

## Prevalence and predictors of child rape among female high school students in Lagos

**Zainab A. Olayinka**

Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lagos

Email: [zainolayinka@gmail.com](mailto:zainolayinka@gmail.com);

&

**Chinwe R. Nwanna (Ph.D)**

*Association Professor*

Department of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Lagos

Email: [chironwa@yahoo.com](mailto:chironwa@yahoo.com); [cnwanna@unilag.edu.ng](mailto:cnwanna@unilag.edu.ng)

**Corresponding author:** Olayinka, Zainab A.

### Abstract

*Child rape is a threat to the development of any country. It is associated with a wide range of negative consequences which include psychological, physical and reproductive health outcomes. The study sought to examine the prevalence and predictors of girl child rape among female high school students in Lagos, Nigeria with particular focus on age, living arrangement, family income, and work involvement. The study employed a cross-sectional survey of two high schools in Lagos among female students. Data were generated from four hundred female students. The mean age is 15. Result showed that about 26% of the respondents had experienced rape. While 17.8% of the girls were physically forced into a sexual intercourse, 8.6% of them were pressured into it. The binary logistic regression model revealed that age and work involvement are statistically significant on the experience of rape (Cox and Snell's  $R^2 = 0.053$  and a Nagelkerke's  $R^2 = 0.077$ ). The findings of this study reveals that there is a significant prevalence of child rape among female high school students. The study recommends intensive empowerment programs to alleviate sufferings of people and sensitisation programs targeted at parents and children.*

**Keywords:** *Child-Rape, Family Income, Work Involvement, Living Arrangement*

### Introduction

Globally, child rape is a serious social problem that has negative consequences for victims and society. In many developing countries, hardly will a day go by without reported or rumoured cases of rape (Akinwole & Omoera, 2013), particularly the rape of a girl child. In

2012, the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) recorded 2,450 cases of statutory rape countrywide within a period of 10 months- January to October (Rumbidzai, 2013). In 2015, the Mirabel centre, a Sexual Assault Referral Centre located in Lagos Nigeria, recorded a total of 614 rape cases, 79% of which constituted female children below the age of 18 years.

Kunnuji and Eshiet (2015) conducted a study on the prevalence of child sexual abuse among 480 out of school adolescent girls and found that 35% of them had been victims of statutory rape. Shittu *et. al.* (2007) did a study among secondary school students and found that one out of every five sexually active teenagers had experienced forced sex.

Rape is an act of violence against a person (Akinwole & Omoera, 2013). It is a non-consensual sexual intercourse between a man and a woman (Obidimma & Umeobika, 2015). However, when the victim is a person below the age of consent, with or without that person's consent, it is termed statutory rape. In this light, girl child rape is defined as an oral, anal or vaginal penetration that involves the use of threat or force against an unwilling person younger than the age of consent (Mfrekemfon & Nwakwaola, 2015), which, in Nigeria, is 18 years (Refworld, 2003). Rape contravenes the Child Rights Act 2003 which states that "no Nigerian child shall be subjected to physical, mental or emotional injury, abuse or neglect" and negates the Sustainable Development Goal 3 of attaining good health and well-being of all.

Studies have shown that rape is associated with an increased risk of a myriad of problems; with both immediate and long term effects (Duru *et. al.*, 2014; Achunike & Kitause, 2014). Firstly, all victims of rape suffer its consequences; foremost of which is emotional suffering. Rape can lead to death resulting from suicide, abortion or murder during a sexual assault (Udoeye, 2007). Other consequences

include social stigma, fear, physical trauma, substance abuse, unintended pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Infections including HIV/AIDS, unsafe abortion and sexual dysfunction (Johnson, 2004; Saewyc, *et. al.*, 2004; Udoeye, 2007; Akinwole & Omoera, 2013). Already, evidence shows that not all exposure to the risk of HIV infection and unintended pregnancy in Sub-Saharan Africa is voluntary (Johnson, 2004) and that unintended pregnancy is a major reproductive health problem among young people in the region (Jejebhoy & Bott, 2003). In addition, Anderson *et. al.* (2008) stated that HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) may occur as a direct result of penetrative sexual abuse enhanced by the increased sexual risk behaviours observed among perpetrators, immature reproductive tracts of young victims, and through genital injuries resulting from coercion (Henry & Fayorsey, 2002).

Secondly, family is traumatised; they have to deal with victim's emotional support; they nurse the fear of it happening again (Andersson *et. al.*, 2008). Parents or caregivers feel guilty for what they should have done but did not do (Andersson *et. al.*, 2008). One of the parents, especially the mother, may decide to quite job for caregiving, leading to income loss.

Thirdly, the society may lose the participation of victims whose behaviour may be altered as a result (Andersson *et. al.*, 2008). Rape can result in more social problems that threaten the society. For instance, victims who become pregnant could be forced to drop out of school; invariably, there is increased rate of fatherlessness and child poverty (Kunnuji

& Eshiet, 2015); increased pressure on available resources as impoverished adolescent mothers may lack the wherewithal to care for their children thus exposing their female children to rape. The implication of this is that women are being deprived of their place in the society; they experience social isolation, physical health problems such as functional impairment, injury and permanent disability (Yahaya, 2014).

Subsequently, some scholars have associated child rape with family income (Black, *et. al.*, 2001; Madu, 2003; Lambert & Andipatin, 2014; Duru *et. al.*, 2014), and family composition (Moore *et. al.*, 2007; Ohlander & Chew, 2008; Freeman & Temple, 2010; Gwirayi, 2012). Others have attributed it with neighbourhood in which a child grows up such as living in overcrowded houses, rural and urban areas (Chapko, 1999; Gardner & El-Bushra, 2004; Ikechebelu, *et. al.*, 2008; Yahaya *et.al.*, 2013). Yet factors like age, work involvement and living arrangement are understudied among high school students in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos. Likewise, little is known about the prevalence of rape among this group in recent times. Against this background, the study seeks to examine the prevalence and associated factors with child rape among female high school students in Lagos with particular focus on age, living arrangement, family income level, and work involvement.

## Methods

### *Design*

The study adopted a non-experimental research design which consisted of cross sectional surveys which were carried out in Lagos, Nigeria. The respondents for the survey were selected using a multi stage sampling technique.

*Stage One:* from the six educational districts in Lagos State, two districts were randomly selected using the ballot method; namely: district II and district IV.

*Stage two:* from each district, one senior school was selected due to logistics.

*Stage three:* in each senior school, there are four segments representing science, commercial, arts and technical class. Using the ballot method, four classes were selected from each level to represent the various segments. In other words, in each school, the survey included four classes from SSS 1, four classes from SSS2, and four classes from SSS 3.

*Stage four:* a list of students in each class was collected from the class representatives. Using the simple random technique (ballot method), sixteen respondents were selected from SSS 1 and SSS 2 classes. Because the SSS 2 appeared larger than the other two levels, eighteen respondents were selected from each segment of the level. This gave a total of 200 respondents from each school. Table 1 below further explains this stage.

**Table 1: Stage 4 selection**

| <b>Segment</b>  | <b>SSS 1</b> | <b>SSS 2</b> | <b>SSS 3</b> |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Sciences        | 16           | 18           | 16           |
| Commercial      | 16           | 18           | 16           |
| Arts            | 16           | 18           | 16           |
| Technical class | 16           | 18           | 16           |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>64</b>    | <b>72</b>    | <b>64</b>    |

### *Participants*

The participants for the survey were 400 secondary school students below the age of 18 years. Participants who were not residents of Lagos State were excluded from the study as well as those who were not willing to participate in the study.

### *Measures*

The principal dependent variable is girl child rape. To measure experience of rape, respondents were asked: 'was there a time when you were forced or persuaded to have sexual intercourse against your will'. The response options were: 'yes' and 'no'. The independent variables for the study are age, family income status, living arrangement, and work involvement. To measure age, respondents were asked 'how old are you?' The response option was left open to enable respondents fill in their exact age. To measure family income, respondents were asked 'how would you describe the income status of your family?' The response options were: 'low income', and 'high income'. To measure living arrangement, respondents were asked: 'Do you live with both parents?' The response options were: 'yes' and 'no'. Lastly, to measure work involvement, respondents were asked: 'Do you work to support the income of the family?' The response options were: 'yes' and 'no'.

### *Data Collection*

Data collection took a period of 12 days, between 13<sup>th</sup> of November to 25<sup>th</sup> of November, 2016. The researcher and two

trained research assistants collected the data for the study. The survey was carried out in well-spaced classrooms to allow respondents react to questions privately and confidentially. This was done with the assistance of the research assistants. Respondents were not compensated for participating in the study.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The process of data collection adhered strictly to the ethical procedures of anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent. The study was approved by four ministries in Lagos state namely, Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Ministry of Youth and Social Development, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Education.

### *Analysis*

Data analysis was informed by a general inductive methodology. The quantitative data generated from the study were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0. Simple percentage analysis was adopted in the description of the background characteristics of participants, and their experience of rape/statutory rape. Tests are conducted at the bivariate level using the Chi square statistic while the logistic regression analysis was employed in examining the predictive power of the independent variables on experience of rape and statutory rape. Tests are considered significant only in cases where the p-value is less than 0.05 or at a higher level of significance.

## Results

### *Background characteristics of respondents*

**Table 2: Background characteristics of respondents**

| <b>Variables</b>            | <b>% (N=40)</b> |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Age</b>                  |                 |
| 12-14                       | 38.3            |
| 15-17                       | 61.7            |
| <b>Class</b>                |                 |
| S.S. 1                      | 30.9            |
| S.S. 2                      | 42.1            |
| S.S. 3                      | 26.9            |
| <b>Status in School</b>     |                 |
| Boarding                    | 18.8            |
| Commuters                   | 81.2            |
| <b>Residence</b>            |                 |
| Urban                       | 28.6            |
| Semi-urban                  | 70.5            |
| Rural                       | 0.9             |
| <b>Family Type</b>          |                 |
| Single Parenting            | 5.4             |
| Monogamy                    | 77.4            |
| Polygamy                    | 17.2            |
| <b>Ethnic Group</b>         |                 |
| Yoruba                      | 72.1            |
| Hausa                       | 2.8             |
| Igbo                        | 20.4            |
| Others                      | 4.8             |
| <b>Family income</b>        |                 |
| low income                  | 75.9            |
| High income                 | 24.1            |
| <b>Work involvement</b>     |                 |
| Not involved                | 67.3            |
| Involved                    | 32.7            |
| <b>Proximity of workp</b>   |                 |
| Family business             | 48.1            |
| Close to home               | 37.4            |
| Far from home               | 14.5            |
| <b>Experience of rape</b>   |                 |
| Yes                         | 25.6            |
| No                          | 74.4            |
| <b>Physically forced in</b> |                 |
| Yes                         | 17.8            |
| No                          | 82.2            |
| <b>Pressured into sex</b>   |                 |
| Yes                         | 8.6             |
| No                          | 91.4            |
| <b>Experience of atten</b>  |                 |

|     |      |
|-----|------|
| Yes | 27.0 |
| No  | 73.0 |

From the survey of 400 female high school students, 37% of the respondents are between ages of twelve and fourteen years while more than half (59.5%) of the respondents are within the ages fifteen and seventeen (see Table 2 above). The mean and median ages of the respondents are 15 each. While students of Senior Secondary School (SSS) 2 make up 39.5% of the sample, students of SSS 1 make up 29% followed by the SSS 3 students who make up 25.3% of the sample. Also, more than three quarters (79%) of the respondents are commuter students while 18.2% of the respondents are boarders. In addition, more than half (53.2%) of the respondents lived in semi-urban areas; 21.6% of the respondents lived in urban areas while less than one tenth (0.7%) of the population lived in rural areas.

Furthermore, more than three quarter (75.5%) of the respondents consider their families to be monogamous in nature while 16.8% of the respondents consider theirs to be polygamous. Twenty-one (5.2%) of the respondents claim to be from a single parent family, that is a family with only the mother or the father. This means that majority of the respondents are from monogamous homes.

In addition, majority of the respondents belong to the Yoruba speaking group of Nigeria while one quarter of the respondents are Igbos. Hausas constitute only 2.8 percent of the respondents while the rest of the respondents make up 4.8 percent. Also, more than three quarters

(75.9%) of the respondents claim to belong to a low income earning family, while 24.1% of the respondents claim to be from a high income earning family.

The survey further revealed that 32% of the respondents engaged in a form of economic activity to support their families. While 15.8% of them assisted with a family business, 12.2% worked in a place close their home and 4.4% of them worked in a place which was quite far from their homes. The question was not applicable to the majority (67.2%) of the respondents.

The distribution of respondents by experience of rape revealed that 25.6% of the respondents had been victims of rape. Seventy-one (17.8%) of the respondent had been physically forced into a sexual intercourse while 32 (8.6%) of the respondents had been either pressured or persuaded into a sexual intercourse against their will. Furthermore, more than a quarter (27.0%) of the respondents claimed that someone had tried to have sexual intercourse with them, against their will but did not succeed.

#### *Correlates of child rape*

As expected, the relationship between age and experience of rape is statistically significant. Less than 20 percent of the respondents within the age group 12-14years reported to have experienced rape while 30.7 percent of those within 15 to 17 years reported that they had been raped. Thus, in Table 3, a greater proportion of the latter group have experienced rape. Similarly, a greater proportion (37.1%) of those who engage in

economic activities to support their families reported that they had been raped compared to the respondents (20%) who did not engage in economic activities. Surprisingly, although a greater proportion (26%) of respondents from low income families had been victims of rape, income is not statistically significant on experience of rape. Likewise, as shown in table 1, living arrangement, family type, residence and schooling status are not statistically significant on experience of rape.

**Table 3: Prevalence of sexual abuse by background characteristics**

| Independent Variable: Victims of rape (n= 100) |      |
|--|------|
| <b>Age*</b>                                    |      |
| 12-14  | 18.5 |
| 15-17  | 30.7 |
| $\chi^2 = 6.970, df=1$                         |      |
| <b>Living Arrangement</b>                      |      |
| Not with both parents                          | 24.1 |
| Both parents                                   | 31.9 |
| $\chi^2=1.792, df=1$                           |      |
| <b>Family income</b>                           |      |
| low income                                     | 26.0 |
| High income                                    | 24.5 |
| $\chi^2=0.092, df=1$                           |      |
| <b>Work involvement</b>                        |      |
| Not involved                                   | 20.3 |
| Involved                                       | 37.1 |
| $\chi^2=12.514, df=1$                          |      |
| <b>Family Type</b>                             |      |
| Single Parenting                               | 22.8 |
| Monogamy                                       | 34.9 |
| Polygamy                                       | 30.0 |
| $\chi^2=4.299, df=1$                           |      |
| <b>Residence</b>                               |      |
| Urban  | 28.3 |
| Semi-urban                                     | 23.4 |
| Rural  | 33.3 |
| $\chi^2=0.117, df=1$                           |      |
| <b>Schooling Status</b>                        |      |

|                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| Boarding             | 23.6 |
| Commuters            | 25.9 |
| $\chi^2=0.160, df=1$ |      |

\*: P < 0.01 i.e. the relationship is significant at p value of 0.01;

\*\* : P < 0.001 i.e. the relationship is significant at p value of 0.001

**Table 4: Logistic regression model for experience of rape**

| Predictors  | Coefficient (B) | S.E   | Odds ratio(Exp(B)) |
|---|-----------------|-------|--------------------|
| <b>Age</b>  |                 |       |                    |
| 12-14 (Ref. category, RC)   | --              | --    | 1.0                |
| 15-17   | -0.566          | 0.272 | 1.761*             |
| <b>Living Arrangement (RC)</b>  |                 |       |                    |
| Not with both parents   | --              | --    | 1.0                |
| Both parents  | -0.128          | 0.318 | 0.880              |
| <b>Family income</b>  |                 |       |                    |
| low income  | --              | --    | 1.0                |
| High income   | -0.134          | 0.153 | 0.875              |
| <b>Work involvement</b>   |                 |       |                    |
| Not involved  | --              | --    | 1.0                |
| Involved  | 0.841           | 0.263 | 2.319**            |
| <b>Constant</b>   |                 |       |                    |
| Model   | 1.983           | 0.628 | 0.138              |
| $\chi^2= 17.052; df=4$ (P-value < 0.01); Hosmer and Lemeshow's test =5.760 (P =0.330) |                 |       |                    |

\*: P < 0.05; i.e. the relationship is significant at p value of 0.05;

\*\*\*:  $P < 0.001$  i.e. the relationship is significant at p value of 0.001

Despite controlling for the influence of age and work involvement, both remain statistically significant on experience of rape (see Table 4). Girls of age group 15 to 17 are 1.761 times as likely to experience rape as girls of age 12 to 14 (reference category). As expected, children who live with their both parents are less likely to be victims of rape than those who did not live with both parents (reference category). Similarly, those who are from high income families are less likely to experience rape than those from low income earning families (reference category). As expected, girls who engaged in economic activities are 2.3 times as likely to be victims of rape as those who do not engage in any form of economic activity (reference category).

### *Discussion of findings*

The study revealed a high prevalence of child rape (25.6%) among secondary school students, indicating that a significant number of high school students in Lagos State had been victims of rape before the age of 18. There is the possibility that the prevalence has increased overtime as this result is higher than the findings of Shittu et al. (2007) who found in 2007 that one in every five sexually active secondary students, including those who were 18 years, had experienced forced sex. Interestingly, the current study revealed that there is a

significant relationship between age and experience of rape. This is consistent with the findings of Chapko (1999) and Kunuji and Esiet (2015), although both studied different populations. The current study found that older girls are more likely to experience rape than younger children. It is possible that the older girls had 'boyfriends' who were also the perpetrators, whether minor or adult. It is also possible that some of the older girls were sexually abused at much tender age. Furthermore, consistent with previous studies (Black et al., 2001; Aderinto, 2010; Collin-Vezina, Daigneault & Herbert 2013), children who live with both parents are less likely to experience rape than those who do not. This implies that girls who live with one of their parents or other relatives are more vulnerable to sexual abuse than those who live with both parents. It is especially so if a child lives with the mother and another man who is not her biological father. The latter can abuse the child sexually if he does not feel the emotional attachment of father-child (Lalor, 2004). In addition, a child who lives with non-biological parents also has high risks of experiencing rape for same reason.

Surprisingly, income was not statistically significant on the experience of rape. But as expected, those from high income families are less likely to be victims of rape than those from low income families (Duru et al., 2014; Lambert & Andipatin, 2014). It is possible that those who claim to be from the low income families reside in less conducive environment such as overcrowded houses,



and slums where alcoholics are common, thus increasing the child's vulnerability to rape (Chapko, 1999; Madu, 2003; Bowman & Brundige, 2014). For instance, Rumbidzai (2013), found that lodging of families in one room could be a contributing factor to the rape of women and girls by close relatives. Furthermore, consistent with previous studies (Madu, 2003; Ajuwon et al., 2006), girls who work to support their family income are more likely to experience rape than those who are not involved in any economic activities. It is particularly so if children work outside the supervision of their parents or guardians as this increases their vulnerability to rape. Hawking, for instance, has consistently been reported as a factor influencing rape as perpetrators could pretend to be potential buyers of hawked wares (Black et al., 2001; Duru, et al., 2014).

### **Conclusion**

The study revealed that experience of rape is associated with age and work involvement. Rape is associated with a wide range of health problems which have both immediate and long term effects on the victim especially, her family and the society at large. Although, it is impossible to eradicate it completely, efforts can be made to reduce its occurrence. There is need for enlightenment and sensitization of all young girls irrespective of their ages about the high prevalence of sexual abuse, its dangers and consequences. They should also be encouraged to report any threat or act of abuse so that they will receive prompt attention and treatment. They

*Nigerian Journal of Social Psychology, Volume 1, No. 1 (2018). Published by the Nigerian Association of Social Psychologists.*

should be provided with hotlines number to report any sexual abuse. Parents who engage their children in economic activities that expose children to rape should be punished. Secondly, marital separation should be discouraged to prevent single parenting as the study revealed that children who lived in unconventional homes of having both parents are more likely to experience rape at childhood.

### **Competing interests**

Authors declared that they have no competing interests.

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