

The Golden Rule against Workplace Sexual Harassment in Africa.

Abstract

Workplace sexual harassment is deviant and detrimental to victims and organisations. Based on a golden rule principle, this paper argues that sexual harassment is opposed to universal principles of goodwill towards others. Hence, it is an immoral behaviour, and leaders have a role to play in ensuring it becomes non-existent. Following the synthesis and thematic analysis of secondary data, four themes emerged, which showed that nothing is positive about sexual harassment. Instead, it has negative physical, behavioural and psychological impacts on victims, who are mostly women. The issue of misuse of power and gender inequality also plays a role in enabling sexual harassment, particularly in the African context, where most nations have a high power-distance culture. The study offers relevant recommendations for tackling workplace sexual harassment, particularly by promoting moral development amongst organisational members using the golden rule principle and cultivating an ethical climate and zero tolerance for sexual harassment. All organisational members are encouraged to join the fight against sexual harassment by first considering themselves in the situation as the harassed and speaking up against such deviant behaviours.

Key words: the golden rule, leaders, workplace sexual harassment, women, moral development.

Introduction

This report covers a synthesis of studies on sexual harassment in Africa. The paper makes a case for promoting the golden rule principle against workplace sexual harassment. Combating sexual harassment requires the input of all organisational members especially leaders, who are called to maintain higher moral standards. That is, good leaders are not toxic or abusive leaders, who perpetuate harassing behaviours such as humiliating, ridiculing, and invading employees' privacy (Liang et al., 2022). Bad leaders are also perpetrators of most cases of bullying (Ahmad, 2018). Whilst leaders are not the only perpetrators of heinous behaviours, the role of leaders requires a higher level of responsibility, especially the demonstration of acceptable behaviours.

As the social learning theory shows, followers are prone to emulate their role models (Gan et al., 2023) since they can vicariously learn and reproduce observed desirable behaviours (Bandura, 1977). Consequentially, followers of unethical leaders are more likely to exhibit undesirable behaviours. The outcome will have adverse ramifications for all stakeholders (Schminke et al., 2005), which highlights the need for ethical or morally developed leaders. Africa is known to have produced several great leaders including Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (Worldhistoryedu.com, 2019) and current thought leaders such as Prof. Patrick Lumumba. However, due to the institutionalisation of corruption in Africa, most leaders are described as corrupt or ineffective (Liedong, 2017), glory-seeking, self-promoting, narcissistic and qualities reflective of destructive leadership (Zoogah & Abugre, 2020). The presence of corruption particularly makes it difficult for those who believe in ethical principles to operate ethically (Temple 2012).

To ennoble moral courage, therefore, the moral development of organisational members is needed (Kohlberg and Hersh 1977; Ukeni 2021). Moreover, cowardly condoning unethical behaviours, such as sexual harassment, will only compound the problem and its consequences. Take the recent preventable cases of workplace violence against nurses (Ekpor et al., 2024) and issues of sexual harassment against employees in South Africa (Malatjie and Mbajiorgu, 2024; Msimanga et al. 2023) and female students in Zimbabwe (Chimbunde, 2023) and Nigeria (Popoola 2023). This study, therefore, encapsulates a critical discussion of the golden rule as

and ethical theory opposed to sexual harassment and emphasises the role African leaders can play to combat it.

2.1 Workplace Sexual Harassment.

Workplace Sexual Harassment is viewed as an unethical/immoral practice that has no ethical justification and is particularly in contrast with the golden rule. It occurs ‘when a person engages in unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature, whether verbal, non-verbal, or physical, that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment (UNISON, n.d.). In essence, workplace sexual harassment is about coercion for sexual favours, which may be single or multiple incidents against one or more people, and is unlawful in most organisations, especially in the UK (CIPD, 2024). Workplace harassment has increased exponentially and as a costly organisational liability, it adversely impacts performance and job satisfaction, increases absenteeism and stress, and results in poor quality service (Adams and Bryan 2021). Harassment is not restricted to the size or type of organisation or even a specific race or nationality as studies show that it is also prevalent in the USA, UK/Europe, Asia, and Canada (Adams and Bryan, 2021).

Sexual harassment should be eliminated because it is aggressively against the victims’ well-being and mostly targeted at women. For example, half of the women surveyed in one study (as cited in UNISON n.d.) had experienced sexual harassment and four out of five failed to report it to their employer. According to the WHO (cited in Evans et al., 2019), sexual violence is ‘any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting’. This means, the immoral act could happen in any context and no excuse is adequate to make sexual violence or harassment right in any circumstance. Such vicious acts are a major issue for organisations (Offermann and Malamut, 2002). This has led to calls to reduce sexual assault on Australian-based university campuses (McCall et al., 2020).

In the USA, these assaults are mostly between employees and students. Universities in the bid to reduce lawsuits and protect their reputation impede the investigation processes (George, 2019). There are measures, however, to prevent such incidents in the first place. Organisations, especially human resource executives, can immunise their organisation by emphasising their anti-harassment statements from the induction stage and reassuring employees that their complaints are welcome and will (should) be resolved (Sullivan, 2004). With the multi-fold increase in harassment issues, however, it is reasonable to assert that the root cause of this issue has not been adequately addressed.

Importantly, it seems like workplace sexual harassment is not just about a desire for sexual intimacy, but one born out of a power tussle or the imbalance of power. In Africa, like in America and other parts of the world, sexual harassment comprises requests for favours, undesired advances, and physical or verbal harassment of a sexual nature (Cheng et al., 2024). There have been high-profile court cases on sexual harassment in Africa (Joubert et al., 2011a), indicative of its existence and impact on real victims. Both physical and verbal sexual harassment are common in Africa (Blumell et al. 2023; Msimanga et al., 2023).

2.2 Underpinning Ethical Theory

The golden rule (TGR) is used by some to refer to the principle that makes certain concepts work. For example, Gestsson & Zoega (2019) provided a golden rule for healthcare expenditure. Sayers et al. (2015) proposed the golden rule of strategic flood management. Bratianu (2018) provided a golden rule for the intellectual capital of organizations. Armstrong et al. (2015) also offered the golden rule of forecasting by deducing 28 guidelines for a conservative forecast that considers past and current knowledge about the given situation. However, Fildes & Petropoulos (2015) contended that the forecasting performance should be context dependent. Hence, Armstrong and colleagues (2015) asserted that golden rules should not be applied automatically to every situation as it could lead to inaccuracies in cases that require consideration of the specific situation or data.

For this review, the focus will be on the moral and philosophical components of the golden rule (TGR). The golden rule is perceived as a moral rule of thumb (Cunningham, 1998). In its negative form, the golden rule is to *not do to others what you would not want others to do to you* (Slater & Banakou, 2021). TGR has secular traditions and is described in different variants or versions (Merawi, 2024). In essence, though TGR is described as the most important principle of formal ethics and possibly of life, there is no consensus on how to interpret or formulate it (Rönnedal, 2015). Hence, Rönnedal (2015) asked pertinent questions about the nature and content of the TGR, especially around what the terms: ‘do, you, ought/want, others and them’ entail. To respond to that, it is important to establish that the paper is delimited to the Christian version of TGR.

Generally, TGR roots are traced to Confucianism (Merawi, 2024), other religions including Judaism, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism (Mligo, 2021) and Christianity (Cofnas, 2022). According to Cofnas (2022), the Christian religion is the moral cornerstone of TGR. Premised on the Christian worldview, TGR means ‘*to do unto others what you want them to do to you*’ (NKJV; Luke 6:31) or according to Matthew (NKJV; Matthew 7:12), “do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets. Matthew’s version is connected to the law and prophets, which supersedes self-referent morality. According to Cunningham (1998), TGR is the law of superabundance, which is about exceeding the law and going above and beyond. TGR related to the God-like behaviour where one loves others like God loves them is most fitting since acceptable norms are considered (Cunningham, 1998).

In essence, TGR is simultaneously aligned with the commandment to love the lord with all of one’s heart, mind and soul, and the second commandment is like it, to love one’s neighbour as one loves oneself (Merawi, 2024; Mligo, 2021). TGR is a universal form of ethics encoded in the natural moral law that fulfils the Christian and mosaic ideas of ethical behaviour (Cunningham, 1998). Specifically, the Christian version is based on Jesus’ sermon on the mount that calls for a moral agency that recognises the dignity and value of the other person. (Merawi, 2024). From this standpoint, it becomes more apparent that TGR exists for and with the other party and its underlying perspective is love. This can lead one to inquire about the nature and type of love, how its expression may differ across cultures and if there is an absolute best way

to love others. However, whatever variant or expression one holds to be true, what is key is that love does not dehumanise others.

Nonetheless, a pending issue is the absence of a moral observer independent of their environment and objective without bias and conditional principles (Mahrik, 2018). Hence, some have suggested turning to the platinum rule, which states that one ought to treat others as they want to be treated (Rönnedal, 2015). However, that is not the perfect answer. This is because the platinum rule sounds good at face value since it is other-focused but is inherently flawed as one may not know how the other wants to be treated. It is also possible that their preference is not suitable for them. For example, masochists like pain inflicted on them, which is not necessarily a justifiable moral act (Cunningham, 1998). Besides, the platinum rule is logically independent of TGR and derived from it (Rönnedal, 2015). Yet, the example of the masochist or agent having flawed desires still presents issues when viewed from the TGR perspective if it is interpreted that the masochist ought to inflict pain on another since they want pain inflicted on them (Rönnedal, 2015). Perhaps viewing TGR as being undergirded by universal principles can eliminate the want to accommodate flawed desires.

Overall, it seems one will have to agree with Mahrik's (2018) conclusion that an in-depth understanding of the ethical challenges requires guidance from a transcendent realm, where formulations of morality point to a metaphysical reality beyond humans and support the divine command theory. If a divine being and creator exist and make moral laws, as enshrined in the Christian faith, it is highly plausible that the moral lawgiver is perfect in every sense and knows what is right or wrong. It means following the divine order would be the best response to ethical dilemmas. The pending issue, however, is that humans are already morally flawed and have both a moral and an immoral orientation (Ukeni, 2021). Yet, TGR still holds practical relevance in modern business and society and is worth incorporating into the discourse of a global ethical code of practice especially as a principle against workplace sexual harassment.

Practical Relevance of the Golden Rule

The golden rule (TGR) is endorsed across cultures, religions and by both business ethicists and philosophers (Bruton, 2004). It is also an integral part of how businesspersons conceive ethics (Bruton, 2004) and has been applied across various disciplines and fields. For example, TGR is used in human resource development (HRD) studies, where it has ethical considerations requiring HRD professionals to respect fundamental human rights, contribute to the welfare of others and minimise adverse impact on others (Greer & Shuck, 2020). It speaks against some immoral business behaviours such as invasion of employees' privacy, subjugating employees to poor and unsafe working conditions, theft and fraud or deviant behaviours, discrimination and padding expense reports and other self-invested lies (Bruton, 2004).

Greer and Shuck (2020) used the golden rule as the starting point for responding to the cultural changes in higher education. Slater and Banakou (2021) discussed how the golden rule as an ethical principle can promote prosocial behaviour in virtual reality. They offered a gold rule embodiment paradigm, where participants create illusionary body ownership over a virtual body to enhance the agent's helping behaviour. Wattle's (as cited in Cunningham, 1998) levels of the TGR are also very insightful, especially the call to social service (treating them as persons of rational dignity), moral imperative (treating others according to moral insights) and loving others as God loves them. Relating this to God-like behaviour (Cunningham, 1998) is most fitting since it requires the consideration of acceptable norms that can be guidelines for behaving and relating with others.

However, some studies see a disparity between the notions of TGR and practical implications for different practices, such as the teacher's injunction for students to approach their relationship with classmates based on the rule (White, 2014). White's (2014) call for teachers to rethink the application of the GR principle in diverse classrooms is rooted in the inquiry as to the utility of the principle if it is as intended or misapplied. Notwithstanding, TGR's call for tolerance and selfless service can help reduce ethno-religious supremacy and conflict, especially in Nigeria (Odo, 2022). The application of TGR has also promoted inclusivity and fostered cooperation and connection among employees of a nursing home (Munkejord, 2019). Here, the relevance of the golden rule at work will be applied to the issue of workplace sexual harassment.

3.1 Method

This study is based on a critical synthesis of sexual harassment in the African context. Secondary sources were chosen to fulfil the overall aim of the study. Given the limited number of journals on the African context, some media reports were included making a total of twelve articles. The data was analysed using thematic analysis which resulted in four relevant themes.

3.2 Result and Discussion

Following a synthesis of studies on sexual harassment in the African context, four reoccurring themes emerged including: the impact of sexual harassment, gender/power imbalance, the type of organisation, and policies of sexual harassment.

3.2.1 Impact of sexual harassment

Indeed, sexual harassment is a very sensitive issue as it directly affects victims and organisations. The impact of sexual harassment on an individual is detrimental regardless of the contextual domain, though victims in the African context are faced with unique challenges. For example, sub-Saharan African countries have the highest experienced rate of sexual harassment, but most cases are unreported (Blumell et al., 2023). This could be caused by the high unemployment rates and fear of losing one's job or the understandable desire to remain gainfully employed. Regardless, victims of sexual harassment and violence experience strong psychological issues such as anger and a deep sense of shame, which could result in absenteeism as they feel uncomfortable returning to work (Tollstern-Landin et al., 2020).

Women are particularly prone to stigmatisation and most victims are afraid of further victimisation (Wamoyi et al., 2023). Due to the socio-religious and cultural milieu of African countries, the blame and wrongly placed or perceived shame experienced by victims is not surprising and needs to be addressed. Since stigma is an issue of concern (Tollstern-Landin et al., 2020; Wamoyi et al., 2023) that deters female victims of sexual abuse or harassment from reporting such incidences, ethical leaders should provide protective environments for women and confidential channels for reporting/disclosure. There are already low levels of job

satisfaction in the African context (Blumell et al., 2023). Adding any form of violation or abuse to the workplace would supposedly make it worse with negative outcomes.

3.2.2 Gender and Misuse of Power

According to Ahmad (2018), individuals in inferior positions of power are less able to defend or escape from abuse. As the #MeToo movement has shown, several allegations are against men who abused their powerful positions in different sectors (Adams and Bryan, 2021; Evans et al., 2019) and spheres including private or domestic domains (Makoni, 2019). This is more prevalent in organisations that emphasise sex differences and assign higher status to one sex; resulting in gender and sexual harassment as a way of protecting a threatened status or position of power (Perry et al. 2021). The gender issue is worth highlighting because as Lee's (2018) study shows, there is a stronger connection between hostility and sexual harassment for women working in male-dominated organisations. Agreeably, this suggests that to tackle the fruit (unethical behaviours), there is an increasing need to address the root (causes of harassment).

The patriarchal African context is wrought with a high-power distance between the male dominant authority and others. Women are often viewed as the 'weaker vessels' that can be easily preyed on. This imbalance of power particularly reinforces gendered hierarchies (Blumell et al., 2023), so it is no surprise that the patriarchal forces are blamed for the occurrences of sexual harassment perpetuated against women (Nguyen et al. 2023; Skalli, 2014). This is not to insinuate that men are totally safe, as a study by Oni et al. (2019) showed that 10.8% of their male participants (N=17) have faced sexual harassment, such as being forced to comply with sexual relationships on campus. Nonetheless, a higher number of women (N=19) have experienced the same harassment (Oni et al., 2019).

In essence, women are more sexually harassed than men in Africa, so both genders experience sexual harassment differently or in unequal proportions (Tollstern-Landin et al., 2020; Vanderschuren et al., 2023). For example, the ratio is 3:4, indicating that more women, particularly female nurses in Tanzania, experience sexual harassment and violence at work (Tollstern-Landin et al., 2020). This is similar to the results found in Western nations as UNISON's (n.d.) report shows that more women are sexually harassed and, overwhelmingly, the perpetrators are men. Perpetrators who are authority figures misuse their power to enslave

or silence their victims. For instance, teachers who abuse secondary school girls go as far as to punish those who resist their advances (Wamoyi et al., 2023) and victims who get pregnant are expelled from school. Pregnancy is used as a weapon to deny female students' education, while the perpetrators or men are allowed to continue their studies or careers. Some deliberately fail students who refuse to offer 'sex in exchange for marks' (BBC, 2019b).

Similarly, female students in Tanzania (Wamoyi et al., 2023) and women in Nigeria and Malawi experience extensive sexual burdens (Vanderschuren et al., 2023). Female journalists in Nigeria, Kenya, Malawi (Blumell and Mulupi, 2021), Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia (Msimanga et al. 2023) have reportedly also faced verbal and physical sexual harassment. In spite of this, a different study set in South Africa showed no statistically significant effect of gender on the incident or perception of sexual harassment (Joubert et al. 2011b). This outcome could be due to contextual differences, although similar studies conducted within the same sector (Higher Education) and context (South Africa) show different results.

One of the studies by Oni et al. (2019) showed that more women (N = 47) than men (N = 27) have been sexually harassed/touched, and two male and five female students were raped on campus (Oni et al., 2019). Another study revealed that female pupils/students were harassed by male students, who succumbed to peer pressure or wanted to prove their masculinity (Wamoyi et al., 2023). Overall, the issues of power against the female gender are telling of how systems or structural arrangements can shape certain behaviours and why it is important to have mechanisms that promote equality and negate the abuse of power.

3.2.3 Type of Organisation

Sexual harassment and violence can be perpetrated by anyone in any place. However, it is worsened by enabling environments, and from the results, it seems to be more prevalent in service-based industries in Africa. For example, one study in Tanzania showed that as many as 10% of nurses have been sexually harassed at work by physicians and 36% of 200 participants knew someone who had experienced workplace sexual harassment (Tollstern-Landin et al.,

2020). The issue is even more worrisome and prevalent in higher education institutions among employees/staff members and students (Chimbunde 2023; Joubert et al., 2011a, 2011b; Oni et al. 2019). Users of transport services also experience sexual harassment, especially women who, despite making shorter trips, experience sexual harassment while waiting or making their way from one location to another (Vanderschuren et al., 2023). The newsroom/media or journalism industry is another field where sexual harassment is prevalent (Blumell and Mulupi 2021; Blumell et al., 2023; Msimanga et al., 2023).

3.2.4 Existing Policies

A report by the World Policy Centre (n.d.) shows that countries in sub-Saharan Africa have existing laws and policies that are strictly against sexual harassment. While this is good, it could have been better if there was evidence of proactive prevention of harassment in the first instance. In Africa, a similar version of the MeToo campaign has been launched in different forms such as #EndRapeCulture, the #AmINext campaign, #TheTotalShutdown, and the #ArewaMeToo campaign (Blumell and Mulupi, 2021). This seems like a positive step in the right direction because victims need support and perpetrators should be punished. Things can be better if relevant policymakers take it a step further. Exposing such scandals has prompted organisations to act and in Africa, some are instituting sexual harassment policies, which is a good place to start. For example, the BBC's Sex for Grade documentary led to the institution or redemption of sexual harassment policies in Nigeria, though as Popoola (2023) rightly noted, the policies are valuable but limited in their gender coverage.

Evidence from South Africa shows that even though there are sexual harassment policies in higher education institutions, they are not viewed as effective tools given the poor implementation of the policies and the general lack of awareness/training on how to utilise them (Joubert et al. 2011a). This is like the case of Zimbabwean tertiary institutions, where there are well-mapped policies that are mostly redundant due to inadequate implementation (Chimbunde, 2023). It is imperative that these universities strive to be a safe and inclusive learning environment. For journalists, in addition to inadequate policies, there is a lack of relevant media or regulatory bodies to curb sexual harassment (Msimanga et al., 2023).

The Niamey Guidelines to Combat Sexual Violence is an important guide that has been considered (Durojaye and Lawal, 2022) and can be replicated by organisations. If followed, it means at the national level governments will implement regional and international norms on sexual violence and compulsorily prevent sexual violence, protect and support victims whilst investigating and prosecuting perpetrators (Durojaye and Lawal, 2022). Importantly, existing policies, laws, and legal decisions need to take into consideration women lived experiences (Durojaye and Lawal, 2022). Overall, drafting policies against harassment is useful, but poor execution defeats its aim. Organisations must therefore create systems that work towards the dissemination and execution of regulations against sexual violence or harassment.

3.3 The Golden Rule against Sexual harassment

The golden rule (TGR) requires recursion where there is an ought phrase (do to others) and an embedded want phrase (as you want them to do to you) (Thagard, 2022). Rönndal's (2015) response to the question about the terms within TGR still holds. The action (do) in TGR refers to specific and general actions, which from Christ's perspective should be rooted in love. As described in the Bible (NKJV: 1 Corinthians 13), love is kind and does not seek to harm others. If everyone ordinarily sought the best for others in every possible way, one can reckon that the world would be a better place without wars and conflicts that have devastated humankind. The 'others or them' refer to humans, in general as it is aligned to Christ's call to love one's neighbour as one loves oneself. Perhaps, the line of inquiry, which raises concern is what one ought to do where they do not reasonably love themselves. However, that is not the general disposition of humans who instinctively strive to survive or have a good life.

The other term, 'you', references the moral agent and '*what ought to be done or what one wants to be done to them*' is about the actions, which should, in life's general situations, be reasonable, justifiable, desirable and universally applicable by humans (Rönndal, 2015). TGR glues one to the other, calling everyone to treat others as they wish to be treated (Ellis, 2017). Hence, reciprocity as a universal rule, is evident in TGR (Kirk, 2003; Merawi, 2024; Mligo, 2021). However, Mahrik (2018), from a humanistic perspective, argues that TGR is paradoxical and questions its claims of reciprocity when there is a unilateral moral commitment by the agent

regardless of the practices of the social environment. Yet, one must note that going against moral codes opposes TGR. For example, claiming that harming others is how one wishes to be treated negates the truth and TGR (Ellis, 2017). This applied to workplace sexual harassment makes it an abhorrence that should be completely eradicated. That is, based on TGR, harassment is inherently immoral and logically would not be desired by the harassed.

Generally, TGR is grounded on the need for universal impartiality and interpersonal love and care (Merawi, 2024). Similarly, Bruton (2004) contends that TGR serves as a litmus test for fairness and impartiality. However, Cofnas (2022) offered a naturalistic perspective on the varying versions of the golden rule and argued that it does not promote moral impartiality. One can, however, contend that the inherent virtue of fairness TGR evokes can make a case for the attribution of impartiality, which is not detached from the persons involved. TGR has also been critiqued for different reasons. Sidgwick's (as cited Bruton, 2004) complaint about the possibility for one to wish cooperation in sin or do evil since they will be willing to reciprocate the same as may be the case for sexual harassers is intriguing. This is because TGR is not anchored on the moral implications that sin bears. Instead, TGR could be about putting oneself in someone else's shoes and asking how one would wish to be treated if one were in the other party's position (Bruton, 2004).

As Rönndal (2024) noted, a possible world where two individuals swap roles is imaginable. Yet it seems like there is a valid claim for contextual variance, where varying contexts permit different values, which can lead to clashes among moral agents. For example, a sexual harasser could seek acquittal since the judge would not want to be sent to jail (Mahrik, 2018). While that is true, the role of both parties is distinct, and the golden rule can still be applied ethically. Therefore, even when the roles are reversed, where the harasser becomes the judge, it will still be appropriate to send the criminal to jail, which supports the objective nature of TGR. Rönndal (2024) presents valid arguments that support the notion that the golden rule has a moral principle, worth considering and argues that treating TGR as an absolute rule in its current form is problematic. For example, there are objections to TGR based on the differences in internal and external circumstances, the moral agent's flawed desires (unusual, perverted, bad or evil wants), inconsistent/conflicting desires, and the recipient's flawed, bad and uninformed desires (Rönndal, 2024).

The reason is not farfetched, moral agency is played by humans, encompassing people's feelings, preferences, and cultural and social backgrounds (Mahrik, 2018). These characteristics of the moral individual are not universal but highly variable. Given its self-reference, there are questions about its subjectivity (Cunningham, 1998). Thus, the rule presents a clear paradox. On the one hand, it is expected that the decision-making of the individual in his moral actions will be independent of the responses of the surroundings, and on the other hand, according to this rule, moral decision-making is dependent on the assessment of its consequences and on the effect of surrounding behaviour towards the individual (Mahrik, 2018).

Hence, Rönndal (2024) offered a rendering of TGR which clarifies past ambiguities: *If you want it to be the case that if x were in your situation and you were in x's situation then x would do H to you, and you have a good will, then you ought to do H to x*. This adds a 'goodwill clause and same situation clause' to mean that goodwill exists where the agent's desires ought to be. The sameness includes universal properties similar to an individual's situation (Rönndal, 2024). This is a clear rendering of TGR and clarifies the ambiguities that informed the criticisms of some scholars. When applied to the moral issue in this study, it will be morally justifiable if the harasser was the harassed and in good will wants harassment. However, the using humans as tools than ends in themselves as opposed to Kant's categorical imperative and humanity principle which are aligned with universal principles indicates that such a response is opposed to goodwill.

Hence, sexual harassment is an immoral, unethical behaviour or practice that needs to be combated. It must be pitched as an unwanted and offensive behaviour (Wamoyi et al., 2023), which is completely unacceptable regardless of the status of the victim and perpetrator. The enlightenment of both men and women is compulsory to combat and prevent sexual violence. An area that cannot be overemphasised is the need to seek consent and for involved parties to respect the responses of others. Even if it was not intended to be offensive, if an act, be it a joke, banter, or flirting, causes offence, then it is sexual harassment (UNISON n.d.). For example, where an individual says 'no', the answer should be viewed as a clear response or indication that the party is not interested, and contextual reinterpretations should be unlearned.

In essence, one should not harass others sexually because such behaviours are not what they or the victim will desire in goodwill, and even if they desired such, it is opposed to universal principles and should not be perpetuated against others. A question that can be used to facilitate workplace conversations on the issue is: would you like this if it were done to you? This makes the moral problem quite personal and removes the distance or separateness that may have occurred when the moral issue is perceived as being meted out against an unknown agent. Creating room for such moral dialogue at work could enable organisational members to put themselves in the victim's position. It may also motivate some to speak up against or prevent workplace sexual harassment.

3.4 Role Leaders Play

Leaders have a role to play in the reduction of sexual harassment at work (Perry et al. 2021; Sadler et al., 2018). Transformational leaders, for example, deter such behaviours by facilitating a moral environment through the facilitation of autonomy, feedback, and task identity (Astrauskaite et al., 2015). They also play a significant role in preventing or reducing sexual violence and its consequences in the military (Sadler et al., 2018). For example, when military leaders respond to sexual violations by taking positive action to produce positive outcomes for victims, more military members are encouraged to report such incidents (Daniel et al., 2019). Contrarily, passive leadership is antithetical to creating the required atmosphere for preventing sexual harassment as both women and men are more likely to be sexually harassed when working under a passive leader (Lee, 2018). Indeed, passivity is not a welcome behaviour for leaders and has been rightly classified as a form of interpersonal deviance (Achyldurdyeva et al., 2021).

In essence, leaders need to be proactive in the prevention and reduction of sexual harassment and its impact on victims. They can start by speaking up and creating a conducive climate that reduces such behaviours (Coomber, 2017; Offermann and Malamut 2002; Perry et al., 2021). Leaders need to set the right tone by demonstrating that the organisation is not harassment tolerant because the organisational climate will largely determine employees' reporting behaviours and perception of harassment (Offermann and Malamut, 2002). That is, where there

is a weak sanction for sexual harassment and strong negative outcomes such as backlash or career disruption for complaining, employees will be less likely to file reports, which will only aggravate the problem.

Nguyen et al. (2023) supposed that workplace harassment is a one-off episode that is infrequent with low intensity. However, the African situation is distinct because it seems to be frequent, as one in two African women has faced sexual harassment at work (Ifex, 2021). It is even more terrifying if the perpetrators are the supervisors themselves (Offermann and Malamut, 2002). A study showed that integrating a higher number of women in leadership positions reduces harassment claims (Glass et al., 2020). This suggests that equality in the workplace to ennoble female leadership is a plausible solution as women can also serve as role models to support victims and limit or checkmate male harassers. An insightful developmental approach involving the completion of an online module covering the cultural narratives that contribute to sexual violence is very instructive here (McCall et al., 2020).

4.1 Recommendation

Behaviours emanating from individuals' faith and morality reduce deviance (Dampson, 2022), so these can be modelled and reinforced to potentially encourage organisational members to serve as agents against deviant practices and harassment. The effort made by the victim's supervisor to stop workplace harassment could increase employees' proclivity to report such incidents. The intolerance for sexual harassment could also be indicative of openness to gender differences, which could lead members to focus on productive work practices. The stigmatisation of victims and the blame and needless shame they experience are equally very concerning and prevalent in the African context, but these issues can be addressed via training. Victims should also be enlightened about their rights and supported to reduce their self-blame (Perry et al. 2021). For nurses, this training can be carried out in the hospital and students/others can start from the educational level, such as universities or medical colleges (Tollstern-Landin et al., 2020).

A possible explanation for the gap between moral or ethical leaders' role and a harassment-free climate could be the lack of adequate ethical leadership training (Bhana and Suknunan, 2020). If leaders at different levels are not trained to lead ethically, it seems that the possibility of ongoing individual moral development is implausible. Consequently, training and development, especially ethical leadership development programs, should be offered at both the unit level (Perry et al., 2021) and institutional level (Sadler et al., 2018). Moral development is particularly important for leaders and followers alike because, as the toxic triangle by Padilla et al. (2007) shows, susceptible followers can succumb to negative behaviours and promote them in a conducive environment. Moral development training should, therefore, be geared towards enabling learners to inculcate and engage in moral reasoning processes (Ukeni, 2021) to be better equipped to discern and fight against deviant behaviours at work.

More so, better moral reasoning orientation can enable leaders to make ethical decisions (Kish-Gephart et al. 2010). Nonetheless, due to existing human immoral orientation (Ukeni 2021) or the 'moral judgement–moral action gap' (DeTienne et al., 2019), awareness of morality alone is not enough. Indeed, Kohlberg and Hersh's (1977) advice for individuals to develop higher levels of cognitive moral development is useful, yet humans can morally disengage (Zsolnai, 2016). Hence, to directly combat sexual harassment, organisations can create or develop leaders to create an inclusive climate (Perry et al., 2021), which is non-discriminatory or disadvantageous to any gender, and incorporate other discussed modalities/systems to ensure a zero tolerant atmosphere for sexual harassment.

The #MeToo movement also shows that online activism through social media, such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, has some bearing and is worth exploring in addition to active on-the-ground mobilisation against sexual violence (Skalli, 2014). As behavioural theories of reinforcement and Bandura's (1977) social learning theories indicate, negative reinforcement or punishment for such bad behaviours can serve to deter the repetition or reproduction of harassment. For organisations, these online voices should not be silenced but re-echoed. Leaders can champion such initiatives within their teams to emphasise their intolerance for sexual harassment and violence.

4.2 Practical Relevance, Limitation and Future study

The golden rule is a self and other-oriented ethical philosophy which calls one to behave in ways that express good will to others. Sexual harassment on the other hand is a deviant behaviour which is unethical and at variance with the golden rule. Hence, this is a clarion call to all individuals who have moral values or perceive themselves as moral agents to rise to the occasion and become the exemplars of desired change. They can engage in moral reflectivity as internal reflectiveness guides individuals and leaders to evaluate their conduct to ensure that they learn and display ethical behaviours. The positive observable attitudes can be replicated by followers to promote ethical behaviours at work (Babalola et al., 2019; Ukeni, 2023).

Sexual harassers hurt or violate others, so they should be exposed. Like in the case where an immoral professor was dismissed for demanding sex for grades (BBC, 2019a), exposure could also serve as a deterrent to harassers and motivate victims to speak out. Leaders or organisations should be proactive in providing relevant support to the victims, especially in enabling them to heal from such traumatic experiences and equipping bystanders with the right tools and resources to prevent or stop the perversion or reactively report and support victims instead of blaming or shaming them. Toxic masculinity amongst men should also be addressed, and clear policies in this regard are required. This perhaps could be a metaphorical stone added to building the tower of equality and addressing the fifth Sustainable Development Goal.

There are existing policies on sexual harassment in Africa, but they are mostly viewed as ‘paper exercises’ due to poor execution (Chimbunde, 2023), so leaders should actively implement existing policies and even amend them to ensure that they can be feasibly executed. Much can also be gleaned from North Africa’s anti-sexual harassment initiatives, which are geared towards changing the narratives of the past, where sexual harassment was condoned or reproduced by patriarchal forces (Skalli, 2014).

The study is limited to a few secondary sources, which were not systematically collected, and no primary data was collected to assess the current situation in the non-western. Others can also investigate the personal attributes of leaders and followers based on their moral identity (Magalhães et al. 2019), moral courage and moral development (removed for peer-review), and

their view of sexual harassment. Further consideration should be given to how cultural contexts, such as high-power distance and socio-religious norms, shape the work environment (Nguyen et al., 2023), particularly in minimising or normalising workplace harassment. The author hopes to collect qualitative data from victims of sexual harassment to uncover their lived experience and recovery, if applicable.

5.1 Conclusion

The published articles on sexual harassment show that African women were more susceptible to being sexually harassed by those in positions of power. This is particularly due to the power imbalance between the genders to the extent that women are blamed and victimised, which further reinforces the negative behaviours of perpetrators. Other related issues are the physical and psychological impact of sexual harassment on victims exacerbated by poorly executed policies. This paper should, therefore, serve as a voice calling on all organisational members to actively fight against sexual harassment. To combat this perverse malady, moral development training on harassment and related issues should be pursued and discussed at work. The golden rule is recommended as a useful or popular philosophy to use in facilitating such sensitive topics as the study shows that humans are readily more sensitive when moral issues are applied to them directly. Leaders should foster integrity, fairness, ethical behaviour, employee voice, and empowerment as mechanisms to prevent sexual harassment.

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