



Journal of Sexual Aggression

An international, interdisciplinary forum for research, theory and practice

ISSN: 1355-2600 (Print) 1742-6545 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tjsa20>

School heads and mentors in cahoots? Challenges to teaching practice in Zimbabwean teacher education programmes

Alfred Henry Makura & Davison Zireva

To cite this article: Alfred Henry Makura & Davison Zireva (2013) School heads and mentors in cahoots? Challenges to teaching practice in Zimbabwean teacher education programmes, Journal of Sexual Aggression, 19:1, 3-16, DOI: [10.1080/13552600.2011.573583](https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2011.573583)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2011.573583>



Published online: 12 May 2011.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 242



Citing articles: 2 View citing articles [↗](#)

School heads and mentors in cahoots? Challenges to teaching practice in Zimbabwean teacher education programmes

Alfred Henry Makura^{1*} & Davison Zireva²

¹University of Fort Hare, Teaching and Learning Centre, Private Bag X1314, Alice, 5700 South Africa & ²Morgenster Teachers College, Zimbabwe

Abstract *Mentors and school heads play cardinal roles in teacher education programmes in most countries, including Zimbabwe. The side-effects of such symbiosis have not yet been investigated fully. This article used a qualitative methodological approach to investigate the perceptions of some Zimbabwean student teachers regarding their teaching practice experiences. A sample of 10 ex-teaching practice students from a teacher education college was selected and interviewed during data collection using a semi-structured interview schedule. The participants reported a high prevalence of sexual harassment/aggression of the students by the host schools' heads and mentors, irrespective of student gender. The form of aggression included seeking sexual favours and intimidation. Most perpetrators used metaphors and satirical or sarcastic language to convey their intentions. The female student teachers reported higher incidences than did the male students. Constant workshopping is imperative to remind mentors and school heads of their professional and social obligations regarding teacher education.*

Keywords *Mentors; school heads; student teachers; sexual harassment; teaching practice; Zimbabwe*

Introduction

The cardinal role of a school head has been reported in numerous studies (Gwarinda, 1995; Mutopa et al., 2006; Nyagura & Reece, 1989; Oliva & Pawlas, 2004; Ozigi, 1983). A key function of a school head is that of providing instructional leadership or supervision. The performance of such a task entails facilitating the teaching and learning activities (i.e. improving instruction) at a school. Such performance entails providing a service to teachers in a collegial, collaborative and professional setting, so that they are assisted in improving their method of instruction (Oliva & Pawlas, 2004). The authors of this article have gone further, and posited that instructional supervision is meant to help teachers to build upon and improve their strengths and to remain in the profession, rather than being a means of probing their

*Corresponding author: E-mail: amakura@ufh.ac.za

deficiencies and of seeking their dismissal for misbehaviour. The former practice is referred to as “mentoring”.

By means of mentoring, student teachers, for instance, gain exposure to the art of teaching prior to joining the teaching profession. Such pre-service teachers are attached individually to an experienced mentor (e.g. a senior teacher) under the overall supervision of the school head. School heads are *de facto* mentors. The mentor assumes a multifaceted role, or multiple roles, as guide, supervisor, counsellor, assessor, protector and model, among other functions (Maphosa, Shumba, & Shumba, 2007). The role of the mentor is to coach and help student teachers to reflect upon their practical teaching experience (Furlong & Maynard, 1995). In many instances, teaching school heads (those school heads who are required to fulfill the dual role of administrator and instructor) assign student teachers to their classes, ostensibly to mentor them.

Regrettably, some school heads and teachers actually seek out teachers’ and/or student teachers’ “deficiencies” which, when discovered, are used as grounds for threatening them with dismissal or for instituting some other action such as, in particular, abuse (Gwarinda, 1995; Madziyire, Makombe, Makoni, & Mugwangi, 1995; Maphosa et al., 2007; Shumba & Matina, 2002; Nyagura & Reece, 1989; Ozigi, 1983). Such a trend was reported by some student teachers enrolled at a teacher education college in the Masvingo province of Zimbabwe. Student teachers are a vulnerable group who are subjected to the scrutiny of those at their college, at their host school and in the surrounding communities. Therefore, they have to contend with the professional and social pressures unleashed by the relevant “stakeholders”. Such pressure is unethical, and constitutes abuse.

A substantial body of literature supports the existence of various forms of human abuse in the Zimbabwean education system (Chiroro, Viki, Frodi, Muromo, & Tsigah, 2006; Makura & Shumba, 2009; Mapfumo, Shumba, & Chireshe, 2007; Shumba, 1999, 2000, 2004a,b, 2006; Shumba et al., 2008; Zindi & Shumba, 1999). Most of the studies that have been undertaken so far have concentrated on child abuse by teachers in both primary and secondary schools (Brackenridge & Fasting, 2002; Gwirayi & Shumba, 2008; Khan, 1995; Shumba, 1999, 2003, 2004b; Shumba, Cherian, & Mawere, 2008; Zindi & Shumba, 1999). Moreover, much of this literature has focused on exploring issues relating to child abuse, particularly sexual abuse. However, a few have addressed the abuse of students in institutions of higher education (Mapfumo et al., 2007; Shumba & Matina, 2002). The literature reveals that the prevalence of abuse of women has been found to be higher than that of men, due to the unequal power relations between the two genders (Clatterbaugh, 1997; Pleck, 1992), as well as to the preponderance of men in leadership positions, some of whom have been discovered as abusive of their positions (Brackenridge & Fasting, 2002; Dorsey, 1989; Manwa, 2002). Therefore, women in particular, are more likely to be prevented from diligently executing their duties than males (Gwirayi & Shumba, 2008) because they are an oppressed group (Higgs & Smith 2002). In contrast, men have rarely been found to be sexually abused by female perpetrators (Shumba, 2004b). Hence, Shumba (2006) has called for teacher education courses to include coverage of legislation pertaining to child abuse. Such a course could start at the primary school level. Colleges may also network with legal enforcing bodies and support organisations to protect female trainees against sexual violence (Worku, 2001).

There exists a dearth of scholarly literature on the abuse of student teachers by their mentors during the teaching practice of the former. Such a void should be filled by means of such efforts as this. Accordingly, the researchers hope that this study will inform educational theory and practice in higher education. Zimbabwean policy formulators and implementers stand to benefit from conceptualising the challenges confronting pre-service teachers. The

study reveals that the current mentoring process serves to curtail the effective and efficient execution of duties by student teachers. As such, both the incumbent and prospective heads should take heed not to abuse their powers. Lastly, the results of the study might assist student teachers and mentors to guard against unethical tendencies in the primary school system.

The leader behaviour approach: A conceptual framework

The leader behaviour approach focuses on what leaders do while they are on duty. The approach resulted from the work undertaken by Ralph Stogdill and A. Coons during the 1950s at the Ohio State University and Michigan University, as well as that which was undertaken later by Andrew Halpin. Leader behaviour, or style, was conceptualised as consisting of two independent dimensions (Park, 1996), namely concern for people (in terms of their relationships) and concern for getting the job done (relating to tasks). Fiedler (1967), Silver (1983), Greenburg (1996) and Park (1996) labelled the two above-mentioned dimensions “consideration” and “initiating structure”, respectively. For these researchers, the relationship dimension includes giving support, communicating, facilitating interactions, listening and giving feedback. The task dimension includes goal-setting, organising, task-setting, time management and control (Hersey & Blanchard, as cited in Park, 1996). Leaders scoring highly on initiating structure were found to be concerned with production, whereas those scoring highly on consideration were concerned with establishing good relations with their subordinates (Greenberg, 1996).

In certain instances, some leaders were found to score low, moderate or high on both dimensions. Leader behaviours thus provide an indication of the extent to which the two characteristics are present in leaders, as well as the extent to which they utilise such characteristics. Some research studies have shown that leaders tend to engage in behaviours in conformity with role expectations (Collard, 2001; Koshal, Gupta, & Koshal, 1998; Murphy, Ekstat, & Parker, 1994). Koshal et al. (1998) found that each gender tends to fulfil certain leadership roles and to behave in terms of such roles, although the masculine managerial model was found to prevail. Rimmer and Davies (1985) and Young (1993) argue that female leaders tend to show cooperative leadership behaviours, unlike male leaders. Consequently, leaders displaying cooperative behaviours were found to be relationship-orientated, as they appeared to aim at creating good human relations. Most such leaders were found to be women.

In the realm of interpersonal communication, female principals were found to demonstrate strong interpersonal relationships, which enables them to mobilise support, to promote the welfare of others and to improve collaborative consensus and affiliation (Carr, 1994), as well as to listen, to reinforce and to encourage (Amodeo & Emslie, 1985). On such a basis, Willis and Bartel (1990) argue that the school head's main task is that of public relations manager *par excellence*. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1983) found that men tend to demonstrate competitive behaviours, so that they tend to be concerned largely with task accomplishment. Such a finding suggests that men tend to be unconcerned with the welfare of others, including learners. Amodeo and Emslie (1985) argue that such task-orientated behaviours involve direct one-way communication. Leaders subscribing to such behaviour tend to be prescriptive and directive, which hampers the innovativeness of their subordinates.

Despite such research findings showing that women are inclined towards the human relations dimension and men towards task orientation, the studies concerned have not yet addressed adequately female use (or male abuse) of such orientation in specific school-based situations. The leader behaviour orientation could have some influence on the extent of sexual harassment of students and teachers during teaching practice by some unscrupulous

institutional leaders. Sexual harassment in the workplace is the use of occupational power to try to enforce sexual demands (Giddens, 1993). Such behaviour constitutes sexual exploitation (Brackenridge & Fasting, 2002). Operationally defined, it is a “Behavior marked by sexually aggressive remarks, unwanted touching and sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, other verbal or physical conduct” (Robbins & Coulter, 2001, p. 366). The operational definition facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the construct in terms of the activities that constitute the construct.

Purpose of study

The overall purpose of this study was to investigate, among student teachers, the perceived negative aspects of the mentoring process that is conducted by primary school teachers and school heads in Zimbabwe. The study exposes the techniques employed as well as the magnitude of the harassment. Consequently, the study used the narratives of the student teachers, which revealed abuse by their mentors (be they teachers or school heads), to explain the complicity of these senior staff in such abuse in institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe, particularly during the hands-on phase (mentoring/teaching practice) of such learning.

Research questions

The study described in the current article attempted to answer the following questions:

- What is the extent and intensity of sexual harassment by school heads and mentors against the mentees?
- What techniques are employed by school heads and mentors to sexually harass the mentees?
- How do the harassed student teachers perceive the mentoring relationship?

Method

Research design

A qualitative research design was adopted for the study, which falls within the descriptive interpretive paradigm. Qualitative research is an alternative to experimental and co-relational research, as it is interactive and naturalistic (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Such research is based on a naturalistic–phenomenological philosophy that views reality as multilayered, interactive and a shared social experience interpreted by individuals. The researchers were able, by means of the study, to obtain the requisite qualitative data from the targeted sample, using the case study method.

The case study research method is grounded in the interpretive research paradigm. A case study is a method or methodology by means of which a researcher studies one unique phenomenon in depth in order to come to an understanding of it. Such a phenomenon might consist of a concept, an entity, an individual, a group of students, a programme or a process (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). The use of a case study entails observing the characteristics of an individual unit in order to probe deeply and analyse its multiple parts, with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which it belongs (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The “case” in our study was “the college” and the “student teacher cohort” in question. The choice of a case study for the research in question was made in order to reach

an understanding of the social realities governing the teaching practice of student teachers from their own perspective.

Sample

A sample of 10 ex-teaching practice student teachers (20% male) was obtained, using the snowballing technique, from a group of more than 200 student teachers who had just completed a teaching practice assignment lasting five terms in two of Masvingo province's seven districts. This technique yielded this specific sample. "Snowballing involves approaching a single case that is involved in the phenomenon to be investigated, in order to gain information on other similar persons" (De Vos, Strydom, Fouchie, & Delpont, 2002, p. 208). The students who had come to report sexual harassment perpetrated against them helped to identify other victims. The students had discussed their teaching practice experiences with their counterparts. It is most likely that some students who did not report to the college were freer to narrate their ordeals to fellow students than to teaching practice officials. Incidentally, more females than males reported incidences of harassment. It is perhaps in this vein that feminist research aims to highlight the subjective experience of women, as well as to increase their degree of involvement in research (Neuman, 1997).

Therefore, by including more female than male respondents in the interview format (albeit coincidentally) the process was imbued with a sense of empowerment, as the former were then able to both disclose, as well as to express themselves about, their personal experiences, while simultaneously downplaying their own professional status (Neuman, 1997). Prior to conducting the exercise, permission was obtained from the teacher education college concerned. The selected sample also consented to being interviewed. Although the findings of the study cannot be generalised, other teacher education institutions in Masvingo province, and in Zimbabwe as a whole, might be able to benefit from its findings.

Instruments

A researcher-generated semi-structured interview guide was used to elicit information from the sampled student teachers. The instrument was used to gather information regarding the student teachers' perceptions of the mentoring process, particularly their social and academic relationships with the mentors and primary school heads. The general questions were asked randomly. Questions deemed appropriate to promote the smooth flow of the interview were asked. These questions related to the abusive and harassing techniques employed by their mentors to coerce the students into behaving in certain ways.

Pilot-testing of instruments

The interview guide used for the study was pilot-tested by one of the authors to ensure its validity prior to its administration. The pilot test involved external checking by an expert researcher, which was conducted to assess the clarity and unambiguousness of the language used and the appropriateness of the instrument for investigating the said research problem. The quality of the guide was enhanced in response to the comments and suggestions made.

Procedure

A co-researcher conducted individual interviews with the sampled student teachers after their consent to the exercise had been obtained, and after they had received a pledge of

confidentiality from the researcher concerned. The researcher then also clarified other technical aspects of the exercise. The consent to be interviewed was obtained after the interviewer had shown the interviewee the requisite authorisation documentation. The in-depth interviews were recorded manually. The assurance of confidentiality with which the respondents were provided enabled them to feel that they could comment freely on the issues under discussion (Makura, 2008).

In each interview, the interviewer started by introducing himself and outlining the reasons for the interview, in accordance with what was stipulated in the interview guide. Any question that was not initially clear to the participant was explained during the interview. Each interview was conducted at an unhurried pace, with the interviewer probing only where necessary, keeping the interaction focused and impartial, although receptive. On average, each interview lasted 20 minutes. A picture of how students were sexually harassed was constructed as the key researcher was collecting and examining the data. This grounded theory was used to build a theory about sexual harassment that was faithful to the evidence (Neuman, 1997; Hoberg, 2001). The theory dictates that the sample selection should involve those participating in the social process under investigation in order to generate theory by exploring diversity within the existing categories (Hill, Lomas, & MacGregor, 2003). In some instances, the participants brought out some issues spontaneously that were in the interview guide.

During the course of the interview, data were collected on (a) the prevalence of sexual abuse or harassment in the schools; (b) the nature of the perpetrator (who the perpetrator was in general); (c) the techniques employed by the perpetrator; and (d) the overall attitude of the victim to the teaching practice and the mentoring process. The data-collection process went smoothly, with all the participants giving their full cooperation to the process. Finally, the respective interviewees were thanked for having agreed to be interviewed.

Data analysis

The data analysis involved the naming, categorising, codifying and comparison of the responses provided by the respondents. The study used grounded theory both in the design and analysis of the interview data. Grounded theory can form the basis of a qualitative inquiry into both objective and subjective data, using a multiplicity of examples and inductive reasoning to explain the existence of such data (Makura, 2008). The codification of data had to be performed both delicately and meticulously. The coding system adopted for the study consisted of both open and selective coding. The open coding involved classifying, naming and labelling data. The researchers assigned codes to all the respondents, as well as to all their schools, as a way of protecting their identity. Selective coding resulted in the development of both storyline and theory (Harchar & Hyle, 1996). The categories were arrived at after the researchers had asked themselves the question suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998): "What seems to be the main repeatedly recurring storyline, pattern or theme?". Specific themes emerging from the analysis were identified and classified into four categories, which are discussed below. These are: the prevalence of sexual abuse or harassment; the nature of the perpetrator; the techniques employed by the perpetrator; and the overall attitude of the victim to the teaching practice and the mentoring process. We categorised the intensity of harassment as mild, moderate and severe. The mild category was characterised by verbal and non-verbal evocation of sexual feelings towards the victim. The severe category was the blatant abuse of professional status.

Prevalence of sexual abuse or harassment

Our study managed to establish the extent (prevalence) and intensity of abuse (mild, moderate and severe). All 10 student teachers reported that they were sexually harassed or abused by either their mentor and/or school head. Indeed, sexual harassment does exist in Zimbabwe institutions of higher learning (Chiroro et al., 2006; Makura & Shumba, 2009; Mapfumo et al., 2007; Shumba, 2006; Zindi & Shumba, 1999). Table I shows the distribution of the student teachers and their abusers or harassers in the specific schools in terms of gender.

Table I shows that the majority of the interviewed respondents or victims were female (80%); six (60%) of the mentors were female, whereas 80% of the school heads were male. Research actually shows that most victims of sexual abuse are female (Clatterbaugh, 1997; Pleck, 1992, Shumba, 2004b). The commonly cited form of abuse or harassment was sexual harassment. Because all the respondents who were interviewed reported harassment or abuse, these data show that such harassment occurs to student teachers, irrespective of their gender or that of the perpetrator, although the women were found to be more prone to abuse than were the men, who were, however, the most frequent perpetrators. In confirming the existence of harassment, typical student teacher responses included, among others, the following:

BEE: The head was a problem. He wanted me to compensate for my teaching shortfalls by affording him sexual favours.

KRR: The head was a wolf in sheepskin. He gave me more teaching materials than others... bought me some groceries... paid me a visit at night... and accused me of being promiscuous.

MMM: The head was trying to have his visitations... in vain.

NEE: My first mentor was a problem. She could sit anyhow... in sexually suggestive ways... asked me to help her choosing better pants to buy... said that I was impotent.

SMM: The mentor was a problem... and was hard on me. He made too many professional demands. At times he would stare at me in a way which made me feel uncomfortable.

Table I. *Distribution of respondents and abusers or harassers by gender and position in school*

Code for school	Code for respondent	Gender of student teacher respondent	Gender of mentor	Gender of school head	Position in school held by abuser or aggressor
A	AEE	F	M	M	Head/mentor
B	BEE	F	F	M	Head
C	BMM	F	M	M	Head
D	CJJ	F	M	M	Head
E	FJJ	M	F	F	Head and mentor
F	KRR	F	F	M	Head
G	MMM	F	F	M	Head and mentor
H	NEE	M	F	M	Mentor
I	SSM	F	M	F	Mentor
J	TMM	F	F	M	Head
Total	Female	8 (80%)	6 (60%)	2 (20%)	Heads ($n=8$)
	Male	2 (20%)	4 (40%)	8 (80%)	Mentors ($n=5$)

F: female; M: male.

Nature of the perpetrator

All the interviewees reported being harassed by the mentor and/or the school head.

The data in Table I show that eight school heads and five mentors were reported as being guilty of harassing student teachers. In one case (that of AEE), the school head was also the mentor. Therefore, of the 13 perpetrators identified by the 10 respondents, nine were male. Four of the perpetrators were female, one of whom was a widowed school head. These statistics confirm most studies which show that most perpetrators are males. Moreover, in all but one case (that of MMM), the perpetrators harassed the opposite gender. In three cases, the student teachers were harassed by both the head and the mentor (or by individuals occupying such roles). All the school heads who were reported to have harassed student teachers were married (with one being widowed). Fidelity ethics would demand that married people respect their marriage vows and act in *loco parentis* to the student teachers. Other possible perpetrator demographical variables (age, experience, etc.) were not investigated, as this was beyond the scope of the study as well as not in line with the leader behaviour approach, which focuses fundamentally on gender aspects.

Technique(s) employed by the perpetrator

Most victims reported that the perpetrators used both indirect and direct techniques to woo the victim. Table II also reveals the intensity of the techniques employed.

A significant number of the perpetrators used evasive language, laced with metaphors and sarcasm, to convey sexually offensive remarks. The intention, initially, was to determine whether the victim was willing to respond favourably to the sexual approach of the perpetrator. This strategy (persuasion) is akin to the relations orientation, according to the leader behaviour approach. In cases where the victim expressed displeasure or non-cooperation, the perpetrator resorted to the moderate and intense forms of harassment. Table II shows the frequency and distribution of the forms of techniques employed by the perpetrators. Some of the metaphors contained in the statements uttered, particularly by the male school heads, were the following (see Table I for acronyms):

Table II. *The extent and nature of sexual harassment*

Category	Theme	Sub Theme	Recurrence
Mild	Verbal and non-verbal evocation of sexual feelings	Displayed pornography	1
		Made sexually offensive remarks	15
Moderate	Forging ahead with establishing a sexual relationship	Drew attention to discussions of sexual matters	1
		Touched the victim	2
		Proposed love	2
		Have unwanted sexual attention	2
		Paid unwanted visits	4
		Exhibited sexually arousing parts	2
Severe	Explicit abuse of professional status	• Bribed with some sort of reward	1
		• Treated badly for being sexually uncooperative	2
		• Threatened with some revenge for not being sexually cooperative	1

“*Wakura... hauzivi zvinofadza murume kana wamutsamwisa?*” [You are mature... surely you must be aware of how to appease a man?] (BEE)

“*Munhu akanaka sewe unoshaya?*” [(I cannot understand how) a beauty like you is not married?] (BMM)

“*Takamanyira makunguwo tisingazivi kuti hanga dzichauya!*” [I rushed for crows, not knowing that guinea-fowl were yet to come!] (KRR)

“*T.P. inokuda. Uri kukura!*” [Teaching practice is pleasant for you. You are maturing fast!] (TMM).

A male perpetrator, who was both the mentor and the school head at the school in question, was more direct to his victim (AEE): “You are the most beautiful woman south of the Sahara!”. She confided in her cousin-in-law, who was also a student teacher at the same school, about the head’s antics. The school head, in turn, accused them both of laziness, resulting in them both being ejected from the school by the school head, after the cousin-in-law had protested about the harassment.

A yet more bizarre technique used by another school head (as described by an interviewee) was the use of a nocturnal magic/witchcraft technique or charm commonly known to the Shona-speaking people of Zimbabwe as *Mubobobo*. It is believed that by possessing this “medicine”, the perpetrator is able to engage in sexual acts without the knowledge and consent of the victim, while the victim is in a deep slumber. Confirming the beliefs in the existence and use of *Mubobobo*, Professor Gordon Chavunduka, President of the Zimbabwe Traditional Healers Association (ZINATHA), commented that *Mubobobo* is not a traditional Zimbabwean practice but was brought into the country by foreigners who were driven by lust (Murape, 2010). This charm, or “medicine”, is acquired by the perpetrators from traditional healers or inherited from parents who cut incisions into would-be perpetrators’ skin. Victim AEE alleged that school head A (Table I) tried in vain to have sexual intercourse with her during one of his “witchcraft” incidents. His failure, according to AEE, was due to her belief in the power of God and the spiritual support of her church that had “disabled” his power and lust to sexually assault her during the night. She said:

The head was a magician... [but] ... he could not do that to me [sleep with me]... I was untouchable because of my church. I have certain power which makes me see visions.

Some Apostolic faith sect prophets do have “holy water” which actually disables and exposes such perpetrators when sprinkled in victims’ bedrooms and mixed with bath water (Murape, 2010). The student (AEE) said further that she always wore her church’s headscarf (*Dhuku*), and that the school head was convinced that her powers to thwart his sexual desire for her came from the scarf. He is said to have, on numerous occasions, dissuaded her from wearing it as it “hid the beauty” in her. The only time that she would remove it was when the school head was assessing her lessons, as he had threatened her that he would provide “no supervision” if she wore it to school. Moreover, on occasions that she removed it, he would comment abusively and lustfully that she was now “becoming a woman”.

A male student teacher, NEE, disclosed that his female mentor came to their classroom (when he worked after hours), and sat deliberately in a compromising position to seek attention. She also spoke negatively about his girlfriend, whom she knew. At one point, the mentor allegedly brought two ladies’ panties, purporting to offer to buy one and requested NEE to “choose the better one” for her. Another male student teacher, FJJ, claimed that his female school head, who had befriended him, invited him to her official residence for supper one day, after which she “got hold of my hand and dragged me to her bedroom”. Moreover, FJJ felt more harassed when his female mentor spread rumours that he was going out with the

school head. The techniques used by male and female perpetrators varied in most cases between coercion (task orientation) and persuasion (relation orientation). Research shows that task orientation is almost a masculine tendency (this does not wholly preclude females). Nine of the perpetrators were males. Given that these perpetrators used some coercion in seeking compliance, we can infer safely that the male perpetrators in leadership positions used the task-orientated style in seeking subordinate compliance. In most cases the female perpetrators tended to be persuasive. As such, we concluded that the leader behaviour approach was a useful tool in explaining the social and work-related relations between leaders (school heads or mentors) and subordinates (student teachers).

Overall attitude of the victim to teaching practice or the mentoring process

Despite the abuse, the student teachers persisted with their teaching practice, and still managed to find the mentoring process and teaching practice enriching. Most students were found to cope with the abuse by adopting several strategies. All of them, initially, complained about the behaviour of the perpetrator. If such complaints failed to elicit correction of such behaviour, they reported that they confided in their spouse/parent/relative (BEE, CJJ, MMM, TMM); their colleagues (AEE, NEE); or the school head (FJJ, SMM); or else requested transfer to another school (BMM, KRR). Commenting on their teaching practice experience, the student teachers identified below made the following comments:

CJJ: I learned a lot of things about life.

KRR: I think God had a plan for me. It could have been a means of testing my character.

MMM: It was quite a rich experience. I learned the dark side of the profession.

NEE: It made me experience the art of teaching. We learn about pupils' behaviour at college and when practising. We learn about other teachers' behaviours at the practising schools.

Discussion

The study described in the current article explored student teachers' perceptions of their teaching practice, and how some mentors and school heads have tended to sexually harass them. The harassment stems from the power differentials of the perpetrators and victims (Clatterbaugh, 1997; Giddens, 1993; Pleck, 1992). The school heads and mentors have more position power than student teachers by virtue of the professional and bureaucratic positions of the former. Male leaders (particularly) in positions of power and authority are thus at a vantage point to abuse their power (Dorsey, 1989; Gwirayi & Shumba, 2008; Manwa, 2002; Shumba & Matina, 2002).

The general findings from the research are that both male and female students are vulnerable to sexual harassment during the teaching practice assignment. The age-old belief that women are the only ones subjected to sexual harassment is challenged. Female student teachers reported experiencing more sexual harassment than did the male student teachers. The sexually harassed students had perpetrators being members of the opposite sex. One of the reasons could be the dominance of heterosexual tendencies within the male school heads and mentors. Such a finding confirms what the extant literature has to say about the existence of harassment in institutions of learning (Chiroro et al., 2006; Gwirayi & Shumba, 2008; Maphosa, Shumba, & Shumba, 2007; Shumba & Matina, 2002; Shumba et al., 2008). Both male and female heads and mentors seemed to work in cahoots, albeit independently.

Moreover, there was a greater tendency for male school heads to sexually harass and intimidate students than for the female heads and mentors to do so.

The sexual harassment they experience can be divided into three categories that indicated the extent of harassment. The mild category is characterised by implicit verbal and/or non-verbal evocation of sexual feelings. The most common form of harassment is offensive sexual remarks. It is most likely that the perpetrators take this as the “pilot venture”. When the victims are thought to be giving in, more conspicuous forms are employed. The “severe” category is characterised by explicit abuse of the perpetrator’s professional status. According to our findings, this category is the domain of the male perpetrators. The rationale could be that the male heads of schools and mentors consider “control” (one of the attributes of the task dimension; Hersey & Blanchard, as cited in Park, 1996) to extremity. They tend to want to control students even in the social sphere, thus abusing their positions (Brackenridge & Fasting, 2002; Dorsey, 1989; Gwarinda, 1995; Manwa, 2002).

The behaviour of the male heads could be attributed largely to their gender, according to the leader behaviour approach. The leader behaviour approach explains that male leaders tend to use the task-orientated dimension, while females use the relations dimension (Collard, 2001; Koshal et al., 1998). We concluded that this theory was useful in explaining the behaviour such as that displayed by the perpetrators in our study. According to our findings, male perpetrators tend to be more explicit about their intentions and are coercive. Female perpetrators are more implicit about their intentions and tend to be persuasive. The techniques used to harass the victims ranged from the use of metaphors and satirical language to the use of direct threats to convey their intent. Initially, the perpetrator would use persuasive language, but would then resort to intimidation the moment a victim showed some resistance. One school head allegedly tried unsuccessfully to use witchcraft to abuse the victims.

The severity of harassment is not an absolute issue. It is relative, and concerned with the interpretation of the victim. For instance, FJJ, who was dragged by his school head into her bedroom, remarked during the interview that “I had no case to the college”. Hence, he decided against reporting his ordeal. The categorisation of harassment was therefore made cautiously and involved the *emic* interpretations of the harassed. The *etic* interpretations, solely, could be misleading. Thus the grounded theory was found useful in making data and theory interact (Hill et al., 2003; Neuman, 1997). In coping with the various incidents of sexual abuse or harassment, 40% of the student teachers reported that they had confided in their close relatives about the incident(s) concerned, whereas others had sought the intervention of the teacher education college at which they studied, or the support of colleagues.

Conclusion

Both male and female students on teaching practice are vulnerable to sexual harassment. The harassment is thus heterosexual. The harassment perpetrated against them can be categorised as mild, moderate and severe. The female student teachers were victims of the severe form. The behaviour of the school heads and mentors is explained within the leader behaviour approach, whereby they abuse their task or relations orientation. Some of the victims reported their ordeals to the college officials. Although the findings of the study may not be generalised to areas outside Masvingo, they nevertheless provide useful insights into the abuse of student teachers while engaged in teaching practice. It validates previous researches on the prevalence

of sexual aggression in institutions of higher learning (Mapfumo et al., 2007; Maphosa et al., 2007; Worku, 2001).

The research shows that most of the students were found to have been abused in one way or another. By furthering an understanding of the occurrence of sexual abuse and harassment among student teachers, it is hoped that the study will help to stop such behaviour as well as unravel their true fears, and the practicalities of higher education. Thus, we urge the relevant stakeholders to conduct regular workshops aimed at reminding mentors and school heads of their professional and social obligations in teacher education. One way is for colleges to conduct regular workshops with mentors and school heads where instructional and administrative issues related to teaching practice are addressed. The “culture of silence” by abuse victims in institutions of higher learning should be discouraged. Two students (BMM and KRR) had the audacity to inform the college of their predicament at the hosting schools. The ease with which the snowballing sampling technique, in itself, unravelled the female “silent victims” of aggression showed the desire of women to participate in activities that aim to address their predicament.

The research has shown that student teachers of either gender are potentially prone to abuse or sexual aggression while on teaching practice. College authorities should alert student teachers of the potential pitfalls of teaching practice stints, and hence the need to offer them emotional and psychological support. Student teachers need to report sexual and other forms of abuse and harassment to college authorities and police. Legally, perpetrators could be charged with *crimen injuria*, be it rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, aggression or molestation. Women can also join support groups and organisations that champion their emancipation (Worku, 2001). Regrettably, Zimbabwean law does not recognise the existence of witchcraft, particularly where nocturnal charms or goblins such as *Mubobobo* are used. It is perhaps in this context that Shumba (2006) called for teacher education courses to include coverage of legislation pertaining to abuse in the education field. It is a challenge and ideal that should see the light of day in the Zimbabwean social contexts.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the support of the college and student teachers from which/whom we obtained the data.

References

- Amodeo, L. B., & Emslie, J. R. (1985). *Minority women in administration: An ethnographic study*. Paper presented at the 69th Annual Conference of the National Association of Women Deans, Administrators and Counselors, Milwaukee, 10–13 April 1985.
- Brackenridge, C., & Fasting, K. (2002). Sexual harassment and abuse in sport: The research context. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 8, 3–15.
- Carr, C. S. (1994). *Verbal and non-verbal micro political communication of female school principals*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. New Orleans, Los Angeles.
- Chiroro, P., Viki, T. G., Frodi, A., Muromo, T., & Tsigah, A. (2006). Nature and prevalence of childhood sexual abuse among high school girls and college students in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 16, 17–26.
- Clatterbaugh, K. (1997). *Contemporary perspectives on masculinity: Men, women and politics in modern society*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Cohen, L., & Manion, L. (1994). *Research methods in education*. 4th edn. London: Routledge.
- Collard, J. L. (2001). Leadership and gender: An Australian perspective. *Journal of Educational Management and Administration*, 29, 343–356.
- De Vos, A. S., Strydom, H., Fouchie, C. B., & Delpport, C. S. L. (2002). *Research at grass roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

- Dorsey, B. J. (1989). Academic women at the University of Zimbabwe: Career prospects, aspirations and family role constraints. *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research*, 1, 342–375.
- Fiedler, F. (1967). *A theory of leadership effectiveness*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Furlong, J., & Maynard, T. (1995). *Mentoring student teachers: The growth of professional knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Giddens, A. (1993). *Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Greenburg, J. (1996). *Managing behavior in organizations*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Gwarinda, T. C. (1995). *The practice of teaching*. Harare: College Press.
- Gwirayi, P., & Shumba, A. (2008). Childhood sexual abuse experiences of female student teachers in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 18, 283–286.
- Harchar, R. L., & Hyle, A. E. (1996). Collaborative power: A grounded theory of administrative instructional leadership in the elementary school. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 34, 15–29.
- Hersey, P., & Blanchard, P. (1969). The life cycle theory of leadership. Cited in D. Park, 1996. Gender role, decision style and leadership style. *Women in Management Review*, 11, 13–17.
- Higgs, P., & Smith, J. (2002). *Rethinking truth*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Hill, Y., Lomas, L., & MacGregor, J. (2003). Students' perceptions of quality in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 11, 15–20.
- Hoberg, S. M. (2001). *Education management: Research methodology. Study guide 2*. Pretoria: UNISA.
- Koshal, M., Gupta, A. K., & Koshal, R. (1998). Women in management: A Malaysian perspective. *Women in Management Review*, 13, 11–18.
- Khan, N. (1995). Patterns of child sexual abuse in Zimbabwe: An overview. *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research*, 7, 181–208.
- Madziyire, N. C., Makombe, B., Makoni, R. D., & Mugwani, M. P. (1995). *Educational leadership and supervision*. Harare: The Centre for Distance Education.
- Makura, A. H. (2008). *An investigation into leadership and management styles exhibited by female primary school heads and their impact on school effectiveness: A case study of Masvingo Education District in Zimbabwe*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Fort Hare.
- Makura, A. H., & Shumba, A. (2009). Management of child sexual abuse cases by female school heads in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 19, 99–104.
- Manwa, H. A. (2002). "Think manager, think male": Does it apply to Zimbabwe? *Zambezia*, 29, 60–75.
- Mapfumo, J., Shumba, A., & Chireshe, R. (2007). Sexual relationships among students in higher education in Zimbabwe: Implications for HIV/AIDS. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 21, 515–526.
- Maphosa, C., Shumba, J., & Shumba, A. (2007). Mentorship for students on teaching practice in Zimbabwe: Are student teachers getting a raw deal? *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 21, 296–307.
- McMillan, J. M., & Schumacher, S. (1993). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction*. 3rd edn. New York: Harper Collins College.
- Murape, W. (2010). *Mubobobo: Indecent exposure or rape?* *The Herald*. 16 January, p. 6.
- Murphy, E. F., Eckstat, A., & Parker, T. (1994). Sex differences in leadership. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, December 1994/January 1995, 2, 116–131.
- Mutopa, S., Shumba, A., Maphosa, C., Shumba, A., Mubika, A. K., & Shumba, J. (2006). School management and teaching: The dilemma of teaching school heads in Zimbabwean secondary schools. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 5, 146–164.
- Neuman, W. L. (1997). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Nyagura, L. M., & Reece, J. L. (1989). The school head as an instructional leader in Zimbabwean secondary schools. *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research*, 1, 304–341.
- Oliva, P., & Pawlas, G. E. (2004). *Supervision for today's schools*. 7th edn. New York: Wiley.
- Ozigi, J. M. (1983). *A handbook of school administration and management*. Harare: College Press.
- Park, D. (1996). Gender role, decision style and leadership style. *Women in Management Review*, 11, 13–17.
- Pleck, J. H. (1992). *Men's power with women, other men, and society: A men's movement analysis*. In M. S. Kimmel & M. A. Messner (Eds.), *Men's lives* (pp. 19–27). New York: Macmillan.
- Rimmer, C., & Davies, B. (1985). Women principals in educational department high schools in Victoria. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 23, 153–189.
- Robbins, S. P., & Coulter, M. (2001). *Management*. 6th edn. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Sergiovanni, T. J., & Starratt, R. J. (1983). *Supervision: Human perspectives*. New York: McGraw Book Company.
- Shumba, A. (1999). An analysis of the nature and extent of child sexual abuse in Zimbabwean primary and secondary schools. *Southern African Review of Education with Production Journal*, 5, 59–65.
- Shumba, A. (2000). The epidemiology and aetiology of child sexual abuse by teachers in Zimbabwean primary schools. Unpublished Doctoral thesis, Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape.

- Shumba, A. (2006). Perceptions of child abuse by teacher trainees in Zimbabwean schools. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 16, 127–134.
- Shumba, A. (2004a). Emotional abuse in the classroom: A cultural dilemma? *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 4, 139–147.
- Shumba, A. (2004b). Male sexual abuse by female and male perpetrators in Zimbabwean schools. *Child Abuse Review*, 13, 353–359.
- Shumba, A. (2003). Pupil physical abuse by secondary school teachers in Zimbabwe: A child rearing practice or cultural dilemma? *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, 18, 53–68.
- Shumba, A., Cherian, L., & Mawere, D. (2008). Corporal punishment in schools: Current issues and challenges in Africa in the new millennium. In M. J. Smith (Ed.), *Child sexual abuse: Issues and challenges* (pp. 181–189). Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
- Shumba, A., Gwirayi, P., Shumba, J., Maphosa, C., Chireshe, R., Gudyanga, E., & Makura, A. H. (2008). Pupils' perceptions of sexual abuse by teachers in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 18, 279–282.
- Shumba, A., & Matina, A. E. M. (2002). Sexual harassment of college students by lecturers in Zimbabwe. *Sex Education*, 2, 45–59.
- Silver, P. (1983). *Educational administration: Theoretical perspectives on practice and research*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research, grounded, theory procedures and technique*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Willis, D. B., & Bartell, C. A. (1990). Japanese and American principals: A comparison of excellence in educational leadership. *Comparative Education*, 26, 107–123.
- Worku, Y. (2001). Retrieved June 12, 2010, from <http://wgc.womensglobalconnection.org/conf06proceedings/Worku%20Y.%20Identifying%20Teacher%20Training,%20Ethiopia.pdf>.
- Young, J. H. (1993). Principals and collaborative curriculum development: Does gender make a difference? *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 39, 433–448.
- Zindi, F., & Shumba, A. (1999). The epidemiology and aetiology of child sexual abuse in Zimbabwe's secondary schools. *African Journal of Social Work*, 1, 37–50.