

Rape and the Girl Child

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Abstract: Rape is an oral, anal or vaginal penetration that involves threat or force against an unwilling person younger than the age of consent. It is a traumatic and life threatening experience, one that cannot be forgotten easily. It may leave survivor full of fear, doubt and anger. Not only does it affect the survivor, the pains and ripples through the family, friend and other significant others. Rape is an example of violence against the girl-child. Reducing the rate of this crime in our society must begin from a change in the way girls are perceived. There are different types of rape such as statutory rape, date rape, war rape, stranger rape and child rape. Parents should educate the girl child on sexuality education, decent dressing and good moral upbringing in a Godly way and teach them to avoid peers with negative influence. The law enforcement agents should investigate and bring the offenders to book to serve as a deterrent to others. This paper discussed the types of rape, predisposing factors to rape, effects on the girl child and care of rape victim. Adequate suggestions were made for the prevention of the girl child from rape.

Keywords: child, consent, girl, Rape, victim,

I. Introduction

Rape is defined as the expression of power and dominance by means of sexual violence, most commonly by men over women, although men can also be raped [1]. It is also defined as an illicit sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent (by force, deception while she is asleep) [2]. Throughout history, forceful sexual intercourse without the consent of the woman has occurred in most cultures around the world. In the Bible (2 Samuel 13:1-14) a pathetic story occurred when Ammon raped his sister Tamar and her life was never the same again. Although, legal and medical definition of rape varies, rape is typically defined as oral, and or vaginal penetration that involves threats or force against an unwilling person. Such penetration, whether wanted or not, is considered statutory rape if victim are younger than the age of consent. Sexual assault is rape or any other sexual contact that results from coercion, including seduction of a child through offer of affection or bribes [3].

Rape is assaultive attack on any unwilling victim [4]. It is an aggression against females mostly during wars, against slave girls, prisoners and social groups who traditionally lack power or status, where the perpetrators of this act uses it as a means of humiliating, degrading and dehumanizing their enemies. Current case in Nigeria today is that of Chibok girls abducted by Boko Haran sect on the 14th of April, 2014 in Bornu State. Rape is found to be common in male dominated, violence prone societies in which females have little or no political power[5]. [6] defined rape as “physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration, even if slight-of the vulva or anus, using penis, other body parts or an object”. The U.S. Justice and department estimated that 300,000 American women are raped annually while the Center for Disease Control gives a figure of 1.3million.

In Nigeria, Lagos State Police Command recorded 678 cases between March 2012 and March 2013 aside from unreported cases. According to 2009 study in Clinical Psychology review, in 65 studies from 22 countries, the highest prevalence rate of child sexual abuse was in Africa (34.4 percent) Vanguard News (2014). According to CLEEN Foundation (an NGO), only 28 percent of rape cases are reported to the Police [7]. [8] reported a case of police orderly, 4 others gang-rape a 17 year old girl in Kano State. [9] reported that a 37 years old mechanic raped a 13 years old girl for 5 days on the 30th of October 2014 at Lokoja. On the 17th of July 2013 a 39 years old man rape a 9 years old girl Vanguard News (2013)[10].

[11]stated categorically that the over increasing incidents of rape especially of minors have become a source of worry to many Nigerians. Hardly can a day pass without reports of women and minors raped across the country. It was reported that 80 rape cases were handled in seven months. In this contemporary time, rape has continued to be a widespread global problem. It is a topic that makes many people of all ages uncomfortable. Rape is a serious crime, it is a traumatic and life-threatening experience – one that can not be easily forgotten. It may leave a survivor full of fear, doubt and anger. Not only does it affect the survivor, the pain ripples through her family, friends and other significant others if the survivor chooses to tell them. The memory of being raped and the fear experienced during and after the occurrence may never completely diminished and vanishes while others are severally traumatized throughout their life time.

One wonders why a man will decide to rape a 2 year old child. Why will a gang decide to rape a 16 year old girl and why will an uncle, a brother, a father, an in-law etc, rape one in his custody. These are the questions that bothered me that prompted my writing this paper. Besides, the natural reluctance to talk about the issue (rape) and the widespread misconception mistaken about rape have resulted in a great deal of ignorance, secrecy and shame surrounding the subject matters. Lack of understanding, awareness, and open communication about rape only add to the suffering of victims since rape affects girls more than any other group in the society. Girls deserve and need accurate information about its predisposing factors, its effects and management of rape victim.

II. Types Of Rape

According to [12], rape can be categorized in different ways, according to the situation it occurs or by identity or characteristic of the victim or the characteristic of the perpetrator. [13] classified rape to include Marital or Spousal Rape which means rape by husband, wife. It is rape between married persons. Exchange Rape which is rape occurring as a result of bargaining or solidarity displaying among men. Punitive or Corrective Rape is used to punish or discipline non-heterosexuals for violating gender roles as in lesbians or [14] and theft rape that happens when a woman is abducted, in most cases to be used as a slave or a prostitute.

Other types of rape include, Ceremonial rape that occurs during ritual, rape by deception that occurs when the perpetrators gain the victims consent through fraud. Custodial rape, which is perpetrated by a person employed by the State in a supervisory or custodial position, such as police officer, public servant or jail or hospital employee. It include the rape of children in institutional care such as Orphanages [15]. War rape is a forced sexual relationship that occurs during wars by soldiers on female victims[5]. Stranger rape describes nonconsensual sexual penetration between individuals who do not know each other before sexual act.

[16] further gave typology of different types of rape as follows, Anger Rape where the main aim of the rapist is to hurt, humiliate and debase their victims through physical violence and profane language using sex as a weapon to defile and degrade their victim by grabbing, striking, knocking beating, tearing their clothes and raping them. This shows the extent of anger and rage in the perpetrators. Power Rape according to [16] is a way of compensate for their underlying feelings of inadequacy and displays their acts of mastery, control, dominance, strength, intimidation, authority and capability. Power rapists have sexual fantasies that tend to lead them to another victim, while Sadistic rape, [16] explained that the rapist finds intentional maltreatment of his victim intensely gratifying and takes pleasure in the victims torments, anguish, distress, helplessness and suffering, the offender finds the victim struggling and erotic experience.

[17] described two main types of date rape as drug to weaken his victim or put his victim to sleep intentionally while abusing her and Acquaintance rape which occurs between two people who knows one another usually in social situation, people who are dating as a couple or who just started dating. It also occurs between co-workers, school mates, teachers and others. Acquaintances this types of rape have been identified as a growing problem in the western world society and it is acquaintance rape accounts for 75% of reported cases according to United States of Bureau of Statistics.

Furthermore, [18] states that gang rape occurs when a group of people participate in the rape of a single victim. This type of rape is heinous and wicked and the violators are alcoholic and drug users. The victim of this type of rape according to [18] seek medical therapy, involves the police and may contemplate suicide than individual assault. While [19] opined that rape of children is a form of child sexual abuse. When committed by another child (usually older or stronger) it is a form of child on child abuse. When committed by a parent or other close relative such as grand-parents aunts and uncles, it is also incest and can result in serious and long-term psychological trauma.

[20] explained that child sexual abuse include a variety of sexual offenses. Sexual assaults is a term defining offenses in which an adult uses minor for the purpose of sexual gratification. For example, rape and penetration with an object, while sexual exploitation is a term defining offenses in which an adult victimizes a minor for advancement, sexual gratification or profit, for example – prostituting a child and creating or trafficking in child pornography. Statutory rape according to [21] is sexual activity in which at least one person is below the age required to legally consent to the behavior. Although it is usually refers to adults engaging in sex with minors under the age of consent. In statutory rape laws presume coercion, because a minor or mentally handicapped adult is legally incapable of giving consent to the act.

III. Predisposing Factors To Rape

There are factors increasing the risk of someone being coerced into sex, factors increasing the risk of an individual man forcing sex on another person and factors within the social environment including peers and family. According to [22], family predisposing factor to rape is the sexual violence behavior learnt from adult during young age, while peer predisposing factor to rape include association with sexually aggressive and delinquent peers. [23] explain that physical violent, emotionally unsupportive and characterized by competition for scarce resources have been associated with sexual violence. Sexually aggressive behavior in young men

have been linked to witnessing violence and having emotionally distant and uncaring fathers. Individual risk factors to rape include alcohol and drug use, coercive and sexual fantasies, impulsive and antisocial tendencies, presence of impersonal sex, hostility towards women, hypermasculinity, history of previously been raped or sexual abuse, having multiple sexual partners and involvement in sex work[24].

Centre for Disease Control and Prevention also identified predisposing factors to rape in the community and in the society as follows – community factors include; lack of employment, lack of institutional support from Police and judicial system, general tolerance of sexual violence within the community and weak community sanctions against violence perpetrators while social risk factors to rape include societal norm – that support sexual violence, that support male superiority and sexual entitlement, societal norm that maintain women’s inferiority and sexual submissiveness, weak laws and policies related to gender equity and high tolerance levels of crime and other forms of violence[25] . Other predisposing factors to rape according to[7] include; pornography, vengeance, conflict relationship, indiscipline, indecent dressing by girls and wickedness and idle mind.

[26]opined that poor women and girls may be more at risk of rape in course of their daily tasks than those who are better off, for example, when they walk home alone on their from work, cate at night or work in the field less parental care and supervision. Poverty forces many women and girls into occupations that carry relatively high risk of sexual violence, particularly sex work. [27] stated that age is another predisposing factor to rape. Young women and girls are found to be more at risk of rape than the older women. According to the date from Justice Systems and Rape Crisis Centre in Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru and United State says that between one third and two third of all victims of sexual assault violence are closely associated with young age, in particular violence taking place in schools, colleges and trafficking in young girls for sexual exploitation.

IV. Signs And Symptoms Of Rape

The following manifestations of rape may be evident in days and weeks after the attack[28]. Contusions and abrasions in various parts of the body, headache, fatigue, sleep pattern disturbance, stomach pains, nausea and vomiting, vaginal discharge and itching, burning sensation on urination, rectal bleeding. Others include, rage, humiliation, embarrassment, desire for revenge and self-blame. Fear of physical violence and death. [21] highlighted the following signs and symptoms: extra genital bleeding, genital bleeding, psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, sexually transmitted disease (STD) like, hepatitis B, syphilis, gonorrhea, Chlamydia infection and HIV/AIDS . pregnancy in which is uncommon.

V. Effects Of Rape On The Girl Child

The effect of rape can be traumatizing with a short or long term effect on the victim. According to[28], the long term effects of the rape depends largely on the individual’s ego, strength, social support system, and the way she was treated as a victim. [29]described the physical effects of rape on the girl child leads to injury. This depends on the age, size of the child and the degree of the force used. Child sexual abuse may cause internal lacerations and bleeding, in severe cases, damage to the internal organs may occur which in some cases may cause death.

Child rape may cause infections and usually sexually transmitted diseases depending on the age of the child, due to lack of sufficient vaginal fluid, chances of infections are higher and vaginitis have been reported by [30] while there may be Neurological damage. According to Ito, [31] research has shown that traumatic stress including stress caused by girl-child rape, causes notable changes in brain functioning and development. It has a deleterious effect on brain development.

Psychological effect of rape on girl child as explained by [32], says that child sexual abuse or rape may result in both short and long term harm including psychopathology in later life. Indicators and effects include depression, anxiety, eating disorder, poor self-esteem and sleep disturbances. [33]stated that children may exhibit regressive behavior such as thumb sucking or bedwetting, acting out an inappropriate sexual knowledge and interest victim may also withdraw from school and social activities. Exhibiting various learning and behavioural problems including cruelty to animal, attention deficit/hyper activity disorder, conduct disorder, teenage pregnancy and risky sexual behavior in adolescence.

VI. Care Of Rape Victim

The care given to rape victim is not only to treat the current mental health issues, but to prevent future occurrence [34]. [35] explained that many rape victims heal from rape without the aid of therapy. Therapy for rape victims includes one-on-one therapy, group therapy. The most common therapy or care given to a rape victim is stress inoculation therapy, cognitive processing therapy and supportive counseling. Stress inoculation training is a behavioural treatment, [36]. It is used to treat the fear and anxiety symptoms often experienced by rape victim. Stress inoculation training consists of three phases: education, skill building and application.

During education phase, individuals' learn how fear develops as a learning response to trauma. They learn to identify things in the environment that trigger fear (examples, dark places that resemble the location of the sexual assault, being alone) and they learn relaxation exercise. In skill building phase, the victim learn to control their fear reactions through exercise designed to reduce physiological sensation (example, diaphragmatic breathing) and fearful thought (example, thought stopping, mental rehearsal, guided self-talk and role playing). In application phase, victims apply all they have learned to engage in fear behavior, control self-criticism and manage avoidance behavior. The victims are taught to reward themselves for their progress. Stress inoculation training is beneficial for female rape victim because it helps in reducing fear, intrusion and avoidance response in groups of female. Prolonged exposure therapy – also known as flooding, as a form of exposure therapy that is based on learning and information processing theories. One of the primary goal of prolonged exposure therapy is to have individuals repeatedly confront fearful images and memories of their traumatic event so that fear and anxiety will decrease[37].

During prolonged exposure, the therapist helps the individual recount the trauma memory in an objectively safe environment. Victims are encouraged to describe their rape experience in detail. The oral narrative is repeated several times during each session to reduce fear associated with the memory. Cognitive processing therapy – is a multi-component treatment package developed by [38] for the treatment of rape victims suffering from past traumatic stress disorder and depression. The goal of cognitive processing therapy is to help integrate the rape by processing and confronting cognitive distortions and maladaptive beliefs concerning rape. Exposure involves writing narratives of the rape in detail and reading the narratives aloud in session and for homework. Cognitive processing therapy can be conducted in individual or group format and completed in 12 weekly sessions.

VII. Psychosocial Support

Most adolescent victims of rape initially experience guilt, shame and grief. They may tend to blame themselves for the assault, especially if drugs or alcohol were consumed or if the victim had voluntary sexual activity before the assault, [39]. Victims of acquaintance rape or date rape may experience a considerable violation of trust because of their previous social relationships with the assailants,[40]. Adolescent girls are encouraged to discuss their feelings, as this will help to restore their self esteem. Referral should be made for counseling through a rape crisis centre, hospital social worker or mental health facility, [41].

VIII. Conclusion

Rape is a topic that makes people of all ages uncomfortable and could be a male or female but men are mostly the offenders. Rape is a very traumatic event on the life of the victim and every precaution should be taken to prevent the girl child from being raped as it has a long-lasting effect on them. Parents, especially mothers should see to it that their girl child avoid things and environment that will predispose them to be raped and good moral standard should be upheld at home with love among the family members. Teenagers (girls) need accurate information about predisposing factors to rape and its effect in order to prevent it. Health educators should be able to deal with the psychological aspect of this problem as most rape victim have long lasting trauma. Every one should get involved in the prevention of rape to reduce its occurrence in the society and rapist should be punished as this will help to curtail the menace in the society.

IX. Suggestions

There is no sure way of arming one's self against rape but there are few precautions that one can take to help reduce the chances of becoming a rape victim. In the home, the children should be taught sex education, good moral standard, there should be love and harmony in the home, the girl child should not be entrusted to strangers and night movement should not be allowed. The word of God should be taught with good examples, parents should monitor what the children watch and do with their computer at all times and discourage indecent dressing.

Individually, the girl child should always avoid peers that will mislead them, learn to behave well at parties and other functions, be aware of her surrounding and report any suspected person to parent or police to take action. Avoid places that are rough and shout out when in danger to call for help and always dress properly. The community should ensure that stringent measure is taken against any rapist.

Legally, the law enforcement agent should ensure that proper investigation is carried out and justice given to the victim of rape. The government should enact stiff penalty for rapist to sever as deterrent to other suspects.

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