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MODERATING ROLE OF AUTHORITARIAN LEADERSHIP ON THE IMPACT OF DETERRENCE ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON NIGERIAN CAMPUSES: A PROPOSED MODEL

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ABSTRACT

Global reports increasingly recognize sexual harassment (SH) in the workplace as one of the most detrimental forms of employee misbehaviour. The recent exposure of SH of female students, often termed "sex for grades," on Nigerian campuses highlights a distressing facet of this problem. Notwithstanding the plethora of media coverage, the issue's significance and repercussions on Nigerian high institutions remain empirically underreported or overlooked. This paper provides a testable model of deterrence-based formal control with theoretical, practical, and managerial implications, intending to rectify the significant research gap and facilitate a comprehensive scientific inquiry into the issue to alleviate its effects. The conceptual study develops research propositions grounded in an extensive literature survey and the tenets of General Deterrence Theory. The research introduces a deterrence framework illustrating the negative effects of deterrence elements (certainty of punishment, severity of punishment, and celerity of punishment) on sexual harassment, with this correlation being more significant in organizations governed by authoritarian leadership. This article seeks to assist school administrators and policy makers in implementing a radical strategy to address the issue. The research proposes a well-established formal organizational control strategy, formerly recognized solely in information systems security, to address SH in an educational setting. Despite being conceptual, the theoretically based arguments of the study require empirical validation within the specified context and setting. Future research may enhance the conceptual framework by further confirming the claims and incorporating mediators in the hypothesized linkages.

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Introduction

Sexual harassment (SH) continues to be a widespread and insidious problem impacting subordinates across diverse professional settings. Prior studies in the United Kingdom indicate that more than 56% of hospitality workers have encountered harassment from customers, whilst approximately 27% have faced harassment from their supervisors (Topping, 2018). Comparable research in the United States indicates that 66% of women and more than 50% of men had experienced harassment from managers, with a considerable proportion also reporting harassment from colleagues (Sherwyn & Wagner, 2018). Numerous surveys indicate that the incidence of sexual harassment is extremely concerning in educational environments, notably within higher education institutions worldwide (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Dogar et al 2021; Foster & Fullagar, 2018; Ghassan, 2021; Klein, 2013).

Research regularly demonstrates that sexual harassment significantly affects the psychological and physical well-being of individual victims, their job satisfaction and performance, as well as the productivity and reputation of the organisation (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020). Individuals who suffer sexual harassment frequently endure heightened levels of stress, anxiety, sadness, and may develop post-traumatic stress disorder (George, 2019). Simultaneously, workplace sexual harassment can diminish employee engagement, elevate absenteeism, and obstruct career progression (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2018). Cortina and Leskinen (2013) emphasise that sexual harassment as one of the most detrimental obstacles to work success and pleasure for women. Moreover, Willness et al. (2007) identify the potential costs of sexual harassment for organisations as excessive legal fees from litigation, adverse publicity, detrimental impacts on recruitment and employee retention, diminished productivity, heightened absenteeism, and increased costs associated with sick leave. Regrettably, a significant consequence of sexual harassment is that it deters victims from reporting incidents due to apprehension of retaliation and the absence of legal mechanisms for redress, resulting in underreporting and consequently exacerbating the problem (Thacker & Gohmann, 1996).

SH is ubiquitous, and its severe adverse effects are seen across all socioeconomic strata, educational levels, cultures, nations, age demographics, and professions (Oni & Tshitangano, 2019; Mueller et al., 2001; Ranganathan et al., 2021)). A plethora of studies across several countries has identified sexual harassment as a prevalent kind of gender-based violence frequently experienced by students, particularly women, in their daily campus lives. A statewide survey of female students' experiences of violence on UK campuses revealed that one in four respondents had

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encountered unwelcome sexual behaviour (Erinosho et al., 2021).

Higher education institutions are essentially intended to be centres of study, research, and personal growth. However, numerous publications have underscored the pervasive issue of sexual harassment on university campuses, particularly in Nigeria (Joseph, 2015). Research demonstrates that sexual harassment is widespread in higher education, with women disproportionately affected as victims (Ghassan, 2021; Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020). Recent high-profile charges and exposures in the media have highlighted the issue, especially within the African setting, where the abuse of academic power relations has been extensively documented (Aina-Pelemo et al., 2021; Emmanuel et al., 2020). Sexual harassment in academic environments can be especially harmful due to the intrinsic power disparity between students and faculty, the enduring effects it may impose on a student's educational and career path, and its wider implications for the campus climate and reputation (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020). Joseph (2015) and Rapidah et al. (2018) assert that victims of sexual harassment in academic environments have repercussions such as humiliation, diminished concentration, subpar academic performance, failure, and potential exit from courses or institutions.

The issue of "sex for grades" scandals in Nigeria, wherein some lecturers misuse their authoritative roles to compel students into sexual engagements, has garnered considerable academic scrutiny (Aina-Pelemo et al., 2021; Ijitona et al., 2018; Onoyase, 2019). Unfortunately, the significance of this issue and its extensive implications for the educational framework and the psychological health of those affected have not been sufficiently examined. In light of this significant research void, this paper seeks to establish a conceptual framework rooted in General Deterrence Theory (Miranne & Gray, 1987) to investigate the influence of deterrence measures in alleviating SH on university campuses in Nigeria. The research aims to evaluate the gravity of sexual harassment on Nigerian university campuses. Moreover, the paper endeavoured to ascertain its truthfulness, the various manifestations, and their implications for students, with the aim of formulating propositions for forthcoming empirical investigations that could assist educational administrations with data-driven insights for the formulation of policies on SH and the establishment of an institutional control mechanism and support framework for victims.

Literature Review

The Concept of Sexual Harassment

A universally accepted definition of sexual harassment remains elusive; however, there exists a broad agreement that it includes a diverse array of unwanted and unwelcome behaviours of a sexual nature. The body of literature presents a multitude of interpretations regarding sexual harassment, encompassing a wide array of behaviours. These range from verbal harassment, which includes sexual comments, jokes, or requests, to visual harassment characterised by the exhibition of sexual imagery, and extending to physical harassment involving unwanted touching, grabbing, or assault (Bondestam

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& Lundqvist, 2020). The diverse interpretations of SH have concentrated on an array of particular behaviours, contingent upon the manner in which it is conveyed to the victim and the contextual circumstances surrounding its occurrence (Bui & Kleiner, 1996; Erinosho et al., 2021). For instance, as noted by Erinosho et al. (2021), there exist five distinct classifications of sexual harassment: (a) general harassment-actions that express insulting, degrading, or sexist sentiments; (b) seductive behaviour-unwelcome and inappropriate sexual propositions; (c) sexual bribery-request for sexual engagement and related conduct in exchange for benefits; (d) sexual coercion-engagement in sexual acts under threat or duress; (e) sexual imposition or assault-sexual offences and violations, encompassing rape and assault. Moreover, Joseph (2015) and Aina-Pelemo et al. (2021) categorise sexual harassment into several distinct forms: verbal harassment, which encompasses sexual solicitation, innuendos, and propositions; non-verbal harassment, including whistling and the distribution of pornographic images; physical harassment, characterised by touching, grabbing, and physical assault; and quid pro quo harassment, which involves demands for sexual favours in return for employment or academic advantages.

In scholarly environments, sexual harassment can manifest in various ways, including requests for sexual favours in return for academic advantages, inappropriate sexual remarks, and, in severe cases, sexual assault and rape. Nevertheless, Willness et al. (2007) contend that SH can be comprehended through both legal and psychological frameworks, with each category encompassing a diverse array of specific behaviours and interpretations. It was contended that given the predominance of empirical research originating from the United States, it may be contextually pertinent to elucidate the legal definition as understood within this jurisdiction. Within the framework of the U.S. legal system, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Jones, 2008) delineates sexual harassment as comprising "Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature" under specific conditions: (a) when submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's employment, (b) when submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual serves as the basis for employment decisions affecting that individual, or (c) when such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

In a comparable manner, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as articulated in Bryan (1980), delineates sexual harassment as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that explicitly or implicitly impacts an individual's employment, unreasonably disrupts an individual's work performance, or engenders an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment." Nevertheless, the World Health

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Organisation has articulated sexual harassment in broader terms as "any unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or perceived to cause offence, humiliation, or intimidation to the individual." Moreover, official documents from the International Labour Organisation and International Human Law indicate that sexual harassment may present as "quid pro quo" demands for sexual favours in exchange for employment or academic benefits, or as a "hostile environment" characterised by unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature (McDonald, 2012; Ranganathan et al., 2021).

Within the framework of Nigerian law, SH is characterised as "an act that threatens, intimidates, or coerces an individual into engaging in any form of sexual activity against their will, whether implicitly or explicitly, or any attempt to do so, or that establishes an intimidating, hostile, or offensive academic or work environment" (Imonikhe et al., 2011). Moreover, the Nigerian Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act of 2015 delineates sexual harassment as "including but not limited to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature"(Omidoyin, 2018)

As indicated in the earlier definitions, sexual harassment is fundamentally recognised as a type of sex discrimination that is categorised into two legal forms: quid pro quo and hostile/poisoned environment harassment (Apodaca & Kleiner, 2001; Bui & Kleiner, 1996). In addition to these legal definitions, there exist psychological dimensions to the phenomenon of sexual harassment. From a psychological standpoint, sexual harassment is viewed as a manifestation of gender discrimination and power imbalances frequently present in professional or academic environments, where those in authority exploit their position to obtain sexual compliance from those beneath them (Holcomb & Holcomb, 2008; Willness et al., 2007). The power dynamic outlined by Willness et al. (2007) often hinges on gender, with men in authoritative roles utilising their influence to engage in sexual harassment of female subordinates. In this context, sexual harassment is characterised as “unwanted sex-related behaviour at work that is appraised by the recipient as offensive, exceeding her resources, or threatening her well-being” (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; p. 15). Erinosho et al. (2021) and Kilpatrick and Kleiner (1999) delineate these sexual behaviours into two overarching categories: quid pro quo, which refers to the exchange of one entity for another, such as sexual favours in return for rewards or under duress; and a hostile working and learning environment. Quid pro quo harassment typically occurs within educational environments. Such a situation arises when a school employee overtly or covertly links a student's involvement in an educational program or activity to the student's acquiescence to unwanted sexual advances, solicitations for sexual favours, or other forms of sexual conduct, whether verbal, nonverbal, or physical. For

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instance, this may occur when a student is pressured into engaging in a sexual relationship with a lecturer under the duress of failing a course or the promise of advance insight into examination questions or the provision of favourable grades (Erinosho et al., 2021).

A fellow student may similarly engage in harassment towards their peer under the same circumstances. Conversely, a detrimental learning environment is characterised by a student, regardless of gender, facing continuous offensive and derogatory sexual remarks and actions. This may encompass unwelcome sexual propositions, solicitations for sexual favours, and various forms of verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature perpetrated by a lecturer, fellow student, or an external party. Such behaviour must be sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to hinder a student's capacity to engage in or derive benefit from an educational program (Apodaca & Kleiner, 2001; Bui & Kleiner, 1996). Research indicates that within educational environments, particularly among peers, claims of hostile-environment harassment occur with greater frequency than claims of quid pro quo harassment (Bogart & Stein, 1987; Imonikhe et al., 2011; Ranganathan et al., 2021; Ramsaroop & Parumasur, 2007).

Despite the various descriptions of SH, as noted by Erinosho et al. (2021), there is a consensus among researchers that the phenomenon includes any type of unwanted sexual behaviour that is offensive or harmful to the victim, whether it occurs as a singular event or is ongoing. The subject encompasses a variety of actions, including those that are criminal in nature, such as rape and sexual assault, as well as physically abusive behaviours like threats and fondling. It also includes verbal offences, such as making derogatory remarks, spreading rumours, and soliciting sexual favours in exchange for rewards. Non-verbal actions are present as well, including unwelcome touching, hugging, kissing, caressing, and blocking someone's path in a sexual manner (Cailleau et al., 2024).

Additionally, non-touching behaviours, such as telling inappropriate jokes, leering, and persistently requesting dates, are part of this spectrum. Visual offences include the distribution of inappropriate images, pornography, and seductive behaviour through indecent attire. In every instance of sexual harassment, the behaviour is unwelcome, objectionable, non-consensual, and constraining for the victim, potentially occurring between a superior and a subordinate, the reverse, or among colleagues. It may manifest in a direct or indirect manner, encompassing the procurement or attempted offering of an individual to another for the purpose of sexual engagement, and can involve individuals of either the same or differing sexes (Erinosho et al., 2021).

Antecedents and Causes of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment, an omnipresent concern with harmful repercussions for both individuals and organisations, arises from a multifaceted interaction of personal, institutional, and socio-cultural elements. This section explores these

antecedents, offering a scholarly viewpoint on the complex nature of this issue.

Individual Factors

At the individual level, specific personality traits, attitudes, and beliefs may elevate the probability of an individual participating in sexual harassment. Patriarchal attitudes and rape myths: Those who subscribe to patriarchal beliefs, which promote male superiority and female inferiority, are more inclined to view sexual harassment as permissible or to downplay its seriousness (Ibrahim & Haruna, 2014). In a comparable manner, the endorsement of misconceptions surrounding sexual violence, including the tendency to attribute blame to victims or to justify the actions of offenders, fosters an environment in which sexual harassment becomes normalised. Research indicates that entrenched societal beliefs that normalise and sustain sexual violence are more prevalent among male perpetrators than their female counterparts (Malhotra & Srivastava, 2016), as noted by Bogart & Stein (1987) and O'Leary-Kelly et al. (1995). This phenomenon arises from the inherent tendencies of men to perceive their social status and authority as a rationale for engaging in sexually coercive behaviour towards women who occupy subordinate positions.

In the same vein, a deficiency in empathy, combined with a pronounced sense of entitlement, may result in individuals overlooking the emotions and boundaries of those they target for harassment (Reiter-Palmon et al., 2008). They might perceive their actions as warranted, overlooking the damage caused. Zeigler-Hill et al. (2015) assert that individuals exhibiting elevated levels of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy-the trio of personality traits known as the "Dark Triad"-demonstrate a greater propensity for engaging in sexual harassment. Prior research indicates that individuals exhibiting these characteristics often display a deficiency in remorse, possess an inflated self-image, and engage in manipulative behaviours, factors that collectively enhance their likelihood of perpetrating sexual harassment.

Research indicates a connection between specific personality disorders, including narcissism and psychopathy, and an increased likelihood of engaging in sexually harassing behaviours (Hardies, 2019). These individuals frequently exhibit a deficiency in remorse and manipulate others for their own benefit. Literary analyses have recognised these personality traits as notable risk factors for sexual aggression and harassment (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2015).

Furthermore, inappropriate attire and conduct: individuals, particularly women, who choose to dress in a manner deemed immodest or display behaviours that are interpreted as provocative or alluring, may find themselves at a heightened risk of encountering sexual harassment. Onoyase (2019) and Chukwudi and Gbakorun (2011) assert that SH may arise from indiscriminate behaviours, such as inappropriate attire and engaging with multiple sexual partners. Inappropriate attire may serve as a means to alleviate the internal sexual tensions that individuals experience. Research suggests that a

contributing factor to sexual harassment in Nigerian tertiary education is the indecent dressing patterns observed among female students (Ahmed & Tijjani, 2019; Chukwudi & Gbakorun, 2011; Bello, 2020; Onoyase, 2019). The findings indicate that female students may adopt provocative attire to attract the attention of male lecturers. For instance, Ahmed and Tijjani (2019) argued that one contributing factor to sexual assault in higher education institutions is the indecent attire of females, which reveals their alluring physical attributes through tight and transparent clothing. Similarly, Ibrahim and Haruna (2014) assert that physical attractiveness constitutes a significant factor in the dynamics of sexual harassment. Thus, evolutionary psychology suggests that human physical attraction is intricately linked to sexual selection and the success of reproduction. This elucidates the rationale behind the human perception of specific traits as appealing, as these traits are typically manifest in individuals exhibiting robust health (Buss, 2007; Bonsteel, 2012). Studies indicate that males exhibit a greater susceptibility to visual appeal. Scholars like Ibrahim & Haruna (2014) and Madera et al. (2007) assert that men place significant importance on the physical allure of women. While there are merits associated with beauty and attractiveness, Madera et al. (2007) and Ibrahim & Haruna (2014) noted that there exists a less favourable reality regarding beauty. Individuals possessing exceptional attractiveness often find themselves the target of unsolicited sexual advances or experience animosity from peers of the same gender. Scholarly research indicates that individuals possessing remarkable physical appearance may become frequent targets of sexual harassment, as they tend to attract the voyeuristic inclinations of others (Udry & Eckland, 1984; Seiter & Dunn, 2000).

However, certain academics contend that the responsibility does not lie with the victim to conform to societal expectations of modesty in order to evade sexual harassment; instead, it is the duty of the perpetrator to abstain from such conduct (Seiter & Dunn, 2000; Pavlović et al., 2019; Hardies, 2019). Researchers such as Begum & Barn (2019) assert that the responsibility for sexual harassment lies squarely with the perpetrator, independent of the victim's appearance or conduct. Consequently, Begum and Barn (2019) contend that an individual's clothing or behaviour "provokes" sexual harassment, a prevalent misconception that endures in numerous societies, especially within patriarchal cultures.

Organizational Factors

The organisational context significantly influences the potential for either alleviating or intensifying the risk of sexual harassment. Foster and Fullagar (2018), Willness et al. (2007), and Jansma (2000) elucidate that various organisational factors can foster an environment conducive to the flourishing of SH. Leadership style and power dynamics: Organisations marked by authoritarian leadership approaches, where authority is concentrated and decision-making flows from the top, may foster an atmosphere that is ripe for harassment. Power dynamics are frequently

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manipulated, resulting in individuals having restricted options when confronted with harassment from those in higher positions (Willness et al., 2007). Research indicates that the existence of power imbalances, especially within hierarchical organisations, heightens the probability of sexual harassment taking place (Sheets & Braver, 1999). Furthermore, in cultures characterised by male dominance within organisations, conventional gender roles and stereotypes tend to be perpetuated, fostering an environment where sexual harassment is more probable and less frequently reported. Studies suggest that environments with a greater ratio of male staff often exhibit more lenient perspectives regarding sexual harassment. According to Foster and Fullagar (2018), the absence of well-defined policies and procedures within organisations can lead to a perception that sexual harassment is permissible. When there are no clear prohibitions or ineffective enforcement of existing policies, it conveys a troubling message regarding the acceptance of such behaviour. This lack of clarity fosters an environment conducive to the proliferation of harassment. Bui and Kleiner, (1996) posit that clearly articulated and uniformly enforced anti-harassment policies, along with robust training and reporting systems, can significantly reduce the incidence of sexual harassment in professional environments.

Socio-Cultural Factors

The prevalence of sexual harassment is also influenced by wider societal norms and cultural values. The subsequent socio-cultural factors exert a considerable influence: Gender Norms and Stereotypes: Societies that maintain inflexible gender roles and stereotypes, frequently relegating women to subordinate positions, establish an environment in which sexual harassment is more likely to transpire. For example, in a society characterised by patriarchal structures that sustain gender inequality and the objectification of women, sexual harassment frequently stems from power imbalances and the normalisation of misogynistic attitudes (Benya et al., 2018; Folke et al., 2019). Moreover, Societal Perspectives and Regulatory Structures: Societies that downplay or tolerate sexual harassment, or that fail to establish sufficient legal structures to safeguard victims and ensure accountability for offenders, sustain a continuous cycle of abuse. In contexts where attitudes that blame victims are widespread and the act of reporting sexual harassment is shrouded in stigma, individuals who have experienced such incidents are often disinclined to speak out, thereby enabling the continuation of the issue (Ranganathan et al., 2021; Rodriguez et al., 2021).

Consequences of sexual harassment

The ramifications of SH extend profoundly and destructively for both individuals and institutions (Benya et al., 2018; Mezey & Rubenstein, 1992; Oni & Tshitangano, 2019). SH exerts a considerable influence on women's professional engagement and mental well-being within the workplace environment. As noted by McLaughlin et al. (2017), considerable costs linked to SH, encompasses both the personal anguish experienced by individuals and the broader economic repercussions for the workplace. Students who experienced SH may

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encounter diminished focus, increased absenteeism, reduced academic performance, and potentially disengagement from their educational pursuits (Bello, 2020). Erinosho et al. (2021) observed that sexual harassment detrimentally impacts the victim's ability to participate in and benefit from educational programs, cultivates a hostile and offensive atmosphere in work and school settings, and engenders a deeply traumatising experience for the victim. Erinosho et al. (2021) indicated that SH can adversely affect students' well-being, incite and intensify conflicts among peers, foster a hostile educational atmosphere, and detrimentally impact academic performance and engagement. According to them, victims may also experience a range of psychological challenges, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and various other mental health concerns. The repercussions of harassment can profoundly impact one's mental health (Thacker & Gohmann, 1996) and overall well-being (Oni & Tshitangano, 2019; Forber-Pratt & Espelage, 2018; Chan et al., 2008). An extensive body of empirical research illustrates the psychological ramifications of sexual harassment, encompassing heightened anxiety, depression, PTSD, diminished self-esteem and self-confidence, and, in some instances, suicidal ideation (Benya et al., 2018; Skoog et al., 2023). Another study indicates that the impact on the victim's physical health is notable, often presenting as various physical symptoms, including headaches, sleep disturbances, digestive issues, and chronic pain (Bello, 2020).

The ramifications reach further than the individual, as sexual harassment also detrimentally influences the broader workplace or academic milieu, resulting in diminished productivity, elevated staff turnover, and a tarnished institutional reputation (Chan et al., 2008). It has also been well documented that the effects of SH are directly associated with declines in performance, heightened absenteeism, withdrawal from job responsibilities, diminished job satisfaction, and a reduction in organisational commitment (Mueller et al., 2001). Experimental studies have examined performance declines, revealing that women exhibit significantly reduced performance, particularly on tasks traditionally associated with masculinity, such as mathematics, in the context of experiencing sexual harassment. For example, Maass et al. (2013) found that exposure to an objectifying gaze negatively impacted women's performance in mathematics, while men's performance remained unaffected. In a related context, Gay and Castano (2010) observed a decline in performance on cognitive tasks among women when subjected to objectification, a decrease that the authors linked to heightened cognitive load (Gervais et al., 2011). Nevertheless, Maass et al. (2013) suggest that the precise mechanisms driving performance declines due to harassment warrant further investigation, ideally through the lenses of both objectification and stereotype threat.

Deterrence as Formal Control in Organization

Organisations employ various formal control mechanisms to discourage

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misconduct in the workplace and foster a secure environment. Various viewpoints have been employed to elucidate formal organisational controls. This technique is officially mandated; as noted by Khansa et al. (2017), "it is officially imposed strategies that generally consist of rules, regulations, policies, procedures, and penalties in the event of any violations" (p. 143). Consequently, the use of formal punishment as a mechanism for controlling and deterring employee misconduct has garnered significant focus in the literature concerning organisational control (Xue et al., 2010; Hollinger & Clark, 1982; Mounce & Mounce, 2008). Punishment is articulated within a formal organisational framework as "the manager's imposition of a negative consequence or the retraction of a positive consequence from an individual under his or her oversight" (Trevino, 1992, p. 649). Consequences that are deemed punitive often encompass verbal admonishments, suspensions, and dismissals. Withholding a pay rise or bonus can be perceived as a punitive measure, involving the withdrawal of advantageous outcomes (Arvey & Ivancevich, 2013). While the debate surrounding the actual deterrent effect of formally imposed objective sanctions persists, scholars who have explored the "deterrence doctrine" concur that the perceived threat of such sanctions plays a significant role in shaping individual behaviour (Apel & Nagin, 2015). The deterrent theory posits that individuals are less likely to engage in criminal behaviour if they perceive a high likelihood of apprehension and punishment, characterised by severity, immediacy, and certainty (Buckenmaier et al., 2021; Apel & Nagin, 2015; Pattnayak, 2006). Therefore, this paper centres on the concepts of punishment certainty, punishment severity, and punishment celerity as the means of formal organizational control.

An expanding array of studies has investigated the deterrent impacts of formal organisational controls on a range of deviant workplace behaviours, including theft, absenteeism, substance abuse, workplace violence, and sexual harassment (Hollinger & Clark, 1983; Willison & Warkentin, 2013; Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2006).

Authoritarian leadership style

The authoritarian leadership style is characterised by behaviours that impose absolute authority and control over subordinates, necessitating their unquestioning obedience (Zheng et al., 2020). Authoritarian leaders necessitate absolute compliance from their followers, fortify group norms by enforcing rigorous discipline, and impose penalties on those who diverge from established expectations. An authoritarian leadership style represents a management approach that potentially mitigates workplace misconduct through its focus on the assertion of absolute authority and control. Wang and Guan (2018) assert that leaders who display authoritarian tendencies characterized by a demand for unquestioning obedience, constant surveillance of subordinates, and severe penalties for infractions can foster an atmosphere in which employees are apprehensive about the repercussions of

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misconduct (Zheng et al., 2020; Xue et al., 2010).

An authoritarian leadership style has been extensively documented across diverse contexts, including policing, the military, sports, and organisations in both Western and Eastern nations (Jiang et al., 2017; Pizzolitto et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2020), demonstrating its capacity to function as a deterrence mechanism within the workplace. In accordance with the findings of Zheng et al. (2020), the congruence between leadership style and organisational control serves as a significant mechanism in influencing employee behaviour and fostering a secure, harassment-free workplace.

Theoretical Background and Proposed Model

Deterrence elements and sexual harassment

This study, grounded in the principles of general deterrence theory (Gibbs, 1968), presents a conceptual model aimed at exploring the influence of deterrence elements (D'Arcy and Herath, 2011; Nagin, 2013) in mitigating sexual harassment on campuses in Nigeria. General deterrence theory suggests that individuals are discouraged from participating in undesirable behaviours, such as sexual harassment, when they recognise that the potential costs or penalties linked to such actions surpass the perceived benefits (Yen, 2021; Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020). The fundamental concept of deterrence theory posits that human behaviour is rational, suggesting that certain deviant actions, such as sexual harassment, can be dissuaded through the negative incentives embedded within sanctions (Apel & Nagin, 2015). The deterrence theory holds significant sway in the social sciences, as it lays the foundational principles for law enforcement, crime prevention, and information security strategies.

The fundamental components of deterrence-severity, certainty, and celerity of punishment have been persistently associated with a decline in occurrences of deviant and unethical behaviour across diverse organisational contexts (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Ghassan, 2021). Research indicates that the perceived severity of punishment for deviant behaviours, such as sexual harassment, along with the certainty of apprehension and penalisation of perpetrators, and the promptness of imposed sanctions, can substantially deter such misconduct (Yen, 2021; Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020). Within the framework of sexual harassment on Nigerian campuses, drawing from the theoretical postulations and empirical evidence presented, this study posits that the establishment of comprehensive formal control mechanisms, characterised by the severity, certainty, and celerity of punishment, may function as a significant deterrent. Consequently, the subsequent propositions are presented:

Deterrence elements, in terms of:

1. *Severity of punishment for sexual harassment, will be negatively related to the incidence of SH on Nigerian campuses.*
2. *Certainty of punishment for sexual harassment, will be negatively*

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related to the incidence of SH on Nigerian campuses.

3. *Celerity of punishment for sexual harassment, will be negatively related to the incidence of SH on Nigerian campuses.*

Authoritarian leadership style as Moderator

An authoritarian leadership style characterised by a high degree of control has been suggested to enforce strict compliance with regulations, accompanied by severe penalties for violations, aims to enhance the deterrent impact of formal control measures regarding any form of misbehaviour in the workplace (Zheng et al., 2020). Empirical studies suggest that this approach to leadership could effectively deter employee counterproductive behaviour and other infractions by signalling that such behaviour will not be tolerated and will incur severe consequences (Jiang et al., 2017; Zheng et al., 2020; Deadrick et al., 1996). This occurs due to the nature of authoritarian leadership, where employees tend to view the repercussions of deviant workplace behaviour as more intense, inevitable, and promptly enforced, thereby strengthening the deterrent impact of formal controls.

Furthermore, empirical evidence as reported in Chan et al. (2013), Wang and Guan (2017) and Zheng et al., (2020) suggests that the efficacy of deterrence strategies in reducing deviant behaviour in the workplace may be enhanced in organisations marked by authoritarian leadership, as individuals in these settings tend to be more acutely aware of the possible repercussions of their behaviour. This empirical undertone is further supported by the literary analyses in Ghassan (2021) which underscore that sexual harassment is more pronounced in hierarchical, male-dominated academic settings, where power dynamics are frequently manipulated and a culture of silence and impunity is entrenched. Hence, it can be inferred that, the prevailing culture of impunity and silence regarding sexual harassment and rape in the Nigerian tertiary institutions (Azeez 2020), significantly contributes to its ongoing existence within higher education institutions. Therefore, the adoption of authoritarian leadership style may serve as a potent mechanism to address challenging organisational cultures and promote enhanced accountability.

Thus, based on the foregoing theoretical postulations and empirical evidence, this study proposes the following:

1. *The negative relationship between the severity of punishment for SH and the incidence of SH on Nigerian campuses will be stronger under conditions of authoritarian leadership.*
2. *The negative relationship between the certainty of punishment for SH and the incidence of SH on Nigerian campuses will be stronger under conditions of authoritarian leadership.*
3. *The negative relationship between the celerity of punishment for SH and the incidence of SH on Nigerian campuses will be stronger under conditions of authoritarian leadership.*

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4. *There will be an overall moderation effect of authoritarian leadership such that the negative relationship between formal control mechanisms and SH on Nigerian campuses will be stronger under conditions of authoritarian leadership.*

Proposed research Framework

The proposed conceptual framework illustrates the moderating influence of authoritarian leadership on the relationship between deterrent elements and sexual harassment. According to Figure 1, the deterrent measures implemented by an organisation are designed to reduce sexual harassment on campuses. Control mechanisms, specifically deterrent elements such as punishment certainty, punishment severity, and punishment celerity (Buckenmaier et al., 2021; Apel & Nagin, 2015), are likely to deter staff from engaging in SH. It is posited that deterrent elements alone are inadequate for controlling the phenomenon of SH. The effectiveness of deterrent-based formal control mechanisms in reducing sexual harassment is contingent upon the extent of authoritarian leadership style employed within the organisation. Authoritarian leadership tends to employ deterrent-based formal control mechanisms, which are likely to reduce sexual harassment in the workplace.

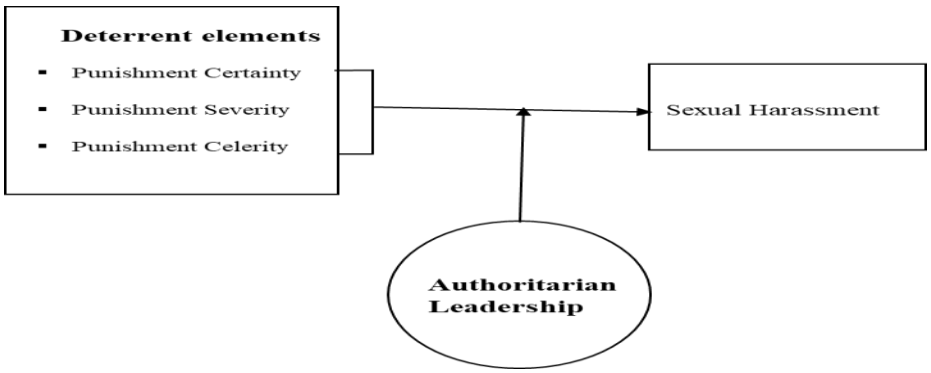


Figure 1: Proposed research Framework

Methodology

This paper presents an investigation into relationship between deterrence elements and SH in a workplace using authoritarian leadership as moderator. The study presents a proposed conceptual framework derived from deterrent theory and an extensive literature review, which suggests that authoritarian leadership plays a moderating role in the relationship between the deterrent factors (punishment certainty, punishment severity and punishment celerity) as formal organizational control and sexual harassment. In order to empirically evaluate and validate this conceptual framework in the future, it is imperative to undertake a quantitative survey study involving a sample of female students and academic staff from Nigeria's higher education institutions.

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Results and Discussion

The occurrence of SH within the Nigerian higher education framework necessitates rigorous scholarly examination, as these aberrant behaviours undermine standards, contaminate the academic milieu, and contribute to student attrition (Erinosho et al., 2021; Popoola, 2023), alongside various other detrimental effects (Maass et al., 2013). While there exists a substantial body of literature addressing the consequences, antecedents, and prevention of SH in Western contexts, there is a notable scarcity of theoretical frameworks specifically designed for the Nigerian socio-cultural landscape, characterised by unique power dynamics, organisational structures, and cultural norms. In response to the identified knowledge gaps, this proposed testable model offers significant theoretical and practical contributions.

Theoretical Contribution

The proposed model utilises a comprehensive framework of deterrence theory to analyse the influence of deterrent elements (severity, certainty, and celerity of punishment) on the SH within Nigerian academic institutions. The proposed model, by synthesising deterrence theory with organisational behaviour and leadership research, provides a nuanced understanding of the various factors that can alleviate the widespread issue of SH in higher education. Consequently, the initial contribution of this paper lies in the formulation of a testable model that is firmly rooted in theoretical foundations.

The empirical findings of this study are anticipated to yield significant insights regarding the function of deterrence-based formal control mechanisms in mitigating sexual harassment on Nigerian campuses. Scholars and practitioners in the fields of organisational behaviour and human resource management stand to gain significantly from a comprehensive empirical investigation into the pertinent issue of SH. Consequently, a scholarly inquiry into deterrent-based organisational formal control and leadership style, as well as SH, can be initiated based on the relationships delineated in this study, as they are underpinned by theoretical support. Furthermore, it is empirically established that the definitiveness (certainty), intensity (severity), and promptness (celerity) of punishment may serve to deter instances of organizational misbehaviour such as SH (Bui & Kleiner, 1996; Malhotra & Srivastava, 2016; Zheng et al., 2020). However, the concept of celerity remains largely overlooked in empirical investigations concerning employee misbehaviour, particularly within Nigerian academic institutions. Furthermore, the three components of deterrence are seldom analysed collectively within a singular empirical framework, with the exception of studies situated in the realm of information systems (D'Arcy & Herath, 2011).

Practical Contribution

The proposed model provides significant insights for policymakers and school administrators in Nigeria who are engaged in tackling the ongoing issue of sexual harassment on campuses. It offers a comprehensive framework for executing a cohesive strategy that utilises deterrence-oriented formal control mechanisms while enhancing leadership approaches. The

model indicates that robust anti-SH policies characterised by definitive, severe, and prompt repercussions, coupled with authoritarian leadership approaches, can significantly diminish the prevalence of SH on Nigerian campuses. Moreover, the model provides a basis for the creation of specialised training initiatives aimed at institution administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals, thereby deepening their comprehension and implementation of effective deterrence-based strategies.

Limitation and direction for future research

While this paper presents several noteworthy contributions, it is fundamentally undermined by the absence of empirical testing of the hypotheses within the proposed context of the study. The proposed correlations outlined in this study are, nonetheless, underpinned by theoretical frameworks and hold the potential for empirical validation in subsequent research endeavours. Consequently, in order to identify the suitable validated instruments for evaluating the proposed model, we suggest employing the SH scale as outlined in Willness et al. (2007) to investigate HS among academics in Nigeria. Comparable insights may be derived from the established frameworks of deterrence-based formal controls and scales of authoritarian leadership. Twelve items from Johnston et al. (2015) and Boss et al. (2009), for instance, could be employed to analyse the four dimensions of formal control grounded in deterrence theory. Johnston et al. (2015) presented metrics for evaluating deterrent elements, including the certainty, severity, and celerity of punishment. In contrast, Zheng et al. (2020) offered instruments for the assessment of Authoritarian leadership style.

The second limitation lies in the model's exclusive emphasis on a deterrence-based approach to the mitigation of sexual harassment, potentially neglecting other significant elements, including the influence of organisational culture, gender dynamics, and individual variances (Tinkler & Zhao, 2019; Ramsaroop & Parumasur, 2007; Shanker et al., 2015). Future research may enhance the model by integrating these supplementary variables to offer a more thorough comprehension of the matter.

Furthermore, within a theoretically robust framework, this study employed an authoritarian leadership style as a moderating factor in response to the concerning prevalence of SH and its related consequences. Subsequent investigations may consider employing an alternative leadership style as either a moderating or independent variable. For example, transactional leadership has been shown to be an effective leadership style for addressing workplace deviant behaviour in Nigerian campuses (Ibrahim et al., 2022).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this conceptual paper presents a model rooted in theoretical frameworks that investigates the influence of deterrence-based formal control mechanisms and authoritarian leadership styles in addressing the widespread issue of sexual harassment on Nigerian

campuses. The proposed model enhances the current body of literature by synthesising deterrence theory with organisational behaviour and leadership studies, thereby offering a more sophisticated comprehension of the matter at hand. Although the model necessitates empirical validation, it provides significant insights for policymakers and administrators in higher education institutions aiming to tackle the on-going issue of SH in Nigeria.

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