

## SEXUAL ABUSE AND REHABILITATION OF VICTIMS: PUBLIC HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

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### Abstract

Sexual abuse is a global issue. All genders are affected, both young and old, most especially the girl child. As a major issue in public health, sexual assault affects millions of individuals annually. In addition to causing physical harm, it also has a significant effect on people's mental and psychological well-being. There are both short-term and long-term effects linked to an elevated risk of various sexual and reproductive health issues. Individuals may be stigmatized and ostracized by their families and communities when abused, hence, parents and guardians should create time for their children and monitor all activities they engage in. There should be implementation of capital punishment for offenders and laws should be put in place to protect the girl child. When it comes to medical and psychological treatment for victims of sexual assault, as well as evidence collection to aid prosecutions, health professionals play a significant role.

**Keywords:** Risk of Sexual Abuse, Rape, Reaction, Post-Traumatic, Rehabilitation.

### Introduction

The word sexual abuse has so many meanings to lots of people which could range from abuse of the girl child, adolescence, women, even the elderly. Very little attention is given to the masculine gender but the word sexual abuse affects both genders, either young or old. This presentation covers men and women but dwells more on the feminine gender in view of the incessant sexual abuse reports on the media committed against the female fold. The study focuses on enlightening the populace about sexual abuse and the need for rehabilitation in our society, and educate the public on the need to safeguard the girl child.

Sexual abuse cases is one ill becoming rampant in our society. Sometimes in Ekiti State, a seventeen-year-old girl was gang-raped by a group of four men and barely days' interval, a 15-year old boy allegedly raped a three-year old girl at Iludi, Osi Ekiti in Ido/Osi Local Government Area of the State. Overtime, we have always heard more dreadful stories reported about sexual abuse in various parts of Nigeria<sup>1</sup>.

The damage and effects of sexual abuse is always traumatic. Sometimes it gives births to addiction, psychological, spiritual, emotional or physical pain. A lot of people suffer in silence because of fear of what the society will say about them or fear of stigmatization. Anyone who knowingly and maliciously uses physical or sexual force to coerce another person into performing a sexual act against their will is committing sexual abuse or assault. Sexual assault encompasses a wide range of violent acts such as rape (including forced vaginal, anal, or oral penetration, as well as drug-facilitated sexual assault), groping, sexual abuse of children, and sexual torture.

There is a global epidemic of sexual violence. Available data suggest that nearly one in four women may experience sexual violence by an intimate partner in some countries, and that, up to one-third of adolescent girls report their first sexual experience as being forced<sup>2</sup>, even though there has been little research conducted on the problem in most countries.

Sexual violence not only injures victims physically, but it also damages their mental and emotional well-being. The risks of many sexual and reproductive health issues, both short- and long-term, are higher in people who have it. Both the physical and mental effects on one's well-being can be devastating and long-lasting.

In the United States, sexual assault is typically defined as an act occurring without the agreement of one of the parties involved. Consent must be established between two competent adults and can be revoked at any moment during the sexual encounter; if this occurs, it is not classified as sexual abuse<sup>3</sup>.

Sexual assault has various manifestations, including acts such as rape or attempted rape, alongside any unwelcome sexual touch or threats. Sexual assault typically transpires when an individual touches any portion of another person's body in a sexual manner, including over clothing, without that person's consent. The perpetrator typically employs intimidation or exploits the victims' inability to provide consent. The majority of victims and offenders are acquainted with one another<sup>2</sup>.

## **Literature Review**

Sexual violence constitutes a global social issue that has garnered significant attention from policymakers, researchers, and practitioners. It is defined as any sexual act, attempts to procure a sexual act, unsolicited sexual remarks or advances, or acts of trafficking, directed against an individual's sexuality through coercion, perpetrated by any individual, irrespective of their relationship to the victim, in any context, including, but not limited to domestic and occupational environments. Sexual abuse, commonly known as molestation, constitutes abusive sexual conduct perpetrated by one individual against another. It is frequently executed through coercion or by exploiting another individual<sup>4</sup>.

Sexual violence has an adverse effect on physical and mental health as well as physical injury on the victims. Sexual and reproductive health of the individual is affected and may be long lasting if there is no quick intervention medically. Deaths, following sexual abuse, may be as a result of suicide committed on the part of the victim, which may be called murder of "honor" or the perpetrator murdering the victim to conceal the act<sup>2</sup>.

There was a recent case of a pastor of a popular church in Edo State in Nigeria who paid a young man the sum of 1.2 million to rape an under graduate student who went to read in the church and eventually murdered her. The information full story can be found in<sup>5</sup>.

Coerced intercourse may yield sexual enjoyment for the perpetrator; nevertheless, its primary intent often lies in the demonstration of power and domination over the victim. Frequently, males who compel their spouses into sexual acts perceive their conduct as justified due to the marital bond. Sexual violence against women and men is frequently

employed as a tactic of warfare, serving as an assault on adversaries and symbolising the subjugation and humiliation of their women or captured male combatants. It may also serve to penalise women for violating social or moral rules, such as those forbidding adultery or public intoxication. Both women and men can be subjected to rape while in police custody or incarcerated<sup>6</sup>.

In a nationwide survey carried out in the USA, it was found that 14.8% of women over the age of 17 had been victims of rape at some point in their lives, 2.8% had faced attempted rape, and 0.3% had been assaulted within the past year<sup>7</sup>. A survey of a representative sample of women aged 18-49 in the provinces of South Africa revealed that in the preceding year, 1.3% of women were coerced, either physically or through verbal threats, into non-consensual sexual acts<sup>8</sup>.

Sexual violence in educational institutions, healthcare environments, armed situations, and refugee contexts Educational institutions. For numerous young women, the predominant environment in which sexual coercion and harassment occur is the educational institutions.

<sup>2</sup>Reported that 71 adolescent females were sexually assaulted by their peers and 19 others were murdered at a boarding institution in Meru, Kenya. Harassment of girls by boys is in all likelihood a global problem in view of study conducted in Canada, where 23% of girls had experienced sexual harassment while attending school<sup>9</sup>.

On the other hand, studies conducted in Africa have shown that educators can play a part in either enabling or engaging in sexual coercion. Within the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, a study by Africa Rights uncovered instances of school-teachers seeking sex as a means of bribing students for excellent grades or avoiding failing. Schoolteachers were held accountable for 32% of the reported cases of child rape in a recent South African national survey that enquired about rape experiences prior to the age of fifteen<sup>8</sup>.

### **Health care setting**

Many reports have surfaced of sexual abuse against patients in healthcare settings<sup>10</sup>. For example, <sup>11</sup>a study of American doctors who were reprimanded for sexual offences indicated that the number of instances had risen from 42 in 1989 to 147 in 1996, and that the proportion of all disciplinary actions that were sex-related had grown from 2.1% to 4.4% during the same time. Involvement of medical personnel in clitoridectomy in Egypt, forced gynaecological exams and the threat of forced abortion in China, and inspections of virginity in Turkey are other instances of reported sexual assault against female patients. Also, there have been reports of male doctors harassing female nurses<sup>12</sup>.

### **Armed Conflict and Refugee Setting**

Rape has been employed as a tactic in numerous conflicts, including Rwanda and the former Yugoslav nations, where it has served as a deliberate strategy to undermine community cohesion and target perceived adversaries, as well as a mechanism for ethnic cleansing. Another unavoidable consequence of armed conflicts is the resultant economic and social

upheaval, which can compel substantial numbers of individuals into prostitution. This observation is equally applicable to the plight of refugees, whether they are escaping armed conflicts or natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, or severe storms.

Refugees escaping hostilities and other perilous circumstances frequently face risks in their new environments. Data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees suggested that among the "boat people" who fled Vietnam in the late 1970s and early 1980s, 39% of the women were either adopted or raped by pirates while at sea, a percentage likely to be an underestimate. Rape has been identified as a significant issue in numerous refugee camps, especially those in Kenya.

### **Sexual Abuse in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, sexual abuse has become a daily news either in the community, state and national level, this is on the increase and alarming. Indeed, it is a crime punishable by many parts of the criminal code's chapter 21. This document was draughted in 1812. As of 2015, according to UNICEF, one in four girls and one in 10 boys in Nigeria have been victims of sexual abuse before reaching the age of 18. A good action for treatment survey found that comprehensive support programs, including trauma-focused counseling and community-based awareness initiatives, were effective in addressing the long-term impact of sexual abuse on survivors. Access indicated that over 31.4% of females reported that their initial sexual experience involved rape or some form of coercion. Sixty percent of youngsters endure mental and physical assault. The Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development estimated that 1,200 girls were raped in 2012 in Rivers, a coastal state in southern Nigeria. Mr. Michael Gabarale, the state project officer of the Organisation, made this announcement in Port Harcourt during an interview with News Agency of Nigeria, adding that rape cases are rising, and has asked for more resources to continue its fight against this and other forms of violence against women. The 49 cases included both gang rapes and regular rapes. Of these, 44 were settled at various police divisions and communities, while 2 were not reported and just 3 offenders were found guilty<sup>14</sup>.

Female students from the neighbouring communities had gone to a government secondary boarding school in Chibok, Borno state, to sit for exams on 14 April, 2014 when Boko Haram insurgents invaded. In the middle of the night, the assailants burst into town in a hail of gunshots, made their way to the school, where they pillaged the dorms and put 276 girls onto trucks. Few were released and some still held captive, have been subjected to forced marriage and put in a family way.

In Lagos state, the Voice of Africa in September 10, 2015 presented Child Abuse Prevalence in Nigeria. Rachel Harvey the chief of child protection for UNICEF in Nigeria in her survey, which covers the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory stated that, the violence starts young, and over half of children were abused before the age 11, and one in 10 were abused before they turned five. About 80% of children have the experience over and over again, most children face the abuse alone and the abusers are known persons says Harvey, who

tend to be parents, relatives or male teachers. When the abuse occurs, it is revealed that the children did not know where to go or who to turn to so as to seek help<sup>15</sup>.

### **Types of Sexual Abuse**

There are different types/forms of sexual abuse. The Staff Annual Report Board Press and Media Employment Brand Assets, (2015), listed the various types of sexual abuse, namely:

- **Stranger Rape:** is rape or sexual assault perpetrated by someone unknown to the survivor.
- **Blitz Sexual Assault:** the offender sexually assaults the victim in a short amount of time without any prior interaction. The majority of blitz attacks take place in public places throughout the night.
- With **contact sexual assault**, the offender makes an effort to establish rapport with the victim before sexually assaulting them.
- **Invasion of the Home Perpetrator** conducts sexual assault by breaking into the victim's home, identifying with when the victim and the offender are known to each other, either as casual acquaintances or as close friends or family. The crime is referred to as rape. The majority of rape cases involve this type.
- **Child Sexual Abuse:** this is engages in sexual behaviour with a juvenile, which is a serious kind of child abuse that can impact the victim for a long time. Sexual abuse of children can occur even in the absence of direct physical touch. Some examples of sexual abuse of children include: making sexually explicit phone calls, sending explicit texts, engaging in sexually explicit online interactions, fondling, exposing oneself to a minor, engaging in sexual intercourse (whether vaginal, oral, or anal), sex trafficking, and obscene phone calls, texts, or digital interactions.
- **Statutory Rape:** This is having sexual relations with a person under the age of 18. Even if both parties were of legal age and consented to the sexual relations, it is still illegal for an adult in California to engage in intercourse with a juvenile.
- **Spousal/Partner Rape:** this happens when two people are romantically involved with one another. Abusive behaviour frequently occurs in tandem with sexual violence. Many women who have been victims of physical abuse by their partners have also been victims of sexual abuse, which can be even more difficult to recognise because the victim may not have acknowledged the abuse or may not have understood that sexual violence does not necessarily involve physical violence.
- **Incest:** is defined as sexual abuse by a relative. Sexual contact/abuse between family members.
- **Serial Rape:** the term is used to describe series of rapes committed on different occasions by the same perpetrator. The media often covers serial rape since the perpetrator usually has several victims, the attacks are often horrific, and the perpetrator makes use of people's fears.

- **Substance Facilitated Rape:** This happens when under the influence of drugs or alcohol, a person's capacity to provide their informed consent to sexual relations is impaired. These drugs make it easier for sexual assaulters to carry out their crimes since they weaken victims' defense mechanisms. In this way, the victim is unable to recall the attack.
- **Multiple Perpetrator/Gang Rape:** This occurs when multiple sexual assailants collude to attack a single victim. The victim is selected in advance by a method of sexual assault that involves the use of substances. Typically, it's done to strengthen the victim's affiliation with the group, be it a gang, a sports team, or a club, and the victim's current relationship with one of the offenders, which is frequently sexual.
- **Sexual Harassment:** This constitutes undesired sexual conduct that disrupts an individual's life, career, or education. This conduct may encompass verbal or physical actions, as well as behaviors that contribute to a "hostile" environment. It can transpire on the street, public transit, at public venues, or within schools, workplaces, and institutions. It may originate from an individual in a position of authority or influence over the person being harassed.
- **Date Rape:** this is specific kind of acquaintance rape referring to assault experienced by the victim from the person they are dating with.

### **Risk Factors for Sexual Abuse**

While a victim is never to be blamed for the assault that she or he experienced, it is imperative to be well grounded with firsthand knowledge about those situations associated with sexual abuse in order to be safeguarded. PACTS Organization (2013), a national movement to prevent sexual assault and rape in colleges listed risk factors as follows

- **Lack of Information about Healthy Sexual Development:** parents often shield their children from the topic of sex, thinking that, their children are safer if they just don't hear about it. The fact is that whether parents like it or not, information about sex will filter into their ears. Children of this nature are at a higher risk because they won't be able to differentiate between unhealthy and healthy sexual behaviors. The children too, will not have the confidence to walk up to their parents to ask questions but will rely on what their friends tells them or the media.
- **Unsupervised Access to Technology:** The reason behind this is that individuals who engage in sexual assault frequently first target youngsters online before they physically harm them. One example is developing close personal connections with people through social media.
- **Being Insecure or Lonely:** Adverse childhood experiences are more common in youngsters who suffer from low self-esteem or insecurity. One common tactic used by those who commit sexual abuse is to spend time with the victim one-on-one. They love to gain their trust and make them feel special. Lonely children turned to the perpetrators for attention not knowing if there is any hidden motive.

- **Special Needs:** Sexual abuse is more common among disabled children. This risk is substantially higher for children who already have intellectual and mental health impairments. This can be due to the fact that the abusers see them as more vulnerable victims due to their communication difficulties. TVC News on the 28th of June, 2020, showed a crime suspect who raped a disabled woman of 23 years old in Osun State.
- **Explicit Media Exposure:** There is an increased risk of sexual abuse for youngsters who regularly consume explicit media. Images, videos, songs, and TV innuendos all fall into this category. Their portrayal of sex is skewed and they normalize abuse.
- **Unsupervised Time with Others:** when minors spend time with teens or adults and they are not supervised, the chances of abusing the minor is high. This is even more established with the case of single-parents or working parents' household where the parents leave a child alone with coaches, instructors, teachers, babysitters or family friends<sup>22</sup>.
- **Past Victimization:** Sexual assault is more common among college students who have had their sexual boundaries violated before, particularly by a romantic relationship. Similarly, a college student's risk of experiencing further assault increases by a factor of up to three after her first victimisation.
- **Substance Abuse:** Victims of sexual assault are more prone to drink as a kind of self-medication, increasing their vulnerability to further assaults, due to the psychological turmoil that commonly follows the assault, drug use and heavy drinking are strongly linked to sexual victimisation, regardless of the victim's history of victimisation.
- Men who are members of sororities or fraternities are disproportionately prone to commit sexual assaults, according to reports. Sorority membership is also associated with heavy drinking, which increases the risk. Just as in Nigeria, there is a well-known one called Daughters of Jezebel that runs on several universities.
- **Lower Age and Academic Year:** lower age and academic year are also risk factors. Female students are more likely to experience sexual assault during their first year in the college due to lack of experience. Survey that was carried out in 2006 by the Campus Sexual Assault Study, revealed that 84% were reported to have been sexually coerced.
- **A history of multiple sexual partners:** Sexual assault is more common among women who have had multiple partners in the past.
- **Late Nights and Weekends:** the majority of sexual assaults occur in the late shadow of the night since perpetrators do not want to be identified, also during weekends at various functions where parties are organized and free flow of alcohol is experienced.
- A history of dating violence
- Off Campus parties.

### **Vulnerable Groups**

The saying that only "attractive" people are targeted for this crime, or those that dressed in a provocative manner revealing sensitive body parts are spotted for such crime, is actually a

myth. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention delineates the severity of sexual violence by presenting key statistics that indicate that over one-third of women encounter sexual violence, including physical contact over their lifetime, while almost one-fourth of men suffer sexual violence<sup>16</sup>.

The following category of groups are identified:

- Children (girl child)
- Women
- People with mental health diagnoses
- People with physical/ cognitive disabilities
- Adults with intellectual disabilities

In Nigeria, a study conducted by <sup>17</sup> on sexual assault victims in south-west, Lagos, discovered that sexual assault reported among males was 6.1%, female victims 93.9%, it was higher in adolescents less than 20years and the unmarried.

### **Impact of Sexual Abuse**

Survivors of sexual assault respond differently from one another. These reactions can be influenced by the survivor's unique style, cultural background, and life circumstances. While some people are more comfortable expressing themselves, others would rather bottle up their sentiments. Some survivors of sexual assault may never speak about it, while others may wait weeks, months, or even years out of dread. The coping mechanism of victims must be respected because of their daily functioning.

**Emotional Reactions:** this may vary from: guilt, shame, self-blame, embarrassment, fear, sadness, vulnerability, isolation.

### **Psychological Reaction**

**Nightmares:** Experiencing a traumatic event from one's past in the present time is known as a flashback. This implies that victims of sexual violence may feel as though they are experiencing the same thing over and over again. It could be tough to ground yourself in reality while experiencing a flashback. It could be so bad that you feel the offender is right there with you. The timing is not always perfect. Simple sensory events, like smelling someone's scent or hearing a certain tone of voice, might set them off. This kind of reaction is typical after experiencing trauma.

**Depression:** is a mood illness characterized by persistent and disabling low mood, hopelessness, and other negative emotions that interfere with daily functioning. Your actions and interactions with others may be impacted.

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** Anxiety, tension, and panic are common emotions for people who have survived sexual violence. This could be a sign of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) if the symptoms are severe, last for longer than a few weeks, or interfere with daily life. Extreme feelings like this might make it hard to function in daily life and make you feel like you're always in danger. Although every victim's reaction is unique, PTSD is characterized by three key symptoms:



- (i) **Re-experiencing:** feeling like you are reliving the event through flashbacks, dreams, or intrusive thoughts
- (ii) **Avoidance:** Deliberately or unconsciously altering your behaviour to evade situations linked to the event or becoming disinterested in previously enjoyed activities.
- (iii) **Hyper-arousal:** Feeling on edge all the time, trouble sleeping, easily startled, or prone to spontaneous outbursts are all symptoms of hyper-arousal.

**Panic attacks:** A panic episode is characterised by an overwhelming sense of dread and unease that comes on suddenly, even in seemingly harmless conditions. People who have been through a lot of stress, abuse, or trauma are more likely to get this panic attacks.

### **Physical Reactions**

*Eating disorders:* Survivors of sexual abuse may experience several impacts, including altered body images and diminished emotions of control.

*Sleep disorders:* Symptoms may encompass difficulty initiating or maintaining sleep, sleeping at atypical hours, or experiencing altered sleep duration.

#### *Increased startle response*

- Concerns about physical safety
- Lack of control
- Anger:
- Numbness
- Confusion
- Shock, disbelief
- Dissociation: is a detachment from reality, including not being able to focus on work or on schoolwork, as well as not feeling present in everyday situations.
- Anxiety
- Substance use or abuse
- Low self-esteem
- *Physical injury:* Deliberate self-harm, or self-injury, is when a person inflicts physical harm on himself or herself, usually in secret.

*Concerns about pregnancy or contracting an STI or HIV:* Some health consequences, including suicide, homicide, maternal mortality, and AIDS-related deaths, can be fatal due to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), which are bacterial or viral infections spread from one person to another by vaginal, anal, or oral contact.

### **Rehabilitation**

The term "rehabilitation" was defined by<sup>18</sup> as medical treatment that aids in the restoration, maintenance, or enhancement of functional capacities. Cognitive, mental, or physical capacities may be at play here (thinking and learning). A person may require this set of actions if they are already facing or will soon have difficulties with daily functioning as a result of ageing or a medical condition. People of all ages can benefit from rehabilitation since

it helps them get back to the things they love doing, whether that's maintaining or reforming their everyday activities, or fulfilling important life tasks.

### **Rehabilitative Measures for sexually Abuse Persons**

Teens who have survived sexual abuse often struggle with issues of trust and betrayal, according to<sup>19</sup>, a renowned American sociologist who has studied child sexual abuse (CSA). Because of the imbalance of power between them and their abuser, victims will feel helpless and unable to make decisions about their own lives, which will have an impact on their ability to form and sustain trustworthy relationships.

Stigmatization and traumatic sexualization are also unique effects of sexual abuse to sexual abuse survivor. Because the abuser has abused the child in unhealthy ways, the youngster develops a distorted view of sexuality. Because children often engage in sexual activity in inappropriate settings, they may develop the mistaken belief that sex is synonymous with love. The idea of rehabilitation is to correct the anomalies sexual abuse might have caused the victims.

**Psychotherapy:** this is the first model of a healthy treatment to establish a relationship for many victims of sexual abuse. It serves to heal, nurture relationship where the client can discover to experience trust. Psychotherapy provides the client with an opportunity to rework the trauma into a healthier sense of self.

**Cognitive therapy:** Cognitive therapy for PTSD teaches patients to recognize, assess, and reframe the faulty cognitions associated with the traumatic event that cause them to experience strong negative emotions and behavioral responses. Those who have survived sexual abuse as youngsters or as adults will find this extremely useful. The approach is based on the fundamental premise that thoughts are the fundamental building blocks of emotional and behavioral reactions to real-world events<sup>20</sup>.

**Counselling:** After experiencing a sexual assault, it might be beneficial to seek counseling and join a support group, particularly if there are other challenges associated with the assault or the healing process. Most times, the victims apportion blame to themselves hence the act of counselling is a continuous process until the victim is stabilized. During counselling, treatment program should be instituted due to fear of HIV/AIDS, prophylaxis are administered immediately<sup>2</sup>. Also anti-depressant drugs are given in extreme cases.

### **Public Health Implication**

When it comes to helping victims of sexual abuse, health care providers play a significant role. Scientific and psychological testing, as well as evidence gathering to aid in prosecutions, are all viable options. Countries with well-trained personnel, clear standards for handling cases and gathering evidence, and strong legal system coordination have health sectors that are far more effective. To put an end to sexual violence, there must be a concerted efforts from many different sectors, as well as the full support of governments and civil societies.

Sexual assault, like other forms of violence, tears at the very fabric of a community's safety and security. In the event of a sexual assault, members of the affected community may experience a range of emotions, including fear, indignation, and disbelief. This includes

places of employment, neighborhoods, campuses, and schools. Furthermore, communities incur financial expenses. Health care, mental health services, legal fees, time away from work, property damage, theft, and the unfathomable value victims of sexual violence bring to society all add up to a hefty price tag.

While there is a lack of data and it is difficult to calculate the economic implications of sexual assault and rape, what research is available suggests that these costs are substantial. Several studies have looked at the monetary cost of rape, taking into consideration things like victim and medical services, lost productivity, and police resources. Although intangible, such as a victim's diminished quality of life, is difficult to put a price on, researchers believe that it is an essential component of any cost analysis of sexual assault. (The extreme psychological and physiological effects of sexual assault on survivors lead many academics to conclude that this type of crime has disproportionately significant intangible costs.) The 2014 Report Rape and Sexual Assault: A Renewed Call to Action by the White House Council on Women and Girls analyzed research that utilized slightly different methodologies. Despite this, all of the studies indicated that the costs were substantial, ranging from \$87,000 to \$240,776 per rape<sup>21</sup>. Impact on victims and their costs: a fresh perspective. Justice Commission of the United States. Victims of crime pay an estimated \$450 billion annually, according to the United States Department of Justice (1996). The yearly cost to victims of rape is \$127 billion, making it the most costly crime. An estimated \$327 million in losses due to federal employees' sick days, job turnover, and individual and group productivity were incurred as a result of sexual harassment in 1995, according to the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board.

### **Public Health implications of Child Sexual Abuse in rural areas in Nigeria**

The true burden of child sexual abuse in Nigeria is not known as most reports are institutional based. Unintended pregnancy is also one of the many implications sexual victims have suffered areas victims don't report after being given in rural areas. Because of the poverty rate in rural stipends just to keep the operation going on. When teenagers and minors become pregnant, the circle of poverty continues in the community, there will be delinquent children, increasing crime rate and lots of dropouts of school. Accessing healthcare treatment becomes a nightmare, leading to increase in morbidity and mortality rare.

### **Implication to Nursing Education and Nursing Practice**

Both in clinical and in school, nurses must be well informed about sexual abuse so that they will:

- be able to counsel the victims to prevent re-victimization;
- know how elicit information from victims; and
- know how to engage in good physical examination.

## **Conclusion**

Sexual assault is a global epidemic that impacts countless individuals every year, posing a significant threat to public health. Various social, cultural, and economic forces are at work in different settings to propel it. When men and women do not treat one other fairly, it inevitably leads to sexual violence against women. Worldwide, studies on sexual assault have been underfunded and under-researched, despite the fact that this issue is a major public health concern. Significantly, more parents may be reluctant to press charges because they fear the public would learn about their child's maltreatment. The victim's ability to get married in the future is affected by this in our society.

Research on all facets of sexual violence is desperately needed globally, and data on the subject is severely inadequate in many nations. Intervention is also important. There is a wide variety of these, but the most important ones focus on preventing sexual violence (which includes both male and female perpetrators), providing assistance to victims of sexual abuse, increasing the likelihood that rapists will face justice, and working to change societal norms and elevate women's status. It is critical to create treatments for settings with limited resources and to assess programs in both developed and developing nations with great rigour.

Strategies for raising awareness, implementing interventions, and assessing their effects on female adolescents must take this presentation into account. Not much has been done on this front in Africa or Nigeria specifically. Furthermore, medical professionals will benefit from this presentation by learning to be extremely cautious when dealing with children who exhibit these symptoms. Our goal in giving this presentation is to raise awareness of this issue in Nigerian elementary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, and to provide assistance to parents whose children are impacted by it in managing and preventing its occurrence.

## **Recommendations**

- Parents should be educated by the government, child rights activists, and practitioners about the dangers of not reporting child sexual abuse, as this could send an indirect signal to abusers to continue abusing children.
- To better comprehend the problem and to put a stop to it, it is necessary to prosecute and penalise perpetrators of sexual abuse. This has the ability to discourage future would-be offenders.
- Sexual abuse of children is prevalent in rural areas, and the abusers are often people the victims know. Many instances go unreported. There has to be an effort to educate parents and children on how to lessen the occurrence and impact of child sexual abuse.
- Sex education should begin at home with children at a young age, and parents should keep an eye on their children's friends.
- Parents/Guardians must be vigilant of what their children watch over the television and on their handset usage.
- Stigmatization should be discouraged when someone falls victim of sexual assault.

- Sex education should be incorporated in all school curriculum.
- Capital punishment must be passed into law for offenders.
- Rehabilitation centers should be established and well-funded by the government.

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