-sectional survey was conducted, with 125 female cadets completing the questionnaire. Results showed a high prevalence of sexual harassment among female cadets, with a significant negative relationship between age and perception. No significant relationship was found between battalion and sexual harassment perception among NDA female cadets. The regular course had a positive relationship with sexual harassment perception, while the arm of service had no relationship. The study concluded that sexual harassment is prevalent among female cadets and is perpetrated by both military officers and NDA lecturers. It is suggested that the academy design a mandatory sexual harassment training program for all staff, including service personnel, academic and non-academic staff, and male cadets, in collaboration with the counselling unit and the department of psychology.

Keyword, Cadets, Female, Harassment, Perception, Sexual

Introduction

Unwanted sexual attention or conduct that makes the target feel threatened, ostracized, or offended is known as sexual harassment.

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Sexual harassment can occur in a variety of contexts, including the workplace, educational institutions, and military training, and it can take many different forms, including verbal, physical, and visual. The issue of sexual harassment is widespread and affects people in a variety of contexts, including educational institutions. Because they are more likely to experience sexual harassment than male students, female students' perceptions of the problem are crucial to comprehending and solving the issue. According to research, female military officer cadets undergoing training at higher institutions are more likely to encounter sexual harassment. According to Kennedy et al. (2016), 60% of female cadets reported experiencing verbal, 14% physical, and 2% sexual assault as different types of sexual harassment. Because female cadets in training encounter a variety of sexual harassment, including unwanted sexual comments, jokes, and gestures, as well as physical assault, sexual harassment in military training is not only pervasive but also a serious problem (SWAN, 2018).

Sexual harassment is a problem among female military officer cadets who are undergoing training. These include a lack of institutional support, a hierarchical structure that encourages the abuse of power, and a masculinity culture that accepts and promotes sexual harassment (Kerr et al., 2017).

Women experience sexual harassment in a variety of contexts, including the military, and it is a worldwide issue. Sexual harassment has been reported by female military officer cadets all over the world during their training and service. Sexual harassment and gender discrimination are widespread problems in the US military, according to the US Department of Defense (DOD) (2019), and female military personnel were more likely to experience sexual harassment than their male counterparts. Additionally, compared to other female military personnel, those female officer cadets were more likely to experience sexual harassment during their training. The study also discovered that male officers were more likely than other male military personnel to engage in sexual harassment.

In India, sexual harassment in the military is a serious issue. According to a Ministry of Defence study from 2019, female officer

cadets in the Indian Armed Forces were more likely than other female military members to experience sexual harassment while in training. Due to their concern for retaliation or stigmatization, female officer cadets were also found to be less likely to report instances of sexual harassment.

According to research, there is a high prevalence of sexual harassment among female military officer cadets undergoing academic training. In military training environments, sexual harassment is common, according to a 2019 study by the US Department of Defense (DoD), with female cadets more likely to experience it than their male counterparts. According to the study, 20% of male cadets who were undergoing academic training reported being sexually harassed, compared to 50% of female cadets. The prevalence of sexual harassment among female military cadets during training was investigated by Iliyasu et al. (2020). According to the study, almost 60% of the female cadets who were surveyed said they had been the victims of sexual harassment at some point while they were in training. Unwanted physical contact, advances toward sexual relations, and remarks regarding a cadet's physique or appearance were the most typical types of sexual harassment that were reported.

According to Akande et al. (2020), sexual harassment against female military personnel in Nigeria occurs frequently. According to the study, more than 40% of the female cadets who participated in the survey said they had been sexually harassed while in training. The study also discovered that cadets who were still in the learning process were more susceptible to sexual harassment. These results imply that female military cadets' experiences with sexual harassment at the NDA may be significantly influenced by their regular course of study. Female cadets who are still in the early stages of their training should be the focus of efforts to prevent and address sexual harassment because they may be more susceptible to such behaviour. Age and sexual harassment: comprehensive education and training should be a part of any efforts made to combat sexual harassment at the NDA.

According to studies, younger female military cadets are more likely than older cadets to experience sexual harassment. For instance,

a US Department of Defense (DoD) study from 2019 found that cadets under the age of 25 were more likely than those over the age of 25 to encounter sexual harassment. The Service Women's Action Network (SWAN) (2018) found in a similar study that younger female cadets undergoing academic training were more likely to encounter sexual harassment than their older counterparts. Younger female cadets may be seen as more vulnerable and less likely to report sexual harassment incidents, which could be one explanation for this association.

Younger cadets might also be less accustomed to military expectations and culture, making them less prepared to handle situations involving sexual harassment. It is important to remember that there are complexities in the connection between age and sexual harassment. The likelihood of experiencing sexual harassment among female military cadets can also be influenced by other variables, including rank, gender, and branch of service. For instance, female cadets in branches of the military that are dominated by men may be more susceptible to sexual harassment than female cadets in branches of the military that are dominated by women.

Female cadets assigned to units with a high prevalence of sexual harassment were more likely to experience sexual harassment themselves, according to Helmer et al. (2020) research. The study also discovered that female cadets were more likely to experience sexual harassment if they were assigned to units with a hostile culture toward women.

The relationship between the battalion of female military cadets' experiences with sexual harassment was investigated by Koss et al. (2021). In comparison to female cadets assigned to battalions with a high proportion of female cadets, Koss et al. (2021) found that female cadets in battalions with a high proportion of male cadets had a significantly higher risk of experiencing sexual harassment. These results imply that a military unit's culture and climate can significantly affect the frequency of sexual harassment experienced by female cadets.

Female cadets who experience such behaviour are more likely to be in units with a hostile culture toward women or with a high prevalence of sexual harassment. Additionally, due to factors like

isolation and a lack of support, female cadets assigned to battalions with a high percentage of male cadets may be more susceptible to sexual harassment.

According to Kelley et al. (2021), female cadets who were just beginning their training were more likely to report sexual harassment than those who had already completed some of their training. The study also discovered that as the cadets advanced in their training, the frequency of sexual harassment decreased.

According to research, sexual harassment affects all military training environments, and female cadets are more likely to be harassed than their male counterparts. According to a RAND Corporation study, about 25% of female service members said they had experienced sexual harassment at some point during their military careers, with those numbers rising even higher during training sessions (RAND, 2018).

THEORIES: Power and Control Theory (Evan Stark, 2007): This theory suggests that sexual harassment is a form of power and control that is exerted by individuals or groups in positions of authority over others. The harasser uses sexualized behaviour or language to intimidate or coerce the victim and may do so to maintain their power and status.
Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1960): This theory proposes that individuals learn behaviours and attitudes through observation and imitation of others. In the case of sexual harassment, individuals who have been exposed to a culture or environment that condones or normalizes such behaviour may be more likely to engage in it themselves.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Leon Festinger, 1950): This theory suggests that individuals who engage in sexual harassment may experience cognitive dissonance, a mental discomfort that arises when one's beliefs or actions are inconsistent with one another. To resolve this discomfort, the harasser may minimize the harm caused by their behaviour or rationalize it as harmless or even desirable.

Organizational Culture Theory (Edgar Schein 2010): This theory proposes that sexual harassment is a product of the broader organizational culture in which it occurs. Organizations that prioritize

productivity and profit over the well-being of their employees may be more likely to tolerate or overlook sexual harassment, creating a climate in which such behaviour is normalized.

Feminist Theory (Catharine MacKinnon, 1979): This theory emphasizes the power dynamics between men and women and how gender inequality and patriarchy contribute to the prevalence of sexual harassment. It also highlights the importance of understanding sexual harassment as a form of gender-based violence that is rooted in systemic inequality.

Problem statement: There has always been a range of responses to incidents of sexual harassment against women in the workplace, in tertiary institutions, and the military. Despite the fact that some people prefer to place blame while others demand justice for the obvious victim, I believe that a small portion of the population still thinks it is absurd to bring these incidents to the attention of the general public. Regardless of which group one may be a part of, sexual harassment of women is a very real and present problem. The issue of sexual harassment is likely to be a serious threat to female officer-cadets in the Nigerian armed forces' success in their academic and military training, though literature reports a high incidence of sexual harassment of female students in tertiary institutions and its effects on the victims. Understanding that sexual harassment is a dangerous social phenomenon that affects Nigerian military institutions, particularly the Nigerian Defence Academy in Kaduna, is crucial because it has a negative impact on the victims' psychological and social well-being as well as the military and economy of the country. Therefore, if there are instances of sexual harassment of female students in military-related tertiary institutions in Nigeria, particularly the Nigerian Defence Academy, it is pertinent as a matter of urgency and national interest to address the issue.

Based on this context, the study seeks to ascertain the perception of the prevalence rate of sexual harassment among officer cadets at the Nigerian Defence Academy Kaduna in relation to age, battalion regular

course, and arm of service. It is with these objectives that the study was hypothesized as follows:

1. There will be a significant prevalence rate of sexual harassment amongst female cadets of NDA
2. There will be a significant relationship between age and perception of sexual harassment amongst female cadets of NDA
3. There will be a significant relationship between the battalion and the perception of sexual harassment amongst female cadets of NDA
4. There will be a significant relationship between the regular course and perception of sexual harassment amongst female cadets of NDA
5. There will be a significant relationship between the arm of service and the perception of sexual harassment amongst female cadets of NDA

METHODS

Design

A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data on the participants. The study has sexual harassment as an independent variable and perception of prevalence as a dependent variable.

Participants

Participants were drawn from female officer cadets of the NDA across the four battalions. The participants were comprised of all the 70RC–74RC female officer-cadets undergoing both academic and military training at the Nigerian Defence Academy in Kaduna.

Sample size and sampling technique

A sample of 125 female officer cadets, which is a total number of 70RC–74RC female officer-cadets, was selected for the study. Purposive and convenient sampling techniques were used to recruit participants for the study.

Instruments

A ten-item self-reported sexual harassment questionnaire developed by the researcher was used to collect data on the participants. A pilot study was conducted to determine the strength of Cronbach's alpha and to ascertain the reliability of the instrument.

Sexual Harassment Scale

The reliability of the sexual harassment scale was assessed among female cadets, and the results indicated a Cronbach's alpha coefficient.682, indicating good reliability.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized items	Number of items
.682	.723	7

Procedure

A clearance certificate to conduct research was obtained from the ethics committee of the NDA. The researcher visited the battalion lines and interacted with and briefed the female officer cadets on the significance and nature of the study. The researcher obtained the consent of the participants based on their willingness and voluntariness to participate in the study. Rapport with the participants was established, and confidentiality and unanimity were also assured before the questionnaire was administered. Participants were assured that they were not under any compulsion to participate; they could withdraw at any time during the conduct of the study if they chose to.

Method of Data Analysis

In this study, the binomial test and multiple linear regression (MLR) were used to test the hypotheses. The binomial test was utilized to test the first hypothesis. The binomial test is a statistical test used to determine if the proportion of successes in a sample differs significantly from the proportion of successes predicted by a null hypothesis. The

test is based on the binomial distribution, which describes the probability of achieving a specified number of successes in a fixed number of independent trials. The alternative hypothesis in a binomial test assumes that the proportion of successes is either greater than or less than the proportion hypothesized. As the data are binary, the binomial test is appropriate for testing the first hypothesis (that is, there are only two possible outcomes: sexually harassed and not sexually harassed).

Using the MLR, hypotheses 2, 3, 4, and 5 were tested. MLR is a statistical method that tests the outcome of a response variable using multiple explanatory (independent) variables. The objective of the MLR is to model the relationship between the explanatory and response variables.

RESULTS

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

	Frequency	Percentage %
Age Group		
16-18 years	11	8.5
19-21 years	83	64.3
22-24 years	34	26.4
Battalion		
Mogadishu	38	29.5
Abyssinia	30	23.3
Burma	32	24.8
Dalet	29	22.5
Regular Course		
74RC/100	12	9.3
73RC/200	31	24.0
72RC/300	42	32.6
71RC/400	28	21.7
70RC/500	16	12.4
Arms of Service		

Army	53	41.1
Navy	47	36.4
Air force	29	22.5

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the study participants. The table indicated that the majority (64.3%) of the female cadets were between 19 – 21 years of age. Most (29.5%) of the female cadets were in the Mogadishu battalion, most (32.6%) were in 72 regular courses; and most of the female cadets were in the army.

Figure 1
Experience of Sexual Harassment

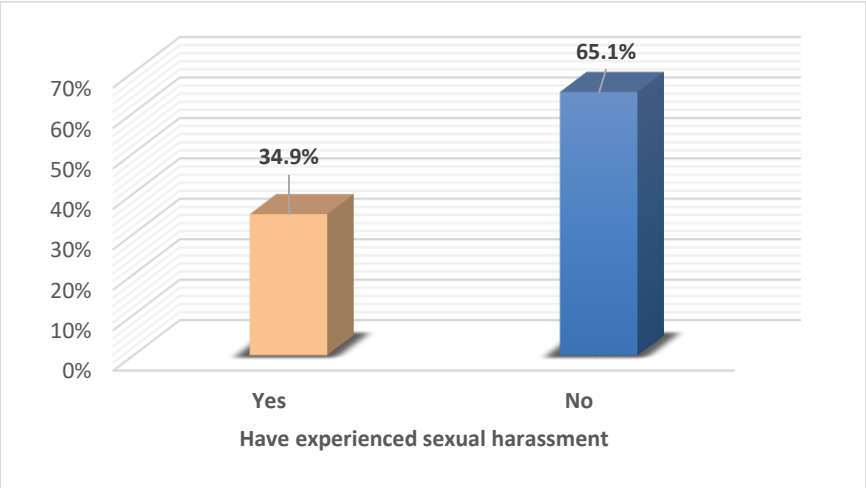


Figure 1 shows the rate of experience of sexual harassment by female cadets. The figure revealed that 34.9% of the female cadets indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment while 65.1% indicated that they had not experienced sexual harassment.

Table 2
Perpetrators of Sexual Harassment

	Frequency	Percentage %
Lecturers	10	7.8
Military officers	29	22.5
Cadets - Male cadets	4	3.1
Non-academic male staff	2	1.6

Table 2 shows the perpetrators of sexual harassment as indicated by among female cadets. The table revealed that 7.8% were lecturers, 22.5% were military officers, 3.1% were male cadets, and 1.6% were non-academic male staff.

Table 3
Factors of Sexual Harassment

	Frequency	Percentage %
Desperate to pass exams	50	38.8
Fear of being punished by military officers	68	52.7
Fear of being asked to serve job by senior cadets	91	70.5
To receive monetary gratification	57	44.2
Failure of victims to report	62	48.1
Influence of alcohol or drugs	43	33.3
For sexual urge and satisfaction	81	62.8

Table 3 shows factors indicated by female cadets as causes of sexual harassment. The table revealed that 38.8% was attributed to desperation to pass exams, 52.7% attributed to fear of being punished by military officers, and 70.5% was attributed to fear of being asked to serve job by senior cadets. Furthermore, 44.2% of the female cadets indicated 'to receive monetary gratification', 48.1% pointed to the failure of victims to report, 33.3% were of the opinion that the influence of alcohol or

drugs was a factor, and 62.8% indicated 'for sexual urge and satisfaction'.

Inferential Results

The Binomial test was used to test the prevalence of sexual harassment (Hypothesis one) in Table 4; and the multiple linear regression was used to test four hypotheses (hypotheses 2, 3, 4, and 5) at the 0.05 significance level. The results of the MLR are presented in Tables 4 and 5 below.

Table 5

Prevalence of Sexual Harassment among Female Cadets

Sexual harassment	Frequency	Observed proportion	Test proportion	*p*-value
No	84	.65	.50	.001
Yes	45	.35		
Total	129	100		

The Binomial test was used to assess if there is a significant prevalence rate of sexual harassment amongst female cadets of NDA (Table 5). The results revealed that using the test proportion 0.50, the results revealed that among the female cadets, 65% had not been sexually harassed, while 35% had been sexually harassed. The result indicated a significantly high prevalence of sexual harassment among female cadets in NDA (binomial test, p = .001). This indicates that the prevalence of sexual harassment among female cadets in NDA is significantly higher than 0.50. Hypothesis one is supported.

Table 6
Regression Model Summary

R^2	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.048	1.570	4	124	.186

Table 4 shows the regression model summary for age, battalion, regular course, and arm of service of female cadets. The result revealed that the coefficient of determination R^2= .048, $F_{(4, 124)}$ = 1.570 (5% level of significance). This showed that age, battalion, regular course, and arm of service can be held for 4.8% variability of perception of sexual harassment.

Table 7
Coefficients of Regression Model 1

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	*p*-value
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	8.436	1.264		6.677	.000
Age	-.929	.446	-.222	-2.082	.039
Battalion	.093	.191	.043	.487	.627
Regular course	.550	.251	.258	2.189	.030
Arms of service	.133	.320	.042	.417	.678

Dependent Variable – Perception of sexual harassment

Hypothesis 2:

Table 7 shows the testing of hypothesis 2. The result shows that the regression coefficient of age in the estimated regression line is -.222, which indicates that 22.2% of the change in perception of sexual

harassment among female cadets was accounted for by age. There was a significant negative relationship between age and perception of sexual harassment among female cadets (=-.929, t = -2.082, *p* =.039). Hypothesis two is supported. This means that an increase in age is related to a decrease in perceptions of sexual harassment, and vice versa.

Hypothesis 3:
The result of hypothesis three in Table 7 revealed that the regression coefficient of the battalion in the estimated regression line is 043, which indicates that 84.3% of the variability in the perception of sexual harassment among female cadets was accounted for by the battalion of female cadets. There was no significant relationship between battalion and perception of sexual harassment amongst female cadets of the NDA (=.191, t =.487, *p* =.627). Hypothesis three is not supported.

Hypothesis 4:
The result of hypothesis 5 in Table 7 revealed that the regression coefficient of regular course in the estimated regression line is 258, which indicates that 25.8% of the change in the perception of sexual harassment among female cadets was accounted for by regular course. There was a significant positive relationship between regular course and perception of sexual harassment among female cadets of NDA (=.550, t = 2.189, *p* =.030). Hypothesis 4 is supported.

Hypothesis 5:
Table 7 shows the result of hypothesis 5. The table indicated that the regression coefficient of Arm of service in the estimated regression line is 042, which indicates that 4.2% of the change in the perception of sexual harassment among female cadets was accounted for by arm of service. There was no relationship between the arm of service and the perception of sexual harassment amongst female cadets of the NDA (=.133, t =.417, *p* =.678). Hypothesis five is not supported.

Discussion: The first hypothesis predicted that sexual harassment would be commonplace among female NDA officer cadets. The

findings showed that among NDA officer cadets, sexual harassment is significantly more common. This finding is consistent with the US Department of Defense's (2019) findings that sexual harassment occurs frequently in military training environments, with female cadets more likely than male cadets to be targets. The outcomes also support Iliyasu et al.'s (2021) findings regarding the high prevalence of sexual harassment among female military cadets during training.

The second hypothesis predicted that among female NDA officer cadets, there would be a significant correlation between age and sexual harassment. The findings showed a significant inverse relationship between age and how NDA officer cadets perceived sexual harassment. This suggested a connection between an increase in age and a decline in perceptions of sexual harassment. This outcome is consistent with research from the US Department of Defense, which discovered that cadets under the age of 25 were more likely than older cadets to encounter sexual harassment. Similar findings were made by SWAN (2018), which discovered that younger female cadets receiving academic training were more likely than their older counterparts to encounter sexual harassment.

The third hypothesis predicted a strong correlation between the sexual harassment of female NDA officer cadets and the battalion. The study's findings showed that there was no connection between the battalion and sexual harassment among NDA officer cadets. This finding conflicts with those of Koss et al. (2021), who found that female cadets assigned to battalions with a high percentage of male cadets were at a noticeably higher risk of being sexually harassed than those assigned to battalions with a high percentage of female cadets. As a result, female cadets assigned to units with a high prevalence of sexual harassment were more likely to experience sexual harassment themselves, according to Helmer et al.'s (2020) findings.

The fourth hypothesis predicted that there would be a significant correlation between the regular course and how female NDA officer cadets perceived sexual harassment. According to the study's findings, sexual harassment among NDA officer cadets is positively correlated with the regular course for cadets. This finding is in line with those of

Kelley et al. (2021), who discovered that junior regular course female cadets were more likely to report sexual harassment than senior regular female cadets to have occurred during their early training. According to Bryant et al. (2021), the highest rates of sexual harassment were experienced by female cadets in Australia who were enrolled in lower-level regular courses at the beginning of their training.

According to hypothesis number five, there will be a significant correlation between the arm of service and how female officer cadets of the NDA perceive sexual harassment. The study's findings showed that there was no correlation between the cadet arm of service and sexual harassment among NDA officer cadets. This outcome is consistent with Rand (2018) findings, which showed that female cadets of the armed forces reported experiencing sexual harassment during their military careers without mentioning their branch of service specifically.

Conclusion: Male and female cadets, male officer cadets, lecturers, and other military personnel are all subject to the serious and pervasive issue of sexual harassment in the military. Despite the Nigerian Defence Academy's efforts to address the problem, much work needs to be done to provide a secure and respectful environment for all of the academy's military and civilian members. The findings show a high prevalence of the perception and that there is no significant relationship between battalion and arm of service and sexual harassment among officer cadets at the Nigerian Defence Academy Kaduna. The results also show that the perception decreases with increasing age and regular course enrollment for female officer cadets. Overall, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders need to pay attention to the complex issue of how female students perceive sexual harassment. The academy as a whole can contribute to the creation of a safer and more encouraging environment for all officer cadets by working to raise awareness of the problem and by providing clear policies and procedures for reporting incidents.

Recommendations: A Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office should be established at the Nigerian Defense Academy so that various

programs to combat sexual harassment and assault in the academy can be implemented. The academy should create mandatory training on sexual harassment and assault for all academy staff members, including all service personnel officers and men, and academic and nonacademic staff. This training should be developed in collaboration with the Department of Psychology and her counselling unit.

Programs for training should be put in place to inform cadets about the repercussions of sexual harassment and to advance gender equality and respect for diversity.

The academy authority should establish zero-tolerance policies against sexual harassment, as well as reporting mechanisms, prevention training programs, and supportive environments for mental health support, to encourage victims of harassment to report incidents of harassment and to ensure that offenders are held accountable for their actions.

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