

THE IMPLICATIONS OF FAITH-LOSS IN THE ENSNAREMENT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE*

Abstract

Sexual harassment/assault is a traumatic event, which could reduce the well-being and might occasion less or increased spiritual roles of the victim. Doubtless, humans are spiritual and often times affiliates/adherents of particular faiths. However, the philosophy of a higher or lower spiritual inclination, in consequence of sexual harassment, might be possible if the victims consider the demands of their faith before or after the occurrence of the sexual act; particularly, if the victim was in a position to take an action that could avert or mitigate the harassment/assault. It could also be a case of struggling with the act and the spiritual life, or a situation where the faith of such victim is challenged for overt or covert reasons, which culminated in succumbing to the harassment. Therefore, this research examined whether spirituality influences the decision of victims before falling prey to sexual harassment or not; which could be termed bold or timid, from the faith perspective. In addressing the issues raised in this study, the doctrinal research methodology was adopted. This involved exploring books and journal articles in hardcopy and electronic formats on spirituality, sexual harassment, and other cognate fields. The paper endeavoured to substantiate that some sexually harassed victims succumbed to sexual harassment or assault not because they were not spiritually inclined, but due to several factors, especially lack of faith or doubt in the spirituality. The Christian religion was predicated upon for the discourse, and the Nigeria society used as case study, for the ease of reference. The study made some viable recommendations simultaneously with the discussion, to help prevent people from further falling prey to sexual harassment/assault, as they leverage on faith to assume responsibility for their individual well-being in the workplace and elsewhere.

Keywords: Ensnarement; Faith; Sexual harassment; Spirituality; Workplace.

1. Introduction

The unwanted sex-related behaviours in the workplace which is perceived as offensive, intimidating, humiliating, hostile, demeaning, frustrating and threatening to the resources and well-being of the recipient is known as sexual harassment.¹ A traumatic event such as sexual harassment or assault causes reduced well-being, which might likely occasion less or increased spiritual roles that help to restore well-being.² However, this philosophy might be possible if the person or victim considers the demands of their faith before the occurrence of the sexual act or after. It could also be a case of struggling with the acts and the spiritual life. Of the seventy women sexually assaulted, as shown by a survey conducted by Kennedy, et al., sixty showed increased spiritual roles as it enhanced their well-being; and those with less spiritual roles significantly portrayed depressed well-being.³ In essence, in moments of being downcast, consolation is sought in religion. Sexual harassment can be critical to the spiritual life of the person who has been subjected to the abuse.⁴

Pertinently, there is a significant role in decision-making on the part of the victim when it relates to religion and sexual harassment. The onus is on the victim to say no and to do all that is possible in the circumstance to avert succumbing to the harassment. Failure to prevent occurrence of the harassment, as much as lies within the control of the would-be victim indicates that the person is either not into any faith or such faith is lukewarm or dicey. This analogy relates to the socio-psychology definition of sexual harassment which says that sexual harassment is a two-way phenomenon. That is, a specific unwanted behaviour and the recipient's reaction to such behaviour.⁵ In essence, the reaction of the victim could either be receptive or resistant and this must be backed up with active

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¹ LF Fitzgerald, and others, 'Antecedents and Consequences of Sexual Harassment in Organizations: A Test of an Integrated Model' 82 *Journal of Applied Psychology* 578, (1997); McDonald, Workplace Sexual Harassment 30Years On: A Review of the Literature' 14, *International Journal of Management Reviews* 1 (2012); JC Quick, MA McFadyen, 'Sexual Harassment: Have We Made Any Progress?' 22 *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 286, 286 (2016); AD Aina-Pelemo, PA Ejembi, Iseoluwa Aina, 'Review of Literatures on Definition of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: Underscoring their Prescriptive Implication', 9 *Benue States University Law Journal* 33, 43 (2020).

² James E. Kennedy, Robert C. Davis and Bruce G. Taylor, 'Changes in Spirituality and Well-Being among Victims of Sexual Assault', 37 *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 322, 322 (1998).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Beth R. Crisp, 'The Spiritual Implications of Sexual Abuse: Not Just an Issue for Religious Women?' 20 In *Feminist Theology*, 133, 133 (2012).

⁵ JL Berdahl, *Harassment based on 'Sex: Protecting Social Status in the Context of Gender Hierarchy'*, 32 *Academy of Management Review* 641, 641 (2007); P Ejembi, A Aina-Pelemo, O Ejembi and I Aina, 'The Trajectory of Nigerian Law Regarding Sexual Harassment in the Workplace', 4 *African Journal of Law and Human Rights* 1, 5, (2020).

steps so as to prove the value of the person's morals and religious faith. For as long as the victim endures or condones the harassment, he/she remains ensnared and/or enslaved, in the literal sense of the words, by the predator as well as the psychological effects of the act. By social perception, sexual harassment may be welcomed by the victim,⁶ and that indicates that it is the victim's decision about the weird behaviours that matters. However, such decision ought to be based on the exercise of victim's faith and morality; otherwise, such faith becomes the reactive measures for rehabilitating victims that have been sexually harassed. This latter position substantiates the position that one of the ways survivors or victims cope with the experience of sexual harassment is the use of spirituality.⁷ The posture of this discourse is that such faith or spirituality is better used for prevention rather than reparation, when proactively deployed in sturdy resistance against the vice of sexual harassment. Workplace is a formal and informal place where one learns, develops, creates, acquires or enhances knowledge.⁸ In the context of this discourse, our major concern is that victims who profess faith ought to put their faith/religion in view before conceding to any form of sexual harassment at any time; except it was committed unexpectedly and/or forcefully. Possibly, if that is done conscientiously, there could be less report of sexually harassed victims and that might serve as a way of preventing sexual harassment in the workplace.

Nevertheless, there are situations whereby spirituality is jettisoned by the victims due to factors, like unemployment, poverty, peer influence, lack of faith in the spiritual, pessimism, fear of the unknown, etc. This research therefore examines the influence of spirituality in the decision reached by victims of sexual harassment in the workplace. The difference between this study and previous ones is that, whilst the latter focus mainly on recovery of victims from sexual trauma with the aid of spirituality; the former (this study) focuses on the possibility that spirituality would influence the decision of victims and avert falling prey to sexual harassment. For avoidance of using an unfamiliar religious premise, we have chosen to tilt this discourse towards Christianity, its adherents, and their religious texts; with which these writers are acquainted. The doctrinal methodology was adopted by exploring books and a broad range of existing journal articles in hardcopy and electronic formats on spirituality and sexual harassment.

2. The Interaction of Morality and Sexual Harassment

For better understanding of the meaning of harassment, it is essential to have a clear image of what morality denotes. Friedman endeavoured to describe morality thus: '...I may be bigger than you, I may not use this to take advantage of you. The fact that I am rich and you are poor, or that I am strong and you are weak, healthy while you are sick, does not entitle me to take advantage of your disadvantage.'⁹ Essentially, sexual harassment is a personal moral predicament and ethical challenge within the workplace, where an expression of positive morality is required. Morality means a set of principles about what is right or wrong, good or bad and just or unjust.¹⁰ These norms, beliefs or traditions of morality are a creation of the society held by a majority of people in the society that could either be positive or negative.¹¹ By implication, the fact that an act is accepted or condoned in the society does not make it right. In this discourse, divine law is regarded as the set of commands of God that are either expressed or implied.¹² One then wonders what determines the negativity or positivity if a societal practice bothers on divine law. Rumble affirms Austin's distinction of divine law and positive morality;¹³ to the effect that positive morality of a society is correct in so far as it coincides with divine law and incorrect in so far as it deviates from it. Hence, any social behaviour that negates the principles of the divine or religious law is seen as negative morality. In essence, a person who truly practices or understands the true meaning of divine law or faith in a religion ought to use his or her intuition and implied commands of God to discourage or prevent any unwanted social behaviour personally. Victims of sexual harassment are not totally exonerated from the occurrences, except such act is unexpected or done forcibly. In the instance whereby the victim succumbs after several pressures then it is a question of faith and/or practice of the divine law. This takes us back to the subject matter that sexual harassment can be averted if people of faith are highly sensitive to the divine law. Sexual harassment has to do with unrelenting, unwanted and unnecessary sexual advances where the consequences of refusing are potentially

⁶ *Ibid.* (note 5) 651; LF Fitzgerald, *Who says? Legal and Psychological Constructions of Women's Resistance to Sexual Harassment* in CA Mackinnon, and R B Siegel, *Directions in Sexual Harassment Law*, 94-110 (eds, Yale University Press, 2004).

⁷ Gregory P. Knapik, Donna S. Martsolf, Claire B. Draucker and Karen D. Strickland, 'Attributes of Spirituality Described by Survivors of Sexual Violence', 15 *Qualitative Report* 644, 644 (2010).

⁸ Karen Cacciattolo, 'Defining Workplace Learning', 1 *European Scientific Journal* 243, 243 (2015).

⁹ Manis Friedman, *The Morality of Weakness: Defining Sexual Harassment*. Chabad.org. (Apr, 23, 2005, n.d.), https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3169/jewish/The-Morality-of-Weakness-Defining-Sexual-Harassment.htm

¹⁰ Emima Alistar Hirlav, *The Relation Between Law and Morality*, RAIS Conference Proceedings, 358 (April 3-4, 2019).

¹¹ Isabel Turegano, M. Freeman, P. Mindus, *The Legacy of John Austin's Jurisprudence: Reconstructing Austin's Intuitions: Positive Morality and Law*, 1 eBook Springer, 291-311 (2013).

¹² Wilfrid E. Rumble, 'Legal Positivism of John Austin and the Realist Movement in American Jurisprudence', 66 *Cornell Law Review* 986, 1007 (1981).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1007.

disadvantageous to the victim.¹⁴ The posture of this discourse is that those victims are not totally helpless or taken away by fear of the consequences of refusal; but for doubt of the potencies and realities of their faith. Victims' experience of sexual harassment differs, the circumstances have ominously similar characteristics; they typically include an all-powerful (usually male, though not excluding female) figure in a position of authority who takes advantage of his status and position to subdue others (mainly women but, in some cases, men) to degrading and unacceptable behaviour.¹⁵

Victims can turn down the offer of sexual harassment from his/her employer by resigning the employment and trusting faith for a better one rather than violating the divine law, and self dignity, to fit into societal practice. In fact, it is difficult to prove a case of sexual harassment, because it is carried out in such a way that the victim is too heavily burdened or afraid to share his or her experience with others, except a very courageous survivor or if the harasser harasses a group of people in the same or similar organisation. More so, male harassers see women as very secretive and they can rarely share private matters of such with fellow women, thereby aiding its occurrence in the organisation. Often times, it is also difficult to get witnesses and corroboration to establish the case in public.¹⁶

3. Societal Response to Sexual Harassment

The Nigerian society is one that readily provides a platform for sexual harassment of females in so many ways; such that has led to the trivialisation of sexual harassment when reported by victims. Ige and Adeleke revealed that majority of the respondents surveyed that reported been sexually harassed were not taken serious, some were laughed at and some people playfully told the victims to desist from arousing the sexual drive of the harassers.¹⁷ This attitude toward victims is not strange due, partly, to the patriarchal structure of the Nigerian society. Adebukola and Adebimpe said that the position of women in African societies especially Nigeria is more like a support/subordinate and men the decision maker or power dictator.¹⁸ This could be corroborated by the traditional and religious practice of permitting men to marry more than a woman and perceiving women with several husbands as sinners or having committed a taboo.¹⁹ Although sexual harassment affects both genders, but the negative impact on the female is worse than that of the male in most societies. Women are usually seen as a gratifying object to satisfy men's sexual urge²⁰ and procreators as opposed to being equal with men in terms of values advocated by international legal instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

It is reported that women in Nigeria have been structured in such a way that when they are subjected to violence, in public or private, specifically the married ones, they are expected to remain silent and endure it all the way.²¹ A part of Nigeria's culture enhances male preference, as most of the cultural rites are performed by males.²² The societal perception of women does not only promote sexual abuse against them, but portrays women as less important to men. The peak of absurdity is when youths, siblings and parents see sexual harassment or abuse as norms for female to face in the workplace. It is observed that some parents assume that sexual harassment is one of the fastest ways to grow in employment and it is worth celebrating if you are preferred among your equals or colleagues in the society.²³ Among the 293 males and 357 females surveyed in a study by Okoro and Obozokhai,

¹⁴ *Abimbola Patricia Yakubu v Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria & Anor*, unreported Suit No. NICN/LA/673/2013, 2016 (Nigeria).

¹⁵ Aina-Pelemo A. D. & Ejembi P. A., *Sexual Harassment and the Law* (15, 1st ed., Jos University Press, 2020).

¹⁶ Olamide Abudu, 'Sexual Harassment in Nigeria: It's everybody's problem'. *The Guardian* (Nov. 22, 2017, 1.25 AM), <https://guardian.ng/issue/sexual-harassment-in-nigeria-its-everybodys-problem/>

¹⁷ Ige, A.Y. & Adeleke, I. A., *Evaluating the role of Culture on Sexual Harassment: the case of Nigerian Organizations* (2012). <http://www.ilera2012.wharton.upenn.edu/RefereedPapers/IgeAY%20AdelekeIA%20ILERA.pdf>

¹⁸ Adebukola Dagunduro, & Adebimpe Adenugba, 'Failure to meet up to Expectation: Examining Women's Activist Groups in the Post-Colonial Period in Nigeria', 4 *Open Cultural Studies* 23, 28-33 (2020).

¹⁹ Aina-Pelemo Adetutu Deborah, Mehanathan M.C. & Kulshrestha Pradeep, 'Sexual Harassment at Workplace: Judicial Impact in Nigeria and India', 4 *Indian Journal of Law & Human Behaviour*, 121, 123 (2018).

²⁰ Gupta, R. *Sexual Harassment at Workplace*, (7, Haryana, LexisNexis, 2014).

²¹ Awosusi A. O. & Ogundana C. F., 'Culture of Silence and Wave of Sexual Violence in Nigeria', 1 *AASCIT Journal of Education*, 33, 34 (2015).

²² Inyang-Etoh, E. C. & Ekanem., A. M., 'Child-Sex Preference and Factors that Influenced such choices among women in an Obstetric Population in Nigeria', 03 *Open Access Library Journal*, 1, 2 (2016); Aina-Pelemo, A., & Saluja, S., 'Comparative Analysis of Sex-Selection in Nigeria and India', 4 *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Studies*, 70, 75-76 (2018).

²³ Imonikhe, J., Aluede, O., & Idogho, P., 'A Survey of Teachers' and Students' Perception of Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Institutions of Edo State, Nigeria', 8 *African Research Review* 412, 414-415, (2011); Okoro, F. I., & Obozokhai, O. 'Sexual Harassment: The Experience of Out-Of-School Teenagers in Benin City, Nigeria', 9 *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 118, 119, 124-25 (2005).

231 (71%) respondents perceived sexual harassment as normal to leave with.²⁴ This could be one of the reasons religious persons under the pressure of sexual harassment in the workplace could easily concede without due recourse to his or her faith. Apparently, societal and customary factors have been discussed as they fuel sexual harassment in the society. Other factors could also make people of faith compromise in the face of sexual harassment in the workplace; these factors are fear of the unknown, retaliation, job termination, peer pressure, loss of livelihood, power differences, poor economy structure, family pressure and not having any religious faith. These factors shall be discussed further, shortly. The societal, religious, economic and customary attributes boil down to the reasons people of faith see religious activities as a reparation channel after succumbing to sexual harassment, as opposed to exercising a level of faith in their religious doctrine to prevent the act from happening at all. Several incoherent efforts have been put in place by the government to curb sexual harassment, but it remains prevalent²⁵ and that is why this discourse is apt, to address the issue of sexual harassment from the faith and victim perspective. It encourages would-be victims to leverage on faith as a means of strength and resistance, rather than cheaply succumb, in expectation of being consoled by faith thereafter.

4. Effect of Faith in Decision-Making

The human nature is gifted, heavily endowed, and capable of many possibilities.²⁶ One of such possibilities is that of spirituality, with a concern for what is unseen and intangible, as opposed to physical or mundane, in other words, developing faith in a deity, a perceived higher being, or an object of worship as the case may be. For instance, the Christian faith proposes that all of creation was made by God, and to Him they owe allegiance and worship.²⁷ By this it is expected that all decisions made or to be made by an adherent will be influenced by his/her faith. This shall be discussed presently by appraising the interaction of spirituality and sexual relations, faith as a window of opportunity, among a few other pertinent concerns.

A) Spirituality and Sexual Relations: It is intrinsic in humans to be both spiritual and sexual. In this discourse, the spiritual relates to ‘deep feelings and beliefs, especially religious beliefs.’²⁸ It could also relate to ‘people’s thoughts and beliefs, rather than to their bodies and physical surroundings.’²⁹ On the other hand, sexual describes a relationship to ‘the instincts, physiological processes, and activities connected with physical attraction or intimate physical contact between individuals.’ The Christian perspective to sexual relations may be qualified as stringent, strictly confining liberty for sexual intimacy to the age-old institution of marriage between a man and a woman.³⁰ Any sexual relation outside this is forbidden. With regards to sexual harassment in the workplace as touching the spiritual or person faith, this discourse concedes that the victim of such harassment does not have control over the action or inaction of the sexual predator, but surely does have control to a reasonable extent over acceding to such proposition of harassment. The culmination of the harassment is usually through a progression, the span of which may differ from one case to another. Within the span of the envisaged progression, it is opined that the would-be victim has a couple of ‘windows of opportunities’ to make a crucial decision of whether or not to succumb to the harassment; particularly because the harassment is being perpetrated in the work environment.

B) The Window of Opportunity: In this discourse, the window of opportunity for a would-be victim of sexual harassment in the work environment is that space of time available to such victim to decide whether to succumb to the impending harassment or to dare confront it. From the Christian perspective, such victim is encouraged and expected to assume an uncompromising posture of valiantly resisting such harassment for certain reasons, some of which includes:

1. Avoidance of sin: Entrenched in the canonical seventh commandment is the requirement that ‘you shall not commit adultery.’³¹ Adultery describes the voluntary sexual relations between a married person and

²⁴ *Ibid.*, ‘The Experience of Out-Of-School Teenagers in Benin City, Nigeria’, 9 *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 118, 125 (2005).

²⁵ Aina-Pelemo Adetutu Deborah, Mehanathan M.C. Kulshrestha Pradeep, & Aina, Iseoluwa T., ‘Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: Case Study of the Nigerian Legal Sector’, 86 *Journal of Law Policy and Globalization*, 121, 129 (2019).

²⁶ Human Nature, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. PLATO.STANFORD.EDU (Mar. 15, 2021, n.d.), <https://www.plato.stanford.edu/entries/human-nature/>

²⁷ *The Epistle of Paul to the Colossian*, Chapter 1 Verse 16 (Authorized King James Version, International Bible Associations, Texas, 1195 (1974). See also Michael Sweeny & Lesley Chapel, *What is Human Nature? –Definition, Theories & Examples*. STUDY.COM (Feb. 16, 2016, n.d.), <https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-human-nature-definition-theories-examples.html>

²⁸ Spiritual, *DICTIONARY.CAMBRIDGE.ORG* (n.d.), <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/spiritual>

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, Chapter 10 Verse 7 (*Supra*, note 27), 1020; and *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, Chapter 5 Verse 31 (*Supra*, note 27), 1190). See also Opadere, O.S. and Akande L.B., *Biblical and Judicial Law: The Search for Marital and Societal Stability in Nigeria*, in Aderibigbe I.S., Omotoye R.W., and Akande L.B. (eds.) *Contextualizing Africans and Globalization: Expressions in Socio-political and Religious Contents and Discontents* pp.175-188 (Lexington Books, USA, 2016).

³¹ *The Second Book of Moses—Exodus*, Chapter 20 Verse 14 (*Supra*, note 27), 87.

somebody other than his/her spouse.³² It is important to consider sexual harassment in the context of adultery, because married individuals also combat with the menace in the workplace. Implicitly, it is expected of a married Christian to consider sexual harassment as a lure to adultery, which should be vehemently resisted. Similar to this is the admonition to ‘flee fornication.’³³ Fornication is described as ‘sexual intercourse between two consenting adults who are not married to each other.’³⁴ On the whole both adultery and fornication address some sexual misnomer which the Christian adherent is required to avoid by all means, whether the manifestation is in the form of sexual harassment or any other form, because it does harm to and violates the doers own body.³⁵

2. **Ownership and Purpose:** By the Christian biblical doctrine, chastity conveys an expression of loyalty to Jesus Christ and acknowledgment of His ownership of the adherent. By this the human body, which is deemed to have been purchased by God at a price, is regarded as the temple of the Holy Spirit.³⁶ Implicitly, in bearing this ownership concept in mind lays the pathway to the fulfillment of purpose for which a Christian adherent accepted the faith in the first place.³⁷ In essence, where ownership is lost, purpose fails.
3. **Punishment for Condescending:** Christians believe that only individuals with clean hands and pure hearts (symbolic of holy and right living) can have access to God.³⁸ Furthermore, it is also believed that those who indulge fornication and adultery will be severed from, and have no share in the kingdom of God.³⁹

Therefore, based on the foregoing admonition and instructions, the Christian is expected to take a firm stand against sexual harassment in the workplace or anywhere else; whether it qualifies as adultery, fornication, or any other vice. However, from the vantage point of the authors,⁴⁰ it is certain that some Christians still fall prey to sexual predators in the workplace, from which they incurred indelible scars. It is observed that some of the victims succumbed to the harassment by reason of varying negligible factors, despite being people of faith in Christianity. Owing to the factors, it is difficult and may even be inappropriate to blame the victim, hence this perspective to reinforcing courage in would-be victims for resistance in the face of harassment.

5. Factors Occasioning Succumb

As earlier mentioned, the observed factors range from threat of losing job, fear, poverty, to ordinate/noble ambition, among others. To some, the factors may not be tenable or weighty enough to warrant succumbing to such vice as sexual harassment; but to the victim, it may be a matter of life and death in the desperation for survival; therefore, the factors are worth examining.

1. **Fear and threat of losing a job** are usually intertwined. Fear of the consequences of losing a job, voluntarily or involuntarily, in the face of sexual harassment in the workplace, it is a real one. For adherents to the Christian belief, fear is unacceptable, as repeatedly admonished by the scriptures.⁴¹ It is particularly admonished that mortals should not be feared, as fearing them ensnares the victim of such fear. Rather, Christians are required to put their trust and confidence in God,⁴² even in such threatening and fearsome situation as foisted by sexual harassment in the workplace. In essence, for people of the Christian faith, fear and threat of losing a job are not sufficient factors enough for which to succumb to harassment in the workplace.
2. **Poverty**, particularly in an emerging economy, is a factor that cannot be denied or glossed over.⁴³ For an individual who understands the reality of poverty, seeking to preserve a perceived secure job, or any job whatsoever that strives to provide sustenance, may be worth every effort, even if enduring the adversities and

³² Encarta Dictionaries, Microsoft® Encarta® 2009. © 1993-2008 Microsoft Corporation.

³³ *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, Chapter 6 Verse 18 (*Supra* note 27), 1160.

³⁴ Encarta Dictionaries (*Supra* note 32).

³⁵ *Supra* note 33. See also Ann F. Pritt, *Healing the Spiritual Wounds of Sexual Abuse*, THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST.ORG (Apr., n.d., 2001, n.d.), <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2001/04/healing-the-spiritual-wounds-of-sexual-abuse?lang=eng>

³⁶ *Supra* note 33.

³⁷ *Supra* note 27.

³⁸ *The Book of Psalm*, Chapter 24 Verses 3-5 (*Supra* note 27), 608-609.

³⁹ *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, Chapter 6 Verse 9-10 (*Supra* note 27), 1160.

⁴⁰ Drawing from his years of experience as a law teacher and Christian counsellor.

⁴¹ *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, Chapter 35 Verse 4 and Chapter 41 Verses 10-13 (*Supra* note 27), 742 & 748.

⁴² *The Proverbs*, Chapter 29 Verse 25 (*Supra* note 27), 698.

⁴³ Based on the data produced by the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics in 2020, 40% or 83 million Nigerians were said to live in poverty. See *Poverty & Equity Brief (Africa Western & Central) Nigeria*, WORLD BANK.ORG (Apr. n.d., 2021, n.d.) https://www.databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C750588BF00QA/AM2020/Global_POVEQ_NGA.pdf and *Nigeria's Poverty Profile is Grim. It's Time to Move Beyond Handouts*, THE CONVERSATION, (Jun. 27, 2021, 10.47 AM). <https://www.theconversation.com/nigerias-poverty-profile-is-grim-its-time-to-move-beyond-handouts-163302>

scars of sexual harassment in the workplace. Nevertheless, the Christian belief holds a contrary view to this. It is expected that adherents seek to please God first, and make living by His righteous standards a first priority; with an assurance that they shall be divinely provided for.⁴⁴ To this effect, scripture is replete with testimonies of such interventions for supernatural provision.⁴⁵ In other words, the Christian creed is of the view that poverty (or any adversity) is not tenable enough to make an adherent succumb to sexual harassment in the workplace or elsewhere.⁴⁶

3. Ordinate/noble ambition is a legitimate factor that may render a would-be victim of sexual harassment in the workplace to succumb to a perpetrator of the vice. It is worth recalling that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reaffirmed commitment to 'faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom....'⁴⁷ By the provisions of the Declaration, it is clear that the innate rights of all mortals to aspire to ordinate or noble ambitions is upheld and reinforced. Certain privileged interactions of the second author with a few individuals who have been victim of sexual harassment in the workplace revealed that the desire to preserve an ordinate and noble ambition to excel in their chosen professional endeavour, vis-à-vis the opportunity of being in a work establishment that appears a prospective springboard to actualizing such ambition if only they endure, occasioned their succumbing to such harassment. In the end, they still had to disengage from such abusive establishment, as the only bid to save their faith and human dignity. Christianity, however, does not consider ambition, no matter how ordinate or noble, worth making one succumb to sexual harassment. In fact, it is of the view that for a gain of the whole world it is not worth mortgaging ones soul.⁴⁸ In other words, ordinate/noble ambitions ought to be pursued and built upon the timeless virtues of dignity, self-worth, and faith, eschewing the dehumanizing compromise of sexual harassment.

6. Faith as 'Sword' and 'Shield'

For adherents of the Christianity, faith or spirituality is expected ultimately to be a 'sword' and 'shield'. Sword in the sense that; the conviction or belief of the adherents is meant to confront any and everything that is considered negative as well as adverse to the creed of the belief.⁴⁹ In essence, the faith held by adherent is a sword with which they are expected to engage in 'warfare' with anything that contradicts the virtues and values of what they believe; and by which they are also required to teach such violators to align with their belief. In the same vein, the faith of a Christian is meant for a defense, in the sense that it constitutes a protective hedge around the adherent⁵⁰ against all negative, compromising, and detrimental infiltrations like a lure to sexual harassment and the likes. In other words, a Christian faced with the vice of sexual harassment in the workplace is expected to appropriate the double-edged benefit of his/her faith in defending the integrity and nobility of the faith, and to confront the ill, even if it means exercising the extreme option of walking away from such toxic work environment, rather than succumb.

7. Conclusion

This discourse has endeavoured to carefully look at the subject of sexual harassment in the workplace, with particular emphasis on the 'narrow strip' of its impact on would-be victims who are people of faith; with the Christian faith chosen for specific evaluation. Faith is underscored as a sword and shield for any would-be victim to deploy in the face of the vice of sexual harassment, whenever it attempts to manifest. By this, the responsibility and rein are snatched away from the harasser and are now lodged with the supposed harassed. To a huge extent, many people of faith who have been victim of this harassment were said to have been as a result of their loss of faith in the potency of the faith they profess. Faith ought not to be resorted to only for reparation after the damage is done; but should be as a first resort, in order to avert the incidence of sexual harassment. As long as the harassment is not rape, then faith can be deployed to overcoming the darts of harassment. In the worst case scenario, by the same faith professed, a would-be victim should be bold and courageous enough to walk away from a toxic work environment riddled with the vice of sexual harassment, rather than wait, at the risk of bearing the hurt and scars of a lifetime. This article concludes that people of faith would-be victims of sexual harassment in the workplace are not totally helpless if they are sensitive to faith, except they opt to be helpless. The authors therefore recommend that everyone in the workplace should be sensitive to their faith. No one is invulnerable to sexual harassment, and faith is one of the significant means of preventing it, rather than a coping mechanism after the incident.

⁴⁴ *The Gospel of St. Matthew*, Chapter 6 Verse 33 (*Supra* note 27), 975.

⁴⁵ *The Book of Psalm*, Chapter 37 Verse 25 (*Supra* note 27), 616.

⁴⁶ For example, in an interaction on 21 September 2016 between the first author (who herself is a survivor of sexual harassment) and a Christian lady who also was victim, the lady said she ought to have relied on her faith for financial assistance rather than the man who sexually harassed her. She stated further that as soon as she fell for the antics and the harasser gave her the needed money, God provided more than the amount she was in need of through a legitimate (miraculous) means; thereby proving to her that he (God) is more than sufficient to provide, if only she had exercised her faith.

⁴⁷ Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, 'Preamble'.

⁴⁸ *The Gospel of St. Matthew*, Chapter 16 Verse 26 (*Supra* note 27), 988.

⁴⁹ *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, Chapter 10 Verse 3-6 (*Supra* note 27), 1177.

⁵⁰ *The Book of Psalm*, Chapter 91 Verses 1-3 (*Supra* note 27), 645.