

Knowledge and Attitude of Undergraduates to Rape

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Abstract:

Introduction: Concerns about sexual violence within universities have increased considerably in the recent past. This study was therefore aimed at determining the knowledge and attitude of undergraduate students to rape.

Materials And Methods: This cross sectional study was conducted amongst student from the six faculties of the Abraka campus of Delta-State University comprising 400 subject (200 males and 200 females) within the age of 18years and above. Respondents were administered questionnaires to ascertain their demographic data and determine their knowledge and attitudes. The data was analyzed with Simple percentages. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the department of anatomy ethics committee.

Results: The results showed that while 56% of the respondents agreed with the definition of rape as penetration of the vagina by a males penis without consent of the female victim, 29% of the respondents disagreed with the definition while 15% were undecided. Similarly 30% respondents supported the view that raped victims could inform their friends while 65% disagreed.

Conclusion: This study showed that students of Delta State University, Abraka demonstrated a poor attitude and knowledge of rape.

Keywords: Rape, Attitude, Knowledge, Undergraduates, Respondent

I. Introduction

Globally, rape has been considered an immoral act and was defined as a form of sexual assault initiated by one or more persons against another person without the person's consent¹. In Nigeria, Chapter 30, Section 357 of the Criminal Code Act, CAP, 77, LFN 1990 defines rape as "unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl, without her consent or with her consent if obtained by force or by means of false threats or intimidation of any kind by fear of harm or by means of false or fraudulent representation as the nature of the Act"². This action may be carried out by physical force, under threat, manipulation or with a person who is incapable of consent.³

Rape has been said to be one of the most serious forms of violent behaviour in campuses.⁴ Heise et al.,⁵ described rape amongst undergraduate students as one of the most brutalizing physical and social forms of violence against female student in campuses. A study conducted in some tertiary institutions in United States, revealed that female undergraduates were vulnerable to rape.⁴

In a survey of undergraduate girls in Tajikistan, less than half (44%) were shown to have perceived sexual violence as a common form of violence.¹ Watts,⁶ opined that in Zimbabwe where violence was used by males within families to deal with disputes and retain family control and where rape within marital context was not legally defined as a crime, women perceived sexual molestation as a normal part of relationships.

Similarly, studies have noted that many of the women who had experienced unwanted vaginal, oral or anal intercourse did not identify experiences as rape.^{7,8} Another study also suggested that some survivors of rape were uncertain of the definition of rape and may not have acknowledged their experiences as an abuse.⁹ A similar study documented that women who were forced to have sexual intercourse with acquaintances were less likely to label their experiences as rape than women assaulted by strangers.¹⁰

A study conducted by Muzdalifat and Abied, showed that about 58% of persons had poor knowledge of sexual violence while 64% had an accepting attitude towards sexual violence.¹¹ Generally, rape cases have been demonstrated to exert a tremendous toll on girls, women and even men and the full extent of its impact is difficult to measure because individuals seldom want to be associated with its occurrence which makes it difficult for effective data collection.¹

Despite the rising incidence of rape especially in tertiary institutions,⁴ very scant studies have been conducted in Delta State University to demonstrate the perception of this social menace in this university community. This study was therefore aimed at determining the knowledge and attitude of index undergraduate students to rape.

II. Materials And Methods

Study Design: This was a descriptive observational study involving four hundred (200males and 200 females) volunteer undergraduates of Delta State University Abraka.

Research Instrument: The research materials were questionnaires which were divided into two sections, A and B. Section A, dealt with the general information on the respondents. Section B, dealt with the knowledge and attitude of students to rape.

Part A: Knowledge of Rape. This was a 23-item questionnaire using a Likert scale with responses ranging from Strongly Agree= SA; Agree = A; Disagree = D; and Strongly Disagree = SD to Undecided =UN.

Part B: Attitude towards Rape. This was a 23-item questionnaire using a Likert scale with responses ranging from Strongly Agree= SA; Agree = A; Disagree = D; and Strongly Disagree = SD; Undecided=UN.

Ethical Consideration: The consent of each respondent was obtained before the questionnaire was served. This followed the outlined procedure for human studies.¹²

Data Analysis:The data obtained were classified and organized in tables with the responses expressed in simple percentages.

III. Results

Student Knowledge about what was considered Rape

As shown in table 1 below, most of the students strongly agreed that rape was perpetrated with the penetration of the female external genitalia by a male’s penis without consent while others generally agreed with the definition. Only a few disagreed (11%) while 6% strongly disagreed with the definition. Secondly, 56% of the respondents agreed that penetration of the vagina by a male’s penis even when consent was not included in the definition, constituted rape. In this group, 29% of the respondents disagreed with this definition while 15% were undecided. A sizable number of individual (44%) consented with the idea that forceful penetration of a male by another male was rape while 34% disagreed with this concept. No student agreed that mere fondling of the genitalia constituted rape. Indeed, 75% disagreed while the remaining were undecided. Despite this, inserting the finger into a female vagina was however conceived as rape by 23% of persons while 66% were of the opinion that this action did not constitute rape. Similarly, penetration of the vagina with an object or weapon was accepted as rape by 33% and 37% of the respondents respectively. Most person opinion regarding inserting of objects or weapons was that these actions did not constitute rape and 43% of respondents strongly disagreed with these definitions.

Table 1; What Encompass Rape (Knowledge of Rape)

S/N	Statements	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	UN	%
1.	Rape is fondling of the genitalia	-	-	-	-	212	53	88	22	100	25
2.	Rape involve inserting a finger into the genitalia only	32	8	60	15	72	18	192	48	44	11
3.	Rape is penetration of the vagina with the penis into the genitalia	56	14	168	42	80	20	36	9	60	15
4.	Rape is penetration of the genitalia against consent	260	65	72	18	44	11	24	6	-	-
5.	Rape is oral penetration with the penis	-	-	48	12	68	17	168	42	140	35
6.	Rape is oral penetration against consent	160	40	112	28	76	19	32	8	20	5
7.	Forceful Penetration of the male anus by another male without consent is rape	124	31	52	13	28	7	108	27	88	22
8.	Penetration of the genitalia with an object is rape	116	29	44	11	140	35	88	22	12	3
9.	Forceful penetration without a weapon is rape	88	22	44	11	72	18	112	28	84	21
10.	French kissing (i.e. sexual penetration of the mouth with tongue without consent is rape	72	18	76	19	144	36	81	20	68	17

with regard to involvement of spouse in rape, 58% of the students strongly disagreed that husbands were more likely to commit rape with their wives. Only 10% disagreed while 29% agreed. Few students (3%) were undecided in this issue. The most persons likely to be involved in rape were boyfriends as shown in table 2 where 43% strongly agreed with this notion. Another 45% also agreed while 11% disagreed. Also, as shown in table 2, respondents were of the opinion that strangers were more likely to be involved in rape than relatives to the female involved.

Table 2: Who is likely to commit Rape

S/N	Statements	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	UN	%
1.	A husband	60	15	56	14	40	10	232	58	12	3
2.	A boyfriend	172	43	180	45	28	7	16	4	44	11
3.	Strangers	116	29	102	25	66	17	92	23	24	6
4.	Relative	68	17	60	15	148	37	96	24	72	18

Table 3: Who should a raped Victim inform?

S/N	Statements	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	UN	%
1.	A friend	40	10	80	20	140	35	120	30	20	5
2.	Parents/guardian	156	39	112	28	28	7	12	3	60	15
3.	The police	12	3	72	18	160	40	112	28	44	11

As shown in table 3, on who should a rape victim inform. A lower percentage (30%) were in agreement that a rape victim should inform a friend while a higher percentage (65%) of respondents disagreed that a rape victim should inform a friend. Although a higher percentage of 67% respondents believed that a victim should inform their parent/guidance,, ten percent of the respondents disagreed while 15% of the student were undecided.

Similarly, the result also showed that 3% strongly agreed , that a victim should inform the police while 18% merely agreed that victims should inform the police. A higher percentage of 40% disagreed that a victim should inform the police while 28 strongly disagreed that a victim should inform the police.

IV. Discussion And Conclusion

The index study provided evidence that undergraduates of Delta State University generally lacked an understanding of rape (by legal definitions). This was in agreement with the findings of Griffith et al. who showed that college students lacked an understanding of sexual behaviours.^{13,9} This lack of understanding was also clearly depicted by Burt, Odem and Clay who showed that culturally ingrained myths surrounding rape which made victims to believe some ideologies about rape.¹⁴ Kennedy also reported that cultural practices may have influenced responses of victims.¹⁵

In the present study, a significant number of students showed poor knowledge as to whom likely rape perpetrators were. Majority of the respondents excluded husbands unlike the strong impression in favour of strangers and non-relatives. This study was similar to the findings by Koss who stated that women who were forced to have sexual intercourse with acquaintances were less likely to label their experiences as rape than women assaulted by strangers.¹⁰ In another study, it was reported that a more common perception was that rape occurred between acquaintances and less between strangers.¹⁶ The possible explanation for the opinion that relatives may not be rapist may be a result of socio-cultural norms.¹⁷

With regards to who to inform in cases of rape, majority of the respondents would rather prefer be salient if or when sexually assaulted. The possible reason for this was stressed by Human Right Watch to be a result of negative reactions from formal (security personnel) and informal (society) support personnel.¹⁷ Ullman et al. revealed that survivors were at risk of receiving negative responses from formal support personnel and informal sources especially from service providers such as police and physicians.¹⁸ Another reason may have been due to stigmatization that may follow assault as discovered by Human Right Watch. Low reporting rate from the present study has been said to be related to factors as documented by Griffith et al.¹³ These included extent of confidentiality, fear of perpetrators, concern that authorities may not believe them and the possibility that family and friends might stigmatize them.

V. Conclusion

This study showed that students of Delta State University, Abraka demonstrated a poor attitude and knowledge of rape.

VI. Recommendations

It has been well elucidated that rape prevention curriculum should be developed to educate young women on rape prevention strategies.¹⁹ In addition, the various sections of our criminal code act should be revised to address obvious defects especially as it involves sexual molestation.⁸

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