



## STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING RAPE AGAINST WOMEN IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Rape and other sexual violence offences are on the increase today in Nigeria. There are cases of fathers raping their daughters, brothers raping their sisters, neighbours raping their follow neighbour's daughters and children, uncles defiling their sisters and nieces, pastors and priests abusing children entrusted to their care. The list is endless. This paper, therefore, is aimed to establish effective strategies for reducing this in human act called rape, and other sexual violence offences in Nigeria. The paper extensively explained what rape is and went further to point out the psychological motivations of rapists. The rising cases of sexual violence in Nigeria were explored adequately. The effects of rape on the victim were satisfactorily elucidated. Strategies for reducing rape, and preventive measures to nip the cases of rape in the bud were equally treated. The paper concluded and recommended that government should enforce stricter measures like castration or life jail, among others, against perpetrators of sexual violence and rape in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** - Strategies, Rape, Women, Nigeria.

### Introduction

Rape is a common phenomenon in Nigeria. Daily in our Newspapers, Radio and TV broadcasts, we hear of cases or occurrences of rape in one part of the country or the other. Some state and non-state actors have asked the Federal Government of Nigeria to declare state of emergency on rape so as to stem the tide of rape and other sexual abuses/violence in this country. This is yet to see the light of the day. By definition, rape is having sexual intercourse with a woman or a man without her or his consent. In this sense, a husband can rape his wife when he subdues his wife and have sexual intercourse with her, without permission.



Britannica (2025), gave a comprehensive explanation of rape, as an unlawful sexual intercourse against the will of the victim through force or the threat of force or with an individual who is incapable of giving legal consent because of minor status, mental illness, mental deficiency, intoxication, unconsciousness or deception. This definition is comprehensive, detailed and encompassing. In saner climes, rape has been seen as a pathological assertion of power over a victim. Equally, in many jurisdictions, the crime of rape has been subsumed under that of sexual assault. Britannica (2025) went further to say that, traditionally, rape is an act of sexual intercourse by a man with a woman against her will but now rapist or the victim, as understood can be an adult of either gender or child. Although rape can occur in same sex intercourse, which is seen in most countries of the world as a taboo and against the will of God Almighty, it is most often committed by a male against a female.

### **Why do some people rape?**

The psychological motivation of rapists is more complex than we can think of. Some rapists rape because of the desire to punish, to gain revenge, to cause pain, to prove sexual prowess and to control through fear. Others, rape especially children, because of the mistaken belief that sexual intercourse with a virgin would bring them good luck or would cure the rapist of his chronic diseases such as HIV/AIDs, chronic cough (Britannica 2025).

### **Rising Cases of Rape and Sexual Violence in Nigeria**

Rape is not alien to Nigeria. It has become one of the most prevailing crimes today. Since the COVID-19 lockdown, there has been a surge of rape and gender-based violence in Nigeria. According to Sheriff Deputies (2020), 717 rape cases were reported in Nigeria by the Nigerian police between January and May 2020. National Human Rights Commission had it that 11, 200 rape cases were reported in 2020 including children raped to death. In April, 2020, it was reported by the Nigerian Minister of Women affairs, Mrs. Pauline Tallen that 3,600 cases of rape were recorded during the lockdown. This demonstrates how dangerously rape and sexual abuses are rising every day in Nigeria. Amnesty International, Nigeria (2021), lamented that concrete actions have not been taken to tackle the rape crisis in Nigeria with the seriousness it deserves. Women and girls continue to be failed by a system that makes it increasingly difficult for survivors to get justice, while allowing perpetrators to get away with gross human right violations.

In May, 2021 a six-year-old girl was raped to death in kaduna state. The story continues unabated. A community-based survey of rape estimated that the rate of rape stood at 1,300 per 100,000 women every year (Idoko, Nwobodo & Idoko, 2020). In December 15, 2023, a prominent Abuja-based businessman was sentenced to life imprisonment for raping two minors (Adekoye, 2023). The Lagos Police has also confirmed that they recorded 111 sexual assault cases between April and June 2023. Furthermore, The Women at Risk International Foundation in collaboration with the United States Consulate General, Lagos, have said that 33 parent of women and girls aged between 15 and 49 have experienced sexual abuse in Nigeria in their life time. However, the number does not total the cases that were left unreported. Victims of rape and sexual assaults are often crippled by fear of their assailants, societal stigma and a lack of confidence in the system which prevents them from pursuing justice (The Republic, 2023).



On 24 October, 2023, four students from Tai Solarin University of Education Ijagun, Ogu state were reportedly raped off campus by a group of suspected robbers. Other instances of rape in 2023, include the alleged rape of a four-year-old girl by a school proprietor in Delta state; a father in Adamawa state who assaulted a 12-year-old girl and blamed her for seducing him, and an 18-year-old girl who was allegedly gang-raped to death in Taraba state. Tamar Sexual Assault Centre also reported that rape cases of children below five years old were predominantly involving infants as they are more vulnerable. These are just few reported cases, the unreported are legion (The Republic, 2023).

The National Bureau of Statistics (2024) reported that the number of women who were victims of rape in Nigeria increased from 48 percent in 2021 to 65 percent in 2022. This indicates that women and the girl child are most likely to be raped compared to their male counterparts. Across the states of Nigeria, FCT, Abuja had the highest incidence of female rape in 2020 with 10% but was outrun by Benue state in 2021 and 2022 with 15 percent and 12 percent respectively.

In 2020, Anambra state via the Ntasi centre for sexual assault cases recorded 107 cases of rape and sexual violence. Premium Times reported that two suspects have been arrested for allegedly raping four minors in Umudim, Nnewi North Local Government Area of Anambra state. The number of rape cases against women and children in Anambra state and other states of the federation were alarming and shocking. In Ogun state, a 70 years old woman was reportedly raped. A 44-year-old man Zakariya Ya'u was arrested by the police in Borno state for allegedly raping a 92-year-old woman. According to the Punch, on February 14, 2023 suspected cult members abducted one Mrs Chigbewejim, a mother of two, and gang raped her to death in Rivers state. In May 27, 2020, a 22-year-old university student in Edo state Vera Uwaila Omozumu was allegedly raped, assaulted and murdered in a church at Ikpoba Hill area of Benin city. According to report, she was raped and hit with a fire extinguisher on her head. She was then rushed to university of Benin Teaching Hospital where she died (Ogunbiyi, 2020).

In April, 2020, Jennifer, an 18-year-old girl was attacked and raped by a gang of five men in Narayi, a small village in Kaduna state. The rapists drugged her and carried out their dastardly act on her. There was also case of 18 years old Barakat Bello, a student of the Federal College of Animal and Production Technology Moore Plantation who was raped and butchered with machets in Ibadan. This cruel act according to report took place at her home in Akinyele, Ibadan and her corpse found behind her house (Ariche, Amalu, Awurumibe & Abdullahi, 2023). The list is litany. The upsurge of sexual violence in 2020 was unprecedented that the state Governors in Nigeria declared a state of emergency on rape and gender-based violence in June, 2020. There was also a decision to open a sex offender's register for perpetrators of sexual violence. However, the narrative still remains the same, nothing seems to have changed till today (Ariche et al, 2023).

### **Effects of Rape**

In Nigeria, rape is most often underreported and under prosecuted because of psychological, physical and social trauma and stigma associated with it. **The psychological** reactions of victims of rape vary but usually include feelings of shame, humiliation confusion, fear and rage. Many



victims are haunted by fear of the place in which the crime took place or fear of being followed, and or fear of all sexual relationships. The duration of the psychological trauma varies from individuals to individuals. Many feel the effects for years even till old age when they must have married and become mothers.

Conversely, some female victims refused to marry or have anything to do with a man due to the horror of rape they experienced. They thought that every man is a rapist; as a result, they develop coldness towards man's advances to dating and courtship. In a similar development, some rapists feel dissatisfied, develop hatred over themselves and would want to commit suicide. Some others went and hide themselves in shame.

**Physical trauma** associated with rape victims is outrageous. Some victims of rape are killed by rape perpetrators because they did not comply, some were raped to death. Some others were tortured, maimed and injured. On June 17, 2025, it was reported in the dailies that a rapist inflicted machet cuts all over the body of his victim who went into the bush to fetch firewood. The rapist used his victim's machet to inflict injuries on her after an unsuccessful rape attempt. This incident happened at Ondo state, Nigeria. Some rape victims were also infected with HIV/AIDs and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) like gonorrhea and syphilis. Some become pregnant and were afraid to nurture such pregnancy till birth. Some even died on an attempt to terminate such ill-gotten pregnancy.

**Socially**, some rape victims were rejected and disowned by their parents. Some did not marry at all; because not every man would like to marry a rape victim, some female victims blatantly refuse to marry because of rape horror and trauma. Most rape victims are so stigmatized that this has led them to a state of depression and other forms of mental disorder. And the fear of stigmatization by their community is one of the many reasons rape victims fear reporting cases to the police (Sheriff Deputies, 2020).

Similarly, in some traditional societies some rape offenders were ostracized and banished from the society where they belong. Some were taken around their community naked as a show of shame. Some were even beaten to death by the youths of the community. In this modern time, some rape offenders were jailed to life imprisonment and a few others sentenced to death by the government of the day. This goes to tell us that the outcome or effects of rape is grievous and devastating.

### **Effective Strategies and Interventions for Reducing Rape in Nigeria**

To reduce rape in Nigeria a multi-pronged approach is needed which includes robust legal reforms, increased public awareness, and community-based support for survivors. According to Laila (2016) and a Sheriff Deputies (2020), the following are strategies to reduce rape in Nigeria:

1. **Public Sensitization:** - The media has a role to play in the fight against rape and other forms of sexual assaults. Radio, Televisions and print media must continue to warn the public particularly the most vulnerable about the dangers of rape and other sexual violence in Nigeria. There should be intense public enlightenment and education at schools, social clubs, churches, cultural group gatherings, mosques through the media to, first of all,



demystify the myths about sexual assault. These myths inform the way many people think about sexual assault, and because they are in the background unconsciously influencing people's thoughts, the false assumptions may be seen as being true. In other words, the media should mount serious public education to debunk common misconceptions about rape and sexual violence. In addition, the media should also promote gender-balanced education to ensure that both boys and girls are educated about healthy relationships, consents and sexual violence prevention.

2. **Social Emotional Learning:** - In schools, social-emotional learning can be an effective tool to prevent rape. Children, particularly, the teenagers who are the most vulnerable group must be taught skills to emotionally sway someone with intent to commit a non-consensual sexual act. It is also important that safe dating and intimate relationship skills be taught to adolescents. For sexual violence victims, only 1 out of 10 has had a prior meeting with the rape offender. This goes to show that rape offender knows that victim. Unless there is a deliberate approach to teach the mentioned vulnerable group on the tricks and ploys used by sexual offenders, their innocence will continue to be exploited.
3. **Environmental/Social Policing:** - Parents, school teachers and other caregivers must make it a duty to communicate and observe wards closely. Many people suffer in silence because no one is willing to give them listening ears. It sometimes becomes too late for the police to get evidence to prosecute the suspected sex offender.  
Sexual violence at the work place is also a menace due to the fear of a job loss. It is a known fact that female staff in Nigerian banks and other corporate organizations are raped daily in their offices without them reporting. Many victims don't speak out because of threat of job loss by their managers as mentioned earlier or waited due to stigma until it becomes too late for the police to get substantial evidence to prosecute. Businesses must enforce policies against the menace of sexual violence in the workplace when there is a rule. Staff would understand the risk and consequences for anyone found guilty. In order to get an unbiased submission on sexual violence cases, It is recommended that an external investigative panel be set up. These days, most of the police stations have sexual crime units; victims of rape or any other forms of sexual violence are encouraged to report immediately to the police.
4. **Support Sexual Violence Victims:** - Unfortunately, most rape victims are stigmatized and this has led them to a state of depression and other forms of mental disorder. The major reason why victims fear reporting cases is because of the fear of being stigmatized by their community. Empathy for rape victims will encourage them to speak out and report offenders to the police. The arrest and persecution of offenders will serve as a deterrent for any one with intent to commit a sexual crime. Also, survivors of sexual violence should be hugely supported by providing accessible resources and services such as counseling, legal assistance and medical care.
5. **Institutional Framework:** - Prevention of sexual assault will remain a mirage until society puts in place institutional framework to deal comprehensively with cases of sexual violence. This approach involves functional, skilled and synchronized services such as the criminal justice system, the police, social services, and sexual assault services. Government should reform and enforce laws like the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act to





ensure stricter penalties for perpetrators of rape and other sexual abuses. Successful and timely prosecution of perpetrators will also serve as a deterrent and hopefully prevent the next person from committing rape. In Nigeria, timely and prompt prosecution of cases is entirely lacking. Something must be done about it if we are to fix this country.

6. **Address Socio-economic Factors:** -Government should recognize that poverty, lack of education, and other socio-economic factors can contribute to sexual violence and as such work harder to improve the welfare of its citizens. It should also address gender inequalities and societal norms.
7. In order to reduce the occurrence of rape in Nigeria, the Federal government should seek support and collaborate with International Organizations such as World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Organization (UNO) etc. It can also work with other bodies like Civil Society of Nigeria (CSO), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to end sexual violence in Nigeria (Laila,2016)

### **Preventive Measures against Rape in Nigeria.**

These are tips, habits and practices that will help nip rape and other sexual violence offences in the bud:

1. Indiscriminate gifts giving and frequent play of childlike games with adults are behaviours that can be considered as sexual grooming strategies. Pedophiles often use gifts giving as a tactics to commit rape against minors. Pedophiles by definition are those adults that like to have sexual intercourse with children. Therefore, children should be taught not to receive gifts indiscriminately from adults they do not know or always play with adults even in their neighborhood at odd hours and places.
2. Pornography should be avoided and rejected at all costs. The dangers of pornography can never be overemphasized. Literatures abound that show that there is high correlation between pornography and sexual violence (Divya, Yassir Arafat, Sufita, Madhim, Sayeda, Ali & Russell, 2021).
3. Staying with little children at odd times and places can trigger rape. Sexual violence is mostly perpetuated by adults who are familiar with those children.
4. Drug Addiction: Drugs have been intimately linked with sexual violence and sexual assault. (Nedejiko; Amanda; Saundra &Thomas, 2021). Many drug addicts are rapists because sexual violence especially rape is often triggered by hard drug intake.
5. Excessive intake of alcohol: Alcohol and sexual assault go together. This is because alcohol arouses the libido sensibilities in a man. Researchers have reported that up to 75% of perpetrators have consumed alcohol prior to the offence (Abbey, zawacki, Buck, Clinton & Mc Anslam, 2016).
6. Unsolicited Physical Touch: - This is any contact that takes place between two people without consent from either of the partners. It may be fondling, putting hands at the buttocks or thigh, it may be hand shaking, it may be kissing, grabbing or hugging. Touching the opposite sex who is not your partner indiscriminately is a red flag.
7. Isolating people from friends/family members to be alone with them: - When people begin to isolate children or young people or even adults of opposite sex to be alone with them, it becomes pertinent to keep surveillance on such people. Closely related to this, is avoid



being alone at odd places and time with people you do not know or trust (Ariche; Amalu; Awurumibe & Abdullahi, 2023).

### **Conclusion**

Sexual violence especially rape is continuously but pathetically increasing in Nigeria. Every effort put in place by the government and society to reduce this ugly monster seems not be working. The researcher sincerely believes that it is the duty of Nigeria society to create hostile environment for sexual assault perpetrations. It is also the researcher's view that by implementing the strategies outlined in the paper for reducing rape, Nigeria can work towards creating a society where sexual violence and rape are not tolerated, and where survivors have access to support services and justice. The onus lies on us to discourage sexual violence, and support victims.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made based on the discussions in this study:

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria should reform and enforce laws, like the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act to ensure stricter penalties for perpetrators of rape and other sexual violence offences. The country's institutional framework should be strengthened to ensure justice to the victims of rape and other sexual violence abuses.
2. The federal Government of Nigeria should mount closed circuit television (CCTV) in all the nook and cranny of this country to discourage rapists from carrying out their inhuman crime and to ensure early detection if and when it occurs.
3. Strict penalties should be meted to the perpetrators of rape and other sexual violence offences in Nigeria. The author is advocating for castration of male offenders or life jail if proven guilty.
4. Rape and sexual violence Centers should be established by the Federal Government of Nigeria in all the rural and urban centers of this country to receive and handle rape cases. Women should be encouraged to open up and report immediately cases of rape and sexual violence to the Center.



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