

# CURBING THE MENACE OF RAPE IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND ACTIONS

*BY*

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## **Abstract**

The issue of rape in Nigeria has become a worrisome social phenomenon of alarming proportion with its negative consequences on the victims and, their families and the society at large. To address this unpleasant situation, this work examines the issues of rape in Nigeria and actions to be taken to curb this menace. Specifically, the paper discusses the various types of rape prevalent in society; several factors responsible for rape; the effects of rape on the perpetrator's victims and the society, and measures for curbing rape in Nigeria. The paper employs feminist and self-control theories to explain the issues of rape. It uses secondary research such as books, journals, published articles, electronic media sources, and internet-based information to provide an overview of the current discussions. The paper concludes that rape is a global issue, it is a form of social deviance and one of the dominant crimes in Nigeria. It affects the victims psychologically, physically, and socially and it is a hurdle to national development in Nigeria. It is recommended that Nigerian law should be strengthened to give it the desired bite and all Nigerians must rise in the condemnation of rape in the society.

**Keywords:** Causes, Curbing, Effects, Menace, Rape,

## **Introduction**

Rape continues to be a major problem in Nigeria, impacting people from different demographics. Nonetheless, detailed and current national statistics are restricted because of underreporting and social stigma. A 2014 National Survey on Violence Against Children in Nigeria indicated that one in four girls said they faced sexual violence during childhood, with around 70% stating they encountered several incidents. Significantly, just 5% looked for assistance and 3.5% accessed any services. Additionally, UNICEF in 2015 that one out of four girls and one out of ten boys in Nigeria had faced sexual violence before turning 18. The National Bureau of Statistics (NIBS) noted a 65% rise in female rape victims in 2022, emphasizing a troubling increase in these occurrences (Omoniyi, 2017). Rape is likely a global issue

and is seen as the most devastating form of trauma, causing adverse effects on victims, their families, and society as a whole. According to Persson & Dhingra (2021), it is regarded as traumatic and frequently results in enduring health consequences. Rape is a type of gender-based violence that transcends all boundaries. It is a worldwide occurrence impacting individuals of all ages, social classes, and levels of education, irrespective of their ethnic heritage or religious beliefs. Unfortunately, women and girls are the primary victims of this crime (Mgolozeli & Duma, 2020; Hilary & Habila, 2014).

Every day, the number of victims and the incidence of rape cases rise in all civilizations (Olaleye & Ajuwon, 2019). Rape is a common criminal sexual conduct that damages the health and well-being of survivors and violates their dignity. Rape rates in Nigeria are rapidly rising to a dangerous level,

necessitating immediate action. According to reports, rape has become more and more common in Nigeria in recent years, with news stories about rape often making headlines (Chiazor; Ozoya, Udume & Egharevba, 2016). According to Mazini-Henwood (2015), the prevalence of rape has serious health consequences for the victims, including unintended pregnancy, miscarriage, HIV infection, and psychological trauma that lasts for the rest of their lives.

Rape is the most horrific type of violence directed at women. It is a global occurrence and it is inherent. It spans across races, tribes, and social classes. The topic of rape must not be taken lightly. It is a matter that has been discussed by human rights organizations globally. Rape has consistently been condemned by the majority of societies globally, often linked to savagery and barbarism (Sobanjo; Asonye; Sodimu & Farotimi, 2021). The idea of rape has emerged as a significant issue of concern not just for the government at various levels, NGOs, academics, and students, but also for the average person in society. The occurrence of rape has emerged as a concern for both the government and the public worldwide. In numerous developing nations like India, Nigeria, South Africa, and others, it is rare for a day to go by without reports or rumors of rape incidents. The threat of rape is rising globally, with Nigeria being particularly affected. Consequently, there is a pressing necessity to reduce this threat, particularly in Nigeria where the problem is taking on a disturbing scale (Alao, 2018). Against this context, this paper analyzes the issue of rape and proposes measures that could be implemented to combat this threat.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Feminist Theory**

This paper is rooted in the feminist perspective, which discusses the essence of women, their roles, their oppression, and the impact these factors have within broader social realities. Feminist theory developed

over the years thanks to the input of numerous scholars, activists, and authors, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) and Gloria Anzaldua (1942-2004). Feminist theory argues that rape is a reflection of gender inequality, stemming from a patriarchal system that emphasizes male power and control over women. This theory highlights how societal norms, cultural traditions, and institutional frameworks sustain sexual violence. The social and cultural undervaluation of women leads to sexual violence and obstructs survivors from pursuing justice. At its foundation, feminist theory seeks to confront and deconstruct systems of oppression, especially patriarchy, while advocating for social justice, equality, and empowerment to foster a more equitable and inclusive society, which is central to this paper. Feminist theory plays a significant role in this work as it highlights that the different forms of rape occurring in Nigeria, as discussed in this paper, are ingrained in a patriarchal system, gender disparities, societal norms, cultural traditions, institutional frameworks, and male supremacy over females, as articulated by feminist theory. Feminist theory examines the societal and institutional foundations of the issue. Using these actions, feminist theory remains profoundly pertinent in addressing the issue of rape in Nigeria.

### **Self-Control Theory**

The theory of self-control, called the General Theory of Crime, was introduced by Micheal Gottfredson and Travis Hirschi in 1990. It is extensively utilized in criminology and psychology to clarify why people partake in dangerous, impulsive, or unlawful behaviors. It is based on the belief that self-control is largely cultivated during childhood through effective parenting, which encompasses consistent discipline, supervision, and nurturing. It emphasizes self-regulation and early development highlighting the significance of supportive environments in influencing future behavior. This theory suggests that a lack of self-control plays a

major role in leading to deviant actions such as rape. It ascribes unlawful actions to impulsiveness, absence of foresight, and the incapacity to reflect on the long-term effects of behaviors. The theory elucidates the connection between inadequate self-control and actions like rape and drug misuse, which provide instant rewards even though they carry negative long-term effects. The theory offers a structure for elucidating different forms of crimes including rape, theft, vandalism, and violent acts. The theory suggests that criminal behavior is frequently impulsive, demands little effort, and offers instant gratification, which attracts individuals with poor self-control, particularly when the chance presents itself. Poor self-control is especially significant in comprehending juvenile delinquencies since numerous deviant actions in young people are associated with inadequate impulse management and insufficient foresight. People with poor self-control tend to participate in behaviors like crime, drug use, and dangerous activities that offer instant pleasure, ignoring the future repercussions. Accordingly, the hypothesis suggests that men who lack self-control and are unable to regulate their sex drive are more prone to engage in rape. Self-control theory is pertinent to this work because it suggests that many men lack self-control, which leads to poor impulse control, a lack of foresight, and an inability to think through the long-term effects of actions. These factors are responsible for the different types and causes of rape that are discussed in this paper. To reduce the threat of rape in Nigeria, self-control theory continues to be a fundamental component of crime prevention and intervention initiatives.

## Conceptual Review

### Concept of Rape

The term rape originates from the Latin verb "Rapere," signifying to seize or take through force. The idea of rape continues to be a topic of discussion among various scholars. In medical terms, rape is characterized as the

penetration of the vulva by the penis. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI, 2013) describes rape as any degree of penetration, however minor, of the vagina or anus with any body part or item, or oral penetration by a sexual organ of another individual without the victim's consent. Achuike & Kitause (2014) define rape as an act of coerced sexual penetration or any type of sexual interaction that does not have the permission of the affected individual. Alao (2018) characterizes rape as a type of violence directed at women and a criminal act in which the perpetrator uses sexuality to impose humiliation on the victim or to exert dominance and control over her. Ashameri (2014) contends that rape involves the use of power, coercion, or violence to intimidate, shame, exploit, demean, or dominate another person sexually. Rape can also happen when an individual coerces or deceives another into engaging in non-consensual sexual acts, even in the absence of physical violence (Adebowale, 2016). As stated by Mukoyo (2017), rape is a form of sexual violence that entails engaging in intercourse without consent or with someone unwilling to participate. Rape refers to engaging in sexual intercourse with a girl or woman without her agreement.

### Types of Rape

Various reasons drive rapists to perpetrate their acts of rape. This is classified in the following manner:

**Anger or Retributive Rape:** It entails the display of animosity and fury directed at the victim. It is marked by physical violence, with the attacker employing much greater force than required to overpower the victim (Agbo, 2017).

**Sadistic Rape:** In sadistic rape, the assailant channels both rage and dominance, turning aggression into a sexual act that becomes eroticized for him. Sadistic rape often includes torture and confinement. The rapist's attack is intentional, methodical, and premeditated. The assailant frequently blindfolds the victim or dons a disguise (Diara & Nweze, 2011).

**Robbery Rape:** This represents another significant and evolving form of rape. The thieves visit their victim's residence to take their belongings and occasionally murder the victim, ultimately resulting in the assault of the victim, which was not their initial plan (Mukoro, 2017).

**Child Assault:** Sexual abuse directed at minors, encompassing molestation, exploitation, or rape, where victims are frequently pressured or manipulated by relatives or trusted adults. Adebowale, 2016.

**Stranger Rape:** Happens when the assailant is unfamiliar to the victim. This form of rape is frequently linked to violence, intimidation, and hostility. It can happen in remote or unknown areas. In numerous city areas, accounts of women assaulted by strangers during late-night commutes illustrate this type of rape (Diara & Nweze, 2011).

**Acquaintance or Date Rape:** This type occurs with a perpetrator familiar to the victim, including a friend, neighbor, co-worker, acquaintance, or romantic partner, and is often seen in social environments. Offenders use established relationships to build trust (Agbo, 2017).

**Marital Rape:** Unconsented sexual relations occurring during marriage. It is frequently based on patriarchal views that see partners as possessions. It includes power dynamics and psychological harm. A partner compels sexual relations with their spouse against their will. In many societies historically, it was not seen as a crime (Alao, 2018).

**Statutory Rape:** Engaging in sexual acts with someone under the legal age of consent, irrespective of their apparent consent. It frequently includes disparities in power between adults and children. Consent holds no legal significance because of the victim's age (Ejim, 2013).

**Group Assault:** Sexual violence perpetrated by several offenders at once, typically characterized by severe brutality and humiliation. It entails intense physical and mental distress. It is frequently utilized to establish control and invoke fear. Favour Okechuckwu, an 11-year-old girl, was brutally gang-raped to death in Ejigbo, Lagos State (Aliyu, 2014).

**War Rape:** Sexual violence committed during armed conflicts or wars employed as a weapon of war to intimidate, degrade, and dominate populations. It is generally aimed at women, children, and occasionally men (Aderanti, Titiloye, Arulogun & Lamidi, 2021).

**Custodial Rape:** Sexual violence perpetrated by authority figures like police officers or prison guards against individuals under their care. It entails the misuse of authority that victims cannot oppose because of their confinement (Ali, 2018).

### Causes of Rape

**Contact with Modernity:** Engaging with modernity by reading about sex in novels, books, magazines, and newspapers, as well as viewing different kinds of pornographic films on television, has put adolescents under constant pressure to experiment with sex, even if it involves sexual assault. Another specific reason that suggests rapists operate without consequences is closely linked to the lenient rape legislation in the country (Ejim, 2013). According to Onasoga, Afolayan, Rejuaro & Onwordi (2019), more than a hundred instances of rape against women frequently occur without any of the offenders facing prosecution or imprisonment. The influence of peer groups plays a significant role in the increase of rape incidents in Nigeria. Many teenagers, to stay important and earn their peers' acceptance, participate in sexual activities through coercion.



**Myths Surrounding Sex:** Numerous myths about sex contribute to the increasing rate of rape in Nigeria. Ohayi, Ezugwu, Chigbu, Arinze-Onyia & Iyoke (2015) found that a prevalent belief among numerous ethnic groups is that without engaging in premarital sexual intercourse, boys are likely to have small testicles, struggle with erections, and have poor performance, while girls are expected to have small breasts, encounter early menopause, face painful menstruation, and experience painful nipples during breastfeeding.

**The Nature of Adolescents:** Adolescents typically possess a strong sexual drive that compels them to explore various experiences, including harmful actions like rape, to fulfill their sexual cravings. Moreover, substance abuse and alcohol dependency enabled sexual assault, commonly referred to as predatory rape. It is a sexual attack that occurs after the victim has been rendered unable to resist due to the intake of alcohol and other illicit drugs.

**Poverty:** A significant issue impacting numerous families in Nigeria. Poverty and economic decline have compelled numerous families to permit their daughters and teenage girls to sell goods, even at unsafe hours and locations, to supplement the household income, thus putting them at unnecessary risk of being assaulted by predators (Chiazor et al 2016).

**Deficient Parental Guidance:** Deficient parental guidance stems from modernity, in which some parents excessively indulge their children by failing to implement strict discipline. Many children in this context may likely turn into rapists (Agbo, 2017).

### **Effects of Rape on the Perpetrators, Victims, and Society**

**Health Implications:** The impact of rape is profoundly detrimental to victims, their families, and society at large (Aliyu, 2014). No perpetrator escapes the repercussions of their actions; they are perpetually haunted by

the memories of their crimes, facing severe outcomes that may include incarceration, deteriorating health, feelings of guilt and societal condemnation, social stigma, a tarnished criminal record, and the risk of sexually transmitted infections, among others. Ashiru & Orifowomo (2015) assert that rape inflicts significant physical and psychological trauma on victims and their families, leading to intense suffering, including death, sexually transmitted infections, and unwanted pregnancies. Mukoro (2017) suggested that if virginity is deemed a marker of a woman's honor, then rape serves as a potent means to destroy the honor. According to Agbo (2017), the aftermath of rape is characterized by painful memories and enduring consequences for the victim. Furthermore, rape not only degrades individuals but also undermines the integrity of entire communities or nations.

**Psychological Impacts:** The mental impacts of rape influence both the mind and the human body. These consist of acute stress reaction, a condition arising from traumatic events a person endures that leads the observer to become extreme, unsettling, and behave with unforeseen fear, stress, or pain, which includes or endangers serious injury, perceived severe injury, or death to the victim (Ali, 2018). Rape trauma syndrome refers to the psychological distress encountered by a rape survivor, which encompasses disturbances to typical physical, emotional, cognitive, and social behaviors (Ann and Lynda, 2014). Post-trauma syndrome can lead individuals to feel anxious or scared even when they are not in any danger (Ann and Lynda, 2014). The signs of post-traumatic stress disorder can be categorized into three types: Re-experiencing symptoms. This episode features flashbacks that involve physical signs such as a racing heartbeat or excessive sweating, disturbing dreams, and scary thoughts; hyper-arousal symptom, in which the person undergoes instances of being easily startled, feeling tense, struggling to sleep, or experiencing angry outbursts; as

well as depression and low self-esteem. Low self-worth makes people susceptible to depression, and depression undermines low self-worth. Depression frequently skews thoughts, leading someone to feel insecure, pessimistic, and filled with self-hatred (Deborah, 2012). Rape affects a community by damaging the unity and shared safety that defines a society (Rashi, 2018). The result is intricate because society precedes economic development, leading to a decline in social well-being. The problem of rape is recurring and it is steadily detrimentally damaging society.

### **Suggested Solutions to Rape**

The following measures are suggested for curbing the menace of rape in Nigeria.

**Provision of Comprehensive Sex Education:** It is imperative that all social institutions, including parents, religious organizations, civil societies, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies, urgently implement comprehensive sex education and guidance for the vast population of Nigerian youth. This initiative is essential in significantly reducing the alarming rates of sexual violence, including rape, in Nigeria. State authorities must systematically and thoroughly document incidents of violence against women, particularly rape, and ensure that this information is made publicly accessible. Furthermore, government agencies should guarantee that all women who have experienced rape receive appropriate avenues for redress, including compensation, rehabilitation, and assurances against future occurrences.

**Parental Guidance:** There is a critical need for effective parental guidance and upbringing to instill proper morals and values in children. This approach will ensure that they are raised in accordance with the ethical standards and cultural values of society.

**Enlightenment and Orientation Campaigns:** While civil societies and non-

governmental organizations should launch comprehensive enlightenment campaigns against rape and rapists, religious leaders, community leaders, and educators at all educational levels must educate and orient people about the risks and consequences of rape. Fighting the evil of rape necessitates a multifaceted strategy. To serve both adult and child survivors, post-rape care facilities must be established in Nigerian local government areas, and occurrences of rape must be documented quickly.

### **Availability of Educational Facilities:**

Addressing rape must start at the grassroots level; local governments should ensure sufficient educational facilities to engage adolescents, thereby reducing their opportunity to view pornography, which can lead to rape. Additionally, there ought to be brochures provided to the community to disseminate various information regarding rape to the public. All victims of rape deserve to receive abundant love and support to rebuild their self-worth.

**Enhanced Treatment and Care:** There needs to be an enhancement in how the police and other criminal justice authorities handle victims of rape.

**Enhancement of Medical and Health Services:** Victims should have access to better medical and health services, along with insurance coverage for hospital care, as many lack the resources to obtain treatment.

**Sufficient Consequences:** To succeed in the battle against rape, each offender must be identified and held entirely accountable for their deeds. Every Nigerian should stand up and condemn this social issue.

**Provision of Counselling Services:** It is essential to enlist the expertise of qualified counsellors to provide support for survivors of rape at both state and local government levels.

**Review of Rape Legislation:** The existing Nigerian legislation regarding rape requires enhancement to ensure its effectiveness. The National Assembly must urgently review the pertinent legal provisions related to rape, particularly concerning the processes of investigation and prosecution. Furthermore, the definitions and stipulations surrounding rape should be clearly articulated in our legal framework, with a focus on the specific circumstances that contribute to the prevalence of rape in the nation.

**Societal Support:** Society must extend its support to victims of rape, offering empathy rather than stigma, as this can significantly aid their recovery. It is crucial to establish adequate and operational rehabilitation centers for the assistance of rape survivors.

### Conclusion

Rape is a worldwide problem impacting various nations. It represents a type of social deviance that differs across countries and evolves. Rape, being a prevalent crime in Nigeria, impacts the victim psychologically, physically, and socially. Rape poses a barrier to economic progress, represents a public health issue, and infringes upon women's essential human rights. In conventional African communities where customs, standards, values, faith, and beliefs prevail, the matter of rape is looked upon negatively. This further explains why incidents of rape are not reported equally in Nigeria. Various elements contribute to the issue of rape in Nigeria, including exposure to modern society, improper handling of rape incidents, peer pressure, provocative clothing, substance abuse, and other factors. In Nigeria, various forms of rape exist, including date rape, anger rape, sadistic rape, and robbery rape, among others. Rape permeates nearly every facet of society in Nigeria and is expected to escalate if significant measures are not implemented to combat this issue. In summary, rape is a grave offense that can lead to physical and emotional repercussions for the victim. Grasping the various types,

reasons, and impacts of rape can aid us in effectively tackling and preventing this offense.

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