

Taming the Rape Scourge in Nigeria: Issues and Actions

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Abstract

All through the passage of time women have always been perceived as the weaker vessel, and so have been subjugated and oppressed by culture in most African societies. The culture is defined by inequality and the subjugation of the female folk. Gender-based violence, including rape, domestic violence and other sexual abuses, has assumed serious dimensions globally. In Nigeria, incidences of rape are fast assuming a threatening dimension that requires urgent intervention. Rape, like other forms of violence against women, is an infringement on women's rights, privacy, self-preservation and dignity. Available data in the print and electronic media reveal that rape issue has become a serious social problem of epidemic proportion and no longer an isolated criminal act affecting just a few women in the society. In recent times the incidences of rape have increased at an alarming rate in Africa and also in Nigeria. There is little or no policy or law that helps protect the victims as they are blamed, stigmatized and humiliated by the public if it is brought to the public domain. This paper interrogates the dynamics, socio-psychological, institutional, socioeconomic and cultural factors accentuating cases of rape on both the victims and the perpetrators of this heinous criminal act. The paper concludes with recommendations on ways and means of tackling this social menace.

Keywords: Rape, Epidemic, Taming, Violence, Women rights

Introduction

The issue of rape is not an abstract issue as it has unveiled its ugly mask in every society, and how do we describe the brutal nature of this shameless masquerade in Africa, especially in Nigeria? What is it about our societies that make vulnerable the female gender to all sorts of abuse and in the case of these paper; rape. What could have triggered the increase in recent times? What could have caused perpetrators to sexually assault their victims? These questions are not easily answered, because in rape cases questions are easily asked but answers are much more difficult and inconvenient to answer. The closest thing to an answer is the close shoulder, the emotional reaction that one receives when the issue is mentioned.

It is understandable when there is an emotional response, but that is not enough. There is need to get to the root of the matter and understand it, by undertaking an in-depth research so as to take well-informed actions. Otherwise we will remain in the dark on how to curb this scourge and the alarming dimensional increase witnessed in recent times.

Rape is the act of forcefully having sex with someone against their will. Others have defined rape as a sexual penetration by one person against another person without the consent of the victim.

However victims of rape have no age limit as babies, and the aged are vulnerable to this menace. Interestingly 90% of victims of rape are female. Rape is a denial of women self-preservation; it is the intrusion of their privacy, it is an inhuman and violent act. Rape victims are usually ashamed, humiliated, afraid, and there is little or no law to protect them. Even the law enforcement officers that are meant to protect these victims also assault them in different ways, even sexually. The study described an incident of a 14-year-old girl in Abuja who was raped by a police officer in the police station. Though what had brought her to the police station was not rape related, but a fight. She was sexually assaulted violently by the policeman because she threatened to report the policeman's sexual advances. This and many more of these cases occur daily in Nigeria.

The Statement of Problem

Amnesty international gave a gruesome picture of the rape scourge in Nigeria when in one of its publications, a few years ago painted the picture of how hopeless the Nigerian case is, quoting a victim of rape:

"There were three men, I have pains even today, they used my daughter too, she is 12 years old. They also raped my sister. Another man raped a woman who was four months pregnant and she lost the child. They were military men. Everyone in the village saw them, they didn't hide, they didn't care, I didn't tell the police because I feared them"
(Amnesty international, 2007).

The situation has not changed, but instead it has grown worse. The picture above is just a tip of the iceberg as there are many more cases like this, if not worse. Unfortunately it has been on the increase all over the world. In

the UK, there are about 147,000 rape cases every year and only a thousand plus are convicted (Kayode 2014). The trend is the same in India, where in every 20 minutes, a case of rape is reported and only less than 25% of these cases are persecuted (Ibid.). In Lagos state, western Nigeria, about 10,079 cases, which constitute only 18% of the rape that, occurred between 2001 and 2005 (Peters and Olowa, 2010; Caroline, 2012) were reported. An NGO (Mirabel centre), reported 170 rape cases between July 2013 and January 2014 (Kayode 2014). Also reporting a high rise in rape cases, the police command identified gang rape as the most common, as it was at the top of the crime chat in 2013 (Ibid.).

From the statements above, it is crystal clear that the rape scourge is on the increase all across the world. Rape is not a delightful sight to behold. It is so devastating for the victims, even when the assaulters are persecuted in rare cases. There is therefore an urgent need for this menace to be tamed, especially in Nigeria where the scourge is assuming an alarming proportion. This is what informed the choice of this research title “TAMING THE RAPE SCOURGE”.

It is against this backdrop that this work examines the issue of rape and suggests actions that could be taken to tame this menace. It seeks to understand the following:

- What situations lead to the rape of victims?
- What are the effects of these incidences on the victims?
- How can these incidences be averted or prevented from re-occurring?

There are a number of literatures that have discussed the subject of rape, the socio- psychological, socio-cultural and health implications of rape. Only a few of them have been written on the increasing rate of rape and only few of them discuss actions that need to be undertaken to reduce drastically, if not totally eradicating this monster called rape from Nigeria. This paper therefore seeks to contribute to the existing literature and also break new grounds in sensitizing all Nigerians on the need to tame the rape scourge in Nigeria.

This study makes use of relevant literature, journals, newspapers and news interviews in its discussion on the subject of rape and the theoretical framework adopted for this study in the next section. This is followed by the methods of study, conclusion and recommendations.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The Act of Rape

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. According to Brigneti and Egbonimali (2002), rape is an act of sexual violence that involves intercourse without consent or against someone being unwilling to engage in the act.

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. A nationwide survey undertaken in 2005 by the CLEEN Foundation, a Nigerian NGO, which promotes public safety, security and justice, found that only 18.1 per cent, less than one in five of some 10,000 respondents who had been raped had reported the offence to the police. According to CLEEN's figures, 2,241 cases of rape and indecent assault were reported in 1999; 1,529 in 2000; 2,284 in 2001; 2,084 in 2002; 2,253 in 2003; 1,626 in 2004 and 1,835 in 2005.

Rape as a global concern

Rape cases are not limited to Nigeria alone. Other countries of the globe have their own side of the story too. A Ugandan court sentenced a teenage girl to a six-hour jail term for killing her rapist father. The 58-year-old man had been raping the daughter repeatedly from the time she was 13 years old. Also a woman is raped in India every 20 minutes. Statistics show that in North America, there is a high probability of a woman being a victim of sexual assault during her life time. For instance, six men riding in a Bus in New Delhi, Indian's Capital, raped and battered a 23year old female medical student and she died as a result of the fatal internal injuries. The death of this Indian rape victim sent shivers around the globe, exposing how the sad trend

is affecting many societies and putting more women at risk. (Sunday Sun, January 6, 2013).

Between 2009/10 and 2011/12 there were an estimated 78,000 victims of rape per year in England and Wales 69,000 females and 9,000 males (Nation Mirror, 2014)

Due to the concerns over women's rights, heralded by the re-emergence of women's movements, sexual assaults and their debilitating consequences for the victims have become one of the pressing and central issues in the last decades. Consequently, many social scientists have turned their attention towards understanding the dynamics of rapists and their motives, the institutional and cultural factors promoting rape, and of course, the various factors affecting the assault on rape victims and their reactions.

To combat the growing number of rapes, more and more people are beginning to think in terms of prevention and not only of ways to deal with the debilitating aftermath of this sexual assault. Only recently, the Lord Bishop of Osun State, Nigeria, Anglican Diocese, Rev Afolabi Popoola, link the increasing cases of rape of minors by men in the state to rituals. Popoola at a news conference in Osogbo, said the church frowns at the rape of minors, especially by men, who are old enough to be their grandfathers. He said rape is an abominable act, which could be linked to ritual practice, all in the quest for material acquisition. He urged law enforcement agents to rise to the challenge by ensuring that offenders face the full wrath of the law. (Punch, March, 20th, 2012).

In the same vein, about 400 women marched through the state capital, Osogbo in Osun State, Nigeria, campaigning against rape in the State. Speaking at the occasion, the wife of the State Governor, Mrs. Sherifal Aregbesola said the campaign was geared towards creating awareness for women to support the eradication of rape in the state since rape has become so rampant in the society. She called on parents to monitor their children and support the state government in her efforts at eradicating rape in the state (Punch, April, 20th, 2012).

The Minister for Women Affairs and Social Development, Hajia Zainab Maina, has raised alarm over high incidences of rape and sexual violence against women in Nigeria. She said concerted efforts should be made at ending these crimes which she said had in some cases led to the untimely death of many women and girls. The minister said sexual violence against

women was pervasive as evidenced by incidences of rape and other forms of psychological abuse of women and girls across the country and asserted that the trend was unacceptable, as these acts were clearly a violation of the human rights of women (Punch 30th January, 2012). Speaking in the same vein, the Executive Secretary of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Professor Ben Angwe, recently urged Nigerians to shun fear and report rape cases to the right authorities. He said the rising cases of rape in the country were at disturbing levels.

Rape, though a global phenomenon, the slow response of the justice system and the lack of supportive institutions to help victims of rape overcome the trauma quickly, have been identified as some of the factors contributing to its rise across the country Nigeria. Many who are raped, suffer humiliations and are sometimes pushed into committing suicide as a result, largely due to the fear of stigmatization.

Incidences of rape scourge in 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. According to Chiedu (2012), there are several cases, which are very irritating. Now and then, it is reported that a teacher has raped a student, a religious leader has raped his flock, robbers have raped a victim, a man has raped a sister-in-law or daughter-in-law, a master has raped a housemaid, a security man has 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-year-old man has raped an 8-year-old girl.

From this lengthy assertion, it is quite glaring that rape cases are a shocking reality in the Nigerian society today. It appears that everyday girls and boys, women and men are sexually being abused, even by persons known to the victims, who perhaps shamelessly take undue advantage of such familiarity (Udekwe, 2013)

According to Punch Newspaper, of 11th April, 2012, page 4, the Office of the Public Defender, a department under the Lagos State Ministry of Justice, raised the alarm over the increase in cases of child abuse and rape in the state. The Director, OPD Mrs. Omotola Rotimi stated that on a daily basis, cases of defilement of children by people who are sometimes very close to their families are received by her office. She lamented the inability of OPD to secure high number of convictions for perpetrators of rape, because of the unwillingness of victims to report such cases, largely due to the perceived social stigma that such a step would attract. In another edition of the same paper, a 62 year old man was arraigned before a Magistrate Court in Ogun State, for defiling his 10 year-old step-daughter.

The Nation Newspaper of Friday, October 5, 2012, reported that a 70-year old man was banished for defiling a 3-year old child in Utulu, Oru West Local Government Area of Imo State. Yet in another headline in the punch Newspaper of 30th January, 2012, Mr. Innocent Francis, father of 8-year old Endurance, who was raped and murdered, alleged that his life was being threatened for reporting the plight of his daughter to the police. Ekiti State Police command arrested an 85-year old man, Samuel Oladipupo, for raping a 12-year old J.S.S 1 pupil (Punch, 29th November, 2012)

It is not only Nigeria that is witnessing an upsurge in rape cases, it is a phenomenon that is wrecking untold damage in other parts of the world, too. In Nigeria, the trend is at alarming levels. According to Dr. Omolara Smith, President, Zonta Club II, Ibadan, the figures have shot up from 12.5percent to about 84 percent in recent months (Sunday, Sun, January 6th, 2013). She feared that this figure could rise if adequate measures are not taken to arrest the development.

In Nigeria, some men seem to be on rampage nation-wide raping women and children. According to Women of Compassion Worldwide in 2008, 1128 cases of rape were reported in Delta State alone in the first seven months of that year. A 2010 National Crime and Safety Survey conducted by CLEEN Foundation, with support from Macarthur Foundation, put Cross-River, Ebonyi and Bayelsa States at the top of the log among the 36 States of the Federation in terms of robbery, rape and murder. (Sunday, Sun January 6th 2013). Up north in Zamfara State, Abdullahi Ibrahim, a police inspector, was sent packing for raping a 15-year old girl in Maradun Local Government Area of the State.

In 2012, there were hundreds of reported rape cases across Nigeria. The Daily Sun of October 5th, 2012, told the story of a 20-year-old lady who was allegedly raped and had her lip chopped off by two men. It was followed by similar report by the same paper of October 16th, 2012, where the case of a father who raped his 12-year-old daughter was equally told. There was also the story of one Temitope Alo, who defiled eight minors. The girls were between eight and 15 years. The incident took place around Koloba area, Ayobo, a Lagos suburb. In October 2012, the Police in Bayelsa State had to contend with rising cases of rape in relief camps set up for persons displaced by floods. About five of such cases were recorded at the camps situated at the sport complex in Yenagoa. Similarly not too long ago, a Corp member was gang-raped by four men in a classroom, at noon, in Kano. Historical records show that no fewer than 1200 girls were raped in Rivers state in 2012 (Kawu, 2013). Equally, a man is allegedly reported to have been raped to death in the early hours of Tuesday, July 17, 2012 by his six wives in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State (Malcolm, 2012). In Enugu State, a notorious aged women rapist was arrested by the police sometime in May 2013 in Opi village, Nsukka Local Government Area. He was said to have confessed in the Court that he committed the act because he could not find any young lady to marry (Kawu, 2013).

In Nigeria rape within marriage (forced or coerced sexual intercourse between wife and husband) is not recognized as a crime by Nigerian Law. In Sharia law (Islamic law practiced in the northern part of Nigeria by the predominantly Muslim population), the husband may withdraw maintenance to his wife if she refuses him sexual intercourse. Rape of a wife is generally not recognized as an offence by customary laws in Nigeria and is not penalized even when the wife suffer bodily harm in the course of the husband forcefully having sex with her.

Types of Rape

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 have been dating.

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.

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.

Causes of the increase in rape scourge in Nigeria

The state of Nigeria poorly defined criminal laws and weak law enforcement creates an environment where rape is committed with freedom (Amnesty International 2006). As a result of the inadequacy of the law in solving this problem, women advocates are presently trying to prevent future rapes by educating the public, ensuring that quality services are provided to victims in order to encourage accountability and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice. According to the Child Rights Law in Nigeria (31(2) enacted by the federal government in May 2003, anyone convicted for rape is liable to life imprisonment. But nobody seems to be enforcing the law. Thus women and girls continue to be raped and molested (Odeh, 2013). Nigeria economic and political conditions, as well as social norms support stereotypical divisions between men and women. Other causes of rape include alcohol and drug abuse, idleness, pornography, psychological disorder, and bad company. At any rate, experts, in considering the persistent nature of these rape cases in Nigeria advance the following causes for the unfortunate reality:

- **Exposure to Modernity**

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 programmes 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 become captured by the power of immorality. This situation makes raping inevitable among the Nigerian youths.

- **Mishandling of Rape Cases**

Another concrete reason why it seems that rapists go about their business with impunity is not unconnected with the lax rape laws in the country (Ejim, 2013). 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. It is an open secret that some policemen in Nigeria are fond of treating rape victims as though they are the offenders themselves (Ejim, 2013). 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 revealed by Alhassan (2013), “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.

- **Peer Group Pressure/Influence**

Some literature posits that most adolescents are led into sexual promiscuity by peer influence. 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 behavior than those who are more influenced by their peers.

- **Myths about Sex**

There are quite a number of myths about sex which serves as an impetus to the growing incidents of rape in Nigeria. Okoro (2011), in his studies revealed that it is a common belief among many ethnic groups that: Without premarital sexual intercourse, boys are bound to have small testicles, suffer from pimples, have difficult erection and not be able to perform well when married. Girls, on the other hand are bound to have small breasts, experience early menopause, painful menstruation and painful nipples when breast-feeding their babies. In addition, some HIV infected men hold to the superstitious belief that if they have sex with a virgin, that they would be cured of AIDS (Garland, 2003). This perhaps lure most people living with HIV and AIDS to resort to raping innocent girls in the society in their quest for a cure. A typical example is the case of a 66 years old HIV and AID patient who raped an eight old girl in Asaba, Delta state, Nigeria (AIT NEWS, October , 2016).

- **Influence of Indecent Dressing**

Indecent dressing among women and girls are inappropriate mode of dressing that often exposes parts of one's body that ought to be covered from public view. This mode of dressing often attracts the opposite sex and causes them to have lustful thoughts that may eventually lead into raping women (Diara and Nweze, 2011). Indecent dressing engineers sexual desires in men, culminating in sexual seduction. According to Eze (2011) "It has become fashionable, particularly among the youthful female folk, to dress so half nakedly that some parts of their body that are supposed to be 'hidden' are exposed to the public". Ladies attract men by wearing sexy or transparent dresses (Okpara, 2005). 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. A survey by Ayogu (2011), sheds light on this and said some parents buy clothes for their children to wear with such negative "Inscriptions like: I am a sexy girl, Hug me tight, Lovely babe-sexy babe,! Devil's advocate". Expectedly, the wearing of these psychedelic and ludicrous dresses that advertise ladies nudity, side by side the unusual painting of their faces presents a very strong pull to rapists to carry on their vices.

- **The Nature of Adolescents**

Adolescents generally have very strong desire for sex. This propels them into wanting to experiment on anything including rape in order to satisfy their sexual drive. This is said to be motivated by their hormonal increase and

activities which often create an upsurge in the sexual interest of the adolescents. Psychologists believe that adolescence period is a time of sexual activeness, with their sexual drive developing to the highest point (Benwell, 2002). This period is the most critical and precarious stage in the adolescents and it is marked with confusion and turbulence.

- **Rape and Stigmatization**

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 in Nigeria to conceal rape assaults in order to save themselves from shame and public embarrassment. Even parents of the raped often find it difficult to come out publicly to report such cases. In Nigeria, 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.

- **Rape and the Nigerian Constitution**

The Nigerian authorities at both federal and state levels have failed to address adequately gender-based violence, including rape. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria seems to contribute in a way to the growing cases of rape in Nigeria. It is most probable that the interpretation of section 357 of the Criminal Code Act, CAP 77, LFN, 1990 which opines that “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 false threats or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or by means of false or 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 called rape” (Musbau, 2013) and especially section 282 of the Penal code which says that “Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife is not a rape, if she has attained puberty” (Olurounbi, 2013). This appears to exonerate people who promote child rape in the name of marriage from punishment by the law. This also implies that the Nigerian constitution seems to have no regard for full maturity of 18 years old before marriage. As it is, Nigerian laws appear not to prevent rape especially child rape, provided it is done under the cover of marriage. In Nigeria, it is common knowledge that

the existing Customary and *Sharia* laws which encourage contrary religious and cultural practices other than the ones stipulated in the Nigerian constitution directly or indirectly affect female folks in no small ways. For instance, the toleration of *Sharia* law in Nigeria makes the prosecution of rape cases in Northern Nigeria very difficult. However, the House of Representatives Abuja on Tuesday March 5, 2013 approved life imprisonment for any person convicted of rape. They equally approved a minimum of 20 years in jail terms without an option of fine for persons convicted. Thereafter the senate equally legislated same in like manner, as a way of checkmating rape incidences in Nigeria (Akumadu, 2007). Akumadu, reiterated that “Enacting laws are not enough; what is more important is the enforcement of the law to protect those it is supposed to protect”.

- **Poor Parental Upbringing:**

As a result of Modernity, some parents over-pamper their children by not enforcing strict disciplines on them. They themselves engage in extra-marital affairs incautiously, before them ,and so they are more likely to foster children that are rude, arrogant and wayward (Obasi, 2007). Most children under this setting may probably become rapists.

- **The Problem of 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 authorities 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. For example, a young girl “Folake” was jailed after she accused a man of rape. A domestic worker, she said her employer’s husband had forced her into his bedroom and made her watch a pornographic film before forcing her to have sex. A medical examination supported her allegation. Yet she was the one brought to court, charged with slander for making the accusation and remanded in prison (Amnesty International Interview with “Folake”, 2004). 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.

- **Poverty and Economic Factor**

Poverty is a major problem affecting many families in Nigeria. Poverty and economic down turn have forced many families into allowing their female children and teens to hawk things for sale, even at unholy hours and places to augment the family income, thereby exposing them to avoidable danger of being raped by rapists.

- **Declining Moral Values**

The eroding social morality has resulted in some parents having passion for their own biological children, pastors fancying their female converts, and lecturers lusting after their students.

Consequences of rape on the perpetrators

No rapist goes free, even if he is not apprehended by the law enforcement agencies. He will always be hounded by the memory of the evil perpetrated on his victims. The offenders should know that rape has severe consequences, ranging from incarceration to poor health, guilt and condemnation, social stigma, bad criminal record, sexually transmitted diseases and several others. Knowledge of the consequences or implications of rape may be a factor that can deter the intended sexual offenders and re-offenders in to giving up the crime of rape.

Effect of rape on the victims

According to Ashiru & Orifowomo (2015), rape devastate the lives of the victims and their families, causing severe physical and psychological pains and sufferings, including death, sexually transmitted infectious diseases and unwanted pregnancies. It is a form of gender-based violence which knows no border. Rape is a global pandemic affecting both the young and old, people of various classes and both the uneducated and educated, regardless of their race, ethnic background or religion. Sadly, women and girls are the most affected of this crime.

Brigneti and Egbonimali (2002) opined that “If virginity is what makes women honourable, rape is an easy weapon to permanently damage them” In the opinion of Obasi (2007), “Rape leaves painful memories and lifelong consequences on the victim”. It inspires permanent damages on its victims. Rape equally degrades as well as violates a whole tribe or nation. According

to Inuwa Sani, a Child Psychologist, the trauma that follows this bitter experience is better imagined than described. Alhassan (2013) captures the consequences thus: In the months following a rape, victims often have symptoms of depression or traumatic stress. They are more likely to abuse alcohol or drugs to control their symptoms. Other effects includes self-blame, lack of control over feelings and thoughts, drug or alcohol dependency, physical injuries, sexually, transmitted diseases, poor self-image, unhealthy sex life, depressive or post-traumatic stress disorders in their lifetime, long-time negative effects on sexuality and inability to form or maintain trusting relationships are common.

Theoretical framework

There is something amiss in the treatment of women in the society. Feminists have over time strived to find out what it is, but to no avail. Betty Friedan (1963) calls it the problem without a name. An xray of the relationship in the society's social structure, shows that eminent in the institution is the dominance of men over women in every the society. The theoretical framework on which this paper is anchored is the Feminism perspective. Feminism is not directly a set of beliefs but also a set of theoretical construct about the nature of women, the role they play, their oppression and the part these play within social reality in general.

The theory of Gender and Power by Cornell (1987), states to a large extent women's experience as a result of power dominance. This theory is used to situate the structure and the phenomenon of rape. This theory states that the way the male and female are perceived is based on gender differentials by culture. As described by the theorist, culture is the foundation of gender division of labour, roles and contributions of men and women. Cultures subjugate women by placing men in roles that make it easy for them to subjugate women. These culturally defined lines have in the long run impacted on their experiences and the chances they get in life is translated into low social status in society, poverty and powerlessness. This theory explains why women are often victims of rape and why they are very powerless and ashamed to voice out this crime that is frequently committed against them. Instead they suffer in silence (Onyejekwe, 2008). Feminists in recent times have perceived rape as an expression of male dominance over women, it is a skewed relationship that have relegated women to be people that should be oppressed and victimized, and that is the major reason why it is perceived that women (rape victims) do not get justice (McGrath 2009). Most culture, places women (rape victims) on a trial process whereby she is

either called a gold digger, an accuser, a seducer or a frivolous person. The Nigerian culture and judiciary system is not exempted from these practices as a woman have to prove that she was a victim of rape by showing evidence (most times semen) (Onyejekwe, 2008). In a country like Nigeria, where there are no defined structure and clearly defined criminal law on rape, and enforcement is weak, has enabled the prevalence of rape to thrive as it is in most cases not punished (Imokuede; 2007, Onyejekwe & Muoghalu,2008). Rape and Women's Sexual Health in Nigeria has defined these failures of the judiciary system as a general violation of women human rights.

Methods of study

This study reviewed articles that provided an overview of current discussions in this research area, and some literature that focused on gender based violence in general, while bearing in mind the main focus of this study, rape, their perpetrators and victims. The following were consulted:

1. Internet-based information from local and international organizations implementing initiatives that address issues of rape, especially the ones that involve women as victims.
2. Electronic media sources that deals with issues of rape and sexual violence in general
3. Books, journals, published articles and other forms of literature from sociology, psychology, medical policy journals and texts.

Due to the delicate nature of this topic (Rape), primary sources of information were not used as they were considered inappropriate for now. It was feared that respondent's views might be biased or they may be scared in giving the right responses. So it was considered expedient to use secondary sources of data in this paper.

The way forward

- 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. Parents should also know the right time and place to discuss sex related issues with their children and get to know the company they keep. Furthermore, they should educate their girl-child on the dangers of rape and places to go to so that they are not caught up in this menace. They should also be careful about entrusting their children in the hands of persons they do not know or trust very well. Parents should ensure that the girl-child put on clothes that do not expose essential parts of their bodies.

- Civil Societies and NGOs should initiate elaborate enlightenment campaigns against rape and rapists. They should exhibit zero-tolerance to rape by engaging in rape intolerance attitudes and as well as dispelling sex myths in Nigeria using the media.
- Hawking by children and female teenagers should be completely banned.
- For the fight against rape to be won, every perpetrator of rape should be exposed and made to take full responsibility for his or her actions. Under no circumstance should such a one be shielded or protected by parents, teachers, religious institutions, non-governmental organizations, governments or the media. All Nigerians must rise up in condemnation of this social epidemic.
- There is need for 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 melted out on the perpetrators.
- All rape victims should be shown much love and care to reengineer their self-esteem. The legislature, state ministries, women groups and the Federal Government should take up these cases and offer all necessary assistance to the victims.
- The high cost of Bride price often hinder matured males from getting married. Bride price or dowry should be reduced drastically so as to encourage every male adult to have a wife or a sex partner in Nigeria.
- The international community, including the United Nations and African Union should encourage and support Nigeria in implementing fully all international and regional treaties, declarations, resolutions and recommendations aimed at condemning, prohibiting and preventing all acts of violence against women. All cases of violence must be investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice in accordance with international standards of fair trial and without recourse to death penalty, and reparations provided the victims. They should also support and encourage initiatives by the Nigerian authorities, women's groups and Human rights organizations in their fight against the rape scourge and other forms of violence against women in Nigeria.

- Civil society groups should demand that women in Nigeria be treated as equal members of society, and also help create an environment that supports and address all forms of violence against women that have become common place in Nigeria today by raising awareness through the media; building community structures and processes to protect women; and providing assistance to victims of violence.
- The judiciary and legal system should ensure that all cases of rape, in particular when the victim is a minor, are heard behind closed doors.
- 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. In addition, they should promptly investigate all complaints of gender-based violence, including rape, and refer such cases to the appropriate judicial authority for prosecution.
- Violence in Nigeria will not be corrected by reforming the criminal justice system alone. To curb this menace, Nigerian women activists and organizations must rise in large numbers and continue to draw attention to the injustice against women victims of GBV, particularly rape.
- Activism, Advocacy, women walking together to fight the scourge, hard fight for change is what is needed now. Women must take action now by working together. Women activists and their organizations have tried in the past to confront violence against women and challenge the gender inequality that promotes that culture of violence. Laws may help, however women activists can and must do much more.
- Committees should be set up or constituted and given national guidelines for the medical and social management of rape and sexual violence.
- There is need to engage experienced counselors who will manage rape survivors at the State and Local Government levels.

- There is also the need to have reliable database for rape cases.
- The cost of legal representation of sexual violence should be borne by the government.
- There should be a certain percentage of statutory allocation devoted to managing rape cases yearly.
- Furthermore, there is need to strengthen the relationship between the health sector and the Justice system especially as it relates to the collection of specimen needed as evidence for prosecution of rape cases in court.
- The Nigerian law on rape should be strengthened to give it the desired bite.

Conclusion

Rape is a hurdle to economic development, a public health problem, and a violation of women's fundamental human rights. Rape victims tend to be silent as a result of humiliation and intimidation by the police, as well as the "embarrassment" of public acknowledgement. Rape is pervasive in Nigeria 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 virginity through 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. This will no doubt help bring the current rape menace to the barest minimum in Nigeria. Perpetrators of rape should be exposed and punished appropriately.

The State authorities should systematically and comprehensively document violence against women, including rape, and make this information publicly available. Government agencies should ensure that all women who have been subjected to violence, including rape, have access to redress, including compensation, rehabilitation and guarantees of non-repetition.

The fight against the rape scourge requires a multi-faceted approach. There is need for rapid response to documented cases of rape and for post rape care services to be set up in all Local Government Areas in Nigeria to cater for both adult and child survivors.

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