



*Brief Research Report*

## Students' Perception of Rape and Sexual Violence and Methods of Prevention in Tertiary Institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This study examined students' perception of rape and sexual violence and methods of prevention in tertiary institutions in Lagos State. It was a cross-sectional study carried out among one thousand, two hundred and eleven (1,211) female undergraduates selected from two tertiary institutions in Lagos State. The sample size for the study was one hundred and twenty-one (121) representing 10% of the population. Inferential statistics was used for analysis. The results revealed that majority of the students are aware of the different types of rape but did not consider forced sexual intercourse between spouses as rape. The students have a good knowledge of rape and sexual violence. The students perceive that rape can have detrimental effects on the victims' mental, physical and reproductive health. Avoiding late nights, dressing decently, increasing the presence of security officers at strategic places on campus and the likes were identified ways of preventing rape in tertiary institutions. Among the recommendations proffered are that students should review their dressing styles to conform to the morals of the society to prevent the occurrence of rape.

**Keywords:** Perception, Rape, Sexual Violence, Students, Tertiary Institutions

## 1. Introduction

Sexual violence against women has been an issue in civilization. Sexual violence is a public health and human rights issue that serves as a warning sign to the world's most serious violation of human security. "Sexual violence" is defined by World Health Organization (WHO, 2015) as "any sexual act, effort to acquire a sexual act, unwelcome sexual comments or attempts against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person, regardless of their connection to the victim, in any environment". Sexual violence is a worldwide public health issue as well as a significant violation of human rights. A person's mental, physical, sexual and reproductive health may be adversely influenced by sexual violence. Sexual violence happens when a person is pressured, persuaded, or tricked into engaging in any undesired sexual activity, even when the individual is unable to agree owing to age, sickness, disability, or the effect of liquor or other substances. Sexual contact, sexual harassment, statutory rape, marital or partner rape, sexual assault on children, ritual abuse, incest, voyeurism, rape, exposure and sexual exploitation are all examples of sexual violence. It is a crime prompted not by sexuality, but by the eagerness to dominate, embarrass, and/or damage. A person's trust and sense of safety can be violated by sexual assault. Adults and children, individual of different age, colors, personalities, sexualities, faiths, occupations, financial levels, and nationalities are susceptible. Rape can happen to both male and female. The focus of this study is on females.

Females are frequently subjected to significant kinds of assault, such as rapes, which have long been a societal concern. Rape is described in the Nigerian penal code as having illicit intimate relations with a woman or girl without her permission, or with her agreement if the consent is acquired by force, menace or coercion of any sort, dread of danger, deceptive action or as in circumstance of a married woman, posing as her husband (Joseph & Bamigboje, 2024). The punishments' for this act according to sections 357 and 358 of the Criminal Code Cap "C38", Laws of the Federation, 2004) is life sentence with or without inflicting punishment. In Nigeria, rape is regarded as the act of having sexual intercourse (carnal knowledge) with a female against her will, without her consent, or even while placing her in fear of dying or harm, or while masquerading as the woman's husband, or having sexual relations with a girl under fourteen years, with or without her agreement, or having sexual relations with a girl with inferior intelligence.

Sexual assaults on college campuses are a rising epidemic and a reproductive health concern. The frequency of this problem in Sub-Saharan Africa ranges between fifteen and forty percent, with research indicating levels of sexual coercion and abuse among female teenagers in Nigeria ranging between eleven and fifty-five percent. One of the most heinous kinds of violence that may occur on a university campus is rape. Assault, extortion, or unjust restriction of liberty, whether in public or private life are examples of acts that may cause bodily, sexual, or mental injury or misery to women (Oshiname, Ogunwale & Ajuwon, 2013). Achunike and Kitause (2014) presented detailed reports of sexual abuse in Nigeria and the effects it has on victims, including bodily injuries, exhaustion, and psychological trauma such as suicidal ideation, burnout syndrome, melancholy and hormonal imbalances. Rape has a number of negative effects on the reproductive level of a woman's health. Serious injuries, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), notably HIV and unintended pregnancies are

some of the immediate effects. Victim's life's quality can be affected on a psychological level, the problem has been linked to chronic somatic problems, high-risk sexual behavior, anxiety, melancholy, chronic diseases and socioeconomic repercussions, all of which have a detrimental effect on the victims of rape (Oshiname, Ogunwale & Ajuwon, 2013).

Mezie-Okoye and Alamina (2014) affirmed that girls are more likely than boys to be victims of rape. The authors further stressed that female undergraduates are prone to rape. Rape is one of the most cruel and inhumane psychosocial forms of abuse against female students on campuses among undergraduate students. Sexual assault has a significant influence on the victims' physical, social and emotional wellbeing. The conduct might result in physical harm, as well as reproductive implications. Depression, anxiety, social isolation, loss of self-esteem, distrust of others, drug addiction and post-traumatic stress disorder are all possible outcomes. It poses a mental danger to an educational atmosphere that is favorable. Rape (by unfamiliar individuals or courting), unwanted sexual advances, sexual misconduct, urging for sex in exchange for favors, sexual assault of mentally challenged or physically disable people, manhandling or grabbing of sensitive parts are all examples of sexual assault that transpire in the higher education institution setting between several undergraduate students. Due to the delicate form of sexual violence and the tradition of passivity in Nigerian society, such events are seldom reported. Sexual assault victims, on the other hand, often experience anxiety and demand a lot of help. They are less likely to complain and seek aid if this is unavailable or inaccessible. For basic protection, an increased awareness of the incidence of sexual assault on university campuses is essential. Sexual assault by other students and professors is increasingly becoming more common in Nigerian institutions, and it must be handled immediately. In Lagos State, Nigeria, there is a scarcity of information on this subject. The goal of this study is to determine the undergraduate students' perception of rape and sexual violence and method of prevention. This data is essential for enhancing avoidance of rape and promoting coping techniques and approaches.

### *1.1. Statement of Problem*

Sexual assaults on college campuses are a rising epidemic and a reproductive health concern. The frequency of this problem in Sub-Saharan Africa ranges between fifteen and forty percent, with research indicating levels of sexual coercion and abuse among female teenagers in Nigeria ranging between eleven and fifty-five percent. One of the most heinous kinds of violence that may occur on a university campus is rape. Assault, extortion, or unjust restriction of liberty, whether in public or private life are examples of acts that may cause bodily, sexual or mental injury or misery to the victim. Victim's life's quality can be affected on a psychological level, a problem linked to chronic somatic problems, high-risk sexual behavior, anxiety, melancholy, chronic diseases and socioeconomic repercussions, all of which have a detrimental influence. Studies have shown that female undergraduates are prone to rape. Hence, the need to examine students' perception of rape, sexual violence and methods of prevention.

### *1.2. Purpose of the Study*

The general purpose of this research is to examine students' perception of rape and sexual violence and methods of prevention in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. Specific purposes are to

determine:

- (a) whether the undergraduates are aware of rape and sexual violence
- (b) whether the undergraduates have knowledge of rape and sexual violence
- (c) the female undergraduates' perception of rape
- (d) the organizations supporting fight against rape in Nigeria
- (e) ways by which rape and sexual violence be prevented on campuses

### *1.3. Research Questions*

The following research questions guided the study:

- (a) Are the undergraduates aware of the different types of rape and sexual violence?
- (b) Do the undergraduates have knowledge of rape and sexual violence?
- (c) What is the female undergraduates' perception of rape?
- (d) What are the organizations supporting fight against rape in Nigeria?
- (e) How can rape and sexual violence be prevented on campuses?

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### *1.1. Design for the Study*

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design to determine students' perception of rape and sexual violence and methods of prevention in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria.

#### *2.1.1. Ethics Statement*

The heads of the supervisory units at the halls of residence in the selected institutions granted permission for this study. Students who participated in the research provided informed consent and information was kept anonymous throughout the study.

### *2.2. Area of the Study*

This study was conducted in two tertiary institutions in Yaba Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos State. The selected institutions are Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos and Federal College of Education (Technical), Yaba, Lagos. Yaba LGA is one of the twenty LGAs in Lagos State. It is an urban area located on the mainland. The choice of these schools is because they have halls of residence and again due to their proximity for the research purpose.

### *2.3. Population and Sample*

The population of this study was one thousand, two hundred and 11(1,211) female undergraduates residing in four female halls of residence in Yaba College of Technology, Yaba, Lagos and Federal College of Education (Technical), Yaba, Lagos. Proportionate sampling was used to determine the sample size for the study. The sample size for the study was one hundred and twenty-one (121). This comprised ten percent of the female students residing in four halls of residence in the selected schools.

### *2.4. Instrument for Data Collection and Study Procedure*

A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The section A elicited data on the respondents' demographic characteristics such as age and year of study while section B elicited data on the research questions. Section B was drawn on a four-point scale rating: Strongly Agreed, Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed.

### 2.5. Data Collection Technique

The questionnaires were administered to the participants in their halls of residence. The exercise lasted for two weeks. Explanations were made to the participants where necessary for clarifications on the instrument.

### 2.6. Data Analysis Technique

The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. The decision rule for mean is 2.50. Items with mean values of 2.50 and above were regarded as accepted while items that scored below 2.50 were regarded as not accepted.

## 3. Results and Discussion

**Research Question 1:** Are the undergraduates aware of the different types of rape and sexual violence?

**Table 1:** Mean Responses on undergraduates awareness of different types of rape and sexual violence

Types of Rape and Sexual Violence	Mean	SD	Decision
Forcible date rape	2.98	1.05	Accepted
Drug facilitated rape	3.81	0.38	Accepted
Blitz rape	3.25	0.78	Accepted
Spousal rape	2.02	1.87	Rejected

Key: SD = Standard Deviation

Table 1 showed the mean responses on students' awareness of types of rape and sexual violence. All the items listed as types of rape were accepted with mean ratings 2.98 to 3.81 except item 4 (Spousal rape) which had a mean rating of 2.02. Findings from the study showed that students are aware of the different types of rape but did not consider forced sexual intercourse between spouses as rape. Spousal rape is less considered as rape since the act is carried out by the husband. This confirmed Oluwole (2014) that the recognition of sex in the context of marriage as crime is strange to many people. This is consistent with the findings of Koss (1992), who found that women compelled to engage in sexual activity with friends were less prone to classify their encounters as sexual violence than some of those victimized by strangers. This is also in agreement with the findings of Odokuma, Udi and Regina (2015) who reported in their study that majority (65%) of their subjects did not consider unwanted sexual intercourse between spouses as rape. Rape is a physical and social form of violence. This corroborated Humphreys and Towl (2020) who described rape as one of the most serious forms of sexual violent behavior against females.

**Research Question 2:** Do the undergraduates have knowledge of rape and sexual violence?**Table 2:** Mean responses on undergraduates' knowledge of rape and sexual violence

Knowledge of Rape and Sexual Violence	Mean	SD	Decision
Rape is forceful penetration with a weapon	3.49	1.02	Accepted
Rape is penetration of the genitalia against consent	2.79	1.18	Accepted
Sexual penetration of the mouth with tongue without consent is rape	2.96	1.04	Accepted
Rape can have detrimental effects on the victims mental and physical health	3.23	1.03	Accepted
Effects of alcohol and illicit drugs can cause rape	3.19	0.90	Accepted
Watching pornography films can stir up the urge for rape	3.04	1.05	Accepted
Rape can have effects on the reproductive health of the victim.	3.04	1.16	Accepted
Victims of rape may suffer sexually transmitted infections	3.31	0.93	Accepted

Key: SD = Standard Deviation

The result of the study in Table 2 showed the students' knowledge of rape and sexual violence. All the items were accepted with a mean range of 2.79 to 3.49. The standard deviation of the subjects' responses ranged from 0.90 to 1.18 which indicated a homogeneous variable as a result of the closeness in the responses. Findings from the study showed that the students are aware that rape and sexual violence could have detrimental effect on mental, physical and reproductive health of victims. Haskell and Randall (2019) described sexual violence as a traumatic experience with neurological consequences which has an effect on the nerve and brain processes. The effect of sexual violence is determined by a number of circumstances. According to Haskell and Randall (2019), these factors comprise (but are not restricted to) the form of the attack, how lengthy it occurred, the level of the physical injury, the victim's connection with the offender, if the victim has a previous history of neglect or abuse, and how relatives, acquaintances, and others react to what the victim tells about the incident. A sexual violence can have both short-term and long-term physical and psychological consequences for victims (Chivers-Wilson, 2006).

**Research Question 3:** What is the female undergraduates' perception of rape and sexual violence?**Table 3:** Mean responses on perception of rape and sexual violence

Perception of Rape and Sexual Violence	Mean	SD	Decision
Rape is forceful intercourse without consent of one's partner	3.77	0.70	Accepted
Unwanted touch or kiss is rape	3.08	0.87	Accepted
Boyfriend can rape his girlfriend	2.88	1.05	Accepted
Teacher can rape	2.94	1.14	Accepted
Anybody can rape	3.04	0.99	Accepted
Anybody can be raped	3.17	1.03	Accepted
Using medicinal charms for seduction is rape	3.20	1.03	Accepted



Key: SD = Standard Deviation

The result of findings in Table 3 showed the students' perception of rape and sexual violence. All the items listed were accepted with a mean range of 2.88 to 3.77. The standard deviation of the subjects' responses ranged from 0.70 to 1.14 which showed that the respondents are close in their responses. Findings from the study showed the students' perception of rape and sexual violence. Shock and rage, dread and anxiousness, hyper-alertness and hyper-vigilance, impatience and wrath, interrupted sleep, nightmares, meditation and other replaying reactions, increased demand for control, inclination to downplay or reject the event as a coping mechanism, propensity to withdraw oneself, feelings of dissociation, emotional rigidity, emotions of betrayal, and a sensation of humiliation are some of the effects that can occur after rape. Conroy and Cotter, (2017) stressed that the sexual objectification character of sexual violence lends a particularly devastating dimension to the situation. The authors asserted that being sexually attacked or raped may be one of the most traumatic horrific memories a woman might go through, especially when the victim knows the perpetrator or when the offender is someone whom the victim felt should be dependable and secure and who she never imagined would abuse her, her sense of betrayal is a fundamental element of the suffering and anguish she suffers.

**Research Question 4:** What are the organizations supporting fight against rape in Nigeria?

**Table 4:** Mean responses on awareness of organizations supporting fight against rape in Nigeria

Organizations supporting fight against rape	Mean	SD	Decision
Stand to End Rape (STER)	3.87	0.36	Accepted
The Mirabel Center	2.98	0.71	Accepted
Hands off Initiative	3.21	0.78	Accepted
Women at Risk International Foundation(WARIF)	3.24	0.96	Accepted

Key: SD = Standard Deviation

The result of the findings in Table 4 showed the students' knowledge of organizations supporting fight against rape. The mean ratings of the responses ranged from 2.98 to 3.87 while the standard deviation of the responses ranged from 0.36 to 0.96 which showed that the respondents are not too far in their responses. Findings from the study revealed that the students are knowledgeable about organizations supporting fight against rape. The identified organizations include Stand to End Rape (STER), The Mirabel Center, Hands off Initiative, Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF). These are organizations fighting against rape and sexual violence in Nigeria. Being aware of these organizations would enable female students to know where to lay complaints with a feeling of confidentiality when the need arises. Odokuma, Udi and Regina (2015) reported that victims of rape preferred to be silent if or when assaulted. The reason for this could be stigmatization that may follow assault or lack of awareness of organizations supporting fight against rape.

**Research Question 5:** In what ways can rape and sexual violence be prevented on campuses?

**Table 5:** Mean responses on ways by which rape and sexual violence can be prevented on campuses.

Ways of Preventing Rape and Sexual Violence	Mean	SD	Decision
Increasing the presence of security officers	3.58	0.88	Accepted
Dressing decently at all times	3.27	0.87	Accepted
Providing public enlightenment on the realities of rape and the punishment attached by law	3.22	1.00	Accepted
Not walking alone at nights	3.09	1.00	Accepted
Having school safety escorts at nights	2.90	0.98	Accepted
Creating mobile apps on security for students	3.10	1.00	Accepted
Informing family members or friend about your destination and estimated time of return	3.29	0.97	Accepted

Key: SD = Standard Deviation

The result of the findings in Table 5 showed ways by which rape could be prevented on campuses. The mean ratings of the students' responses ranged from 2.90 to 3.58 while the standard deviation ranged from 0.78 to 1.00. Findings from the study showed that rape could be prevented on campuses by increasing the presence of security officers, dressing decently at all times, avoiding late nights, informing family members or friend about one's destination and estimated time of return. Rape is the act of coercing another person into having intercourse against their will, usually using assault, threats, verbal coercion, deceit, or other forms of manipulation. Rape can be detrimental to the lives of the victims and should be avoided. Rape is often carried out at nights and lonely places. According to WHO (2015), sexual violence has profound impact on physical and mental health. It is associated with an increased risk of a range of sexual and reproductive health problems. It could also lead to death as a result of suicide, HIV infection or murder. The study empirically established undergraduate students' perception of rape and sexual violence. The study has contributed to the body of literature on methods of preventing rape and sexual violence in tertiary institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. Further research can be carried out on the potential impacts of rape on campus policies and programs in tertiary institutions.

#### 4. Conclusion

The study concluded that the students are aware of the different types of rape but did not consider forced sexual intercourse between spouses as rape. The students have good knowledge of rape. They know that rape can have detrimental effects on the victims' mental, physical and reproductive health. The identified ways of preventing rape on campuses include increasing the presence of security officers, dressing decently at all times and informing family members or friend about one's destination and estimated time of return. The study therefore recommends that students should review their dressing styles to conform to the morals of the society to prevent the occurrence of rape. Also, the perpetrators of rape in and outside the campus should be prosecuted to serve as deterrent to others. Students should



form the habit of informing family members or friend about their destination and estimated time of return among more.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no clash of interest

### **Author Contributions**

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Investigation: JSS-M, AAE, OOI, NOA

Methodology: JSS-M, NOA, OOI, AAE

Writing original draft, review and editing: JSS-M, NOA, AAE, OOI

### **Data Availability Statement**

The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article. Further enquiries can be directed to the correspondence author.

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