Matric Number: 19/MHS06/019

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**Rape**

Rape is the sexual assault usually involving sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual penetration carried out against a person without his/her consent. This act may be carried out forcefully, through coercion, abuse of authority or against a person who is incapable of giving valid consent, such as one who is unconscious, incapacitated, has in intellectual disability or is below the legal age of consent. Worldwide, sexual violence including rape, is primarily committed by males against females.

The term rape originated from the Latin word rapere which means “to snatch, to grab, to carry off”. In Roman law, the carrying off of a woman by force, with or without intercourse, constitutes raptus which could be used to refer to either kidnapping in Medieval English law or rape is the modern sense of sexual violation.

People who have been raped can be traumatized and develop posttraumatic stress disorder. Serious injuries can result along with the risk of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. A person may face violence or threats from the rapist and in some cultures, from the victim’s family and relatives.

Historically, women have always been subjugated and oppressed by men in most cultures in Nigeria. This situation is due to the inequality in gender relations between man and woman, rape has always been with mankind throughout the world. However, in recent times, the incidence of rape has increased in Nigeria. The hegemonic patriarchal values and practices make it difficult for women who have been raped to obtain justice. Perpetrators often go unpunished even if the victims have the courage to report the incident. Owing to this, rape victims suffer in silence due to stigma and humiliation attached to the public knowledge of rape.

An extensive review of the Nigerian anti-rape law identified shortcomings in the provisions which make rape prevention a challenge. First, according to the law, rape can only be committed by a man to a woman and it involves only penal and vaginal sex. The law does not acknowledge male rape victims nor does it recognize anal sex as part of rape. Second, a victim of rape needs to establish penetration occurred, affirmation the crime needs to be established and proof must be provided that consent was not given. The limitations with establishing consent make proving many of the few valid rape cases difficult.

Some rape cases in Nigeria are:

On the 17th of June 2020 in Abuja, a 35 year old man, Onyebuchi Ezema, was arraigned before a Federal Capital Territory (FCT) high court for allegedly raping his four year old daughter between the 15th and 16th of April 2020 at Lugbe, a suburb in Abuja.

Another rape case in Nigeria is the case of a 12 year old girl in Ajah, Lagos. She was raped by four masked men in her home on a Thursday. She was at home having her online class when the sad occurrence took place. According to a family member, the pupil was not only raped but also brutalized.

The police in Kano state said they had recorded 42 rape cases in the state between January and May. Adding that the suspect had been charged to courts in the state. They said statistical analysis of the cases indicated that 33.3% of the rape incidents were committed in uncompleted buildings and 17.7% at farmlands, 15% in shops, 15.6% at the suspects residence and 8.9% in schools, while 6.7% and 2.2% of the cases were committed at the victims residence and market places respectively.

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Some principal factors that lead to the perpetration of sexual violence against women, including rape are:

Beliefs in family honor and sexual purity

Attitudes of male sexual entitlement

Weak legal sanctions for sexual violence

No single facet explains the motive for rape. Underlying motives of rapists can be multi-faced. Several factors have been proposed: anger, power, sadism, sexual gratification or evolutionary proclivities. A study of undetected rapists in 2002 by David Lisak a clinical psychologist says that compared with non-rapists, both undetected and convicted rapists are measurably more angry at women and more motivated by a desire to dominate and control them, are more impulsive, disinhibited, anti-social, hyper masculine and less empathic.

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There are many reasons for this. Rape results in stigmatization of the victim, resulting in rejection by families and communities, and with police unwilling to make official reports. Due to this stigma, women and adolescents may be unwilling or unable to obtain a medical examination to substantiate their report of rape. High rates of rape and low reporting underscore the need for specific actions to address sexual violence. It is important that leadership recognize there is a rape Pandemic.

Studies show that the rates of sexual coercion and abuse among female adolescents in Nigeria between 11 and 55%. A recent survey in Nigeria also showed that 31.4% and 5.7% of sexually active adolescent females and males reported forced sex (rape) at sexual initiation. Prior reports have shown that 4-6% of all adolescents in Nigeria girls in southern Nigeria experience rape. Less than one in five (18.1%) of 10,000 respondents who have been raped in Nigeria report the offence to the Police.

Women ages 16-19 are four times more likely to be victims of rape of sexual assault and female college students ages 18-24 are three times more likely to experience sexual assault.

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The general population, government and lawmakers need to understand the epidemic proportions of the crime and its potential long-term impact on the victims. This will help facilitate more structured interventions and preventions in Nigeria.

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In 2017, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that in the year 2017, 2,279 cases of rape and indecent assault were recorded by the police across the country. Figures from the National Correctional Service on prison admission by type of offence reported that in 2013, 5,797 Nigerians were admitted for sex offences. In 2014, this figure dropped to 4,436. And by the second quarter of 2015, the figure was 1,621.