

## **Prevalence of Rape in Ekiti State Nigeria: Expectations from the Church**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The article investigates the prevalence of rape and sexual assaults in Ekiti State, Nigeria. It reviews some pieces of literature on rape from scholarly perspectives; rape in the bible and its effects were equally investigated. The causes and effects of rape were emphasized in work. The article examined expectations from the church being the moral bastion of society. It is a concern that rape has become cancer that has eaten deep into our contemporary society. There have been reported cases of rape in Ekiti state, which calls for this article. It is no doubt that some men have thrown morals into the bin and defiled women of all ages, but children are not left behind in this contemporary madness. Some men have slept with children far below their children's ages. The research shows that rape is not exclusive to the state under study; allegations of rape and molestation have come from different states in Nigeria using qualitative and interview approaches. The paper equally gives information on reported and cases of convicted culprits of rape in the state. Likewise, efforts of the State Government and the church to forestall rape were revealed in this work. Nevertheless, it was observed that despite the efforts of Ekiti State in curtailing rape in the state, it is still prevalent. However, this is due to the number of new cases reported daily. Consequently, the call for church intervention as the moral bastion of society to forestall rape is imperative at this juncture. It has been discovered in the work that cases of rape are underreported due to the stigma and shame associated with it. Ekiti state, just like every other state in Nigeria, is a patriarch in nature. Hence, men are always at an advantage in nearly everything. Therefore, the paper recommends that the church intensify efforts to enlighten society through radio, television evangelism, counselling, preaching and workshop on the danger of rape. Finally, rape victims should be given the moral and medical support needed for their healing from the physical, emotional and psychological traumas associated with rape.*

**KEY WORD:** prevalence, rape, Ekiti State, Nigeria, expectations, church.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Rape is gradually becoming a norm in our present society. For example, (Adesanya Ogunlusi, 2020) report that there has been a rise in cases of child rape in Nigeria. It is pertinent to note that the issue of rape in contemporary Nigeria does not exclude anyone. Scholars have reported cases of different kinds of rapes, such as; prison rape, gang rape, , acquaintance rape, spousal rape, child rape, marital rape and rape during war e.t.c. (Schwartz, Nwabueze & Oduah, 2018). Unfortunately, rapists have broken age-limits barriers in perpetrating this evil because toddlers, children,

adolescents, adults and aged women have been victims of rape (Adesanya, 2020). For instance, there was a reported case of a man jailed for a lifetime in Ekiti State, Nigeria, for raping an 85-year-old grandmother (Emmanuel, 2022). In another report, a grandmother from the same state collected 50 thousand naira from a teenager who defiled a 3-year-old girl (Abiodun, 2021). Moreover, a 14-year-old high school girl was defiled by one Shola Oguntuase, a 30-year-old man. He was convicted and sent to life imprisonment. (Sunday, 2022) The Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice in Ekiti State Wale Fapounda (SAN) confirmed 168 cases of rape prosecuted in 2021. He equally affirmed that 108 cases of rape were still active and ongoing in the state. (Abiodun, 2021).

Meanwhile, rape is considered an offence in nearly all the nations of the world, Nigeria inclusive. Yet, despite this, cases of rape have been reported daily in Nigeria. Fortunately, a famous Nigerian Nollywood actor Olarewaju James also known as Baba Ijesa was recently sentenced to 16 years imprisonment for sexually assaulting the 14-year-old daughter of his colleague, a comedienne by the name Damilola Adekanya popularly known as Princess. (Sodiq, Oyeleke, Bimpe Olajiga and Matthew Agbaje, 2022). Also, in Ekiti State, which is the concern of this article, some rapists have been jailed to serve as a deterrent to others. (Nejo, 2022).

Furthermore, rape is prevalent in nearly all the nations of the world. For instance, "United Nations recorded that, internationally, the rape cases reported by police in 2008 ranged per 100,000 people, from 0.2 in Azerbaijan to 92.2 in Botswana with 6.3 in Lithuania. The African Security Forum International was concerned with the prevalence of rape in Nigeria and advised the inspector general of police to institute a "General Violence Reduction unit" in Nigeria's police force to be handling rape cases in the country, this is because of the levity hands on which these cases are being handled by police even when reported. This becomes necessary after the rape and killing of a 22-year-old University of Benin student inside a Redeemed Christian church of God in Benin City, Nigeria (Africa Security, 2020). Furthermore, in a survey published by the CLEEN foundation in 2012, Niger Delta was declared the "rape capital of Nigeria" because one in every ten women was either raped or victim of attempted rape in the region in 2012 (Amina, 2013). Also, the centre for Law enforcement education reports that the south-south has the highest rape cases in Nigeria, with 10 per cent rape or attempted cases. The North-East has 6 per cent, while the North-West regions had statistics of a woman out of every 25 women, this is four per cent each. The North-Central has the lowest number of rape victims, with one woman in every 33; this is 3 per cent. It is noted that; some of these victims were raped very close to their homes. (Aborisade, 2014; Ilora & Utoo, 2018, Victor, Chika & Innocent, 2009).

Meanwhile, despite these survey reports, scholars have posited that these reports do not give an accurate picture and representation of rape in Nigeria. This is because most rape victims do not report to the police, and the perpetrators can go unpunished (Adesanya, 2020; Graveling, 2018; Thacker, 2017). The question then is how can the church intervene in these issues of rape? It is noteworthy that Ekiti State Government has put measures in place to forestall rape in the state. Some of these measures are "name and shame of sex offenders", opening a particular register

tagged "sex offenders register", and the life sentence of convicted sex offenders in the state. Despite this, rape is still much prevalent in the state. Against this backdrop, these articles focus on the expectations of the church in curtailing the issue of rape in the state.

## **THE REVIEW**

This part reviews the overall issues of rape and how it affects the victims. The section concludes with the understanding that rape is a global epidemic in our contemporary society. The section reveals that rape is equally common among married and cohabiting couples. Finally, the section concludes with the understanding of child rape. The word rape has its etymology from Latin "rapere", which means "to grab", "to carry off" "to snatch". (Sunders, 2001) Several scholars have seen rape as an act of entering any bodily opening by a penis or any other object without agreement by the other party (Buchhandler-Raphael, 2011, Shaw & Lee, 2001, Adesanya et al., 2020) identified unconsented sex as rape. They emphasized that the target of the rapist is to overpower, hurt and subjugate their victims for their pleasure. For example, (Williams & Walfield, 2016) studies have shown that any attack on a woman to consent to sexual acts by a male stranger is rape. Williams and Walfred, 2016 (and Green 1987, & Weekley, 1986) have identified that some rapists do not use force on their victims, which may result in bodily injuries.

Equally, some scholarly works have revealed that a rapist may not necessarily use a weapon on the victims, which may result in bodily injuries. Furthermore, scholarly works have revealed that a rapist may not necessarily use a weapon on the victim before having his/her way. (Bowness et al., 1991; Weekley, 1986). While (Russell, 1990, Bachman and Saltzman, 1995). Work emphasized that rape can be committed by a man who is close to the victim. Married women are more susceptible to rape by their husbands than strangers. (Russell, 1990).

Meanwhile, (Kilpatric, Edmunds and Seymour, 1992) report that in the United States of America, 10% of women raped were by their husbands or former husbands. Rape is common among associates and cohabiting partners (Williams 2016). Meanwhile, generally, marriage has been taken as a form of implicit consent to sexual intercourse; marital rape, therefore, has never been taken to be a severe issue or considered to be rape in African society. The reason for this is not far-fetched; customarily, in Nigeria, women are considered part of their husbands' belongings so that they can have her anytime they wish.

Meanwhile, recent works in advanced countries have identified non-consensual sex among married or cohabiting couples as rape (Russell, 1990, Bachman and Saltzman, 1995). Rape, therefore, is unlawful, unconsented and forced sexual activity, mostly perpetrated by a man; there are rare cases whereby women are the perpetrator. Furthermore (Adesanya, 2020) reported the most dehumanizing form of rape which she identified as child rape. Child rape is penetrating a minor's mouth, vagina and anus with a penis and any other object by an adult. (Felt 2014, Glosser, 2004 and Adesanya, 2020). The issue of consent is equally not applicable when the sexual activity involves a minor.

### **Incidences of Rape in the Bible**

This aspect of the article examines the issue and incidence of rape in the bible. It is pertinent to say that the issue of rape is not peculiar to our contemporary society. There are records of rape in the bible. For instance, Jacob's daughter Dinah was raped by a prince named Shechem the Hivite. Genesis 34: 2. This bible passage explicitly explains how Shechem raped Dinah, "he took her and lay with and defiled her" (Gen. 34:2 KJV). He took her as used in the bible passage above could be interpreted as abducting her, which means she did not consent to the sexual relationship. To defile is to rape. In 2nd Samuel 13: 11-14. Amnon was in lust with his half-sister Tamar and tricked her in order to have sex with her because she was a virgin. Verse 14 of 2nd Samuel 13 "Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice but being stronger than she, forced her and lay with her". The word "forced" as used in the bible means that Amnon violently raped his blood sister. This incident between Amnon and Tamar indicates that rapists are not necessarily strangers. (Phyllis, 1984) called the rape of Tamar by Amnon "The Royal Rape of Wisdom".

A woman was raped, injured and murdered in Judges 19:1-30. The story of this woman was a pathetic one. It equally shows the state of weakness of a woman towards her abusers (Phyllis, 1984). Similarly, in the book of (Judges, 19: 22-25), a group of men who were homosexual attempted to rape a travelling Levite. This man exchanged his concubine for sex with this man, and she was raped and molested till daybreak. This woman's case indicates that women are susceptible to evil even in the hands of a trusted person. It is necessary at this stage to show that God frowns at rape because it violates God's design for managing the human body.

Interestingly, some bible passages emphasize punishment for rape offenders. For example, Deuteronomy 22: 23-29 shows that forcing a woman into sexual activities against her wish is a grievous offence. The word "force" indicates rape in our contemporary society. There are laid down rules and punishment for sex offenders in the bible. Deuteronomy 22: 26-27) stipulated such laws. "But if a man finds a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man forces her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die. Nevertheless, unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so, is this matter" from verse 26b of Deuteronomy 22, it is evident that the sin of rape is a grievous one because it was likening to sin of murder. According to this bible passage, a rapist is a murderer and should be treated as such.

Furthermore, some biblical passages recommend that a rapist marry the young woman he violated if the woman is still a virgin; he was to pay her father 50 shekels of silver equally and remain married to her till death. The Phrase "remain married to her" equally indicates that under no circumstances must you be involved in sex with someone you are not ready to be married to; this punishment indicates a life-long responsibility to discourage rape by making the rapist responsible for his or her actions. There have been arguments that this passage seems to force a woman to marry her violator. (Kunhiyop, 2008). However, it is imperative to note that this law is rooted in the primitive culture of the Jews, and the 50 shekels of silver to be paid to the victim's father was like a bride price and was much money at this time.

Moreover, cases of rapes were only recorded in the Old Testament. Notwithstanding, in the New Testament, there are many teachings of Jesus and how he handled some situations gives a glimpse of his expectations of how sexual relations and life should be. In (Mathew 5:28), Jesus teaches that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has committed adultery with her in his heart. "Adultery is not just an act based on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount." (Adesanya et al. 2020) Nearly all the rape incidences in the bible resulted in grievous consequences for the rapists. In situations where it happens in the family, it brings separation and rancour, as in the case of Amnom and Tamar. Absalom revenged his sister's rape by killing Amnon. Equally, the effects of Dinah's rape ruined a whole community (Gen. 34:25-29). The resultant effect of the raping of Levite's concubine was a war which nearly destroying the tribe, of Benjamin. Many innocent people were victims of this war.

### **Causes of Rape in Our Contemporary Society**

Rapists rape for many reasons. Meanwhile, it is pertinent to note that some of the reasons often given by rapist and their sympathizers are against the victims and should be discouraged. The state studied is patriarch in nature; men are considered superior to women in all ramifications. Due to these, rape victims have been silent for many years until the First Lady of Ekiti State, Erelu Bisi Adeleye Fayemi, renowned gender advocate and feminist, led the war against rape in the state. The First Lady's activities enabled the victims to muster the courage to come out and report their ordeals. Victims of rape have been humiliated for many years because of societal views about them, which include; their provocative dressings, hairdo, and make-up caused them to be raped. Others are of the view that some women hypnotize the culprits sexually. Sex victims have been blamed, shamed and put in arduous legal battles, which they often lost to prove they were raped. The question is; are the children and the older women raped also dressing provocatively? Also, can it be said that those children that were raped also hypnotized their victims? Some people believe that when a woman says no to sexual advances, she says yes and wants sex. Some culprits have said that the devil pushes them to rape. All these and many more are the excuses of rapists.

### **Some Identifiable Causes of Rape**

**A deficit in Sex Education:** Sex education is the set of instruction given to children as early as possible in order for them to live a responsible and responsive sexual life. (Apter, 2011) this type of education has lasting impacts on young people. It helps in building momentous unions with the opposite sex. Sex education can be formal or informal. The type of sex education given in school is formal sexual education, while the one given orally by parents is informal sexual education. Meanwhile, it has been discovered that parents often shy away from the responsibility of talking about sex and sexuality to their children. This is one of the reasons rape is prevalent in society. Sex education prevents sexual abuse such as pedophiles are exposed and dealt with accordingly. As a result, early sex and sexually transmitted diseases are prevented. (WHO). Sex education will bring about self-control over sexual urges, primarily resulting in rape.

**Social Norms and Gender Inequality:** This is another cause of rape. In a typical African setting, women are seen as part of the husband's property. Some cultures see the woman as part of a man's property that is while some men have many wives while women not acceptable to have more than a husband at a time. Women in traditional African settings are made to submit everything to their husbands, including their bodies; that is why marital rape is not an offence. Gender inequality and social norms influence the expression of sexuality and sexual behaviour. (WHO) women mostly have no control over their sexual lives once they are married. On the other hand, as a result of cultural norms and peer pressure, men act according to male sexual stereotypes and may engage in harmful sexual acts.

**Improper Use of Drugs and Alcohols:** One identified reason for rape in Nigeria is substance abuse and alcohol (Martins, 2020); in some cases of rape, the culprits were said to be under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Among the reported cases of Vanguard was the case of a 25- year -older man who raped an 85- year- old grandmother in Niger State, Nigeria. Equally, another 25- year –older man raped a 70 year- old- grandmother in Ogun state. In addition, a man was reported to have sexually abused his two biological daughters for many years until he was caught. All the above-reported cases were said to have been influenced by the use of substances and alcohol.

**Beliefs and Myths:** Some myths and beliefs have contributed immensely to the increase in rape, especially child rape and raping of older women; these groups of people are vulnerable to rape primarily because of the belief that sexual intercourse with children and menopausal will make them rich. Some people believe having sex with children, and menopausal women can heal HIV/ AIDS and other terminal illnesses.

**Revenge:** It has been discovered that some people rape for revenge. Raping for revenge is common among adolescents. This often happens as a result of peer pressure. It is a demonstration of power over a girl who may have rejected sexual advances or had an altercation with the opposite sex earlier.

### **Impacts of Rape on the Victims**

Rape has both short and long time effects on the victims or survivors. This is because it infringes on the self-esteem and dignity of the victims. The effects of rape can be physical, emotional and psychological. The physical effects of rape can be bruises often caused by beating and biting, broken limbs, vaginal and anal bleedings caused by forceful penetration. These injuries can be classified as physical injuries which need immediate medical attention. Furthermore, unwanted pregnancies as a result of rape can be classified as the physical impact of rape, provided the victim decides to keep the pregnancy.

Moreover, the emotions of raped victims are altered; they are distressed, feel worthless, anxious and confused. Consequently, it results in emotional injuries and disassociating themselves from people, which may lead to depression and stress disorders. Unfortunately, social withdrawal often leads victims of rape to a suicide attempts. Victims of rape are often filled with guilt, anxiety,

hopelessness and sometimes helplessness as a result of the reactions of people to their ordeal. Confusion and shame are some of the impacts of rape.

Victims of rape sometimes result from alcohol and drug use. Some sex predators target the emotions of their victims; they silence their victims with a threat. Pedophiles are known for threatening their victims, often prepubescent, with death or parental death. One of the raped victims, a twelve years old girl, when asked why she did not tell her parents about the incident, which lasted for one year, alleged that: "our neighbour, who raped me said I must not tell anybody, that he would kill me, my daddy and my mummy."

Sexual dysfunction is another impact of rape; this often impairs the marital life of victims. This is because sex meant to be enjoyed by a couple will become a burden or a form of punishment for a raped victim. This can as well lead to marital rape. The sexual lives of rape victims are sometimes destroyed because desire and arousal, which are the primary sexual activities, are lacking in the case of rape because of the force involved in rape.

Rape victims also suffer from Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) and HIV/AIDS. The reason for this is not far-fetched; rapists are most often involved in unprotected sex. Stigma and shame are other effects of rape; in most African societies, sex is seen as sacred and not to be discussed openly; this belief has contributed immensely to rape in Nigeria. Stigmatizing rape victims in Nigeria is one of the reasons rape victims are not reported. This can be seen in the recent case of Princess, a popular comedienne whose adopted daughter was raped by his colleague; she was blamed for reporting the case by his colleagues, friends, families and even strangers. She confessed that she nearly tripped into depression if not for the intervention of people who came to her rescue until she got justice for the little girl. In the case of injustice meted out to rape victims by law enforcement agencies which may lead to an arduous legal battle, the victims are discouraged, may experience set back in their education and business and may develop trust issues. An attempt to avenge may lead to murder, hatred and death. Regrettably, death is the ultimate effect of rape. Rapists have killed some of their victims. The case of Uwaila Omozuwa, a student of the University of Benin who was raped and killed in church premises in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. (Aliu, 2020) clearly shows that a victim of rape often time pays the ultimate price of death.

### **Efforts of Ekiti State Government in Forestalling Rape**

The state government has put measures in place to forestall rape and sexual violence in the state. The state has zero tolerance for rape and sexual violence of any kind. This is imperative as new cases of sexual assaults and rape are being recorded daily. Some of the measures put in place to forestall rape as reported are;

- Enacting a number of laws, including Gender- Based Violence Prohibition Law
- Compulsory Treatment of Child Victims of Sexual Violence
- Review of the Criminal Law of Ekiti State with far-reaching provisions on sexual violence
- Implementing a name and shame policy for convicted sex offenders

- Opening of register for sex offenders
- Sex offenders will not benefit from the governor's prerogative of power
- Public shaming of offenders ( Nejo, 2021)

### **Expectations from the Church**

The pervasiveness of rape and its cost to the victims and the society at large make protection against rape an issue for everyone, and the church being one of the social institutions that serve people throughout their life span, has a significant role to play in order to forestall it. Rape is wrong both morally, socially and biblically. Rape distorts the honour of marriage and the sacredness of the sexual relationship between husband and wife, which God ordained. Rape is exploiting the weak and vulnerable. First, the church should not pretend rape does not exist. The bible is against sexual immoralities and rape, and so the church, as the moral bastion of society, must prepare to talk about rape in their programs. The church at this critical period should not avoid creating awareness of rape. Likewise, the church must be bold enough to condemn those perpetrating this evil in the church. This is imperative, having discovered that some self-acclaimed pastors were caught on this web (Olatunji, 2022, Ukpong, 2020). Churches should include teachings on rape and sexual assaults in the Sunday school manuals, church magazines and daily devotions. Information on how to recognize these self-acclaimed men of God who are predators must be emphasized in the church. The consequences of rape and sexual assaults on the perpetrators, victims, church and society should be emphasized in the church magazines and all the teaching manuals. Likewise, relationships with the opposite sex should be taught in the church.

Meanwhile, discussions on rape must not be limited to the adult; children must be introduced to biblical stories on rape and its consequences of it. This becomes necessary since religious beliefs and practices influence men from the very start of their lives. In the same way, children react to and learn both tenderness and meanness from the beginning and so must be introduced to the basic rules of relationships, what constitute abuse of relationships and the standard behaviour required of any relationship, especially with the opposite sex.

Moreover, having realized that society is often against rape victims, this they do by condemning and blaming them has both individual and societal consequences. The church, one of the agents of socialization, should rise up against this by organizing workshops where people must be trained on ways to defend victims of rape and sexual assaults. These victims, both old and young, likewise need counselling to assist them in dealing with the emotional, physical and psychological trauma of rape. Raped victims must be accepted without condemnation and blame for what has happened. Meanwhile, the church lacks the power to persecute rape and sexual assault offenders. Instead, the church should encourage the government to enact laws that protect rape victims from the humiliation they often face at the hands of law enforcement agencies when rape is reported. Equally, such laws should be made to protect them from societal condemnations. Meanwhile, Christianity is a religion that preaches forgiveness, this should not be extended to rapists, and they should instead be condemned and made to face the consequences of their actions.



Conclusively, since Ekiti State has put many measures in place to forestall rape and sexual violence in the state, the rape issue is still unabated, given the number of cases that are reported daily and rape cases that are yet to be prosecuted. Consequently, it is necessary for the church, one of the agents of socialization and ethical stronghold of society, to rise to her responsibility at this crucial period to use everything at its disposal for the enlightenment of the people on the issue of rape in the state. The church should use the gospel as a tool of transformation to change people's hearts on the issue of rape by teaching its consequences, which is life imprisonment in Ekiti State. Furthermore, the church should reach out to rape victims and assist them in convalescing their dignity and purpose in life. This can be done through counselling and rehabilitation programs.

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