

## A SURVEY INTO THE PREVALENCE AND PATTERN OF RAPE IN A NIGERIAN TERTIARY INSTITUTION

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**ABSTRACT:** *Objective:* To determine the incidence and pattern of rape among students in a Nigerian tertiary institution. *Method:* A cross-sectional study was conducted among 400 students of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki over a two-month period (between March 1 to April 30, 2014). A well-structured self-administered questionnaire was distributed to them in sealed envelopes. These were answered in their privacies and returned sealed. *Results:* The response rate was 81.8%. The incidence of rape was 19.3%. 17.7% cases of rape occurred in fair-skinned females and only 1.6% occurred in dark-skinned females. Most of the cases of rape occurred in the age range 20-24 years, 12.5% and among the singles, 19.0%. Most rapes were perpetrated in the afternoon, 33.4%, followed by evening, 31.7%. 87.3% of victims recognized the rapists and could identify them. Most of the perpetrators of rape were relations of the victims, 60.3%. Most of the rape cases took place in the residence of the rapists, 48.6%, and the rapists were older than their victims in 100% of cases. 66.7% of victims did not make report to any person/authority and the commonest reason for not reporting was fear of shame and stigmatization, 70.6%. *Conclusion:* The incidence of rape in this study was very high. The victims of rape should be encouraged to open up. There should be legislation of stiffer penalties for the rapists.

**KEYWORDS:** Rape, victims, incidence, tertiary institution.

### INTRODUCTION

Rape is defined as a sexual contact which may be oral, genital, anal or digital with an adult without consent or with a minor/ under age, mentally deranged person who cannot make a choice<sup>1</sup> or canal knowledge of a woman without consent<sup>2</sup>. It is a crime against humanity.

Worldwide, it is predominantly directed against women and it is a violation of women's sexual and reproductive right<sup>1</sup>.

In South Africa, about 500,000 cases of rapes are committed annually, about 1,370 daily<sup>3</sup>. One in four men commit rape in South Africa<sup>3</sup> and about 50% have raped more than once<sup>3</sup>. In USA about one in six men are involved in rape<sup>4</sup>.

Rape is common in Nigeria but the true national prevalence is difficult to obtain for obvious reasons-poor national statistics and poor reporting. Rape is generally under reported worldwide because of male-dominated society, the need to protect her womanhood, fear of stigmatization and fear of not being married in the future. The legal system also tends to protect the rapists<sup>2,3</sup>. The effects of rape on the victim are enormous-physical & psychological.

No study has been carried out in our environment to determine the prevalence and pattern of rape. This study aims at just doing that.

### SUBJECTS AND METHODS

This is a cross-sectional study conducted among 400 female students of Ebonyi State University (EBSU) over a two-month period (March 1 –April 30, 2014).

Well-structured, self-administered questionnaires were randomly distributed to them in sealed envelopes. These questionnaires were answered in their privacies and returned sealed. Three hundred and fifty nine (359) questionnaires were returned but only 327 were properly filled and were analyzed.

Information regarding demographic characteristics, sexual activities, rape experience, time of rape, knowledge of the rapists, venue of rape, events surrounding the rape and whether or not the victim reported the incidence, were obtained

Information also obtained included post rape experience, treatment offered and suggestions on how to reduce the menace of rape.

Data were analyzed using Epi info.

**RESULTS**

The response rate was 81.8% while the incidence of rape was 19.3%. 17.7% occurred in fair-skinned females and 1.6% in the dark-skinned females.

Most of the cases of rapes occurred between the ages of 20-24(12.5%) and amongg the singles (19%), 64.2% were already sexually active prior to rape.

Most rapes occurred in the afternoon (33.4%) followed by evening (31.7%). 87.3% of victims recognized the rapists and could identify them. Most of the perpetrators of rapes were relations of the victims (60.3%). Most of the rapes took place in the residence of the rapists (48.6%).

In 100% of cases the rapists were older than the victims. 66.7% of victims did not report to any person and the commonest reasons for not reporting were shame & fear of stigmatization (70.6%). Eighty one percent (81%) did not suffer any physical injury while 90.5% accepted to have suffered a form of psychological trauma.

65.1% were raped only once, while 34.9% were raped more than once. 93.7% involved a single rapist while 6.3% involved mass rape. The rapists used condom in only 1.6% of cases. Only 4.8% of victims used contraceptives after rape incidence. The reasons for not using contraception included lack of knowledge of contraception (48.7%), feeling that they cannot become pregnant(42.5%) while 8.8% felt it was not necessary.

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents**

<b>Age(years)</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>%</b>
<19	7	2.1
20-24	161	49.2
25-29	99	30.3
30-34	60	18.4
>35	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital status</b>	<b>no</b>	<b>%</b>
Single	270	82.6
Married	31	9.5
Engaged	26	7.9
Divorced	0	0
Separated	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2: Frequency of rapes on the victims**

Frequency	No	%
1	41	65.1
2	7	11.1
3	8	12.7
4	7	11.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3: Time of rape**

Time	No	%
Morning	9	14.3
Afternoon	21	33.4
Evening	20	31.7
Night	13	20.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4: Identity of the rapists**

Identity	No	%
Relations	44	60.3
Acquaintances	19	26.0
Colleagues	10	13.7
Lecturer	0	0
Friends	0	0
Father	0	0
Christian brother	0	0
Pastor	0	0

**Table 6: suggestions on how to prevent rape**

Suggestion	NO	%
Females dress well	13	18.8
Legislation against rape	16	23.2
Girls avoid visit to opposite sex's houses alone	28	40.6
Security education-among girls	12	17.4

Table 5: Venue of rape

Venue	NO	%
Rapist's residence	34	48.6
Hotel	11	15.7
Rapist's friend's home	10	14.3
Hostel	8	11.4
Car	5	7.1
Victim's residence	2	2.9
Reading room	0	0
Open field/space	0	0

## DISCUSSION

The incidence of rape in this study is high (19.3%). This is higher than the incidence of 17.6% reported in United States of America (USA)<sup>4</sup> and South West Nigeria<sup>5-9</sup>.

Most of the rape cases (12.5% out of 19.3%) occurred in the age range 20-24. This is different from other reports where most rapes were seen among females within the age bracket of 12-17 years<sup>4-10</sup>. This study did not include this age group as the population was university students. A more broad study involving females in the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions will give a better picture of the age distribution of rapes in our environment.

Most of the rapes involved a single rapist (93.7%) with only 6.3% involving mass rapes. A high incidence of mass rapes (47%) was reported by Olusanya<sup>10</sup>. The reason for disparity may be related to environment.

Nineteen percent (19.0%) of victims sustained some form of physical injury. This is lower than report of other studies where as high as 33% of victims sustained physical injuries<sup>10</sup>. The difference may not be unconnected to the lower incidence of mass rape in this study. Mass rape is associated with more physical injuries. The difference may also be connected to the fact that most of the rapes occurred in the homes of the rapists and perpetrated by those who know the victims (60.3%). It may also be attributed to the fact that the victims were much younger than the rapists in 100% of cases, hence, were overpowered by the perpetrators.

Other possible reasons for disparity in the incidence of physical injuries include: this study involved females whose genital organs were already developed unlike other studies that included children whose genital organs were undeveloped and prone to injuries<sup>10,11</sup>. Most females in this study were already sexually active (64.2%). Other studies involved mainly females who were not exposed sexually<sup>10-12</sup>. However, as high as 90.5% sustained emotional trauma in this study. High incidence of psychological trauma has been reported by others<sup>1,4,10,13</sup>.

Most of the rape cases occurred among singles (82.6%). This is similar to other studies<sup>5-10,14</sup>. This is not surprising because single females are more in the university and are more exposed to risky behaviours that will expose them to rapes.

In this study rapes were more among fair-skinned females (17.7% out of the 19.3%) raped were fair-skinned. Out of the 188(57.5%) fair-skinned that participated in the study, 30.9% were raped compared to only 3.6% of the dark-skinned in the study that were raped. It appears men are more attracted to fair-skinned females or may be the fair-skinned are more involved in risky adventures that expose them to rapes.

Majority of the assailants were known to the victims. This is similar to other studies<sup>5,6</sup>. Most rapes took place in the afternoon and evening. Similar pattern was reported in South West Nigeria<sup>5</sup>. Most females tend to visit their boyfriends during afternoon and evening periods. 66.7% of victims reported the incidence to someone. This differs from other studies<sup>1,3,13</sup>. The disparity may be due to differences in population studied. Students were involved in this study and were likely to report for help.

Majority of victims (63.5%) did not seek medical attention. This compares with other reports<sup>3,11</sup>. This is dangerous because of health consequences.

## CONCLUSION

Rape should be treated as a significant social problem. Awareness about rape should be created in the society. African girls should be educated on social skills and how to relate with male partners to protect themselves from rape. Finally, we suggest that a rapist deserves death sentence

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