

Factors Responsible for the Rise of Girl-Child Rape in Lagos State: An Implication for Counselling

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Abstract

The increasing rate of reported rape cases against minors in Nigeria is becoming alarming, to the extent that not even toddlers are spared. Young children, especially girls are increasingly experiencing sexual abuse at the hands of those that are supposed to take care of them. This paper therefore examined the factors responsible for the rise in girl-child rape in Lagos, Nigeria. The sample consisted of 200 mothers randomly selected from two local government areas in Lagos. Results show a significant relationship between lack of sex and sexuality education and girl-child rape, and that girl-child rape is not age-related: any girl-child is at risk. The paper recommends counselling on sex and sexuality education early enough in life both at home and in schools, formation of girl-child protection network within the community. It is also imperative for parents to make childcare a priority.

Keywords: girl-child, factors, rape, sexual assault

Introduction

The increasing rate of reported rape cases against minors in Nigeria is becoming alarming to the extent that not even toddlers are spared. Rape is now a recurring decimal in our society with recent statistics leaving many wondering if there will ever be an end to the menace. Child rape is one of the most traumatizing forms of violence against children, usually committed by a person in a position of power and trust in the child's life. While several cases are officially reported to the appropriate authorities in Nigeria, most people believe the majority of rape cases go unreported mainly because parents want to protect their children from potential stigmatization and embarrassment.

A girl-child can be referred to as a female child, a young, unmarried woman. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) defines a girl-child as "a female human being below the age of 18 years." Badejo (2005) gives childhood age as the period between two to 11 years, this implying that a girl-child is a female human being within that age range. The National Child Welfare Policy (1989, cited by Ada, 2007) defines girl-child as a person below 14 years of age. Offorma (2009) corroborates the UNCRC definition of the girl-child as a biological female offspring from birth to 18 years of age. The legal definition of child generally refers to a minor, otherwise known as a person younger than the age of maturity. During this period, the girl-child is totally under the care of the adult,

who may be her parents or guardians and older siblings, by whom she is malleable, builds and develops her personality and character. She is very dependent on the significant others, those on whom she models her behavior, through observation, repetition and imitation. Her physical, mental, social, spiritual and emotional developments start and progress to get to the peak at the young adult stage. The economic downturn worldwide has eroded this culture of parental care and guidance.

Rape is a form of sexual assault, usually involving sexual intercourse, which is initiated by one or more persons against another person without that person's consent. Rape could be by fathers on their step or biological daughters; older brothers or stepbrothers on young sisters or stepsisters (Esere & Idowu, 2005). It may also be by neighbors or family friends. Rape may also be statutory (as in some states in United States of America) which is sexual intercourse with minors, physically and mentally incapacitated persons. In such cases, force and lack of consent are not necessary for conviction (Ullman, 1997). Also, some mean-spirited and diabolical housemaids may do so to the orifice of children under their charge.

An opinion poll, reveals that nearly seven out of 10 adult Nigerians (67%) decry the high incidence of teenage rape in the country, while three in 10, (31%) personally know of a victim of child rape in their local community (NOI Polls 2014). The findings of the poll further reveal that almost four in 10 (36%) of adult Nigerians claim that most often the alleged offenders involved in child rape were close family members, relatives and neighbours. Half or (49%) of those that personally knew a victim said they were usually children aged between 7 and 12 years. In a study from South Africa, Runyan, Wattam, Ikeda, Hassan and Ramiro (2002) say that 1.6% of females were found to have experienced forced or coerced intercourse before the age of 15. Tourigny and Baril (2011) submit that certain individual factors have been associated with an increased likelihood of being raped as a child. The key question that needs to be asked is "why is girl-child rape on the increase in our society?"

Several factors are advanced as influencing girl-child rape, such as: conditions, circumstances or characteristics associated with an individual or her environment that increase the likelihood of the individual becoming a victim of rape. The presence of one or more risk factors is not a cause for rape, but it can increase the risk that rape will occur (Tourigny & Baril, 2009). Various individual, relationship, community and societal factors are associated with an increased risk that a child will become a victim of rape. Researchers across the world have identified diverse factors that increase vulnerability to risk of rape or being raped. These factors could be economic, physical, social and legal. Therefore, this study aims at examining the factors influencing the rise in girl-child rape in Lagos.

Research question

1. What are the influencing factors responsible for the rise in girl-child rape in Lagos state?

Research Hypotheses

- i. There is no significant relationship between influencing factors and rise in girl-child rape in Lagos state.
- ii. There is no significant difference in the rise of girl-child rape in Lagos state based on age.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted to examine the factors influencing the rise in girl-child rape in Lagos state. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire was administered on 200 women to solicit data on factors influencing the rise in girl-child rape in Lagos state. The questionnaire, "Factors Influencing Rape Inventory" (FIRI), was divided into two sections. Section A was for collection of personal data of respondents while section B consisted of questions that elicit responses from respondents with response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Simple percentage, t-test, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and ANOVA were used for data analysis using a 4-point rating scale: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point.

The questionnaire was distributed to a group of 200 women, purpose of data collection and gray areas of the instrument were explained. Time was given for them to answer and questionnaires collected immediately after. Data collected from questionnaires was thereafter analysed.

Results

The data shows that the total number of respondents was 200 women. Data analysis was carried out using simple percentage, t-test, PPMC and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Analysis of research question and hypotheses

- Question: What are the influencing factors responsible for the rise in girl-child rape in Lagos state?

Table 1: Factors influencing rise in girl-child rape in Lagos state

	Factors	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
	Mothers too busy	78	39.0	39.0
	Family problems	52	26.0	65.0
	Girl-children hawking wares	40	20.0	85.0

	Factors	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative %
Valid	Parents don't discuss sex and sexuality	24	12.0	97.0
	Girl-children sent to relatives or used as maids	6	3.0	100.0
	Total	200	100.0	

This result shows that the factors influencing rise in girl-child rape in Lagos that parents are too busy, family problems, and other related factors.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between factors and rise in girl-child rape in Lagos state.

Table 2: Correlation between factors and rate of rape in Lagos

	Influencing factors	Rate of rape	
Factors	Pearson correlation	1	.771**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Rate of rape	Pearson correlation	.771**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

** – Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From Table 2 above, it was observed that the PPMC (r) stood at 0.771 , approximately 0.77, which means there is a strong positive correlation between the variables and that the correlation, $p < 0.005$. This means that the correlation is significant at 0.05 level. Hence the null-hypothesis is not accepted. This then indicates that there is a significant relationship between influencing factors and rising rate of girl-child rape in Lagos.

From table 3 (opposite page), the independent t-test revealed that $df = 198$, $F = 0.343$ and $p < 0.05$. This result shows there is no statistically significant difference between the variables, hence, the null-hypothesis is accepted; that is, there is no significant influence of age on the rise of girl-child rape in Lagos. This implies that girl-child of any age is susceptible to rape.

Discussion

The study reveals that the major factors responsible for the rise in girl-child rape are mothers being too busy, family problems, lack of sex and sexuality education, girls hawking wares after school and sending children off to relatives for adoption or holiday or using them as maids. This is in line with the findings of Finkelhor, Moore, Hamby and Straus (1997) and Drake and Pandey (1996) that

girl-children from poor communities or low-income families are at a greater risk of being raped.

Also, girl-children from problem homes are more susceptible to rape. This agrees with the findings of Black, Heyman and Slep (2001) and Finkelhor and Baron (1986) that children that are disturbed due to problems at home seem to be more vulnerable to rape, as perpetrators seek out children from this type of background. This is supported by Wolfe (2007) and Martin, Najman, Williams, Bor, Gorton and Alati (2011) that family problems are typical characteristics that may affect the parents' ability to properly supervise their children thus exposing them to sexual assault. Other factors include lack of sex and sexuality education by parents early in life, sending children to live with relatives or being used as housemaids and girl-children with too strict or harsh parents are more likely to be raped. These findings agree with the report of Boney-McCoy and Finkelhor (1995) that rape is common among children who report poor relationship with their parents; distant mother-daughter relationship (Paveza, 1988), and having to live away from biological parents before the age of 16 (Ajuwon, Olaleye, Faromoku & Ladipo, 2006).

Most reviewed literature do not agree on age as a factor but all agree that being young is a key reason for being raped due to naivety, dependence on adults, and the development process.

Summary

From the research study, it is established that mothers being too busy to attend to girl-child needs as well as inadequate supervision are major influencing factor responsible for the rise of girl-child rape. Other factors include poor par-

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the rise of girl-child rape in Lagos on the basis of age.
Table 3: Independent sample tests of difference on rise in girl-child rape on the basis of age.

Rape prevalence	Equal variances assumed	Levene's Test for equality of variances		t-Test for equality of means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean diff.	Std. error diff.	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
	Equal variances not assumed								Lower	Upper
		.343	.559	-1.256	198	.211	-1.991	1.586	-5.119	1.136
				-1.255	196.185	.211	-1.991	1.587	-5.121	1.138

ent/child interpersonal relations, lack of sex and sexuality education by parents and inadequate parental love to the girl-child. Attending to these influencing factors will help reduce the onslaught of girl-child rape.

Conclusion

Based on the study, it can be deduced that many factors ameliorate girl-child rape as many factors can also increase its prevalence. The study establishes that spending quality time as well as cordial relationship between parents and children will go a long way in protecting girl-child against being raped. The study also establishes that carefree parenting, giving away children to others to raise money to support the family, or sending them to relatives to ease financial burdens are some of the factors that make girl-child rape rampant in society. Despite the above factors, however, there are some instances when girl-child rape occurrence cannot be explained.

Implications of Findings for Counselling

The role of counsellors cannot be undermined when it comes to girl-child sexuality education. Educating the girl-child on sexuality early in life will empower her to stand up to sexual harassment at home, school or at play. Therefore, the findings of this study imply that:

- Establishment of counselling services in primary schools as well as improving the guidance and counselling services in secondary schools in Lagos should be urgently looked into.
- These counselling centres should be manned by experienced counsellors that can lay the foundation of sexuality education of the girl-child at the primary-school level.
- Counsellors should pay more attention to those salient signs of loneliness, physical abuse and grooming signs that can lead to rape and taking steps to nip rape in the bud before it happens.
- Counsellors should be versatile with grooming tactics by rape offenders and educate the girl-child on what to do in risky situation to prevent getting raped.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study that:

- Parents— mothers especially—should spend more quality time with their girl-children, communicating sexuality education to them.
- Parents should work hard to provide for their children, thus forestalling dependence on relatives and neighbours.
- Children should be well-guided, especially after school and not send to hawk wares.

- Living with relatives or as housemaid is not the best option and parents should look for a better way of raising their children with the little they have.
- Divorce or separation, violence, drinking, smoking and doing drugs should be avoided by parents as much as possible to avoid influencing children negatively.
- Counselling services should be taken seriously at both primary and secondary school level with a comprehensive syllabus on sexuality education.

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