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SEXUAL ASSAULTS AND THE PSYCHOSOCIAL MALADJUSTMENT OF ADOLESCENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CAMEROON

Shien Vera

PhD, Faculty of Education, University of Bamenda, Cameroon

Abstract

Sexual assault is a vice that is alarming in secondary schools in Cameroon. It's a severe crime and call for concern especially in schools due to vulnerability of students. Nowadays, the rate at which adolescent students are involved in sexual assaults is alarming. They engage in physical, sexual and relational victimisation which may have adverse psychosocial effects on the victims. Though they are diverse forms of victimisation among adolescents such as overt victimisation, relational, property crime and power imbalance, this paper focuses on how sexual assaults (sexual violence, groping, rape, forced virginal or oral penetration,) leads to psychosocial maladjustment among adolescents in secondary schools in Cameroon. Mixed method was used in collecting data. Purposive and stratified sampling techniques were used to select a sample which comprised of adolescent students (577), counsellors (12) and discipline masters (12) from some schools in the North West, South West, Centre, and Adamawa Region (613). The instruments used for data collection were a closed-ended questionnaire for students, a focus group discussion with students, and an interview for counsellors and discipline masters/mistresses. Data obtained were analyzed descriptively and inferentially using cross-tabulations, percentages, and multiple response sets. Findings showed that sexual assaults significantly predict psychosocial maladjustment ($P < 0.001$). The positive sign of the correlation ($R = 0.641^{**}$) implied that adolescents are more likely to suffer from psychosocial maladjustments. When there was a persistent occurrence of relational victimisation in the school environment. The findings implies that when there is persistent sexual violence, groping, rape, forced virginal or oral penetration from social groups, the victim turn to suffer from psychosocial maladjustment. In order to reduce the adverse effects of sexual victimisation and promote positive psychosocial maladjustments among adolescent the various stakeholders especially parents, teachers, school administrators, and counsellors should play unique roles in organising forums to advice and counsel the students peer victimisation.

Keywords Sexual violence, groping, rape, forced virginal or oral penetration.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual assault is a form of victimisation which involves unwanted sexual contact obtained through violent or non-violent means (U.S. Department of Justice 2008) and continues at alarmingly high rates among adolescents Sexual assault is an act in which someone intentionally

touches another person sexually without their consent or coerces or physically forces a person to engage in a sexual act against their will (Peter et al., 2011). Sexual assault manifests in different forms such as sexual violence, which includes child sexual abuse, groping, rape, forced virginal, anal or oral

penetration or a drug-facilitated sexual assault (George et al., 2011). It is important to note that the prevalence rates based on reported incidents are likely underestimates of the problem; because only half of all adolescent victims will tell anyone about the incident (Davis et al., 1993; Davis & Lee, 1996), and only 6% will report the incident to authorities (Ageton, 1983). Although many of these incidents of peer-on-peer sexual assault likely take place within the school context, other studies have examined the prevalence of sexual assault occurring within versus outside of school (e.g. Ahrens et al., 2009).

Sexual assault occurred in secondary school campuses due to recent court cases that found schools liable for failing to protect students from victimisation by other students (Davis Monroe County Board of Education, 1999). There is also a growing awareness that sexual aggression occurring in school has negative ramifications on the victim's attendance, success, and propagates school attrition (Duffy et al., 2004). This is particularly disconcerting given that involvement in school can serve as a protective factor for adolescent health risk behaviours such as substance use (Beyers et al., 1999). However, the push for school sexual aggression prevention efforts is in the absence of a solid understanding of the nature of sexual violence occurring within schools, particularly when considering sexual aggression that meets the definition of sexual assault involving physical contact. Consequently, it is critical both in terms of the schools' legal liability and students' psychological and academic well-being to better understand the extent and nature of sexual aggression occurring within the school setting.

Sexual assault is a severe crime and a call for concern, especially in schools, due to the vulnerability of students to it. The effects are devastating and include depression (Rossa et al., 1999), post-traumatic disorder (Widom, 1999), anxiety (Levitan et al., 2003), the propensity to revictimisation in adulthood (Messman-Moore, 2000), physical injury to the adolescents and increased risk for future interpersonal violence

(Dinwiddie, 2000). Secondary school environments are common places for the occurrence of sexual assaults among peers. Schools fail to protect their students from sexual assault, thereby increasing its spread and thus exposing them to victimisation (Davis, 1999). There is also awareness that sexual assaults in schools negatively ram the victim's attendance, success, and attachments to schools (Duffy et al., 2004). Lee et al. (1996) posited that sexual assaults in school are equally associated with various adverse outcomes among its victims, including absenteeism, decreased quality of school performance: loss of friendship, truancy, and internalising and externalising psychosocial symptoms

Review of Literature

Sexual assault in schools is recognized as a public health problem that is detrimental to girls' psychosomatic health (Fineran & Bennett, 1998; Berman et al., 2000; Dahinten, 2001; Gillander, 2002). Qualitative studies show that – although broadly not acknowledged, a hostile environment in school has a significant impact on girls' confidence and level of achievement (e.g. Larkin, 1994; Lahelma, 2002). It is empirically difficult to establish the causal effects of sexual assaults (Lee et al., 1996; Duffy et al., 2004) but some studies indicate that sexual harassment has negative psychological and educational consequences (e.g. Lee et al., 1996 ;Gillander & Hammarström, 2000; Juvonen et al., 2000; Dahinten, 2001; Duffy et al., 2004; Eliasson et al., 2006). Other adverse health-related effects have been indicated (Dahinten, 2001; Lee et al., 1996; Paludi, 1997).

Some sexual harassment behaviours are forms of sexual assault and traumas with lifelong consequences (Bagley et al., 1997). Harassment in an organisation gives rise to psychological distress among individuals who have not been directly victimised (Larkin, 1994; Schneider, 1997). A majority of victims attempt to ignore or avoid offensive behaviour, so they may cut classes or even quit school (Paludi, 1997; Stein, 1995). Sexual harassment creates a hostile environment for all students, thereby impairing their educational

achievements. Girls may opt-out of sports and male-dominated curricula because they experience or fear being exposed to harassment. This has an impact on their health and fitness and their future opportunities for employment in more prestigious and better paying job areas such as computer sciences, engineering and management.

Arguably, sexual assault passes through different segments and social environment (where families exist), and the school is a shared space for its occurrence. The impacts of this type of assault are related to the psychosocial development of children and adolescents' school performance and their family members' quality of life. By definition, sexual violence is any action related to using physical force, coercion, intimidation or psychological influence to compel a person to witness or participate in sexual interactions for profit, revenge or any other intention (Ministerio da saude, 2016). He further argues that from a chronological perspective, children and adolescents constitute the population between zero to 9 and 10 to 19 years of age respectively and at this stage, they are very involved with these vices in one way or the other (World health Organisation, 2018).

Sexual harassment consists of the sexualisation of an instrumental relationship through the introduction of imposition of sexist or sexual remarks, requests, or requirements in the context of former power differential (Fitzgerald, 1990). Basil (2015) further defines sexual harassment as physical and verbal violence in the form of unwanted sexual advances or unwelcome requests for sexual favour (American Association of University Women, 2001). Furthermore, McKinnon (1979) defines sexual harassment as the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the relationship of unequal power. It encompasses three categories of impermissible behaviour: sexual coercion, which is a rare happening, and sexual harassment, which is unwanted sexual attention, for Examples will include: kissing, stroking, relentless efforts for dates and unwanted sexual attention, including sexual assaults and even rape. Sexual harassment in schools is thought to be

a public health problem detrimental, especially for girls' psychosomatic health (Berman et al., 2000). It is very harmful as it creates a wholly hostile environment for students, thus impairing their educational achievements. Worth mentioning is that some sexual harassment behaviour is a form of sexual assault and trauma with lifelong consequences (Bageley et al., 1997).

The effects of sexual assaults are complex and cover different consequences for the victim. The physical problems include trauma, sexually transmitted infections, withdrawal, and emotional problems such as phobias, anxiety, and depression. According to the United Nations (2021), violence against children and adolescents is still a common silenced phenomenon responsible for the scarcity of statistical data. Thus, all information and knowledge about the characteristics of the event, victims and aggressors are essential for measures to be taken to reduce cases.

It is important to note that research has portrayed perpetrators of most sexual assaults to be are themselves products of sexual abuse in their early life (Hiel, 2002). This explains why most recent research has focused on identifying variables that mediate or explain the relationship between childhood abuse and sexual assault perpetrators (Simon et al., 2002). Research has equally shown that the traumatic experience of childhood abuse and the associated lack of humane treatment decrease the victim's ability to empathize with others as adults (Greenberg, 2018). Examples of abuse during childhood include harm to a child's self-worth and emotional well-being, such as name-calling, shaming, rejection, withholding love, or threats (Lee et al., 2008).

Sexual assault may be inevitable in the school environment since it is the primary setting where adolescents socialise with peers. They come in contact with a Variety of peers with whom they may or may not be on favourable, friendly terms. They may also socialize with friends out of school or within the school. In addition, with the increased contact with other peers, there can be minimal adult supervision on school premises at times. Glover (2000) argued that lack of adult supervision

has long been considered a risk factor for bullying and physical victimisation occurring on school grounds. Bullying is most likely in locations where teachers are absent, such as locker rooms, school buses, and hallways.

Considering Erikson's developmental stage, adolescence, a major development task is the formation of a strong identity (Erikson, 1959). They cannot form their identity without friends, peers, family, social groups, schoolmates, societal trends, and popular culture. Sexual assault among them is very prominent and can happen anywhere because unwanted romantic touches are also considered sexual assaults. While in class, adolescents are sexually assaulted by unwanted touches, striking and fondling. As puberty emerges, they get excited and are exposed to many ills of society. While they interact with peers, they are influenced directly by their attitude and indirectly by the environment. That is they copy the attitudes of their peers and is influenced by the happenings in the environment in which they find themselves.

There is no specific pattern of consequences experienced as a consequence of sexual assaults by adolescents. The sequel of adolescent sexual abuse varies from one adolescent to the next (Baril et al., 2009; Hebert, 2011). Victims of sexual assaults can face immediate consequences and chronic effects that can impact their adjustment throughout their development (Polucci et al., 2003; Putnam, 2003). Some maladjustments resulting from sexual assaults include shock, fear, anxiety, guilt, confusion, withdrawal, low self-esteem, grief, and depression. It is a defect because it last as long as the adolescent grows up to adulthood, and it might affect marital and parental hood (World Health Organisation, 2010; Baril, 2009; Hebert, 2011) The most pressing consequences of sexual assaults in adolescence are neurobiological changes, depressive symptoms, homelessness, running away from home, anxiety, fear, distrust of others, alcohol and drug abuse (Baril et al., 2011).

This study aimed at finding out how sexual assault leads to psychosocial maladjustment. Sexual assaults is manifested in forms such as forced, unwanted sex, sexual acts or touching, child sexual

abuse: use of power to involve a child or adolescent in sexual activities, indecent assaults: inappropriate touching, threatening to touch, someone else's body sexually without their consent, rape or attempted rape, anal or oral penetration, striking and fondling (Kullima et al., 2010; Sendo et al., 2015, World Health Organisation, 2021). This leads to psychosocial maladjustments such as shock and denial, fear, silence, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, isolation, nightmares and flags backs, mood swings, loss of confidence, loss of trust (Wasco, 2003; Arhens,2006)

METHODS

The research design adopted for this study was the mixed methods approach with a concurrent nested design. This design requires that data is collected simultaneously or in parallel within the same study. Data which was analyzed was drawn from 577 students in 12 schools from four regions, 24 discipline masters \mistresses and gradient counsellors. A purposive sampling technique was use to select the regions, divisions, Discipline masters \ mistresses and school counsellors. Stratified sampling technique was used to select schools, simple random sampling technique was used to select students, and the convenience was used to select those who participated in focus group.

The instruments used to collect data were: the questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussions. The questionnaire was administered to some students in class; eight of them were subjected to a focus group talk. The researcher interviewed administrators like counsellors, discipline masters, to get additional qualitative data. These responses were vital because they provided and supplemented information students had already provided. The concurrent nested design was also used because the students selected for the focus group discussion constituted part of the students to whom the questionnaires were administered.

Data analysis technique was done using descriptive and inferential statistics. The questionnaire data

was subjected to descriptive statistics to generate counts, percentages and multiple response set. The descriptive data was further used to verify hypotheses that were stated in the study. The spearman rho correlation test was used to verify the relationship between victimisation and psychosocial maladjustments among adolescents

in secondary schools in Cameroon. Meanwhile qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis and emerging themes and their groundings were discerned, presented and expatiated by quotations

Findings

Table: 1

Psychosocial Maladjustment among Adolescent Students in Secondary Schools

Items	Stretched			Collapsed		
	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	SA/A	D/SD
I always feel like staying away (isolating myself from peers in the school environment	110 (19.0%)	169 (29.3%)	108 (18.7%)	190 (32.9%)	279 (48.4%)	298 (51.6%)
I get depressed in school	81 (14.1%)	145 (25.3%)	167 (29.1%)	181 (31.5%)	226 (39.4%)	348 (60.6%)
I lack self-esteem while in school	92 (16.1%)	138 (24.1%)	166 (29.0%)	177 (30.9%)	230 (40.1%)	343 (59.9%)

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I know many classmates who love staying indifferent from peers in the school environment.	160 (27.8%)	203 (35.2%)	84 (14.6%)	129 (22.4%)	263 (63.0%)	213 (37.0%)
I quarrel with my mates and peers after they portray an aggressive attitude towards me	125 (21.7%)	166 (28.9%)	114 (19.8%)	170 (29.6%)	291 (50.6%)	284 (49.4%)
I get angry in school	103 (17.9%)	178 (31.0%)	124 (21.6%)	170 (29.6%)	281 (48.9%)	294 (51.1%)
The learning environment is very tense	86 (15.2%)	144 (25.4%)	149 (26.3%)	188 (32.6%)	230 (40.6%)	337 (59.4%)
I sometimes lack confidence in myself in school	140 (24.5%)	164 (28.7%)	118 (20.7%)	149 (26.1%)	304 (53.2%)	267 (46.8%)
I often feel am incompetent to carry out some task assigned to me in school	117 (20.6%)	160 (28.2%)	137 (24.1%)	154 (27.1%)	277 (48.8%)	291 (51.2%)
I am not comfortable	112	132	128	202	244	330

standing in class and	(19.5%)	(23.0%	(22.3	(35.2%)	(42.5%	(57.5
answering questions.))))))
Multiple Response Set	1126	1599	1259	1710	2725	3005
(MRS)	(19.7%)	(27.9	(22.6	(29.8%	(47.6%	(52.4
		%)	%)))	%)

Assessing the prevalence of psychosocial maladjustment among adolescent students in secondary schools, table 10 shows that some 48.4% (279) of adolescent students indicated they always felt like staying away (isolating themselves) from peers in the school environment. A percentage of 63.0 (263) argued that many of their classmates love staying indifferent to peers in the school environment. Findings also show that 39.4% (226) of participants get depressed in the school environment. At the same time, 40.1% (230) of the adolescent students presented a lack of self-esteem while in school.

The findings showed that 50.6% (291) of adolescent students quarrel with their mates and portray an aggressive attitude towards them. The

findings further revealed that some 48.9% (281) get angry in the school environment. Some 40.6% (230) of the adolescent students argued that their learning environment is agitated, such that they are afraid. In contrast, 53.2% (304) of the adolescent students indicated they sometimes lack confidence in themselves in the school environment.

The findings also showed that some 48.8% (277) of adolescent students often feel incompetent to carry out tasks assigned to them in school. Finally, 42.5% (244) of the adolescent students indicated they were not comfortable standing in class and answering questions. In aggregate, findings showed that 47.6% of the adolescent students showed signs of psychosocial maladjustment while 52.4% did not.

Table: 2

Adolescent Students’ Characterisation of Sexual Assault

Items	Stretched			Collapsed		
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	SA/A	D/SD
	(SA)	(A)	(D)	(SD)		
While in school, I have	131	83	77	285	214	362

unwanted sexual touches from peers	(22.7%)	(14.4%)	(13.4%)	(49.5%)	(37.1%)	(62.8%)
I am being fondled by my peers in school	90	129	142	213	219	355
	(15.7%)	(22.5%)	(24.7%)	(37.1%)	(38.2%)	(61.5%)
My school uniform is very tight and short as a result, my body is partially exposed	56	43	108	370	99	478
	(9.7%)	(7.5%)	(18.7%)	(64.1%)	(17.2%)	(82.8%)
I am being admired by mates of the same sex	86	97	109	284	183	393
	(14.9%)	(16.8%)	(18.9%)	(49.3%)	(31.8%)	(68.2%)
I am being threatened by my peers for refusing to have sex with them	54	43	66	408	97	474
	(9.5%)	(7.5%)	(11.6%)	(71.5%)	(17.0%)	(83.0%)
There are incidents of rape that goes on in school	103	155	109	210	258	319
	(17.9%)	(26.9%)	(18.9%)	(36.4%)	(44.7%)	(55.3%)
When am sexually harassed I am traumatized	135	125	103	212	260	315
	(23.5%)	(21.7%)	(17.9%)	(36.9%)	(45.2%)	(54.8%)
I have been sexually	57	66	118	334	123	452

abused by peer	(9.9%)	(11.5%)	(20.5%)	(58.1%)	(21.4%)	(78.6%)
There is no awareness	122	134	115	201	256	316
in school on sexual	(21.3%)	(23.4%)	(20.1%)	(35.1%)	(44.8%)	(55.2%)
assaults						
When sexual assault is	191	132	99	152	323	251
reported in school,	(33.3%)	(23.0%)	(17.2%)	(26.5%)	(56.3%)	(43.7%)
there is a medical						
check done to control						
sexually transmitted						
diseases and						
pregnancies						
Multiple Response	1025	1007	1046	2669	2032	3715
Set (MRS)	(17.8%)	(17.5%)	(18.2%)	(46.4%)	(35.4%)	(64.6%)

Findings showed that 37.1% (214) of the adolescent students indicated they had had unwanted sexual touches from peers. Findings also revealed that peers were fondling 38.2% (219) of the school participants. While 17.2% (99) of adolescent students argued that their school uniform was very tight and short, their body was partially exposed with a percentage of 31.8 (183) of the adolescent students presented that mates of the same sex admired them. Furthermore, findings also showed that 17.0% (97) of the adolescents agreed that peers are threatening them for refusing to have sex with them. The findings also revealed that 44.7% (258) of the adolescents agreed that are

incidents of rape that go on in school, with 45.2% (260) of the adolescents admitted that they become traumatized when sexually harassed. To elucidate, findings equally revealed that peer has sexually abused 21.4% (123) of the adolescent students. Finally, the study's findings also showed that 56.3% (323) argued that when sexual assault is reported in school, a medical check is done to control sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancies. Overall, findings showed that 35.4% of the adolescent students admitted to sexual assaults in their school environment, while 64.6% were against it. This is also presented in the figure 6 below.

Table :3

Cross Tabulation between Sexual Assault and Psychosocial Maladjustment

		Sexual assault	Total
		Strongly Agree/ Disagree/ Agree	Strongly Disagree
Psychosocial maladjustments	Strongly Agree/ Agree	99 37.8%	163 62.2%
	Disagree	83 26.9%	309 73.1%
	Strongly Disagree		
Total		182	389
			571

Using a cross-tabulation technique, findings showed that adolescent students whose school environment was characterized by sexual assaults suffered more psychosocial maladjustment (37.8%) than those whose school environment was not characterized by sexual assaults.

Table 4

Thematic Characterisation of Sexual Assaults

Parental marital status	What was your experience about it?	How often has that been done?	What was the cause of it being done?	What in your opinion could be done to stop it?
‘Yes’	‘Bad,	‘Once’	‘Jealousy’	‘Report to

	Painful’		school
			administration
		‘Revenge	Fight back
		Seductive	Dismissal’
		dressing	
	Short	school	‘Dress decently’
		uniform’	
‘No’		‘Never’	

The focus group discussions with the students opined that they were sexually assaulted. Adolescent students who have been sexually assaulted felt terrible, while for others, it was painful. To elucidate, finding out from the sexually assaulted students how often that occurs, they all said once as they said one time attempted in school while others said never. Asking the sexually assaulted students what the cause of it was, some of them said they were jealous. Others said it was because their uniform was short and because their dressing was seductive. Findings showed that

some students said they were sexually assaulted because of revenge that others planned to carry against them.

Finally, finding out from the students what can be done to stop sexual assaults on the school campus, some said girls have to dress decently. Others said perpetrators of sexual assaults should be dismissed. Others said the students should fight back, while others said cases of sexual assault should be reported to the school administration. Some said it can only by stop when students dress decently.

Table 5

Testing the Effect of Sexual Abuse on Psychosocial Maladjustment of Adolescent Students

Test	Statistics	Sexual abuse	Psychosocial maladjustment
Spearman's rho	R-value	1.000	.461**
	p-value	.	.000

n

571

571

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Statistically, findings showed that sexual assault significantly predicts psychosocial maladjustment of adolescent students in secondary schools ($p < 0.001$; 0.05). The positive sign of the correlation ($R = 0.461^{**}$) implied that adolescent students are more likely to suffer psychosocial maladjustment when there is a constant or persistent occurrence of sexual assaults in the school environment. In addition, descriptive findings revealed that adolescent students whose school environment was characterized by sexual assaults suffered more psychosocial maladjustment (37.8%) than those whose school environment was not characterized by sexual assaults. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that sexual abuse does not predict the psychosocial maladjustment of adolescent students in secondary schools, was rejected, and the alternative was maintained.

DISCUSSIONS

The findings showed that sexual assault significantly predicts the psychosocial maladjustment of adolescents in secondary schools. The findings implied that adolescent students who are in environments characterized by sexual assaults suffer from psychosocial maladjustment than those whose environments are free from it. The findings showed that sexual assaults among adolescent students are manifested through unwanted sexual touches, fondling, and rape. This is in line with George et al. (2011) who also posited that sexual assaults could be manifested in different forms such as unwanted touches, groping, rape, and forceful vaginal penetration. The findings are further confirmed by Peter et al. (2011) who posited that sexual assault is intentionally touching someone without the person's consent. The findings hold that a school environment characterized by sexual activities such as rape, masturbation, and fingering often causes the environment to be uncondusive for

adequate studies and could lead to students abandoning school. This is, therefore, an explosion of victimisation in school. The above finding is supported by the work of Duffy et al. (2004) who say there is a growing awareness of sexual aggression occurring in schools and has negative ramifications on the victim's attendance, success, and attachment to school.

In the findings, adolescent students argued that sexual assault leads to psychosocial maladjustments in adolescents in secondary schools in Cameroon. The findings concluded that an environment where sexual assault is not a good environment because it is a ramification on the victims' attendance, success, and attachments in school. The finding are also in conformity with what Lee (1996) says; that sexual assault in schools has various outcomes, including loss of friendship, truancy, and internalizing and externalizing psychosocial symptoms. The findings showed that there is bound to be victimization without supervision in the school environment when cases of sexual assaults are reported. This is in congruence with the work of Glover (2000), which stipulated that in an environment where there is no supervision, it is considered a risk factor where victimisation is bound to occur. This, therefore, defeats the purpose of studies.

The demographic findings showed that in terms of school types, most adolescents from confessional schools attested to the occurrence of sexual assaults, followed by those from government schools and those from lay private schools. In terms of class, more adolescents from form two attested to sexual assaults, followed by form three, form one, and lastly, form four. By age range, findings showed that the adolescents within the age range of 12-14 agreed highest to occurrences of sexual assaults in their schools, followed by those between the ages of 9 -11 and lastly 15-17. Finally, by school location, adolescents in rural and

urban agreed equally on sexual occurrences in their school environment.

The findings of this study reflect the theoretical position of Bronfenbrener's (1979) ecological system. It states that the interactions of both inherent qualities of adolescent students and the environment in which they find themselves interacting influences how they grow and develop. Worth mentioning is the fact that the most direct influence of adolescent victimization is within the Microsystems. It comprises individuals that fall within the immediate setting. For example, peer, home, school, family, and work environments with which adolescents frequently interact. Sexual assault, a form of peer victimisation, could be very detrimental, especially when there is no one around the environment to handle the wrong occurrences. This is in line with Espalage et al. (2001) who opine that lack of parental involvement, follow-up, and support are associated with bullying perpetration and victimisation.

These findings showed that an environment characterized by sexual assaults leads to psychosocial maladjustments than one free from it. It is vital to note that when the needs of children are not satisfied at the earlier ages of their lives, it is automatically tricky for them to develop to their full potential. Most of them turn to seek comfort in areas where they are lacking from the wrong sources. This is in concurrence with Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory which posited the different areas of needs as a child develops. The theory emphasizes that lower physiological safety, love, and belonging needs must be met before the higher needs of esteem and self-actualization. Suppose these needs are neglected at an early age. In that case, it will become difficult for the child to develop to full potential. Maslow, (1943) emphasizes that children need to be loved, feel safe, and need their basic needs met before they can attain self-actualization. The child who is neglected will have difficulty in attaining self-actualization. Maslow (1943) argued that our day-to-day actions, activities, and decisions are driven by a desire to satisfy various physiological and psychological needs.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings showed a significant relationship between sexual assault and the psychosocial maladjustment of adolescent students in secondary schools. This means that adolescents are more likely to suffer from psychosocial maladjustment in an environment characterized by sexual assaults than those free from it. This is supported by Baril et al. (2015) and Hebert (2011), who posited that more pressing consequences of sexual assaults in adolescent students are neurobiological changes, depressive symptoms, homelessness, running away from home; anxiety, fear, distrust of others, alcohol, and drug use, symptoms of post-traumatic stress, gang involvement, higher risk of sexual behaviour, teen pregnancy, low self-esteem, poor body image, strained relationship with family, behavioural problem, social isolation, lack of emotional commitment in a relationship, multiple sex partners, suicidal thought or attempted suicide, self-destructive behaviour, and self-mutilation. In addition, the cross-tabulation table in chapter four descriptively revealed that adolescent students whose school environment is characterized by sexual assaults suffer more from psychosocial maladjustments than adolescents whose school environment is free from it.

Regarding sexual assaults: for those in day schools, discipline masters should ensure adolescent students are properly dressed before getting into the school compound. This is vital because some of the dresses and uniforms of female adolescents entice the opposite sex. There should be constant checks at the gate to ensure they are properly dressed. Let teachers always do a brief check at the beginning of their lessons with respect to adolescent student's uniform. They should ensure that a brief check should be done before their lessons. When cases of sexual abuse are reported in school, it should be taken and handled seriously by the school authorities, thereby frustrating the plans of those who might want to emulate such processes. Furthermore, much security should be put in place based on property crime. Students who take bicycles to school should be advised to chain and lock them to avoid theft. Concerning theft of

books, snacks, bags, and other properties in the class, students are advised to write their names on their books, and teachers and other school administrators are equally advised to counsel the students on the disadvantages of stealing. Parents should have talks with their children at home about such acts. Parents should be able to know their children's friends and interact. Parents should equally stay involved in their children's school by being informed of what is happening there. They should volunteer to assist with school functions and join in PTA meetings. Children should be involved in a prevention coalition. All parents, students, school staff, and members of the community need to be part of creating safe school environments for our children. It should always begin from the school where the adolescent students come from.

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