

REDUCING THE HIGH RATE OF RAPE IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY: THE ROLE OF RELIGION

Kanayo L. Nwadiakor & Chinedu E. Nnatuanya
Department of Religion and Human Relations
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Abstract: *The study attempts to evaluate the role of religion in reducing the high rate of rape in present Nigerian society. Literature was reviewed and the opinions of several scholars appraised in relation to how best the high rate of rape in the society can be reduced. Data were collected through primary and secondary sources while functionalistic approach was used in interpretation. Findings reveal that the reason the menace has not been effectively curtailed over the years is not the absence of relevant laws to bring the culprits to book, but weakness in implementation. Also, the stigma that goes with being raped makes the victims timorous and discourages them from reporting their cases, thereby reducing the chances of the criminals being subjected to justice. The paper, therefore, suggests that religion can be instrumental in addressing the issue of rape. It recommends that religion should use all available means and channels at her disposal to teach, educate, and sensitize her members and various institutions in the society on the dangers and implications of rape in the society.*

Keywords: Rape, Role of Religion, Contemporary Nigeria, Implementation of Law, Types of rape

Introduction

The rate at which many destinies are being tampered with in Nigeria today as a result of rape is worrisome and unacceptable. Rape is a violent crime that dehumanizes the victims and devalues their sense of self-worth. Its upsurge in Nigeria today is a crisis that touches on the mental state of the average citizen. Research has shown that rape is as a result of different contributing factors such as modernization, industrialization and technological advancement which have increased access to pornographic pictures and videos that result in immoral behaviour among people. In recent times, the novel corona virus related lockdown has been added as a factor for rape. It becomes more worrisome when children of even less than two months old are reported almost on a daily basis across Nigeria to be victims of rape. These violent sex crimes sometimes end in murder or threats of same; and the culprits are, more likely than not, family members and people who should normally earn the trust of the victims. These include religious leaders, fathers and uncles of the victims and young men involved in cultism and drug abuse.

Rape as a social phenomenon has caused havoc in many homes and destinies. This anomaly appears to be growing in an alarming rate among adolescents, adults and even among married people. Children and women are mostly victims although in rare cases men are being raped. NOI Polls released in 2014, gave a glimpse of the high rate and attitude of Nigerians in regard to rape.

The report states that almost 7 in 10 adult Nigerians (67%) think there is a high prevalence of child rape in the country while 3 in 10 (31%) personally know of a victim of child rape in their local communities. It further maintains that almost 4 in 10 (36%) adult Nigerians, representing the majority, claim that most often the offenders involved in the incident of child rape are close family relatives and neighbors (33%). Also almost half (49%) of those that personally know a victim claim they included children aged between 7-12 years of age and, 78% of this group mentioned these cases were reported to local police authority. It is even more worrisome that in Nigeria today, children of two months old have been recorded as victims of rape. There is hardly a day when reports of rape and sexual molestation do not make pages of Nigerian Newspapers, but the manner that the victims are now being killed after the crimes are committed is now leaving Nigerians more horrified. There has been recent waves of rape and killing of women in Nigeria, which has led to national outcry. This new trend could be said to be as a result of the novel corona virus related lockdown across the country. According to Omoniyi (2020), it has come to the public knowledge that because of Covid 19 restrictions, there is a surge in rape cases and gender based violence. Okogba (2020) adds that it began to dawn on Nigerians that there is a rape epidemic amidst the corona virus pandemic. A Director of the Anambra State Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Mrs. Nkechi Anazodo, announced the shocking finding that under this lockdown her department documented over 80 rape cases. This could be just a tip of the iceberg of a national trend. Far too long, with every passing day, women are living in fear, unable to walk the streets at certain times, unable to wear dresses that they find beautiful; having to look at every face in a bus before hoping in.

In view of the above, it becomes important for one to ask, what are the causes of this ugly practice called rape and why is it rampant in a time like this? Looking at its implications to human and societal development, will it be allowed to keep escalating or will there be an end to it? In response to the following issues, it becomes necessary for religion as the moral conscience of the society to rise up to the challenge of reducing, if not eradicating incidence of rape in the society. This becomes inevitable since all government and non-governmental measures at curbing the ugly incidence of rape in Nigeria have not yielded the needed meaningful results. Women have taken to the street of Nigeria and the social media is awash with numerous protests against this phenomenon, yet rape cases and child molestation are mounting by the day; and since no concrete legislation has been given by the lawmakers regarding punishments for the perpetrators of this evil, there is, therefore, the need for religious bodies to wade into this matter with the view to finding a more sustainable solution to the problem. This study assesses therefore, the gap religion as the conscience and moral guide of the society, could fill in curbing the incidents of rape in contemporary Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

Rape as a concept can be seen in different perspectives. For Brigneti and Egbonimali (2002), it is an act of sexual violence that involves intercourse without consent or against someone being willing to engage in the act. Merrill (2004) in his own view opines that rape in most legal jurisdictions is a sexual intercourse, or other forms of sexual penetration, initiated by a perpetrator against a victim without their consent. In essence, rape occurs whenever there is no agreement between the victim and the initiator of the sexual activities.

Generally, rape can be said to have occurred when sex or penetration is carried out with the use of force of any kind, use of deception or infliction of fear on the victim, and without consent.

Also, it can be said to occur when the victim is asleep or unconscious, mentally incapacitated or impaired due to voluntary or involuntary factors. In other words, rape occurs when there is absence of consent of either of the parties involved in sexual activity. Sexual activity must be as a result of voluntary mutual agreement and in the same vein, the persons involved must be within the age of consent.

On the other hand, is penetration a criterion for rape? The answer to this may vary among scholars. However, Okeke (2014) maintains that some countries such as Germany are now using more inclusive definitions which do not require penetration. According to her, the 1998 International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda defines rape as “physical invasion of a sexual nature committed on a person under circumstances which are coercive” (p.871). She went further to state that in contemporary time, the word rape has been phased out of legal use in favour of sexual assault. What then is sexual assault?

For National Center for Victims of Crime, sexual assault is an act of forcing another person into sexual activity against his or her will. It takes many forms, including rape or attempted rape, as well as any unwanted sexual contact, forced sexual intercourse (rape), sodomy (oral or anal sexual acts), child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape. It is important to state that sexual assault is not restricted to any particular age, gender, race or place. Perpetrators sometimes may be strangers, acquaintances, friends, or family members and they may use violence, threats, coercion, manipulation, or other forms of pressure or deception to commit the crime.

In Nigerian context, rape occurs when a person has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman without her consent, if with her consent, by means of threat or intimidation, by means of fraudulent misrepresentation as to the act or by impersonating her husband (*S.357 of the Criminal Code applicable in Southern Nigeria*). In addition, Section 282 of the Penal Code which is applicable in Northern Nigeria provides that a man is said to commit rape with a woman in any of the following circumstances-

- (a) against her will;
- (b) without her consent;
- (c) with her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her in fear of death or of hurt;
- (d) with her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband and that her consent is given because she believes that he is another man to whom she is or believes herself to be lawfully married;
- (e) with or without her consent, when she is under fourteen years of age or of unsound mind.

(2) Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife is not rape, if she has attained to puberty.

In other words, rape in Nigeria appears as if it can only be committed by a man against a woman and not vice versa while in other countries this is not the case because it has been established that man may also be a victim of rape. In essence, rape is related to sexual assault in the sense that it happens whenever there is an unwanted penetration whether oral, anal, or vaginal; while sexual assault points to any unwanted sexual contact both fondling and molestation inclusive.

Types of Rape

Date Rape – For Humprey (1993), date rape can also be referred to as “acquaintance rape,” which is committed by someone who knows the victim. Those that constitute victims of this category of rape are normally people who know one another usually in social situations, people who are dating as a couple and have had consensual sex in the past. It can also occur between two people who are starting to date, or people who are just friends, and between acquaintances, co-workers, schoolmates, family, friends, teachers and other acquaintances. This type is growing in high rate without the victims not likely to report the case especially in Nigeria.

Gang Rape: This occurs when a group of people take part in the rape of a single victim. Ullman (1999) explains that perpetrators of gang rape are those who use alcohol and drugs, night attackers who possibly use weapons to overpower their victims.

Marital Rape: This type occurs when one partner either the wife or husband is not consenting. It can also be called spousal rape, or partner rape.

Prison Rape: It occurs between prison inmates and it is usually a same-sex crime because prison populations are segregated. This does not mean that perpetrators are homo-sexual.

Custodial rape: This type of rape happens when a custodial individual like prison staff, police officer take the advantage of his position over the inmates.

Rape by Deception: Rape by deception occurs when a rapist gains consent from the victim through fraud, or false pretenses.

Revenge Rape: this can also be called payback or punishment rape. It occurs when one or more people rape another person as revenge for acts committed by the victim or their family or tribe.

Corrective rape: This is an action targeted as a punishment against non-heterosexuals for violating gender roles. Corrective rape is a hate crime against lesbians or homosexuals perpetrated as a response to make them conform to natural sexual orientation.

Statutory Rape: It involves sexual intercourse or other sexual acts with an individual who is seen by the law as not being able to give consent.

War Rape: This type occurs when soldiers or civilians rape other individuals during armed conflict or war. This is seen as a means of psychological warfare.

Cases of Rape in Nigeria at a Glance

Cases of rape in Nigeria are on the high side. The Punch Newspaper of August 9th 2016 reports thus:

A total number of 150 reported cases of sexual and physical abuse were recorded in Lagos State for one year period as of April 27, 2016. Also, the Lagos State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Mrs. Lola Akande, said the ministry in the

last one year had treated about 589 cases ranging from sexual abuse, physical abuse and child labor.

In the same vein, the Police in Bauchi State arrested two teachers of a Primary School in Dutsen Tanshi area of Bauchi, the Bauchi State capital, for raping their six-year-old pupil. The suspects, Sani Abubakar, 39, and Usman Hassan, 33, both of Dutsen Tanshi, were arrested on March 8th, 2017 at about 9:00 am for having carnal knowledge of the minor. According to them, the suspects lured a six-year-old girl and had unlawful carnal knowledge with her at a primary school in Dutsen Tanshi.

Ajayi (2017) on the other hand, laments that four men, who allegedly raped an 11-year-old hawker in Ibadan, have been arrested. In addition, Kawu (2013) explains that historical records show that no fewer than 1200 girls were raped in Rivers state in 2013 while in Enugu State; a notorious aged rapist was arrested by the police sometime in May 2013 in Opi village of Nsukka Local Government Area. He was said to have confessed in the court that he committed the act because he could not find any young lady to marry. In the same vein, Malcolm, (2012) cries that a man is allegedly reported to have been raped to death in the early hours of Tuesday, July 17, 2012 by his six wives in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State.

In a similar development, John (2013) reports another case of sexual abuse in the Church where a cleric that described himself as the Chairman of Bishops in Rivers State, Bishop Nwabueze, was arrested for allegedly raping a 15- year-old girl and sponsoring the abortion of the baby. It is held that Bishop Nwabueze who confessed to the act blamed it on a set up by other Bishops who according to him have been eyeing the position he occupied.

Chiedu (2012) describes this prevailing epidemic called rape in this way:

There are several cases, which are very irritating. Now and then, it is reported that a teacher has raped a student. A religious leader has raped his flock. Robbers have raped a victim. A man has raped a sister-in-law or daughter-in-law. A master has raped a housemaid. A security man has raped his master's wife. A boss has raped his staff. A father has raped his daughter. A young man has raped a grandmother. A minor has raped a fellow minor. A traditional ruler has raped a subject. An 80-year-old man has raped an 8-year-old girl. (p. 1).

In more recent times, the rate of rape cases are on the increase especially during the period of the covid 19 related lockdown in Nigeria. According to Premium Times of June 15, 2020, Nigeria has recorded a total of 717 cases of rape between January and May, 2020. Daily Trust of June 13, 2020, reports that a Kano State High Court sentenced one Abdullahi Magaji, to 14 years jail term for raping a six year old girl. BBC News of June 10, 2020, reports that a man was arrested after he has raped over 40 people in a town in Kano for a period of one year. A mother in the Northern town of Dangoro caught the man in her children's bedroom. His spate of rape included an 80 year old woman and children of less than twelve years old.

According to Omoniyi (2020), for the Bellos, life will never remain the same, and every Monday will always strike a sad chord in their traumatized hearts for years to come. On a Monday, a group of yet to be identified men stormed their home located at Akinyere Kara market, along old

Oyo road, Ibadan, leaving death and sorrow behind. Initial report indicates that the hoodlums, who were apparently on a mission to rob the household, met nearly an empty home. The rampaging criminals met 18 year old Barakat who was taking her bath. Upon seeing the girl in the bathroom, the hoodlums raped the young lady. Not done and perhaps to hide their crime, machete her till she gave up the ghost.

About a week earlier, Vera Omozuwa, a 100 level student of microbiology at the University of Benin died after she was beaten and allegedly raped right inside a church by yet to be identified men. The undergraduate was bludgeoned to death in a parish of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Ikpoba Hill, Benin city on May 13, 2020 where she went to study. She died on May 31, 2020. 18 days after, at the University of Benin teaching hospital, Benin City.

The story of Hadiza Saidu's daughter and niece is rather traumatic. Both girls were raped by a neighbor, Abubakar Musa. There was also report of a father who repeatedly raped two of his daughters at gunpoint.

It is therefore clear that rape has assumed a threatening dimension in Nigeria that every passing day poses a threat to the life of Nigerian women and the girl child. Some human rights activists believe that Nigeria is not doing enough to tackle rape cases and this is why the incidences increase at an alarming rate. There may be skeletal laws and policies already passed, but have they been implemented? There appears at the moment that there is little or no policy that has been put in place to help rape victims, rather they are stigmatized and humiliated.

Factors Responsible for the Increase Rate of Rape in Nigeria

There are many contributing factors that have prompted the high rate of rape cases in Nigeria in recent times. These factors are not isolated rather they are inter-connected variables that have contributed immensely to the increase in rape cases. For O'Donovan, (1997) it is because sex is a powerful force which no one can easily resist. It is like a fire in a dry forest. Notwithstanding, Amaugo (2006) avers that sexual desire is a divine gift which God gave to humanity. According to him, "If there is anything that is common in our world today, it is sexual activities. Sex is everywhere...It has permeated every nook and cranny of the society" (p 11). In view of this universal acknowledgement of sex, Obasi (2007) comments:

Mention sex and everybody's ear is wide open. The subject of sex receives more attention than any other curricular or extra-curricular topic in the academic world. It is being discussed and even practiced in the hidden and in the open places alike. Sex has a propelling force that stimulates the curiosity and interest of both the youth and the adult. People of all professions make much haste in quest for the knowledge of sex, formally or informally. Sex has been made a central theme in our contemporary society. This is proved by the large number of erotic magazines, pornographic films, nude posters, sensual booklets and seductive dresses that have flooded our markets and film industry. (p. 1).

From the above, the following factors can be identified as being responsible for the increase of rape in Nigeria.

Globalization

This is a process of interaction and integration among people of various tribes, race, companies, and governments of different nations. It is a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology. This interaction affects people's lifestyle, culture, environment among others. Globalization has also made the world to become a global village where through technology events happening in any part of the globe can be viewed in every part of the world at the same time. In view of this factor, pornographic pictures and nude videos are being transmitted and shared to the young ones through Facebook, YouTube, twitter, whatsapp, among others. As a result, many people are being exposed to sexual attractions which prompt unnecessary sexual desires that lead to rape.

Garland (2001) goes on to state that parents contribute a lot by buying or renting video cassettes, CD plates and movies for their children to watch most of the times, which in a way stirs up their sexual desires. He maintains that situations whereby children spend too much time watching television where sex is used by most factories to advertise things like toothpaste, drinks and flashy cars likely put younger generation under pressure to go into sex. The implication of such attitude is that youths try to experiment what they have watched on sex even if it means raping. In support, Gberindyer (2010) opines, "Some of them desire to experience it once, just to know how it is. But they become captured by the power of immorality" (p.6).

Indecent Dressing

Indecent dressing is a malady in the society in recent times. It seems to be an evil change that does more harm. It simply means deliberate exposure of one's body to the public. It entails ladies putting on miniskirts, bumper shorts or armless tops among others to functions. This exposure causes sexual arousal among the men which affects people's way of thinking thereby subjecting them to inordinate affections that result in rape. Ayogu (2011) maintains that some parents buy clothes with such negative "Inscriptions like: I am a sexy girl, Hug me tight, Lovely babe-sexy babe, I am 4 u, Kiss me fast, Touch me, Deep kiss, Romance me," among others, for their children to wear. According to him, the wearing of these psychedelic and ludicrous dresses that advertise ladies nudity side by side the unusual painting of their faces presents a very strong pull to rapists to carry on their exploits.

Parental Negligence

One of the greatest disasters that have happened to this generation is the increased in parental negligence among many parents. This is partly as a result of economic hardship and social pressure that have made many parents to abandon their responsibility of child upbringing to the maids who are not capable of imparting good moral values to the children. In addition, many parents fail to adhere to strict moral principles thereby making their child a victim of lack of moral values. Also, some engage in extra-marital relationship to the knowledge of their children and even before them thereby indirectly approving it for them.

Poverty, Unemployment and Corruption

These three factors have contributed a lot to the upsurge of rape in modern times. For instance, lack of meaningful employment and poverty have made many parents to expose their wards to hawking which made them victims of rape as seen in many cases. More so, corruption which is an epidemic in all institutions has made young people and even adults victim of rape as result of trying to make ends meet in an unapproved way. Furthermore, corruption in the Nigerian police force and judiciary has made it difficult to prosecute offenders thereby contributing immensely in increasing this evil menace. In view of these factors, victims choose to conceal their ordeals in order not to bring public shame on their family thereby shattering their image and future.

Ignorance

Most often adolescent are easily deceived by some cultural myths about sex. Okoro (2011) reveals that some ethnic groups in Nigeria holds common that without premarital sexual intercourse, boys are bound to have small testicles, suffer from pimples, have difficult erection and not be able to perform better when married while girls are bound to have small breasts, experience early menopause, painful menstruation and painful nipples when breast-feeding their babies. Due to this wrong assumption, young boys and girls try to experience sex at a very tender age thereby increasing the rate of rape.

Addiction to Drugs and Alcohol

Due to frustration as a result of Nigerian poor economy, many people have resorted to drugs and addiction for succor and relief. This measure does not help rather it triggers social disorder which has increased the rate of rape. For instances, drinking parlors are on the increase in the society while drug dealers are making good profit. These factors are indices that social malady will be on the rise.

Implications of Rape

Rape can have psychological, emotional, and physical effects on a victim. It includes both the initial physical trauma as well as deep psychological trauma. This results to mental health concerns and diminished social confidence on people including friends. The physical effects can lead to painful intercourse, urinary infections, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) – HIV, genital warts, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and others. While the emotional and psychological effects can result to post-traumatic stress disorder (feelings of severe anxiety and stress), depression, flashbacks (memories of rape as if it is taking place again), guilt, distrust of others, anger, feelings of personal powerlessness among others. In support of the above, Obasi (2007), echoes, “rape leaves painful memories and a lifelong consequences on the victim” (p.34) in the same vein, Olufemi (cited in Odeh, 2013) says that it is like stabbing a heart and leaving the knife there.

Rape is like a cancer, it has no respect for age, sex or race. It starts from a spot and then gradually spreads to the entire body system. While spreading, it steals a victim's pleasurable desires, purposeful drives and prospective dreams, and in some cases, life. It causes one to start questioning their beliefs and even existence. It is a five minutes' pleasure for the rapist and a life time scar for the victim. Without any invitation, a feeling of worthlessness creeps in. Rape is like a song track placed in repeat; the incidence keeps on happening long after it has happened. With this repeat, the hands and the words turn to blades cutting and creating an indelible scar long after tissue healing may have taken place. The effects of rape on its victims are legion and devastating. Not a few female victims are traumatized for the rest of their lives after they had been raped. To sum it up, Alhassan (2013) laments:

In the months following a rape, victims often have symptoms of depression or traumatic stress. They are more likely to abuse alcohol or drugs to control their symptoms. Nearly one-third have thoughts of suicide, and approximately 17 percent actually attempt suicide. Thirty percent of victims will go on to develop major depressive or post-traumatic stress disorders in their lifetime, long-time negative effects on sexuality and inability to form or maintain trusting relationships are common. (p. 3).

The Role of Religion

Gender activists argue that the reason the menace has not been effectively curtailed over the years is not the absence of relevant laws to bring the culprits to book, but weakness in implementation. In Nigeria, there are at least five legal provisions which provide access to justice for rape victims. There is the Criminal Codes, applicable in all the Southern States; the Penal Code, applicable in all the Northern States and the Criminal Laws of Lagos, applicable only in Lagos State. There is equally the Violence against Persons Prohibition Act, applicable only in FCT, and the Child Right Act, applicable in the States that have domesticated it; but sadly, not all the States in the Federation that have domesticated this law.

The seriousness of the menace has made many nations across the globe to enact and enforce tough laws to curb it, even as far as passing out death sentences. For instance, the Supreme Court of India awarded death penalty to the four men convicted of gang rape of Jyoti Singh in December, 2012, a case that fueled global outcry and overhauled the country's rape law. In Saudi Arabia, rape is punishable by death. In Bangladesh the Supreme Court in 2015 ruled that death sentence remains an option alongside life imprisonment for rape crime. In Japan 20 years is the penalty for rape. In Iran rape is punishable by death. In Pakistan, gang rape, child molestation and rape are punishable by death and in Cuba, death sentence is the penalty for rape. In Nigeria, the House of Representatives, in the wake of the rape and killing of Barakat and Uwa, lamented the spike of the crime but voted against a motion moved by James Faleke, seeking castration as a punishment for rapists.

Following from inability to properly enforce extant rape laws and absence of adequate laws to reverse the trend of rape as discussed above, the present researchers believe that recourse to religion could be a more sustainable option. Religion has a lot to offer in relation to reducing the

rate of rape in the society. Though Soyinka (2009) believes that religion is an enemy of nationhood; for him, religion has done more harm than good in Nigerian society. In reaction, Kukah (2009) argues that Soyinka cannot in honesty deny the constructive role which religion especially the Church has played in the development of Nigerian nation. It is in line with these constructive roles that make the bases of this paper. This is because “any religion which professes to be concerned with the souls of men but not with the social and economic conditions that scar the soul is a spiritual moribund religion only waiting to be buried” (Luther, 1958:37). Therefore, it is within the ambient of religion’s social function to act urgently in putting an end to this anomaly. Sowale (n.d.) explains that Lambeth 1988 resolution mandated the Church to be alive to her social responsibilities. The resolution states thus:

Social functions must be performed by the church so as to build up the whole life of man: in addition to teaching, preaching, the church must address herself to healing the social ills of our world today by providing employment and sound education to remove ignorance and laziness among her members. This could be done by establishing of small scale industries, arts, crafts and farm settlement. The ministry should be prophetic, transforming and democratic. (p. 101).

From the Lambeth 1988 resolution, it can be said, therefore that religion can employ the strategy of teaching and preaching at all times to sensitize and mobilize forces against rape. Through rightful teaching of the word of God, the people will inculcate sound moral attitudes that will enable them to imbibe characters that will foster justice and order in the society. Choji (2014) admits that clerics are beginning to express fears over the spate of indecent dressing in places of worship, especially by ladies. This phenomenon, that was once alien to Africa, is gradually becoming a norm and is contributing to the increase in the rate of immorality and other ills plaguing the society. It was on this basis that Resolution 37 of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) has this to say:

This Joint Meeting of the Primates of the Anglican Communion and the Anglican Consultative Council urges all Provinces to work to end sexual abuse and exploitation of women and children throughout the Anglican Church, and calls on congregations to provide pastoral care to victims of sexual abuse and exploitation; and further expresses its shame that there is evidence of cases of sexual abuse within the Anglican Church and calls on congregations to provide pastoral care to victims of sexual abuse and further condemns commercial practices of sexual exploitation, such as 'mail order brides' and child prostitution.

On the other hand, Finn and Finn (2012) note that the Roman Catholic Church was not left out. According to them, the Church teaches that sexual intimacy is to be reserved for marriage, maintaining that such things as fornication, masturbation, rape, unnatural intercourse and the likes are contrary to profound meaning of sexuality. In addition, Edayodil (2012) went further to state that Pope John Paul II uses the connotation “Value of the person” to emphasize chastity of sexual life and a discouragement of illicit sexual relationship such as rape. It now behooves all religious bodies to create the enabling environment towards the implementation of this policy statement which will help to reduce immoral abuse and injustices in the society. Religion will

also teach parents on the need to pay attention to the upbringing of their wards on daily basis. The reason is because parents contribute more to the lifestyle of their children. Kumbin (cited in Choji, 2014) observes:

It is unfortunate that standard has fallen in the society and parents are not helping because they do not have time for their children. There are many reasons why young girls come out in indecent dresses but the most important I think has to do with self-esteem. When a young girl feels inadequate, lacking in self-confidence, she will do anything to draw attention to herself and wearing indecent clothes could be her way of doing that. They forget that for every action, there is a reaction and that is why we have series of cases like rape. Most young women have fallen victims to rape because of the provocative dresses they put on. I believe that, indecent dressing debases womanhood because it tends to expose parts of the woman's body that forms her treasure. Our pride as women lies in hidden and protected treasure; but when a girl exposes it to the public, it reduces her worth in the sight of everyone in society and it makes the man to lose respect in her, there won't be anything left for the man to explore. Any man that will come after her will only be doing so out of lust, and just to devour what she has displaced for him. Even if you are decent but decide to wear indecent clothes, people will insult you.

Practically, different religious bodies have different youth organizations through which they teach the youths values and skills for meaningful living. The women and men are not left out. Through their organizations they are being educated and encouraged on the responsibility of parenthood. Religion preaches against indecency through their various youth seminars and conferences. Religion also engages youths in meaningful activities in order to inculcate in them skills that will help them impact their generation.

Religion must in addition encourage the government to rise up to her social and economic responsibilities in relation to the welfare of the citizens. Anikwenkwa (2008) warns:

We need to structure our educational system in a way that would enable our school graduates to be self-reliant. Moreover, economic policies must be structured in a way that would encourage entrepreneurship. If the economy is not strong and oriented towards enhancing the wellbeing of the people, there bound to be increase unemployment and criminal economic exploits. No well-meaning leader would allow that situation to occur under him or her leadership. (p. 35).

In reaction to the evil of rape in the society and the need for capital punishment on the offenders, Odunsi (2013) quoted the former Primate of Church of Nigeria, Rt Rev Nicholas Okoh warning the government thus: "Government should not allow anybody or organization to teach it what morality is. The law of capital punishment for those who rightly deserve it should be enforced. Think about this, "a gang robbed a woman, raped, and finally murdered her." One may ask where the human right of this woman is. Okoh maintains that the Federal Government should not

allow people to teach them morals. According to him, anybody who has degenerated to the level of depravity deserves capital punishment and it should be enforced. It is not true to say that punishment does not deter crime! It does. The difference between our society and society outside is that, we have laws which are not enforced. Nigerians in diaspora obey laws, but as soon as they come back home, they feel above the law because if they contravene the law and law enforcing agents approach them, they will say ‘do you know who I am.’

In response to this clarion call, several state governments must be commended for handing over schools to the missions as a part of re-structuring of the educational system. Such handover has contributed to the rapid growth in academic and most importantly the moral upbringing of the students and pupils. Presently, the school system, to an extent has taken a holistic shape that is geared toward the wellbeing of the society. In the same vein, some churches have established vocational institute and skill acquisition centers for the training of youths. Also, Marriage Academies where principles of building a good home are inculcated into the life of the married and unmarried have been established. These institutions including the creation of effective school chaplaincy being headed by a priest in many mission schools both primary and secondary have tremendously helped to impact on the lives of the students and pupils.

The former Deputy Senate President of Federal Republic of Nigeria, Senator Ike Ekweremandu commenting on the above opines that “the Church and other religious institutions, when they held sway, lifted the education sector to lofty academic, disciplinary, and moral standards” (Umoru, 2017:16). He went further to observe that the handover of schools by Anambra State to their original owners, saw the state rise from previous 25th and 26th positions on a table of 36 states, to first position in National Examination Council (NECO) performance in 2011 and 2013. In view of these facts, Ekweremandu urged the government to “give to the church what belongs to the church” while cautioning that such handover should not serve as a ploy by states to evade the responsibility of funding quality education for their citizens as “quality education costs good money” but should emulate Anambra State under former Governor Peter Obi who not only handed over 1,040 primary schools to the church in 2011, but also voted N6 billion for the schools, knowing that it would still be serving the same Anambra people.

Conclusion

Nigeria is engulfed in a rape crisis. Our women (and in a minority of cases, men) are under siege from sex maniacs. It is a nationwide phenomenon, and the time has come for all and sundry to pay it the critical attention it deserves. Eliminating rape in the society is something that needs to be taken seriously by the government, parents and especially religious bodies. Religion as the moral voice of the society must always speak out against sexual assault and rape while religious leaders should endeavour to create ways to help in the rehabilitation of the victims. To make it happen, religious institutions should adopt the strategy of inculcating godly morals in the life of her members so to enable them live a godly and moral life. More so, sex education should be adopted to be taught to youths to help them know important facts about sex, relationship matters and family life. In addition, creation of employment opportunities and leadership by example will go a long way to reduce this menace called rape.

References

- Amaugo, G. (2006). *Sex lies*. Lagos: Reed to Rock.
- Ajayi O. (2017, February 1). 4 Men rape 11 year old girl in Ibadan in *Vanguard Newspaper*
- Alhassan, A. (2013), Child Rape: Who Speaks for the Victims? Retrieved on July 4, 2013 from: <http://www.hopefornigeriaonline.com/child-rape-who-speaks-for-the-victims>.
- Anikwenwa, M.S.C (2008, October 20th). *Presidential address* to the 1st session of the 8th Synod of the diocese of Awka held at St Jude's Parish, Adazi.
- Ayogu, C.B. (2011). *Are we really Christians?* Enugu: Chrisbest.
- Brigneti, P. & Egbonimali, S. (2002). Rape in Nigeria: Theory & reality. Retrieved from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/aug/20/qanda.islam> on July 4, 2013
- Smith, Merrill D. (2004). *Encyclopedia of rape*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press.
- Chiedu, A. (2012). Rape of Nigerians and country: What Shall We Do? Retrieved from: <http://nigeriavillagesquare.com/guest-articles/rape-of-nigerians-and-country-what-shall-we-do.html> on July 4, 2013.
- Choji R. (2014). Dangers of indecent dressing. October 12, Leadership Newspaper Retrieved on 21st March, 2017 from <http://leadership.ng/features/386775/dangers-indecent-dressing>.
- Diara, C.F. (2011). The Church and the youth: A biblical mandate. *Journal of Bible Exposition, I, No.1*, 73-84.
- Finn, T. & Finn, D. (2012). *Love, sex and the Catholic Church*. Bandra, Mumbai: St. Paul.
- Garland, J.C. (2001). *Ten great reasons why you should say no to sex before marriage*. Jos: Honey City.
- Gberindyer, G.G. (2010). *Singles and sex: Discovering biblical and practical principles that will help you*. Jalingo: Dan-Kaduna.
- Humphreys, T.P (1993). *Gender differences in the perception of rape: The role of ambiguity* (M.A. thesis) Wilfrid Laurier University.
- John, T. (2013). Unholy sex: Bishop Rapes a 15-Year-Old Girl. *Wednesday, July 3, 2013. Vol. 10, No. 2660, P.9.*
- Kawu, I.M. (2013). Nigeria's troubling epidemic of rape. Retrieved from on 21st March, 2017 from <http://www.nigeriastroublingepidemicofrape>, on July 4, 2013.

- Luther, M. (1958). *Stride toward freedom*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Malcolm, (2012). Rape under Nigerian law: Time for a review. *Retrieved from on 22nd March, 2017 from <http://saymalcolm.wordpress.com/2012/07/25/> on July 4, 2013.*
- O'Donovan, W. (1997). *Biblical Christianity in African perspective*. Lagos: Oasis.
- Odeh, N. (2013, 6th May). Siege of child rapists. In *The News*, Pp.14-20.
- Odunsi W. (2013). Capital punishment: Those who rape and kill must be killed. Daily post of July 7, *Retrieved on March 21st, 2017 <http://dailypost.ng/2013/07/07/capital-punishment-those-who-rape-and-kill-must-be-killed-primate-of-anglican-church/>*
- Okeke, J.N (2014). Violence against the girl child: a case of rape. In N. Nnyigide, R. Ezeuko, N. Nwokoye & J. Eyisi (Eds.). *The eagle of Igbo literature: A festschrift in honour of Prof G.O Onyekaonwu* (pp.870 - 876).Nimo: Rex Charles and Patrick.
- Okogba, E. (2020, June 18). Rape cases in Nigeria amidst corona virus lockdown. *Vanguard*
- Okoro, C.K. (2011). *The Youths: Challenges and prospects*. Enugu: Timex.
- Omoniyi, T. (2020, June 1). The alarming rate of rape cases in Nigeria during the covid 19 lockdown. *Premium Times*.
- Ullman, S. E. (1999). Violence and victims, Volume 14, Number 2, pp. 123-133(11). New York: Springer
- Umoru, H (2017, 21st March). Return mission schools to owners, Ekweremadu tells FG. *Vanguard Newspaper p.16*
- Sowale, S.O (n.d). The renewal of the Church in its mission in Ijebu-Remo diocese (Anglican Communion) *Lambeth "88" E.d E.A Odumanyima, S.O Sowale, I.T.A Fasugbe, T.E.K Oredain, and E.O.I Ogundana, 30 – 66.*
- Soyinka, W. (2009, March 4). *Between nation space and nationhood*. Guardian, P.21
- 2014- Child Rape Cases on the Rise in Nigeria: NOI polls retrieved from <http://www.noi-polls.com/root/index.php?pid=294&parentid=66&ptid=1> on 14th March, 2017.
- National centre for Victims of Crime – retrieved from <http://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/dna-resource-center/untested-sexual-assault> on 20th March, 2017.
- Why is there much rape in Nigeria? Punch Newspaper August 9, 2016 Retrieved on 20th March, 2017 frc om <http://punchng.com/much-rape-nigeria/>

Resolution 37: sexual abuse of Anglican Consultative Council Retrieved from <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/instruments-of-communion/acc/acc-9/resolutions.aspx>.