

University Undergraduates' Perception of the Menace of Rape: Causes and Effect

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Abstract: Rape is reported to occur daily in Nigeria, affecting a wide range of victims, from older women to tiny toddlers under five years old. It is a prevalent form of illegal sexual misconduct that not only violates the dignity of survivors but also jeopardises their health and well-being. This study shed light on the issue of rape in Nigerian society. Its objectives are to determine the causes and effects of rape, as well as propose possible solutions for curbing it. A descriptive research design of the cross-sectional subtype was employed for this study. Data was collected through the administration of a researcher-designed questionnaire to a total sample of 200 respondents. The mean rating was used to analyse the data and address the research questions. The results of the study indicated that the respondents agreed that proving sexual prowess is the most common cause of rape. To combat the issue of rape, victims should feel empowered to speak out. Public awareness campaigns and comprehensive sex and moral education should be implemented. The study also recommends that women be encouraged to dress

modestly, parents serve as good role models to their children, and young adults be taught to say NO to rape and report any cases they encounter without supporting or concealing them.

Keywords: Menace of rape, causes of rape, effects of rape, university undergraduates, victims.

1. Introduction

With 90 per cent of the population being either Christian or Muslim, Nigeria has been described as a profoundly religious country. Every day, incidents of homicide, banditry, armed robbery, and rape, to name a few, are covered in various news outlets around the country. Rape has recently become a regular occurrence in Nigeria (Orji & Uche, 2021). It is condemned in both religions' teachings. Despite a lack of comprehensive statistics in Nigeria, evidence from several states indicates that rape incidents are rising (Izzi & Obinuch, 2016). Rape is a worldwide issue (Persson & Dhingra, 2021) and is recognised as the most traumatic experience, with harmful implications for victims and their families (Mgolozeli & Duma, 2020). It is considered a traumatic event with long-term health consequences (Olaleye & Ajuwon, 2019; Oshodi et al., 2020). More than 40% of rape victims are believed to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a relatively high figure compared to other forms of trauma (Bragesjö et al., 2020; Covers et al., 2019). Rape is said to occur daily in Nigeria, affecting individuals ranging from older women to girls under five years old. It is a widespread form of illegal sexual conduct that violates survivors' dignity and jeopardises their health and well-being (Ogunwale et al., 2019). According to reports, women are more likely than their male counterparts to be raped (Lichty & Gowen, 2021).

The number of rape survivors has recently decreased due to a new trend of murdering the victims after the heinous deed (Aladetoyinbo, 2020; Tade & Udechukwu, 2020). It violates victims' rights regardless of gender, although it is more commonly perpetrated against females than males (Olatunji & Thomas, 2017). Rape is a form of assault where sexual interaction is unwanted and non-consensual,

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involving the use of physical force, threats, or verbal intimidation against the victim (Orji & Uche, 2021). Rape, like other forms of violence against women, is considered by Chiazor et al. (2016) to be an attack on women's rights, privacy, self-preservation, and dignity. It is defined in Section 357 of the Nigerian Criminal Code as a situation in which an individual engages in unlawful sexual intercourse with another individual, regardless of their gender, without their consent. Furthermore, it can also occur when consent is obtained through force, threats, or any form of intimidation or when the true nature of the act is misrepresented (Oluwaleye & Adefisoye, 2021).

Nigeria has witnessed numerous cases of rape, some of which have resulted in fatalities. Several high-profile incidents serve as examples (Izzi & Obinuchi, 2019). In November 2021, the medical director of a clinic raped his wife's niece, a 15-year-old girl, over a period of several months (Samuel, 2023). In March 2022, a fashion designer was raped and subsequently thrown out of a bus (Ebele, 2022). In August 2022, an actor was charged in a State High Court in Uyo for the rape of a 16-year-old girl he had adopted and lived with, as well as for providing abortion medication (Medeme, 2022; Tarinipre, 2022). Similarly, a Nollywood actor was accused of abusing the 14-year-old foster daughter of a comedienne (Busari & Ogunsakin, 2022). Allegations arose against a Nigerian musician, who reportedly suffered from a blood clot in her chest due to abuse by her husband (Ebele, 2022). Furthermore, a 41-year-old instructor was charged with defiling a six-year-old student and subsequently found guilty, resulting in a life sentence (Ojo, 2023). Lawyard (2024) reports a case where an elderly man who engaged in sexual activity with his neighbour's 11-year-old daughter was also sentenced to life imprisonment. Additionally, a 45-year-old man sexually assaulted a 7-year-old girl in Kaduna State (Nseyen, 2024).

In the city of Ilorin, located in Kwara State, Nigeria, an incident of fatal rape involved a university undergraduate who was assaulted by a group of three individuals (Garba, 2022). The relative of one of these three undergraduates also fell victim to gang rape (Oyekola, 2023). In another case, a student seeking medical treatment at the Chief Medical Director's hospital in the Sawmill neighbourhood of Ilorin was sexually assaulted by a doctor (Akinyemi, 2023). Additionally, a three-year-old girl was sexually molested by a 21-year-old student (Abdulkareem, 2023). There were allegations against a 49-year-old man for raping a 17-year-old girl in Ilorin, and reportedly, a private security officer raped a 15-year-old girl in an office at Gaa Akanbi (Shittu, 2024).

Unfortunately, rape is a pervasive social problem in the society. It affects various sectors, including the family, school system, employment, armed forces, hospitals, and places of worship (Laima et al., 2021). This issue particularly plagues many developing nations, where victims suffer severe mental distress that often leads to despair and even suicide (Motillon-Toudic et al., 2022). The majority of victims, approximately 90%, are sexually exploited by individuals they know, commonly referred to as 'familiar foes' (Idoko et al., 2020). These perpetrators can include family members such as grandparents, fathers, and uncles (Egbe et al., 2020), as well as neighbours and individuals in positions of trust (Amole et al., 2021). Trusting neighbours to care for one's child while running errands is no longer a safe option, as the situation can quickly change (Folarin & Ajayi, 2019).

According to Abdulganiyu (2020), the Nigerian authorities have not done enough to combat rape crimes, resulting in a significant increase in the number of incidents. Furthermore, Ibenegbu (2018) and Agiriga (2019) express concerns about police extortion and the fear that law enforcement will not take appropriate action against perpetrators. Consequently, pursuing legal action becomes a futile exercise (Bivens & Dawson, 2019). Individuals who have the courage to come forward as victims often face disparagement and ridicule (Audu, 2016). Orjinmo (2020) reveals that many Nigerians lack confidence in the judicial process and, as a result, do not engage with the legal system or report cases to authorities. Additionally, rape victims are often blamed for their clothing choices, being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or even being accused of fabricating rape allegations. As

a result, it is a challenging task to convict suspected rapists and provide justice for victims of sexual assault (William, 2020).

Given the frequency of these heinous crimes, it is crucial for the government and individuals to collaborate in order to eliminate or minimise rape in Nigerian society. Therefore, it is imperative to take concrete steps to tackle this issue. Against this backdrop, the study examines the perception of university undergraduates regarding the prevalence of rape in present-day Nigerian society and its impact on victims, with the goal of suggesting a way forward by answering the following research questions:

1.1 Research questions

- What are university undergraduates' perceptions of the causes of rape?
- What are the university undergraduates' perceptions of the effects of rape on the victims?
- How can rape be curbed as perceived by undergraduate students?

2. Literature Review

Oluwaleye and Adefisoye (2021) explored the reasons for the rape and defilement of children in Nigeria. According to their research, the defilement of children in Nigeria is seen as a means for money rituals from a socio-cultural perspective. Ugwuanyi et al. (2021) examined the causes and consequences of rape, as well as the various aspects of rape outcomes. They discovered that rape is caused by sex myths, indecent attire, a lack of documentation on rape cases (Abdullahi & Saa-Aondo, 2021), peer pressure, ritual rape, youth unemployment, economic status, child labour, inequality, ignorance, spiritual manipulation, and poor self-esteem (Agbo, 2019). Chiazoe et al. (2016) investigated the dynamic, institutional, socio-psychological, cultural, and socioeconomic factors that influence both victims and perpetrators of this heinous crime. They proposed that NGOs and civil society launch comprehensive education campaigns against rape and its perpetrators. These campaigns should promote zero tolerance for rape by fostering an attitude of intolerance towards rape and dispelling misconceptions about sex in Nigeria through the media.

Iyanda (2021) investigated the impact of the Igbo traditional family structure and community in reducing rape in Nigeria's South East region. According to the study, the Igbo traditional family system is specifically designed to prevent rape by providing members with training and re-training. Ani et al. (2019) explained that extended family members and society as a whole participate in child-rearing and socialisation processes, acting as guardians against deviant behaviour. Ifemesia (2020) advocated for the revival of the traditional family system and family unions, even in urban contexts, and emphasised the importance of the traditional family structure in instilling acceptable values and reducing rape, particularly in Nigeria's South East. There is no punishment too severe for rapists (Odeh, 2018).

Rape has both physical and psychological consequences. Its victims experience a wide range of effects, including mental health and biological issues (Amole et al., 2021), psychological and cognitive challenges, and social crises (Amuda, 2021). Various researchers have reported that rape can result in unwanted pregnancy, abortion (Kamal-Deen, 2017), exposure or transmission of diseases, damage or dysfunction of body organs (Agiriga, 2019), trauma and paranoia, self-pity or self-blame, and suicidal tendencies (RAINN, 2020). Nnaji (2022) proposed that public education should address the issue of rape to raise awareness that anyone, regardless of age, can be a victim.

Peace Over Violence (2020) suggested that the government should fully implement strong sanctions such as name shaming of abusers, life sentences, and strict enforcement of existing laws against rape and defilement (Izzi & Obinuch, 2016) to reduce rape. The judiciary and judicial system should strive to try all rape cases in closed courtrooms. Rape myths, fear of stigma, insensitivity of law enforcement officers to sexual assault, and government policies are all factors that contribute to victims not

reporting rape, as noted by Awosusi and Ogunjana (2015). Other factors include mental illness, intoxication, and substance abuse among perpetrators (Lawpadi, 2020). Beginning with basic education, there is a need for value re-orientation through school and social media platforms for future leaders of society (Obot et al., 2018; Orji & Uche, 2021).

3. Materials and Methods/methodology

In this study, descriptive research of the cross-sectional subtype was used. A cross-sectional study is a type of research that is used to investigate factors in various groups that are comparable in other ways (Setia, 2016). This survey type allows the researcher to gather data at a specified time from various specific groups, even though real-time is necessary to complete the survey at a certain time. As a result, a cross-sectional subtype of descriptive research survey was utilised to conduct this study since it allowed the researchers to collect a large quantity of information on stakeholders' perceptions of the rape threat in society.

3.1 Sample and sampling technique

The population for this study consisted of university undergraduates in Ilorin, Nigeria, specifically those attending public universities. Ilorin has two public universities: one Federal and one State. Due to the large number of students at both institutions, the faculty of education was selected for participant recruitment. Proportionate sampling was employed to ensure representation from both universities. As the federal university has a larger student population, a greater number of respondents were selected from this institution. Specifically, 125 respondents were chosen from the federal university, while 75 were selected from the state university. Accidental sampling was used to recruit a total of 200 university undergraduates who served as the sample for this study.

3.2 Instrumentation and data analysis

The study collected data using a questionnaire developed by the researchers titled "Undergraduates' Perception of the Menace of Rape in Society." The questionnaire was divided into four sections: A, B, C, and D. Section A gathered demographic information such as gender, religion, and educational background of the participants. Section B focused on participants' views on the causes of rape, while Section C explored its impacts. Section D discussed methods for reducing rape in society. The questionnaire items were categorised as strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), disagreed (D), and strongly disagreed (SD).

Two Test and Measurement professionals reviewed and approved the instrument to ensure its validity. Their suggestions and revisions were incorporated into the final version, which was then administered to thirty (30) individuals from the general public who were not part of the sample. With a four-week interval, the test-retest reliability approach was employed to assess the instrument's reliability. The Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient statistic was used to correlate the scores from the two administrations, resulting in a coefficient of 0.83. The questionnaires were distributed to the study participants by the researchers and three research assistants. The data collected for the study was analysed using descriptive statistics, including mean rating and standard deviation.

3.3 Ethical consideration

Ethical considerations were given utmost attention during the course of this study. The researcher ensured that no form of plagiarism occurred by adequately citing and referencing sources that contributed directly or indirectly to the research. In the introductory section of the questionnaire, permission was obtained from the participants, along with information about the purpose of the study, to ensure voluntary participation and obtain fully informed consent. Additionally, participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point if desired. It was also made clear that any data provided prior to withdrawal would not be included in the

study. Finally, maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was treated as a top priority in this study.

4. Presentation of Results

This section presents the results from the data collected and arranged to respond to the research questions raised above. Three research questions were raised, and the results below are presented in the hierarchy of the questions.

Research Question 1: What is the perception of university undergraduates on the causes of rape?

Table 1: University undergraduates' perception of the causes of rape

S/No.	Incidences of rape	Mean	SD	Position
1	To prove sexual prowess	3.66	1.401	1 st
2	Promiscuity	3.59	1.325	2 nd
3	High level of immorality	3.23	1.298	3 rd
4	Indecent Dressing	3.11	1.285	4 th
5	Desire to punish	2.97	1.242	5 th
6	Poverty	2.84	1.162	6 th
7	Peer Pressure	2.80	1.158	7 th
8	The negative influence of social media	2.73	1.105	8 th
9	Excessive intake of alcohol	2.61	1.053	9 th

Benchmark score: 2.50

Table 1 reveals the respondents' opinions on the causes of rape. The majority of the respondents agreed that an individual's desire to prove their sexual prowess is the most common cause of rape. It was followed by promiscuity, a high level of immorality, indecent dressing, and a desire to punish the victims, which were also identified as common causes of rape. Other identified causes include poverty, peer pressure, the negative influence of social media, and excessive alcohol consumption. All the identified causes of rape had a higher mean score than the benchmark score. Therefore, according to the perception of university undergraduates, proving sexual prowess is the most common cause of rape.

Research Question 2: What is the effect of rape as perceived by stakeholders?

Table 2: Effect of rape as perceived by stakeholders

S/No	Effects of rape	Mean	SD	Position
1	Shame	3.47	1.315	1 st
2	Depression	3.36	1.428	2 nd
3	Unwanted Pregnancy	3.23	1.325	3 rd
4	Sexually Transmitted Diseases	2.76	1.320	4 th
5	Suicide	2.66	1.447	5 th

Benchmark score: 2.50

Table 2 shows that respondents agreed that shame, depression, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and suicide are the effects of rape on victims. These effects were ranked in order, with shame being perceived as the most common effect of rape by university undergraduates.

Research Question 3: How can rape be curbed as perceived by stakeholders?

Table 3: Curbing of rape as perceived by stakeholders

S/No	Curbing Rape	Mean	SD	Position
1	Rape recovery programme should be available and accessible	4.41	1.371	1 st

2	Victims must be ready to speak out	3.69	1.310	2 nd
3	Stiffer Punishment for Offenders	3.65	1.298	3 rd
4	Sex education should be introduced in the school curriculum	3.58	1.235	4 th
5	Institutional Framework should be put in place to deal with sexual abuse	3.54	1.203	5 th
6	Good moral upbringing should start at home	3.45	1.196	6 th
7	More women should take up positions in politics and policy-making	2.86	1.172	7 th

Benchmark score: 2.50

As shown in Table 3, university undergraduates have identified the establishment of a rape recovery programme as the most crucial measure in reducing incidents of rape. Other methods of curbing rape in society include encouraging victims to speak out, imposing stricter penalties on offenders, and incorporating sex education into the school curriculum. Additionally, creating institutional frameworks to address rape and sexual abuse, promoting good moral upbringing at home, and empowering women to hold positions in politics were also recognised by the university undergraduates as effective ways to combat rape in society.

4.1 Discussion of findings

In this study, it was revealed that the increase in incidences of rape is influenced by several factors. Perpetrators often feel the need to prove their sexual prowess. University undergraduates also attributed the increase to promiscuity, high immorality, indecent dressing, and a desire to punish the victims. It is worth noting that in most cases, rape victims are acquainted with their attackers. Therefore, parents and guardians should be mindful of the movies their children are watching. Additionally, the presence of pornographic content on certain social media platforms and websites can also encourage the act of rape. Ineffective legislation and poverty have also been identified as underlying causes of rape. These findings support the research conducted by Chiazor (2016), Tade and Udechukwu (2020), and Abdullahi and Saa-Aondo (2021), who have all argued that rape is influenced by sex myths and indecent dressing.

The study's findings also highlight the adverse effects of rape on the victims. It was noted that victims may experience shame and ridicule, which often leads them to leave their environment. Furthermore, these experiences may discourage victims from reporting the case to the appropriate agencies. Ibenegbu (2018) has suggested that victims may face further ridicule and molestation from members of their community. Okafor-Udah (2015) pointed out that rape victims may fall into a state of depression, making it difficult for them to recover. They may perceive life as meaningless, as they struggle with the trauma alone and are afraid to speak out due to fear of stigma.

Another finding of the study is that university undergraduates agree on strategies to curb the menace of rape in society. Establishing rape recovery centres for victims is considered an effective method to minimise, if not eradicate, incidences of rape. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Olatunji and Thomas (2017), who proposed public enlightenment and education as a means to change people's behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, and value systems regarding rape. This implies that schools, social clubs, cultural groups, churches, mosques, social media, and NGOs should all be involved in raising awareness. Similar findings have been reported by Aborisade (2019), Lawpadi (2020), and Orji and Uche (2021), suggesting that training the police, law enforcement, prosecution, attorneys, advocates, and the general public is crucial. It is important to recognise that anyone can be a victim of rape and that victims' rights should be protected with dignity, fairness, and respect. Furthermore, incorporating sex education into the school curriculum is highly recommended.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Rape is prevalent in Nigeria and cuts across all spheres of society. It is an evil wind that does no one any good. It is one of the social problems affecting society. An uncritical mind, cruelty, indecent dressing, and many other things cause rape. The results of this study may be utilised to create focused educational initiatives that will increase students' comprehension of rape-related concerns. Additionally, this study advances knowledge on the barriers to reporting rape that victims may face, such as a lack of confidence in the legal system or a fear of shame. Enhance victim support services accordingly and promote the reporting of rapes. Rape leads to death, depression, suicide, and other adverse effects. To curb rape, all hands must be on deck – teachers, parents, the government, and other stakeholders should play their roles. It was recommended that:

- The government and the judicial system should play their roles by ensuring that no rapist goes unpunished.
- Parents should play their own role in monitoring their children, especially adolescents, to know the type of books they read, the kind of movies they watch, and the type of friends they keep.
- Parents themselves should be good examples to their wards and teach them about sex education at home. Society should be taught to say NO to rape and report any rape cases around them without supporting or helping to conceal them.

6. Declarations

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation (O.A.O. & O.O.D.); Literature review (O.O.D.); methodology (O.A.O.); software (N/A); validation (O.A.O.); formal analysis (O.O.D.); investigation (O.O.D.); data curation (O.O.D.) drafting and preparation (O.A.O. & O.O.D.); review and editing (O.A.O.); supervision (O.O.D.); project administration (O.A.O.); funding acquisition (N/A). All authors have read and approved the published version of the article.

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