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## **ADOLESCENCE AND SEXUAL ABUSE AND ITS IMPLICATION ON OUR CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY**

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**Alhaji Thomas (PhD)**  
**(alhajithomas1969@gmail.com)**  
**+2348055836728, 09082446384**  
**Medium Security and Custodian Centre, Makurdi**

### **Abstract**

Sexual abuse remains a global phenomenon that has taken a central stage in all its discourse especially its effects on the family which is the foundation block of every nation. Its effects cut across all who are exposed: perpetrators, victims, and the children who witness the violence. The impact of sexual abuse in the family especially on children who witness these events can be devastating and puts these children at a greater risk of being abused themselves. Evidence shows a correlation between the occurrences of sexual abuse with threats to safety and sustenance of the family. This review examines the literature in general and the recent cases of sexual abuse in the country. The thrust of this paper therefore, is to identify and examine the causes of sexual abuse as well as its effects on the family and the various forms of sexual abuse over time in the light of Christianity. The study is also aimed at examining the social, psychological, emotional, physical and economical effects of sexual abuse on the family. The researcher finds out that, most families are victims of this ugly trend. It is as a result of this that the researcher wishes to address this offensive mark on families by calling on the entire Christian community, guidance counselors, families, law enforcement agents and the society at large to join forces against this endemic from exploding into an epidemic.

**Keywords:** Adolescence and Sexual Abuse

## INTRODUCTION

Human life is marked by distinct stages, each with associated unique characteristics. Hence human beings like other animals go through developmental stages in the course of their life time. The development spans through all facets of human life such as physical, cognitive, emotional, social and moral development. These developmental processes come along with the manifestation of differing behavioral changes. Human being development starts from conception and pass through a period of nine months through what may be referred to as prenatal development (Prenatal development is the process in which an embryo and later fetus develops during gestation.). Stages associated with prenatal development are fertilization (zygote), embryonic state and fetal stage. During these developments physical changes occur in the organs qualitatively and quantitatively.

After birth with the interaction of the child with the environment other more organized and systematic developments starting showing appearances. The child, while interacting with both physical and social environments, gets to acquire strategies to adjust or cope with the environment. Within this period, he learns positive or negative ways of adapting to the environment. From this moment through the interactions with the environment personality of the child begins to gets prepared.

The child from the moment of his interaction begins to grow and passes through series of dramatic stages: childhood, adolescence, adulthood. The most spectacular period of these stages is the adolescence stage. Adolescence is a human stage of development that span through the ages of 12 and 18 years. This marks the period of puberty. According to Armstrong (2015) the biological event of puberty unleashes a powerful set of changes in the adolescents' body that reflect in a teenager's sexual, emotional, cultural, and/or spiritual passion. Erickson contends that

at adolescence the child seeks to establish his own identity. At this point he wants to have autonomy over his life believing himself to be an adult. This if not controlled leads him to rebel against the adult world. So this period is described as a period of storm and stress. Adolescence passion thus represents a significant touchstone for anyone who is seeking to reconnect with their deepest inner zeal for life. This passion is so heightened that influences the general emotional reactions of the adolescent which often needs to be checkmated to safeguard the adolescent. Combined with physical developmental in relation to sexual characteristics, predisposing both sexes to become extremely hormonal this can lead to mood swings affecting their social and emotional life. The adolescent may desire to express emotional feelings to the opposite sex. This is coupled with the fact that the adolescent social affiliation shifts from immediate family members to external affiliates.

Having interacted with the social and physical environment, the adolescent learns patterns of how to relate with social world especially with the people of the opposite sex. During this period positive or negative sexual overtures are learnt. When negatively learnt the child may develop sexual disorders or what is called sexual deviation to crisis magnitude.

It has earlier been established that adolescents experience a heightened level of emotionality. This predisposes adolescents to get involved in series of antisocial behaviors and other social vices (bad habit or immoral activities)! Vices are common among young males and females, examples 'include prostitution, indecent dressing, robbery, cultism. pocket picking, drug addiction, examination malpractice, hooliganism, thuggery, gambling, smoking, pre-marital sexual activities and rape. Social vices are bad traits, unhealthy and negative behaviors that are against the morality of a society and frowned at by members of the society (Morgan. 2016). This paper recognizing the current wide spread or rape despite the highly limited information/data on the issue seeks to examine the existence of rape in Nigerian society, causes, effect on the victim, and the treatment procedure for the victim and the rapist.

## The Concept of Sexual Abuse

Sex and human sexuality are a core part of being human, so it's natural to wonder about sex in all of its different forms. Sexual disorders are like people - they come in all different kinds of shapes and sizes. A sexual disorder doesn't mean something is "wrong" with you. It only means that you're experiencing the kind of issue that can suddenly affect anyone, at any time in their lives, for any reason or no reason whatsoever (Grohol, 2017). Sex abuse is a form sexual disorder and one of earliest form and most wide spread. Sexual abuse, also referred to as molestation, is usually undesired sexual behavior by one person upon another. When force is immediate, of short duration, or infrequent, it is called sexual assault. The offender is referred to as a sexual abuser or (often pejoratively) molester (Green. 2002). The term also covers or any behavior by an adult or older adolescent towards a child to stimulate any of the involved sexually. The use of a child or other individuals younger than the age of consent, for sexual stimulation is referred to as child sexual abuse statutory rape. The American Psychological Association defined it as unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. Mayapge (2014) defined it as a type of physical abuse which entails forcing an undesired sexual behavior *from* one person to another. This is also according to him called molestation. On the whole, Sexual abuse in the home is domestic violence. Sexual intercourse without consent is sexual assault. Marital rape also comes under this form of domestic violence. The

question may be asked about how a husband can rape the wife. The answer is found in the fact that any sexual act that is done in some unwanted, degrading manner and sometimes involving threats to the life

of the victim/wife should she want to resist such an act is regarded as marital rape (Ishola, 2006).

Sexual assault may or may not involve physical force. Sexual abuse is any unwanted sexual contact. It should be borne in mind that it was only in 1985 in Victoria that rape in marriage was

officially recognized as a crime.

### **Types of Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuses are numerous and divergent in characteristics. However, they are all similar because they all involve the lack of consent of the victim. This makes it a crime. Hence assault is given preeminence at the discussion of sexual abuse. The notable ones are as follows:

- i. Rape (which is sexual intercourse against a person's will)
- ii. Forcible sodomy (anal or oral sex against a person's will)
- iii. Forcible object penetration (penetrating someone's vagina or anus, or causing that person to penetrate her or himself, against that person's will)
- iv. Unwanted sexual touching
- v. Sexual contact with minors
- vi. Incest (Sexual intercourse or sexual intrusion between family members.)
- vii. Any unwanted or coerced sexual contact.

Of all the forms of sexual abuse the commonest is rape. Rape is a type of sexual assault usually involving sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual penetration carried out against a person without that person's 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 (WHO, 2002).

### **Prevalence of Rape**

In Nigeria there is a dearth of statistics on prevalence of rape. The little information existing on the issue is only derived from newspaper pages. Rape is a severely under-reported crime with

surveys showing dark figures of up to 91.6%. The reasons for not reporting are numerous. Isimore (2015) highlighted them as:

- i. fear of retaliation,
- ii. uncertainty about whether a crime was committed or if the offender intended harm,'
- iii. not wanting others to know about the rape.
- iv. not wanting the offender to get in trouble.
- v. fear of prosecution (e.g. due to laws against premarital sex).
- vi. and doubt in local law enforcement

A United Nations statistical report compiled from government sources showed that more than 250,000 cases of rape or attempted rape were recorded by police annually. The reported data covered 65 countries (English United Nations Survey on Crime. 2005) including Nigeria. In Nigeria rape is rampant and its perpetrators include the Nigerian police. According to Amnesty International (2005), police forces in Nigeria are reported to have perpetrated acts of rape and other sexual abuse against women, in public locations, or while women were transferred to police stations, or while women visited male detainees in police custody; and sometimes police used sexual violence in order to extract confessions and other information (168).

A study of students of the Polytechnic, Ibadan found that in their lifetimes 1.7% (2.5% of males and 1.1% of females) had raped and 2.7% (5.3% of males and 0.9% of females) had attempted rape. Similarly, out of a sample of 295 female students from Ebonyi State University Abakaliki in Southeast Nigeria, 36.7% had experienced sexual harassment/victimization at least once on campus. Of this, 32.4% had been raped (10.8% of the sample) (Ogbonaya Ogbonnaya, Ogbonnaya & Emma-Echieg, 2011).

Also, in another study comparing the sexual practice of 12- to 19-year-old students with

and without mild/moderate intellectual disabilities from schools across Oyo State. Nigeria found that 68.3% of the sexually experienced intellectually disabled females reported a history of rape victimization compared to 2.9% of the sexually experienced non-disabled females (Aderemi, Pilley and Estahulzein, 2013).

Again, another study analyzing the hospital records of 76 sexual assault victims in Ile-Ife from 2007-2011 found that the majority (76.1%) of the victims that sought help at a hospital did so within 24 hours of their sexual assault, but forensic evidence was not gathered because rape kits have yet to be introduced in the country (Badejoko et al. 2014).

In a 2013 poll of 585 randomly selected adults from six Nigerian geopolitical zones by NOI Polls, 34% answered 'What do you think is the most prevalent cause of rape in the society. with 'indecent dressing'. 29% said they personally knew a victim of rape. The implication of the statistics presented above is that rape is rampant in the Nigerian society. Hence there is the need for attention-as counselors to be prepared to control and manage victims and treat the offenders.

### **Causes/Reasons of Rape**

So many reasons have been presented on reasons for rape. Farouk (2008) identified the following reasons for rape;

- i. As a way of dealing with rejection
- i. Feeling superior to women
- ii. Expression of power
- iii. Revenge
- iv. Compensation and regaining control

The reasons for rape gave rise to various types of rapes. Groth (1999) classified sex offenders into two: the child molester and rape offender. Child molesters often utilize persuasion and/or

manipulation to perpetrate the sexual abuse. They typically begin their involvement with children by using grooming behavior. Grooming behavior is intended to make the victim or potential victim or victim's guardians feel comfortable with the molester and even interested in interacting with him.

According to the Groth Typology, there are two different types of child molesters, they include Fixated or Pedophile and The Regressed or Situational Child Molester.

i. Fixated or Pedophile is a clinical diagnosis that appears in the DSM-IV. A diagnosis of pedophilia is made when an individual who is over the age of 16 has a primary or overarching sexual attraction to prepubescent children. An individual does not have to act on his primary or overarching sexual attraction to prepubescent children in order to be diagnosed as a pedophile.

When we describe someone as a fixated child molester, therefore, we are describing men who have a primary or overarching sexual attraction to children. These offenders often see their attractions as permanent and report that they have had them for as long as they can remember. Fixated child molesters' offenses tend to be planned and carefully carried out over a period of time. In other words, these offenders do not act impulsively and without forethought. Nevertheless, the result for the abused woman can be public humiliation and isolation from friends and other members of her family

The Regressed or Situational Child Molester, according to the Groth Typology, is the second type of child molester is known as regressed (or situational). Their primary sexual attraction is to adult females. That is, if you asked them the question about the ideal sexual partner, they would more than likely describe an age-appropriate member of the opposite sex. The regressed or situational offender's sexual involvement with children often develops as a result of their responses to external stress and situational difficulties that they experience. In



other words, these molesters usually turn to children as a way to cope with the stress they are dealing with in their lives - as a way to feel better about their situations and themselves.

## **Rapist**

The other major form of sexual assault behavior is rape, in which the victims are usually, though not exclusively, post-pubescent. Rape is associated with very aggressive though not necessarily physically violent behavior on the part of the perpetrator. He attacks, threatens, and uses hostility and/or physical force to intimidate and overpower his victim. Groth identified three different kinds of rapists in his typology.

### **1. Anger Rapists**

Anger rapists, as one would assume, are very angry men. Although they may be angry at women in general, or may react angrily to specific behavior of their victim, they are more often angry about a variety of issues in their lives. They cannot and will not face the difficult issues in their lives directly and in a pro-social manner.

### **2. Power Rapists**

The second type of rapist in the Groth typology is the power rapist. Power rapists like anger rapists—use sexual assault as a way to feel powerful and in control. They do not, however, discharge anger during their offenses and they only use the physical force necessary to perpetrate the offense. If power rapists can gain control through threat and psychological coercion (rather than physical intimidation), they will do so. As a result, the physical injuries usually associated with anger rapists are less common with power rapists.

### **3. The Sadistic Rapist**

Finally, sadistic rapists are individuals who have an erotic attraction to power, anger or violence. Sadistic rapists engage in very compulsive, sometimes very ritualized sexual assault

behavior. Because they have an erotic response to power and control, extreme violence and torture often characterize their assaults. In many cases, victims of sadistic rapists are murdered during the assaults, unlike all of the other types of sex offenders in Dr. Groth's typology, sadistic rapists often have very significant psychiatric difficulties that may have a direct relationship to the offense behavior.

### **Effects of Rape on the Victim**

Rape victims have been found not to be the same anymore unless where intervention is urgently given. This is because of the reaction of the victim to the situation. However, victims don't react in the same manner. This is because of different style of adjustment. Gluck (2003) classified the effect into physical and psychological effects.

It is believed that sexual abuse is a wide spread happening affecting most families within and at large. The effects of domestic violence are in many folds, these ranges from the victims themselves to the society at large. It is interesting to know that sexual abuse is an act of cowardice and barbarism. It is inhuman, indecent and beyond acceptable universal standards of social relations. Tsendzuul and Atime-Jov (2018) have captured the effect of sexual abuse to include:

**(a) Psychological and Emotional Effect** – It is glaring to know that the women and children have suffered diverse forms of sexual abuse across the globe. The consequence and effects of this on the family could last throughout. Such families are emotionally characterized with grief for the family and personal loses. They are also characterized with shame, guilt and self-blame. Most families suffer from mental problem as a result of depression and despair. Walker (2005) angrily cited the example of a woman who when asked describe the most painful battering

incident of her life, said, after her husband finished abusing her, he then commanded her to get on her hands and knees and make sounds like an animal. This psychological degradation was far more humiliating and painful than the physical abuse she suffered.

Emotionally, abused adolescence are always confused, have conflicting feelings towards each other, fear of being abandoned and fear of the unknown. Also, a family that is emotionally abused could be affected with depression and feelings of helplessness, powerlessness and embarrassment.

**(b) Economic Effects** – This social problem exhibits itself clearly in a situation where a child is deformed and as such cannot continue with daily economic activities to sustain the family for example, tailoring, and secretariat activity etc. Specifically, sexual abuse as a violent act against families especially the women and the children present an obstacle to their development. Physical brutalizing women lack the energy to participate in economic activities. It has been noted that, women cannot lead their labour... fully if they are burdened with physical and psychological scars of abuse (Okpaga and Ansah, 2008).

**(d) Physical Effects** – The victims suffer bodily injuries such as dislocation and fracture. When this happens, the victim neither goes about with scars on both chins and engages in any strenuous labour nor put any loan upon her head as a result of the beating. Sometimes, it leads to death when victims sustain physical damage to vital body organs. Often times, miscarriages occur where the woman is pregnant. An example of a true life story confirms the physical effect suffered by a family. This family became devastated as a result of sexual abuse. The father in this family was abusive of his wife both physically and psychologically. He beat her at the slightest provocation (misunderstanding, argument, offence, error). As a well-trained nurse with

eight children, this woman tried to accommodate her husband's intolerance, anger and constant molestation but the more she tried, the worse he became.

To avoid being asked why she seemed to have bruises, swollen mouth or eyes or broken nose, she kept changing jobs from one hospital to another. The final straw that broke the Carmel's back was the day she returned from a night shift and was preparing breakfast for the family. On this day, father came out of the bedroom into the kitchen and after exchanging a few words with her, his started chasing her down the staircase with an electric kettle containing boiled water. All the children were watching this scenario. And suddenly, father threw the content of the kettle at their mother. She dodged it but one of the sons ran to defend his mother and instead got the hot water on him and sustains a severe and permanent deformity on his face.

Today, the consequences of violence in this home are many and sad. First, is an estranged maimed wife who moved back to her father's house. Second, are a bunch of embittered children who hate their father, cut off from him and refer to him as 'a wife battering mad man'. Some of the children who are now grown up recall how they lived under constant tension and fear in their home and behaved like abnormal persons. Children who know violence and grow up in domestic environment have many such tales of woes to tell worldwide.

**(c) Social Effects-** A family suffering domestic violence isolates itself from friends and relatives, has stormy relationship, develops difficulty in trusting anybody and usually has poor anger management and problem solving skills. Sometimes, the victims involve themselves in excessive social activities or event to avoid home. Investigation shows that, domestic violence has caused so many homes a lot of damage, comment on the social effect she revealed that, the victims of domestic violence most often keep to themselves hence associating with their peers or age grades and even with the society is a thing of shame due to their inferiority complex.

Domestic violence is fast becoming a major and growing public health problem across the world and carries with it, serious consequences both in the short-term and long-term for individuals, families, communities and nations. However, one of the goals is to raise awareness about the problem and hopefully make the case that domestic violence is preventable and individual play a role in addressing its causes, consequences and prevention especially the Christian community.

### Psychological Effects of Rape

Victims experience both short and long-term psychological effects of rape. One of the most common psychological consequences of rape is self-blame. Victims use self-blame as an avoidance-based coping tool. Self-blame slows or, in many cases, stops the healing process. Other common emotional and psychological effects of rape include: Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - feelings of severe anxiety and stress; Depression; Flashbacks — memories of rape as if it is taking place again; Personality disorder; Sleep disorders DISORDER; Eating disorders; Dissociative identity disorder; Guilt; Distrust of others - uneasy in everyday social situations; Anger; and Feelings of personal powerlessness - victims feel the rapist robbed them of control over their bodies.

### Intervention and Management of Rape

According to Natasha (2004) while many rape victims heal from rape without the aid of therapy, it is also common to receive professional rape therapy. In fact, many therapies have been studied in rape treatment for decades. Therapy for rape victims can include one-on-one therapy, group therapy and even, in some cases, pharmacotherapy (medication) used alongside other therapies.

The type of rape therapy used depends a lot on the individual and their circumstance but

common rape therapies include:

- Stress inoculation therapy
- Prolonged exposure therapy
- Cognitive processing therapy
- Eye movement desensitization reprocessing (EMDR)
- Supportive counseling

### **Stress Inoculation Rape Therapy**

Stress inoculation rape therapy was developed to treat those with elevated fear and anxiety as well as specific avoidance behaviors (such as avoiding walking in the dark). Stress inoculation rape therapy includes three phases: Education - explains that fear is a normal response to trauma. Also, teaches about cues that may trigger fear (such as places that remind the victim of the rape).

### **Prolonged Exposure Therapy**

Prolonged exposure rape therapy is also known as flooding and is a way of desensitizing a person to the trauma of rape through repeated exposures to memories of the traumatic event. In prolonged exposure therapy, victims are asked to repeatedly recount their rape as well as confront situations in real life that remind them of the rape. Victims also listen to tape-recorded sessions telling of the rape to increase exposure. Prolonged exposure rape therapy has been found to treat PTSD as well as feelings of depression and guilt associated with the trauma.

### **Cognitive Processing Therapy**

Cognitive processing rape therapy is designed to help people suffering from PTSD and depression. In this rape treatment, education, exposure and cognitive techniques are used. Victims are encouraged to identify parts of the trauma with "inadequately processed emotions"<sup>1</sup>

\*

associated with them, known as "stuck points. Cognitive processing rape therapy has been shown to effectively treat PTSD, depression and guilt as well as other feelings associated with the rape.

### **Supportive Counseling Rape Therapy**

Supportive counseling rape therapy is used in many rape crisis intervention centers. The therapist provides unconditional positive regard, active listening and general support. While this type of therapy may be appropriate immediately after a trauma, in comparison studies, cognitive behavioral therapies are generally more effective.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the above the author makes the following recommendations:

- i. Parents and teachers should be good role models to make the youths get themselves properly oriented towards acceptable behavioral standards
- ii. There should be concerted efforts towards teaching the adolescents on appropriate sexual practices through a well-organized sex education programs.
- iii. The adolescent should be properly engaged in activities that has the potency to take the mind off illicit behaviors and that will help me redirect the energies towards healthy activities.
- iv. Parents should appropriately monitor the children's activities and friends and encourage their friends to come for appropriate monitoring.

## **Conclusion**

Rape is a crucial issue as it exists in every society and involves all socio-economic class. It is a thing of embarrassment to the society and hence requires to be eliminated as it reduces the dignity of victims. The adverse effects of rape require stringent measures to contain the menace. It is the position of this paper that victims or likely victims should be trained to acquire self-defense skills, stringent laws should be enacted against the act. indecent dressing on the part of females should be checkmated and counselors should be properly equipped on counselling techniques to handle the problems experienced by rape victims.

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