
Attributions of Kenyan Public University Students' Dressing Styles and Implications for Sexual Harassment

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Abstract

Victims of sexual harassment are often blamed for being responsible for the harassment they receive. The clothes worn may send different messages to the people that the wearer interacts with. To investigate this, the study sought to examine the attributions made on students' dressing styles and whether these were found provocative or not. A descriptive survey design was used in this study. The study areas were University of Nairobi, Egerton University, Moi University, Technical University of Mombasa, Maseno and Karatina Universities. Multiple sampling procedures were used to select 566 students who participated in the study. Data was collected using questionnaires, focus group discussions and observation checklists. Results show that sexual harassment existed in the various institutions. The results point that sexual harassment existed within the learning institutions and the respondents were aware of what sexual harassment is with the main perpetrators being fellow students. Miniskirts, high slitted skirts and skin tight trousers had the highest negative attributes assigned to them with a mean of -0.64, -0.63 and -0.61 respectively.

Key Words: Attribution; Dressing Style; Sexual Harassment.

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1. Introduction

It is acknowledged that whenever people encounter each other for the first time, they know very little about each other [25]. However, it is the clothing worn that conveys the information that people use to make inferences about personality. People are accustomed to thinking about clothes in a fairly routine and almost unconscious way. Only when attention is drawn to them do people realize that they are actively analyzing clothes [13; 23]. Both males and females deal, on a daily basis, with decisions related to their own clothes and interpretations of other people's appearances [7]. Some authors [5;19] note that dress conveys accurate and inaccurate messages about the wearer. A person's choice of clothing can heavily influence the impression they transmit, hence is a powerful communication tool [10]. The clothing an individual wears affects judgment about the individual, as well as behavioral responses toward the person [17;18]. Further, it is stated that appearance, posture and dress have all been found to communicate a range of personality traits, occupational and social roles [10]. Some authors [5;19] have expressed that dress conveys accurate and inaccurate messages about the wearer. Every day, people form first impressions of others; they do so rapidly and effortlessly, and complex judgments are made based on appearance in less than half a second [24]. The clothes send different messages to the people that one may interact with. Garments worn give other people cues about one's social status, occupation or personality [10;11;14] and the inferences are made and attributes assigned about personality. For many, sexual harassment is a fact of life. Many people are aware that sexual harassment is designed to let them know that they are not wanted at the site[15;1]. Whether an individual's dress would motivate another's acts of sexual harassment, or put people at risk for becoming victims of sexual harassment is a subject for discussion.

2. Methods

A descriptive survey design was used in this study. The study area consisted of University of Nairobi, Egerton University, Kenyatta University, Moi University, Technical University of Mombasa, Maseno University and Karatina University. The study employed multiple sampling procedures. First, purposive sampling was used to select the main campuses of University of Nairobi, Egerton University, Kenyatta University, Moi University, Technical University of Mombasa, Karatina University and Maseno University that formed the strata. Secondly, the 2nd and 3rd year students were proportionately selected from the faculties represented at the main campus of each university to get a final sample of 566 students. Proportionate numbers were derived from each stratum so that 155 respondents were derived from University of Nairobi, 102 respondents from Egerton University, 94 from Kenyatta University, 78 from Moi University, 66 from Technical University of Mombasa, 55 from Maseno University and 50 from Karatina University. The investigations were carried out using questionnaires, focus group discussions and observation checklists to meet the objectives. The questionnaires were designed to include both closed and open-ended questions. Focus Group Discussion Schedule was designed to include open-ended questions. The focus groups were formed in groups of 12, with two each for male and female, from each university. The groups were randomly selected from the 2nd and 3rd years that belong to the peer educator's club. The discussions were arranged to take place at a convenient time that did not interfere with the students' classes. The discussions were recorded on tape after seeking permission from the participants. This was to allow the moderator to focus on the discussion, at the same time not miss important points by trying to write them down. Efforts were made to make the group discussions free flowing with the

participation of all members of the group. During the data collection period, observations were made to identify common dressing styles among the university students. The observations were plotted on the Observation Checklist. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. Cross tabulations were done to compare the responses between males and females. The qualitative data was grouped into themes and analyzed textually and quantitatively.

3. Constraints and limitations of the study

3.1 *The study was limited to public universities in different regions in Kenya, hence generalizations of the results should be done with caution*

3.2 *Only second and third year students participated in the study, yielding a response rate of 94.33%*

3.3 *The study was constrained in terms of time and resources.*

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Demographic Information

4.1.1 Age Group of the Respondents

The age of the respondent is an important demographic characteristic because it can explain the behavior of an individual.

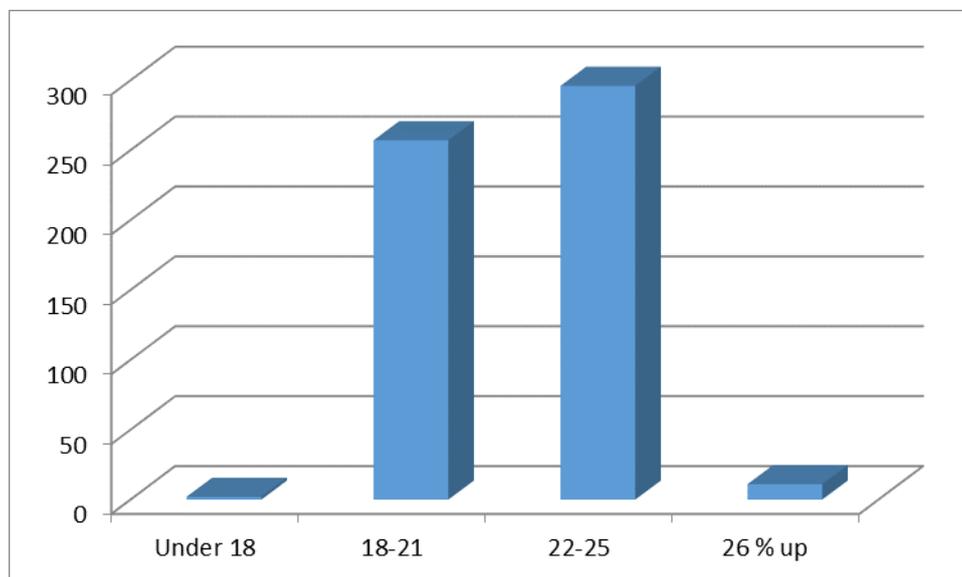


Figure 1: Age Group of the Respondents

Source: Field data

Results in **Figure 1** portray that most of the respondents (52.9%) fell in the age group of 22-25. Of these, 62.5%

were males in that age group. This is the common age group of undergraduate university students in Kenya. Most females (61.8%) fell in the age group of 18-21 years. From these results, it is notable that the females were younger than the males. This would be presumed to make them even more vulnerable to sexual harassment. In terms of dress, this youthful group is active and outgoing, ready to experiment with fashion, and given their predictable audacity, they are ready to shop, venture out and experiment a fashion trend [30]. At this age, their choice of dress is very liberal as they would wish to experiment styles that they find to be unique and exciting.

4.1.2 Area of Residence

University students often make a variety of choices when it comes to accommodation. In most cases, they choose between living in hostels within the campus, or private accommodation outside the campus and staying at home, especially if they can commute daily to college.

Table 1: Respondents by Area of Residence

Area of residence	Male		Female			
	(n=289)	%	(n=272)	%	(n=561)	%
On campus	228	51.4	216	48.6	444	79.1
Out campus/Non resident	50	53.2	44	46.8	94	16.8
At home	11	47.8	12	52.2	23	4.1

Results in **Table 1** point that majority of the respondents (79.1%) reside on campus. However, more males (51.4%) than females (48.6%) reside on campus. Also, very few of both genders reside at home. The fact that majority live within the campus can be ascribed to the fact that it is convenient, with proximity to class, utilities and other amenities. It also provides unparalleled experience, rendering a platform for interaction with other students from diverse backgrounds. Equally, it assures independence from constant supervision of parents or guardians. This independence is what drives the desire to choose those outfits that excite them.

4.2 Sexual harassment of the Respondents

4.2.1 Knowledge of sexual harassment

The respondents were asked whether they knew what sexual harassment was. The results are presented in the figure below.

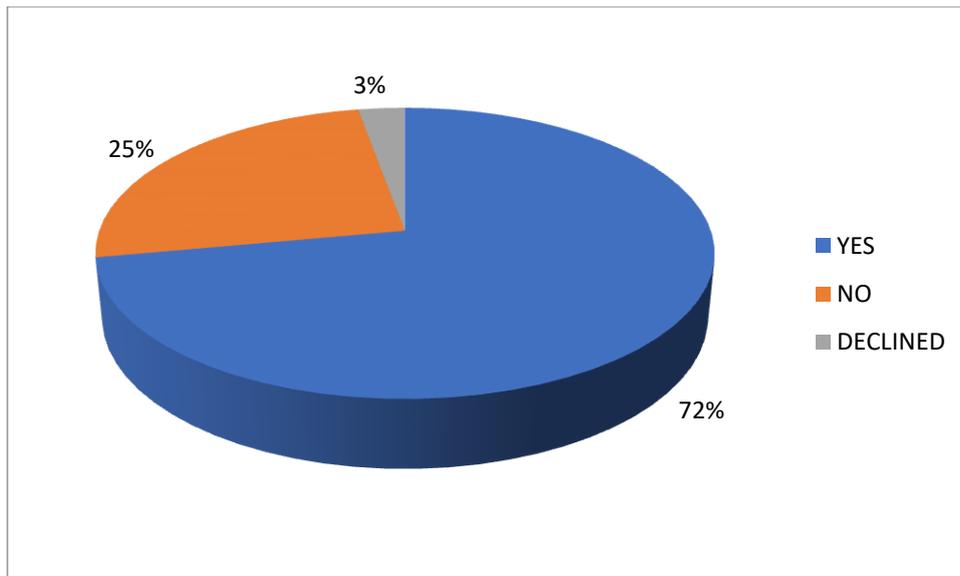


Figure 2: Respondents by Knowledge of Sexual Harassment

Source: Field data

The results in **Figure 2** point that (72%) knew what sexual harassment is, 25% did not know what sexual harassment is while 3% declined to answer. This concurs with what [21] found, that majority of the respondents admitted that they knew what sexual harassment was. These results can be confirmed by the responses from the Focus Group Discussions that elicited various responses as indicated below:

“...any act of seeking or soliciting for sexual favors from people without their consent...”

“.....any form of touch, gesture or spoken word which is in a sexual way and makes someone feel lowered and uncomfortable...”

“.... emotional, physical, psychological coercion of sexual acts or any other acts to one by another that causes discomfort to the individual....”

“.....unwanted sexual advances or behavior that is inappropriate and makes someone uncomfortable.....”

“...the process of asking for sex in exchange for favors...”

“...when someone is forced into having sex without being prepared for it, or simply to satisfy another person’s desires...”

From the above expressions, it can be noted that sexual harassment involves sexual advances and that the behavior is unwanted or unwelcome by the aggrieved party. Majority of the respondents knew what sexual harassment was. From the expressions given, it was observed that sexual harassment involved sexual advances that are unwanted or unwelcome by the aggrieved party. This concurs with what [20] concluded as sexually

harassing behavior that included (1) gender harassment, including sexist statements and behavior that convey insulting, degrading or sexist attitudes; (2) seductive behavior encompassing unwanted, inappropriate, and offensive physical or verbal sexual advances; (3) sexual bribery, involving solicitation of sexual activity or other sex-linked behavior by promise of reward; (4) sexual coercion of sexual activity or other sex-linked behavior by threat of punishment; and (5) sexual assault, attempted rape and rape. Thus, majority of the respondents demonstrated a clear understanding of what constitutes sexual harassment.

4.2.2 Perpetrators of sexual harassment

Asked who the perpetrators of sexual harassment were, a variety of responses were received.

Table 2: Respondents by perpetrators of sexual harassment

Perpetrator	Male		Female		Overall	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Other Students	141	61.3	166	65.1	307	63.3
Lecturers	13	5.7	22	8.7	35	7.2
Administrators	6	2.6	17	6.7	23	4.7
Cleaners	3	1.3	5	2.0	8	1.7
Drivers	1	0.4	9	3.5	10	2.1
Boy friend	16	7.0	47	18.5	63	13.0
Girl friend	57	24.8	9	3.5	66	13.6
Cooks	3	1.3	4	1.6	7	1.4
An acquaintance/ visitor	15	6.5	22	8.6	37	7.6

*Multiple responses allowed

The results in **Table 2** point that fellow students were the main perpetrators of sexual harassment, with more females (63.3%) than males (61.3%) alluding to the fact that students do harass each other. This concurs with what [3] found, that undergraduate women were more likely to be harassed or assaulted by fellow students. Though more women were likely victims, it is notable that the males also experienced sexual harassment from fellow students. These results show that the perpetrators are those who are often in close proximity to the victims. Some respondents were more explicit in their expressions as indicated below:

“Students especially through their mode of dressing”

“Female students encourage it by the way they dress and males accept this as the norm.”

“Female students do by exposing themselves and also by refusing to leave your room at night”

In the above responses, the female students are pointed out as inviting the sexual harassment they receive, and the males finding it as a normal occurrence. Dressing style of the female students is given as the reason for any sexual harassment overtures made towards them.

“Both students and lecturers contribute a great deal but lecturers contribute most.”

“In many cases lecturers who want kickbacks to favor students in exams.”

“Lecturers through conditions bound to generate marks.”

“Lecturers who ask students to do something sexual in exchange of class notes or better grades.”

“Female lecturers are often known to harass male students.”

“It depends on how students talk to a given lecturer.”

“People in a superior position.”

“Ladies who act or provoke men to make sexual advances”

It is apparent from the findings that students of either gender do sexually harass each other. The female victims were perceived to be provoking the act. However, fewer females (7.2 %) than males (11.5%) were mentioned as perpetrators. This concurs with findings of other authors [26;3;22] that found that girls were more likely to experience sexual harassment than boys. The fact that some students dress provocatively also featured as given in the respondents’ statements. As a result, the victims were deemed to be somewhat responsible for the sexual harassment directed at them. It can be noted that those mentioned most were people familiar to the students. This concurs with findings of 26;31 in 22:3] that the perpetrators are often known by the victims and these include fathers, neighbors, colleagues or acquaintances.

4.2.3 Prevalence of sexual harassment at the university

Table 4: Respondents by prevalence of sexual harassment

	Freq	%
Not any	1	.2
Only a little	38	6.7
Some, but not a lot	141	24.9
A lot	291	51.4
Not sure	78	13.8
No answer	17	3.0
TOTAL	566	100.0

The results in **Table 4** exhibit that majority (51.4%) of the respondents felt that a lot of sexual harassment

occurs at the university. Another 24.9 % indicated that some sexual harassment occurs at the university. Whether a little, some or a lot of sexual harassment occurs, this accounts for a total of 83.0% of occurrence of sexual harassment at the university. This concurs with other authors' [26;3;32;29;22;28] that found sexual harassment to be rampant in institutions of higher learning.

4.2.4 Site of sexual harassment

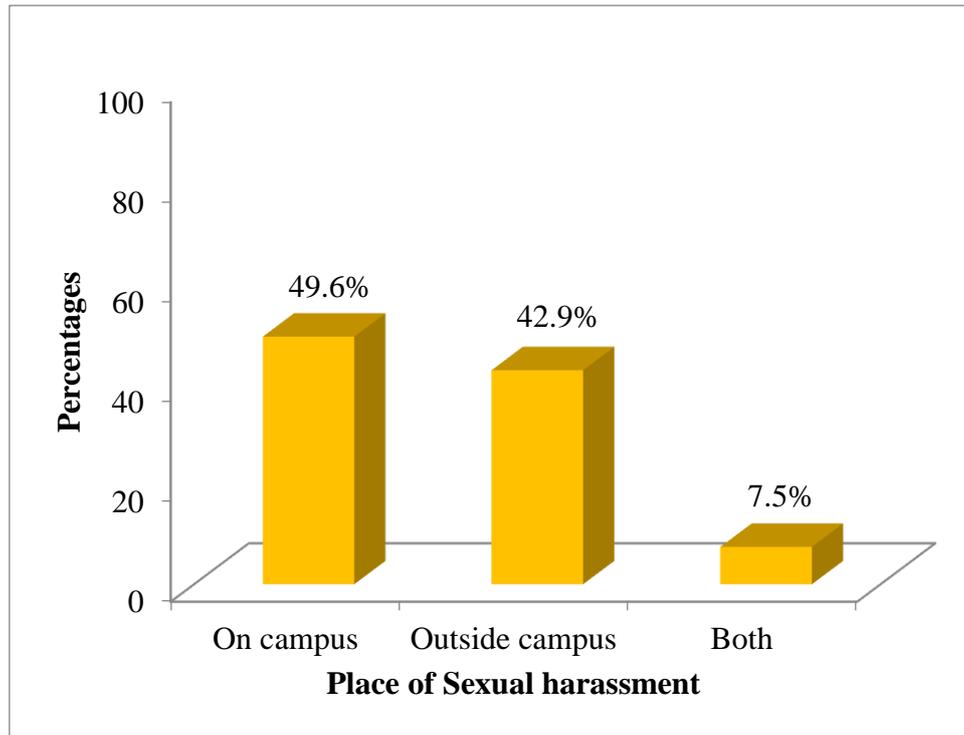


Figure 3: Respondents by Site of Sexual harassment

Results in **Figure 3** portray that most (49.64%) of the harassment occurred within the campus grounds while 42.86 occurred outside the campus. Another 7.5% occurred at both venues. Sexual harassment is likely to occur on campus grounds because students spend a considerable amount of time on campus.

4.2.5 Perpetrators of sexual harassment

Table 5: Respondents by perpetrators of sexual harassment

Perpetrators	Never		Rarely		Occasionally		Often		Not Sure	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Student harassing other students (n=557)	7	1.3	90	16.2	184	33.0	212	38.1	64	11.4
Lecturers & other employees harassing students (n=557)	9	1.6	92	16.5	191	34.3	143	25.7	122	21.9
Students harassing lecturers and employees (n=553)	75	13.6	197	35.6	77	13.9	48	8.7	156	28.2

The results in **Table 5** indicate that more students (38.1%) than lecturers (25.7%) often sexually harass other students. It is always thought that those in authority always have the power over those who are subordinate to them, hence their likelihood of sexually harassing the ones who are powerless, in this case, the students. Whether occasional or often 70% of students harass fellow students compared to lecturers or employees harassing students. Very few (22.6%) students were reported to be sexually harassing lectures or employees.

Table 8: Respondents by the perpetrators who harassed them

Perpetrator	YES		NO		NO ANSWER	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Other students	307	54.2	179	31.6	63	11.1
Lecturers	35	6.2	450	79.5	64	11.3
Administrators	23	4.1	463	85.9	65	11.5
Cleaners	8	1.4	477	84.3	66	11.7
Drivers	10	1.8	475	83.9	65	11.5
Boyfriend	63	11.1	422	74.6	66	11.7
Girlfriend	66	11.7	419	74.0	65	11.5
Cooks	7	1.2	479	84.6	65	11.5
Acquaintance/ Visitor	37	6.5	479	79.3	65	11.5

Multiple responses allowed

Results in **Table 8** point that most respondents (54.2%) were sexually harassed by fellow students. This asserts the notion that more students than lecturers and other staff members were the perpetrators of sexual harassment in the universities. The other individuals mentioned as having sexually harassed the respondents were girlfriend (11.7%), boyfriend (11.1%), an acquaintance or visitor (6.5%), administrators (4.1%), drivers (1.8%) and cleaners (1.4%). It is notable that while 54.2% of the respondents hinted that they were sexually harassed by other students, only 43.5% had earlier admitted to have ever been sexually harassed. This can be attributed to the fact that some of the respondents may never have wanted to admit that they were actually sexually harassed. Some of the respondents may also have felt that being sexually harassed is demeaning and so would never have wanted to admit that they had been sexually harassed.

4.2.6 Knowledge of a friend who has been sexually harassed

One may not have fallen victim to sexual harassment but can know of a friend who may have fallen victim to sexual harassment. The respondents were asked whether they knew of friends who had been sexually by the people listed.

Table 9: Respondents by perpetrators who sexually harassed their friends

PERPETRATOR	YES		NO		NO ANSWER	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Other students	290	51.2	247	43.6	29	5.2
Lecturers	167	29.5	372	66.7	27	4.8
Administrators	53	9.4	485	85.7	28	4.9
Cleaners	17	3.0	518	91.5	31	5.5
Drivers	25	4.4	512	90.5	28	4.9
Boyfriend	157	27.7	380	67.1	29	5.2
Girlfriend	82	14.5	456	80.6	28	4.9
Cooks	17	3.0	520	91.9	29	5.1
Acquaintance/ Visitor	50	8.8	485	85.7	31	5.5

Multiple responses allowed

The results in **Table 9** indicate that most of the respondents knew of a friend who had been sexually harassed by other students (51.2 %) and lecturers (29.5%). The least mentioned harassers were cooks (3.0%), cleaners (3.0%), drivers (4.4%), acquaintance/visitor (8.8%), administrators (9.4%) and girlfriend (14.5%). It is notable from these results that students are still projected as the main perpetrators of sexual harassment of fellow students within the university.

4.2.7 Forms of sexual harassment experienced by the respondents

Table 6: Forms of sexual harassment

Forms	Never %	Rarely %	Often %	Declined to answer %
Make sexual comments, gestures. Jokes or looks	26.7	32.7	33.9	6.7
Show or leave you sexual pictures, photographs illustrations, messages or notes	62.7	20.5	12.5	4.8
Post messages about you on the internet (e-mail messages about you)	84.1	8.5	2.7	4.8
Called you gay or lesbian or prostitute	61.8	21.0	11.1	6.2
Touched, grabbed or pinched you in a sexual way	83.9	6.9	2.8	6.4
Intentionally brushed you in a sexual way	49.5	27.7	15.9	6.5
Asked you to do something sexual in exchange for something (better grade recommendation, notes)	77.9	9.5	4.9	7.6
Pulled at your cloth in a sexual way	72.3	16.4	6.2	5.1
Pulled off or down your clothing	84.3	6.5	3.5	5.7
Blocked your way, cornered you or followed you in a sexual way	59.7	25.3	9.2	5.8
Forced you to kiss him/her	70.7	15.5	7.2	6.5
Forced you to do something sexual other than kissing	74.2	12.2	5.1	8.5

Multiple responses allowed

Results in **Table 6** point that 33.9% often made sexual comments, jokes or looks about the respondents; 15.9% intentionally brushed the respondent in a sexual way; 25.3% blocked the respondent's way, cornered or followed him/her in a sexual way; 15.5% forced the respondent to kiss him or her and a total of 22.9% pulled at the respondents' clothing, or pulled off or down the respondents' clothing. It is important to note that even though the acts of sexual harassment experienced by the respondents were low, it is deplorable for anyone to experience such acts at all. This concurs with [4;22] that noted that more of the college girls complained of sexual harassment acts such as verbal comments, lewd songs, telephone calls and staring at women's breasts.

4.2.8 Where the sexual harassment occurred

Table 7: Respondents by area where sexual harassment was experienced

Area	YES		NO		NO ANSWER	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Classroom/ Lecture Hall	172	30.4	331	58.5	63	11.1
Hall/ Common room	105	18.6	397	70.1	64	11.3
Playing area	57	10.1	444	78.4	65	11.5
Cafeteria	56	9.9	444	78.4	66	11.7
Hostel	205	36.2	293	52.3	65	11.5
On campus grounds	156	27.6	344	60.8	66	11.7
Library	46	8.1	455	80.4	65	11.5
In a lecturer's office	23	4.1	478	84.5	65	11.5
In an administrator's office	22	3.9	479	84.6	65	11.5
Somewhere else	135	23.9	365	64.5	66	11.7

Results in **Table 7** indicate that 205(36.2 %) mentioned the hostel and 156 (27.6%) mentioned campus grounds as areas where they were sexually harassed. Other areas that can be noted were classroom/lecture hall (30.4%), elsewhere other than the places mentioned (23.9%), campus hall or common room of campus building (18.6%). Very few incidences of sexual harassment occurred in the lecturers' offices (4.1%), administrator's office (3.9%) or in the cafeteria (9.9%). The fact that more incidences of sexual harassment occurred in the hostels than other place corroborates in that more students (51.2%) often harass fellow students and this can be happening in the hostels. The hostel room was mentioned more than the other places and this can be attributed to the perceived privacy of the hostel rooms. Conversely, the cafeteria, playing ground/area and the library may not have featured frequently because of perceived lack of privacy. The classrooms or lecture halls are open public spaces during the day and so are libraries. This can be the reason why they did not feature frequently. Depending on the time of day and where activities are concentrated, campus grounds can also be fertile places of sexual harassment. The results concur with the earlier results that more students than other workers harassed the respondents, and thus the hostel featured more frequently than other places. This differs with what was expected in that the lecturers' or administrator' offices would feature more frequently because they are secluded.

4.3 Dressing Styles

To establish whether dressing styles of the respondents was responsible for the sexual harassment experienced, to specify the characteristics that they associated with those articles and to state whether they found the articles modest or immodest. Additionally, the respondents were asked to state whether they got any unwelcome gestures or comments whenever they put on these items, which unwelcome gestures or comments were directed at them and whether they ever felt that whatever they were wearing would draw undue attention.

4.3.1 Attributes associated with various items

The respondents were asked to specify the characteristics they associated with various items. The characteristics identified were then classified into thematic areas; Stylish/Fashionable, Comfortable, Beauty/Aesthetic/Good looking, Sexy and Not applicable. Sexy at (83.2%) was identified as the main characteristic associated with miniskirts articles. Bare chest tops were found to be fashionable/stylish by only (9.9%). Vests were associated with comfort at (45.4%) while close fitting shirts were associated with beauty/good looking at (22.5%). These results compare with those of two authors [12], that identify low necklines, short skirts see through or clinging clothing as sexy, seductive and promiscuous.

Table 10: Classification of respondents' attributes associated with various clothing articles

Attributes	Positive		Neutral		Negative		Mean (SD)
	(+1)		(0)		(-1)		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	
Vest (n=335)	89(55)	72(45)	77(57)	59(43)	20(52)	18(47)	0.37 (0.67)
Unbuttoned Shirt (n=308)	39(64)	22(36)	14(48)	15(52)	114(52)	104(48)	-0.51(0.80)
Close fitting shirt(n=327)	69(55)	57(45)	9(50)	9(50)	102(56)	81(44)	-0.17(0.96)
Shorts (n=321)	87(56)	69(44)	8(47)	9(53)	80(54)	68(46)	0.02(0.97)
Bare chest tops (n=312)	78(57)	59(43)	13(59)	9(41)	75(49)	78(51)	-0.05(0.96)
Mini Skirts (n=318)	16(46)	19(54)	21(47)	24(53)	129(54)	109(46)	-0.64(0.67)
Boob tops (n=317)	39(56)	31(44)	24(58)	17(42)	97(47)	109(53)	-0.47(0.64)
Skin Tight dresses (n=314)	23(41)	33(59)	16(38)	26(62)	130(60)	86(40)	-0.51(0.78)
Skin Tight Trousers (n=322)	18(38)	29(62)	18(55)	15(45)	139(57)	103(43)	-0.61(0.73)
Tumbo-cut Tops (n=313)	21(40)	31(60)	23(56)	18(44)	119(54)	101(46)	-0.53(0.76)
High Slitted Skirts(n=320)	20(50)	20(50)	21(57)	16(43)	135(56)	108(44)	-0.63(0.69)
Tight Trousers (n=323)	31(44)	40(56)	24(49)	25(51)	113(56)	90(44)	-0.41(0.83)
Spaghetti Tops (n=310)	29(29)	71(71)	24(55)	20(45)	106(64)	60(36)	-0.21(0.90)
Bare back Tops (n=310)	20(38)	33(62)	21(46)	25(54)	123(58)	88(42)	-0.51(0.77)
Tight Bermuda Shorts(n=284)	24(38)	40(63)	23(49)	24(51)	106(61)	67(39)	-0.38(0.83)

The attributes were further classified as positive (+1), neutral (0) and negative (-1) as shown in table 29 above. Upon classifying the attributes, vest and shorts were the only clothes to which majority of the respondents assigned positive attributes with a mean of 0.37 and 0.02 respectively. Miniskirts, high slitted skirts and skin tight trousers had the highest negative attributes assigned to them with a mean of -0.64, -0.63 and -0.61 respectively.

Table 11: Respondents by Attributes associated with Vests

Attributes associated with Vest (n=335)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Comfortable	10	5.1	13	9.4	23	6.9
Sexy	9	4.6	9	6.5	18	5.4
Modest	16	8.2	5	3.6	21	6.3
Cool	11	5.6	9	6.5	20	6
Decent	11	5.6	4	2.9	15	4.5
Normal	15	7.7	3	2.2	18	5.4
Others	124	63.3	96	69.1	220	65.5
TOTAL	196	100	139	100	335	100

The results in **Table 11** point that for both males and females, there was no outstanding attribute associated with vests. However, some of the traits mentioned by both males and females were comfortable, sexy, modest, cool and decent. This concurs with findings of [2], that found vests to be modest. A vest is a versatile unisex garment that can be worn under a shirt or blouse to absorb body sweat and oils, keeping the body comfortable. It can be worn in both cold and warm seasons. They look great when minimally styled and paired with jeans or pants.¹ Lately, vests have donned runways and are found to be fashionable. This is probably the reason why the respondents assigned the attribute of comfort to vests.

Table 12: Table of Respondents by Attributes associated with Unbuttoned Shirt

Attributes associated with Unbuttoned Shirt (n=308)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sexy	27	15.3	20	15.3	47	15.2
Immodest/Indecent	3	1.7	8	6.1	11	3.6
Rude/Roughness/Rogue	2	1.1	4	3.1	6	1.9
Carelessness	3	1.7	8	6.1	11	3.6
Cool	8	4.5	3	2.3	11	3.6
Others	134	75.7	88	67.2	222	72.1
TOTAL	177	100	131	100	308	100

The results in **Table 12** reveal that both males and females associated the unbuttoned shirt with being sexy

¹ www.outfittrends.com/what-to-wear-with-a-vest-women/

15.3% (n=47). This concurred with what [10] established, that when shirts are unbuttoned and worn by women, it is provocative and sexy. This implies that wearing an unbuttoned shirt can contribute to a negative impression or attribute on the wearer. Another 3.6% (n=11) found unbuttoned shirts to be immodest/indecent and 3.6% (n=11) associated them with carelessness. However, some related unbuttoned shirts with rude/roughness/rogue 1.9% (n=6). A shirt is a versatile garment that can be worn by both men and women. Shirts can either be constructed to have an open neck area or one with buttons running up to the collar can be partly unbuttoned to let the wearer have an open neck area, particularly in warm weather. It can be relaxing to undo a few buttons so that the wearer looks truly at ease. Contrary to what the respondents said, the unbuttoned shirt can be elegantly stylish and fashionable.²

Table 13: Respondents by Attributes Associated with Close Fitting Shirt

Attributes associated with close fitting shirt (n=327)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
	Sexy	65	37.8	53	34.2	118
Decent/Modest	19	11.0	10	6.5	29	8.8
Normal/Official/Neat	8	4.7	9	5.8	17	5.2
Smart/Nice	8	4.7	8	5.2	16	4.9
Others	72	41.9	75	48.4	147	45
TOTAL	172	100	155	100	327	100

Results in **Table 13** show that majority of the respondents associated close fitting shirts to being sexy 36.1% (n=118), with more males (37.8%) than females (34.2%) saying they are sexy. However, others also found closefitting shirts to be normal, official or neat 5.2% (n=17), some found them decent or modest 8.9% (n=29) and others found them smart or nice 4.9% (n=16). A close-fitting shirt has an accentuated back with darts and a high armhole stance that allows for a shaped look, and sits snugly on the body. In terms of functionality, close-fitting shirts should be deemed fashionable because they eliminate excess fabric on the garment. Muscular men may wear tight clothes to accentuate their physique either they feel good or want attention from both girls and boys. They worked hard to attain that muscular physique and they would want to impress and show off by wearing close-fitting shirts. Contrary to being sexy like the respondents said, some people consider these close-fitting shirts to be stylish and hot.³

² www.belletag.com/fashion/style-guide/unbuttoned-shirt

³ www.seventeen.com/love/a3427/things-guys-wear-that-make-them-hotter/

Table 14: Respondents by Attributes Associated with Shorts

Attributes associated with Shorts (n=321)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
	Sexy	25	14.6	46	30.7	71
Fashionable/Good	10	5.8	5	3.3	15	4.7
Cool/Comfortable	11	6.4	8	5.3	19	5.9
Decent/Modest	16	9.4	10	6.7	26	8.1
Normal/Official	9	5.3	2	1.3	11	3.4
Smart/Nice/Trendy	13	7.6	5	3.3	18	5.6
Others	87	50.9	74	49.3	161	50.2
TOTAL	171	100	150	100	321	100

Results in **Table 14** point that quite a number of both male and female respondents associated shorts with being sexy 22.1% (n=71). However, some associated shorts with decency or modesty 8.1% (n=26), while some found them to be normal or official 3.4% (n=11), smart or nice or trendy 5.6% (n=18) and cool or comfortable 5.9% (n=19). Shorts are casual outfits that are unisex, hence can be worn by both males and females. Worn by a woman, it would indicate boldness or self-confidence. Actually, petite ladies will look good in shorts as they give an illusion of longer legs. For men, shorts are casual garments that provides comfort, particularly in warm weather to prevent sweating as well as provide freedom of movement.⁴ However, they may look inappropriate when worn by men in public. The fact that they are short should not imply that they are provocative.

Table 15: Respondents by Attributes Associated with Miniskirt

Attributes associated with Miniskirt (n=318)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
	Sexy/Seductive	56	40.0	79	44.4	135
Indecent/Immodest	12	8.6	6	3.4	18	5.7
Others	72	51.4	93	52.2	165	51.9
TOTAL	140	100	178	100	318	100

Results in **Table 15** point that nearly half of both male and female respondents associated the mini-skirt with sexiness or seductiveness 42.5% (n=135). Strangely, more females than males found the mini-skirt sexy or seductive. This implies that the females who wear these skirts do so knowing that they would draw attention towards them. A few others 5.7% (n=18) associated it with indecency or immodesty. This could be one of the reasons why Makerere University banned female students and staff from wearing mini-skirts and tight-fitting

⁴www.realmenrealstyle.com/how-to-wear-shorts/

clothes on Campus, and later the total ban of wearing mini-skirts by women in Uganda [8]. Wearing a mini-skirt can be saturated with the ability to offend on different levels. However, by wearing them, the women aren't necessarily signaling their availability.⁵ Similar to the respondents' notion, wearing a mini-skirt is sexy, exciting and can be seen as a prelude to romance.⁶ Contrary to the notion of sexiness of the mini-skirt, they can actually be cute, fashionable, versatile and fun to wear; and some people wear them because they are fun, non-restrictive, super breathable and easy to launder.⁷ A mini skirt is a mid-thigh level skirt that is normally no longer than 10cm (4 inches) below the hips. They accentuate both the legs and butts, which may give perceivers the impression that she wants attention. They look best on younger females than older ones. Regardless of the position one holds, mini-skirts are best worn in moderation and should be suitable for the occasion.

Table 16: Respondents by Attributes associated with Boob Tops

Attributes associated with Boob tops (n=321)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sexy	102	54.8	80	59.3	182	56.7
Immodest/Immoral/Indecent	8	4.3	5	3.7	13	4.0
Normal/Good/Smart	3	1.6	7	5.2	10	3.2
Others	73	39.2	43	31.9	116	36.1
TOTAL	186	100	135	100	321	100

Results in **Table 16** indicate that 56.7% (n=182) of the respondents associated boob tops with sexiness and 4.0% (n=13), with more females than males finding them sexy. This was contrary to expectation, that more males than females would find them sexy. This suggests that the females who wore boob-tops were doing so with the knowledge that they were likely to attract attention by being sexy. However, 3.1% (n=10) found boob tops to be normal, good or smart. Comparable to the respondents' belief, boob tops are flattering on petite figures since they hug the chest and make the bare shoulders look sexy and aesthetic. The boob top (known in the United States of America as a boob tube) is a strapless and sleeveless top that wraps around the breast or chest area. There is something liberating and stylish on the boob top. It enables one to show off the arms and partly, the stomach. To some people, it may bring a sprinkle of elegance and comfort.⁸ They are extremely versatile, but may be found unsuitable for the office. If it must be worn to the office, it has to be worn under a blazer or cardigan.

⁵

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238717236_Women's_Rights_Get_A_Dressing_Down_Mini_Skirt_At_tacks_in_South_Africa

⁶ https://www.Quora.com/What's_the_point-of-wearing-a-mini-skirt-or-short-dress

⁷ <https://www.bellatory.com/Clothing/Women-in-Short-Skirts>

⁸ <https://vogue.com/article/Kendall-Jenner-tube-top-reemergence>

Table 17: Respondents by Attributes associated with Skin Tight dresses

Attributes associated with Skin Tight dresses (n=314)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sexy	56	37.8	75	45.2	131	41.7
Immodest/Immoral/Indecent/Inappropriate	9	6.1	4	2.4	13	4.1
Hot	5	3.4	1	0.6	6	1.8
Normal/Modest	2	1.4	3	1.8	5	1.6
Inner wear	1	0.7	3	1.8	4	1.3
Comfortable	1	0.7	2	1.2	3	1.0
Arousing	3	2.0	0	0.0	3	1.0
Others	71	48.0	78	47.0	149	47.5
TOTAL	148	100	166	100	314	100

Results in **Table 17** illustrate that nearly a half of the respondents associated skin tight dress with sexiness 41.7% (n=131) and other respondents attributed skin tight dress to immodest/immoral/indecent/inappropriate 4.1% (n=13). Despite majority of the students attributing skin tight dress to sexiness, others attributed skin tight dress with normal/modest 1.6% (n=5). Due to some cultural and religious beliefs, skin tight dresses may be seen to be seductive and sexual, such that those who wear them may draw attention to their sexuality.⁹ Depending on a person’s body type, a skin tight dress can be worn without looking trashy or unprofessional. It can be chosen in such a way that it flatters the body shape and size by camouflaging the parts that can give one anxiety while revealing those parts that should be flaunted.

Table 18: Respondents by Attributes associated with Skin Tight trouser

Attributes associated with Skin Tight trouser (n=322)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sexy	93	56.4	76	48.4	169	52.5
Immodest/Immoral/Indecent/Inappropriate	12	7.3	8	5.1	20	6.1
Hot	4	2.4	1	0.6	5	1.6
Cool/Decent	3	1.8	2	1.3	5	1.6
Others	53	32.1	70	44.6	123	38.2
TOTAL	165	100	157	100	322	100

Results in **Table 18** point that more than half of the respondents 52.5% (n=169) associated skin tight trouser with sexiness while 1.6% (n=5) each of the respondents attributed it to hotness and cool/decent. Commonly referred to as tights, these trousers are held to the skin usually by elastic tension using stretch fabrics. Just like the respondents, many people believe that wearing of tight trousers is sexy. If worn by men, it may suggest to the viewer that they may be more effeminate than manly, yet they want to remain masculine. Conversely, some women wear tight trousers to look slim, beautiful and young, to the extent that some fashion experts label them as comfortable, gorgeous and flattering. However, several schools in the United States of America have made

⁹ <https://www.zerxa.com/fashion-beauty/clothing/skin-tight-clothes-and-slut-shaming/>

tight fitting women's clothing such as leggings, skinny jeans and pants against the dress code, describing them as distracting.¹⁰ Tight trousers or pants are a more casual than a professional attire, hence would be more suitable worn in informal surroundings.

Table 19: Respondents by Attributes associated with Tumbo-cut Tops

Attributes associated with Tumbo-cut Tops (n=313)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sexy	83	49.4	46	31.7	129	41.2
Immodest/Immoral/Indecent/Inappropriate	9	5.4	8	5.5	17	5.5
Cool/Decent	3	1.8	7	4.8	10	3.2
Fashionable	1	0.6	5	3.4	6	1.9
Hot/Gay	7	4.2	0	0.0	7	2.2
Others	65	38.7	79	54.5	144	46
TOTAL	168	100	145	100	313	100

Results in **Table 19** reveal that nearly a half of the respondents associated Tumbo-cut tops with sexiness 41.2%(n=129), while a few 5.4%(n=17) associated it with immodesty/immorality/indecency/inappropriateness and a few others 2.2% (n=7) associated it with hotness/gay. Tumbo-cut tops, also known as crop tops show a part of the belly and the navel when worn. It is a unisex garment that can be worn by both men and women. Contrary, on petite figures, Tumbo-cut tops can be quite flattering. Worn with long skirts, they can look elegant and decent.¹¹ It is notable that they are best used by those with flat or well-toned tummies. When worn by a person with a bit of flesh, it can look very unattractive.

Table 20: Respondents by Attributes associated with High Slitted Skirts

Attributes associated with High Slitted Skirts (n=320)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sexy	59	35.5	64	41.6	123	38.4
Immodest/Immoral/Indecent	15	9.0	5	3.2	20	6.3
Fashionable/Stylish	0	0.0	5	3.2	5	1.6
Revealing	9	5.4	1	0.6	10	3.1
Hot	4	2.4	4	2.6	8	2.5
Others	79	47.6	75	48.7	154	48.1
TOTAL	166	100	154	100	320	100

Results in **Table 20** exhibit that a number of the respondents 38.4% (n=123) associated high slitted skirts with sexiness, while 6.3 (n=20) found it to be immodest/immoral/indecent and yet another 3.1% (n=10) thought it to be too revealing. Only 1.6 (n=5) considered it fashionable. High slitted skirts often give a subtle display of the legs, and when slit on the sides, they expose the upper thigh. To some people, these slits spell suaveness and

¹⁰ [https:// www.bbc.com/news/magazine-31447905](https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-31447905)

¹¹ [https:// www.stylesatlife.com/articles/crop-tops/](https://www.stylesatlife.com/articles/crop-tops/)

style, drawing attention to the legs. While many narrow skirts need slits to permit the wearer to take comfortable strides, they can be quite daring when they expose a lot of leg. It is agreeable that high slits are appealing when done in moderation, but when the legs become more prominent than the skirt so that one is able to see the inner garments, then vulgarity takes over.¹²

Table 21: Respondents by Attributes associated with Tight Trousers

Attributes associated with Tight Trousers (n=323)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sexy	87	50.0	53	35.6	140	43.3
Normal/Modest/Decent	6	3.4	8	5.4	14	4.3
Immodest/Immoral/Indecent	6	3.4	4	2.7	10	3.1
Fashionable/Stylish	4	2.3	3	2.0	7	2.2
Revealing	3	1.7	0	0.0	3	1.0
Hot	3	1.7	1	0.7	4	1.2
Others	65	37.4	80	53.7	145	44.9
TOTAL	174	100	149	100	323	100

Results in **Table 21** illustrate that nearly a half of the respondents associated tight trousers with sexiness 43.3% (n=140). However, a number of respondents also associated tight trousers to normality/modesty/decency at 4.3% (n=14). Women may wear tight trousers or pants because they feel comfortable in them. However, most women wear tight pants or clothes to enhance the curves of their body and appear more attractive, particularly to the opposite sex.¹³ Although some men wear tight trousers too, it is more common for women to wear tight trousers

Table 22: Respondents by Attributes associated with Spaghetti Tops

Attributes associated with Spaghetti Tops (n=310)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sexy	83	53.2	32	20.8	115	37.1
Comfortable	2	1.3	10	6.5	12	3.8
Normal/Modest/Decent	3	1.9	17	11.0	20	6.5
Immodest/Immoral/Indecent	4	2.6	5	3.2	9	2.9
Fashionable/Stylish	1	0.6	9	5.8	10	3.2
Revealing	2	1.3	1	0.6	3	1
Hot	4	2.6	3	1.9	7	2.3
Others	57	36.5	77	50.0	134	43.2
TOTAL	156	100	154	100	310	100

Results in **Table 22** exhibit that 37.1% (n=115) associated spaghetti tops with sexiness. However, 6.5% (n=20)

¹²[https:// www.nytimes.com/archives/slit-skirts-a-question-of-taste-appealing-in-moderation.html](https://www.nytimes.com/archives/slit-skirts-a-question-of-taste-appealing-in-moderation.html)

¹³ <https://www.fibre to fashion.com/industry/article/tight-clothing>

of the respondents associated spaghetti tops with normality/modesty/decency. Others 3.2% (n=10) linked it to fashion/style. Spaghetti tops are tops with only tiny straps falling over the shoulders. Even though the respondents found them sexy, these tops may be considered inappropriate in certain settings, for example, they can appear too informal for the business place. Rather, they would be appropriate and more relaxing outdoors.¹⁴

Table 23: Respondents by Attributes associated with Bare back Tops

Attributes associated with Bare back Tops (n=310)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sexy	56	40.6	71	41.3	127	41
Immodest/Immoral/Indecent	9	6.5	3	1.7	12	3.9
Fashionable/Stylish	1	0.7	4	2.3	5	1.6
Revealing	6	4.3	0	0.0	6	1.9
Hot	0	0.0	3	1.7	3	1
Cool	3	2.2	7	4.1	10	3.2
Others	63	45.7	84	48.8	147	47.4
TOTAL	138	100	172	100	310	100

The results in **Table 23** reveal that a half of the respondents associated bare back tops with sexiness 41.0% (n=127) while other respondents 3.9% (n=12) associated bare back tops to immodesty/immorality/indecency. A few 3.2% (n=10) associated these tops with coolness. Bare back tops are those tops that show a little extra skin at the back, particularly when one has body modifications like tattoos and can be a powerful fashion statement. It can make one look original and trendy. However, similar to the respondents' notion, bare back tops can be an allure piece that may be deemed sexy, especially when worn with denim shorts.¹⁵

Table 24: Respondents Attributes associated with Bare chest Tops

Attributes associated with Bare chest Tops (n=313)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sexy	47	27.2	24	17.1	71	22.7
Modest/Decent	9	5.2	15	10.7	24	7.7
Fashionable/Stylish	2	1.2	6	4.3	8	2.6
Normal/Official	3	1.7	8	5.7	11	3.5
Hot	5	2.9	7	5.0	12	3.7
Good	4	2.3	4	2.9	8	2.6
Others	103	59.5	76	54.3	179	57.2
TOTAL	173	100	140	100	313	100

¹⁴ <https://www.infobloom.com/what-are-spaghetti-straps>

¹⁵ <https://www.pennlive.com>entertainment>2014/07>

Results in **Table 24** illustrate that 22.7% (n=71) of the respondents associated bare chest tops to sexiness, while others 7.7% (n=24) associated it with modesty/decency. A few 3.5% (n=11) found them to be normal/official. Bare chest tops refer to a variety shirt, blouses sweaters and related garments that reveal the upper part of the chest or bust. A low-cut blouse that displays a peek of cleavage can leave a lot to imagination, while a shirt that bears more than necessary of the chest is revealing too much.¹⁶ This could be the reason why the respondents found them to be sexy. Low-cut blouses and shirts would be deemed appropriate for casual rather than formal wear.

Table 26: Respondents by Attributes associated with Tight Bermuda Shorts

Attributes associated with Tight Bermuda Shorts (n=289)	Male		Female		Overall	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sexy	26	19.3	47	30.5	73	25.3
Cool/Comfortable	5	3.7	2	1.3	7	2.4
Fashionable/Stylish	2	1.5	4	2.6	6	2.1
Hot	5	3.7	2	1.3	7	2.4
Others	97	71.9	99	64.3	196	67.8
TOTAL	135	100	154	100	289	100

Results in **Table 26** point that some respondents 25.3% (n=73) associated tight Bermuda shorts with sexiness. Some (2.4%, n=7) respondents associated them with coolness/ comfort at while others (2.1%, (n=7) thought they were fashionable/ stylish. Bermuda shorts can be considered to make fashion statements because of their unique look. They are considered ideal for those who want to make a fashion statement without exposing much of their legs. It can be noted that Bermuda shorts have hem lengths that are incredibly versatile so they can be constructed to suit different situations, from dinners or parties to weekend getaways. However, just like the respondents, some people do find them sexy and cool.¹⁷

5. Summary

The findings from the study reveal that most of the respondents were aware of what sexual harassment was. The highest incidents of sexual harassment took place on campus grounds that emanated from fellow students and female students were more likely to be victims. This may arise from the fact that the students spend most of their time together within the precincts of the university. Miniskirts, high slitted skirts and skin tight trousers had the highest negative attributes assigned to them with a mean of -0.64, -0.63 and -0.61 respectively. Further, quite a significant number of the students put on clothes which they attributed to as being “sexy”. The mini-skirt was found to be the sexiest followed by skirts with high slits boob-tops, skin-tight trousers and unbuttoned shirts. Only vests and shorts seemed to elicit positive attributes.

¹⁶ <https://quora.com>. What are low cut tops?

¹⁷ <https://comfashiongum.com/womens-fashion/are-bermuda-shorts-in-trend-this-year>

6. Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Higher learning institutions could come up with guidelines on dressing styles for students, particularly during official learning hours.
2. Higher learning institutions should put in place anti-sexual harassment policies to protect the students from the vice.
3. Both staff and students in institutions of higher learning could hold interactive sessions on best methods to curb sexual harassment as well as improve guidelines on dressing styles.

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