

Towards Curbing the Menace of Rape in the Nigerian Society: the Roles of the Library

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Abstract

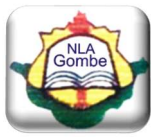
The menace of rape has drastically become a serious epidemic not just Nigeria but globally where it is daily recorded that men sexually abuse/assault the female gender and, in fact, forcefully have carnal knowledge of them regardless of their age. However, despite the widespread outcry over the rising cases of rape in Nigeria, there seems to be no end to this social threat. As such, there is a dire need to address it with a view of curbing it. Hence, an institution such as the library which deals with the adequate provision of information and knowledge is required to acknowledge its role in the quest of bringing the scourge of rape to an end in the contemporary society. Thus, it is to this end that this paper provides a conceptual basis for the roles that the library plays in terms of curbing the menace of rape in the Nigerian society.

Keywords: Curbing, Rape, Nigerian Society and Library.

Introduction

Taking a cursory look at the series of unfolding events and developments in Nigeria indicates that the nation is fast deteriorating into criminalities and other related offences. One of such crimes is that of men sexually abusing/assaulting women and, in fact, forcefully having carnal knowledge of girls and women without their consent (Nwabueze and Oduah, 2015). Izzi and Obinuchi (2019) recount that despite the widespread outcry over the rising cases of rape in Nigeria, there seems to be no end to the nemesis or what other word can we use for the pitiable, terrible situation we have found ourselves. Apparently, there is no day in the country without a reported case of sexual violence especially rape in the media. The recent rape and murder of a 22-year old University of Benin undergraduate fanned the ember of the growing awareness and condemnation of sexual violence/rape in the Nigerian society. Since the incident, there have been many other reported cases of rape of women and girls, and even more worrisome is the sexual violation of little girls in the country.

The scourge of rape is of common knowledge not just in Nigeria, but globally due to the high rate of its occurrence. Thus the dire need to address it with a view of curbing it. It is to this end that the government should not be left alone to deal with the menace of rape. Hence, non-governmental institutions and organizations are required to aid the government in curbing this maniac of rape. Thus, an institution such as the library has the responsibility of aiding the government in curbing the menace of rape. Akanmidu, Bamidele and Ogunbote (2018) posit that traditionally, libraries on their own have played key roles in advocating the development of societies and its citizens. The societal roles that libraries have included provision of adequate information and knowledge, linking people to information sources and outreach and awareness services to communities for enlightenment. Cobb (2018) avert that libraries are capable of acting as agents of change, based on the fact that they are among the most trusted of all community institutions, thus, enabling them to take visible stance in opposition to the menace of rape in the society.



Willingham and Taylor (2018) observed that libraries are capable of confronting the rape menace and enlightening the younger generation by evincing an awareness of, and opposition to men's sexual violence, by providing information assistance to victims of intimate partner violence, reinforcing the need for adequate sex education, by strengthening leadership and opportunities for 'the girl child', and by enlightening people on superstitious beliefs of rape. Therefore, libraries in the contemporary society are required to acknowledge their significant role of assisting the government in curbing the menace of rape.

Rape: Some Conceptual Clarifications

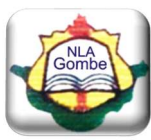
For centuries, rape and other forms of sexual violence have been condoned as inevitable, even if regrettable and horrific. According to Esere, Idowu, Durosaro and Omotosho (2009), sexual violence is a regular experience of most women and girls in Nigeria, and they include rape, female circumcision, sexual harassment and physical abuse. However, with regard to this study, rape would be the main focus. Hence, it is imperative to mention that rape is a global issue as it has been reported in almost all parts of the world including Nigeria, where it is reported that rape occurs on a daily basis ranging from the old women to young children below the age of five years. The menace of rape is not an abstract issue as it has unveiled its ugly mask in every society. But how do we describe the brutal nature of this nuisance, especially in Nigeria?. There is need to candidly have an in-depth knowledge about this subject matter.

The word rape has its etymology from the Latin word 'rapere', which implies 'to seize' or 'take by force'. It is a forced, unwanted sexual intercourse; it is sometimes also called sexual assault, which can happen to both men and women of any age (Medhelp, 2008). The term rape does not have a universally acceptable definition as various learned scholars and jurists have given varied definitions. However, Onyejekwe (2008) in her research assert that according to the Section 357 of the Criminal Code:

Any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl, without her consent, or with her consent, if the consent is obtained by force or by means of threat or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or by means of false and fraudulent representation as the nature of the act, or in the case of married woman, by personating her husband, is guilty of an offence which is called rape.

Over the span of time, quite a number of individuals perceive that rape is a sexual act. Although rape involves sexual act, it is, however induced by the desire for power and control over another person, rather than by sexual attraction or the desire for sexual gratification. Hence, rape is regarded as a crime of violence (Omoera, 2004). Rape also occurs when someone forces or tricks another person into unwanted sexual activity, even if actual physical violence is not involved. Rape is a form of social deviancy which varies from one country to another; it changes overtime. Thus, it is dynamic in nature. Ashiru and Orifowomo (2015) buttresses this by stating that there is nothing timeless or random about rape; it is not a metaphor for the ruin of a city or nation, and an embodiment of violation of another person.

Aborisade (2019) affirms that the occurrences of rape are on the increase in Nigeria. The Mass Media is awash with a catalogue of cases of rape. Rape has become a social phenomenon of wide-ranging proportions and not an isolated criminal act affecting just a few women and girls in Nigeria. Presently, it has become a common feature in Nigeria for children less than twelve years to be victims of sexual assault. Adolescent and young adult women are in high risk range. In Nigeria, even old women are not spared this assault. There



are vast numbers of rape cases which are sickening to say the least. For instance, Hasan (2018) affirms that they now and then, it is reported that a teacher has raped a student, a religious leader has raped his flock, a father has raped his daughter, a young man has raped an elderly woman, a Fulani herder has raped so many innocent women etc.

Therefore, the menace of rape cannot be trivialized as it cuts across, age, race, tribe and class. It is a universal endemic phenomenon that has been subjected to debates by human rights bodies all over the world. Rape is the most gruesome form of violence against women. It is a denial of women's right of self-preservation. It is an intrusion into the right of privacy of the victim. It is a particular kind of human violence which carries powerful meanings in any culture, ancient and modern. The act of rape is not new. The problem is that it is on the increase and the effects are becoming more harmful to the victims and their relatives.

Types of Rape

Rape can be categorized in different way: by reference to the situation in which it occurs or by the identity or characteristics of the victim, and by the identity or characteristics of the perpetrator. These categories are referred to as acts of rape. The types of rape described below are not mutually exclusive. A given rape can fit into multiple categories, for example by being both a blitz rape and a gang rape or both, a date rape and a drug facilitated rape. Rape is rape.

Date Rape: This is also known as 'acquaintance rape', and it refers to a rape or non-consensual sexual activity between people who are already acquainted, friends, acquaintances, people on a date, or even people in an existing romantic relationship where consent for sexual activity is not given, or is given under duress. The vast majority of rapes are committed by people who already know the victim. Mosadomi (2008) however notes that the label 'date rape' is a rather general term.

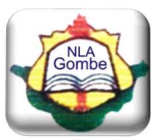
Blitz Rape: Benedict (2012) avers that this is also known as stranger rape. It occurs when the rapist assaults the victim on the street with no prior contact. Generally, the rapist "comes out of nowhere".

Drug Facilitated Rape: This involves the use of drugs by rapists to render their victim incapacitated and unconscious; some also cause memory loss. Hence, this also implies that the victim may be unable to resist (what some may consider as consensual sex). Date rape drug refers to any drug that can be used to assist in the commission of a sexual assault.

Spousal Rape: This is also known as 'spouse rape' 'marital rape', 'wife rape', 'husband rape', 'partner rape' or 'intimate partner sexual assault'. It is a rape between a married or a de facto couple. However, different countries have different rape laws. In some African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Malawi, to mention but a few, it is not possible to commit the crime of rape against one's own wife or husband.

Rape of Children: Rape of a child is a form of child sexual abuse. It can be committed by another child usually older and stronger, a parent (or other close relatives such as grandparents, aunts and uncles), and by other elders (as priests, nuns or other religious authorities, school teachers, or therapists, to name a few).

Statutory rape: This is a sexual intercourse with a minor by an adult (sexual intercourse with a minor). The rape is often based on a presumption that people under a certain age do not have the capacity to give consent. The age at which individuals are considered competent to give consent, called the age of consent, it varies in different countries and regions, and



however the rarcation, it ranges from 16 to 18 years. Generally, sexual activity that violates age-of-consent law, but is neither violent nor physically coerced, is sometimes recognized as 'statutory rape'.

Corrective Rape: This is a type of rape that is targeted against non-heterosexuals as a punishment for violating gender roles. It is a form of hate crime against individuals, mainly lesbians, in which the rapist justifies the act as an acceptable response to the victim's perceived sexual or gender orientation, and as a form of punishment for being a gay. Often, the stated argument of the corrective rapist is that the rape will turn the person straight, "correcting" their sex or gender, i.e. makes them conform to societal norms. The term was first coined in South Africa after well-known cases of corrective rape, such as that of sports star 'Eudy Simelane' became public.

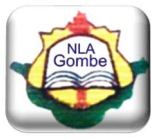
Gang Rape: This is also known as 'group rape', 'gang bang', or 'run a train'. It occurs when a group of people (at least two or more people) participate in the rape of a single victim. It is usually far more damaging to the victim, and in some jurisdictions, is punished more severely than rape by a single person. Studies have shown that offenders in gang rape were younger with a higher possibility of being unemployed. Also, gang rapes involved more alcohol and other drug use, night attacks and severe sexual assault outcomes.

Curbing of Rape Menace: A Priority of the Library

The affiliation of the library and the society is not much of a strange phenomenon, because libraries have grown to be social institutions which have become an integral part of the societies around the world. Library and society are interlinked and interdependent, not mutually exclusive. It is a well-known fact that information plays significant role in the all-round human development, enlightening and enabling people to develop their full potential with appropriate education and skills and preparing them for a transition from education stage to work stage, from ignorant stage to edified stage, and from impervious stage to open-minded stage. It is also well-known that libraries provide the basic conditions for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development of the individuals and social groups. Over the years, libraries have come to serve as portals to knowledge, enlightenment and civilization, by doing so offering limitless learning opportunities that have the capability of fueling economic, social, cultural and moral development.

Since rape has grown to become a critical issue in the society, Temitayo, Audu, and Lukman (2018) observed that access to tangible and adequate information is cardinal to the curbing of the widespread of rape. The provision of information to meet the needs of individuals and the public at large is a basic role the library has to play in the quest of curbing the menace of rape. Thus, the provision of all forms of useful information on laws guiding against rape and punishment of rapists, women's liberation, and effects of sexual violence on victims, gender equality and socio-cultural approaches to rape prevention by the library would expediently foster the curbing of the menace of rape in the society.

Folarin and Ajayi (2019) posit that the role of the library in putting an end to the menace of rape is not just to disseminate information to a restricted class and age of individuals, but also to offer a universal approach to information dissemination. Thus, this implies that the library is required to target the grassroots and encourage the essentiality of sexual education from the young to the old. Currently, the war on sexual violence should not be fought alone by the government, but also by the library. Hence, the library is required to come to terms with their responsibility of curbing the menace of rape in the society by the adequate and unrestricted



dissemination of information. The eradication of rape and other sexual violence has a significant part to play in the overall survival of any nation.

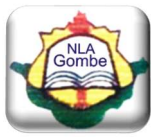
According to Olatunji and Thomas (2017), the sheer scale of sexual violence against females in Nigeria is staggering, 400 women (both young and old) sexually violated in an hour and close to 2000 women sexual violated in a day. However, what no statistics can express is the burden of suffering imposed upon these women, who were raped and sexually abused. Along with natural disasters, combat, and life-threatening accidents, sexual violation is considered a traumatic event, associated with serious and potentially lifelong physical, psychological, emotional, and social consequences for victims. Anxiety, fear, sense of guilt and shame are common in the aftermath of sexual violation, as are the accompanying depression, nightmares, insomnia, substance abuse, and a general deterioration in personal health and well-being. Therefore, it is the responsibility of libraries as the hub of knowledge to educate individuals (especially males) about the detrimental effects of rape and sexual violence on the victims.

Obot, Bamgbose and Okoro (2018) opine that the emergence of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) in the 21st century has transformed libraries to technological-oriented infrastructures in which various connections and collaborations among people are enabled. Accordingly, a significant means of curbing the menace of rape can be linked to connections and collaborations, for instance, the use of hash tag '#MeToo' on twitter has enabled the connection and remodifying the global conversation around sexual violence. Bivens and Dawson (2019) purport that ICT in the contemporary society has served as significant tool in changing norms about sexual assault and sexual violence by diffusing and disseminating ideas, attitudes, and knowledge among a large population or target audience. Hence, it is required by the library to harness the potential of ICT in fighting against and putting an end to the menace of rape.

Specifically, librarians who operate in the library are required to be ethical, as well as maintain professional imperativeness in confronting the systemic injustices that afflict the society with regard to rape. Thus, librarians can educate other library staff about sexual violence, so that they can better assist assaulted women without acting upon injurious misconceptions about what it means to be a victim of sexual violence. Librarians who have lived through sexual violence themselves may consider revealing their stories, as a means to open the lines of interactions with other victims who may then feel more comfortable reaching out to someone they know has survived a similar traumatic experience.

Techniques of Curbing the Menace of Rape by Librarians

The curbing of rape menace does not only require governmental policies in the societal purview, but also the effort of the library. Sanday (1981) In a cross-cultural study of rape in tribal societies, Sanday (1981) offered compelling evidence in support of the feminist assertion that rape, like all sexual behaviour, is determined by socio political and sociocultural context rather than by biology. Thus, since libraries are integral in the society (both politically and culturally), it is possible for library to play an active role in the curbing of rape menace. In a bid to attain this, the library as a social-oriented institution with the goal of providing information for dissemination becomes increasingly important in the role exterminating the scourge of rape in a nation like Nigeria. Also, since libraries are among the most trusted of all community institutions, being endowed with the opportunity to take a viable stand in the opposition and curbing of rape. Therefore, a number of techniques which libraries can utilize to curb the menace of rape are discussed briefly below:

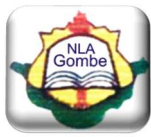


Adoption of Social Media: Social media is a widely used term that can encompass many platforms. According to Dewing, (2012), social media can be regarded as the wide range of Internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online interactions, contribute user-created content, or join online communities. Owing to the increased globalization, facilitated by the widespread adoption and use of social media, institutions such as the library have been gradually adopting its use for the purpose of enhancing their service delivery. Social media encompasses both traditional media (e.g. news media stories), and most importantly, user generated contents (e.g. individual tweets and group chats). Thus, its adoption by librarians to curb the menace of rape would prove to be effective. For instance, librarians can create an hash tag such as ‘#MeToo’ on a social media such as twitter in order for users (who were victims of rape) to express their solidarity, and speak up against rape. With the adoption of social media, librarians are enabled to serve as change agents in the quest of transforming the norms about sexual assault and sexual violence by diffusing and disseminating ideas, attitudes, and knowledge among a large population or target audience.

Provision of Sufficient Information Resources: Information is regarded as the communication of knowledge, ideas and facts that are meant to be used to achieve some goals (Ireogbu, 2004). Information plays a significant role in the enlightenment of individuals and community. Thus, libraries as repositories of information are required to provide sufficient information both in print and non-print on rape and its nature. Libraries are required to support formal sex education, learning, support literacy teaching, check gender divide, and help reshape the existing/new ideas and perspectives on the perception of rape in the society. The populace and the society at large essentially need the library in order to have access to information with regards to, developing their knowledge about myths of rape, understanding the nature of adolescents, recognizing constitutions and policies about rape, and appreciating the significance of moral values. For instance, Odeh (2018) in his study revealed that with the provision of sufficient information on ailments and their appropriate remedies, the library can help in the eradication of a myth such as “having sex with a child or a virgin in order to cure an ailment”.

Strengthening the Economic Support for the Female Gender: Gender equality has gradually gain more prevalence in the contemporary society with regard to the upsurge in Violence Against Women (VAW) and various primitive beliefs about the female gender. Gender equality refers to the equal consideration of needs, attitudes and of women and men. In a nutshell, gender equality refers to the equal treatment of women and men at home and in the society. In recent times, an alarming number of sexual violence and abuse have been inflicted on the female gender, thus inducing the need for strengthening the economic support for the female gender. Cobb (2018) asserts that libraries in their own way can put an end to the scourge of rape by sensitizing individuals both in rural and urban areas on the importance of gender equality and the value of optimum education and support for ‘the girl child’. By so doing, the library will have played an essential role in the quest of curbing the menace of rape in the society.

Organising Seminar and Symposium: Libraries can organise series of seminars and symposia to create awareness for the public on the punishment attached to rape. In such a meeting libraries can also invite the victims of rape as speakers to share their experience(s) with the public; through that, victims of rape would be bold enough to speak out. According to Tade and Udechukwu (2020), one noteworthy reason for the apparent rise of rape in Nigeria could be traced to the fact that victims of rape are drastically becoming more encouraged to speak up and report such crimes.



Conclusion

Rape is a barrier to economic development and national integration, a public health problem, and a violation of women's fundamental human rights. In particular, in Nigeria, Rape has become pervasive and is likely going to get even worse if adequate steps are not taken in order to curb this monster in the society. Thus, both governmental and non-governmental institutions are required to play their part in the pursuit of eradicating the menace of rape. With regard to this study, the library (as a non-governmental institution) has a significant role to play in the curbing of rape. Since libraries are regarded as social institutions, they have accordingly grown to become quite significant in the society based on their ability to serve as the hub of knowledge, enlightenment and civilization through the appropriate and adequate provision of information resources. With the provision of information on various issues relating to rape and sexual violence, libraries are enabled to play their role in curbing the monster of rape in the society. Therefore, libraries are required to acknowledge the significant role they play in terms enlightening the public in order to eradicate the scourge of rape and thus bring about economic and social development.

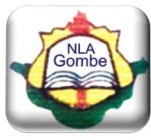
Suggestions

Based on the literature given above, it was revealed that libraries are capable of curbing the menace of rape. However, a number of recommendations are suggested:

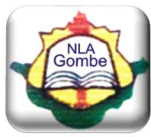
1. The management of libraries should endeavor to equip the library with enough information resources on topics related to rape and sexual violence in order to educate and enlighten individuals and the public on the nature of rape and its detrimental effects on its victims.
2. The management of libraries should consider the adoption and use of social media in order to curb the menace of rape on a wider scale.
3. The management of libraries should provide a means of educating library staff about sexual violence in order for them to effectively assist victims of sexual violence without acting upon injurious misconceptions about what it means to be a victim of sexual violence.
4. The management of libraries should endeavour to pursue cordial relationships with order local agencies and organizations concerned with the aim of curbing of sexual violence in order to adequately and unreservedly combat the scourge of rape in the society.

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