



THE CULTURE OF SILENCE AND THE PRACTICE OF SEX FOR GRADES IN A TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract

Sex for grades a global health concern growing at an alarming rate. It involves asking for sex in exchange for high grades usually without getting the consent of the victims by perpetrators. Perpetrators are usually allowed to go scot free; victims are forced to be quiet as if nothing happened in what is called culture of silence, while the victims suffer several traumatic experiences. This study seeks to find out some of the factors that promote sex for grades, the outcome of sex for grades, forms of sex for grades, possible solutions and the influence age has on outcomes of sex for

grades. The study utilized a population of 392, with a sample of 196 made up 50 males and 146 females all of which are final year students, selected using the systematic sampling technique. The questionnaire was the instrument for collecting the needed data. The study revealed that increased absenteeism (84.1%), transmission of sexually transmitted infections (91.8%) are some of the outcomes of sex for grades while inappropriate touching of body parts (56.6%) scored high for form of sex for grades. Also, age had no influences on form of sex for grades. Recommendations made included; the need to strengthen disciplinary committees and expose perpetrators to curb the menace among others.

Keywords: sex for grades, sex related policy, teenagers

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Introduction

Sex for grades is a type of gender based violence experienced by persons especially females in government owned institutions. It is sometimes referred to as sexually transmitted grades (Elin, 2019). Elin, (2019) opined that it involves demanding sex for upgrade of scores as a payment for good done for someone who is usually a female subordinate and forcing her to be silent as well. Sex for grades can be for appointment, employments, promotions, financial support, contract awards, for assignment of acting roles etc. It is an unethical practice indulged in by bosses, teachers or lecturers in tertiary institutions (Ademola, 2011). Whatever way it comes, it is a violation of human rights, a barrier in the way of educational success (Udechukwu & Nwankwo, 2020). In schools, teachers/lecturers can deliberately fail a student just to make her come begging for extra scores. At other times, weak students out of fear, offer sex just to get high grades from lecturers without any feeling of affections (Oludayo, 2019). In a country where emphases lie on paper qualification/class of degree, this situation could expose girls to friends who may pressurize them. It can also be promoted by wearing indecent clothing, forceful demand for sex, enhanced information crises crossing via phones between students/ lecturers at will after an exam has been written (Udechukwu & Nwankwo, 2020).

Sex for grades is more dehumanizing when the victim is coerced to give in without consent (Daily Trust, 2020). The outcome is an increased rate of absenteeism, loss of self confidence, traumatic mental effects, increased sexually transmitted diseases, feeling of suicide and eventual decline in educational standards with yearly turnout of uneducated graduates into the society (Premium Times, 2019., Udechukwu & Nwankwo, 2020). This was probably the reason why Muasya referred to sex for grades as the dark market behind the schools (Muasya, 2014). This dark market is likely to hamper the achievement of the SDGs 3 and 4 related to health and Education come 2030 (UNICEF, 2022). Sometimes, sex for grades can come in various forms such as forced kissing, inappropriate touching of sensitive parts of the girls' body, repeated stalking, acting in an intimidating manner, or forced sexual intercourse. When these happen, the victim may not have a platform to courageous voice it out because of the aftermath effect



(Udechukwu & Nwankwo, 2020). It can be hard especially when school authorities are notified and no action was taken to address it. It is harder when the victim is a teenager. Obviously, our universities are filled with more teenagers at the undergraduate level (Oludayo, 2019). This is so because the Nigerian admission requirement into a tertiary institution demands that candidates entering age must be 16 (Joint Admission and Matriculation Board (JAMB) 2021 as cited by Oludayo 2021). Such a candidate graduates as a teenager at the age of 19, if the duration of the course he/she is admitted into is for 4 years. By implication, such a student is likely a teenage graduate. This teenage age increases vulnerability and exposes them to poor sexual choices (Ademola, 2011).

Studies in Italy and the U.S. suggested that teenagers are highly vulnerable to sexual pressure and less equipped with skills to manage the complex emotional processes associated with forced sex. This becomes more complicated when a matured adult forcefully demand sex for grades. The study also indicated that a teenager who engages in sex with those they are not romantically attracted to are likely to suffer from unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion and may contemplate suicide (Muasya, 2014). Most teenagers may not have sufficient knowledge on sexual behaviour and may not understand why a mature adult is stalking them (African Regional Sexuality Resource Centre, 2021). These issues can be addressed and the effects reduced if the authorities of tertiary institutions make extra efforts at implementing policies to improve safety and standards (Muasya, 2014). This was considered an effective method when conference marking was introduced in Niger Delta University. Thus reducing sex for grades and sexual harassment in the University environment (Edoumiekumo, 2021). Such policies will empower young school girls to speak up and break the culture of silence which has become a societal threat (Joyner & Udry, 2000). A World Bank data in 2018 revealed that tertiary institutions in 59 countries do not have sexual harassment laws both in government owned institutions and in private institutions. The University of Port Harcourt, in an Agency report, revealed that female students jubilated when the school authority unveiled her sex for grades policy document (Premium Times, 2019). Whether the policy will be implemented is a different thing



altogether (Daily Trust, 2020). Statistics indicated that 1 out of 5 cases of sex for grades are reported, such reports are always played down. In a separate study in Ethiopia, 78% cases of sex for grades in schools that were reported by females and 70% in Nigeria did not get any kind of school authority support; instead the cases were trivialized and pushed under the carpet. This can compound the shame or feelings of trauma experienced by the victims. On the other hand, the victim may not have enough courage to report immediately, this may also leave her with little or no evidence with which the authorities can pursue and prosecute the offenders should they decide to. The implication is that the victim suffers in silence. It should be noted that school authorities can only act if students make a formal complaint with substantial evidence (Joyner & Udry, 2000).

Sex for grades can be prevented when schools have sex related policies such as sexual harassment policy that can punish offenders by way of sanctions, suspensions, demotion, exclusions or even the use of verbal or written apology to victims and the school for violating school policies (Elin, 2019). However, the International Federation of Female Lawyers (FIDA) suggested ways to deal with sex for grades as; by strengthening disciplinary committees in institutions so that staff and students can feel protected in a gender responsive environment, by reviewing recruitment processes so that only morally upright persons are engaged to promote professionalism (HealthDay, 2010). Modern technology can suffice to expose perpetrators (Opera news, 2021). This can be routes of escape for victims.

It was observed that although studies have been done related to sex for grades in Nigeria, none of the study focused on teenagers in higher institutions whose reproductive organs are not fully developed and whose rights have been trampled upon. This study therefore seeks to examine the culture of silence and the practice of sex for grades in a tertiary institution in Delta State.

Method

The study utilized the descriptive survey research design. The population for the study was 392 out of which a sample of 196 was selected using a systematic sampling technique to select all odd numbers from admission registers for final year students of 2020/2021 session. The purpose of the study was to identify factors that promoted sex for grades, forms of sex for grades and identify



solutions to the problems. Also to identify if age has any influence on forms of sex for grades. These purposes guided the researcher in the construction of questionnaire tool. This tool with a reliability coefficient of 0.61, was validated by experts in the field of health and safety. The tool was administered personally with a retrieval rate of 100%.

Results and Discussion

A. Results

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by age

Age of respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Under 15	13	6.6
16-19	162	82.7
20-22	12	6.1
23-25	6	3.1
Above 25	3	1.5
Total	196	100%

Table 1 indicated that ages 20-22, 23-25 and above 25 are 6.1%, 3.1% and 1.5 % respectively. While under 15 is 6.6% and 16-17 is 162%. These data show that the later group of respondents are within the age bracket of teenagers. The implication is that majority of the respondents are teenagers (6.6% and 82.7%).

Table 2. Outcome of sex for grades

Outcome of sex for grades	Yes	No	I don't know
1.Increased absenteeism	165 (84.1%)	0 (0 %)	31(15.8 %)
2. Transmission of sexually transmitted diseases	180 (91.8%)	2(1.02 %)	14 (7.1 %)
3. Feeling of suicide	8 (4.1 %)	183(93.4 %)	5 (2.6 %)
4. Loss of self confidence	43 (29.9%)	40 (20.4 %)	113(57.7 %)
5. Unwanted pregnancies	62 (31.6 %)	45 (22.9 %)	89(45.4 %)
6. Uneducated graduates	157(80.1%)	9(4.6%)	30(15.3%)

Table 2 indicated increased absenteeism was 84.1% for yes, while no recorded 0%. Transmission of sexually transmitted diseases had 91.8% yes and 1.02% no. I don't know recorded 7.1%. Also, 4.1 % had feelings of suicide, 93.4% no and 2.6% was for yes and I don't know had 2.6%. In the same vein, loss of self confidence had 29.9% yes, 20.4% no and 57.7% was for



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I don't know. Unwanted pregnancy had 31.6%, 22.9%, 45.4% were recorded for yes, no and I don't know respectively. Uneducated graduates made 80.1% for yes, 4.6% no and 15.3 was I don't know.

Table 3. Forms of experiences by female students

Experiences by female students	Yes	No	I don't know
1. Forced kissing	3 (1.53 %)	180 (81.8 %)	13 (6.6 %)
2. Repeated stalking	91 (46.4 %)	1 (0.5%)	104 (53.1%)
3. Forced sexual intercourse	76 (38.8 %)	48 (24.5 %)	72 (36.7 %)
4. Inappropriate touching of body parts	111 (56.6 %)	30 (15.3 %)	55 (28.1%)
5. Acting in an intimidating manner	101 (51.5%)	0 (0 %)	95 (48.5 %)

Forced kissing had 1.53 % yes, 81.8% no and 6.6% for I don't know. Repeated stalking was 46.4%, 0.5%, and 53.1 for yes, no and I don't know. Forced sexual intercourse was 38.8% yes, 24.5% no and I don't know was 36.7%. Inappropriate touching of body parts (56.6 %,15.3 %, 28.1%) for yes, no and I don't know. Acting in an intimidating manner recorded (51.5%, 0 % and 48.5 %) for yes, no and I don't know.

Table 4. Ways to curb sex for grades

Ways to curb sex for grades	Yes (%)	No(%)
1. Development of sex related policies in institutions	27(36.6%)	124(63.3%)
2.Strengthening of disciplinary committees in institutions	88(44.9%)	108(55.1%)
3. Review of admission policies	130(66.3%)	66(33.7%)
4. Review of recruitment processes	30(15.3%)	166(84.7%)
5. Expose perpetrators	127(64.8%)	69(35.2%)

Table 4 revealed that strengthening of disciplinary committees in institutions (44.9%) and expose perpetrators ranked highest while development of sex related policies in institutions 36.6% and review of recruitment process (15.3) ranked lowest.

Table 5: Chi-square statistics on influence of age on forms of sex for grades

Scale			N	X ²	Df	Critical table value	P	R
	Yes	No	196	118.827	2	9.133	0.05	Sig
Fo	175	21						
F3	98.5	98.5						



The above table 5, $X^2 = 118.827 > 9.133$. This indicates that there is a significant influence of age on forms of sex for grades experienced by females. These findings confirmed that age has a significant influence on experiences of females (form of sex for grades).

B. Discussion

Table 1 indicated that under 15 with 6.6% and 16-17 with 162% are within the teenage age and are a majority. This tallies with what Oludayo in 2019 stated that our universities are filled with more teenagers at the undergraduate level. In table 2, respondents agreed that the outcome of sex for grades included increased absenteeism, sexually transmitted diseases, loss of self confidence, unwanted pregnancies and turn out of uneducated graduates. The study agrees with Ademola in 2011 who stated that a teenager who engages in sex with those they are not romantically attracted to are likely to suffer from unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion and may contemplate suicide. Table 3 show experiences of females which are mostly repeated stalking, inappropriate touching of body parts, forced sexual intercourse and acting in an intimidating manner, These experiences according to Premium Times, 2019., Udechukwu and Nwankwo, 2020 suggested that this can result in an increased rate of school drop outs, absenteeism, loss of self confidence, traumatic mental effects, feeling of suicide and eventual decline in educational standards This was probably the reason why Muasya in 2014 referred to sex for grades as the dark market behind the schools. The findings on table 4 indicated sex for grades can be reduced through strengthening of disciplinary committees in schools and also to expose perpetrators. These are in agreement with what the International Federation of Female Lawyers (FIDA) suggested that ways to deal with sex for grades as; by strengthening disciplinary committees in institutions so that staff and students can feel protected (Blue Print Newspaper, 2011). Also in agreement is the use of modern technology to expose perpetrators (Opera news, 2021). Although the study suggested that age has something to do with the form of experiences that females face, this was at variance with the views of African Regional Sexuality Resource Centre, 2021 that to be young in African setting means sexually vulnerable. By implication, vulnerability is not related to age.



Conclusion and Recommendation

1. Students should be encouraged to work harder to avoid being intimidated into sex for grades.
2. School authorities should strengthen disciplinary committees in schools to create a more gender responsive school environment where students can feel safe to learn.
3. Expose perpetrators to serve as deterrent for others
4. School authorities should be encouraged to have sex related policies in place that can be implemented if staff or students are found wanting.



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