

**Rape Trajectory and the Manipulation of Religion in the Nigeria Society**

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**Abstract**

Rape is a global social problem that cuts across ages, genders, races, ethnicities and religions. Notwithstanding its devastating effects on the health of the victim and society, its prevalence has continued to increase daily regardless of the location of the act whether sacred or secular place. The prevalence of rape shows that before the age of 18, one out of every four females are victims of rape while a ratio of ten was evident in male victims. Rape has also been happening in religious organizations, most especially among religious leaders and practitioners that hide under the religious pretense to perpetrate the act, and later shift the blame onto the devil to generate sympathy along religious lines. Though punishment for rape ranges from fines to imprisonment terms, the penalties have not reduced the crime of rape. Using descriptive analysis, the paper will examine rape under Nigerian law, types, cases and reasons for the religious cycle in Nigeria. Also, the paper examined religious manipulation in the cases of rape, social support and rehabilitation system. It was concluded that some religious organisation aid and abet rape by not opening up to security agencies on cases of rape brought to them. It therefore recommends that the scourge of rape can only reduce when religious bodies encourage victims to speak up.

## Introduction

The crime of rape is a global phenomenon with countries having different ways of punishing offenders. Rape is sexual violence involving sexual intercourse or penetration of a sexual organ by any means. It is a crime under the law and it is defined as having sexual intercourse with a person without the person's consent. It has continued to be a significant crime among all ages, male and female alike (Eze, 2013). Rape is dirty as many victims see themselves to have seriously been violated against their will. Rape is traumatic and many victims do not get out of the trauma for the rest of their life. It has ruined so many lives and shattered many carriers, homes and destinies. Despite its havoc on the health of the victim and social effect on society at large, its prevalence has continued to increase daily to the extent that there is no place sacred enough that rape cannot happen (WHO, 2020). The prevalence of rape shows that before the age of 18, one out of every four females is a victim of rape while the ratio of ten was evident in male victims (Ater, 2023; Duban, 2020; UNICEF, 2015). New WHO findings show that it is now a ratio of 1 to 3 in women (WHO, 2020), while Basson (2016) findings show that a woman is been raped every 17 seconds in South Africa.

There had been the evidence of rape within the religious cycle (Muhammad & Bilal, 2020). Many religious leaders such as pastors, imams and practitioners of traditional religions have been arrested on the basis of rape in so many situations. (Woodbridge & Joubert, 2018). This action raised concern for adherents. However, religion has told us that God is sovereign, all-powerful and all-knowing. Why then will He not save his believer from the assailant that wants to devour him? The most awful for us to believe is the way people hid under these religions to perpetrate the evil of rape and yet, they claim to be servants of God. Religious leaders that are expected to teach morality have failed and many of them are deep into the act of rape. Perpetrators of rape are found of blaming the act on the devil after they are caught. Instead of owning up and facing the consequences therein, they prefer to shift the blame to the devil believing they will have sympathy from religious people against the nature of the devil. And this act under the guise of religion brings stigmatization mostly in women who innocently patronize these religious leaders that do commit the crime. This article aims at examining how the crime of rape causes stigmatization of women in which religious practitioners use religion as an excuse to carry out the act.

## **Rape under the Nigeria law**

The Nigerian legal system has many ways through which it punishes the offender of rape. The decision of the court for the punishment does vary as a result of the evidence presented in support of or against the act of rape, whether it happened or not. Rape is classified as a sexual offence and sexual offences are generally defined as sexual activity that a person has not consented to. It is a broad range of sexual behaviours that make the victim feel uncomfortable, frightened or threatened. Rape under the Nigeria Criminal Code, Section 357 & 358, is defined as when a man or boy had unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl, that had not given her consent to the act, or when the consent was obtained by force, threats, or intimidation of any kind. It continues to add that in the case of a married woman when the act was performed by impersonating her husband.

In the same vein, Section 282 of the Nigeria Penal Code Act 8 states that a rape occurs when a man who, except in the case referred to in subsection (2) of this section, has sexual intercourse with a woman in any of the following circumstances, (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 another man to whom she believes herself to be lawfully married to; (e) with or without her consent when she is under fourteen years of age or of unsound mind". One fundamental issue about the inappropriateness of this legal definition is that the law believes that it is only a woman or girl that can be raped (Ater, 2023; UNICEF, 2015).

### **Types of Rape:**

Scholars have also identified different types of rape. However, in all these typologies, one thing that has to remain sacrosanct is the concept of consent. Some different types of rape include but are not limited to the following:

**Gang Rape:** This is usually perpetrated in most cases by more than two or more people. It is characteristically different to the rape perpetrated by individuals. Studies have shown that gang rapists are usually younger and are more often repeat offenders and, in most cases, they are usually likely to be under the influence of substances like drugs or alcohol (Neumann, 2018). Gang rapes are more violent on average and usually create more severe sexual and non-sexual injuries on their victims (Ullman, 2013). Gang rapes are usually premeditated in their intent and target their victim(s). Social factors such as civil wars hate propaganda, and ethnic conflicts increase the rate

and prevalence of gang rape in any society. Rape gang members often form a close-knit peer pressure group that is encouraged by the criminal behaviour of their fellow peers. Some identified factors in the crime included the misuse of alcohol, childhood victimization, the need to prove heterosexual performance, dominance over women, and participation in gangs and related activities.

**Custodial Rape:** This is the type of rape perpetrated by someone who is in a supervisory role or custodial position as employed by the state. Such persons could include police officers, prison officials, hospital employees, etc. Custodial rape also includes the rape of children in institutional care such as orphanages or rehabilitation homes etc. Custodial rape has been reported in so many countries, especially in the third world or less developed countries. In India, the caste system encourages custodial rape and it has been a major focus of women's rights organizations and has been an official category of rape defined under Indian law since 1983. The term custodial rape is sometimes used broadly to include rape by anyone in a position of authority such as an employer, money-lender, contractor or landlord. Victims of custodial rape are frequently minorities, people who are poor, or low status. Custodial rape is part of a broader pattern of custodial abuse and can include torture and murder.

**Payback Rape:** This type of rape is also referred to as punishment rape or revenge rape. It consists of the rape of a female, usually by a group of several males, as revenge for acts committed by members of her family, such as her father or brothers. Rape is meant to humiliate and disgrace the family member of the victim, as punishment for their prior behaviour towards the perpetrators. Payback rape is sometimes connected to tribal fighting where two or more communities have had issues of fighting among themselves and needed to humiliate each other.

**Attempted Rape:** In an attempted rape, the rapist has not finished carrying out his/her intention but has already started the action against the victim. Attempted rape is as grievous as the rape itself and that is why so many nations of the world give it almost the same punishment as rape. Attempted rape precedes rape itself.

**Partner Rape:** This is also known as spousal rape or marital rape, wife rape, husband rape, or intimate partner sexual assault. It is rape between a married or *de facto* couple without the other spouse's consent. This type of rape is considered a form of domestic violence and sexual abuse despite being married to each other. The victims of this type of rape do face the same psychological trauma when compared to other types of rape. Historically, and most especially in Africa and some

less developed countries, society usually does not believe that non-consensual sexual acts within a marriage constitute rape. So many believed that the bride price paid and the legal document (marriage certificate) signed have taken away the consent of the spouse when sex is placed on the table. It is against this backdrop that many married people especially women, do not report sexual assault or rape between them and their spouse to the police and rights groups.

**Date Rape:** Date rape can also be referred to as acquaintance rape. It is a non-domestic rape that is committed by someone who knows the victim. Date rape is usually between two friends who started dating each other or are in an amorous relationship and expecting to take their relationship further. In most cases, the perpetrator usually blames such action on the devil, claiming they don't know what came over them to carry out such action. In most situations date rape is mostly facilitated by the use of drugs where the rapist intentionally drugs the victim with a date rape drug so that they are incapacitated.

**Incapacitated Rape:** Is usually and frequently overlapping with date rape, where the victim is incapacitated and unable to give consent as a result of being drugged. Incapacitated rape can also be a result of intoxication or alcohol consumed by the victim. It can simply be because the victim is asleep or has a medical condition.

**Acquaintance Rape:** This can occur between two people who know one another usually in social situations and between people who had dated before or as a former couple and have had consensual sex in the past. It can also be between two people who are just starting to date each other or between people who are just friends or acquaintances. This type of rape could include the rape of co-workers, friends, teachers, schoolmates, family and other acquaintances. It is sometimes referred to as hidden rape and has become a growing problem in globally and especially among employers and employees who does not want to lose their job. Young women especially those of schooling age have been identified to be at considerable risk of becoming a victim of such rape.

### **Rape and Stigmatization**

The Latin verb *rapere* implies 'to seize or take by force.' It is an unwelcome, forced sexual encounter; it's also known as sexual assault, and it may happen to men and women of any age (Medhelp, 2008). Rape is often misunderstood as a sexual act by many individuals. Although rape involves sexual acts, it is motivated by a desire for power and control over another person rather than sexual attraction or gratification. In other words, rape is a violent crime (Omoera, 2004). Even if there is no physical violence involved, rape happens when someone pushes or convinces another

person into engaging in unwanted sexual behaviour (Medhelp, 2008). Rape is a type of social deviancy that differs from country to country and evolves through time. According to Bourke (2001), rape is neither timeless nor random; it is not a metaphor for the destruction of a city or nation, an environmental calamity, or the embodied violation of another person. It is a crime in which a person is forced to engage in sexual contact without their permission.

Rape is sometimes referred to as 'aggravated sexual assault' in some nations. Rape is contextualized in many nations to include gay rape, incest, and other sex offences. According to Akinwale and Omera (2013), rape is frequently motivated by great anger against the victim or a desire to overwhelm the victim. The purpose is rarely sexual, and violence is always present. The purpose of forced sex is to torture, humiliate, and demean the victim. Women and girls bearing children from rape are subject matter that is misunderstood in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), according to Liebling, Slegh, and Ruratotoye (2012), because the majority of the population is unaware of the underlying causes and consequences of sexual violence, as well as their impact on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Rape had its first historical appearance in early religious literature, both as abduction and in the sexual sense. Rape culture is an ambiguous notion with unclear origins and definitions, yet it has found its way into ordinary language and is thought to be widely understood. Margaret Lazarus' award-winning documentary film *Rape Culture*, released in 1975, is credited as being the first to define the idea. The film's narration is more illustrative than definitive in dealing with rape as depicted in movies, music, and other forms of entertainment, relying heavily on jargon such as 'rapism' and 'phallogocentric society'.

According to Goffman (1963), stigma is a dynamic social process that discounts certain groups or individuals based on their perceived inferior moral status and rationalizes animosity toward them in his seminal work on stigma theory, published in 1963. His research looked at how those who are stigmatized internalize this discounting as self-blame, shame, and the fear of negative judgments from others if their secret is revealed. Using Goffman's work as a foundation, contemporary scholars have investigated aspects of stigma, such as labelling and discrimination, as well as elements of stigmatization, such as status loss and isolation, and detailed how they work together to enforce norms and trigger behavioural adaptations such as passing (disclosure avoidance) among those who are stigmatized (Bos, Pryor, Reeder, & Stutterheim, 2013; Link & Phelan, 2001).

Despite the significance of dealing with the establishment and improvement of depressive symptoms after rape, few studies have attempted to fully identify risk variables for adaptive and maladaptive coping in victims. Victims' coping mechanisms may be influenced by negative consequences experienced after rape. Self-blaming thoughts and stigmatization are two of the consequences (e.g., feelings of shame or embarrassment about being a rape victim). When victims reveal, they may get damaging rather than therapeutic responses from others, such as being blamed for the rape or having the seriousness of the rape reduced. Finally, victims may endure shifts in their worldview, including a loss of faith in others' reliability, justice, and value. According to Arata (2000), characterological self-blame for the rape (e.g., the rape occurred because the lady was a victim type) was linked to reduced use of approach coping methods. Furthermore, Gibson and Leitenberg (2001) discovered that sentiments of shame about one's victimization were a strong predictor of increased use of avoidance coping. They discovered, however, that two characteristics of the victims' worldview, belief in kindness and meaningfulness of the world, were unrelated to avoidance coping. Finally, Ullman (1996) discovered that negative reactions from others (e.g., blaming, minimizing) predicted greater use of avoidance coping.

In Nigeria, the woman is frequently victimized twice. First by the violence she endures and by the failure of the government to bring her abusers to justice. There seems to be a culture of silence surrounding rape in Nigeria. The social stigma associated with rape across the globe forces female victims in Nigeria to conceal rape assaults to save themselves from shame and public embarrassment. Even parents of the raped often find it difficult to come out publicly to report such cases (Chiazor, Ozoya, Udume, and Egharevba, 2016). For instance, the crime statistics on rape in Ibadan from 2016 – June 2020 by the Nigeria Police Force shows that the crime of rape is rampant among male adult and there are many cases and persons prosecuted. However, most cases have been adjourned without given final judgment by the court.

Year	Cases reported	Cases refused	True cases	Persons arrested or summoned						Cases and persons prosecuted							Adjournments At the instance of			
				Age and sex						Cases			Convictions							Awaiting trials
				Adult	14-17		Under 14		Cases	M	F	Above 17	Under 17	Cases	M	F	Cases	M	F	Court
2016				M	F	M	F	M												
	89		89	112						89	112				89	112		84	3	2
2017																				
2018	80		80	128						80	102				76	82		59	11	6
2019	104	8	112	124						112	104				110	100		50	9	

2020	54		56	62				56	52			55	50		50	9	
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**Source:** Nigeria Police Force, Oyo State Command

Also, there seems to be a culture of silence surrounding rape in Nigeria. The social stigma associated with rape across the globe forces female victims in Nigeria to conceal rape assaults to save themselves from shame and public embarrassment. Even parents of the raped often find it difficult to come out publicly to report such cases (Achunike and Kitause, 2014).

According to Brigneti and Egbonimali (2002), 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 a 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 other intenders to go into raping since people who indulge in it go scot-free, and most rape incidents in Nigeria were usually unreported as a result of corruption, stigma and victim-blaming (Amnesty International).

### **Religiosity and Rape**

There are many researches that have been done in determining the link between religiosity and rape perception. Rebeiz and Harb (2010) discovered that religion was associated with acceptance of the rape myth among Lebanese college students. Although the individuals were from a different cultures, those authors utilized methods comparable to the one used in this study. According to Freymeyer (1997), more religious men considered that women who had been raped should bear some of the guilt. Mulliken (2005), on the other hand, found no link between religion and belief in rape myths. It is relevant and vital to aid in the study of religion and how it affects people's opinions towards rape victims. Internalized stereotypes about rape and religious beliefs, according to Hite-Corrie (2012), can produce secondary wounding (an emotional scar that is either directly or indirectly induced by the trauma of intimate partner sexual abuse). The members of the upper class of the society, religious leaders, and relatives can all be sources of secondary wounds. Religious beliefs, according to Pritt (1998), can add to the anguish experienced by victims of intimate relationship violence and sexual assault. Mormon women who had been sexually abused felt more estranged from God and less loved by God than Mormon women who had not been abused (Pritt, 1998).

Sheldon and Parent (2002) investigated the views of clergy who had worked with sexual assault victims. Fundamentalism, misogyny, and a negative attitude toward victims were all linked to victims receiving more blame. Although the majority of clergy respondents blamed the victim,



they also held a high level of belief in the rape myth. Furthermore, religious leaders that hold strong fundamentalist views prohibited their congregations from getting counselling outside the church.

### **Instances of popular rape cases by religious leaders in Nigeria**

One of the greatest conspiracies against the elimination of rape in religion was a document written in Latin, having the seal of Pope John XXIII, written to every bishop of the church (including the Nigeria church), instructing them of the policy of “strictest” secrecy in dealing with an allegation of sexual abuse. The policy threatens those that will speak up about illicit sex action with ex-communication from the church (the Guardian news, 2023). The so also, many bishops and cardinals even at the Vatican have been accused of different kinds of rape, homosexuality, rape of minor ate.

One of the most popular incidents of rape in the religious cycle in Nigeria is the one that has to do with the photographer, Busola Dakolo, who accused the celebrity pastor Biodun Fatoyinbo of rape when she granted an interview in 2019. The interview sparks protests against the church and makes so many people’s love for the church reduced. The pastor denies the allegations. Expectedly, religious people in the country that never bordered to investigate swooped down on Dakolo and gave her so much social media backlash. Many accused her of lying against the man of God. Mrs Dakolo sued the pastor demanding an apology but his legal team countersued Dakolo. However, a Nigerian high court ordered Dakolo to pay Fatoyinbo one million naira in damages. Another pastor in charge of Life and Power Bible church Ogijo, Ogun State, was accused by several women of raping them under the pretence of doing deliverance for them. The pastor according to the police source claimed to have been overwhelmed by the evil spirit (Daily Post News, 2022).

The rape and eventual killing of Miss Uwa Omoziwa, a 22-year-old student of the University of Benin, Nigeria inside a church by some assailants seem to be the pick of the rampant incidents of rape in Nigeria. In another rape saga against a randy bishop in Lagos, victims open up to the Punch newspapers on their encounter with one Bishop who raped them repeatedly. His modus operandi includes drugging his victims. In the same vein, an Islamic cleric, 43 years old was remanded by an Ikeja Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Court for allegedly raping a five-year-old girl who is under his tutelage for Quranic lessons in the Olorunbabe mosque in 2018 (Sahara Reporters, 2019). In another development, a 16-year-old girl, who is also an orphan

accused an Islamic cleric, who she is learning the Quran from of raping her repeatedly when the cleric took her and two other boys to Ogun state on a study tour from Ede in Osun State. The cleric claims to be married to the girl but he could not provide any evidence of the marriage (premiuntimes.com, 2019).

Another form and instance of domestic violence at this time has to do with the rape of against men. The myth and reality of male rape are captured by this writer thus.

MYTH: Men can't be sexually assaulted, and if they were, they should have been able to prevent it. One of the strong beliefs in our culture about the rape of men is that any man if he is "a real man" could have or should have been strong enough to prevent the rape by putting up a fight. It is believed that this is the only "manly thing to do". The message here is that failure to fight off an attack is a sign of weakness, a sign of not being manly. Many male victims internalized the belief that they are not real men because they did not stop the rape; they feel a sense of "deficiency" and a deep sense of guilt and shame.

However, the reality is that men are been raped on a daily basis. Any man can be sexually assaulted regardless of size, strength, appearance or sexual orientation. The belief that a man could have prevented the rape ignores the fact that in rape, the threat of bodily harm or death overpowers the desire to defend oneself. Many acts of rape against men could be done through anal sex of men against men or the same rape by a woman using any type of sex toy to penetrate the anus of the man possibly after he has been overpowered or rendered inactive through drugs or something else.

### **Reasons for rape in the religion cycle**

There are instances in the scriptures that show that religion as a whole, subtly encourages the act of rape by not condemning it in its totality but usually does cover it up. An instance can be seen in the household of King David, in 2 Samuel 13: 1-29. King David, after hearing about the crime of rape committed by Amnon against his step-sister Tamar, the king refused to do anything as a consequence of the rape. It took Tamar's brother, Absalom 2 years before he could revenge the act, then killing Amnon. Another instance of rape could be found in Judges 21:1-25 when the children of Benjamin were saved from extinction through the mass rape of virgins from Jabeshgilead and Shiloh. Rape is endemic in the Bible, both factually and symbolically, it also functions as a conduit for male competition and a tool to uphold patriarchy and this has encouraged

many so-called religious leaders to engage in rape. In Islam, wives, similarly, are obliged to accept the sexual advances of their husbands except in certain circumstances such as menstruation or fasting and the Hanafi School of jurisprudence expressly permitted a husband to otherwise force himself on his wife. As such, the rape of slaves and wives is not considered unlawful in Islamic law. Almost to emphasize the point, the rape of the slaves of other men is treated as property damage. Within traditional religions, reasons for rape have largely been attributed to ritual purposes. So many custodians of these shrines are usually diabolic and do recommend their clients to do awful things such as rape underage, or even infants in their quest for becoming more powerful or looking for riches overnight.

Other reasons for rape which also cut across society include indecent dressing at places of worship which has been seen as one of the major causes of rape in religion. This has a way of entrapping some religious leaders into the crime of rape. Some women usually dress seductively in churches to seduce the pastor. This affects the ministry of the religious leaders who eventually get entangled in lust due to a lack of self-discipline as their self-control ability is very weak. Moreover, some religious leaders overestimate their abilities to live above sin because they are unduly celebrated by society. In addition, they have easy access to a vulnerable female who comes to them for spiritual care, counselling and interventions by taking undue advantage of the unusual closeness. Sometimes, some of them get involved in rape as a means of possessing spiritual power and affluence.

### **Religion manipulation in the case of rape**

Religion is an essential piece of Nigerian life and system. It has been an instrument that is either used or misused by believers. Part of the misuse of religion by religious practitioners is the use of religion as a justification for rape. Rape has become an endemic problem in Nigerian society, most especially when perpetrators use religion as an excuse to shift the fault away from themselves to the devil or the society. For instance, the national survey on torture in Nigeria carried out by the Women's Aid Collective (WACOL) shows that rape and sexual abuse are amongst the forms of torture experienced by women. The study situates the percentage of rape on women and sexual abuse at 65.4%. The findings of the National Crime and Safety Survey executed by CLEEN Foundation in 2012 in all 36 States in Nigeria uncovered that only 23% of rape incidents in Nigeria were reported to the law enforcement agency. Hence, about 77% of rape cases go unreported, thus perpetrators move freely in society waiting for their next victim. Reasons for unreported rape cases are also attached to belief systems.

There are several reasons people get involved in rape and why it is rampant in our society. The involvement of people in rape and why it is rampant was investigated. Evidence revealed that rape perpetrators get involved in the act owing to infatuation, to make ritual money, get-rich-quickly syndrome, fame, deep involvement in pornography, lack of self-control/discipline, low self-esteem, psychological/spiritual issues, indecent dressing, uncontrollable sex urge, showing the superiority of masculine strength, group influence, availability, use/misuse of hard drugs and alcohol. In addition, the crime of rape is rampant because of decadence in moral values, and failure in family upbringing. Most parents did not teach their children properly anymore owing to allocating much time and attention to work and business. They are not very protective or careful about their children, most especially girls. Also, the increase in the proliferation of pornographic pictures and films has affected young ones and adults to get involved in crime and thus, corrupt society. More importantly, there is no adequate punishment for perpetrators to serve as a deterrent to others, and excess publicity of enhancement drugs and increase in online dating sites.

It is important to note that rape perpetrators blame the devil as a means of self-defence. The term the devil can only be found in religion. The devil is always associated with evil. Thus, when rape is committed, blaming the devil indicates that it is the devil that 'instrumentalised' the act. An instance was in the case of a self-described Satanist, Richard Ramirez, an American serial killer who usually sexually violates his victim. Nevertheless, rape is a crime committed by a human being, not the devil. The devil cannot be held responsible for the consequences. It is the perpetrator that would be held responsible to face the wrath of the law. In addition, rape perpetrators blame the devil as a scheme of appealing to people's sympathy by applying religious terms and covering up their wicked acts. There is a special respect for religion. Thus, appealing to the religious sense of the people sometimes weakens people's reactions when it comes to crime. Hence, perpetrators of rape assume that using such a strategy can make the people, and even the law tender justice with mercy or even allow them to go scot-free. In a nutshell, it is a way of getting sympathy from a religious society like Nigeria by shifting the blame to the devil, and as a strategy to attach their sin to the devil.

There is an increase in the rate at which religious leaders get involved in crime. Religious practitioners get involved as a result of inadequate counselling by older religious leaders. Many of the so-called men of God were not meant to be in the business of pastoring a church. Most of those that are there were not adequately tutored before venturing into the ministry, hence, they cover up their weaknesses and pretensions with religion. Since these so-called men of God are key figures

in society, the rape victims would even be advised not to make a case out of the situation since no one would listen to him or them, thus sliding into the culture of silence. Some are threatened that if they speak to anyone about the incident they will be killed. Any victim that dares to speak up, society in so many situations finds it difficult to believe them or put the blame on them making many perpetrators get away with the crime. Daramola-Salako (2020) says “75% of the cases I have on my table are from religious leaders, and a lot of time, we don’t get to the end of it, because when we start, the family would come and tell us we should leave the religious leader to God.” Therefore, increasing the culture of silence about rape victims to increase in society. Besides, religion becomes a potent weapon in rape cases because people respect religious leaders and they fear the consequences of alleging a crime that is difficult to prove.

Furthermore, religion absolves the perpetrators of guilt, and Nigerian society is naively religious and rarely challenges issues that have been enveloped with religion. That does not mean the fault of rape can be put on religion. Rape is a personal choice that can be committed by both religious and non-religious people. It has become a tool to perpetrate evil by alleging that the devil ‘instrumentalized’ the crime. Nevertheless, society has been faulted to a large extent ranging from a permissive attitude towards materialism, the value placed on sexuality and gender, covering up of rape perpetrators by family members and community, and likewise concealing the rape victims by members of the family due to stigmatization, fear of reprisal attack, feelings of shame, and fear of not being believed. Those who have fallen victim to rape by those who identify with religion suffer some modifications in their perception of their religion and faith. It should be noted that to a large extent, rape modifies the victim’s complete understanding of faith and belief, particularly in circumstances when the perpetrator is an important figure in the religious body.

According to Finkelhor & Brown (1985), such a situation can make many victims of rape view the religious organization as a desecrated place. Pargament (2008), emphasizing the great theological consequence of rape that involves a clergy or an official of faith-community, indicated that it is even a greater desecration than violation by a biological parent, because, the clergy take formal vows to protect and nurture the spiritual well-being of all of their followers; they are legitimated to enact the role of God. Piggott (2021) adds that religious views may change dramatically as a result of over-accommodation; the schematic integration of such a traumatic experience may lead one to not only become less religious but have negative or oppositional views regarding their previous religious beliefs. Littleton (2007) found those who experienced rape and over-accommodated were more likely to engage in maladaptive and risky coping compared to

those who engaged in accommodation or assimilation. Hence, as soon as a religious figure disregards his/her consecration, obligation, and honour as a mouthpiece of God in human society, it is as if God himself has committed the violation.

### **Social support and rehabilitation**

The concept of social support is for the rehabilitation, reintegration and reformation of both victim and assailant. Since the impact of rape on the victim is often profound to the extent that many survivors usually experience post-traumatic disorder and many other problems such as sleep disturbance, depression, suicidal thoughts, dissociation, anxiety, etc. there is therefore the need for them to be supported to overcome the trauma. Victims should be helped to stand up to speak. Various types of support should be made available to victims (Wilson & Scarpa, 2013). For instance, positive informal social support which is a kind of support that tries to validate the experience and emotions of the survivor should be encouraged. Professionals in this field are expected to encourage, empathize with survivors, have listening behaviours and be affirmative (Ullman, 1999). Social support could also include financial, offering help with household chores, providing a referral to a doctor, or providing child care.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Rape is a social and global problem with so many consequences attached to it. Despite this, most victims of rape do not speak out, therefore, making the crime of rape the most under-reported. Scholars have also attributed reasons for not speaking up to include the stigmatization that victims usually face, the inconsequential attitude of the religion bodies amongst other things. However, before the scourge of rape can end or be reduced to the minimum in our societies, the following recommendations needs to be adhere to:

- All religions should start to see all types of rape as the same and should stop justifying some against others. For instance, it is culturally and religiously believed that a spouse cannot claim to be raped by his/her partner who is still leaving together as a couple.
- Religions should stop paying lip service to the offence of rape and stop covering it up with the mentality that it is the devil that caused it. Many rapists have been scientifically tested and discovered to be in a good state of mind. Why then blaming of the devil for

their actions? It should be seen as a sin against the image of God and the people and society.

- Victims of rape should be encouraged to speak out just as Tamar did speak out against her brother Amnon. Speaking out will make social groups come to the aid of the victim, hence helping in pursuing justice in situations where the victim is not capable of doing so themselves. When justice is served to the perpetrator, it will deter other potential assailants from thinking of committing the same offence.
- Adequate punishment should be encouraged and enforced by the religious organisation and not to cover it up. The bible even says that “he that covereth his sins will not prosper”. Why then will the religious bodies encourage its people to cover up such sin, is it that they want them to prosper?
- Families should be more careful in leaving their children behind even in religious places. There should be more enlightenment so that children and teenagers are subtly made conscious of this societal ill to be better equipped to evade present and future predators.

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