

Interrogating the Causes, Effects and Societal Responses to Rape and Child-Defilement in Nigeria

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Abstract: Nigeria's social landscape has been inundated by an alarming spate of rape and child defilement cases, so much more that there is hardly a week without media reports of rape in the country. Records released by the Nigeria Police Force shows that a total of seven hundred and seventeen cases of rape and child defilement were recorded in the first five months of the year 2020. More alarming is the defilement of minors and underage children by adults. The foregoing raises concerns and the need to interrogate the causes of alarming cases of rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria. The mixed methods research approach was adopted to generate both primary and secondary data. For the primary data, an online questionnaire was designed and administered to a total of two hundred and nine Nigerians across various sectors and regions of the country. Besides, six (6) key informants, each from the Ministry of Women, Legal Department, National Human Rights Commission, NGO, religious leader and media practitioners, were interviewed. On the other hand, government reports, gazettes, journal and newspaper articles

were used to generate secondary data. Findings show that defilement of minors in Nigeria is perceived from a socio-cultural perspective as an avenue for money rituals. Other causes include mental disorders of perpetrators, alcoholism and substance abuse. Effects of such acts are physical and psychological. Recommendations on ways of curbing the menace include life sentences, name shame of perpetrators, and strict enforcement of existing laws prohibiting rape and defilement in the country.

Keywords: Rape, Child-defilement, Causes and effect, Societal responses, Minors.

1. Introduction

Children are significant to the future of a country. This is because they will become adults and leaders in the future. As a result, their welfare and well-being should be paramount to the government and reflect national policy. The well-being of children is crucial to the future well-being of society. In essence, whatever threaten the welfare of children is a challenge to the future of the country. UNICEF (2020) report on child protection in Nigeria revealed that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 10 per cent of boys had been victims of sexual violence. Of recent, cases of rape and defilement of minor has become endemic in Nigeria. In 2020 alone, Nigerian Police recorded 717 cases of rape between January and May (Premium Times, 2020). For instance, on 26th June, Katsina Police Command reported the arrest of 40 suspected rapists between April and June 2020, while Akwa Ibom Police Command on 24th June 2020 reported how they arrested a pastor and 11 others for rape and defilement (Ezeilo, 2020). Also, the case of a 33-year-old father, Chibuikwe Kalu, in Lagos, defiled his 14-year-old daughter in his apartment (Usman, 2020). Another was the case of Chinedu Obi, who confessed to have been sleeping with his employer's twins girls since when they were 11 years (Usman, 2020). Statistics revealed that only 1 in 5 survivors of rape, globally, report to police due to fear of public shame, ridicule and stigmatisation (Ogundipe, Obinna, & Olawale, 2019). Unfortunately, 90 per cent of victims of rape and defilement are female (Chiazor, Ozoya, Udume & Egharevba, 2016).

The rape and defilement leave the survivors with emotional trauma and physical, social, and mental challenges. Sodipo, Adedokun, Adejumo and Olibamoyo (2018) revealed the consequences of sexual assault to include physical injuries, unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and sexually transmitted diseases, including Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and short and long-term consequences such as depression and suicide. In most cases, perpetrators of rape and defilement of minors are not strangers but people familiar to them. Reports have revealed perpetrators to include neighbours, close family members, caretakers, teachers, and surprising still,

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the father and brothers (Akpoghome & Nwano, 2016; Oseni, Lawani & Oyedeji, 2016; Sodipo, Adedokun, Adejumo & Olibamoyo, 2018). Rape and defilement of minors is against the dignity, preservation and well-being of its victims. The effect of rape and defilement of minor range in our argument ranges from a functional impairment, shock, distrust for others, frustration and depression, and health challenges for its victims. Based on this, the study sort to addressing these challenges banking on the following research questions.

1.1 Research Questions

In order to respond to the above problems, the following research questions were raised to guide the study; and the questions were answered using both primary and secondary sources of data.

- What are the causes of the brutal acts of rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria?
- What are the effects of rape and defilement of Minors in Nigeria?
- What are the societal responses to rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria?
- How can the tides of rape and defilement of minors be curbed in Nigeria?

1.2. Theoretical Framework

Theories relevant to rape and defilement of minors include psychoanalytic theory, attachment and integration theory. Attachment theory posits that “humans have a propensity to establish strong emotional bonds with others (Omodan & Tsotetsi, 2019), and when individuals have some loss and emotional distress, they act out as a result of their loneliness and isolation” (Terry and Tallon, 2004 p.15). It established a relationship between poor quality attachment to sexual offending, noting that men who sexually abuse underage fail to develop social skills and self-confidence necessary for effective intimacy with their peers (Terry and Tallon, 2004). The desire to satisfy sexual desire has been identified as one of the factors for the rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria. Psychoanalytic theory attributed to Freud, on the other hand, viewed sexual deviant as a result of the conflict in the stages of child development. According to the theorists, the failure to fix the unresolved conflict in the oral, anal, phallic and genital stage results in distortion of the sexual object (Terry and Tallon, 2004). The theory posited that oedipal conflict, in which boys no longer compete with their fathers for their mother, may shift their affections to females in their adults if their appearance brings back the fear of castration (Terry and Tallon, 2004). Undue closeness to females may also be one of the major factors for rape and defilement of minors.

Integration theory presented integration psychoanalytic and attachment theories to explain various factors responsible for deviant sexual behaviour. Finkelhor proposed a four-factor model of pre-condition for child sexual abuse, which includes motivation, internal inhibitions, external inhibitors and overcoming children’s likely resistance (SECASA, 2018). He integrated various theories on why individuals begin to participate in deviant sexual behaviour. He identified four underlying factors why perpetrators abuse and continue to abuse. These are emotional congruence, sexual arousal, blockage and disinhibition (Terry & Tallon, 2004 p. 18).

- i. Emotional congruence: He described emotional congruence “as the relationship between the adult abuser’s emotional needs and child’s characteristics. Such an adult, for instance, may suffer from low-esteem and a low sense of efficacy in social relationship and maybe more comfortable relating with children due to sense of power and control” (Terry & Tallon, 2004 p. 18; Ward & Hudson, 2008).
- ii. Sexual arousal: He opined that “the child abuser has been molested as a child and through conditioning and imprinting grew to find children arousing” (Terry and Tallon, 2004 p. 18; War and Hudson, 2008).
- iii. Blockage: Blockage refers to the abuser inability to have his emotional need met in the adult relationship (Males, 2004 p. 168).
- iv. Disinhibition: Refers to “factors that allow the molester to overcome his inhibitions so that he allows himself to molest a child. Finkelhor employed cognitive-behaviour theory to explain this factor. He noted that substance abuse and stress could contribute to the lowering of inhibitions” (Terry and Tallon, 2004 p. 18; Ward and Hudson, 2008).

Although integration theory did not address all the causes of rape and defilement, the proposed four-factor model by the theory is relevant to some of the causes of rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria. Emotional and sexual arousal through exposure to social media is one of the observed factors for rape and defilement of minors. This was one of the reasons for the alarming rate of rape and defilement in Nigeria, especially during the COVID-19 lockdown when people have time to watch movies and dramas. Blockage is also relevant to those who engage in rape and defilement due to lack of access to their partner. Also, disinhibition is associated with other causes of rape and defilement such as substance abuse and alcohol.

1.3. Literature Review: Conceptualisation of Rape and Defilement

Defilement is any sexual intercourse with a child under the age of 18, whether or not the child consents (160 Girls Project, 2020). Mwangi, Ndungo and Masiga (2018) identified types of defilement: i., incest, sex exploitation between blood relatives or surrogate relatives before victims reach the age of 18 years. ii. Commercial sex exploitation of children. The most common of these is child prostitution, which is using a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other considerations. iii. Sexual behaviour such as:

“Penetration in the vaginal, oral sex, prolonged kissing, cuddling, French kissing, looking at children with or without clothing with the intent to be sexually aroused, touching, folding, or kissing a child’s genital, making a child fold an adult’s genitals, forcing a child to undress, spying on a child in the bathroom or bedroom, exposing the children to adult sexuality, performing the acts in front of a child, exposing genitals, exposing one’s nudity for the sexual gratification of the adult. Others including telling dirty stories, videotaping or filming of children with the intent to create sexual stimulation, exploitation, exposing a child for sexual purposes on the internet, selling a child’s services as a prostitute; having a child perform in pornography, exchanging or purchasing child pornography” (Mwangi, Ndungo & Masiga, 2018 p.18)

On the other hand, rape, according to Ogundipe, Obinna, and Olawale (2019), is obtaining forceful sexual intercourse. It may be with a male organ or an object through the vagina or anus (Ogundipe, Obinna & Olawale, 2019). Similarly, Chiazor, Ozoya, Udume and Egharevba (2016) described rape as the act of forcefully having sex with someone against her will. Agbo (2019) described rape as the crime of forcefully having a sexual relationship with somebody against the person’s wish or consent. Akinwale and Omoera (2013) identified types of rape to include:

- i. forcible date rape, non-consensual sexual activity between people who are already acquainted, friends, acquaintances, people on a date or even people in an existing romantic relationship but in which consent is not given or is given under duress.
- ii. ii. Blitz rape, also called stranger rape, is the type in which the rapist assaults the victim on the street with no prior contact.
- iii. iii. Spousal rape, which is rape between a married or de facto couple. This is a non-consensus sexual assault in which the perpetrator is the victim spouse.
- iv. iv. Group rape occurs when a group of people participate in the rape of a single victim.
- v. v. Incest, a type of rape committed by the child’s parent or close relatives, such as grandparents, uncles, brothers.
- vi. vi. Statutory rape is a type of rape considered as an offence by the government to protect young people, especially the minor, with the assumption that people under a certain age do not have the capacity to give informed consent.
- vii. vi. Bottle rape, which is coerced sexual penetration with a foreign object.

Similarly, Peace Over Violence (2020) described types of rape to include:

- i. stranger rape, rape perpetrated by someone unknown to the survivor.
- ii. Blitz rape, in which the perpetrator rapidly and brutally assaults the victim without prior contact.

- iii. contact sexual assault, in which the perpetrator works to gain trust and confidence before assaulting.
- iv. home invasion sexual assault, in which the perpetrator breaks into the home to commit the assault.
- v. Acquaintance rape, in which the survivor and perpetrator are known to each other.
- vi. Statutory rape, unlawful intercourse with a minor.
- vii. Spousal/Partner rape is between two individuals who are in a relationship.
- viii. Incest, sexual abuse by a relative or family members.
- ix. Serial rape, series of rape committed on different occasions by the same perpetrators.
- x. gang rape, when two or more perpetrators act together to sexually assault the same victim, and
- xi. Substance facilitated rape is when alcohol or drugs compromise an individual's ability to consent to sexual activity. In whatever it may take, rape in its entirety is inhuman and have a lasting effect on the victims.

Criminal Code (Lawpadi, 2020) distinguished defilement from rape. According to the Code, sexual intercourse with underage girls or people with unsound minds is defilement. In this regard, someone can be charged for rape and defilement at the same time.

1.4 Conceptualising Minors

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990 (The African Child Policy Forum, 2013), describes a child to mean any human being below 18 years. Also, Section 277 of Child's Act Rights of 2003 describes a child as a person under eighteen years old (The African Child Policy Forum, 2013). Cybercrime (Prevention, Prohibition) Act 2015, Section 23 defines a minor or a child as someone below the age of 18. UNICEF (2020) represents a child as any person under 18. This research also views children below age 18 as minors.

2. Research Methodology

The mixed methods research approach was adopted to generate both primary and secondary data. For the primary data, an online questionnaire was designed and administered to two hundred and Nine (209) Nigerians across various sectors and regions. It includes respondents from Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo, in South West; Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers, in South-South; Enugu, and Imo, in South-East; Adamawa C, Niger C, Kogi C, and Kwara C in North Central; Bauchi E and Taraba in North East; and Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, and Sokoto States in North-West Nigeria. Also, respondents cut across the three major, Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba, in the country. It also involves both males (54.7%) and females (45.3%). The respondents' age is 18-25(35%); 26-45 (54.7%); 46-60 (9.9%); and above 60 (0.4%). It covers both married (34%) and single (66%). Respondents cut across different categories of people such are teachers, students, civil servants, lecturers, public servants, engineers, self-employed, corps members, artisans (welders, fashion designer, makeup artist, graphic designer, printer), surveyors, retirees, farmers, clergymen, broadcaster, and others. Both Christians (87.3%) and Muslims (12.7%) contributed to the survey. Besides, selected key informants from notable civil society organisations working in health, human rights and gender-related issues; government officials at the National Human Rights Commission; officers of law enforcement agencies; academics, religious leaders and media practitioners were purposively selected. The respondents were chosen using simple random sampling, while those interviewed were selected through purposive sampling. This is to ensure that people who have knowledge of the subject matter were selected. The questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents, while structured questions were used for the interview. Data gathered from the questionnaire were analysed statistically with frequencies and percentages, while interview responses were analysed descriptively. The researcher made efforts to avoid bias and ensure the objectivity of the study.

3. Presentation of Data and Results

Questions directly drawn from the research questions were responded to through an online questionnaire. There was a total of 209 respondents in all with varying responses for each question as discussed below:

3.1 Table 1: Causes of rape and the defilement of minors in Nigeria

Causes of Rape and Defilement of Minor in Nigeria	RESPONDENTS			
	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided	Total
Influence of social media	173(84%)	31(15%)	2 (1%)	206(100%)
Rituals for money	167 (80.7%)	27(13%)	13 (6.3%)	207(100%)
Socio-cultural factor	72 (35%)	104(50.5%)	30 (14.6%)	206(100%)
Psychiatric disorder of the offender	132(63.8%)	59(28.5%)	16 (7.7%)	207(100%)
Environmental factors	186(89.9%)	15(7.2%)	6 (7.9%)	207(100%)
Alcoholism	176(86)	29(14%)		205(100%)
Substance abuse	187(91.2%)	17(8.3%)	1(0.5%)	205(100%)
Seduce dress of the victims	153(73.9%)	51(24.6%)	3(1.4%)	207(100%)
Failure to bring perpetrators to book	181(87.4%)	21(10.1%)	5(2.4%)	207(100%)
Effects of lockdown	89(43.2%)	105(51%)	12(5.8%)	206(100%)

Source: Field Work, 2020

Various reasons have advanced for the rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria. These include the following factors:

Influence of social media and desire to practice what they learnt through it: On the influence of social media and desire to practice what they learnt through it, 173(84%) out of 206 respondents agreed that it is a major factor for rape and defilement of minors, while 31(15%) disagreed and 2(1%) responded “I don’t know. A religious leader in an interview linked to rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria to decadence in societal moral values, affecting the friends we keep, clothes we wear, and music we listen to, among other things. This refers to the negative effect of globalisation on moral values.

Rituals for money: Out of the 207 respondents, 167 (80.7%) agreed the rape and defilements of minors are used for rituals for quick money and wealth. Just 27(13%) disagreed, while 13 (6.3%) did not know whether rape and defilement of minors have been perpetrated for rituals purposes. A key informant (Field Survey, 2020) linked to rape and defilement of minors to rituals. This view was also supported by the Director of women, Ekiti State Ministry of Women Affairs, who submitted that “Personally, sometimes I feel it has to do with ritual purpose or how else will you explain the rape of a 3-month-old”. This is corroborated by Agbo (2019), who revealed the belief of some those raping virgins can transfer the destiny of the victim virgin to the rapist, thereby changing their situation from poverty to wealth. Similarly, a Bishop in the Punch, 30th March 2012, linked the increasing rate of rape of minors by men of enough to be their grandfather to ritual for quest material acquisition (Chiazor, Ozoya, Udume and Egharevba (2016). Aruna (2018), in a similar study, interviewed a 60-year-old magistrate who revealed that some so-called “men of God” arraigned in court confessed to using the virgins for power and that some claim to acquire spiritual power through and from it. She also revealed that some engage in the acts to get rich quickly through money rituals.

Socio-cultural factor: Superstitious Belief that it cures barrenness. Seventy-two (72), representing 35% out of the 206 who responded, agreed that rape and defilement of minors by some have a socio-cultural undertone as some believe that such acts can cure the problem of barrenness. Most of the respondents, 104(50.5%), disagreed, while 30(14.6%) claimed ignorance of such belief. This is corroborated by Chiazor, Ozoya, Udume, and Egharevba (2016), who posited that some men

with HIV hold the superstitious belief that having sex with a virgin will cure them of AIDs. Citing the case of a 66-year-old HIV/AIDs patient who rapes an 8-year-old girl in Asaba, they believed such belief lured people in that category to resort to raping innocent girls.

Psychiatric disorder of the offender: Most of the respondents, 132(63.8%) out of 207 respondents, agreed that perpetrators of rape and defilement of minors are mentally sick before engaging in such acts, 59(28.5%) disagreed, while 16(7.7%) said they didn't know whether a psychiatric problem can lead to such acts. The President of the National Association of Women Journalists in Nigeria, in a key informant interview (Field Survey, 2020) also, linked rape and defilement of minors to mental illness, among other reasons.

Environmental factor: Carelessness or negligence of parents. The majority of the respondents, 186(89.9%) out of 207 respondents, agreed that rape and defilement of minors is due to the carelessness and negligence of parents in taken care of their children, while just 15(7.2%) disagreed and 6(7.9%) claimed they did not know whether carelessness and negligence of parents can cause such act. This is corroborated by Salako (2016) report in relation to repeated defilement of two underages of co-tenants by a 48-year old trader in Lagos, who attributed the act to poor guardianship and innocence of the minors. In with the above, Ali (2017) noted that the failure of parents to give their children sex education is another reason for the rape and defilement of children. He opined that this s development is because their own parents struggled to talk to them and the fear that talking about sex early may lead the child to experiment with it. He submitted that the parents tend to leave the assignment of sex education to school and vice versa.

Alcoholism/Drug Abuse: Many respondents, 176(86%) out of 205, agreed that alcoholism is a major cause of rape and defilement of minors, while the remaining 29(14%) disagreed. Similarly, 187(91.2%) out of the 205 respondents are of the opinion that substance/drug abuse is a notable factor for rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria, while 17(8.3%) disagreed and 1(0.5%) did not know whether substance/drug abuse can lead to rape and defilement of minors. The President of the National Association of Women Journalists in Nigeria attributed to rape and defilement of minors to drunkenness and drug abuse (Field Survey, 2020). Similarly, Folorunso-Fransis (2020) established a correlation between the abuse of drugs and rape.

Seductive dress of the victims: Many respondents, 153(73.9%) out of 207 respondents, opined that seductive dress of the victims accounted for rape and defilement of minors while 51(24.6%) disagreed and 3(1.4%) claimed they did not know. Agbo (2019), in a similar study, submitted that indecent dressing, dressing that expose thighs, buttocks, stomachs and breast, expose such females for rape.

Failure to bring perpetrators to book: Also, failure to bring perpetrators to book was seen as another major factor for the increasing rate of rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria. Most of the respondents are of this opinion. 181 (87.4%) out of 207 supported this assertion, while 21(10.1%) disagreed and 5(2.4%) claimed ignorance of this fact. Failure to bring perpetrator to book. This is in line with Agbo (2019) finding, which revealed the rigorous process of law, such as providing medical evidence of rape and getting a police report at the shortest interval. She revealed the unfortunate situation in which some police would demand bribes to investigate and give reports, and if the bribe is not given, they accuse the victim of consenting to the rape, while in some cases, the complainants become the accused and vice versa. Hence, the number of rapists increase as they are not adequately punished (Agbo, 2019).

Effects of lockdown: It was revealed that the government's lockdown to curtail the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic allowed more people to stay at home, thus making some the devil's workshop. Many of the respondents, 89(43.2%) out of 206, agreed that lockdown contributed to the increasing rate of rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria, while 105(51%) disagreed and 12(5.8%) claimed they did not know. This is contrary to the view of a religious leader in an interview (Field Survey, 2020) who linked the increased rate of rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria to lockdown imposed to stem the spread of COVID-19. Similarly, the Inspector General of Police reported that 717 rape cases were reported between January and May 2020 (Igomu, 2020).

Other factors identified by respondents include the closeness of boys and girls alone behind closed doors, disunity/divorce by parents, unquenched sexual urges, the influence of friends and peer

groups, fear of God, lack of job, lack of sex education by parents, lack of uniform punishment for perpetrators, and wrong mindset. In the same vein, a key informant, the Director of Women, Ekiti State Ministry of Women Affairs (Field Survey, 2020), revealed other causes to include poverty, idleness/unemployment, the influence of alcohol and drugs, use of pornography, lack of moral values, inability to control sexual urges and mental disorderliness among others. In the same vein, the Officer in Charge, Legal Department of Ekiti State CID, Police Force, Ekiti State, in a key informant interview (Field Survey, 2020), revealed the following that mainly among the reported cases here, the causes of rape and child defilement have been the need to satisfy sexual urge, revenge, bitterness, use of drugs and alcohol, the exercise of control, use of pornography, indecent dressing and sometimes for ritual purposes. Similarly, an officer at the National Human Rights Commission identified causes of rape and defilement of minors to include early exposure to the entertainment industry, pornography, rape (victim/survivor) leads to rape, indecent dressing, staying in odd locations, staying with the opposite sex at odd period/time, the influence of drugs and alcoholic and related items, parental failure/negligence, lack of proper sex education, and mental deficiencies.

Other causes include lack of supporting institutions to bring perpetrators to book, lack of access to partners (for instance, a security member in a pastor’s house rape and defile the pastor’s 8-year-old daughter on the excuse of engaging in both night and day duty and unable to see his wife, especially when feeling cold (Odunsi, 2020; Ogunsile, 2020).

3.2. Effects of rape and defilement of Minors in Nigeria

Table 2: Effects of rape and defilement of Minors in Nigeria

Effects of Rape and Defilement of Minor in Nigeria	RESPONDENTS			
	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided	Total
Shock, fear and anxiety	191(93.2%)	9(4.4%)	5(2.4%)	205(100%)
Functional Impairment	167(81.1%)	16(8.7%)	23(11.2%)	206(100%)
Depression and frustration	193(93.2%)	12(5.8%)	2(1%)	207(100%)
Distrust for others	181(91.9%)	10(5.1%)	6(3%)	197(100%)
Behavioural problem	189(91.3%)	15(7.2%)	3(1.4%)	207(100%)
Maladjustment in school	175(85%)	22(10.7%)	9(4.4%)	206(100%)
Social isolation behaviour	181(87.4%)	21(10.1%)	5(2.4%)	207(100%)
Health challenges	176(85%)	25(12.1%)	6(2.9%)	207(100%)
Failure to bring perpetrators o book	181(87.4%)	21(10.1%)	5(2.4%)	207(100%)
Effects of lockdown	89(43.2%)	105(51%)	12(5.8%)	206(100%)

Source: Field Work, 2020

Shock, fear and anxiety: The majority of the respondents, 191(93.2%) out of 205, agreed that rape and defilement of Minors result in shock, fear and anxiety for the survivors. Just 9(4.4%) disagreed, while 5(2.4%) claimed that they did not know these as effects of rape and defilement of minors. This is in line with Igomu (2020) and RAINN (2020) finding that victims do pass through shock, anger, and depression.

Functional impairment: The majority of respondents, 167(81.1%) out of 206, agreed that survivors of rape and defilement used to suffer functional impairment, while 16(8.7%) disagreed 23(11.2%) said they did not know. In the same vein, Oseni, Lawani, and Oyedeji (2016), in a similar study of Case Study of Sexual Abuse of Minor, discovered that victims are subjected to a post-traumatic stress disorder, emotional and psychological damage. Child Family Community Australia (CFCA, 2013) revealed the consequences such as psychiatric disorder, negative mental health such as depression, helplessness, negative attributions, eating disorders and conduct problems

Depression and frustration: Almost all respondents, 193(93.2%) out of 207, opined that depression and frustration are parts of the effects of rape and defilement on survivors, while 12(5.8%) disagreed, and 2(1%) claimed ignorance of the side effects. This finding is similar to the findings that rape and defilement of minors led to depression (CFCA, 2013; Igomu, 2020; RAINN, 2020)

Distrust for others: Out of the 197 respondents, 181(91.9%) agreed that survivors of rape and defilement of minors used to have distrust for others while only 10(5.1%) disagreed and 6(3%) did not know. This finding is in line with the finding of Philip and Ajanwachukwu that lack of trust and loss of confidence in others, among others, are long-term effects of rape of minors.

Behavioural problems: In line with the above, 189(91.3%) out of 207 respondents revealed that survivors of rape and defilement used to have behavioural problems. Just 15(7.2%) disagreed, and 3(1.4%) did not know. A similar finding by RAINN (2020) revealed the effects of sexual violence to include eating disorders, sleeping disorders, self-harm, panic attacks, and substance abuse.

Maladjustment in school: Similar to the above, 175(85%) opined that survivors of rape and defilement of minors usually find it difficult to cope at schools while 22(10.7%) disagreed and 9(4.4%) claimed ignorance of the effects. This finding is corroborated by Agbo (2019) that child sexual abuse has implications for the education of the victims.

Social isolation behaviour: Out of the 207 respondents, 181(87.4%) agreed that the survivors of rape and defilement of minors used to develop social isolation behaviours, while 21(10.1%) disagreed and 5(2.4%) did not know. In the same vein, RAINN (2020) revealed that dissociation is one of the many defensive mechanisms the brain can use to cope with the trauma of sexual violence.

Health challenges: Also, most respondents, 176(85%) out of 207, are of the opinion that survivors of rape and defilement of minors are faced with health challenges. Only 25(12.1%) disagreed, while 6(2.9%) claimed ignorance of the challenge of health survivors of rape and defilement. A key informant, the Director of Women Affairs in Ekiti State Ministry of Women Affairs, revealed the effects of rape and defilement of minors as follows:

Some of the effects of the abuse on victims include exposure to infection, damage to internal organs as some defiled children have to undergo reconstructive surgeries on their genitals, unwanted pregnancy and abortion, death, fear, loss of positive self-image (Field Survey, 2020).

Other effects of rape and defilement on survivors identified by respondents include low self-esteem, hatred for the opposite sex, death, suicide, permanent disability, and stigma on the survivors. A key informant from National Human Rights Commission, in a key informant interview (Field Survey, 2020), revealed the effects of rape and defilement of minors too include psychological trauma, social stigma, educational deficiency, transfer of STDs, suicide attempts, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, sexual phobia, sex addiction, and low esteem. Effects of rape, according to scholars, include withdrawal, bedwetting, thumb-sucking, aggression, cluelessness, drug addiction, prostitution, depression, suicidal thoughts, nightmares, flashbacks, eating disorders, feeling of guilt or shame (Igomu, 2020). There are cases in which the victims were raped to death (The New Humanitarian, 2008).

3.3. Societal Response to rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria

Protests: For instance, 400 women marched through Oshogbo, the state capital of Osun State, to protest against rape and defilement in the State (The Punch, 20th April 2012 cited in Chiazor, Ozoya, Udume and Egharevba (2016). The large turnout for the protest depicts the disapproval of society to the acts of rape and defilement of minors. It was also a signal to the government to intervene urgently to curb the trend.

Condemnation: Public opinion on reactions to news of rape and defilement of minors always condemn the acts. People often recommend severe punishment like imprisonment without option, life imprisonment without the benefits of amnesty, cutting of the manhood of perpetrators, and death sentence for the perpetrators (Field Work, 2020)

Non-Governmental Organisation efforts: Also, there are Non-Government Organisation set up to fight and curb rape and defilement in Nigeria. Such are (i). The Mirabel Center founded in 2013 by Itoro Eze-Anaba, a lawyer who lobbied Nigerian Government to pass a bill outlawing domestic

violence. The Center is the first Sexual Assault Referral Center in Nigeria. (ii). Stand to End Rape (STER) was launched in 2015 by a survivor of rape, Ayodeji Osowobi, to provide prevention mechanisms and psychological services to survivors. (iii). Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF), a non-profit organisation based in Lagos, was set up in 2016 by Dr Kemi Dasilva-Ibru, a gynecologist, to provide health education and community service for survivors of sexual violence. (iv). Hands Off Initiative was set up in 2018 by Ololade Ganikale to break the cycle of abuse in Nigeria and address the challenge of rape and sexual harassment. Through frequent outreach programmes, the organisation goes to public and private schools to teach kids and youths about consent. (v). Wineandwhineng is a platform that hosts events and makes women converge to discuss issues of concern and find solutions to them (Okunola, 2020). Eguagie (2016), the programme officer and rape watch coordinator, the Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ), considering the increasing rate of rape in Nigeria, opined that law should no longer be lenient with rapists and perpetrators at all levels of the community so as to deter perpetrators in the society.

3.4 Curbing the tides of rape and defilement of minors be curbed in Nigeria

Table 3: Steps taken by the Government to curb the menace of rape and child defilement in Nigeria

Steps taken by Government to curb Rape and Defilement of Minor in Nigeria	RESPONDENTS				Total
	Agreed	Disagreed	Undecided	Others	
Laws in some States	165(79.7%)	17(8.2%)	25(12.1%)		207(100%)
Naming and Shaming	148(71.8%)	17(8.3%)	41(19.9%)		206(100%)
Imprisonment	152(73.8%)	22(10.7%)	28(13.6%)	4(2%)	206(100%)

Source: Field Work, 2020

The following were the identified steps taken by the government to curb the challenge of rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria:

Laws in some States. Out of 207 respondents, 165(79.7%) affirmed that the government in some States in Nigeria made laws against rape with penalties for perpetrators, while 17(8.2%) had a contrary opinion and 25(12.1%) did not know. To corroborate the above finding, Lawpadi (2020) described laws against rape promulgated at various levels of governance. These include:

- i. Criminal Code which is applicable to the Southern States
- ii. The Penal Code, which is applicable to the Northern States
- iii. The Criminal Law of Lagos, applicable to Lagos State
- iv. The violence Against Person Prohibition Act, which is applicable only in FCT Abuja, and
- v. The Child’s Rights Act, which is applicable in States that domesticate it (Lawpadi, 2020).

In the same vein, Section 23 of Cybercrime (Prevention, Prohibition) Act 2015 sees as an offence if: Any person who intentionally proposes, grooms, or solicits, through a computer system or network, to meet a child for the purpose of: (a) engaging in sexual activities with the child; (b) engaging in sexual activities with the child where – (i) use is made of coercion, inducement, force or threats.

Furthermore, in an effort to combat the incessant defilement and rape of children, the Governor of Ekiti State signed into law Ekiti Sexual Violence against Children Law (compulsory Treatment and care for child victims of sexual violence) (Premium Times, 2020). Also, out of the 206 respondents, 148(71.8%) supported the fact that some States, for instance, Ekiti State, introduced a measure “naming and shaming” as part of the punishment to expose perpetrators of rape and defilement of minors in order to serve as a deterrent to others. Some of the respondents, 17(8.3%), opined “No” while 41(19.9%) claimed ignorance of such a step. This development is corroborated by Nejo (2020) and Shibayan (2020). The naming and shaming initiative allows for the names and photographs of convicted rapists to be recorded in the sex offenders’ register and also pasted on billboards in prominent public places in their communities and local governments headquarters. It is also uploaded on the website of the State Ministry of Justice and other government platforms (Nejo,

2020). Shibayan (2020) presented the example of one Gabriel serving five years imprisonment at Ado-Ekiti correctional centre for raping a seven years old girl.

It was also revealed that imprisonment was part of the punishment of perpetrators of rape and defilement of minors. Out of 206 respondents, 152(73.8%) affirmed the practice while 22(10.7%) responded "No", and 28(13.6%) did not know. Furthermore, 2(1%) affirmed that some states have been able to do that while 1(0.5%) and another 1(0.5%) revealed that other states had imposed castration and death sentences, respectively. Under Sharia Penal Laws applicable to 12 States in Northern Nigeria, rape is part of the death penalty offence (ILO, 2020:7).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study interrogates the causes, effects and societal responses to rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria. Findings reveal the causes of rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria to include, but are not limited, to influence social media, an avenue for money rituals, psychological disorder of perpetrators, failure to bring perpetrators to book, alcoholism, and substance abuse. The study also reveals that the effects of such acts range from shock and fear to frustration, depression, functional impairment, mistrust of others, behavioural problems and health challenges, among others. Further findings show efforts on the part of government and society to curb the tides of rape and defilement of minors. These include protests, condemnation through public opinion in mass media, Non-Governmental Organisation interventions while the government has imposed various laws and penalties on perpetrators. In view of the above, the recommendations below would go a long way to ameliorate the acts of rape and defilement of minors in Nigeria. Based on this, the following recommendations were made:

- Culture of silence should be addressed. People should be encouraged to speak out. The culture of stigmatising the victims should be discouraged by the relevant penalty for anyone that does such.
- The vulnerable should be taken care of. To put an end to rape and child defilement, vulnerable people should be careful of where they go, who they move with and what they do. Anytime they identify potential harm, they should speak out and raise alarm. Victims and vulnerable persons should report to any NGO working on gender issues, law enforcement agencies, particularly the newly commissioned Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), which is located within EKSUTH premises and has total care and support in their services.
- Stricter measures should be taken to punish perpetrators for serving as a deterrent to others. Existing Laws should be well implemented. For instance, death sentence as in Indonesia and chemical castration as in Poland will drive the message home to potential rapists to have a rethink of involving in such acts.
- Law should be strictly used to deal with rapists to serve as a deterrent to others. Penalties should be spelt out and made public to create fear in perpetrators.

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