

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA: A CHALLENGE TO SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT.

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Abstract

Sexual violence occurs frequently worldwide and is particularly pervasive in the developing countries. The background to sexual violence is important in the understanding of the ramifications of the problem. It is important to understand the ramifications of sexual violence, as not only a physical act, but also could be verbal or visual sexual abuse or any act that forces a person to join in unwanted sexual contact or attention. The study analyses the incidence of sexual violence in Nigeria and how it affects Nigeria's security and sustainable development. The paper argues that Sexual, or emotional abuse, emotionally unsupportive family environment, poor parent-child relationships, poverty, unemployment, Peer pressure and school related factors among others, have been responsible for the unprecedented increase of sexual violence in the country. The study reveals that causes of sexual violent behaviours are traceable to schools, home, peer influence. The study therefore recommends the need to direct teaching and learning towards discouraging sexual violence in the society and contends that unless this scenario is remedied, sustainable national security and development will not be attained in the country.

Keywords: Sexual Violence, Sustainable National Security, Development,

Introduction

Sexual violence as a growing public health and human rights problem is an indicator of the most severe breach of human security in the world (Bajpa, 2019). World Health Organization in Matasha (2012) defines sexual violence as any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts of traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim in any setting, including but not limited to home and work place (Schei, Sidenia, Lundvall, and Otherson, 2013). Although it has been observed as one of the fastest growing crimes in many all over the world, the actual prevalence of sexual violence is usually unknown as a result of gross underreporting (Buga, Amoko and Ncayiyana, 2014). However, studies have shown that one in four women may have experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner and up to a third of adolescent girls report their experience as being forced (Effa, Okokon, Nwagbara, and Bello, 2012).

Despite the widespread outcry over the rising cases of sexual violence in Nigeria, there seems to be no end to the menace. There is no day in the country without a reported case of sexual violence especially rape in the media. One contestable reason for the apparent rise of sexual violence in Nigeria could be that sexual violence victims are becoming more encouraged to report such crimes. However, it could also be that there is an increase in the rate of sexual violence in Nigeria. The recent sexual violation and murder of a 22-year University of Benin undergraduate (Vanguard newspaper, 2020) have fanned the embers of the growing awareness and condemnation of sexual violence in the Nigerian society. Since the incident, there have been many other reported cases of violation of women and girls, and even more worrisome is the sexual violation of little girls in the country.

Sexual violence encompasses a range of acts, including coerced sex in marriage and dating relationships, rape by strangers, organized rape in war, sexual harassment (including demands of sex for jobs or school grades), and rape of children, trafficking of women and girls, female genital mutilation, and forced exposure to pornography. It is important to understand the ramifications of sexual violence as not only a physical act, but also could be verbal or visual sexual abuse or any act that forces a person to join in unwanted sexual contact or attention (Olatunji, 2012). Data available suggests that in developed countries one in five women report sexual violence by an intimate partner and up to a third of girls report forced sexual initiation (Olle, 2014). At least one in five women has been sexually abused by a man at some time in her life (Matasha, 2012). A study carried out in Southern Nigeria (University of Calabar) showed that 51.7% of female undergraduates had suffered one form of sexual violence or

another (Kullima, Kawuwa, Audu, Mairiga, and Bukar, 2017). This figure is higher than what was obtained in two studies from Northern Nigeria (13.8%, 22.2%). The prevalence is generally high in Africa and varied between 16% in Cameroun, 23% in Sierra Leone, 34.4% in Ethiopia, 49% in Ghana to 65.6% in Zimbabwe, and 67% in Botswana (Iliyasu, Abubakar, Aliyu, Galadanci and Salihu, 2019). A majority of cases of sexual violence in Nigeria goes unreported. This is due largely to fear on the part of the victim of being socially stigmatized or blamed (Kullima, Kawuwa, Audu, Mairiga, and Bukar, 2017). Hence, Iwuama, & Ekwe, (2012) observed that about two million Nigerian girls experience sexual abuse annually and that only 28 per cent of rape cases are reported. Of those, only 12 per cent result in convictions

Sexual violence has become one of the global phenomenon and in Nigeria, it has been on unprecedented increase. Since last decade and more there has been a proliferation of unrivalled violence, the cases of kidnapping, abduction and sexual mollestation and as well as destruction of lives and personal properties. These are mostly the activities of youths that are socially unacceptable triggered by enforced desired of outcome from the constituted authority. This negative development according to Igbo and Ikpa (2013) is unfortunate and has become one of the security challenges facing man in the present society. In a nutshell, the problem bedevilling Nigerian country is insecurity demonstrated by the activities of sexual offenders and this has affected the sustainable development of the country. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to determine the causes and implication of sexual violence to our security and sustainable development.

Conceptualization

The three major concepts made used of in this research are sexual violence, security and sustainable development. Before analysis of the implications of sexual violence on national security and sustainable development, there is need to establish a synergy between the three concepts and their meanings are worthy to be clarified.

Concept of Sexual Violence

World Health Organization in 2012 defined Sexual violence as any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act by violence or coercion, acts to traffic a person or acts directed against a person's sexuality, regardless of the relationship to the victim. Sexual violence is sexual activity when consent is not obtained or not freely given (Peterson, DeGue, Florence, and Lokey, 2017). Sexual violence is a serious public health problem and has a profound short or long-term impact

on physical and mental health, such as an increased risk of sexual and reproductive health problems, an increased risk of suicide or HIV infection. Murder occurring either during a sexual assault or as a result of an honor killing in response to a sexual assault is also a factor of sexual violence (Smith, Zhang, Basile, Merrick, Wang, Kresnow, and Chen, 2018).

Sexual violence can be seen as any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act by violence or coercion, acts to traffic a person or acts directed against a person's sexuality, regardless of the relationship to the victim (Iwuama, and Ekwe, 2012). Sexual Violence occurs when a person is forced to unwillingly take part in sexual activity. Sexual violence includes : Touching in a sexual manner without consent (i.e., kissing, grabbing, fondling); Forcing a person to perform sexual acts that may be degrading or painful; Beating sexual parts of the body; Exhibitionism; Making unwelcome sexual comments or jokes; Denial of a person's sexuality or privacy (watching); Forced prostitution; Unfounded allegations of promiscuity and/or infidelity; and, Purposefully exposing the person to HIV-AIDS or other sexually transmitted infections (Usman, 2013).

Sexual violence affects millions of people each year in Nigeria and all over the world. Researchers have noted that the society underestimates this significant problem as many cases go unreported. Victims may be ashamed, embarrassed, or afraid to tell the police, friends, or family about the violence. Victims may also keep quiet because they have been threatened with further harm if they tell anyone or do not think that anyone will help them (Basile & Smith, 2011).

A study By National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2016 shows that;

- **Sexual violence is common.** 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men experienced sexual violence involving physical contact during their lifetimes. Nearly 1 in 5 women and 1 in 38 men have experienced completed or attempted rape and 1 in 14 men were made to penetrate someone (completed or attempted) during his lifetime.
- **Sexual violence starts early.** 1 in 3 female rape victims experienced it for the first time between 11-17 years old and 1 in 8 reported that it occurred before age 10. Nearly 1 in 4 male rape victims experienced it for the first time between 11-17 years old and about 1 in 4 reported that it occurred before age 10.
- **Sexual violence is costly.** Recent estimates put the cost of rape per victim, including medical costs, lost productivity, criminal justice activities, and others are very high in financial valuation.

Types of Sexual Violence

Types of sexual violence as highlighted by Folayan, Odetoyinbo, Harrison, and Brown, (2014) include the following;

- **Sexual Assault:** Sexual assault can take many different forms and be defined in different ways, but one thing remains the same: it's never the victim's fault.
- **Child Sexual Abuse:** When a perpetrator intentionally harms a minor physically, psychologically, sexually, or by acts of neglect, the crime is known as child abuse.
- **Intimate Partner Sexual Violence:** A perpetrator can have any relationship to a victim, and that includes the role of an intimate partner.
- **Incest:** Regardless of how the law defines incest, unwanted sexual contact from a family member can have a lasting effect on the survivor.

Causes of sexual violence

In analyzing causes of sexual violence we shall consider three factors which include individual factors, relationship factors and community factors (Espelage, Basile & Hamburger, 2012);

- Individual factors include: Alcohol and drug use, delinquency, empathic deficits, general aggressiveness and acceptance of violence, early sexual initiation, coercive sexual fantasies, preference for impersonal sex and sexual-risk taking, exposure to sexually explicit media, hostility towards women, adherence to traditional gender role norms hyper-masculinity, suicidal behavior, prior sexual victimization or perpetration.
- Relationship factors: Family environment characterized by physical violence and conflict, childhood history of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, emotionally unsupportive family environment, poor parent-child relationships, particularly with fathers, association with sexually aggressive, hypermasculine, and delinquent peers, involvement in a violent or abusive intimate relationship,
- Community factors include: Poverty, lack of employment opportunities, lack of institutional support from police and judicial system, general tolerance of sexual violence within the community, weak community sanctions against sexual violence perpetrators

National Security

National security is directed at having a reliable, strong and viable state that is free from threat internally and externally which is targeted at peace and tranquility of the state. Bolu-steve and Esere, (2017). asserts that security means protection from hidden and harmful disruptions in the partners of daily life in

home, offices or communities security, must be related to the presence of peace, absence of crisis, threats to human injury among others. However, Babangida (2012) views National Security as "The physical protection and defense of our citizens and our territorial integrity, of which it is a part, but also the promotion of the economic well being and prosperity of Nigeria in a safe and secure environment that promotes the attainment of our national interests and those of our foreign partners. To Ebeh (2015) national security is more than territorial defense and should focus on the "physical, social and psychological equality of life of the society and its members both in the domestic setting and within the large regional and global system".

For workable understanding of national security, especially when referring to nation-state, Security means likely hood of survival; it means confidence in the maintenance of state boundaries and the preservation of its territorial, ideological and cultural integrity (George & Ukpogon, 2013). It has been observed that there have been no generally and universally accepted conception of national security but it is more than the military aspect, it should encompass all facet of national life in preservation of its values (Otto & Ukpere, 2012). Looking at national security from this perspective we can deduce that sexual violence in our schools will continue to pose a challenge to Nigeria's security and development if not curbed.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is another important concept to be briefly discussed; it is all about stability (Yusuf, 2013). Development is the general improvement in the well being of all citizens of a country which is measured by the unhindered access to all availability of the convenience of life for the greatest number in nation-state. (Haruna, & Jumba, 2011).

The youth constitutes a very important portion of Nigerian population. They are the foundation of society; their energies, character and orientation define the pace of development and the security of the country. This paper seeks to explain the incidence of sexual violence and how it affects the security and the development of the country.

Theoretical Explanation of Sexual Violence Behavior Personality Theories (Attachment theory)

One of the later personality theories — attachment theory — was first introduced by Justine Bowlby (1988) to explain the relationship between a child and his or her primary caretaker, and how this early relationship affects later adjustment. According to attachment theory, humans have a propensity to

establish strong emotional bonds with others, and when individuals have some loss or emotional distress, they act out as a result of their loneliness and isolation. Later research indicates there is a relationship between poor quality attachments and sexual offending. Men who sexually abuse children often have not developed the social skills and self-confidence necessary to form effective intimate relations with peers. This failure creates frustration that causes them to seek intimacy with young partners.

Behavioral Theories

Behavioral theories explain sexually abusive behaviors as a learned condition. Behavioral theories are based on the assumption that sexually deviant arousal plays a pivotal role in the commission of sex crimes and that people who engage in sex with, or have sexual feelings toward, inappropriate stimuli are more likely to commit sexual violence than those with appropriate sexual desires.

In behavioral theory, the occurrence of continued deviant sexual behavior (as with all behavior) depends on reinforcement and punishment. Sexual gratification and the perceived lack of negative consequences for sexual offending, coupled with a lack of support for *not* engaging in sexual offending behavior, increases the likelihood for sex offenses to continue. The key factor is that if the negative consequences of the behavior (punishment) are sufficiently strong, the negative behavior (sexual violence) is less likely to occur.

Self-regulation is also a behavioral theory that has been applied to sexually deviant behaviors. Self-regulation involves the selection of a goal and strategies to reach that goal. The goals of sexual satisfaction, intimacy, mood control or other rewards related to sexual deviance can affect recall, judgment and information processing. According to self-regulation theory, the goal of engaging in sexually deviant behavior and the strategies employed to reach that goal become automatically integrated into the behavior of the offender because they have been consistently reinforced in the past.

Sexual Violence: A Challenge to Sustainable National Security and Development.

Sexual violence is a serious public health problem and it has both short and long term negative physical and psychological effects on health and well-being of Nigerians, it constitutes security problems that can endanger the peaceful co-existence of the country, in the same manner conflict and insecurity can be very havoc to the sustainable development of the country.

Some of the consequences of sexual violence as highlighted by Iwuama, and Ekwe, (2012) include;

- The consequences of sexual violence are physical, like bruising and genital injuries, and psychological, such as depression, anxiety and suicidal thoughts.
- The consequences may also be chronic. Victims may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, experience re-occurring gynecological, gastrointestinal, cardiovascular and sexual health problems.
- Sexual violence is also linked to negative health behaviors. For example, victims are more likely to smoke, abuse alcohol, use drugs, and engage in risky sexual activity.
- The trauma resulting from sexual violence can have an impact on a survivor's employment in terms of time off from work, diminished performance, job loss, or being unable to work. These disrupt earning power and have a long-term effect on the economic well-being of survivors, their families and the nation at large. Readjustment after victimization can be challenging: victims may have difficulty in their personal relationships, in returning to work or school, and in regaining a sense of normalcy.

In addition, sexual violence is connected to other forms of violence. For example, girls who have been sexually abused are more likely to experience other forms of violence and additional sexual violence, and be a victim of intimate partner violence in adulthood. Perpetrating bullying in early middle school is associated with sexual harassment perpetration in adolescence (Peterson, DeGue, Florence, & Lokey, 2017). Sexual or emotional abuse, emotionally unsupportive family environment, poor parent-child relationships, poverty, unemployment, Peer pressure and school related factors have great consequences on sexual violence and the academic wellbeing of students. It is imperative for government, parents and schools to put adequate measures in place to curb the incidence of sexual violence acts in our schools because of its increasing rate in the educational system and national security at large. And unless this scenario is remedied, national security and sustainable development will not be attained in the country.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the nature and incidence of sexual violence.

1. Having observed that the causes of sexual violent behaviours are traceable to schools, home, peer influence etc there is need for parents, and school administrators to work together in keeping students behaviour under effective control.

2. Government and parent should not relent in their responsibilities concerning providing necessary means or avenue of curbing or mitigating sexual violent behaviour in our contemporary society.
3. Government and parents should also put it compulsory that every student or teacher should endeavour to undergo behavioural test before absorbing the person as a student or teacher in any of the institution to avoid recruiting people of deviant and sexual violence behaviour that will bring disgrace to government and parents.
4. There is need to direct teaching and learning towards discouraging sexual violence in the society.
5. School administrators should ensure proper monitoring and guidance in school.
6. Reinforcement of positive behaviours and hard work should be the priority of the teacher and school administrators.

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