

Female Faculty of Education Undergraduate Students' Sexual Harassment Experiences during Work – Placement

Mawere Daniel , Moyo Annah

Abstract:

The study aimed at finding out the sexual harassment experiences of female undergraduate student teachers during work related learning in secondary schools, who the perpetrators were and the extent to which these experiences were reported. All this being done in order to mitigate sexual harassment incidences during work-placement. The organizational theory of sexual harassment with its focus on how power is abused to sexually harass especially females in organisations informed the study. A qualitative exploratory descriptive design was employed in conducting the study. Convenient sampling technique was used to come up with the study sample. Face to face interviews were carried out with female undergraduate students. These students had experienced sexual harassment and had returned from a year long period of work experience. The interviews were audio taped. A thematic content analysis was used in analysing data. The study found out that female undergraduate students experienced verbal, physical and visual sexual harassment from male perpetrators inclusive of mentors, other qualified teachers and some school heads. Very few students reported their experiences to both school management and faculty of education leaders. Most participants did not report their sexual harassment experiences at all. The main reasons for not reporting were: fear of being victimised by the school community after reporting; having an attitude that nothing will be done about the sexual harassment report; ignorance of where and how to report as well as thinking that it was not very important for sexual harassment victims to report the experiences, among other reasons. Mitigating sexual harassment in practicing schools is possible: when teacher preparation programmes provide training to undergraduate students about sexual harassment in workplacements; when there are quality relationships, safe, supportive and trusting learning environments in the practicing schools.