

PERCEIVED IMPLICATIONS OF RAPE ON CHRISTAIN BELIEF SYSTEMS AND ASSESSMENT OF ROLES OF CHRISTAIN BODIES IN RAPE MITIGATION EFFORTS IN ANAMBRA STATE, SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This research paper examined how Christians perceive the implications of rape on their belief system. It also looked at how Christians assessed the roles of Christian bodies (denominations and groups) towards rape mitigation efforts in Anambra state, southeast Nigeria. The study which was anchored on Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) theory of Community Change adopted descriptive mixed method design. The commercial/administrative capitals of the three senatorial zones of the state constituted the study locations. Participants were randomly drawn among adult Christians aged between 18-65 years old. A sample size of 250 adult respondents was considered adequate for applicable statistical techniques. Quantitative data was collected via questionnaire. Also, Focused Group Discussions (FGD) was conducted in the study locations to collect qualitative data. The quantitative data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The hypotheses for the study were tested using the chi-square inferential statistics while qualitative data generated from FGD were transcribed verbatim and analyzed manually based on the themes of the study. The findings showed that respondents did not differ significantly ($\chi^2 = 1.839$ $df = 3$, $p > .606$) between their levels of education and their views of the implication of rape on Christian faith. The study also found that Christain bodies help victims of rape to obtain justice against culprits so as to protect them from further victimization. Furthermore, it was also observed that the tide of rape can be stemmed by Christian bodies when they embark on educating the public on the moral depravity of rape in the society. It was therefore strongly recommended that Christian bodies should embark on a massive enlightenment of their followers on the implications of rape as a heinous crime.

Keywords: Crime, Christian bodies, education, rape, and tide

Introduction

Rape was initially defined as a crime committed by men against women. However, it is today recognized as a crime perpetrated by a person of any gender against a victim of any gender. It is a crime perpetrated not only against women, but also against men and boys (HM Crown Prosecution Service Incorporate, 2019).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC, #2356, 1994) sees rape as an intrinsically evil act, involving forcible violation of the sexual intimacy of another person, which does injury to justice and charity. The Church believes that rape deeply wounds the respect, freedom, physical and moral integrity to which every person has a right. Rape causes grave damage that marks the victim for life.

The moral depravity of rape is seen in St. Augustine's analysis of the sin of rape as evil. Ortiz (2019) observed that St. Augustine made it clear that rape is a grave evil for which the aggressor alone bears blame. St. Augustine calls rape a "crime", a "wicked (criminal) deed", and an "atrocious". He counts it among the "godless", "utterly disgraceful", and "damnable" abominations that the barbarians commit (see *City of God*, 1.9). St. Augustine further describes rape as an "assault". The rapist "suppresses" or "oppresses" the victim and commits a "corrupt", "filthy", and "turpitudinous" act on or in the person of the victim. For St. Augustine, rape is a very grievous and atrocious crime against the person of the victim.

Bogart (1991), in stressing that rape as a forcible, coerced, non-voluntary and nonconsensual sex, outlines five main categories which he termed the 'core domain of rape', and by which rape can be understood. The categories are:

- i. sex obtained by force or threat of force against the victim;
- ii. sex obtained by threats against a third party;
- iii. sex while the victim is incapacitated;
- iv. sex obtained by fraud, and
- v. sex involving a child.

The categories portray rape as a non-voluntary and nonconsensual affair that undermines the independence and liberty of the victim. Eastaerl (2011) defined rape as an act of violence which uses sex as a weapon. Rape is motivated by aggression and by the desire to exert power and humiliate the victim. Erksso (2010), on her part, defined rape, as a crime that principally affects women and its prevalence in all states, cultures and contexts, whether in an armed conflict or peacetime, represents a prime example of this challenge.

Rape is prevalent in every society and in every country of the world today. It is a wide spread phenomenon that cuts across the globe. Cowling (2001), observed that the general assumption is that rape is plainly morally abhorrent. He further remarked that rape is vastly more extensive than official statistics can indicate. There are no definite records of prevalent incidents of rape because prevalence and reported cases may or may not include child rape. Besides, only a proportion of rape cases are reported to the police. Among countries that have reliable records of rape cases, Australia, USA and Sweden have high prevalence

rates, while South Africa has highest prevalence and reporting of rape cases (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002).

Tjaden & Thoennes (2000), noted that in America, rape is a significant social and health problem. Results from the National Violence against Women Survey (NVAWS) revealed that within the year of the study, 17.7 million women and 2.8 million men in the United States were forcibly raped at some time in their lives, with 302,091 women and 92,748 men forcibly raped in the year preceding the survey. The NVAWS found that 17.6 percent of surveyed women and 3 percent of surveyed men were raped at some time in their lives. In the United States therefore, 1 of every 6 women has been raped at some time in her life, and 1 of every 33 men has been raped at some time in his life. In South Africa, the national statistics on the incidence of rape and sexual offences based on the reports individuals submitted to the police, between 2008 and 2015, 432, 834 sexual offences were reported at police stations across the country (SAPS Crime Statistics 2015). In 2010, a survey research in Gauteng province found that only 1 in 25 women who had ever been raped had reported their experience of rape to the police (Machisa, Lowe Morna, & Rama, 2011). The incidence of rape in South Africa is higher than in other countries and is driven by a violent political history, as well as by structural and gender inequality. Research has shown that rape is more common in a social context of poverty where unemployment is high, men organize into social gangs and interpersonal violence is rife (Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002).

Nigeria as a country is not left out in the ugly trend of the crime of rape. The problem with Nigerian case regarding rape records is that the records of the prevalence rate of rape are not reliably available. Adebajo (2019), quoting the Nigerian Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Dame Pauline Tallen, reported that two million Nigerians are raped every year. He however admitted that there is no reliable public data to support or disprove the claim. He further noted that earlier in 2011, Caroline Ajie, a human rights lawyer, made a similar claim by [estimating that](#) “at least 2 million Nigerian girls experience sexual abuse annually and that only 28 per cent of rape cases are reported”. Adebajo again underscored the fact that it is not clear what the estimate is based on (Adebajo, 2019).

The crime of rape in Nigeria is so prevalent (especially the sexual abuse and exploitation of minors, under-aged girls and women). That many citizens are agitated. According to Ezeilo & Oriye (2020), a National survey on torture in Nigeria carried out by Women’s Aid Collective (WACOL), indicates that rape and sexual abuse, are amongst the forms of torture experienced by women. The survey puts the rate of women’s rape and sexual abuse, at 65.4%. They equally reported that the National Crime and Safety Survey carried out by CLEEN Foundation in 2012 in all the 36 States of the Federation revealed that only 23%

of rape incidents in Nigeria were reported to the Police. Thus, about 77% of rape cases go unreported (Ezeilo & Oriye, 2020).

A number of institutions and organizations in Nigeria are concerned about the high prevalence of rape cases in Nigeria. Anambra State is not left out is the crime of rape. The State has its own ugly records of rape cases. Ujumadu (2020), reported in Vanguard Newspaper of occurrence of eighty cases of rape during the 2020 Covid-19 lockdown.

Many of the victims of rape maintain a culture of silence and find it so difficult to share their experience due to fear of reprisal attack on them. Many others live in shame and fear of being stigmatized should they open up to relate their ugly experience. Crisp (2010), observed that feelings of shame disempowered people and make them suffer in silence. It prevents rape survivors from talking about their ordeal and thus from getting help. At the same time, it protects the perpetrators from punishment. Many others entertain fear of reporting their experience to the police because of tendency of being subjected to unnecessary scrutiny that is equivalent to rape itself. Many don't report their bitter experience for fear of not being believed or of being blamed for being responsible for the offence against them.

Rape cases have always been handled by the police and other security agencies as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Civil Society Organizations and non-governmental agencies have often collaborated with the security agencies towards unraveling rape cases and possibly bringing the perpetrators to book. However; it appears that their efforts have not recorded tremendous successes, especially with the persistent culture of silence among victims.

There is therefore the need to find out what other independent bodies are up to, especially with regard to how they handle the victims of rape and offer them necessary protections to enable them open up and share their experiences freely and completely. This research paper focused on perceived implications of rape on Christian belief systems, which is the major religion in Anambra state, southeast Nigeria. It examined the responses of Christian bodies when their leader is a culprit in rape situations, as well as the roles that Christian bodies have played over the years in curbing the trend of rape cases in the state. The focus on Christian bodies is important because they are part of the Nigerian society and to a great extent; both the perpetrators of rape and victims of rape could sometimes be members of one Christian religious body or another. Indeed, there had been cases of rape involving high profile members of Christian bodies.

Specific Objectives

- i. To ascertain the perceived implications of rape on Christian belief systems in Anambra State
- ii. To ascertain how Christian Bodies/ denominations in Anambra State react to rape when their leader is indicted
- iii. To find out dominant role(s) that Christian Bodies/denominations in Anambra State have consistently played /as their response toward mitigating the incidence of rape in the state.

Hypotheses

- i. Believers with low level of education are likely to hold the view that rising cases of rape in Nigeria is devaluing Christianity than their counterparts with high level of education.
- ii. Protestant Christians are most likely to protect their indicted member in rape than their orthodox counterparts in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Implications of Rape on Christian Adherents (Believers)

Rape is a crime that has multi-dimensional implications. It has psychological, physiological, emotional, legal and spiritual implications or repercussions (Logue, 2000). The focus of this section of the article is to assess the implications of rape on the victims. Murray-Swank & Pargament (2005), in their study of spiritual implications of sexual abuse, conclude that some victims turn to spiritual practices to aid their recovery, while others experience intense spiritual struggles in their effort to reconcile their experience of rape.

In most cases, rape significantly affects the victim's entire orientation about faith and belief, especially in situations when the perpetrator is a highly placed person in a Christian body or even an official or authority in the Church namely a clergy. Such experience according to Finkelhor & Brown (1985), has made many victims of rape to view the Church as a desecrated place. Pargament (2008), emphasizing the great theological consequence of rape that involves a clergy or an official of faith-community, indicated that it is even a greater desecration than violation by a biological parent, because, the clergy take formal vows to protect and nurture the spiritual well-being of all of their followers; they are legitimated to enact the role of God. Thus, when a clerical figure violates his or her ordination, responsibility, and privilege as a representative of God in a human relationship, it is as if God himself has committed the violation'.

Rape experience, makes a victim to have a feeling of alienation from the Church and from God. McLaughlin (1995), observed that involvement of Church authorities in rape cases as perpetrators, makes the victims feel the Church itself has hurt them and that God himself never cared for them. Rape experience

propels the victim to lose faith in the Church and her authorities. The victims equally lose faith in God as a loving and protecting Father. Besides loss of faith in God, victims equally question God's benevolence (Fogler et al, 2008a).

Logue (2000), in his study reported the experience of a victim of rape who exclaimed that "The more I remember, the more I realized that God did not care for me at all. If he didn't care for me, He wasn't who I thought He was... It's been an incredible loss... I haven't been able to find a God I can believe in". Such experience could be very disturbing and shattering. Indeed, it has jeopardized both the trust and faith many a victim had in God and in the faith-community.

Alvear & Tombs (2016), related that a victim of rape described the impact of it in her life as 'catastrophic' and for which she felt abandoned by God as well as abandoned by the Church. Farrell & Taylor (2000), equally observed that the long term implications for the abused or victim of rape is a legacy of erosion and stigmatization of the victim's wellbeing, which creates spiritual and existential conflict, whilst challenging the victim's religious faith, spiritual identity and any concept that they have of God.

Rape incidents affect victims holistically and tremendously. It often makes a victim to lose faith both in God, in the society/the faith-community and in the self. The whole essence of the victim's being is seriously put to question.

Pargament (2008) identified three different forms of the spiritual consequences of rape. They are;

- 'Struggles with the divine (e.g. feeling of anger, abandonment, or fear in relation to God),
- Interpersonal struggles (e.g. religious tension and conflict with family, church members and leaders, denomination), and
- Intra-psychic struggles (e.g. religious doubts, questions about dogma, and conflicts between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors)'.

Mennonite Central Committee U.S (2016), summarizing the whole consequence of the rape victims' experience, noted that, the victims often experience a loss of trust in church leadership and separation from their congregation. They may feel betrayed by God and the church. They may as well feel sinful and question God's love for them.

Besides the experience of not believing in God again as a result of rape experience, a victim could as well be very angry against God, when God is presented as a male figure. In the sacramental life of the Church, both language and image of God, point him out as a male figure (Logue, 2000). In the understanding of God as a male figure, Logue (2000), related the experience of

a female rape victim who said she could only feel at ease with faith in an angel's presence. For the victim, the notion of 'God' especially 'God the Father' was much too threatening after the experience of abuse she had.

Feminist theologians challenge exclusively male images of God, which are viewed as restrictive and potentially harmful spiritually. The feminist theologians base their discussion of rape on the patriarchal socialization processes and the intimate relationship between religion and patriarchy. Rather than seeing rape in the context of sexuality, the feminists view it morally as a sin of power as opposed to a sin of sexuality. They, as well, explore rape from the perspective of truth and just relationships. They question the traditional theologies of forgiveness, suffering, ownership, and sacrifice. They profoundly challenge these theologies of faith as abusive to women and as positive supports for a rape culture. The feminist theologians conclude that the traditional interpretations of suffering, sacrifice and atonement have led to the acculturation of women to accept abuse and to live with it (Logue, 2000).

On the whole, rape experience does a great damage to the belief of a victim both in self, God and in faith-community. It can subject a victim to live in shame and isolation. It equally can propel a victim to denounce having anything to do with faith-community and totally turn against God; having lost faith in guidance of the faith-community and in God's benevolence. The trend of rape belittles at least in the victim, God's benevolence and love; and subjects the faith-community to object of ridicule.

Background Issues on Culture of Silence Associated with Rape

Logue (2000) discussed two aspects of the reality regarding rape cases as they affect the victims or survivors of rape incidents namely; experienced and perceived realities of rape. He established that the experienced reality of rape is often not reported. What is always in the news of national dailies is the perceived reality of rape, with recurring theme of virtually universal fear of rape on the part of women and a personal sense of trauma, shame, guilt, denial and anger. McColgan (1996), cited in Logue (2000), explains why the experienced reality of rape is often never reported. She indicated that the role of embarrassment, humiliation, shame, manipulation and fear all contribute to silence the victim of rape. She indicated that "the penalties of complaining are high". These factors more or less subdue the victims that they find it difficult to voice out their experience.

The Scottish Episcopal Provincial Office (n.d), buttressing the implications of experienced reality on the victims of rape and for which it is most difficult for them to express themselves, stated that people who have experienced abuse are at increased risk of a wide range of mental health illnesses. There might be a great sense of loss and grief which can be linked with overpowering anger;

feelings of self-blame, guilt and shame, or a loss of a sense of self, along with a sense of worthlessness or humiliation; an ongoing sense of deep hurt; a loss of confidence; powerlessness, feeling trapped; a diminished sense of hope or optimism linked with a diminished sense of joy or pleasure; and dissociation from reality. With all these factors of suppression, a victim of rape would most likely opt for silence believing that she might not be understood and believed if she tells her story. Asproth (2017), emphasized that the pressure to keep quiet can be pulverizing. The victim is dying in silence.

The victims of the experienced reality of rape are often silenced, subdued and made to be voiceless because of the impact of perceived reality. Mertes (2010), indicated that the victims or survivors of rape may feel re-victimized by the experience of rumour and scandal. The re-victimization of the victims by the community makes the survivors feel lonely. They live in fear of reprisal attack, should they ever voice out their ugly experience. Even the communities in which they live do not help matters, since they are never understood by the community.

Newbell (2019), explained that rape is a tragedy, and the attitude of the community toward rape victims is no less a tragedy than the crime itself. The victims suffer tremendously for not being heard. Crisp (2012), explained that the rape experience has far-reaching consequences for survivors.

Responsibilities Discharged by the Church (Christian Bodies) toward Rape Victims and the Society regarding Rape related Issues

The emotional, spiritual and religious scars of rape take much longer to heal. When the victims recall the rape incident or experience rejection from others, their suffering becomes overwhelming. It destructs their spiritual well-being and reinforces their suffering and feelings of worthlessness.

Over time, the suffering can become so severe that the victims feel incapable of embodying the divine on a spiritual and/or a religious level. Spiritual death occurs when the shame that rape survivors experience becomes 'rooted in the perception of self, causing the victim to review herself as dirty and immoral, no longer capable of embodying the divine' (Messina-Dysert 2012:130). It is in this challenging situation that the victims need support, assistance and solace. But the community, to which they belong, does not understand or even accommodate them. Some of the agencies involved in handling rape cases like the police, the court and even the medical sector do not offer the victims the solace they desperately desire. Ganzevoort (2003), observed that a lack of community support combined with the trauma of the sexual abuse itself can lead to a situation where the recovery and spiritual growth of the victim is very difficult. Even worse, the victim may become the scapegoat of the community. The victims therefore may live their lives in total loneliness, not being

understood or accommodated by the community. Mertes (2010), explained the experience of loneliness to which the victims are subjected. According to him:

Loneliness is the experience of the victim because no one wants to hear the story of the victim or even believe in it. Here comes the second aspect of being a victim: the victims are “sacrificed”. There may be no interest in the story of the victim because the story of the victim threatens the marriage of the parents, the reputation of the institution and the peace of the community. The victim is in danger because her experience puts the system in which she lives in danger.

The victims of rape in their subdued condition, yearn for a voice to speak for them; and ears to hear their story. If the society does not understand the victims, and is even disposed to victimize them further, Christian bodies should at least give them the hearing they desperately yearn for, as well as being the courageous voice that will speak in their defense. Perilla (2006), observed that being a voice for the voiceless is one important functions of the Church towards the rape victims. According to him, the church can serve to tell the truth about women’s experiences of abuse, and should give a voice where there has been silence. Adksion-Bradley et al. (2005), underscored the fact that historically, churches were and are still associated with the support of people who suffer as a result of trauma and who need support in healing. Churches are important contributors to the well-being of their members. Van Wyk (2018), observed that ministers of churches have a huge responsibility towards rape survivors, and their contribution to help the victims to regain self-respect and dignity is required long after the rape incidence. The victims are majorly helped through pastoral counseling (Thorne, 2001). Michau et al. (2015), noted that Churches need to do more in assisting rape survivors. The Churches would need to collaborate with other sectors such as healthcare and education, in assisting the rape victims. Indeed, the church has the responsibility and the capacity to assist victims in dealing with hospitals, law enforcement agencies, and perhaps the media (Newbell, 2019).

Even though the victims seem subdued, they itch consistently to be heard. The Scottish Episcopal Church Provincial Office (n.d), indicated that the Church has a role to play in order to give the victims of rape some succor. They observed that it is important that the Church supports all those who are struggling in their own journey and process of healing through the quality of listening and understanding; and through reaching out with them to obtain the justice, support and care that they need. The Provincial Office further stated that the Church needs to ensure that survivors understand that there is support for them and action will be taken in recognition of their suffering and pain. They need a Church that provides a safe environment for them where their experiences of abuse can be heard, and appropriate support offered. The

Scottish Episcopal Provincial Office (n.d), concluded that a very good pastoral support can help a survivor to overcome a troubled period.

Carolyn (2015), outlined a number of practical response of the Church to rape victims especially when it involves the Church authorities. In response to a victim's disclosure of rape experience, the Church should believe the victim, assuring her that the incident was not her fault. The Church should keep primary focus on the victim's pain and need for safety and support. The Church further should give the victim a listening ear. In making a follow-up step in response to the victim's ugly experience, the Church should seek help of professionals, outside the Church, to determine if a crime has been committed; and to report to appropriate authorities. The Church should further assist the victim with legal Counsel, and also protect the victim from any form of retaliation by the abuser or by those who might wish to protect the abuser or his reputation or the institution he represents. Asproth (2017), observed that Churches should ensure that perpetrators have zero access to their victims. A victim and a perpetrator do not need to "talk it out". The Church should assure both the victim and her family that they are not alone and will not be abandoned. Further step the Church can take in assisting the victim, is to arrange for her to have a professional assessment of the physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual damage she may have suffered; and of course to help her settle the bill for such treatment. The Church should as well empower the victim to tell her story; and thereby, taking control of the situation away from her abuser and the institution that might wish to protect his image (Carolyn, 2015).

Carolyn (2015), further emphasized that the Church should not relent in working to prevent further abuses especially where it involves Church leaders. The Church should make genuine commitment to eradicate abuse/rape by the Church leaders. This can be done by teaching ministers-in-training the ethical requirements of their profession; helping them to identify and heal their psycho-social wounds; and assist them in developing a meaningful personal spirituality. The Church should as well create, implement, and carefully monitor policies designed to prevent abuse and ensure that offenders are held accountable. Asproth (2017), explained that in dealing with rape cases, the Churches should make transparency a top priority because abuse is often born in shadows.

The Churches should be very pro-active in the fight against rape. In doing this, the Churches should not be limited to attending to rape victims only. The Churches should be of great service to the society in creating awareness about the ugliness and implications of rape. Newbell (2019), observed that the Churches should conduct educational program in rape awareness. She maintains that due to the nature of the society, the Churches owe their members an educational program that facilitates awareness of rape and its personal, psychological, sociological, legal, and moral consequences. Rape education,

Newbell (2019), concluded, should teach church members to take the crime of rape seriously.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) theory of Community Change. The theory provides family and social workers with a framework for examining and changing the individual and social factors that lead to sexual violence. There is a connection between individual victims of sexual violence and the social environment that affect the social functioning of the affected individuals. Rape Prevention and Education Theory connects two community-level (societal change) theories namely: community readiness and diffusion of innovations (DOI) (Rogers, 1995) theories; with three other individual-level theories namely, theory of reasoned action (TRA), theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and the health belief model (HBM) (Biglan, 1995; Glanz, Rimer, & Lewis, 2002), for the purpose of ending sexual violence.

Rape Prevention and Education Theory was created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in United States of America, by the 1994 Violence against Women Act. The purpose was to use the RPE Program to strengthen sexual prevention efforts. Rape Prevention and Education Model of Community Change (RPE theory model) was developed with input from state and community organizations.

The theory provides the organizations and other audiences with an understanding of the types of strategies needed to pursue multilevel change and articulates how change happens at the community and individual levels. Family social workers can utilize this model to inform their efforts to seek individual, family, and society-level changes in their communities. The Church as a religious/social body can very well be assisted by the Rape Prevention and Education theory in its social intervention efforts in assisting the rape/sexual violence victims to get back on their feet in the society, as well to get justice against their abusers.

Materials and Methods

The study, located in Anambra state, southeast Nigeria, employed a descriptive mixed method design which necessitated that both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, but analyzed independently and then combined for meaningful interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Data collection lasted for a period of five weeks, between February and March 2021. Respondents were drawn from the commercial and administrative capitals of the three senatorial zones in the state, namely Awka, Nnewi and Onitsha. The respondents were adult Christians of both sexes aged between 18 years and 65 years. Because of dearth of accurate population records for the age

bracket and cost of reaching all, a sample size of 250 respondents was randomly drawn on whom the questionnaire was administered on other administered basis with the help of three research assistants. Awka and Nnewi got 80 copies of the questionnaire distributed in their areas, whereas Onitsha got 90 because of her larger population.

Qualitative data were collected via Focused Group Discussion held for male and female groups in the three communities studied. Altogether, there were six sessions of FGD. In each of the FGD sessions, nine participants were invited, made up of civil servants, medical personnel and religious men and women who consented to participate.

The quantitative data collected were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. The results were presented below in frequencies, simple percentages and graphic illustrations like bar charts. The hypotheses formulated for the study were tested using the chi-square inferential statistics. The qualitative data generated from FGD were transcribed verbatim and analyzed manually based on the themes of the study. Qualitative data generated were used to support and clarify the quantitative data of the study. In line with the theoretical perspective of the study, the concurrent transformative strategy is employed in merging the findings of both quantitative and qualitative data of the study (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003).

Analysis of Research Objectives

The thematic issues of the study which revolve around implications of rape cases on Christian belief systems/faith; roles of Christian Bodies toward victims of rape and curtailment of rape are discussed below.

Research Objective 1: To ascertain the perceived implications of rape on Christian belief systems/faith in Anambra State

To provide answer to the above objective, responses to questionnaire item that sought to know if rampant cases of rape devalue the importance of Christianity in Anambra state was analyzed as shown in Table 1 below

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by their view on whether rampant cases of rape devalue the importance of Christian Faith

Variables	Frequency Percentage (%)
Certainly	21
Not at all	8.4 163
In some cases	65.2
I can't say	40
	16
	26
	10.4
Total	250 100

Field Survey, 2021

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents 165(65.2%) hold the opinion that rampant cases of rape do not devalue the importance of Christianity in the society, while 21 (8.4%) of the respondents indicated that rampant cases of rape certainly devalue the importance of Christian faith. The finding is in agreement with the findings of the qualitative data of the study. In the FGD at Awka, a participant firmly observed that

It is true that rape is an ugly incident which nobody in his/her right senses will be happy to see happen to himself/herself or to any other person, yet it is something the victim knows is the crime of the perpetrator and not of the Church. The victim of a rape case will feel isolated and disappointed if the Christian body to which the victim belongs do not offer any protection and ray of hope; and be made to know that everyone feels for him/her. The Church as a body is not guilty of the crime of rape for the offence to devalue the importance of Christian faith (Male, 57 years, retired school teacher)

Another participant in FGD at Onitsha, making a contribution of whether rampant cases of rape can devalue the importance of the Christian faith, asserted that:

It may in some cases affect the faith and commitment to some victims especially in situations in which the offender is a personality to reckon with in the Church. If the perpetrator is a reputable leader in the Church, the crime may not only injure the faith of the victim, it may go a long way in demoralising the entire Church fold because the faithful look on their leaders as being God's representatives and as such should be sacrosanct and above board (Male, 51 years, Hospital Lab Attendant).

Also in FGD at Onitsha, a priest who participated in the discussion stated that;

The rampant crime of rape can actually affect the functionality of a Christian fold if it is recorded that the perpetrators of the crime belong to the Christian fold and the victims are also of the fold. The relevance of the fold will be totally lost and its functionality will be a mirage and of no consequence. If eventually, there are some members of a Christian fold who are perpetrators of such crime, the relevance of the Church should not be jeopardised provided the Church works to protect the interest of the victims and endeavours to bring the culprits to justice no matter who they are (Male, 39 years, A Catholic Priest).

Research Objective 2: To ascertain how Christian Bodies/ denominations in Anambra State react to rape when one of their leaders is indicted

The participants were further asked to describe how they will react individually and collectively, when their religious leader is indicted of rape. Their responses were given on figure 1.

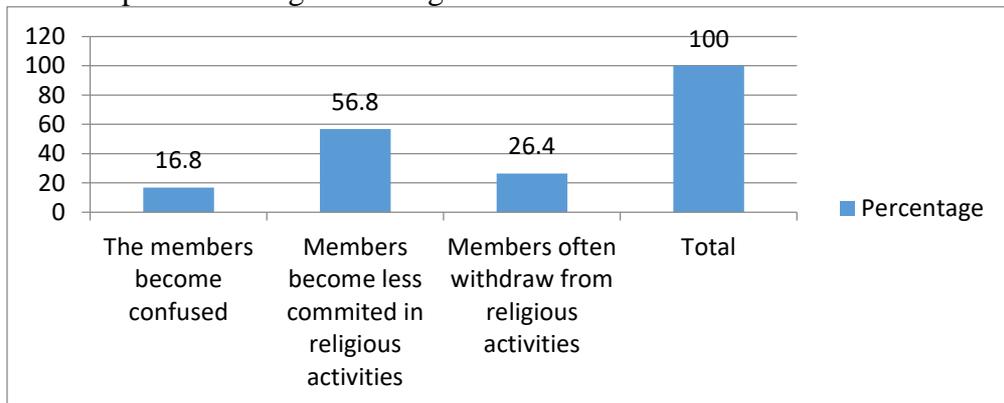
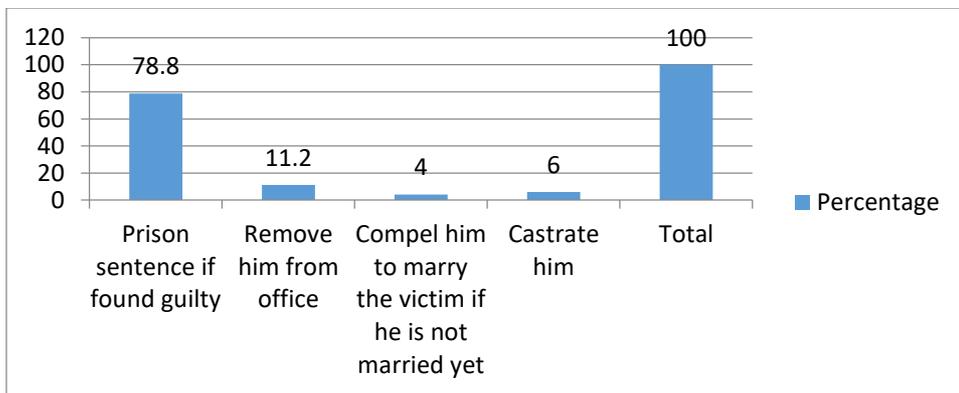


Figure 1: Reactions (individually and collectively), when their religious leader is indicted of rape (Field Survey, 2021)

Regarding reactions of members when a religious leader is indicted of perpetrating rape, Figure 1 shows that 56.8% of the respondents believe that members of the Christian faith will become less committed to religious activities, while 16.8% of the respondents hold the view that the members of the Church will become confused regarding their faith. This finding is in agreement with the findings of the qualitative data. Participants in the FGD in the three study areas indicated that involvement of a religious leader in crime of rape is so ugly that it weakens the confidence the followers or Church members have on them and as such weakens their commitment to religious activities of the Church. A participant at Nkpor/Onitsha remarkably stated,

The Bible in Proverbs 14:34 observed that righteousness exalts a nation while sin is a reproach to any people. Following from this, it is obvious that in any Church fold where a religious leader is wayward, the

followers are weak in faith. Worse still when a leader in a Church is indicted of a heinous crime like rape the members of the Church will be spiritually weak and less committed in religious activities. The spiritual strength of a Christian community is often established on the steadfastness of their leaders and once the leaders are weak, the followers will be weak and less committed, unless the followers are determined to remove such a leader and subject him to justice, to answer for his crimes. Their action in such situation will be their strength and the crime of the leader will not affect their spiritual progress (Female, 62 years, a Nurse).



Field Survey, 2021

Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents on the likely penalty of a religious leader indicted of rape

Figure 2 shows that 78.8% or respondents were of the opinion that penalty of a religious leader indicted of rape should be prison sentence if found guilty, while 4% of the respondents rather believe that the penalty should be to prevail on the religious leader to marry the victim if he is not married yet. The finding is corroborated by the findings of the qualitative data of the study. In the FGD at Awka, all the participants maintained that imprisonment is more appropriate punishment for a rape culprit even if he is a religious leader. One of the participants affirmed that,

Once crime is committed, the law does not inquire on the personality of the perpetrator and as such if a religious leader brings himself so low as to commit the crime of rape in total disregard of his person and his office, justice demands that he should face the penalty due to the crime. Being sentenced to prison could even be to his benefit because if he does not go to prison, angry mobs might lynch him or worse still, castrates him. Going to prison should rather be a better option for him (Male, 54 years, a Civil Servant)

Research Objective 3: To ascertain dominant role(s) that Christian Bodies/denominations in Anambra State have consistently played /as their response toward mitigating the incidence of rape in the state.

Table 2: What major role have Christian Bodies consistently played to assist rape victims?

Variables	Frequency Percentage (%)	
They provide them with support groups where they narrate or share their experiences, as well as give each other sense of hope	31	12.4
They help them to obtain justice against culprits so as to protect them from further victimization	183	73.2
	36	14.4
They help them to go through rehabilitation as well as religious counseling	0	0.0
Others, please specify.....		
Total	250	100

Field Survey, 2021

On roles that Christian bodies have played to assist rape victims on their part to recovery, 183 (73.2%) of the respondents hold the opinion that the Christian bodies help the victims to obtain justice against culprits so as to protect them from further victimization, while 31 (12.4%) of the respondents indicated that the victims were assisted by providing them with support groups where they narrate or share their experiences, as well as give each other sense of hope.

The finding above is in agreement with the findings of the qualitative data. For instance, in the FGD at Awka, a participant observed that

A victim of rape will not have consolation and peace of heart if she does not see the culprit punished for the crime of desecrating her. If every effort is made to give the victim solace and made her feel accommodated and understood, yet the perpetrator is not brought to justice; and pay for his crime, the victim would continue to feel the traumatic pain and grief of what she suffered. When the victim is sure that the culprit has been adequately punished for the crime, she will begin to respond to other attention being given to her (Female,49 years, a Civil servant in Local Government Secretariat).

Also in a FGD at Onitsha, a participant remarked,

Victims of rape generally live in fear of reprisal attack from perpetrators of rape and as such would always prefer silence on the matter even though their hearts are in pain and agony. They obviously cannot fight for themselves. Therefore, the assistance they can be given is to be helped to bring the perpetrators to justice. Once the victim is certain the perpetrator is punished for the offence, she can confidently share her experience (Female, 53 years, A Rev. Sister).

Table 3: How have Christian Bodies been contributing to stem the tide of rape in Anambra State?

Variables	Frequency (%)	Percentage
Consistently condemning rape as a heinous crime	44	17.6
Educating the public on the immoral gravity of rape	140	56.0
Helping to see that offenders are properly rehabilitated	46	18.4
Organizing seminars to educate the society on safety measures to prevent rape	20	8.0
Total	250	100

Field Survey, 2021

On the respondents’ view on how the Christian bodies could contribute to stem the tide of rape in the society, Table 3 shows that 140 (56.0%) of the respondents are of the view that educating the public on the immoral gravity of rape is a major way to the Christian bodies can contribute to control rampant cases of rape in the society. 20 (8.0%) of the respondents on the other hand believe that the tide of rape in the society could be stemmed if the Christian bodies organise seminars to educate the society on safety measures to prevent rape. The finding is in agreement with the findings of the qualitative data of the study. In Nkpor, a participant in FGD remarked that,

Punishing perpetrators of crime without corresponding enlightenment to the public on the intricacies and implications of the crime, will continue to multiply the offenders. The same is applicable to rape. If the public is not educated and enlightened on the ugliness and seriousness of rape, innocent ones will, with time be part of the crime. Education creates awareness and knowledge; and knowledge is power.

Educating the public on rape matters will not only inform them of the implications of rape and how heinous it is but it will equip them with measures to avoid being victims of the crime (Male, 47 years, A Catholic Priest).

Test of Study Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: Respondents with low level of education are likely to hold the view that rising cases of rape in Nigeria is devaluing Christianity than their counterparts with high level of education.

To test this hypothesis, respondents’ educational attainment was re-coded into low and high levels. That is, no formal education, primary and secondary educations were re-coded into low level of education, while tertiary education was classified as high level. Thereafter, cross-tabulation was carried out between level of education and respondents view on effect of rampant cases of rape on Christianity. The outcome is shown on table 4 below;

Table 4: Chi-square result of hypothesis one

<i>Level of education</i>	<i>Do you think that rampant cases of rape devalue the importance of Christianity in the society?</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>Certainly</i>	<i>Not at All</i>	<i>In Some Cases</i>	<i>I Can’t Certainly Say</i>	
<i>Low level</i>	11 (52.4%)	69 (42.3%)	15 (37.5%)	9 (34.6%)	104 (41.6%)
<i>High level</i>	10 (47.6%)	94 (57.7%)	25 (62.5%)	17 (65.4%)	146 (58.4%)
Total	21 (100.0%)	163 (100.0%)	40 (100.0%)	26 (100.0%)	250 (100.0%)

$x^2 = 1.839$ $df = 3$, $p > .606$, $N = 250$

Table 4 indicates that respondents with high level of education 146(58.4%) were greater than those with low level 104(41.6%). In cross-tabulation, those who certainly believe that rampant cases of rape in Nigeria is devaluing Christianity were 21(100.0%) and those who were of the opinion that it is in some cases were 40(100.0%). On the other hand, those who strongly disprove that view by saying not at all 163(100.0%) were far greater. Again, based on the chi-square result ($x^2=1.839$) and p-value (.606) which is greater than 0.05 level of significance, there appears a convincing evidence to reject the stated

substantive hypothesis. This suggests that educational attainment does not determine respondents' views on implications of rape on Christian faith.

Hypothesis Two: Protestant Christians are most likely to protect their indicted member in rape than their orthodox counterparts in Nigeria.

To test this hypothesis, respondents' denomination was re-coded into two, i.e., orthodox and protestant Christians. The Catholics and Anglican were merged as orthodox, while Pentecostals were termed Protestants. Based on this a cross-tabulation was carried out between Christian denomination and possibility of Christian Bodies to protect a culprit member indicted in rape. The outcome is shown on table 5 below;

Table 5: Chi-square result of hypothesis two

<i>Christian Denomination</i>	<i>Is it possible that Christian Bodies would want to protect a culprit member by blaming the victim?</i>			<i>Total</i>
	Yes	Not at All	Not in All Cases	
<i>Orthodox</i>	26 (72.2%)	29 (69.0%)	135 (78.5%)	190 (76.0%)
<i>Protestants</i>	10 (27.8%)	13 (31.0%)	37 (21.5%)	60 (24.0%)
Total	36 (100.0%)	42 (100.0%)	172 (100.0%)	250 (100.0%)

$$x^2=1.979 \text{ df} = 2, p>.372, N = 250$$

Table 5 shows that Orthodox Christians 190(76.0%) constituted greater number of the respondents than Protestants who were just 60(24.0%). The cross-tabulated result indicates that majority of the respondents 172(100.0%) were of the view that Christian bodies would not in all cases protect their member indicted in rape. This suggests that this attitude is often witnessed among Christian organizations, perhaps to shield their image from dent. In addition, the lesser proportion 36 (100.0%) of the respondents strongly affirmed that Christian bodies would stop at nothing from trying to protect their own who is a rape culprit. However, 42(100.0%) of them disproved that view as not possible. Based on the chi-square result ($x^2=1.979$) and p-value of (.372), which is greater than 0.05 level of significance, there emerged an evidence to reject the stated hypothesis and uphold the null. This implies that Protestant Christians

are not likely to protect their indicted member in rape than their orthodox counterparts in Nigeria. This is understandable because the bible condemns the immoral act and it is as well a crime against humanity. No sane person therefore would want to condole or cover a rape culprit, and not even among Christians.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that rampant cases of rape do not devalue the importance of Christian belief system/ faith in Anambra state. Both quantitative and qualitative findings agreed on this but to a point. There were however situations according to qualitative findings where rape cases may affect the importance and relevance of a Christian body. In situations where the perpetrator is a reputable personality in the Church, the crime of rape may not only injure the faith of the victim, it may go a long way in demoralizing the entire Church fold because the faithful look on their leaders as being God's representatives and should be sacrosanct and above board. Also, in situation where the perpetrators and the victims are of the same Christian body, the Church loses its relevance. This view to some extent is consistent with previous studies on the issue.

Finkelhor & Brown (1985), in their study of impact of rape observed that such experience has made many victims of rape to view the Church as a desecrated place and to have a total disconnect with the Church. Hypothesis one, states that believers with low level of education are likely to hold the view that rising cases of rape in Nigeria is devaluing Christianity than their counterparts with high level of education. The result showed that there is no significant difference ($\chi^2 = 1.839$ $df = 3$, $p > .606$) between how respondents with low level of education and their counterparts with high level of education view of how rising cases of rape in Nigeria devalue Christianity. This simply indicates that educational attainment does not determine a believer's view on implications of rape on Christian faith. This is because the ugliness of the crime is obvious to everyone who is reasonable in spite of educational status.

The study further showed that involvement of Christian religious leader in rape crime affects the faith of the Church members awkwardly by making them less committed to religious activities. The spiritual strength of a Christian community is often established on the steadfastness of their leaders. This finding has support in previous studies. Fogler et al, (2008a), in their study noted that rape experience propels the victim to lose faith in the Church and her authorities. The victims equally lose faith in God as a loving and protecting Father. Besides loss of faith in God, victims equally question God's benevolence. The involvement of Christian religious leaders in rape makes the faithful to be spiritually weak, except in situations where the followers resolve to remove the culprit leader and subject him to justice, to answer for his crime.

The study furthermore showed that Christian bodies can be of great assistance to rape victims by helping them to obtain justice against culprits and they should be protected from further victimization. The study showed that as long as the perpetrators of the crime of rape are not brought to justice, to pay for their crime, the victim would continue to feel the traumatic pain of the crime against her. This is consistent with the findings in related studies by other scholars. The Scottish Episcopal Church Provincial Office (n.d), in their study of impact of rape on the victims indicated that the Church has a role to play in order to give the victims of rape some succor. They observed that a victim of rape would most likely opt for silence believing that she might not be understood and believed if she tells her story. It is important therefore that the Church supports all such victims through the quality of listening and understanding; and through reaching out with them to obtain the justice, support and care that they need. In order to obtain such justice, the study showed that any religious leader who is indicted of rape, and by virtue of extension, any culprit, should go to prison if found guilty. Hypothesis two states that Protestant Christians are most likely to protect their indicted member in rape than their orthodox counterparts in Nigeria. The result showed that there is no significant difference ($\chi^2=1.979$ $df = 2$, $p>.372$) between the protection Protestant Christians and Orthodox Christians give to their indicted members in rape cases. This is because rape is a heinous crime that every sane person frowns seriously at.

On how the Christian bodies can help to stem the tide of rape in the society, the study showed that the Christian bodies should embark on educating the public on the moral gravity of rape in the society. The finding on the duty of the Christian bodies or the Churches to educate their members on the ugliness of rape among them, is consistent with earlier studies. Newbell (2019), in his study, observed that the Churches should conduct educational program in rape awareness. She further stated that due to the nature of society, the Churches owe their members an educational program that facilitates awareness of rape and its personal, psychological, sociological, legal, and moral consequences. By undertaking the education of their members, the Christian bodies contribute immensely in stemming the tide of rape in the society. Rape Prevention and Education theory provides the Christian bodies the strategies they need to pursue multilevel change both at community and individual levels that involve their members. The theory will assist Christian bodies in their effort to educate their members in order to bring some transformational change in the society.

Conclusion

The study interrogated the implications of rape among Christian believers in Anambra State. It also inquired into how the Christian bodies react to rape when a religious leader is indicted. The study showed that rampant cases of rape do not devalue the importance of Christian faith because the act of rape is committed not by the Church but by individuals. However, in situation when

the perpetrator is a reputable personality in the Church, the faith of the victim is jeopardized and other members of the Church fold are discouraged and demoralized. Victims of rape often times live in fear of further victimization. They yearn for justice and to be understood. The Church has the obligation to offer support and assistance to such victims and to help them secure justice against the culprits. The Church further has the obligation to help create awareness among its members, of the ugly implications of rape. When this is regularly done, the Church contributes immensely in stemming the tide of rape in society.

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