

Rape Post –Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms and Perception of Female Young Adults

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Abstract: - Millions of women and young girls all over the world are sexually abused, humiliated and traumatized. This study attempts to bring to the limelight the perception of young female adults on rape post-traumatic stress symptoms in Nigeria. Although several studies have examined rape and Posttraumatic stress disorder among women in developed countries, only a few study explicitly examined rape post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms and perception using a population in Nigeria. Therefore this study investigated rape post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms and perception of young female adults in Nigeria. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The sample comprised 225 female drawn from four faculties in University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria through multi stage sampling technique. The instruments for data collection were Rape Post-traumatic Stress Symptom($r = 0.68$) and Student Perception Rating ($r = 0.64$) Scales. The data collected was analyzed using simple percentage, frequency count, and inferential statistic of independent t-test. The results revealed among others that rape events are prevalence among young female adult. Also, young female adult have had experience of different rape traumatic stress disorder symptoms. The study suggests that the inclusion of sex education at all levels of education will create more awareness and enable students to learn from their peers' diverse experiences and professional circumstances can meaningfully impact and assist students perceptions and understanding of handling rape post-traumatic stress disorder.

Keywords: Perception, Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms, Rape, Young female adults

I. INTRODUCTION

The alarming increase in the number of reported cases of sexual abuse in the national dailies is becoming an issue of great concern even though majority of cases are not reported. Chukwuma, Osakwe, Ekpenyong and Imona (2003) in their Project Alert on Violence Against Women (PAWAW), a Non-governmental Organization, in its Annual Report of attacks on women in Nigeria and about forty six (46) cases of alleged rape of children, women and young girls (December 2004- November 2005). Similarly, the Vanguard Newspaper of April 7th 2005 reported the case of a female student of the Petroleum Training Institute, Effuru in Delta State who was alleged gang-raped by some male students of the same institute.

Other reports have it that female students of the school of Health Technology in Benin were alleged raped by armed men in Benin. Edo State (The Punch, March 3, 2005). A nine years old girl was allegedly raped by a fifty (50) year old mechanic in Abeokuta, Ogun State (Daily Sun, April 10, 2005), a 32 year old woman was allegedly raped by 6 men in Sokoto State (Daily Sun, April, 2005), a young girl was allegedly raped by her father in Ajegunle suburb in Lagos State (The Sun, May 7, 2005). A Randy Pastor in Port Harcourt allegedly raped a set of 8 – year – old twins (Daily Sun, May 31, 2005); six female students of Adeyemi College of Education in Ondo State were allegedly raped by some armed men (Daily Sun, June 23, 2005).

The above cases indicate the rampant nature of attack on our young girls and women. The effect of such actions on the ego, the psyche and the mental health of the victims can only be imagined in this era of HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Such individuals may suffer the trauma and go on with their lives, but end up suffering later in life. An overwhelming tragedy like being raped by an armed robber can cause traumatic stress on its victim. Such traumatic stress can cause symptoms such as vivid memories of the trauma even years later, leading to post traumatic-stress disorder, a debilitating malady characterized by recurring and intrusive recollections or dreams of the traumatic event. Such symptoms could be devastating. Rape causes tremendous stress to its victim. Rape is a crime that has increased in recent years. Some research studies have shown that rape appears to be more likely than other traumatic events which results in posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms which characterised by symptoms like flashbacks or re-experiencing the assault, avoiding things associated with the assault, numbness, and increased anxiety and an increased startle response (Frazier, Byrne, Glaser, Hurliman, Iwan & Seales, 1997; Ferguson, McLeod & Horwood, 2013; Manson & Lodrick, 2013).

Prior studies have concentrated more on other traumatic events and predictive factors of post-traumatic stress disorder with less concentration on perception of rape posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms in Nigeria. Also, most of the previous studies evolved around mental health in developed countries. It is this reason that the present study focuses on the perception of young female adult and rape posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms in Nigeria. The study is guided by

the following research questions: To what extent do young female adults perceive rape posttraumatic stress symptoms? To what extent do rape event produces post-traumatic stress disorder? What categories of age range are mostly prone to rape attack? To what extent do young female adults experience rape event? What are the different post-traumatic stress levels in terms of young female adolescents and middle aged women? The rest of the paper focuses on related literature review, methodology, result and discussion, conclusion and recommendations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Legally, rape is defined as intentional, unlawful sexual intercourse without consent. Rape is a brutal violence of the person that causes lasting trauma for the victim. Haas and Haas (1990) stated that rape comes in many forms. For instance, stranger rape in which the assailant is not previously known to the victim; acquaintance rape committed by a known person to the victim such as family friend, classmate, or siblings; date rape when a person is forced to have sex with her date, statutory rape is having sexual intercourse with a minor, a person who is below the age of consent (under the age of about 16 years) even though the person may give consent. Kilpatrick, Edmunds and Seymour (1992) found that individuals under age 25 are at greatest risk for rape. Acquaintance rape is an increasing problem in high schools and college campuses, the victims within this category are often teenagers and young women (Christopher & Kisler, 2004).

Therefore, being a victim of rape from any of these sources may shatter the individual's sense of safety and security to the degree such individual has no other source of safety to which they retreat. It is very fundamental nature of these sources of security that tallies rape from any of them as a devastating experience, one which is difficult to recover (Pierson & Thomas, 2002). Rape causes tremendous stress to its victim. An overwhelming tragedy like being raped by an armed robber can cause traumatic stress on its victim. Such traumatic stress can cause symptoms such as vivid memories of the trauma even years later, leading to post traumatic-stress disorder syndrome, a debilitating malady characterized by recurring and intrusive recollections or dreams of the traumatic event. Such symptoms could be devastating. Pierson and Thomas (2002) further see post-traumatic stress reaction to refers to the person's immediate or short-term responses to the trauma. These include hysteria, involving sometimes loss of consciousness, impulsiveness, weeping, confusion and perhaps psychotic experiences such as hallucinations or delusions. In addition, Pierson and Thomas (2002) stated that there are two stages of post-traumatic stress syndrome, namely: the post-traumatic stress reactions and the post-traumatic stress disorder. In the very long term, adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse are likely to suffer from

mental health problems of depression, low self-esteem, anxiety and perhaps rigidity. Thompson, Crosby, Wonderlich, Mitchell, Redlin, Demuth, Smyth and Haseltin (2003) in their study disclosed that victims of rape initially feel shock and numbness and often are acutely disorganized. Some victims, according to them show their distress through words and tears, while others show more internalized sufferings. They further stated that, as victims strive to get their lives back to normal, they might experience depression, fear and anxiety for months or years. About one-fifth of rape victims have attempted suicide while about 50 percent suffer sexual dysfunctions such as reduced sexual desire and inability to reach orgasm. Besides producing the physiological responses, for example, in the nervous and circulatory system, it also produces series of responses as experienced by a thirty five year old married woman. Jane had been married for over ten years. She was raped by her teacher when she was twelve years old. She confessed of never experiencing orgasm when having coitus with the husband. She says she is always frightened with the thought of having sex and she is always experiencing pains rather than pleasure. When having affairs with her husband, her mind always swings back to her earlier experience.

Study carried by Resnick, Kilpatrick, Dansky, Saunders and Best (1993) using a national sample of women found that perceived life threat and physical injury were related to more posttraumatic stress disorder, a diagnosis more common in rape victims than in victims of other traumatic life events. In same vein, Epstein, Saunders and Kilpatrick (1997) studied a national sample of women and found a perceived life threat and physical injury discriminated posttraumatic stress disorder status in childhood rape victims. In another study, McLaughlin, Koenen, Hill, Petukhova, Sampson, Zaslavsky and Kessler (2013) demonstrated that rape was associated with the highest conditional probability of posttraumatic disorder syndrome. Studies of Suries, Lind, Kashner, Borman and Petty (2004); Hoffman, Schorge, Bradshaw, Harvorson, Schaffer and Corton (2016) revealed that post-traumatic stress disorder have been associated with a wide range of traumatic events. These studies revealed that men are more likely to experience a traumatic event, but women are more likely to experience the kind of high-impact traumatic event that can lead to posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as interpersonal violence and sexual assault or rape. The risk of developing PTSD after a traumatic event varies by trauma type and is highest following exposure to sexual violence, particularly rape (Stern, 2016; Kessler, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Alonso, Benjet, Bromet, Cardoso, Degenhardt, Girolamo, & Dinolova, 2017).

Some others scholars revealed that people who experience interpersonal trauma such as rape or child-abuse are more likely to develop posttraumatic stress disorder, as compared to people who experience non-assault based trauma like accidents and natural disasters (Zoladz, 2013; Bisson,

Cosgrove, Lewis & Robert, 2015). Walsh, Koenen, Aiello, Uddin, and Galea (2014) submits that sexual violence such as rape was associated with increased risk for lifetime posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and exposure to other traumas. Posttraumatic stress disorder have been found to be characterised by intrusive symptoms (flashbacks of the events), avoidance behaviours – avoiding people or situations that remind the survivors of their rape, negative alterations in cognitions or affect, for example, cognition that the world is unsafe place, and hyper-arousal, that is being easily startled (Snipes, Calton, Green, Perrin & Benotsch, 2017).

III. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. This design is best in obtaining personal data and has the advantage of wide scope and at the same time is economical. The study was delimited to the University of Calabar undergraduate female students. At the time of study, the population of female students in the University of Calabar stood at approximately 17, 999. Simple random and stratified sampling techniques were used in drawing out the respondents for the study. Four faculties were randomly selected for the study, namely: 56 Faculty of Agriculture; 56 Faculty of Social Sciences; 57 Faculty of Education and 56 Faculty of Sciences. A total of 225 students were randomly selected from the faculties to make up the study sample.

The instrument for data collection was two sets of questionnaire namely: Rape Post-traumatic stress disorder symptom (RPTSDS) and Student Perception Rating (SPR) Scales. Rape post-traumatic stress disorder symptom scale (RPTSDS) elicits information on different categories of posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms caused by rape. On the other hand, Students’ Perception Rating Scales elicit information on students’ opinions and their feelings on rape post-traumatic stress symptoms. It was designed on a 4-point Likert scale format containing 25-items with options ranging from strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), to Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The instruments were duly validated by experts from test and measurement in the Faculty of Education; while the reliability index established using Cronbach coefficient Alpha resulted in the values of 0.68 and 0.64 for RPTSDS and SPRS respectively. The administration of the instruments was done by the researchers and two trained research assistants on the sampled students in the selected faculties in University of Calabar. The whole exercise took two weeks and the retention rate was 100% because copies of the questionnaire were filled and returned on the spot. The scoring of the RPTSDS and SPRS was done by listing and counting the frequencies of the responses for each item. Analysis of the data collected was done using percentages, frequency count and independent t-test.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

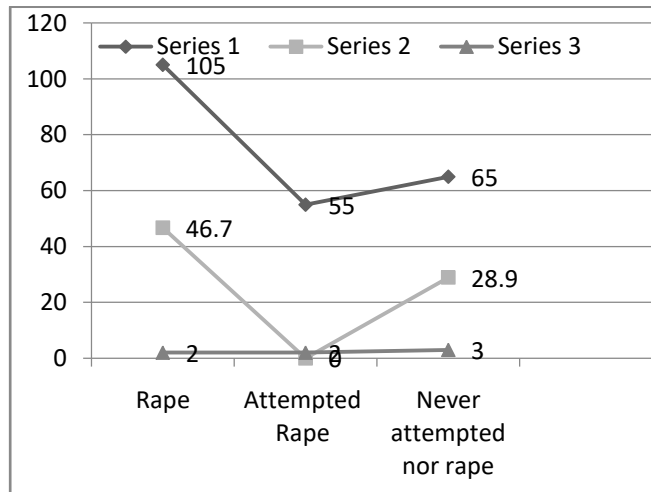


Figure 1: Experience of rape event

The result in Fig. 1 reveals that 47% of the respondents had experience rape event, while 24% experience attempted rape event and 29% of the respondents agreed that they never experienced rape event. From the result in figure 1 almost 50% of the sampled respondents have experienced rape event. This implies that female young adults significantly experience posttraumatic stress rape event and are stressed traumatically thereafter. This result is in consonants with the reports of some national newspaper (Daily Sun, April 10, & Daily Sun, June 23, 2005; Daily Champion, June 25, 2005).

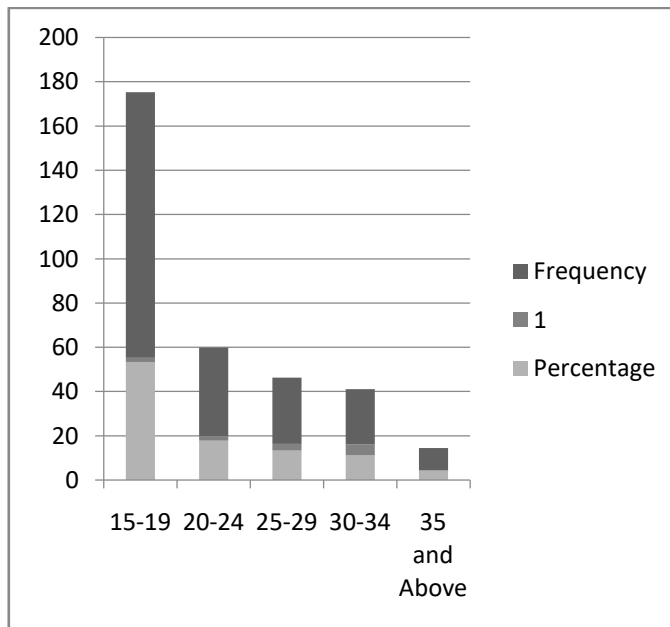


Figure 2: Prevalence age of rape events.

The result in figure 2 shows that, 120 respondents representing 53.3% of the total respondents agreed that, 15-19 years of age suffered rape events, 40 (17.8%) says victims of rape events were between 20-24 years of age. Also, 30

(13.3%) of the respondents are of the opinion that some victims of rape events were between 25-29 years of age; while 25(11.1%) of the respondents believed that victims of rape event fall between 30-34 years of age, and 10(4.4%) of the respondents says age 35 and above suffered rape attack. The result of the table 2 reveals that rape events are prevalence among young female adults. The result is associated to some earlier study (Kilpatrick, Edmunds & Seymour, 1992).

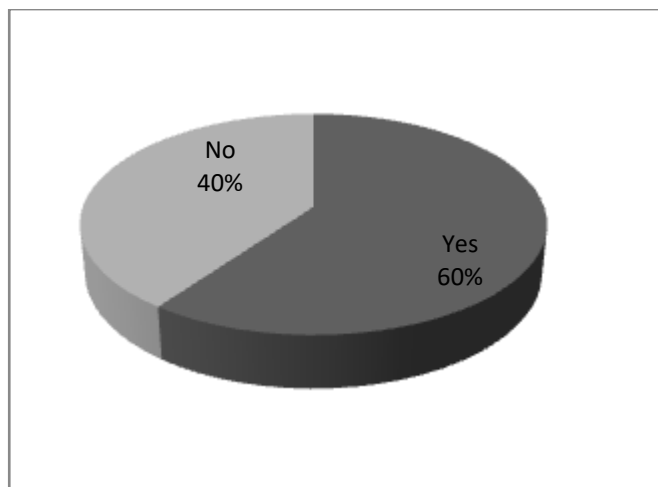


Figure 3: Association of rape experience to posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms

The result in figure 3 reveals that 60% of the respondents are of the opinions that rape exposes victims to posttraumatic stress disorder; while 40% said that rape does not expose its victims to posttraumatic stress disorder. The result shows that the highest (60%) responses from the respondents perceived that rape exposes it victims to posttraumatic stress disorder, as asserted by some of the previous studies (Thompson et al. 2003; Zolal, 2013; Walsh et al. 2014; Bisson et al. 2015; Hoffman et al. 2016).

Table I: Frequency Distribution of Perceived Post-traumatic Stress Symptoms Due to Rape

S/ N	Items	Responses			
		SA	A	D	SD
		Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)
1	Shock	45 (20%)	80(35.5)	55 (24.4%)	45 (20%)
2	Disbelief	40(17.8)	35(15.5)	80(35.5%)	0(31.1%)
3	Numbness	60(26.7)	65(28.9)	60(26.7%)	40(17.8%)
4	Acute disorganization	86(38.2)	99(44)	40(17.8%)	-
5	Restlessness	85(37.8%)	100(44.4%)	40(17.8%)	-

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

The result as presented in table 1 shows that 80 respondents representing (35.5%) agreed that rape causes shock, while 55 (24.4%) disagreed, 40 (17.8%) agreed that rape causes disbelief while 80 (35.5%) disagreed; 65 (28.9%)

agreed rape causes numbness while 60 (26.7%) disagreed. 99 (44%) agreed that rape causes acute disorganization while 40 (17.8%) disagreed. 100 (44.4%) agreed rape result in restlessness; while 40 (17.8%) disagreed of rape causing restlessness. By implication this results revealed that most of the respondents perceived different symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder emanating from rape event as previous studies have shown (Manson & Lodrick, 2013; Ferguson et al. 2013; Snipes et al. 2017).

Table II: Independent t-test Analysis of the Differential level Proneness to Rape Posttraumatic Stress symptoms

Variables	n	\bar{x}	Sd	t-value
Adolescents	145	18.67	3.41	6.98*
Middle aged women	80	14.34	2.25	

*Significance at 0.05 level, critical t = 198

The result in table 2 indicates that calculated t-value of 6.98 is higher than the critical t-value of 1.96 at significance level of 0.05 with 198 degrees of freedom. This result therefore reveals no statistically significant difference in proneness to rape as perceived by the respondents. This implies that both young female adolescents and aged women are prone to rape post-traumatic stress and this is in agreement with prior studies (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

V. CONCLUSION

Conclusions drawn from the evidence provided by the study shown that rape has been found to be the most traumatic events commonly associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among young adults. That around 24-47% of young adults experienced rape events which eventually turn to be traumatic stressed. That post-traumatic stress disorder can present with a range of symptoms, which in adults are most commonly in the form of very vivid, distressing memories of the event or flashbacks. However, sometimes, the most prominent symptoms may be avoidance of trauma-related situations or general social contacts. It is highly recommended sex education should be integrated in the curriculum of all levels of education where people will be exposed to topic like rape; it associated problems and ways to combat such event. The other commendation is that it should be insured that the sample size is adequate for the study. Further, in order to go beyond the population and design other sex of the population and design (example, quasi-experimental design) need to be made in conducting a study of this nature.

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She is with modesty, counted among the first three Nigerian recipients of first round of Early Careers Academic award, offered to mark Association of Commonwealth Universities

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