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**RAPE IN NIGERIA: ITS EFFECTS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

Rape! A universal issue that has had its effect on both women and men; yes men also however, it is more universally known to be committed against women by men much more than men-men, female-female or even to men by females. In order to proceed we would need to clearly define what rape is. Rape, simply put is an act of sexual assault which involves sexual intercourse against the victim’s valid consent. I say ‘valid consent’ in the sense that the culprit can perform rape through physical force, threats, when the victim is unconscious, intoxicated or even below age of legal consent. In explanation of ‘age of consent’ it is simple the legal age at which a person is considered competent to consent to sexual acts; in Nigeria, the age of consent is at 18 years as of 2020.

However, today I shall be discussing rape in Nigeria precisely. In Nigeria there have been a lot of opinions on rape as an issue generally; whilst most people cry out to stop raping girls and anyone generally without their consent, others (mostly men) blame it on the dressing of girls and their going out too late at night. Personally I believe it’s completely absurd to put blame on females for being their own of rape as a result of what they wear or even being out at night. This is because a lot of times rape victims have been going through it since they were young (below age of consent) and didn’t know what was going on and many other cases were performed in broad daylight mostly by more than one person. I would admit however that some people put themselves in a consequential position but a crime is a crime, one has no justification for committing rape. As long as an individual who’s of legal age of consent does not give her consent or withdraws it at anytime not listening or acting against it is an act of sexual assault. If the individual isn’t of legal age of consent any sexual intercourse or harassment is an act of rape.

Sadly, in Nigeria there are many cases of rape most of which are unreported and the few reported most times never convicted the culprits. The numbers of unreported cases are higher than the reported ones. This is because of the effect of fear of stigmatization rape brings.

I would now to speak on few out of the many effects of rape starting off with genital injuries Sexually Transmitted Diseases(STDs). STDs are infectious diseases that are transmitted from one person to another through sexual intercourse. STDs are one of the most common effects of rape on the victim’s physical health; some examples include HIV-AIDS, Syphilis, Gonorrhea, etc. In most cases in Nigeria the STD transferred is HIV-AIDS and it doesn’t have a confirmed cure, other STDs may be cured as some of them are just bacterial infections but for others that are viral infections they do not have a cure. It is one thing to be infected with a disease because of someone’s lack of control of his/her sexual desires and it’s a whole different case living knowing that the disease you carry has no cure and you could end up dying from it. Having these burdening thoughts can also lead to another more sensitive effect of rape- Traumas and PTSD. People may not know the extreme extent traumas and PTSDs can take a victim of rape. The mere remembrance of the pain endured whether physically, emotionally or mentally can really make the victim lose he/her. It is worse if the culprit was someone who the victim was familiar with which most times is the case. It is also very mentally damaging if the victim also has to deal with STDs and as healing requires the patient to be in a good mental state.

Furthermore, there’s stigmatization. Sadly in Nigeria this is something that still most victims face and fear facing. It is also one of the reasons why there are so many unreported cases of rape. Victims fear stigmatization from society, their work place and even in some cases their family members. All these cause people to shy away from coming out when they’ve been raped. Some families would criticize the victims and blame them when they’ve been raped and are immediately tagged as a shame and disgrace. Some families are even the ones that cover up the issue so the ‘family name’ is not tainted and the culprit is left not convicted whilst the victim is damaged physically, emotionally and mentally.

However, to every problem there’s a solution; in light of that here are few solutions to the issue in discuss. Research has shown children of all age groups have been victims of rape, which is why I believe beginning sex education at a much more early stage in the education system would help to cut down rape in Nigeria. Some rapists may not even use force especially on victims below the age of consent but they use deception and coercion. These young children unaware of what is being done to them allow and pay many consequences for it, therefore sex education should be taught at a much more early stage for children so they are aware of when they are being abused.

In addition, the government should wake up to the leading cause of HIV-AIDS in Nigeria and begin to take effective legal actions against the perpetrators of this crime. For the few reported cases of rape, the Nigerian government really has not been keen and serious with the consequences laid out for the culprits. I believe if the government had punished them as stated in the law instead of dropping the cases, the rate at which rape occurs in Nigeria would not be this high. Another solution can be the way children are raised at home, let both sons and daughters be raised with good morals and also taught sex education at more early ages in their homes. Also parents should ensure to provide a better home atmosphere so if anyone of their children be victims, they would be more comfortable to come forward about it so the culprit(s) can be put to justice and let society have one less rapist on the loose.

In conclusion I appeal that the government takes into cognizance the points above and work to provide a rape-free society. In a country already high in the lack of good security and of which victims are mostly females, having rapists on loose that target females most times is too much of a burden for us females and the citizenry at large. However, would all this trouble would not be here if people exercise a sense of morals and self-control over their sexual desires?

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