
The Epidemic of Rape Sexual Violence in Nigeria

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Abstract

Rape is a worrisome epidemic that is becoming problematic in contemporary Nigeria due to many factors that are already inherent in the Nigerian society. Historically, women have always been subjugated and oppressed by men in most cultures in Nigeria. This situation is due to the inequality in gender relations between men and women. Rape has always been with mankind throughout the world. However, in recent times, the incidence of rape has increased in Nigeria. The hegemonic patriarchal cultural values and practices make it difficult for women and young girls who are raped to obtain justice. Perpetrators often go unpunished even if the victims have the courage to report the incident. Rape has always been condemned by most societies around the world. It is usually associated with primitiveness and brutality and it is not seen as something that would be found among refined people. Most societies define rape as a criminal offence and those found guilty of rape are severely punished. Rape can be perpetrated by a man or a woman but in this paper, I chose to focus on the woman and young girls as the victims. The approach is both analytically and deductive in nature.

Introduction

Rape has a history that almost equalled the history of mankind at creation. It is on record that the first recorded incidence of rape in the bible is found in the book of Genesis. Indeed biblically, rape was a constant feature among men and at a point it was taken as a thing of shame not on the victim but on the family or the master of the person who raped. In Nigeria, the offence of rape is a heinous offence and the drafters of the Nigerian criminal code deemed it fit for life imprisonment upon conviction (section 357 criminal code). Culturally, it is an offence which stands on the same pedestal with the offence of murder since a suspect of rape is expected to go into hiding while his people make efforts to cleanse the shame on the face of the family of the rape victim. Despite all these, the offence of rape in Nigeria seems to be on the increase and the question on every lip is what is the cause? Does it mean that the punishment stipulated for it in the extant laws is no longer heavy enough to deter would-be rapist, or are there other factors which ostensibly offer more incentives for rape than the risk of punishment?

The Act of Rape

The word rape is derived from Latin word meaning “to seize”. Rape is defined legally as carnal knowledge of a person by force and against her will. The Nigeria communal code refers to rape as follows:

Any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl without her

consent, or with her consent, if the consent is obtained by force or by means of threats or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or by means of false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or in the case of a married woman by impersonating her husband, is guilty of an offence, which is called rape.

Today however, rape is seen as an act of power or dominance of one person over another. The Nigerian police force recorded 717 rape cases between January and May 2020.

Rape, a social menace is becoming rampant in our society today. In many purviews, every crime of rape has been spanned as sexual assault, which also entails acts that fall short of intercourse. Although, the legal definition of rape has changed substantially overtime since the late 20th century, but whatever its origins, rape is a serious crime.

Findings from a National Survey carried out in 2014 on Violence against Children in Nigeria confirmed one in four females reported experiencing sexual violence in childhood with approximately 70 percent reporting more than one incident of sexual violence. In the same study, it was found that 24.8 percent of females' ages 18 to 24 years experienced sexual abuse prior to age 18 of which 5.0 percent sought help, with only 3.5 percent receiving any services. In recent times, the case of rape in Nigeria has become quite alarming and threatening and requires urgent intervention. It is no longer a solitude criminal act affecting just a few women in the society.

The issue of rape cannot be trivialized. It cuts across race, tribe and class. It is a universal phenomenon. And it is endemic. It is an issue that has been subjected to debates by human rights bodies all over the world (Human Right Watch/Africa). Rape is the most gruesome form of violence against women. It is a denial of women's right of self- preservation. It is an intrusion into the right of privacy of the victim. It is a particular kind of human violence which carries powerful meanings in any culture, ancient and modern. The act of rape is not new. The problem is that it is on the increase and the effects are becoming more harmful to the victims and their relatives. Recent upsurge in rape cases questions our sanity as a people.

Common Classes of Rape Culture

Date Rape: This is a type of rape in which the individuals have agreed on social engagement. The assailant may be an acquaintance or a person one has been dating. Research has shown that about 57 percent of rapes happened on dates.

Power Rape: Power rapist sexuality want to capture, conquer and control their victims.

Gang Rape: this is when a group of people participate in the rape of a single victim.

Anger or Retaliatory Rape: It involves expression of hatred and rage towards the victim.

Stranger Rape: This where the victim does not know her assailant. Stranger rape is often accompanied by violence and sometimes even by murder.

Sadistic Rape: This rapist is obsessed and forces the victim to act out a part in some sort of role-play, it could involve mutilation, or torture as a means of getting the rapists excited.

Acquaintance Rape: Here the assailant is known by the victim in some way. Such may be a neighbor, classmate, a co-worker, employer, a teacher, a boyfriend, a parent or a relative. Robin Warshaw claimed that the risk of being raped by one you know is four times greater than the risk of being raped by a stranger and that 84 percent of those raped knew their attackers.

The Surge of Rape Culture in the Nigeria

Incidences of rape are on the increase in Nigeria. The Mass Media is replete with catalogue of cases of rape. Rape has become a social phenomenon of epidemic proportions and not an isolated criminal act affecting just a few women and girls in Nigeria. It has become a common feature in Nigeria for children, less than twelve years to be victims of sexual assault. Adolescent and young adult women are in high risk range. In Nigeria, even old women are not spared this assault. There has being several cases of rape reported on the media across the section of Nigeria. There are cases teacher raping a student , a religious leader has raped his flock, robbers have assaulting a victim, a man has raping a sister-in-law or daughter-in-law, a master has raped a housemaid, a security man raped his master's wife, a boss has raped his staff, a father has raped his daughter, a young man has raped a grandmother, a minor has raped a fellow minor, a traditional ruler has raped a subject, and an 80-yearold man has raped an 8-year-old girl.

Despite the widespread outcry over the rising cases of rape in Nigeria, there seems to be no end to the nemesis. There is no day in the country without a reported case of sexual violence especially rape in the media. One contestable reason for the apparent rise of sexual violence in Nigeria could be that sexual violence victims are becoming more encouraged to report such crimes. However, it could also be that there is an increase in the rate of sexual violence in Nigeria. The recent sexual violation and murder of a 22-year University of Benin undergraduate have fanned the embers of the growing awareness and condemnation of sexual violence in the Nigerian society. Since the incident, there have been many other reported cases of violation of women and girls, and even more worrisome is the sexual violation of little girls in the country. While lunching the Sex Offenders Register as part of the government's strategy to deal with the issue of rape in the country in December 2019, Mrs Pauline Tallen, Nigeria's Minister for Women Affairs and Social Development claimed that about two million Nigerians (mainly women and girls) are raped every year. This figure although not proven, shows that there is a systemic failure in handling this spiralling crime. For instance, a poll conducted by NOIPOLLS in July 2019, revealed that most Nigerians (85%) believe that there is a high prevalence of rape in Nigeria.

The rise in rape cases in Nigeria is scary, worrisome and an ugly phenomenon, especially the sexual abuse and exploitation of minors, that is under-aged girls. It is nothing short of impunity, and is being perpetrated with such rampancy and violence that has left many wondering and asking what is really amiss? It is becoming clearer that we are not just fighting the Coronavirus pandemic in Nigeria, but also the rape epidemic happening upon the Covid-19 pandemic. This Day daily newspaper of June 30, 2020 had the fellows achieves of rapes cases: On 26th June, the Katsina Police Command reported arrests of 40 suspected rapists within this period of the Covid-19 lockdown, between April and June 2020. In the same vein, on 24th June 2020, the Akwa-Ibom Police Command in a press briefing, informed the public about how they have arrested within seven days another Pastor and 11 others, for rape and defilement. Investigation further revealed that, the said Pastor, who lives with eight other girls between the ages of 13 and 16 in his so-called deliverance centre at the said address, severally had unlawful carnal knowledge of one of the minors who is a 15-year-old. The Akwa-Ibom Police's arrest included two fathers who committed incest with their daughters. It also revealed the violence rapists deploy these days, to coerce or force sex on their victims. In two cases out

of the 11, a gun and a machete were used, and a deep cuts and grievous bodily harm were meted out on one of the victims.

In Enugu, in one of the nine cases that was reported and handled in June by Women's Aid Collective (WACOL), a gun was also used to intimidate a 16-year-old girl at Nsukka, to succumb to the rapist's unwarranted sexual attack. In another case, WACOL received in April, a report that a father started to have unlawful sex with his daughter as a minor, and it continued to her adulthood, and she had been impregnated by this father and forced to abort two pregnancies until she ran away and reported to the organization through our online services in April, 2020. Here have been tales of woes for women and girls caught up in the web of the pervasive violence in public and private spaces, especially during this Covid-19 pandemic. Why is the world watching this impunity grow daily? What are the Nigerian Government and other stakeholders doing, to immediately halt this trend of increasing sexual and gender-based violence? The crux of the matter is that, there is low accountability to violence perpetrated against the female gender. Today, it is Uwa Omozuwa (Benin, Edo State), yesterday it was the ultimate betrayal of defilement and torture on a three-month old baby in Nasarawa, a year ago in 2019, it was about a 17-year-old salesgirl being gang raped to death in Edo State. The year before in 2018, it was the case of young Ochanya Ogbaje, a 13-year-old girl who was allegedly raped to death by her uncle and his son in Benue State. In 2014, it was an 8-year-old girl named Evidence, who was raped and murdered in Enugu, and she became a body of growing evidence of the heinous crime of rape and sexual assault against womanhood. And on and on, the list goes.

According to the report, “about 3 in 10 Nigerians (26 per cent) disclosed that they know someone who has been raped in the past and the rape victims were particularly minors and young adults aged between 1-15 years (72 per cent) and 16-25 years (24 per cent) respectively. This statistic implies that one in every three girls would have experienced at least one form of sexual abuse by the time they reach 25 years”. While we bemoan over women and girls whose violations occur within the purview of law and order, one wonders the magnitude of rape and other forms of sexual abuses which occur in our various conflict zones. Here, women and girls are easily captured and turned into sex slaves and violated at will. For example, on May 7, 2013, insurgents seized 4 women and 8 children from a police barrack in Bama in Borno state for similar purposes.

Besides, owing to inadequate access to basic needs, traditional protection structures, or security fears at internally displaced persons' camps, some women and girls have reportedly become vulnerable to sexual exploitation in the form of rape and survival sex. In late July 2016, Human Rights Watch documented sexual abuse, including rape and exploitation of 43 women and girls living in seven internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps in Maiduguri, Borno State (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Similarly, a Rapid Protection Assessment Report published in May 2016 by the Borno State Protection Sector working group comprising national and international aid providers identified sexual exploitation, rape and other sexual abuses as a major concern in 14 camps out of 26 sites hosting IDPs in Borno State.

With current campaigns against rape and other forms of sexual abuse in the country, the state needs to rise to the occasion and deal with it. Apart from the creation of Sex offenders Registers, which even though commendable but is technically deficient without a national

database containing information of every citizen and a national criminal record system. Secondly, the handling of reported cases by the police in some situations have discouraged many victims of rape from coming forward. There is a need for such cases if charged to court to be given a quick hearing, thereby restoring confidence in the mind of victims. If rapists are caught, tried and jailed in time, it can serve as a form of deterrence to future offenders.

As disclosed by NOIPOLL, “there are perceptions that rape cases have been under-reported especially to the Police, findings showed that slightly more than half (53 per cent) of the respondents mentioned that rape incidents were reported to the Police. Out of this proportion, 67 per cent acknowledged that the offenders were arrested, while 33 per cent claimed that the offenders were not arrested. This implies that about 3 in 10 perpetrators of this atrocious crime often don't face the drum or the dictates of the law against the crime even when reported to the police”. There is a need for policy actions and legislation that will curb the menace of rape in Nigeria and also ensure that victims get the justice they deserve.

Rape as Crime Against Human Right

Rape is a form of gender-based violence against women and girls. It is the sexual violation of both girls and women against their will or consent. It violates the rights of women and girls to be free from torture, to mental and physical integrity, to liberty and security of the person, and prevents enjoyment of rights such as the right to health, employment and freedom of expression and, in some cases, it denies them the right to life. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, clearly prohibits torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment. Section 34 (1) states that: “Every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person, and accordingly, (a) no person shall be subjected to torture, or to inhuman or degrading treatment”. Article 17(2) (b) adds that human dignity shall be maintained and enhanced”. Section 357 of the criminal code (2004) defines rape thus:

any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl without her consent, if the consent is obtained by force or by means of threat or intimidating of any kind or by fear of harm or by means of false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or in the case of a married woman, by personating her husband, is guilty of an offence which is called rape.

From the above criminal code, rape in Nigeria is a crime against basic human rights and it also violates the victim's most cherished of the fundamental rights, the right to life and movement. Rape and defilement are seen to be a crime of violence, aggression and domination directed towards womenfolk by their men counterparts. It is a weapon by the latter to the former. It is a hatred, contempt and oppression of women concentrated into one single act. As Wanjiru Nancy noted, “it is a spiritual crime as well as a physical one, displayed in cultural power relations, economic power relations and sexuality”.

Theological Perspective of Rape

Women's stories of rape reveal that the perceived reality and the experienced reality of rape differ considerably. Because of the tremendous difficulty women often have in voicing their experience of rape the perceived reality, unfortunately, tends to hold sway. Personal accounts of rape show immense differences, but certain recurring themes emerge; a virtually universal fear of rape on the part of women and a personal sense of trauma, shame, guilt, denial and anger are commonly reported. Repeatedly such women insist that the physical rape is but

one aspect of the total rape experience; the physiological, psychological, emotional and spiritual repercussions are equally significant and, in some cases, even more so. Clearly then, an exclusively physical approach to the question of rape is considered to be theologically inadequate.

In traditional and indeed contemporary mainstream theology, rape is examined predominantly from the perspective of Scripture and Natural Law. References to rape in Scripture are relatively few and the primary concern here is that of male property rights. In the Old Testament, for example, rape by an outsider is largely viewed as an act of aggression against male property, hence an act of hostility towards the males in a community. The rape of Dinah (Gen. 34:1-31) and the rape of the concubine (Jdgs. 19:22-30) are classic examples. What is notable in these and other cases is that the violation of the woman in itself is not treated as an offense. Rape is also viewed as a crime against the community and a source of communal conflict.⁹ Further references to rape in the Old Testament include legal references. Take Ex 22:15-16. Here it is stated that in the case of the rape of a virgin the rapist is required to pay the 'bride-price' (mohar) and must also marry the virgin. The book of Deuteronomy 22:23-29 similarly describes how the rape of a virgin leads to a forcible marriage with no divorce and the payment of 50 shekles.

New Testament sources, on the surface, offer limited insight; rape is generally regarded to be subsumed under the general categories of adultery, vice or impurity. An analysis of rape in the Tradition proves interesting. The historian Sylvana Tomaselli argues that Augustine's contribution is important in that he challenges the Roman practice of self-inflicted suicide after rape, by the victim, for the sake of honour; he insists that the sin is that of the rapist and that the victim remains chaste in the eyes of God. The single most significant theoretical influence however is that of Natural Law as developed by Aquinas and subsequent neo-scholastics. Natural Law theory when applied to the area of sexuality (the area in which rape is addressed traditionally) is clearly physicalist'. In other words, it looks to physical and biological structures when it identifies the end goal of sexual activity as procreation. Under this schema, sexual activities which may result in procreation are not considered to be 'contrary to nature' nor 'intrinsically evil'. Rape, however unacceptable, technically fits this category since procreation is possible in its case. The logical fall-out of such a theory is that rape is somehow less grave morally than sexual acts which, by their physical nature, fail to allow for possible procreation, e.g. auto-eroticism, homogenital sexual activity, sodomy etc., which fall into the category of 'grave moral matter'.

Common Factors Responsible for Sexual Abuse

There are many causes of rape, some include alcohol and drug abuse, idleness, pornography, psychological disorder, and bad company. However, from a pastoral point of view, given the persistent nature of rape cases in Nigeria today I wish to advance this discussion on the following fundamental identified causes:

Sex and Power Motives

Violence against women is widely believed to be motivated by needs to dominate women. This view conjures the image of a powerful man who uses violence against women as a tool to maintain his superiority. Power and control frequently underlie intimate partner violence, but the purpose of the violence may also be in response to a man's feelings of

powerlessness and inability to accept rejection. It also has been argued that rape, in particular, represents fulfilment of sexual needs through violence, but research has found that motives of power and anger are more prominent in the rationalizations for sexual aggression than sexual desires. Attempts to resolve the debate about sex versus power have involved laboratory studies of men's sexual arousal to stimuli of depictions of pure violence, pure consensual sex, and non-consensual sex plus violence. These studies have consistently shown that some "normal" males with no known history of rape may be aroused by rape stimuli involving adult women, especially if the women are portrayed as enjoying the experience. However, sexually aggressive men appear to be more sexually arousable in general, either to consenting or rape stimuli, and rapists respond more than nonsexual offenders to rape cues than to consenting sex cues. Sexually aggressive men openly admit that their sexual fantasies are dominated by aggressive and sadistic material.

Sex Myths

There are quite a number of myths about sex which serves as an impetus to the growing incidents of rape in Nigeria. Here are a few of such most common of these myths:

- 1. Women actually desire to be Raped:** This myth is an extension of the attitude of male dominance. Entertainment media often condition men to look at women and young girls as objects to be raped, as beings whose sole worth is in their sexual stimulus. Men who assume this myth believe that women enjoy being dominated sexually. This is often a myth because no woman welcomes sexual victimization into life world.
- 2. Women owe Sex to Men who Spend Money on them:** This is prevalent among youth who assume that because they have spent some money on a girl, they have absolute right to have sex with them. In a survey 51 percent of the boys and 41 percent of the girls said a man has a right to force a woman to kiss him if he has spent a lot of money on her. 25 percent of the boys and 17 percent of the girls said forced sex is okay if the man has spent on her. There are a lot of assumptions underneath this entitlement. People of this ilk seem to believe in a transactional nature to sexuality, where a certain amount of giving from one partner must necessarily result in sex from the other, or else things are "unfair". And they also occasionally appear to believe that the only real point in interacting with women is to gain access to their genitals. That unfortunately for them is not how this works.
- 3. Women may say no, but their Actions says Yes:** A lot of men claim that women dress and act seductively in order to turn guys on. When a woman resists his attempts at sex, a man may say "you tell me to stop, but everything else you do says go. Studies show that men tend to see a woman's friendliness as an interest in sex. Therefore, a man may overrate a woman's expressions of friendship and underrate her verbal protests to his sexual advances. Misperceiving a woman's platonic interest as sexual interest has been implicated in a sexual bargaining process that leads to sexual coercion.

Poor Handling of Rape Cases

One of the concrete reasons why rapists purportedly go about their business with impunity is not unconnected with the lax rape laws in the country. According to the Child Rights Law in Nigeria section 31(2) enacted by the federal government in May 2003, anyone

convicted for rape is liable to life imprisonment. Odeh rightly observed that because nobody seems to be enforcing the law, vulnerable women and girls continue to be raped and molested.

It is observed that “the laws in Nigeria appear to further victimize and humiliate women. They do not bring justice to them”. The rigorous requirement involved in producing authentic evidence of rape such as getting a medical report, as well as a police report and within the shortest possible interval of any rape incident in question, seems to trivialize the whole matter. This is why Ejim reports that it is an open matter that some policemen in Nigeria are fond of treating rape victims as though they are the offenders themselves. In some cases, it is held that the police after demanding in vain to get bribe in order to investigate rape cases, accuse the victims of consenting to the sexual intercourse with the rapists.

It is an established fact that police in Nigeria seems to contribute to the culture of tolerance for sexual violence against women. This probably may account for the reason an Abuja High Court Judge, Umoh Enah, recently lampooned the Nigerian Police for its poor handling and prosecution of an alleged rapist. As rightly revealed by Alhassan, “over a hundred cases of violence against the child and women often go without any of the culprits being prosecuted and jailed”. For example, sometime in 1999, an uncle sexually assaulted a little girl of six years. The matter was taken to court and prosecuted. In giving judgment however, the magistrate set the accused person free for lack of “corroboration”. This was in spite of the bloodied pants, the testimony of the mother who noticed the pains while bathing her and the medical evidence from a government hospital. I suppose with better training and retraining, the police will be equipped and prepared to deal with reported cases much better today.

Indecent Dressing

Indecent dressing among young ladies and girls are signs that invite rapists, though they have the freedom to dress the best way they can, however, inappropriate mode of dressing that often exposes parts of one's body that ought to be covered from public view is one key cause of rising cases of rape with the level of modernism. Indecent culture of dressing often attracts the opposite sex and causes them to have lustful thoughts that may eventually lead into raping women. Indecent dressing engineers sexual desires in men, culminating in sexual seduction. It has become fashionable, particularly among the youthful female, to dress so half nakedly that some parts of their body that are supposed to be 'hidden' are exposed to the public”. It is assumed that ladies attract men by wearing sexy or transparent dresses. This type of fashion is particularly rampant among College and University students, and it has become a common mode of dressing for the masses in Nigeria today. Indecent dressing has come as a quest for happiness. But true happiness cannot come from indecent thoughts. This is why Matthew Kelly observes that people do stupid things because they mistakenly believe those stupid things will make them happy.

Poverty and Economic Factor

Poverty is a major problem affecting many families in Nigeria. The rising levels of poverty and economic down turn have forced many families into allowing their female children and teens to hawk things for sale, even at ungodly hours and places to augment the family income, thereby exposing them to avoidable danger of being raped by rapists. Parents of these girls send them as maids for domestic and child labour. People living in poverty and

lacking economic power and resources are at greater risk for sexual violence. Poverty can make the daily lives of women and children more dangerous and make them more dependent on others for survival and, therefore, less able to control their own sexuality, to consent to sex, to recognize their own victimization or to seek help when victimized; poverty can necessitate high-risk survival activities (CDC, 2007). For instance, according to the World Health Organization's World Report on Violence and Health (2002), poverty increases one's vulnerabilities to sexual exploitation in the workplace, schools, and in prostitution, sex trafficking, and the drug trade. The fear of losing financial support makes them susceptible to manipulation. Hence noted Wanjiru, "denying womenfolk economic independence is a major cause of violence against them as it prolongs their vulnerability and dependence".

Peer Group Pressure

Peer group is an important factor in the upsurge of rape cases in Nigeria. Innocent youths who keep regular company of rapists may easily learn their evil ways, no matter how careful they think they are. Most adolescents, in trying to remain relevant and to gain the continued approval of their friends try to experiment sex through raping. It is often said that children who are more influenced by their parents are more likely to adopt socially acceptable sexual behaviour than those who are more influenced by their peers.

Exposure to Pornography

Individuals who have been exposed to pornography are susceptible to sexual pathology. In the study by Jennings Bryant, "two thirds of the males involved in pornography activities are reported wanting to try out some of the sexual behaviours they had witnessed". Adolescents in Nigeria today are being bombarded by modernizing influences. They read about sex in novels, books, magazines and newspapers. It is said that the adolescents also "Watch various types of pornographic movies aside from being exposed to sexually overloaded advertisements in newspapers and the television. All these and the sexually graphic music, movies, obscene literature directed at the adolescents arouse their interest in sex. Some parents allow their wards to spend too much time watching television programs where sex is used by most manufacturers to advertise their products. These adverts help put the younger generation under terrific pressure to go into sex by all means. As a result of this exposure, the adolescents are perpetually under pressure to experiment on sex, even if it means raping. It is believed that some of them desire to experience it once, just to know how it is. But they gradually become captured by the power of immorality. This factor makes raping a common occurrence among the Nigerian youths.

Negative Attitudes towards Women

A man who strongly believes in male dominance and female subservience is a potential rapist. Such individual subscribes to the view that a woman will only respect a man who will lay down the law for her. He believes a man must show a woman who is the boss, or he will end up henpecked. This attitude of "I am the king" says Josh and Bob, does not make a man to rape a lady because he is hungry for sex but because he is hungry for power. His passion is to control and conquer women by all means whom he perceives as his adversaries for superiority. Rape culture attitudes view women as sexual conquests by which manhood is legitimized and women are objectified. Another wrong attitude is the "who cares about you".

Men who are prone to rape usually lack social conscience. They act for themselves with little regard for the feeling and well-being of others. In a sexual encounter, they may be oblivious to the physical and emotional pain they are inflicting on the victim in the process of getting what they want.

Factor of Stigmatization

The majority of the cases of rape go unreported because of the social stigma it creates and the burden of proof. Hence, in Nigeria, the woman is frequently victimized twice. First by the violence she endures and by the failure of the governments to bring her abusers to justice. There seems to be a culture of silence surrounding rape in Nigeria. The social stigma associated with rape across the globe forces female victims to conceal rape assaults in order to save themselves from shame and public embarrassment. Even parents of the raped victim often find it difficult to come out publicly to report such cases. In Nigerian traditional culture, when a woman is raped and it becomes public knowledge, “She and her family are “ostracized” due to the dishonor associated with rape”. Another reason for not taking bold step in reporting such cases could be for the victim's family to maintain the ever-existing cordial relationship with the parents of the perpetrator of the heinous crime. This situation encourages other intenders to go into raping since people who indulge in it go scot-free.

Lack of Proper Sex Education

Another reason responsible for rape cases in Nigeria is the lack of sex education. Observation shows that adolescent boys have an urge to explore. A skewed sex ratio, lack of accessibility and negligible interaction with people of the opposite sex play havoc on impressionable minds fed with easy access to porn. Also, the profanity of using vulgar lyrics in songs needs to be curbed. There are item numbers where the woman is projected as no more than an object of desire. This causes women to be viewed as commodities, meant to be consumed and ravished. Sexually obsessed rapists don't consider women as human beings but as an object that can be violated with impunity. Education, gender sensitization and legal awareness are indispensable to control rapes. There is need for better community policing and CCTV mapping of desolate areas. Cognitive restructuring is needed to remove the myths clogging our minds. Behavioural and emotional intelligence is very different from academic intelligence. We need to question the accused and not the victim, the time of rape or the dress she wore. Society needs to stigmatize the perpetrator instead of the victim. Sensible sensitivity is essential to counter this crime which is rightly classified as the 'worst crime against womanhood'. Prevention Education needs to be strengthened to include strategies that focus on bystander education, men as allies, and the definitions of sexual assault, rape, and effective consent. Such prevention education models can provide potential support persons and victims with skills needed to prevent an assault from taking place.

Under-Reportage of Rape Cases

Rape is one of the most underreported of all serious crimes in Nigeria and in other countries as well. When we try to get a true picture of the enormity of its incidence, we find the issue complicated by the lack of reliable rape statistics. A major problem encountered when dealing with this issue of rape is that most victims simply refuse to come forward and report to

the public authority incidences of sexual violence. For many rape victims, a sense of shame or guilt or self-blame about their role in the rape assaults may be enough to prevent them from coming forward and pressing charges. In many instances, the public often, seems willing to blame the victim for the assault rather than the rapist. There are a number of barriers preventing the victims of sexual assault from coming forward; hence rape continues to be one of the most underreported crimes. Most crimes of rape are not reported for reasons such as the social stigma attached to the victim, the fear of being ostracized from the family and community, and also the fact that the police may be unwilling to make an official report due to insufficient evidence.

The Major Effects of Rape

The foremost psychological effect of rape will be emotional trauma and paranoia. At times, the victim will exhibit symptoms of mental and emotional trauma through solitude and exclusion. They also develop fear in mingling and socializing with strangers and other people especially men. These effects can last for the duration of the victim's lifetime. Other common emotional and psychological effects of rape include: Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – feelings of severe anxiety and stress, Depression, Flashbacks – memories of rape as if it is taking place again, Borderline personality disorder.

For many victims, the most immediate and noticeable impact of rape is physical. Some have been beaten and injured in some parts of their bodies. Many rape victims have acquired HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections which can result in infertility. Peters and Olowa, have reported that rape results in trauma, sexually transmitted infections and potentially unwanted pregnancy which itself constitutes a traumatic experience. Some victims report that their sleep is affected, especially if the attack happened at night or in their own bedroom. Other victim experiences a disturbance in their eating patterns as a result of the assault. Some have reported says Josh to self-hatred, causing them to abhor their own bodies. When this happens, other problems arise that could include a decrease in appetite, which may lead to compulsive disorders like overeating, bulimia or self-starvation.

Rape victims often succumb to other compulsive physical behaviours such as compulsive exercising, perfectionism, obsessive house-cleaning, overachieving, drug abuse. Some women battle with extreme sexual attitudes or tendencies, others suffer from migraine headaches or stomach problems and other minor or major physical health issues. The most striking effect that rape can produce in a victim is the thoughts or tendencies of committing suicide. Because of trauma, self-pity, and seclusion, rape victims often feel that there is no longer hope and they could no longer recover and that they are not worthy of living.

In addition, pregnancy resulting from rape may shorten one's life, leads to school drop-out, and also leads to rushing into an unplanned marriage and marrying the wrong person. Psychologically too, rape may bring guilt, anxiety, fear, disappointment, frustration, anger at self and others, image depression and lowered self-esteem. Rape could also usher in demoralization, prayerlessness, and backsliding from Christian faith.

Socially the victim of rape may suffer blamed and ostracized and may have to endure injustice. A desire to avenge the rape can also lead to hatred that could result in murder and even bitter unending war.

Preventive Measures and Strategies

The society should exhibit zero-tolerance to rape by engaging in rape intolerance attitudes and increase level of empathy. Every perpetrator of rape should be exposed to take

full responsibility for his actions and should under no circumstance be shielded or protected by parents, Churches and colleagues. People of all age brackets should be instructed to begin to guard their thoughts as enjoined by their holy books since rape is a product of overcharged sexual desires and lusts. More Civil Societies and NGOs should be formed to battle against this notorious evil in Nigeria. All rape victims should be shown much love and care to reengineer their self-image.

Public enlightenment has been shown to be a critical tool in changing behaviour, attitude, beliefs and value system of people. Therefore, there should be intense public enlightenment and education at schools, social clubs, cultural group gatherings, churches, mosques and through the media, to first of all, demystify the myths about sexual assault. Young girls and children can also be sensitized on steps they could take to reduce the risk of being sexually abused. Parents should build a strong, healthy and open relationship with their children and be very vigilant. They should closely observe their children for any sign of vulnerability or abuse. Hawking by children and female teenagers should be completely banned.

Other measures include; the upgrading of the existing obsolete laws so as to ensure better protection of rape victims. The laws on rape should give more protection to victims. Every case should be given a chance to see the light of the day in the law Courts in Nigeria and severe sanctions should be meted out on the perpetrators. The Inspector General of Police, the Nigerian Police Force and heads of the security forces should systematically and comprehensively document all reports of gender-based violence, including rape, make this information publicly available, and submit it to the Federal and State governments, as well as the National Human Rights Commission.

Conclusion Comment

Rape is pervasive in Nigeria due to the aforementioned factors and is likely going to worsen if no steps are taken immediately to end this scourge. It is very worrisome that Nigerian females now lose their dignity due to rape. The persistence of this menace in modern Nigeria is no doubt a thing of grave concern to all in the society, including the academia, legal, religious, medical, and political circles of the day. In order to reduce the scourge of rape in Nigeria, this paper suggests that all social institutions, parents, Churches, Civil Societies, NGOs, and government agencies should as a matter of necessity and urgency provide qualitative sex education and guidance to the teeming Nigerian youths. More importantly women must be seen in the forefront to fight this war by empowering themselves economically and educationally. Society needs to be educated to support rape victims and to condemn rape and all forms of violence against women. There should also be legislation against all forms of pornography that undermine women's dignity by depicting them as sex objects or as men's property. There should be a deliberate attempt to show respect for women, who are created in the image of God.

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