



**Paper: “Sexual Harassment and Academic Engagement of Female Students in Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria”**

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Peer review:

Reviewer 1: Salwa Alinat  
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Reviewer 2: Josephine W. Gitome  
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### **ESJ Manuscript Evaluation Form 2026**

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Date Manuscript Received: 17 <sup>th</sup> April, 2026	Date Review Report Submitted: 27 <sup>th</sup> April, 2026
Manuscript Title: Sexual Harassment and Academic Engagement of Female Students in Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria	
<b>ESJ Manuscript Number: 0468/26</b>	
You agree your name is revealed to the author of the paper: No	
You approve, your name as a reviewer of this paper, is available in the “review history” of the paper: Yes	
You approve, this review report is available in the “review history” of the paper: Yes	

#### **Evaluation Criteria:**

**Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Rating Result</b> [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
<b>1. The title is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.</b>	<b>4</b>
The title is clear to the reader	
<b>2. The abstract presents objectives, methods, and results.</b>	<b>3</b>
Yes, the abstract presents the objectives, methods and results but lacked a sentence to introduce the paper before the objectives. The objectives are also not easy to pick and flow with. The writers should make the abstract more friendly to a reader searching the objectives.	
<b>3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.</b>	<b>4</b>
Yes there are almost no grammatical errors, the English is British style and well written.	
<b>4. The study methods are explained clearly.</b>	<b>4</b>

Yes, the study methods are well explained.	
<b>5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.</b>	<b>2</b>
The results are good but overstretched and at a certain point it sounds too much of narrative The discussion of finding is also very weak, captured in 6 short paragraphs. This is the section that should demonstrate the writer's academic professionalism. More interaction of primary data with secondary data is needed.	
<b>6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.</b>	<b>2</b>
The conclusion is too brief, It can be more detailed in line with the findings	
<b>7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.</b>	<b>3</b>
It's fairly done.	

**Overall Recommendation** (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accepted, minor revision needed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Return for major revision and resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reject	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):**

The paper is fairly good, well-written, with very few errors, but the results are overstretched, and the discussion and findings are too thin. A balance of these two could provide quality to this paper.

**Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only:**

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Please respond within the appointed time so that we can give the authors timely responses and feedback.

NOTE: ESJ promotes peer review procedure based on scientific validity and technical quality of the paper (not perceived the impact). You are also not required to do proofreading of the paper. It could be recommended as part of the revision.

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Reviewer Name: Salwa Alinat Abed	
University, Country: The open University of Israel	
Date Manuscript Received: 17/4/26	Date Review Report Submitted: 29/4/26
Manuscript Title: <b>Sexual Harassment and Academic Engagement of Female Students in Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria</b>	
ESJ Manuscript Number:	
You agree your name is revealed to the author of the paper: yes	
You approve, your name as a reviewer of this paper, is available in the “review history” of the paper: yes	
You approve, this review report is available in the “review history” of the paper: yes	

#### Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Rating Result</b> [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
<b>1. The title is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>The title accurately and concisely represents the core research variables—sexual harassment and academic engagement—while clearly defining the target population (female students) and the geographical context (Higher Education Institutions in Nigeria)</i>	
<b>2. The abstract presents objectives, methods, and results.</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>The abstract is well-structured and comprehensive. It explicitly states the study's objective to explore the impact of sexual harassment, the qualitative case study and in-depth interview methodology employed, and the primary findings regarding the disruption of cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement.</i>	
<b>3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.</b>	<b>4</b>

<i>The manuscript is written in high-quality academic English. The narrative is clear and professional, with no significant spelling or grammatical issues that impede understanding. Minor proofreading of punctuation in the lengthy participant quotations could further enhance the flow.</i>	
<b>4. The study methods are explained clearly.</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>The methodology section provides a thorough explanation of the qualitative phenomenological design. It includes detailed information on purposive and snowball sampling, training research assistants, ethical considerations such as informed consent and anonymity, and the thematic analysis used to organize the findings.</i>	
<b>5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<i>While the results are presented clearly and the participant narratives are deeply moving and authentic, there is a tendency to rely heavily on descriptive reporting of these experiences. The analysis would benefit from a more robust theoretical integration. Instead of primarily presenting the "what" (the experiences), the authors should use the Discussion section to more deeply explore the "why" and "how" through the lens of the cited theories (e.g., deeper application of Power Dynamics or Coping Theory to specific interview outcomes).</i>	
<b>6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.</b>	<b>4</b>
<p><i>The conclusions are logically derived from the findings and highlight the severe disruption sexual harassment causes to students' academic trajectories. The recommendations are practical and address the institutional "culture of silence" and the lack of trauma-informed support.</i></p> <p><b>Suggested Improvement (Theoretical Depth):</b>  <i>While the conclusions accurately summarize the participants' experiences, there is a missed opportunity to synthesize these findings into a broader theoretical contribution. The final section would be significantly strengthened if the authors moved beyond describing the emotional and behavioral toll to explaining these outcomes through the lens of the study's primary theories. For instance, the conclusion should explicitly discuss how institutional failure functions as a structural barrier that paralyzes <b>Cognitive Engagement</b>, rather than just listing it as a result of the trauma. Linking the "survival strategies" observed in the interviews more firmly back to the theoretical framework would elevate the paper from a descriptive report to a more influential analytical study.</i></p>	
<b>7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>The reference list is comprehensive and relevant, demonstrating high academic standards. It successfully integrates foundational theories, such as <b>Skinner et al. (2009)</b> for academic engagement and <b>Lazarus &amp; Folkman (1984)</b> for coping mechanisms, with very recent empirical studies from 2020–2026. The bibliography provides a solid global and local (Nigerian) context for the study. To further improve this section, the authors could ensure consistent formatting across all entries, particularly regarding DOI links and title capitalization.</i>	

**Overall Recommendation** (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accepted, minor revision needed	<input type="checkbox"/>
Return for major revision and resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reject	<input type="checkbox"/>

### **Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):**

The empirical data collected through the 32 interviews is exceptional and provides a rare, detailed look into the systemic nature of sexual harassment in Nigerian HEIs. However, to elevate the manuscript to a higher scholarly level, I suggest the following minor revision:

- **Strengthen Theoretical Analysis:** In the Results and Discussion sections, move beyond a descriptive summary of the interviews. Try to more explicitly "map" specific participant behaviors to theoretical constructs. For example, when discussing Participant 5's defensive strategy, you could analyze it more deeply through Lazarus and Folkman's Coping Theory—does this reflect 'problem-focused coping' within a toxic hierarchy?
- **Conceptual Synthesis:** Ensure that the transition from raw data (the narratives) to the analytical framework (Affective, Behavioral, and Cognitive engagement) is more nuanced, explaining not only that engagement decreased but also the psychological mechanisms at play, grounded in the provided theoretical background.

### **Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only:**