

# **A SURVEY OF THE CAUSES OF RAPE AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE VICTIMS IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

Rape is a scourge that is equivalent to COVID-19 and other related pandemics that require national emergency response. This paper focused on the causes of rape and its accompanying effects on the victims in Benue State. Aims of the study were to investigate the causes and effects of rape in Benue State. This study adopted descriptive design where data were collected from the male and female in Benue State. Katsina-Ala, Makurdi, and Otukpo Local Government areas were sampled for the study. 400 respondents were sampled for the study using Tara Yamane sample size determination formula and questionnaire was used for data collection. Data was analysed using frequency and percentages. The findings of the study revealed that exposure to modernity, indecent dressing, poor parental upbringing, lust, moral depravity were the causes of rape in Benue State. Also, findings indicated the psychological, sociological and health implications of rape on its victims in Benue State. The study recommends the following that: stringent laws be put in place to ensure that rape perpetrators are justly punished; advocacy by non governmental agencies and governmental agencies should be encouraged to ensure improved reportage of rape to the law enforcement agencies; and Parents should build a strong, healthy, open and friendly relationship with their children for effective regulation of their sexual behaviour.

**Keywords:** Survey, Rape, Victims, Causes, and Effects

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## **Introduction**

The phenomenon of rape has preoccupied a centre stage in the discourse of gender violence across human societies. At different epochs and stages of societal evolution, rape is not welcomed. It appears there is no sane religion, culture and tradition that condoned rape. There are various injunctions in the Holy Bible that frowns at rape. Again, there are diverse instances where the Holy Bible has accounted for the incidence of rape in varied periods of the Biblical history. Such instances of rape as recorded in the Holy Book include Shechem, who raped Dinah Jacob's daughter (Gen 34:2). The New Reverse Standard Vision (NRSV) of the Holy Bible recorded in (Gen 34:2) that "he took her and lay with her by force". The expression he took her forcefully presupposes lack of wilful consent of Dinah in the sexual relationship. Again, Amnon David's son forcefully had sex with his half sister Tamar (2 Sam 13:11-14). The cited verses of the Bible, underscores the basic meaning of rape as "seizure", which indicate the lack of consent and unwillingness in the sexual intercourse on the part of the victim. The book of (Deut 22:26-27), clearly spelt how rapists were dealt among the Israelites.

Rape is one of the most recurrent crimes that cut cross societies the world over. The incidence of rape has increased astronomically over the years with enormous consequences on its victims across the globe. Incidences of rape are recorded on daily basis with child rape taking the lead recently. Rape is endemic in the society and has left its victims with psycho-social effects. Such effects of rape are depression, stigmatization, stereotype, infections (sexually transmitted infections), isolation or social withdrawer, insomnia, fear of victimization as well as suicide and murder (Osimodu, 2019; Alade, 2019; Ariyo, 2020). Again, the perpetrators of rape are not exempted from the consequences of rape. They are bounded by the memory of the evil they have perpetrated against their victims. Other consequences faced by the perpetrators of rape ranges from incarceration, castration, guilt and public condemnation, social stigma, having criminal record, sexually transmitted diseases among others (Osimodu, 2019; Alade, 2019; Ariyo, 2020).The enormous consequences of rape in the society informed the varied campaigns against it on print media, radio, television, and online sources of information. Such informed the formulation of extant laws in Nigeria that criminalised rape; even the moral precepts of the society abhors rape; international, national, and local non-governmental organization are

championing advocacy against rape, and law enforcement agencies have made concerted efforts at curtailing the incidence of rape to no avail. It appears the rapists are unrepentant and law enforcement agencies are overwhelmed by the activities of rapists hence the increase in the rate of rape in the society.

It seems the State legal frameworks have failed to adequately address gender-based violence, particularly rape. This is evidently noticed in the contrary provisions of the existing legal instruments which have created the gaps that are embodied in the extant laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria related to rape. For instance the provisions of section 357 of the Criminal Code, CAP 77, LFN, 1990 which provides that "any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl, without her consent, or with her consent, if the consent is obtained by force or by means of false threat or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or by means of false or fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or in the case of a married woman, by impersonating her husband, is guilty of an offence called rape(Criminal Code,1990)." Similarly, the provisions of section 282 of the Penal Code which stipulates that "sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife is not rape, if she has attained puberty."(cited in Olurounbi, 2019 and Musbau, 2020).The provisions of the Penal Code seems to have contravened the provisions of the Criminal Code which specifies that any unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl without her given consent, or if the consent is obtained by force or by means of false threat or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm is rape. These counter provisions of the law have constituted a conceptual morass to the meaning and context of rape.

The existence of Customary and Sharia Laws in Nigeria have encouraged religious and cultural practices contrary to the stipulations of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria directly or indirectly affecting the prosecution of rape (Akumadu, 2020). The tolerance of forceful sexual intercourse among ethnic nationalities for example Hausa Fulanis' as a manifest cultural practice makes the prosecution of rape cases among such groups difficult. Consequently, in an attempt at resolving the eminent ambiguities and inconsistencies in the legal provisions on rape, the National Assembly have enacted laws that seeks to address these encumbrances in order to facilitate the prosecution of rape swiftly and apportioned punitive

sanctions on rapists. For instance, on the 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, the National Assembly prescribed life imprisonment for any person convicted of sadistic rape. They equally approved a minimum of 20 years imprisonment without an option of fine for persons convicted of other categories of rape (Akumadu, 2020). The intent of providing punitive sanctions on rapists is directed at instilling general and specific deterrence towards checkmating the incidence of rape in Nigeria. However, rapists are not deterred by such punitive measures.

Therefore, the lopsided nature of Nigeria's criminal law and the weak institutions mandated to checkmate the incidences of rape has created an enabling environment for rape to thrive (Amnesty International, 2018). As a result, women advocacy groups are presently trying to prevent rape by educating the public on the malaise of rape, ensuring that quality rehabilitation services are provided for rape victims, and ensuring that perpetrators of rape are brought to book. The section 31 Subsection 2 of the Child Rights Laws enacted by the Federal Republic of Nigeria in May, 2003, provides that anyone convicted of rape is liable to life imprisonment. But this provision of the law is not enforced to the latter. Thus women and girls are raped and molested almost unabated (Odeh, 2019). There are a plethora of factors that have accounted for the incidences of rape such as: economic and socio-political conditions, alcohol and drug abuse, exposure to pornography, psychological disorder, peer influence, victim precipitated factors and exposure to modernity (Osimodu, 2019; Alade, 2019; Adebola, 2019; Bolade, 2019, Ariyo, 2020 and Alakija, 2020). These factors among others are known to have accounted for the increasing rate of rape in the society.

Rape exists across countries, race, ethnic groups, class, and religion. It is a universal phenomenon that cannot be trivialised nor gainsaid. It is an issue that has been subjected to debates by Human Rights Groups all over the world (Human Rights Watch/Africa, 2017). Rape is the most gruesome form of sexual violence committed mostly against the women. It is a denial of women's right to self preservation and consent to sexual intercourse. It is an intrusion into the right to sexual life of the victim's choice. It is a particular kind of human violence which violates meaning and essence of sexual life in any culture both ancient and modern. The increase in the volume of rape and its effects on the victims and their relatives is becoming more harmful and

notoriously noticeable in recent times. The rate of rape is variously recorded among the nations of the world. The estimates of rape range from as low as 2 percent as noted in the Epidemic of Rape and Child Sexual Abuse in the United States of America to 56 percent (Osimodu, 2019; Alade, 2019; Adebola, 2019; Bolade, 2019, Ariyo, 2020 and Alakija, 2020). Recent studies on rape shows that sexual assault still occurs at rates that approximate those first identified more than 20 years ago which established that approximately 27.5% of college women reported experiences that met the legal criteria for rape (Smith, 2004).

17.6 % of surveyed women and 3.0% of men said that they have experienced completed or attempted rape at some point in their life time. Thus, 1 among 6 United States of America's women and 1 among 33 of United States of America's men have been victims of completed or attempted rape (WHO, 2020). Flowing from the above, few women and men reported they were victims of an attempted rape only while 14.8% of surveyed women said they had experienced a completed rape only (WHO, 2020). These findings indicated that most rapists successfully penetrate their female victims. Statistics show that in North America, there is high probability of a woman being a victim of sexual assault during her life time. In Uganda, Ugandan court sentenced a teenage girl to a six hour jail term for killing her rapists' father. Also a woman is raped in India every 20 minutes. For instance, six men riding in Bus in New Delhi, India's Capital, raped and battered a 23 years old female medical student and she died as a result of the fatal internal injuries (WHO, 2020). A nationwide victim survey undertaken in 2019 by CLEEN in Nigeria established that 18.1 percent, less than one in five of 10,000 respondents who had been raped had reported the offence to the police. According to CLEENs, 2,241 cases of rape and incidence of sexual assault were reported in 2014; 1,529 in 2015; 2,284 in 2016; 2,084 in 2017; 2,253 in 2018, 1,626 in 2019; and 1,835 in 2020.

Similarly, rape cases in Benue State have witnessed a significant increase. According to police crime statistics generated by the Nigeria Police Command, Makurdi, from 2018-2020 58 rape cases were recorded. The preponderance of rape and its effects on victims has exposed how the trend is affecting many societies and making more women vulnerable to rape. The under reportage of the incidences of rape is linked to the stigma that

accompany the crime. Statistical reports on rape cases over the years have not been accurate as many rape victims are yet to be discovered. This made the official record of rape contestable. These figures are highly contestable because on daily basis, there are incidences of rape within the locality which is not codified by state agencies of law enforcement. The under representation of rape cases suggests the existence of dark and gray figures of rape in Benue State which necessitates a victim survey of the incidence of rape in Benue State.

Despite the widespread outcry over the rising cases of rape in Nigeria, there seems to be no end to this menace. A day hardly passes by without a reported case of rape/sexual violence in the media. Notable reasons for the apparent rise of sexual violence or rape in Nigeria could be that sexual violated victims are becoming more discouraged to report the crime. It could also be that rapists are having a field day hence an increase in the rate of sexual violence in Nigeria. Majority of rape cases occur in a location that is familiar to the victim hence they are afraid of raising alarm over their victimisation because fear of the stereotype attached to the offence. Such places are either the residence of the victim or that of the perpetrator. More worrisome among the factor is that rape victims who seek for justice are denied justice on account of their inability to prove or lack evidence in relation to their victimization.

Rape is one of the most under reported of all heinous crimes in Nigeria and countries the world over. To establish a true picture of the enormity of its incidence, we find the issue complicated by the lack of reliable rape statistics (Osimodu, 2019; and Alade, 2019). A major problem encountered when dealing with incidence of rape is that most victims of rape are simply adamant to report their victimization to the law enforcement agencies (Adebola, 2019; and Bolade, 2019). For many rape victims, a sense of shame, guilt or self blame about their role in the incidence of rape may be enough to prevent them from seeking for justice. In many instances, the public vilify the victim for the assault rather than the rapist hence rape continues to be one of the most under reported crimes (Ariyo, 2020 and Alakija, 2020). For example, a young girl 'Folake' was jailed after she accused a man of rape. A domestic worker who said her employer's husband had forced her into his bedroom and made her watch pornographic film before

forcing her to have sex with him. A medical examination was required to substantiate her allegation. Yet the victim was brought to court, charged for slander for making the accusation and remanded in prison (Amnesty International, 2018). Clearly from the above, victims of rape tend to be afraid of reporting their victimization to state agencies of law enforcement on account of want of evidence. This makes the generation of valid and accurate figures of rape impossible hence the gray figure figures of rape abounds in the society. Therefore, this paper seeks to do a victim survey to investigate the causes and effects of rape on its victims in Benue State, Nigeria. This paper seeks to answer the following questions thus: what are the causes of rape in Benue State? What are the effects of rape on its victims in Benue State?

### **Conceptual clarification and Theoretical Framework**

This section of the paper deals with clarification of concepts and theoretical framework. Here the concepts of rape, effects, causes, survey and victim are clarified while lifestyle exposure theory is reviewed and adopted.

Rape: is sexual assault or other forms of sexual penetration carried out against a person without his or her given consent. The act may be carried out by physical force, coercion, abuse of authority, or against a person who is incapable of giving valid consent such as one who is unconscious, incapacitated, has an intellectual disability, or is below the legal age of consent. The term rape is used interchangeably with sexual assault. The definitions of rape vary among States and scholars. Rape is mostly defined by scholar and statutes as non-consensual oral, anal, or vaginal penetration of the victim by body parts or objects using force, threat of bodily harm, or by taking advantage of a victim who is incapacitated or otherwise incapable of giving consent. Incapacitation may include mental or cognitive disability, self-induced or forced intoxication, status as minor, or any other condition defined by law that voids an individual's ability to give consent (Ashiru, 2019; Babawale, 2018; Bade, 2019; Benwell, 2019; Ajala, 2019). The Nigeria Criminal Code sees rape as having unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl without her consent, or with her consent, if the consent is obtained by force or by means of threat or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or by means of false and fraudulent representation as to the nature

of the act, or in the case of a married woman by impersonating her husband, is guilty of an offence which is called rape. According to Brigneti and Egbonimali (2019), rape is an act of sexual violence that involves intercourse without consent or against someone being unwilling to engage in the act.

Rape is associated with the use of threat, force, duress, torture and coercion for sexual gratification. It involves any unlawful sexual behaviour such as fondling breast and body, one's private parts or genital organs to derive sexual pleasure. Rape is an aggressive act against women mostly during wars, against slave girls, inmates and groups who lack power or status. The perpetrators use it as a means of humiliating the victims. Rape as a sexual assault involves penetration i.e. vaginal, oral, or anal due to force or threat of force, lack of consent or inability of the victim to provide consent due to age, intoxication or mental status (Achunike et al, 2014). World Health Organization (1995) defines rape as physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration, even if slight-of the vulva or anus, using penis, other body parts or an object.

Section 282 of the Penal Code which applies to Northern Nigeria specifies that:

A man is said to commit rape who has sexual intercourse with a woman in any of the following: (a) against her will (b) without her consent (c) with her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her in fear of death or of hurt (d) with her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband and that her consent is given because she believes that he is the man to whom she is or believes herself to be lawfully married (e) with or without her consent when she is under fourteen years of age or of unsound mind. 2. Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife is not rape, if she has attained puberty

For the purposes of this paper, rape is abrupt seizure or grabbing of the opposite sex to have unlawful and non-consensual sexual relationship. Different types of rape are identified in literature. According to Amadi and Uju (2019), rape can be categorised into date rape, power rape, gang rape,



anger or retaliatory rape, and sadistic rape. Date rape is the type of rape in which the individuals have agreed or consented to engage in date relationship. The rapist may be an acquaintance or a person with whom the victim have been dating. Power rape involves a situation whereby the rapist sexually captures, conquer and control their victims for example, a husband trying to compel his wife to have sex with her even when she is not interested in having sex. Again, women abducted and raped by criminals. Gang rape is when a group of people participate in the rape of a single victim. Anger or retaliatory rape involves the expression of hatred and rage towards the victim while sadistic rape is when the rapist is obsessed and forces the victim to act out a part in some sort of role play. It could involve mutilation, or torture as a means of getting the rapist excited.

**Victim:** As conceives by Ubwa (2003), victims of crime are those who suffer the physical, social, psychological, monetary and other depriving cost of crime. In other words, victims of crime are those who bear the cost of crime. To Gyong (2010), a person or a collectivity may be made a victim of crime as a result of conduct which:

- a) Is a violation of the rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; or
- b) Otherwise constitute an abuse of power in violation of international law and fundamental personal, economic, social, cultural, environmental, civil or political rights possessed by that person or a collectivity; or
- c) Otherwise constitute an offence under national legislation.

Similarly, Gyong (1988) conceives victims of crime as individuals or corporate bodies who directly or indirectly bear the brunt of criminal activities. He further states that those who suffer from outright violation of their fundamental human rights, exploitation, police brutality, racism, sexism, apartheid, state oppression, unfair economic policies, interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign nations etc. could be said to be victims of crime. For this study, rape victims are those whose right for choice and wilful consent to sexual intercourse has been wantonly violated by the opposite sex.

**Effects:** these are the psychological, medical and sociological consequences of rape on its victims. Psychological deals with mental and social domain of a human being, sociological encompass the socio-environmental, while

medical deals with the health related effects of rape on its victims. For the purposes of this paper, effects of rape are depression, stigmatization, stereotype, isolation or social withdrawer, insomnia, fear of victimization, disease infection as well as suicide.

**Causes:** these are the constituent factors that accounted for the existence or occurrence of a phenomenon. For the purposes of this paper, causes are the precipitating factors of rape.

**Survey:** is method adopted in the study of victims of crime which seeks to generated data on the existence of crimes, the rate, nature and extent of such crimes that are not recorded by official crime control agencies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Lifestyle theory is adopted to assess the causes and effects of rape on its victims in Benue State. Lifestyle exposure theory was developed by Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo. The theory argues that Lifestyles are patterned, regular, recurrent, prevalent, or routine activities that exposes or predisposes individuals to victimization. It advocates that lifestyle of individuals are predisposing factor of their victimisation. Kenndy and Forde (1990) summarised the lifestyle exposure model and posit that individuals become victims of crime based on their lifestyle choices, and that these lifestyle choices expose them to criminal victimisation. Example of lifestyle choices that predisposes individuals to rape include going out at night alone, living in isolated areas, associating with known felons, being promiscuous, excessive alcohol use, indecent dressing, drug abuse, and clubbing and keeping late hours. The mentioned lifestyle may contribute to their victimization since they cause the individual to put themselves at higher risk for victimisation than their more conservative lifestyle counterpart.

Lifestyle exposure theory is adopted to assess the cause and effects of rape on its victims in Benue State because of the core argument of the theory which states that individuals' lifestyle precipitate the nature and extent of their victimization. The explanatory value of theory to the phenomenon under investigation is valid because most victims surveyed have, lived in isolated areas, associated with known felons, were promiscuous, were given to excessive alcohol usage, were identified to have dressed indecently, and were noticed of clubbing and keeping late hours which accounted for most

sexual assault. The lifestyle of victims of rape exposes them to psychological, sociological and medical effects. However, there is every need to re-examine the propositions of the lifestyle theory on victimisation based on its postulations in relation to the victim-offender overlap. There is need to probe the theory's position regarding the specific association between lifestyle indicators and the risk for involvement in crime as either victims only, offenders only, or victim-offenders. Notably, the theory has failed to explain victimisation of individuals who have led conservative lifestyle.

### **Methodology**

This paper adopted Benue State as the study setting due to the vast nature of the study setting; three Local Governments Areas were selected across the existing Senatorial districts in the Benue State. These selected Local Government Areas were, Katsina-Ala, Makurdi, and Otukpo. These local Governments areas were selected to draw a balanced representation among existing predominant intermediate areas in the state. The setting was adopted because of the prevalence of rape in the locality and the gross under reportage of it. This study adopted descriptive research design where data was collected from the male and female adult resident in Benue State. The questionnaire was used to generate data for the study from 400 respondents that use determined using Tara Yamane sample size determination formula. Simple random sampling technique was employed to arrive at the final unit analysis. Data was analysed quantitatively and presented in frequency and simple percentages.

### **Causes of Rape in Benue State**

The causes of rape are: exposure to modernity, peer pressure, myths about sex, indecent dressing, and nature of adolescents, poor parental upbringing, socio-economic factors, lust, and moral depravity. Socio-economic factors: poverty is a major problem affecting many families in Nigeria with a predisposing consequence on the spread of rape in the society. Poverty is a manifest consequence of economic down turn which have forced many families into allowing their families children and teens to engage in street hawking. The exposure of teens to hawking even at unholy hours and places makes them vulnerable to rape. Moral depravity: eroding moral depravity is

common place in our society today. Recently, parents are having carnal passion for their own biological children, and religious leaders having sexual urge for their female members and lecturer lusting with their students. Ideally, parents, religious leaders and teachers are expected to enforce the moral character of the society not the contrary.

**Poor parental upbringing:** most parents have failed to inculcate strict sexual discipline into their children. Some parents engage in extra-marital affair to the knowledge of their children. Such parents are prone to nurture children who are rude, arrogant and wayward. (Ipinlaye & Ajanlekoo, 2019). Most children nurtured under this setting may probably become rapists. **The nature of Adolescents:** adolescents generally have very strong desire for sex. This propels them into wanting to experiment on anything including rape in order to satisfy their sexual drive. This is said to be motivated by their hormonal increase and activities which often create an upsurge in the sexual interest of the adolescent. Adolescent period is a time of sexual activeness, with their sexual drive developing to the highest point (Benwell and Smart, 2019). This period is the most critical stage of child development characterised with crises including unflinching sex desire which make the adolescent resort to sexual assault.

**Peer influence/peer pressure:** according to Bolarin (2019), peer group influence is an important factor in the upsurge of rape in Nigeria. Innocent youth who keep regular company of rapists may easily learn their evil ways no matter how careful they think they are. This is because in trying to remain relevant in group relation, individuals learn and adapt to new behavioural pattern common with such groups they belong to. Differential association exert a lot of influence positive or negative on personality development. **Indecent/shabby dressing:** indecent dressing engenders sexual desire in both men and women culminating into sexual seduction which precipitate rape (Bolarin, 2019). The usages of transparent and fashionable dresses particular among youth who have attained puberty are predisposing factors to sexual attraction. Recently, girls and female folk have taken to dressing half naked exposing their supposedly hidden body parts to the public. The wearing of seductive dresses that tends to advertise the nudity of ladies wearing of fanciful makeup are triggers for rape.

**Table 1: causes of rape in Benue State**

<b>Causes of Rape</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Exposure to modernity	80	22
Lifestyle	104	28.6
Poor parental upbringing	24	6.7
Moral depravity	20	5.5
Peer influence	45	12.4
Peer influence	49	13.5
Adolescent crisis	41	11.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Data on table 1 above showed that 28.6% (104) indicated lifestyle as the prominent factor that accounted for rape in the study location while 5.5% (20) was the least factor that explained the spread in rape in the area. Majority of the respondents opined that lifestyle of people explains the increase in rape in the society while minority of the respondents saw moral depravity as a factor accounting for the hike in incidences of rape in Benue State. Sociologically, the increasing adaption to careless lifestyle of people particularly the youth predisposes same to diverse carnal avenues such as pornography facilitate their desire for sex hence they adopt rape as the readily available means of satisfying their sexual urge in Nigeria in general and Benue State in particular. The responses gathered on the causative factors accounting for the prevalence of rape in Benue State suggested that exposure to modernity, indecent dressing, poor parental upbringing, moral depravity, lifestyle and adolescent crisis accounted for the prevalence of rape in most communities in Benue State. Such data implied that rape there are myriad of causative factors of rape in the area. The findings on the causes of rape in Benue State have agreed with the finding of (Ipinlaye & Ajanlekoo, 2019) (Osimodu, 2019; Alade, 2019; Adebola, 2019; Bolade, 2019, Ariyo, 2020 and Akakija, 2020) and (Ipinlaye & Ajanlekoo, 2019).

### **Effects of Rape on its Victims in Benue State**

According to Ashiru and Amurawaye (2019), rape devastate the lives of the

victim and their families causing severe physical and psychological pains and sufferings including death, sexually transmitted infectious diseases, unwanted pregnancies, depression, social stigmatization, distrust of opposite sex, and social isolation. Brigneti and Egbonimali (2020), opined that "if virginity is what makes women honourable, rape is an easy weapon to permanently damage them." For Obasi and Onagoruwa (2019), rape leaves painful memories and lifelong consequences on the victim. It inspires permanent damages on its victims. Rape equally degrades as well as violates a whole tribe or nation. Alhassan (2020), states that victims of rape often have symptoms of depression or traumatic stress. They are more likely to abuse alcohol or drug to control their symptom. Other effects include self-blame, lack of control over feelings and thoughts, drug or alcohol dependency, physical injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, poor self-image, unhealthy sex life, depression of post-traumatic stress disorder in their lifetime, long time negative effects on sexuality and inability to form or maintain trusting relationship are common.

The social stigma associated with rape across the globe forces female victims in Nigeria to conceal rape assault in order to save themselves from shame and public embarrassment. Even parents of the raped often find it difficult to come out publicly to report and make case for their sexually violated wards, children even wives. In Nigeria, when a woman is raped and it becomes public knowledge, "she and her family are "ostracized" due to the dishonour associated with rape". Another reason for not taking bold step in reporting such cases could be for the victim's family to maintain the ever existing cordial relationship with the parents of the perpetrator of the heinous crime. This situation encourages intending rapists to go into raping since people who indulge into the crime go scot-free. Drawing from the literature above, rape has psychological, sociological and medical effects on the victims. Such consequences of have ravaged individuals psycho-social and health wellbeing.

**Table 2: effects of rape on its victims in Benue State**

<b>Effects of Rape</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Psychological effects	148	40.3
Sociological effects	133	36.2
Health effects	86	23.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 2022, Field Survey.

Data on the effects of rape suggested that 40.3% (148) of the respondents maintained that the victims of rape in Benue State have suffered psychological effects of the incidence while 23.4% (86) responses saw sociological effects of rape in the locality. Generally, the data on the effects of rape in the study area hold that victims of rape in the locality have suffered psychological, sociological and health effects of rape. Data gathered on the effects of rape in the Benue State proved the peoples knowledge on the extent of rape in the area. From the data gathered across the study area, the effects of rape include sexually transmitted infectious diseases, unwanted pregnancies, depression, social stigmatization, distrust of opposite sex, and social isolation, physical injuries, poor self-image, unhealthy sex life. The data on the effects of rape on its victims corroborates the findings of Ashiru and Amurawaye (2019) and Alhassan (2020),

### **Conclusion**

The incidence of rape across societies has assumed alarming proportion. Rape may be heterosexual (involving members of opposite sex) or homosexual (involving members of the same sex). Many reasons are attributive to the increase in the rate of rape in the societies the world particularly in Benue State. Such reasons are the lopsided nature of the existing extant laws on rape, fear of stereotype and stigmatisation among victims, socio-cultural barriers and mischief in the criminal justice system. There are a plethora of factors that have accounted for the incidences of rape such factors are: economic and socio-political conditions, alcohol and drug

abuse, exposure to pornography, psychological disorder, peer influence, victim precipitated factors and exposure to modernity. Rape is endemic in the society and has left its victims with psycho-social and health effects. Such effects of rape are subsumed as depression, stigmatization, stereotype, infections (sexually transmitted diseases), isolation or social withdrawal, insomnia, fear of victimization as well as suicide and murder. Mental trauma may include overwhelming feelings of humiliation, embarrassment and defilement. It is common for rape to go unreported with some victims and their families, fearing stigmatization, police extortion and a lack of trust in the judicial process choose not to report cases to the authorities. To establish a near accurate figure of the incidence of rape victims' survey based studies were utilised.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were advanced by the study:

- i. Stringent laws should be put in place to ensure that rape offenders are justly punished. The judiciary and police should facilitate the processes of prosecuting and apportioning the rightful sanctions imposed on rape swiftly.
- ii. Advocacy campaigns championed by non governmental agencies and governmental agencies should be engendered to ensure improved reportage of rape to the law enforcement agencies.
- iii. Parents should build a strong, healthy, open and friendly relationship with their children and be very vigilant towards building and regulating their sexual behaviour. Parent should observe closely their children for any sign of vulnerability or abuse. Parents should also know the right time and place to discuss sex related issues with their children and get to know the company they keep. In addition, parents should educate their girl-child on the dangers of rape and places to go to so that they are not caught up in this menace. They should also be careful about entrusting their children in the hands of persons they do not know or trust very well. Parents should ensure that the girl child put on clothes that do not expose essential parts of their bodies.
- iv. Rehabilitation centres should be established to rehabilitate victims of rape. Such centres would serve as counselling units for rape victims.



- v. Punitive sanctions should be imposed on sexual assault offenders. Law makers should ensure that stringent punishment such as castration of male sex offenders and life imprisonment should be imposed on sex offenders.
- vi. Routine activities that are predisposing factors to rape should be discouraged among women. This implied that women should avoid isolated places, keeping of late hours, bad company, and consumption of illicit drugs.

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