

MARITAL STATUS AS CORRELATE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT EXPERIENCES AMONG ATHLETES IN SOUTHERN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT: *The study investigated marital status as correlate of sexual harassment experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities using survey design. Questionnaire was utilized to collect data from the athletes (N=946). Data were analyzed using percentage and simple regression. It was found that slightly above half of unmarried athletes (51.64%) have experienced gender harassment compared to few athletes who are married (3.11%). Also, higher percentage of unmarried athletes (39.80%) has experienced unwanted sexual attention compared to the married counterparts (1.91%). Moreover, greater percentage of single or unmarried athletes (12.06%) have experienced sexual coercion compared to a very insignificant percentage of married athletes (0.47%). Marital status had significant relationship with gender harassment; unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion experiences of southern Nigerian universities athletes. It was recommended that athletes especially those who are single or unmarried should be protected of sexual harassment by government through strong anti-harassment laws and policies.*

KEYWORDS: Single, Married, Correlate, Sexual Harassment, Behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Sport is a socializing activity and institution, and social problems (e.g. sexual harassment) that hamper the socialization function of sport have been the bedrock of research for sport sociologists. Participation in sports in a sexual harassment-free atmosphere is a fundamental human right for all irrespective of one's marital status whether single (unmarried) or married. Sexual harassment has made many sports participants to regret their socialization into or through sport. Sexual harassment is a violation of human rights (Brackenridge & Fasting, 2006), and an anti-social behaviour that negatively impacts on the health and safety of sport and its participants.

Sexual harassment, according to Brackenridge and Fasting (2006), refers to behaviour towards an individual or group of individual that involves sexualized verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviour, whether intended or unintended, legal or illegal, that is based upon an abuse of power and trust and that is considered by the victim or a bystander to be unwanted or coerced. Gender harassment (GH), unwanted sexual attention (USA) and sexual coercion (SC) are the empirically tested categories of sexual harassment (Gelfand, Fitzgerald & Drasgow, 1995). Every athlete is a potential victim of sexual harassment irrespective of his or her marital status. This means that married and unmarried athletes can experience sexual harassment. Sexual harassment does not respect one's marital status.

1. Literature/Theoretical underpinning

One of the theoretical explanations of sexual harassment in social settings such as sports is natural or biological model. The natural or biological model of sexual harassment, which was

propounded by Tangri, Burt and Johnson (1982), posits that the intent is not to harm, or harass women, but that men are naturally aggressive in pursuing their sexual urges. This model postulates that sexual harassment is the product of attraction of the man to exert pressure on the woman but devoid of any intent to harm her (Ladebo, 2003). This model asserts that sexual harassment is natural behaviour, that is, the normal consequence of the stronger sex drive of men. As a result of this higher sex drive, there is a mismatch between the sexual desires of men and women, which results in sexually aggressive behaviour at work. According to this theory, men emit sexual harassment behaviours in the workplace in order to improve the probability of gaining sexual access to more females (Sbraga & O'Donohue, 2000). This study was also anchored on the natural or biological model. There is no social setting that is devoid of sexual harassment reports and cases from unmarried and married people, and university athletic setting cannot be ruled out. Studies (Martin, 2003; Sabo, 1994) have suggested that sexual harassment in universities deserves attention and the need to formulate, implement policies and procedures to prevent it and protect the student-athletes. Identifying demographic variables that are related to activity can help prioritize subgroups for interventions (Sallis, Prochaska, Taylor, Hill, & Geraci, 1999). One of the demographic variables that may correlate with the sexual harassment experiences of athletes is their marital status. Questions arose as to what is the relationship between southern Nigerian universities athletes' marital status (single/unmarried and married) and gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion experiences?. Among the single/unmarried and married athletes, which group is most sexually harassed in southern Nigerian universities?.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to find out the relationship between marital status and sexual harassment experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities. The study specifically intends to determine the relationship between:

1. marital status and gender harassment experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities.
2. marital status and unwanted sexual attention experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities.
3. marital status and sexual coercion experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities

Research Questions

The following hypotheses guided the study.

1. What is the relationship between marital status and gender harassment experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities?
2. What is the relationship between marital status and unwanted sexual attention experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities?
3. What is the relationship between marital status and sexual coercion experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha level.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between marital status and gender harassment experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between marital status and unwanted sexual attention experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between marital status and sexual coercion experiences among athletes in southern Nigerian universities.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was employed in this study. This design was considered appropriate as it has effectively been utilized in related studies by Gettman (2003), and Witkowska (2005). A population of three thousand four hundred and eight athletes was used for the study. A sample size of one thousand two hundred and fourteen athletes was used for the present study. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to draw the sample. Firstly, universities in the southern Nigeria were stratified into the three geo-political zones (South-east, South-west, and South-south). Simple random sampling technique without replacement was used to select the number of universities that was a true representation of the overall number of universities in each zone. This is to ensure generalization of the findings. Secondly, purposive sampling technique was used to select all the married athletes for the study. All the married athletes were used since their population was small. Sixty per cent of the unmarried athletes in each selected university was selected using simple random sampling technique.

A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The face and content validity of the questionnaire were established by seven experts in the fields of Health and Physical Education, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology, and Measurement and Evaluation in University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Split-half method was used for questionnaire reliability testing. Overall reliability co-efficient of .8267 was established using Pearson product moment correlation in conjunction with Spearman-Brown prophecy statistic. Using Cronbach alpha, the inter-scale reliability indices of gender harassment ($\alpha = .7627$); unwanted sexual attention ($\alpha = .8520$), and sexual coercion ($\alpha = .9071$) were established. One thousand two hundred and fourteen copies of questionnaire were administered to the athletes. Only nine hundred and seventy-five copies of the questionnaire were returned giving a return rate of 80.31 per cent. Nine hundred and forty-six copies of the questionnaire were properly filled and finally used for analysis. Percentage and simple regression statistic were used to analyze the data. Ejifugha's (1998) criteria for interpreting the correlation co-efficient index was adopted in interpreting the nature of the relationship between athletes' marital status and sexual harassment experiences. According to her, .00 - .19 was considered "very low"; .20 "low"; .40 - .69 "average or moderate"; .70 - .89 "high", and .90 - 1.00 "very high" relationship.

RESULTS/FINDINGS**Table 1: Relationship between Marital Status and Gender Harassment Experiences among Athletes in Southern Nigerian Universities**

S/no	Items	<u>Single</u> (n = 777)				<u>Married</u> (n = 169)			
		f	<u>Yes</u> %	f	<u>No</u> %	f	<u>Yes</u> %	f	<u>No</u> %
1	Directing sexist jokes to athletes	579	74.54	198	25.48	4	2.37	165	97.63
2	Displaying and distribution of sexual materials to athletes	272	35.01	505	64.99	9	5.33	160	94.67
3	Sexually suggestive comments about athlete's body	531	68.34	246	31.66	5	2.96	164	97.04
4	Being treated differently because of athlete's gender	223	28.70	554	71.30	3	1.78	166	98.22
	Cluster %		51.64		48.36		3.11		96.89

$R = .561$; $R^2 = .315$; $df = 1 \text{ \& } 944$; $p < .05$; $F\text{-cal. } 202.172$; $F\text{-tab. } 3.84$; $\beta = .556$; $t\text{-cal. } = 60.172$; $t\text{-tab. } = 1.960$

Table 1 revealed that 579 (74.54%) single, and 4 (2.37%) married athletes have had sexist jokes directed to them, 272 (35.01%) single and 9 (5.33%) have had sexual materials displayed to them. Also, 531 (68.34%) single and 5 (2.96%) married athletes have had sexually suggestive comment made about their body. It is equally evident that 223 (28.70%) single, and 3 (1.78%) married athletes have been treated differently because of their gender.

In addition, the table showed that the R-value for GH is .561 which going by Ejifugha's (1998) criteria, showed positive moderate relationship. Again the F-cal. (202.172) is greater than the F-tab. (3.84) with df (1 & 944), and at .05 level of significance. Furthermore, the value of regression weight $\beta = .556$ (moderate predictive value of the GH experiences), and regression co-efficient of determination (R^2) is .315 showing that 31.5 per cent of the variation in the GH experiences was accounted for by the variation in athletes' marital status. Also, the table revealed that for GH, the t-cal. (60.172) > t-tab. (1.960), at $p < .05$ with df (944). Hence, there was significant relationship between athletes' marital status and gender harassment experiences.

Table 2: Relationship between Marital Status and Unwanted Sexual Attention Experiences among Athletes in Southern Nigerian Universities

Items	<u>Single</u> (n = 777)				<u>Married</u> (n = 169)			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1 Directing sexualized name-callings to athletes	462	59.46	325	40.54	7	4.14	162	95.86
2 Spreading sexual rumours about athletes	372	47.88	405	52.12	4	2.37	165	97.63
3 Talking about sex all the time in athletes' presence	409	52.64	368	47.36	3	1.78	166	98.22
4 Pressuring athlete for sex	154	19.82	623	80.18	2	1.18	167	98.82
5 Pressuring athlete for a date or relationship refusing to take "No" for answer	302	38.87	475	61.13	2	1.18	167	98.82
6 Pulling athlete's clothings in a sexual way	288	37.07	489	62.93	1	.59	168	99.41
7 Directing sexual gestures to athletes	315	40.54	462	59.46	6	3.55	163	96.45
8 Attempt to establish romantic relationship with athlete	290	37.32	487	62.68	2	1.18	167	98.82
9 Sending sexually offensive messages or calls to athlete	191	24.58	586	75.42	2	1.18	167	98.82
Cluster %		39.80		60.20		1.91		98.09

$R = .793$; $R^2 = .629$; $df = 1 \ \& \ 944$; $p < .05$; F-cal. 239.014; F-tab. 3.84; $\beta = .764$; t-cal. = 69.764; t-tab. = 1.960

Data in table 2 revealed that 462 (59.46%) single, and 7 (4.14%) married athletes have had sexualized name-calling directed to them, 372 (47.88%) single, and 4 (2.37%) married athletes have had sexual rumours spread about them, and 409 (52.64%) single, and 3 (1.78%) married athletes have had talk about sex all the time in their presence. Again, 154 (19.64%) single, and 2 (1.18%) married athletes have been pressured for sex, 302 (38.87%) single, and 2 (1.18%) married athletes have been pressured for a date or relationship refusing to take "No" for answer, and 288 (37.07%) single athletes, and 1 (0.59%) married athlete have had the clothings pulled in a sexual way. The table showed that 315 (40.54%) single, and 6 (3.55%) married athletes have had sexual gestures directed to them, 290 (37.32%) single, and

2 (1.18%) married athletes have had someone's attempt to establish romantic relationship with them, and 191 (24.58%) single, and 2 (1.18%) married athletes have had sexually offensive messages or calls sent to them.

It is also evident in the table that the R-value for USA is .793 indicating positive high relationship. It was evident that $F\text{-cal. (239.014)} > F\text{-tab. (3.84)}$, $p < .05$, $df (1 \& 944)$. The value of R weight $\beta = .764$ (high and strong predictive value), and regression co-efficient of determination (R^2) is .629 showing that 62.9% of the variance in the unwanted sexual attention experiences was as a result of variation in the athletes' marital status. The table further showed that the $t\text{-cal. (69.764)} > t\text{-tab. (1.960)}$, at $p < .05$, with $df (944)$. There was significant relationship between athletes' marital status and unwanted sexual attention experiences.

Table 3: Relationship between Marital Status and Sexual Coercion Experiences among Athletes in Southern Nigerian Universities

S/n	Items	<u>Single</u> (n = 777)				<u>Married</u> (n = 169)			
		Yes		No		Yes		No	
		F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1	Offering benefits as incentives to engage in sexual relationship with athlete	293	37.71	484	62.29	1	.59	168	99.41
2	Threatened athlete with negative consequences for refusing to engage in sexual relationship	198	25.48	579	74.52	0	.00	169	100.00
3	Forceful attempts to touch or fondle athlete's body	254	32.59	523	67.41	2	1.18	167	98.82
4	Attempted rape or forceful sexual intercourse on athlete	86	11.07	691	88.93	1	.59	168	99.41
5	Rape or forceful sexual intercourse on athlete	13	1.67	764	98.33	0	.00	169	100.00
	Cluster %		12.06		87.94		.47		99.53

$R = .836$; $R^2 = .699$; $df = 1 \& 944$; $p < .05$; $F\text{-cal. } 317.492$; $F\text{-tab. } 3.84$; $\beta = .728$; $t\text{-cal. } = 72.811$; $t\text{-tab. } = 1.960$

It is evident in table 3 that 293 (37.71%) single athletes, and 1 (0.59%) married athlete have had benefits as incentives offered to engage in sexual relationship, 198 (25.48%) single, and none (0.00%) of the married athletes have been threatened with negative consequences for refusing to engage in sexual relationship. Moreover, 254 (32.59%) single, and 2 (1.18%) married athletes have had forceful attempts by someone to touch or fondle their body, and 86

(11.07%) single athletes, and 1 (0.59%) married athlete have experienced attempted rape or forceful sexual intercourse. It could be seen in the table that 13 (1.67%) single, and none (0.00%) of the married athletes have experienced rape or forceful sexual intercourse.

The R-value for SC as could be seen in the table is .836 (positive high relationship). The F-cal. (317.492) > F-tab. (3.84), df (1 & 944), $p < .05$. The value of R weight $\beta = .728$ (high and strong predictive value), and regression co-efficient of determination (R^2) is .699 showing that 69.9 per cent of the variation in the sexual coercion experiences was accounted for by the variation in the athletes' marital status. Also the t-cal. (72.811) > t-tab. (1.960), $p < .05$, df (944); there was significant relationship between athletes' marital status and sexual coercion experiences.

DISCUSSION

The findings that athletes who are single mostly experience gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion than married athletes. This was expected as people may not see any reason for not directing sexually harassing behaviours to them. They may see them as people who are free and may not complain over some sexual behaviours as unwanted and offensive. The finding is not a surprise since it is culturally wrong and immoral to direct sexually harassing behaviours to married people including athletes. The finding agrees with Brandsaeter and Widerberg's as cited in Timmerman and Bajema (1997) that single or divorce individuals are more at risk of being harassed than married ones. The finding is also in agreement with Duncan (1987), and Fitzgerald et al. (1997) who reported that marital status correlates with sexual harassment experiences. The finding confirms Timmerman and Bajema's (1997) assumption that single or unmarried people are more likely to be harassed than married ones. Also, Lach and Gwertney-Gibbs (1993) noted that targets of sexual harassment are likely to be the singles.

Implication to Research and Practice

The implications of the findings that unmarried athletes mostly experienced gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion to research is that there will be need for development and mounting of intervention programme for prevention of all forms of sexual harassment on unmarried athletes. The implication of the findings to practice is that unmarried athletes are likely to withdraw from sports if nothing is done. Unmarried athletes will be discourage from participating in sports.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Athletes irrespective of their marital status experience different forms of sexual harassment ranging from gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention to sexual coercion. Single or unmarried athletes experience more sexually harassing behaviours compared to married athletes. Hence, it was recommended that:

1. athletes especially those who are single or unmarried should be protected of sexual harassment by government through strong anti-harassment laws and policies.

2. government and sport enthusiasts should design and implement sexual harassment prevention and intervention policies that will safeguard and protect the right, health and safety of athletes especially the unmarried athletes.
3. people should desist from sexually harassing athletes especially the unmarried ones.
4. perpetrators of sexual harassment on athletes especially on the unmarried athletes should be immediately prosecuted and brought to justice.
5. anti-harassment campaigns should be carried out by individuals, government and non-governmental organizations.

Future Research

1. Similar study should be carried out among the athletes in colleges of education in southern Nigeria.
2. A study on development of an intervention programme for sexual harassment prevention among southern university athletes especially among unmarried athletes aimed at societal attitudinal change should be carried out.

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