Gender Stereotypes and Language Indices of Sexual Violence in Lagos State Universities

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Abstract

This paper presents an aspect of the result of a British Council Funded project on " Preventing sexual violence on university campuses in Nigeria" using Braun and Clarke (2006) Reflexive Thematic theory to analyze listening exercises from three purposively selected institutions in Lagos State with insights from theoretic elements from linguistic Pragmatics. Findings reveal that female students are unable to speak up against sexual violence because of stereotypes relating to respect for elders, proximity to the opposite sex and assumptions.

Keywords: Sexual violence, BBC, British Council, Gender stereotypes, Lagos State Universities

1.0 Introduction

Humans are complex beings. As such, we tend to have different beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes towards other sets or groups of people in a defined setting. These beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes may be construed as "stereotypes." Stereotypes are simply widespread/conventional assumptions and notions concerning a particular group or thing, and a sort of trait or behaviour they wield. Fiske & Operario, (2004) define stereotypes as "a cognitive structure formed by an individual's fixed ideas or expectations about members of a specified group." According to Karasawa (2007), stereotypes are coined from interpersonal relationships and communications we establish with other people. It is pertinent to note that there are certain stereotypes that people attach to almost all domains of life, be it education, politics, governance, religion, institutions amongst others. These stereotypes may be positive or negative. Also, stereotypical beliefs may be attached to genders- male and female, shaping how a gender views, communicates, and establishes interpersonal relationships with each other. The United Nations Human Rights (UNHR) defines gender stereotypes as "a generalised view or preconception about attributes, characteristics, or roles ought to be performed by women and men". According to UNHR, stereotype is usually a form of a biased view of women in the society, which could be very negative towards women and may lead to infringement of human rights and freedom. The European Institute for Gender Equality (2015) explains gender stereotypes as "preconceived ideas whereby female and males are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles which are determined and limited by their gender. Gender stereotypes can also be culture specific, as such, in this paper, we consider those gender stereotypes that are peculiar to the Nigerian society.

1.2 Sexual Violence and Gender Stereotypes in Southwest Nigeria

Sexual violence are simply acts of violence in a sexual matter that is without consent. According to Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) (2023), it is a form of gender-based

violence that refers to "any sexual act or attempts directed against a person's sexuality through coercion, in any setting. " The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (2010) also defines it as "a means through which a person manipulates or forces someone into unwanted sexual activity without consent." In an article by Spotlight Initiative, Nigeria (2022), 1 in 4 girls experience sexual violence, half of girl children who experienced sexual violence, experienced it at home, 1 in 6 girls sexually abused experienced it at school. This shows that Nigeria, just like any other part of the world, is faced with the increasing rate of sexual violence, especially amongst young girls.

Nigeria is a West African country which is largely heterogeneous in nature with a population of more than 200 million; 51% of women and 49% of men (Worldometer, 2022). As an heterogenous state, she accounts for more than 300 ethnic groups with the major ones being Yoruba, Ibo, and Hausa, and is divided into 36 states, 774 local governments, and 6 geo-political zones namely North Central, Northeast, North West, South East, South-South, and South-West. The Southwest zone comprises 6 states namely Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, and Lagos State.

The South-West region of Nigeria is heavily hinged on culture, which is deeply rooted in the day-to-day activities of its people. Family and communal ties are the cornerstones of the society, and as such, gender roles and stereotypes are formed through the process of socialisation. For the Yoruba people of South-West Nigeria, patriarchy is quite dominant. This has resulted into types of gender stereotypes in aspects of dressing, verbal and nonverbal clues of respect, education, amongst others. On dressing, it is believed that females can wear male clothing, while it is seen as a "taboo" for a male to dress like a female, due to the Nigerian homosexuality law under Criminal Code of 1990. Also, some church denominations under Christianity, forbids women to wear trousers, use earrings, etc, as the case may be. On respect and speaking, it is stereotyped that females must genuflect at all times while greeting or

acknowledging an elderly man or woman, or anyone older; and males should prostrate, and both genders should not try to establish eye-contact too long with elders, as a sign of humility and reverence. On education, it is believed that the males are more suited to take on roles of leadership and certain careers due to action and energy they portray in domains of science, technology, health, amongst others; while women are best in acts of nurturing, home tasks, humility, softness, and taking on lesser career paths and jobs.

Gender stereotypes in South-West Nigeria are like a status quo ordained by cultural values, and overtime these stereotypes have adverse consequences, especially on the female child. One of such prevalent effect is that of sexual violence against women and girl child in the society, and institutions of learning. The institutions used in this paper are situated in Lagos State, south-west, Nigeria. It is with this background that this study investigates gender stereotypes that relate to sexual violence in Lagos State Universities, Nigeria.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Studies related to gender stereotypes and sexual violence in Nigeria and Africa have been done (Olaogun et al, 2015, Ajayi (n.d), Obagboye, 2021, Asuagbor, 2016 Lasisi and Ozurumba, 2021, Mezie-Okoye and Alamina, 2014, Ezugoh et al, 2021). These studies have focused on occurrences of sexual violence in Public Universities and workplaces within and outside Nigeria, knowledge about its prevalence in Lagos State Universities is relatively unknown. This gap is filled in this this paper by examining gender stereotypes that relate to sexual violence in Lagos State University campuses.

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

In this paper we identify the gender stereotypes that relate to sexual violence in selected higher institutions. The objectives are:

a. To identify the prevailing gender stereotypes that relate to sexual violence in Lagos State University campuses

b. To provide explanations for the identified gender stereotypes with recourse to shared cultural knowledge

1.5 Research Questions

a. Which gender stereotypes that relate to sexual violence are prevalent in Lagos State University campuses?

b. What are the shared cultural knowledge behind these gender stereotypes?

2.0 Review of Relevant Literature

Ezugoh et al (2021) examined the causes, cases, risk factors, effective management, and coping strategies for those traumatized of sexual violence in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions. In the study, they assert that cases of sexual violence in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions is on a high rate, and is "a great disappointment and embarrassment to the nation and humanity." The victims are being boxed to a corner, making them to be quite due to stigma, trauma, retribution, negative repercussions, amongst others. Also, they affirm that those who commit sexual violence against females in Nigerian tertiary educational institutions are academic and non-academic staff, and students as well.

Olaogun et al (2015) examined gender imbalance in the academia in Nigeria, in selected tertiary institutions- University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Enugu State University of Technology, Imo State University, University of Ibadan, University of Calabar, University of Port Harcourt, and Ekiti State University. According to them, there is a gender role worldwide, which has created a space between men and women. Gender imbalance leads to gender stereotypes, which further leads to gender discrimination in the academic sector of Nigeria.

Odu et al (2014) investigated the prevalence of violent sexual assault on South-West Nigerian girls, its reasons, myth surrounding it, conditions warranting it, and the interventions needed to curb it. According to them, about 50-90% of rape cases are not being reported for

certain reasons namely humiliation, guilt, victimization, etc. In the study, the South-West culture of Yorubaland subjects female under patriarchy, which has laid a foundation for sexual assault towards women.

Mezie-Okoye and Alamina (2014) examined the prevalence, pattern, determinants, and health consequences of sexual violence among female undergraduates in a tertiary institution in Port Harcourt. The study population were female undergraduates. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional approach, and a simple random sampling method. According to the study, sexual violence is reported to be one of the rapid spreading crimes in parts of the world today, and at least, 1 in 3 women have been sexually abused by a man before. The findings from the data collected through a questionnaire involving 413 female students with an average age of 20 and above, show that about 193 had suffered from one form of sexual violence or another, with fondling and grabbing of sensitive parts of the body as the most form of sexual violence experienced.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the selected universities we have purposively selected for this study have not been looked into. This is because two of these institutions have just been upgraded to university statuses in 2021. This study therefore pioneers a comprehensive study of the three institutions.

2.1 University Policies on Sexual Violence in Lagos State Universities

Judging by the Lagos state stance on sexual violence in the state, it is important to measure the effectiveness of sexual violence policies in the state universities. This is what this section addresses. We look at the institutions in turn:

2.1.1 Lagos State University

Lagos State University (LASU) is a state-owned university in Nigeria located in Ojo, with other campuses at Ikeja and Epe. It was established in 1983, under the administration of late Lateef Kayode Jakande. The university offers diploma degree, Bachelor of Arts degree,

and also post-graduate programs. LASU was ranked in 2020 as one of the top 600 universities in the world, by Times Higher Education World University Rankings, and also the second-best university in Nigeria in 2021 by world university rankings. In a bid to ensure a safe environment for learning and also the female gender, Lagos State University created a center named Center for the Response and Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. This center was created in October 2021, to fight all forms of sexual and gender-based violence within its three campuses. The center in 2022 released a set of policies on SGBV, and through this policy, students, staff and other dwellers within the LASU community are free to file any incidence or occurrence of sexual and gender-based violence which they had fallen victims of. The policy is easily accessible both online and offline.

2.1.2 Lagos State University of Education

Lagos State University of Education (LASUED) is an institution of education which arose from the merging of Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education (AOCOED) and Michael Otedola College of Primary Education (MOCPED). It is the first college of primary education in Nigeria. Its main campus is situated in Oto, Ijanikin, with another of its campus at Naforija, Epe, Lagos State. It has over seven colleges which are College of Humanities Education (COHED), College of Science Education (COSED), College of Information and Technology Education (COITED), College of Vocational and Entrepreneurship Education (COVED), College of Management and Social Sciences Education (COMSSED), College of Specialised and Professional Education (COSPED), and College of Language and Communication Arts Education (COLCAED). There is no documentary and explicit policy against sexual and gender-based violence in LASUED but the institution has ways of punishing offenders when cases are reported.

2.1.3 Lagos State University of Science and Technology

Lagos State University of Science and Technology (LASUSTECH) is a state-owned and recently established institution of learning situated in Ikorodu, Lagos State, Nigeria. It was first known as Lagos State College of Science and Technology (LACOSTECH) when it was established in 1977, before it became Lagos State Polytechnic (LASPOTECH). In February 2023, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu then converted LASPOTECH to its recent name: LASUSTECH. It has campuses in Ikorodu, Surulere, and Isolo, with over five Faculties namely Faculty of Engineering, Agriculture, Sciences, Environmental Designs, and Applied Social Sciences. LASUSTECH does not have an explicit policy/law protecting staff and students against sexual and gender-based violence. However, the student affairs unit takes care of issues relating to sexual violence. As a new institution, the committee on sexual violence was set up and the policy is expected anytime soon. As of July 2023, the policy has already been set in motion and it should be available as soon as the Council approves it.

2.2 Federal and State Laws on Sexual Violence

At both federal and state levels in Nigeria, there are laws against sexual violence. In this section, we give a brief into the laws in turn:

2.2.1 Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP)

VAPP is an act which was enacted by the Federal Republic of Nigeria 2015, by President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. This law prohibits all forms of violence against persons in private and public life, and also provides maximum protection and effective remedies for victims and punishment of offenders (VAPP, 2015). According to Punch Newspaper (2022), 29 of the 36 states in Nigeria, have 'passed and domesticated' the VAPP law in their respective jurisdictions.

Subsection 1 of VAPP Act elucidates on sexual violence through rape, which attracts a 14 years imprisonment for the offender, or 12 years' imprisonment without fine. If the act of

rape is committed by a group of persons, offenders are liable to 20 years improvement without option of fine. Also, victims shall be awarded the appropriate compensation by the court, for damages which might have been done. This shows that there is an existing law on sexual violence at the federal level.

2.2.2 Lagos State and Laws on Sexual Violence

The Lagos state government has extensive laws on sexual and gender-based violence. In fact, the state has zero tolerance for issues related to Sexual and gender-based violence. In this section, I identify the agency and laws in the state:

2.2.2.1 Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency

Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Agency, also known as DVSA is committed to a complete reduction and eradication of sexual and gender-based violence in Lagos state. It also provides service and redress to victims of domestic and sexual violence in Lagos. It was signed into law as an agency in 2021. DVSA does the function of coordinating prompt response to sexual and gender-based violence, reporting scenarios and cases of sexual and domestic assault, providing medical relief and support for victims, collating and documenting forensic and crime scene evidences for further prosecution of offenders, and fostering a relationship between DVSA and other private and government parastatals and institutions; both local and foreign. They have a duty to liaise and work with other institutions in the state such as the universities. However, there seems to be no evidence of collaboration between the agency and the tertiary institutions used for this study.

2.2.2.2 Criminal Law of Lagos State

Criminal Law of Lagos State was signed to become fully functional by the Lagos State House of Assembly in August, 2011. The law is divided into 10 parts, 48 chapters, and 420 sections. (Sabilaw, 2022). Chapter 25 of the Criminal Law of Lagos State contains laws addressing sexual violence, harassment, and other sexual related offenses. Section 259 reveals

punishment of offenders, which states that "any person who sexually penetrates the anus, vagina, mouth, or other opening in the body of another person with a part of his body or anything else, without consent of the person, if found guilty, is liable to life imprisonment." Section 261 and 262 states that "any person who sexually touches another, or sexually harassed another without consent, if found guilty, is liable to 3 years imprisonment. "Section 265 states that "a person who causes another person to engage in any sexual activity without the other person's consent, if found guilty, will be sentenced to 4 years imprisonment."

2.2.2.3.Protection Against Domestic Violence Law

Protection Against Domestic Violence Law also known as PADVL, is a law which came into existence in Lagos State on the 18th of May, 2007. The law provides protection for anyone involved in domestic violence and abuse, and any threats of violence- sexual violence inclusive. Section 18 of the law makes room for sexual abuse or exploitation, "including but not limited to rape, incest, and sexual assault." The laws are easily accessible to members of the public.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

In deconstructing the data set for this study, we deployed Braun and Clarke (2006) Reflexive Thematic Theory with insights from theoretic elements from linguistic pragmatics such as common ground, implicature and presupposition. These are discussed in turn:

2.3.1 Braun and Clark (2019) Reflexive Thematic Theory

Reflexive Thematic Analysis Theory is considered a reflection of the researcher's interpretative analysis of the data conducted at the intersection of data set, theoretical assumptions of the analysis and the analytical skills/ resources of the researcher which helps in creating themes. These themes are produced by organising codes around a central organising concept that the researcher interprets from the data. According to Byrne (2022). the theory has six steps: Familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes,

reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes and projection of report. These phases are explained in turns:

Familiarisation with the data: In this phase, the researcher reads the text in order to gain in-depth knowledge of the content. It takes a conscious effort in reading and being immersed into the discourse. Once, the researcher gets very comfortable with the content, he/she is able to put the content into good use.

Generation of Codes- Codes are like labels that can be used to identify the ideas contained in the text. Identifying and identifying these codes will help in categorizing labels that are similar and these can be group together.

Searching for Themes- Looking at the ideas that are similar helps to label them according to the themes that resonate in them. The most important and most projected them is used as the general theme for like items.

Reviewing Potential Themes- It is important to review themes in such a way that it clearly separates ideas into categories. Ideas that are nearly alike can be reviewed further to make them distinct.

Defining and Naming Themes: Themes are clearly listed and named according to the general category where all ideas are then discussed.

Projection of Report – This is the final stage where all the codes generated have been well captured into themes and sub themes as we shall see in the analysis in section 4.

The theory is diagrammatised below:

2.3.2 Common Ground, Implicature and Presupposition

Linguistic Pragmatics looks at how language is used in context. Understanding human language use in general can be investigated through the pragmatic theoretic elements such as common ground, implicature and presupposition. Common ground is the basis for any conversational encounter. It simply means the "sharedness" which interlocutors have or assume that they have for any conversation to be adjudged cooperative. It simply allows interlocutors in any conversational encounter to have economy of speech in their utterances based on foregrounded implicit or explicit understanding that they both have about other things which are related to and can be factored into understanding the discourse topic. Implicature on the other hand provides insights into how much gets communicated in any communicational setting even when the propositions expressed do not explicitly reveal 'surface' meanings. By 'surface meaning' we mean utterance interpretations that rely only on the semantics of the language as used by the speaker. Implicature goes beyond what is on the surface or deep level syntactic analysis of language study to look at what is not explicitly expressed but implied via the choice of lexical choices and/ or other contextual variables that participants employ in their propositions. Implicature helps in getting out facts or meaning from utterances. Stalnaker

(1991) explains that "to presuppose something is to take it for granted, or at least to act as if one takes it for granted, as background information." This means that presupposition should be part of the common ground in order for the proposition to be felicitous. But often times, some presuppositions may not be part of the speakers' common ground but is treated as such. The concept of accommodation is brought to use in such instances. Accommodation presupposition can be backgrounded or simply added to the common ground of participants in a discourse, even if it is a new information, when this happens, the backgrounded information enables participants to add new information and increment common ground. Stoke (2010) describes accommodation as a mechanism by which a missing presupposition is supplied by the hearer in order to avoid infelicity. These concepts are used in our analysis of the data set used in this paper.
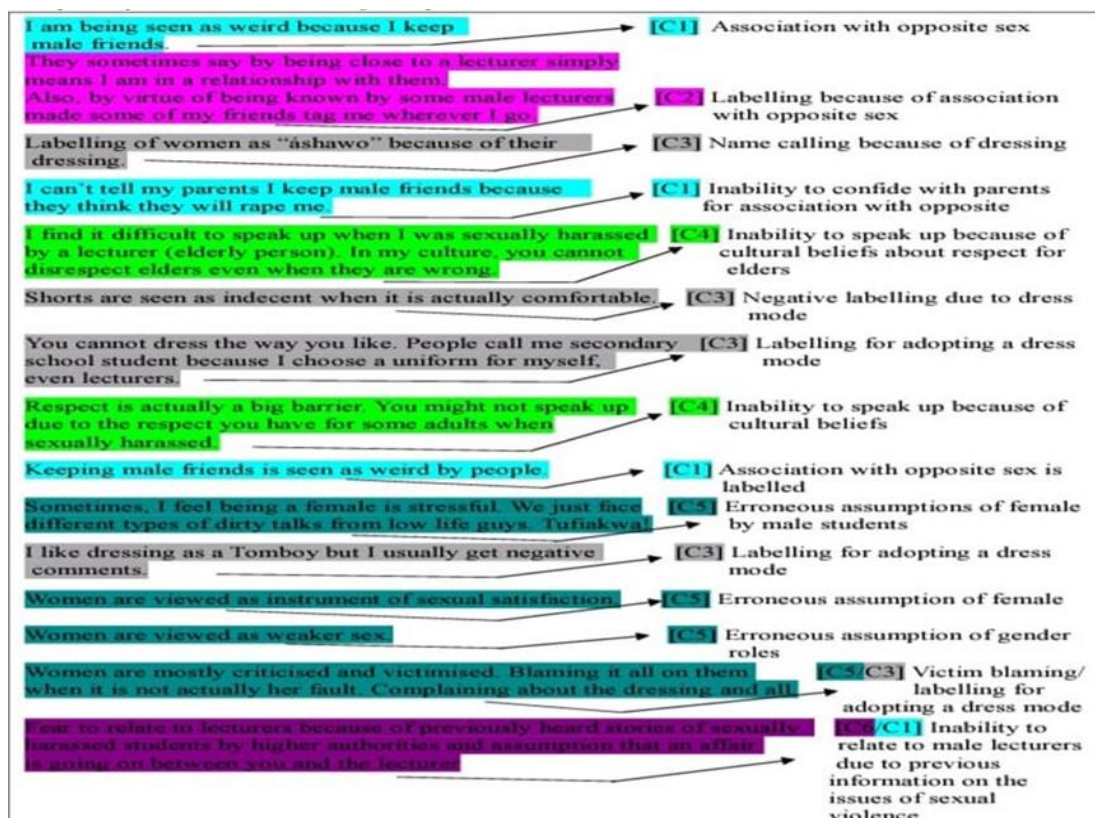

Figure 2: Presentation of Codes

3.0 Methodology

For this paper, we used only the data set relevant for gender stereotypes and indices of sexual violence on the university campuses. The methodology is qualitative. We used listening exercise and menti app to get participants responses on a set of questions. The listening exercise are then analysed using Braun and Clark (2019) Reflexive thematic Analysis Theory with theoretic elements from linguistic pragmatics.

PRESENTATION OF DATA The diagram below shows the presentation of data on the themes relating to cultural barriers that participants face in university campuses using Braun and Clark (2019) Reflexive Thematic Theory.
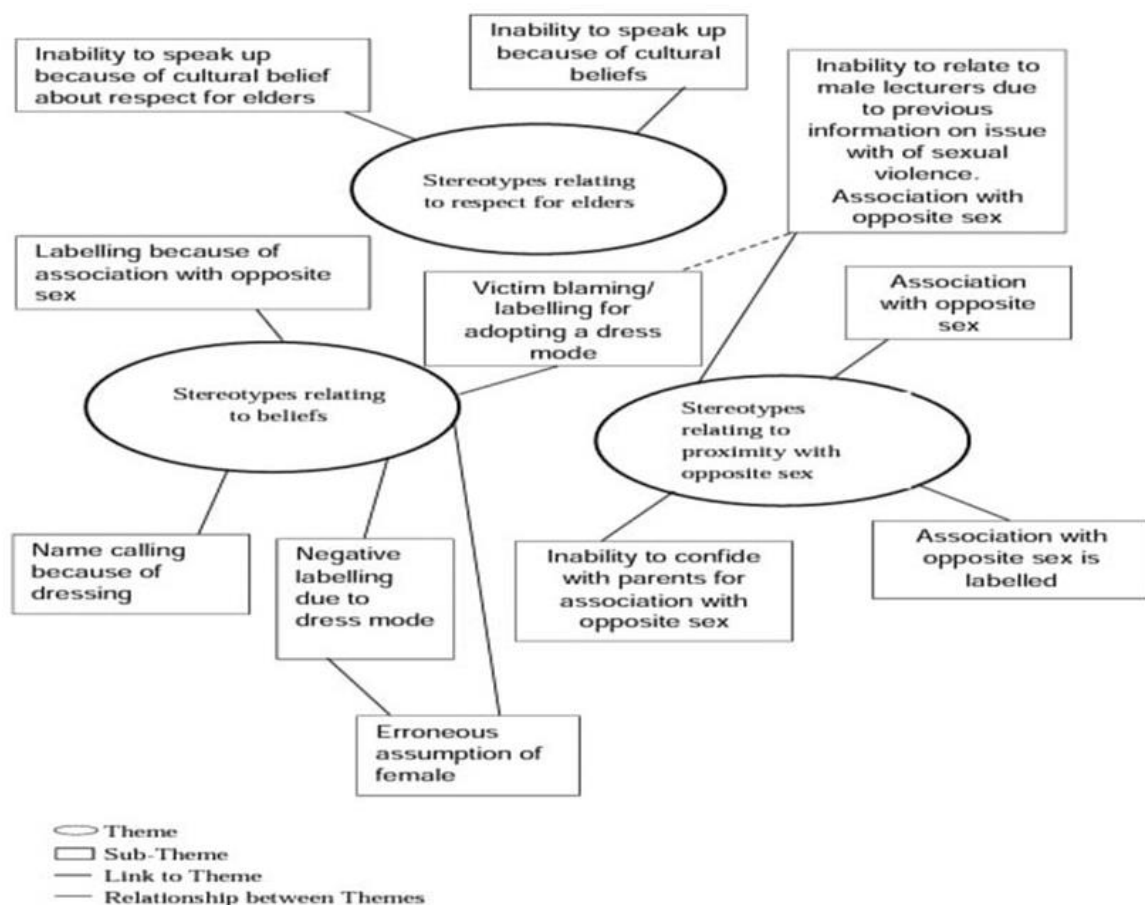
Figure 3: Thematic map indicating three themes from the participants

4.1 Discussion of Findings

Findings revealed that stereotypes related to sexual violence that disempower students are of three types: stereotypes related to proximity with opposite sex, stereotypes related to respect for elders and stereotypes related to assumptions. These are discussed in turn:

4.1.1 Stereotypes related to Proximity with the opposite gender: As seen in the dataset, there is a belief that people who move with the opposite sex are prone to being sexually harassed. This often make students who move with opposite sex to assume that they will be judged because of the background knowledge that they share with others of their choice of friends. Also, female students, belief that being friends with male students may make people to label them and as such they prefer to run away from 'the drama' of female friends. Some female students do not want female friends because they also erroneously believe that women are their own enemies. In C2 for instance, one of the participants wrote that –

Excerpt I

> "They sometimes say by being close to a lecturer simply
>
> means I am in a relationship with them. Also, by virtue of
>
> being known by some male lecturers made some of my
>
> friends tag me wherever I go."

This text reveals the implicature that the subject derives from the common ground that she shares with others about labelling of people because of proximity with the opposite sex. This invariably

Makes these students unable to voice out if and whenever they experience any form of sexual violence.

4.1.2 Stereotypes related to Respect for elders: In most African cultures, respect for elders is seen as one of the concept of 'the omoluabi culture'. An 'Omoluabi' is that individual who is

well cultured in character and in speaking. When this is the case, younger people are constrained when their oppressors are older than them as informed by some of the participants.

Excerpt II

"I find it difficult to speak up when I was sexually harassed

by a lecturer (elderly person). In my culture, you cannot

disrespect elders even when they are wrong. "

In this excerpt, the student alludes to respect for elders as one of the reasons why she cannot voice out when she was harassed. In the Yoruba culture, it is expected that you must respect your elders. This is a shared cultural knowledge amongst participants because of the culture they find themselves. In fact, there is an adage which states that 'there's nothing you use seniority to do if not to cheat a younger person'. One can derive an implicature from the students' background knowledge that they would rather keep quiet than be seen disrespecting an older person. However, this is an erroneous assumption.

Another instance is expressed thus:

Excerpt III

"Respect is actually a big barrier. You might not speak up

due to the respect you have for some adults when

sexually harassed."

This is due to shared cultural knowledge and beliefs about respect for elders which the participants share. It is important for this sort of cultural beliefs to be disambiguated so that it does not further lead to condoning these harmful practices.

4.1.3 Stereotypes related to assumptions: Assumptions as used here relates to other beliefs not founded on any empirical basis. People just assume that something is the case because it has been said or heard before but not with regards to the frequency that can confirm or affirm such

as constant. There several examples of shared beliefs based on assumptions. I explain with one extract from the data:

Excerpt IV

"Fear to relate to lecturers because of previously heard stories of sexually harassed students by higher authorities and assumption that an affair   is going on between you and the lecturer"

Usually, students say a lot of things to other students especially to freshers (new students), there is the general belief that staylites(old students) have more information about goings-on in the school as such the freshers believe whatever they tell them. However, some staylites exaggerate their experiences thus leading the fresh students to believe some things without any substantial evidence to do so. The implicature of this is that staylites have an upper hand in disseminating information to freshers. This in-group sharedness will make the freshers extend and carry-over these assumptions to others and the story goes on and on being elongated without any evidence to believe so.

5.0 Summary /Conclusion and Recommendation for Further Studies

This paper identifies the gender stereotypes that are prevalent in selected higher institutions and those that relate to sexual violence in a bid to:

a.   identify the prevailing gender stereotypes that relate to sexual violence on Lagos State University campuses

b.   provide explanation for the identified gender stereotypes

Our analysis reveals that the prevailing stereotypes can be grouped into three broad categories: stereotypes relating to proximity, stereotypes relating to respect for elders and stereotypes relating to assumptions. Based on our findings, we recommend that there is need to change the narrative and invoke a more inclusive perception where people are not judged based on their

choice of association; there is need for capacity building training and more awareness and visibility for policies guiding the handling of issues relating to sexual violence on campuses.

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