

PREVALENCE, CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE/RAPE IN SOME COMMUNITIES IN EDO STATE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

In recent times, the Nigerian mass media has been plagued with reported cases of sexual abuse such as rape. Some of these reported cases have shown that children and minors are increasingly becoming victims of rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Could the escalating wave of this ugly social menace be attributed to poor law enforcement or decline in our moral standards and poor state of education?

The study seeks to examine the prevalence of rape in Edo state, with reference to the causes and implications to some selected communities in Edo State, Nigeria. The study uses exploratory research design and quantitative data were collected from 300 respondents in Oredo, Egor and Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Areas of Edo State, using personally administered structured questionnaires and while qualitative data were collected from forty five participants using the in-depth interview guide. Convenient sampling method was used in selecting both the respondents and participants. Based on the findings, it was realized that rape was occasioned by the lax in the law and criminal justice, peer influence amongst other factors and its negative impact is enormous, as it affects both the individual and the society at large. Based on this, the study suggests that parents should always create special time for their children or ward, to know their friends and what they do on daily routine as well as the need for government to strengthen existing laws on child abuse and make implementation less cumbersome.

Keyword: Child Abuse, Rape, Woman, Girl child and Trauma

INTRODUCTION

Every child deserves the security of life, protection and parental refuge, as a violation of these will have an everlasting negative impact such as traumatic condition on the child. The idea of rape or sexual abuse has been a phenomenon that has ravaged the world as the females are the most hard-hit. Rape, is one of the categories of interpersonal violence and it results when one person unlawfully compels another to engage in sexual intercourse against that victim's will.

The Nigerian State in its Criminal Code distinguishes this offense from statutory rape, or sexual intercourse with consent of a partner under the legally allowed age of consent, which varies from State to State (Geis, 2001). Sexual abuse on children by men who are advanced age is now assuming an alarming state, as this ugly social evil called "rape", especially of children, has bewildered the Nigerian Society and is expanding by the day (Achunike and Kitause, 2014). This act that is

frowned on by most people in the society is now *"walking in the street with four legs"* and is an abuse to the freedom of the molested child. The World Health Organization (2011, page 50) defines sexual violence (which rape is one) as: 'Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffick or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.

This view is however buttressed by Contreras et al. (2010), who asserted that sexual violence encompasses acts that range from verbal harassment to forced penetration, and an array of types of coercion, from social pressure and intimidation to physical force. Without doubt, sexual abuse has exposed the Nigerian girl child to some level of insecurity as the society and some of her machinery cannot secure the life and property of these innocent persons (Achunike and Kitause, 2014). This view that is backed up by an investigation by the United Nations Organization into allegations of rape by some Nigerian Police Force members who were serving in the UN peace-keeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Consequently, the entire Nigerian contingent was withdrawn from the peace keeping operation and at least 10 Police officers were also dismissed from service in Nigeria having been found culpable of rape (Daily Champion, of 26th November, 2005). The then police Public Relations Officer, Haz Iwendi, was reported as saying: *"These are typical Nigerian police. They went there and instead of doing the job they were sent to do, they started abusing little girls and raping women."* (Daily Champion, of 26th November, 2005)

According to the United Nation International Children Education Fund (2009), sexual abuse is the act in which a child is used for sexual purposes. The abuse is carried out

by a person (adult or older child) whom the child trusts (parent, brother, a member of the extended family, teacher, guardian, etc.) or any other person in a position of power, authority or control over the child. This action could be synonymous with rape, as the child is used as the means for achieving the sexual urge of the perpetrator of the act, and this is violates Section 358 of the Criminal Code, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria. The action of rape world-wide is alarming as report from one continent to the other is jaw-breaking. This is because in 2009, statistics revealed that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2009) recorded 89,000 rapes in 2008, but criminologists warn against judging the actual incidence of the offense only from official statistics as these official numbers underestimate the total number of the incidence of rapes.

Roos & Katz, (2003) have argued that rape is experienced as an unexpected and intrusive violation, which at once impacts on all dimensions of the victim's existence, and ultimately disrupts to some degree the victim's essence of being in the world.. The victim is left with what appears to be a continuous struggle to adjust back into society. The rights to the dignity (Chapter four, 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic Nigeria), privacy and integrity of every person are basic to the ethos of the constitution and to any defensible civilization. Rape is therefore a very serious offence, as it involves a humiliating, degrading and brutal invasion of the privacy, dignity and person of the victim. (Mabasa, 2007).

Research offers little support for the notion that victims often seduce rapists, although some offenders make such claims to rationalize their behaviour. Young men commit rape and alcohol seems to play a major role in most of these incidences. In any case, statistical evidence characterizes most rapes cases as planned criminal activities

rather than unexpected, explosive events (although, we acknowledge the fact that some spontaneous rapes do occur). Most convicted rapists have no prior records of sex offenses, although a substantial number have had previous convictions for other crimes (Osayimwense, 2014). Females are usually referred to as the weaker sex and this sentiment makes them vulnerable to sexual abuse, including rape. This is likely to have a ripple effect on the girl child in the country especially at a time like this when the country witnessed the abduction of over 200 girls from Federal Government Girls College, Chibok with government still unable to rescue them. Some have argued in private and also in public discourse that these abducted girls are presently being sexually abused.

INCIDENCES/PREVALENCE OF RAPE IN NIGERIA

Rape is alarmingly common in Edo State. It probably has been in existence in the traditional society and only became public knowledge with the advent of electronic and print media at the wake of modern Pentecostalism in Nigeria sometimes in the 1970s. Its baffling prevalent upsurge is reported to have gone up in recent past from 12.5 percent to 80 percent in Nigeria (Chiedu, 2012). There are various incidence of rape of minors and teens within the landmass of the country and this has caused insecurity within and among the girl child in Nigeria, as statistics on rape incidents may still not be a good reflection of the extent of the crime in the country. Interestingly, unreported rape cases are on the increase and more alarming is that the incidence affects even underage persons. The media is replete with reports of young girls sexually violated, as young as three months. Most child sexual abuse is by men and curiously about 30 percent are the child's relatives- brothers, fathers, uncles or cousins- while about 60 per cent are other

acquaintances such as friends of the family, baby-sitters, or neighbours. Only about 10% of sexual abuse of children is done by strangers (The Vanguard of 17 January, 2014).

This statistics speak volumes of our society and the prevalence of this ugly phenomenon that is ravaging the girl child, who will incidentally be mothers, wife and leaders of the country in future, as we see the evolving of society leadership from the male dominated to a more gender equity society. Rape cases, though for some reasons, are under reported; there however seems to be some obvious situations where reports were made. Okoronkwo (2012) opined that recently, the Edo State hospital reported that it handled 80 rape cases within seven months in spite of the fact that the punishment is clearly spelt out in Section 358 of the Criminal Code. Also Izuekwe, (2013), reported that a civil engineering graduate from Delta State University, who lost his job and was newly employed as a security guard in a private school at Ijegan area of Lagos State, was remanded in prison custody for allegedly raping an 18-year old student of the school inside the school premises. More pathetic is where a Pastor (a so-called man of God) defiled the sanctuary by raping a 12 years old chorister in Uromi, Edo State (Daily Times of September 3, 2011)

Ezeaku (2013), while buttressing the prevalence of rape in the country, narrated how a nine-year-old girl was raped to death by a 14 year-old boy. The Northern Nigeria is not spared from this viral disease called rape, as a 70 years old man defiled a 3 years old girl, and it was stated that the police in Kano have recorded 54 cases of child rape and made 60 arrests within the last 6 months. (IRIN, 3 January, 2014). Ezeaku further added that, in far away Jigawa State, a 25-year-old farmer was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for raping an eight-year old girl.

Regardless of the various laws aimed at protecting the rights of women, rape has lately become epidemic in Nigeria. Across the six-geopolitical zones, newspapers are full of reports of numerous cases of rape, especially of minors, teenagers and elderly women. This trend is becoming alarming even as the arm of government that is saddled with the protection of life has been found to be the perpetrators of the crime themselves, as a policeman was jailed sometime ago for raping a 16-year-old girl (The Vanguard of April 18, 2012). Now, one starts to wonder if the law on sexual abuse is *light-weighted* or is *ineffective*, as there is need to explain and expose relevant statutes as it relates to sexual abuse.

CAUSES OF RAPE

There exist several reasons why men indulge in rape. The rising incidence of sexual abuse of minors in the country is evident that our Police and laws are not working, as there are repeated cases of rape and little or no remedies is forth coming. Ezeaku (2013) opined that the high rate of rape cases is as a consequence of parents' neglect of their roles to their children. He buttresses this with the confession of 14-year-old Onyi, who said he learnt about sex by watching pornographic films, even as his father lamented that, "I trained that boy in the way of the Lord and expected so much from him. Indecent dressing and parents' neglect of their wards' nude dress sense is also said to be a factor.

Peer group is another important factor in the upsurge of rape cases in Edo state, innocent youth who keep regular company of rapist may easily learn their evil ways no matter how careful they think they are. According to Isangedighi (1990) most adolescents are led into sexual promiscuity by peer influence and in other to remain relevant and gain the continual approval of their friends they try to experiment sex through raping

Olumide (2014) opined that, access to pornography can open children to rape, this is because young ones are into experimenting things as well as being adventurous. He also added that lack of confidence in a justice system where the police is likely to insult and provoke the victims with flippant and derisive questions can promote the incidence. However, rape victims are not often treated with dignity as they are blamed for being raped and are asked to produce "evidence". Olumide (2014) concluded that single parentage is also a factor as some fathers, mostly those separated from wives and having custody of the children, are also guilty of this heinous crime. Mabasa (2007) added that the following factors influences rape, and they include: lack of social skill, alcohol, lack of care for children, sexual pleasure/gratification, family background, unemployment, objectifying the girl child, influence of substance use and disempowered men.

LEGAL ASPECT OF SEXUAL ABUSE/ RAPE IN NIGERIA

True, there appears to be an escalating wave of sexual abuse and rape of children in Edo State. However, it cannot be said that there are insufficient laws in place in Nigeria to prevent and penalize all manifestations of this ill. On the contrary, the Penal or Criminal Code Laws of all the States of Nigeria provide for criminal sanctions against rape and all sexual abuse and the likes. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in turn provides for a right to freedom from "inhuman or degrading treatment", while the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and the Africa Charter on Human and People's Right both to which Nigeria is a signatory, provide for the protection and preservation of the dignity of human persons..

The Nigeria courts have in a plethora of cases, given judicial backing to the provisions of the above statutes. Worthy of mention are

the following cases: Upahar v. State (2003) 6 NWLR pt 816 p230, Ibo v. Zaria N.A. (1962) NNCN 30, Okoyomon v. State (1973) NMLR 292 and the recent case of Edwin Ezigbo v. State (2012) 16 NWLR pt 1326

It will appear that the interpretation of the law has in a soothe way contributed to the increase in sexual abuse of children by adult. 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 has in no small way giving rise to a new trend in child abuse. This appears to exonerate people who promote child rape in the name of marriage from punishment by the law. As it is , Nigerian laws not to prevent rape, provided it is done under the cover of marriage (Olurounbi, 2013).

IMPLICATIONS OF RAPE ON THE SOCIETY

The effect of rape on the girl child cannot be over-emphasized. On the health impact, rape may lead to long term consequences, which may be a long-term mental health effect. Long-term mental health effects of childhood sexual abuse include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, psychosis, substance misuse, eating disorders, self-harm and suicide. Adverse health effects of childhood sexual abuse include higher rates of health-risk behaviours such as smoking, alcohol and drug misuse, risky sexual behaviour (including prostitution), sexually transmitted disease and gynecological problems (Nurse , Moreno and Phinney 2005), as cited in Itzin et al. (2014).

Peter and Olowa (2010) opined that there are physical and psychological traumas on the raped girl child. They argue that the most common trauma are those related to reproductive health, i.e., gynaecological which include pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, urinary tract infection, etc. Psychological trauma includes self blame, suicide/suicidal attempt, lowered self esteem, anxiety, eating disorders and post traumatic

stress disorder. The high incidence of rape is a precursor for the spread of HIV and AIDS. They further contend that the danger posed by this vice to the society is devastating, adding that with high incidence of rape, HIV and AIDS is bound to spread like wild fire and consume more people who are of the working age and thus devastate the economy.

THEORETICAL EXPLANATION OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Child sexual abuse is not a new phenomenon; however there are social explanations on this abnormality as with most forms of deviant behaviours. There are also various explanations as to the causes of sexual offending. This study shall employ the biological theories to explain the causes of deviant sexual fantasies and behaviour.

BIOLOGICAL THEORY

This theory is concerned with organic explanations of human behaviour. It holds that physiological factors (e.g., hormone levels, chromosomal makeup) have an effect on sexual behaviour for one thing, androgens promote sexual arousal, orgasm, and ejaculation, as well as regulate sexuality, aggression, cognition, emotion and personality; abnormal levels of androgens lead to aggressive sexual behaviour. When it comes to sexual behaviour, these theorists postulate that physiological factors, such as hormone levels and chromosomal makeup, have an effect on the behaviour (Marshall & Barbaree, 1990).

Androgens, which are male sex hormones, promote sexual arousal, orgasm, and ejaculation, as well as regulate sexuality, aggression, cognition, emotion and personality (Rösler & Witztum, 2000; Marques et al., 2000). As a result, biological theories about deviant sexual behaviour usually pertain to rape because it is considered an act of violence. When males reach puberty, there is

a major increase in testosterone levels in the testes. Due to the fact that sex drive increases dramatically at this time, there is generally believed to be a correlation between testosterone levels and sex drive, with testosterone being the primary biological factor responsible for normal and abnormal sexual behaviour.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the factors influencing matured adults in defying young female children in our society
2. To examine the implications of child sexual abuse/rape on the society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The quantitative and qualitative methods were adopted for this study. Edo State was selected for this study while 6 communities was randomly selected from 3 Local

Government Areas namely Oredo, Ikpoba-Okha and Egor. The choice of the Local Government Areas stem from the fact that they are the most populous Local Government Areas in Edo State according to the 2006 census population head count and also they formed the constituent called Benin City. 300 respondents were selected using cluster and convenient sampling technique. Responses were gotten with the use of a structured questionnaire and in-depth interviews were conducted with six (6) participants (2 each from the 3 selected Local Government Area in the state) respectively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Child sexual abuse/rape has been discussed in the above content, and results from the respondents show prevalence, causes and implications of child sexual abuse/rape in the selected communities in Edo State.

TABLE 1: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC OF RESPONDENTS

Sex:				
Male (175) 58.3%		Female(125) 41.7%		
Age:				
18- 25yrs (48)16%	26-35yrs (114)38%	36-45yrs (60)20%	above 45yrs (78)26%	
Marital status:				
Single (46)15.3%		Married(226)75.4%	Divorced(10)3.3%	Separated (18)6%
Educational level				
Primary(24)8%	SSCE(48)16%	B.Sc/HND (108)36%	Masters/PhD (84)28%	Other Degrees(36)12%
Religious affiliation:				
Christian(198)66%		Muslim(72) 24%	ATR(30)10%	
Occupation				
Trader (81)27%	Civil Servants (51)17%	Professional worker (69)23%	Students (90)30%	
Socio-economic Status:				
Upper class (33)11%	Middle class (145)48.3%	lower class (122)40.7%		

Source: fieldwork 2014

The result from the above table 1 reveals that there are more male respondents than

females with a difference of 16.6%, with majority of them within age 26-35 years (38%)

and 45years and above (26%). From the analysis; the result shows that 75.4% of the respondents are married, with 3.3% been divorced. On the Educational level, respondents with tertiary education are 64% of the entire respondents while 8% have primary education. Since Benin City had early contracts with the Europeans and Missionaries, 66% of the respondents are Christians while 24% and 10% are Muslims and of the African Traditional Religion respectively.

The occupations of the respondents show that they are engaged in different economic activities that put food on their tables daily. However the result shows that more of the respondents claimed to be from the middle class with 48.3%, this is evident when compared with their average wages earned while 40.7% claimed to be from the lower class. This shows the socio-economic class of the respondents.

TABLE 2: CAUSES AND IMPLICATION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE/RAPE ON THE VICTIMS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES/SOCIETIES.

THEIR COMMONLINES/SOCIETIES:					
Causes of child sexual abuse/rape					
Broken homes	Socio-economic status of parents	Peer influence	Use of Hard Drugs	Collapse of Value system	Law and Justice system
36(12%)	49(16.4%)	75(25%)	63(21%)	57(19%)	20(7 %)
Impact of child sexual abuse/rape on the individual					
Demoralizes her	Psychological trauma	lingering health issue	Carries stigma		
30(10%)	105(35%)	(if not treated properly)	75(25%)		
90(30%)					
Impact of child sexual abuse/rape on the society					
Ephebiphobia	Experience early Adulthood	lack of trust in the society	May hinder the girls child		
			Dream for getting to the top		
45(15%)	72(24%)	126 (42%)		57(19%)	

Source: fieldwork 2014

The following were listed as the causes of child sexual abuse/rape in the Benin metropolis: broken homes, socio-economic status of parents, peer influence, use of hard drugs, collapse of value system; while others suggested that it may be due to lax law and justice system. This supports the views of Isangedighi (1990) when he asserted that most adolescent are led into sexual promiscuity by peer influence. Interestingly too, data generated from this study further lend credence to the views of Olurounbi (2013) when he asserted that Section 282 of the Penal Code promotes child rape in the name of marriage as well as allowing child rapist to escape the law under the cover of marriage.

Isangedighi's (1990) view collaborates the opinions of some IDI respondents as clearly captured by one interviewee.

My child started behaving funny when he started going out with some particular classmates of his. That was when for the first time in my life I have to go on two different occasions to bail him over cases of sexual intercourse with children in our area. (August, 2014)

The views of a Barrister -IDI respondent further add value to the opinion of Olurounbi (2013) when he stated that

The justice system as it is presently in Nigeria is porous and full of

technicalities that make it very hard to convict a rapist. The things that the prosecution needs to prove are almost impossible. In my opinion, this may be one of the reasons why there is an increase in the rate of child abuse. (August, 2014)

On the other hand, the impact of child sexual abuse varies on the individual and the society, as the table above reveals that 10% of the entire respondents stated that it demoralizes the victim, 35%(psychological trauma), 30% (lingering health issues) and 25% asserted that it causes self stigma to the individual. To the society 15% opined that it leads to ephibiphobia (fear of the youth or grown up) and 24% (makes the child to experience early adulthood). Majority opined that it will lead to lack of trust on the society. This assertion was made by 42% of the respondents while 19% asserted that it may hinder the girl child's dream of getting to the top. These findings are supported by the works of Nurse, Moreno and Phinney (2005) and Peter and Olowa (2010) respectively. Nurse, Moreno and Phinney (2005) asserted that child sexual abuse leads to depression, anxiety, substance misuse and long term mental health effect. While on their part, Peter and Olowa (2010) opined that there are physical and psychological traumas on the raped girl child.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that child sexual abuse/rape is a crime which if not checked or totally eradicated will expose the girl child to all sorts of abnormalities in life, as they are the future leaders of our nation Nigeria. Edo state is not an exemption, as it is a microcosm of the larger society (Nigeria) and therefore

there is need to create awareness on the danger this menace constitutes to the girl child. The effect of this sexual abuse/rape on the child and the society cannot be over emphasized as it has caused lack of trust on the society for the victim, psychological trauma and stigmatization, amongst others.

Following the trend of the findings of this study, it is worthwhile to proffer the under mentioned recommendations.

1. The Federal government of Nigeria in addition to promulgating laws, it should ensure full and speedy transformation of existing judicial system as a way to trap down rapist in Nigeria. Policy makers should re-visit some of our laws and ensure that the punishments attached to certain offences are commensurate with the offence so as to deter offenders from committing such offences.
2. Parents should always create special time for their children or ward, to know their friends and what they do on daily routine as this will create some level of self respect over time when they get to adulthood and decide to live their life independent of their family.
3. Finally, for Nigeria to be one of the crime-free societies, there is need for all victims to report the case and ensure it is followed to the last with their parents or guardians accompanying them, as this will make both the government, mass media, community leaders, security agencies and other relevant forces know, act and correct the error of some few individuals in a society like Nigeria.

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