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Rape Endemic in Nigeria: Causes, Effect and Probable Way Out

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Abstract- Nigeria faces a number of problems such as high rate of corruption, increasing unemployment, persistent poverty, lack of basic medical care amongst others. Added to the above stated developmental problems, is the problem of incessant rape permeating the Nigerian society. This paper examines the causes and effects of rape. The paper is essentially library research with internet sources using expository and phenomenological designs. Rape is shown to be a global social problem and its perpetrators cut across all age brackets. The paper recommends amongst others that; the society should exhibit zero tolerance to rape by engaging rape intolerance attitudes, an increased level of empathy; every perpetrator of rape should be exposed to take full responsibility for his or her actions and should under no circumstances be shielded or protected by parents, colleagues or churches. Nigerian government should enforce laws to protect women against rape.

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Rape Endemic in Nigeria: Causes, Effect and Probable Way Out

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Abstract- Nigeria faces a number of problems such as high rate of corruption, increasing unemployment, persistent poverty, lack of basic medical care amongst others. Added to the above stated developmental problems, is the problem of incessant rape permeating the Nigerian society. This paper examines the causes and effects of rape. The paper is essentially library research with internet sources using expository and phenomenological designs. Rape is shown to be a global social problem and its perpetrators cut across all age brackets. The paper recommends amongst others that; the society should exhibit zero tolerance to rape by engaging rape intolerance attitudes, an increased level of empathy; every perpetrator of rape should be exposed to take full responsibility for his or her actions and should under no circumstances be shielded or protected by parents, colleagues or churches. Nigerian government should enforce laws to protect women against rape.

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I. Introduction

Despite decades of feminist activism, men continue to rape women and girls at appalling rates. Rape is one of the more pervasive forms of violation against women in which the assailant uses sex to inflict humiliation on the victim or exert power and control over the victim. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993 defines Violence Against Women (VAW) as any act of gender based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, girls including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (Onyejekwe (2008).

The Unitdceed Nation Declaration specifies that rape, marital rape and sexual abuse are forms of violence against women. Article 2 makes it clear that physical, sexual and psychological acts of violence perpetrated or condoned by the state wherever it occurs also falls within the definition of violence against women and that states must refrain from engaging in violence against women (article 4 (b)) and exercise due diligence against women whether those acts are perpetrated by the state or by private persons (article 4c).

There is no doubt that rape is prevalent across all sectors of Nigerian society. The prevalence of rape committed with impunity by state actors is particularly alarming in the current situation. Testimonies of women who have been raped and reports by Nigerian human rights organizations identify the Nigerian police force and other members of the security forces particularly the military as the principal actors.

Rape of women and girls by both the police and security forces, and within their homes and community is acknowledged to be endemic in Nigeria not only by human rights defenders but by some government officials at federal, state and local levels. Amnesty International (2007). The government however, is failing in her obligation to exercise due diligence; the perpetrators invariably escape punishment and women and girls who have been raped are denied any form of redress for the serious crimes against them. Rape at times was used strategically by police and security forces to coerce and intimidate entire communities. Amnesty International has met some women and girls who have been raped some of whom have been abducted by the security forces in areas of the country where violence is rife and have documented their harrowing experiences.

Rape like a cankerworm seems to be thriving and deepening its roots at an alarming rate today in the Nigerian society. The frightening reports of rape appear in the national dailies cutting across all age brackets in the society. Achunike and Kitause (2014). It is against this background that the paper is out to examine the concept of rape, incidences of rape in Nigeria and other countries, its effects and probable way out to the heinous crime in Nigeria.

II. Conceptual Clarification of Rape

Rape is defined as any form of sexual intercourse without free mutual consent between those involved. Ezere et al (2009). It is a sexual intercourse that involves force, threat, blackmail, deceit or coercion. Hornby (2006) defines rape as a crime of forcing somebody to have sex with one especially using violence. It is the crime of forcefully having sex with someone against the person's wish (Chiedu 2012). Rape is an act of sexual violence that involves intercourse without consent or against someone being willing to engage in the act. (Brigneti and Egbonimah (2002).

Rape within marriage (force or coercion) sexual intercourse between husband and wife is not recognized as a crime by Nigerian law. A husband who forces his wife to have sex may be found guilty of assault,

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wounding or grievous harm depending on the degree and effect of the force he used on his wife. In the words of Chukwuma,(2013), rape may involve unlawful behavior or action such as making a child touch, suck or caress one's private parts to derive sexual pleasure. It should be noted that once the law of love is violated in any love making, even if it is within marriage, it is equally an act tantamount to rape (Litchfield and Litchfield 2012) and Achunike and Ritause (2014). Rape endemic is a form of gender based violence against women and girls. The committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women stated in its General Recommendation No 19 that gender-based violence is a form of discrimination which the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) of all form requires its state parties to eliminate in all its form. Nigeria ratified the convention on June 1985.

III. Rape, a Global Problem

Rape endemic in Nigeria is alarmingly a menace that is spreading very fast. According to Chiedu (2012) rape has been in existence in the traditional society and only became public knowledge with the advent of globalization, electronic and printed media. Rape is a global problem with women and girls being mostly vulnerable (Onah, 2010)

Women and girls are still caught up in a cycle of human rights violations since the first United Nations Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975 (Ward, Horwood, McEvoy, Shipman and Rumble 2007). Estimates show that a woman born anywhere in the world has a one in three chance of being raped, beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime.

There are several sad cases of rape in Nigeria. For instance a religious leader raping a member of his flock, a landlord raping his tenant's daughter, a teacher raping a student, a man raping his sister-in-law or daughter-in-law, a boss raping his staff, master raping his house girl. A young man raping a grandmother, an 80 year old has raped an 8 year old girl, a traditional ruler raped a subject and the list is endless.(Chiedu 2012, p1)

Many of these perpetrators of rape are young men while others are adults (Obasi 2007). The Nation (2010) in its editorial lamented the growing trend of sexual abuse in different parts of Nigeria. It was observed that the cases cut across any type of boundary, even age has nothing to do with it for the perpetrators of the crime because it is the unrestrained urge. ANPPCAN (1999) in her intensive study on 100 female hawkers and 100 female non-hawkers aged 8-15 years in Ibadan metropolis reported that 50% of the hawkers had sexual intercourse while 9% of the non-hawkers had been raped while out on errands or walking to or from school. Of the 50% who have been raped, only seven reported the event to parent or guardian. This may be due to fear of stigma or ridicule if the rape is made public.

In a survey of national dailies, Okunade (1998) identified 100 cases of rape of children whose ages ranged between 2 and 16 years. The victims were 94 girls and 6 boys while their assailants were aged 13 to 60 years. In Ilorin, Adedoyin and Adegoke (1995) reported that 50% of commercial sex workers surveyed had their first sexual experience before 18 years and there stated that childhood rape could lead to prostitution.

Out of 950 rape cases reported at the hospital in Benin city, 58% involved child rape, 40% of these victims were those attending formal school, 40% were engaged in hawking while the remaining 20% were idle. Reports show that no fewer than 1200 girls were raped in Rivers state in 2012 (Kawu 2013). Also, a man is allegedly reported to have been raped to death by six wives on Tuesday July 17, 2012 in Ogbadiso Local Government Areas of Benue State (Malcom, 2012).

Suffice it to stress that rape cases in Nigeria is not a new practice but only that it appears more endemic with children now forming the bulk of the victims (Odeh, 2013). The incidence of baby and child rape as reported by Ejim (2013) has hit a statistic of 70 percent of the total rape cases in Nigeria. Child molestation is becoming a sad reality which Nigeria must curtail before it gets out of hands. Nigerian government, parent and religious organizations should rise up and fight the menace. Record has it that in Lagos state recently, two girls, aged 2 and 3 respectively were raped by adults aged 25 and 35 years old (Rotimi, 2013) said of Sylvester Ehijere, a 48 year old man of No.8 Kolawole Sebili street, Iyana Ejigbo, Lagos who had been sexually abusing his two daughters until March 2013 when he was exposed, arrested and is currently facing trial for his alleged crime (Odeh, 2013).

In Niger state, a 6 year old girl was sexually abused by one Ibrahim, a 17 year old boy in Niger state (Alhassan, 2013). Also, Joel Lambert Ayibakuro was arrested and arraigned before the court for raping his own 7 year old daughter. A man was detained because he has carried out sexual assault with his biological daughter and granddaughter (Ejim, 2013). The researcher has seen a landlord who had always raped all his daughters and any female who came to live in his house for a while (Personal Communication, 2015). The research got to know this secret through two of the girls who lived with him and whom the man attempted to rape and the other one he had raped, luring them with gift and money.

Coupled with the above is the case of the police and government officials in Kano who reported that there is an upsurge of child rape incidences, fearing that young girls are now unsafe in Kano city (http://www.nigeriachildrapeinkano.com/2012). In Kano city alone, 54 cases of child rape were recorded in that

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city. It was recorded in Ekiti state that a police man raped a 12 year old girl in the capital city (http://www.grassrootsvanguard.com/2011).

Record showed that three police officers in Enugu were charged with rape and abduction by a magistrate court in Enugu and the case was subsequently transferred to a high court. The defendant pleaded not guilty (Amnesty International 2006). An application for bail filed by the defence lawyer on 17 May 2006 was refused and the defendants remained in detention awaiting the next hearing. The NGOs reported to Amnesty International that the girls and the members of their families have been subjected to intimidation, including anonymous death threats to coerce them into withdrawing the case. A senior police officer was also reported to have approached their relatives to offer a bribe if criminal charges were dropped. The different cases of rape can go on inexhaustibly in Nigeria by relatives, in-laws, police and other security agents, religious leaders and so on.

Record also revealed that one Segun Benson, a sixty year old unmarried bricklayer of 9, Momoh Street, Agege Lagos raped a fourteen year old girl of primary six on the 19th, January 2015. The girl was tricked into the room with fifty naira (2015)

Suffice it also to stress that rape cases are not limited to Nigeria alone. Prevalence of rape cases occur in other countries of the world. In North America, approximately 15% to 25% of women and girls and 5% to 15% of men were sexually abused when they were children (Gorey and Leslie, 1997). Most rape offenders are acquainted with their victim; for instance approximately 30% are relatives of the child, most often brothers, fathers, uncles or neighbours, strangers are the offenders in approximately 10% of rape cases (Whealin, 2007). Hall and Hall, (2007) opined that most offenders who rape prepubescent children are pedophiles. Pedophiles are those who have persistent feeling of attraction towards prepubescent children, whether the attraction is acted upon or not. Matorah, Jenkes and Vindale (1997) reported that an antenatal clinic in the outskirt of CapeTown in South Africa, 32% of 119 teenage mothers whose average age was 16 years reported that their first intercourse had been forced, 75% reported having had sex against their will at some point and 12.5% said they would be beaten if they refused sex.

In Darfur, Sudan, the UN has since accused the Janjaweed-Arab Militiamen-of abducting and gang-raping thousands of women and girls (Mariner, 2004). There were reports of American troops raping fellow female troupes in Iraq (Mofeit and Herdy, 2004). It is estimated that a third of all women and girls in the Sierra-Leone conflict of 1991 and 2002 were raped (Ross,2007). In Congo also women are bearing the brunt of the horrible weapons of war; rape (Cooper, 2008). Similar experience were witnessed in the Bosnian war(International Herald Tribune, 2007) Not long ago in Pakistan, Mukhtaran Mal, was gangraped and left naked on the order of a tribal council in 2002 as punishment for her brother's alleged affair with a woman from another tribe (Delva, 2007).

In New Delhi, India four men were sentenced to death by hanging because they gang-raped and murdered a 23 year old physiotherapy student (http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/new/indian-gang-rape-four-accused-624965). In Chicago, a nine year old girl was found raped, beaten and poisoned on the seventh-floor stairway of her Cabrin Green housing project on January 9, 1997 (Adeleye, 1997). In Kenya, the government survey revealed that one out of every 5 women and girls are victims of child rape cases in Kenya are from 3 years of age and above. This findings, among others point to frightening dimensions that rape may be assuming in Nigeria and the world at large. The endemic nature of rape in contemporary Nigeria are caused by many factors that would be discussed below:

IV. Endemic Rape in Nigeria: Causes

The following are considered the causes of rape in Nigeria. As good as sex is because it is a gift from God, the misuse of it is a sin of which the perpetrator would be judged if not repented.

Culture of Silence: This has aggravated this problem partly from humiliation and intimidation of the victim by the police as well as embarrassment of the public acknowledgement. Hutton, Omidian and Miller (2006) aptly describe the situation as including being ostracized by those who consider rape as bringing dishonor to a woman's family and community. This culture of silence reinforces the stigma already attached to the victim rather than to a perpetrator, as the dominant perception is that women have provoked the abuser to attack, victims in many of the incidence are unwilling to testify about their experiences.

Myths About Sex: Are another cause of rape in Nigeria. There 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 been able to perform better when married. The myth about the girls is that they are bound to have small breast, experience early menopause, painful menstruation and painful nipples when breast feeding their babies. Coupled with above myth is a myth that if the HIV infected men have sex with a virgin, they can be cured of AIDS (Garland, 2003). This myth has lured many men with HIV and AIDS to rape innocent girls in the society as a solution to their problem.

Peer Group Influence: Is another factor that encourages heinous rape in the Nigerian society. The Holy Bible says show me your friend and I will tell you the type of person you are. Isangedighi,(1990) opined that most

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adolescents are led into sexual promiscuity by their peers. Most adolescents in their bid to be social and gain approval of their peers engage in many social vices like rape, prostitution, cyber crimes etc. Many of them through peer influence experiment sex through raping and since they are not caught, they continue in the business of rape.

Indecent Dressing: Is also a factor that encourages rape in Nigerian society. Indecent dressing has been traced to modernity. Indecent dressing that exposes the erogenous zones of female attracts undue attention from males which do lead to sexual harassment that at times leads to rape Mofoluwawo, (2012). She opined further that is considered a healthy practice to put on clothes that adequately covered certain sensitive parts of the body. Robinson, (2001) explained that the role played by clothing in stimulating or diminishing sexual urge is symbolic of the moral standard of a given culture. Nowadays it has become a fashion for the female folk (women and girls alike) to dress half naked to the extent that some parts of their body like breast, buttock, armpit, thighs that are supposed to be hidden are exposed to the public (Eze 2007, Mofoluwawo, 2012)). Indecent dressing is the order of the day in Nigerian tertiary institutions of learning particularly among female folk. Apparently, it has become the common mode of dressing for the majority. Some parents even carelessly buy clothes for their children to wear with negative inscriptions like *'kiss me fast', 'fuck me', 'hug me tight', sexy babe',* and the likes. Ayogu(2011), Achunike and Kitause (2014). It is a fact that action speaks louder than words; wearing of such seductive clothes attract male folk to rape such ladies.

Influence Of Modernity Or Civilization And Globalization: Has also contributed to endemic rape in Nigerian society. The discourse of modernity and civilization as propelled by globalization though the acceleration of Information Technology (ICT) have encouraged the adolescents to watch various types of pornographic movies and pictures. Many youths also read erotic novels, books, newspapers, magazines aside from being exposed to sexually overloaded advertisement on television and films. Coupled with the above is the sexually graphic music, obscene literature, movies directed at the adolescents which arouses their interest in sex. (Isangedighi, 1990 p.285). Exposure of the adolescents to sexual films and music pressurizes them to experiment what they have seen even if it means raping. This situation makes raping more endemic among Nigerian youth.

Lax Rape Laws In Nigeria: Is another factor in the Nigerian society. The laxity of law against the rapist enables the heinous crime to continue with impunity since many of them have not been caught talk less of being punished. The laws in Nigeria lack implementation, they only appeared inside the paper. This laxity further humiliates the victims rather than vindicating them. Reports of the rape do not guarantee redress or punishment of the offenders. This is because rape perpetuates powerful mythologies which make it difficult to prosecute rapists without evidence of physical injury from the victim, corroborating eye witnesses or other difficult evidence. Ejim,(2013) reiterated further that the police after demanding to get bribe so as to investigate rape cases, accuse the victims of consenting to the sexual intercourse with the rapists. It was also reported that one rape victim was put in a cell for reporting a police rapist (http://naijamajor.com/kenyan-girl-win-landmark-rape-case-against-police. This may be the reason why the Abuja High Court Judge-Umoh Enah recently lampooned the Nigerian police for mishandling the prosecution of an alleged rapist (http:// premium tim esng.com/metro1133299).

V. Endemic Rape in Nigeria: ITS Effects

Ogunyemi, (2000) reported the psychological effect of rape as feelings of vulnerability, unworthiness and mistrust, shame, guilt and mental health problems. The behavioural consequences are involvement in unprotected sex, earlier sexual initiation, unwanted pregnancy and increased risk of infection with sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS).

Kayode (2010) and Alhassan (2013) in their interaction with rape victims discovered that some of the people felt like committing suicide, 17 percent actually attempt suicide, some wanted vengeance, some suffered trauma, mental challenges and sexuality problems as married adults among other defects. Rape leaves painful memories and a lifelong effect on the victim (Obasi 2007 p.34). It leaves a permanent damage on its victims.

Succinctly, women aspirations and achievement are powerfully inhibited not just by the injuries of physical attacks but by the implicit threat to social development ((Nnaeke, 2006). Rape is a key component to social problems. By subjecting women and girls to rape without a social structure that endeavours to stop this practice, the women could be made to believe that they are inferior to their counterparts and that they deserve their abuse. This can affect their self image and perception on men in general.

Again, rape may shorten one's life as the victim tries to abort the pregnancy resulting from rape. It may lead to dropping out of school or rushing into unplanned marriage or marrying the wrong person (Finn and Finn 2012). It can as well lead to frustration, fear, anxiety, anger at self, image depression and a host of other damages to one's life (Litchfield and Litchfield, 2012).

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VI. Proposal for Curbing Endemic Rape in Nigeria

- Having examined the concept of rape, its causes, incidences of rape in Nigeria and other countries of the world and its effects, the following measures are proposed to curb the endemic rape in Nigeria:
- Government and the society need to declare a zero-tolerance on rape in Nigeria and commit adequate resources to tracking down offenders and encouraging victims to come forward and report to the police. Nigerian populace should also increase their level of empathy towards the victims rather stigmatize them.
- Suggested solutions to the problem of rape by Estrich (1998) go along with those of Amnesty International is (2006) observation on Nigeria-that of providing support structures for girls and women victims. These include getting men involved in finding a lasting solution to this crime in such areas as the police departments, hospitals and district attorney's offices. By so doing, they can be trained and given the expertise to deal sensitively with the physical and emotional issues involved in order to win the victim's cooperation and successfully prosecute the perpetrators.
- Support should be given to developmental associations, civil society, human rights organization, national councils, ministries, youth centres, mosques and churches to confront this menace. Also accurate information and data must be available on the scope of the problem and how to confront it.
- The government should ensure that all girls and women who have been subjected to rape have access to justice and to reparations including compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition.
- Bring all perpetrators to justice in trial standards and exclude the death penalty and facilitate private criminal prosecutions by non-governmental organizations and other cases of rape.
- Government should ensure that punishment prescribed for rape are commensurate with the gravity of the crime committed.
- Ensure that women and girls are able to report to women police officers when reporting gender based violence.
- Ensure effective separation of men and women in prisons, police stations and all other places of detention and that detention facilities for women are staffed by women officers.

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