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**VICTIMS OF RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT/ ABUSE IN LAGOS STATE**

* **THESIS**

This work aims at the awareness and enlightenment of various severe rape and sexual assault cases happening in Lagos state and as a country at large. This will inform the reader about the physical and emotional impact rape has on its victims. It will also help activism to address male rape with collaborative outreach services.

* **INTRODUCTION**

Some people are ignorant of what rape and sexual assault are. They are of the opinion that when women especially wear revealing clothes, it is no longer considered as rape. They also are convinced that in marriages and relationships, there is no such concept as “rape”, because it is part of the duties as their partner. These thoughts are wrong and are the causes of some of the rape cases being unsolved.

 To give a simple and basic definition, rape and sexual assault can simply be defined as the violation of one’s private parts without consent. This happens to both men and woman and it is a very serious crime. Rape also involves forcing or manipulating someone to witness or participate in any sexual acts. Sexual assault can also involve blackmailing someone to sleep with you and in marriages/relationships if one party does not give consent.

* **BODY**

There was a study held for survivors of Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) from January 2008 to December 2012. The hospital has a 20 bedded gynecological ward. When a victim of sexual assault shows, the nurse will perform the initial assessment, especially for vital signs. Consultation is then done by conducting a thorough physical examination, obtaining evidence for any signs of sexually transmitted disease. This study showed 304 victims with 287 with concrete information. The ages of these victims ranged from 2 to 50 years. Most victims were mostly Christians and Yoruba people, majority of those victims lived with their parents. Those less than 19 showed the majority (83.6%), comprising of those under 10 years (39%) and adolescents (44.6%). The management showed that majority of these victims ended up with sexually transmitted diseases, especially HIV.

**CAUSES OF RAPE**

Rape is caused by many reasons. One major reason is because our institutions are not addressing the crime as serious as they should. In a survey of rape in Nigerian universities in Lagos, 67% of the victims did nothing after they were raped while 33% made a feeble attempt to which most of them are not taken seriously. In Nigeria as a whole, about only 18% of the rape cases are solved and talked about. In this small percentage, there are mostly women; this is not just because woman are raped more than men, it is also because the society has made it in a way that no support is given to a man who has been raped because he is a man and it is shameful for a fellow man to be raped by its kind. The women, who represent most of the rape cases, cannot come out to speak, also because some societies shun the women, giving all manner of reasons why she was raped and she ends up keeping silent to the crime. This leaves many cases to remain unsolved and the crime to increase because no institution is helping to curb or reduce the crime

Another reason for most rape cases is ignorance. This is usually identified in marriages. Some partners, especially the husbands, are usually ignorant during marriages. They believe that there is no such thing as rape inside a marriage. Rape of a wife is usually not recognized as an offence in customary law and it is still not penalized if the wife suffers body harm. Many women suffer such domestic violence in the house and the people is also ignorant to it, allowing parents to sell their children to early marriages to older men who will end up beating, “punishing” and raping these girls.

Also, another reason is wickedness of some people in the society. Some people- friends, family, strangers- use rape as a way to punish girls for certain reasons known to them only. About a week ago, in Gbagada in Lagos state, there was a case of two girls going to their friend’s house to give her a birthday present and this girl set them up with 7 boys to rape them. The girls were beaten and drugged, one girl ended up being badly burnt with iron because she did not want to submit at first to them. The girl’s reason for this was simply because; she wanted to get back at them for making fun of her for losing her virginity. This case is one out of many cases that are caused this way. Some people do this to others for certain evil reason which should be punishable by law.

Other reasons include: unequal power relations for women, alcohol and drug dependence, etc

**CONSEQUENCES OF RAPE ON VICTIMS AND THE SOCIETY**

One does not need to emphasize on this, it is very much known to us the consequences of rape especially on the victims.

 A few of the victims usually die after the experience, depending on the amount of people that rape them and the force used during the crime. Most victims, however, survive this crime but they are never the same afterwards. Some become terrified of men in general, some become suicidal, or some might even end up being mentally unstable. Most are left with scars in the form of memoires, dreams, and so on. These victims are most times also left with sexually transmitted diseases to which they battle with for the rest of their lives. To simply put, these victims experience nothing short of serious trauma. Some male victims end up becoming rapists as well. A good example is the cast, Ropo, in a Nigerian movie called October 1st

Rape also affects the society because their women no longer feel safe, especially if nothing is done about the offenders or the crime itself. It increases the rate of insecurity in Nigeria, especially in the society.

 **POSSIBLE SOULTIONS TO RAPE**

In order to curb this crime, awareness needs to be raised about this crime to the people and the various institutions of the society. Citizens need to know the seriousness of this crime and it should be punishable by the law.

Parents should also raise their sons in good values. African parents should no longer see the need to pay attention to only the female child on cooking and cleaning, but should also focus on the male child and teach them the importance of consent and no violence in their lives.

 Government should also provide a comfortable and conducive centre where women are allowed to air their views and be listened to without being judged. Parents and supervisors should also listen to their female children and pay more attention to them.

**CONCLUSION**

Rape is a very serious crime and an act of domestic violence, one which 3 in every 5 women experience. We should not remain ignorant to it , even if it does not happen to us or our relatives. We should help one another in the society by condemning rape and its apologists in the country. By doing so, we would be able to save our girls/women, boys/men in our society.