‘Sexual harassment is a crime, civil wrong’

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The Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) has described sexual harassment as both a crime and a civil wrong and urged university students to complain if they are threatened or affected.  
  
DSVRT Coordinator, Titilola Vivour-Adeniyi, said rape and sexual assault by penetration is punishable by life imprisonment, while sexual harassment attracts three years’ imprisonment.  
  
Vivour-Adeniyi spoke on “Prevention of rape and sexual assault on campus” at a sensitisation programme for freshers of the University of Lagos (UNILAG) and Lagos State University (LASU).  
  
She said the team engaged the students to ensure their continuous sensitisation on sexual harassment and safety on campus.  
  
“The focus on fresher students is key, as statistics have shown that they are at a greater risk of being sexually abused on campus due to perceived naivety and an initial lack of safety awareness within campus or red flags they should be wary of,” Vivour-Adeniyi explained.  
  
The team also informed participants of what consent entails, while emphasising that consent is “freely given, reversible and specific.”  
  
Addressing the “criminality of sexual harassment,” the Coordinator said: “Students should report lecturers and people in authority in the respective institutions who solicit for sexual favours or make unwelcome sexual advances that affect the students’ educational opportunity or create intimidating, hostile or offensive learning environment.”  
  
She advised students to immediately report such incidents to their Course Adviser, Counsellor or Dean of Students Affairs.