

The background of the cover is a photograph of a wide, calm lake or river. In the distance, there are rolling hills or mountains under a hazy, overcast sky. The water reflects the light, creating a soft, blueish-grey tone. The overall mood is serene but slightly somber, fitting the theme of the book.

Christians' and Muslims'  
Responses to the COVID-19  
Pandemic in Nigeria

*Battling the Unknown*

*Edited by*

Afis Ayinde Oladosu

Abdulrazaq Kilani

Samuel Okanlawon

# Christians' and Muslims' Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria:

*Battling the Unknown*

Edited by

Afis Ayinde Oladosu, Abdulrazaq Kilani  
and Samuel Okanlawon

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## CHAPTER 9

# “THIS SHOULD NOT HAPPEN IN THE CHURCH!”: RAPE AND SOCIAL INSECURITY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN NIGERIA

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### Introduction

The rape of women and girls in Nigeria, like in other nations of the world, has generated much debate. While some put the blame on the government for not being responsible enough for the security of lives of her citizens, others are of the opinion that the victims are to be blamed as they expose their bodies to attract the opposite sex.<sup>1</sup> Rape cases in Nigeria increased during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown/restriction order as directed by the government to fight the spread of the pandemic. Efforts made so far by both government and non-governmental organisations to address this menace have not produced any encouraging results.<sup>2</sup> The paper examines the increase in rape cases during the lockdown in Nigeria and its connection to social insecurity within the context of Christianity.

### Cases of Rape in Nigeria

This section of the paper specifically examines a few cases of rape that were perpetrated in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic. Perhaps,

<sup>1</sup> Caroline Okumdi Muoghalu. “Rape and Women’s Sexual Health in Nigeria: The Stark Realities of Being Female in a Patriarchal World”, *The African Anthropologist*, 19, no1 & 2 (2012):34-40.

<sup>2</sup> Chiazor, I.A. et.al., “Taming the Scourge of Rape in Nigeria: Issues and Actions”, *Gender and Behaviour*, 14(3)2016.

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one of the most emotionally-crippling reported incidents of rape was the incestuous rape of a 60-year-old mother in the Ajobamidele area of Ado Ekiti by her own 21-year-old son, Akintunde Omotehinde.<sup>3</sup> Also, on Monday, 1 June 2020, a group of yet-to-be-identified men stormed the home of Miss Barakat Bello at the Kara Market area of Moniya in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State. The men, whose intention was to rob the family of their belongings, met Barakat Bello in the bathroom; they raped and killed her after their dastardly act.<sup>4</sup> The story of Hadiza Saidu's daughter was rather traumatic as their two girls were raped by their neighbour.<sup>5</sup> There was also a case of a father who repeatedly raped his own daughter at gunpoint.<sup>6</sup> Another case of rape that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic was that of Kehinde Osadeke, who was home from school and visited a family friend. But one of the boys began to touch her, and he became violent when Kehinde shouted at him to stop. He eventually raped the innocent lady. Because of the shame and the stigma, Kehinde committed suicide.<sup>7</sup> A 13-year-old Rose had been sexually and physically abused by her father for as long as she could remember. Her mother had left when Rose was very young, leaving her and her father alone in their one-room apartment in Lagos. Things got worse during the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown. Rose's father saw the lockdown, which also resulted in the closure of schools, as an opportunity to rape his own daughter every night. Her cries during one of those nights caught the attention of their neighbours, which led to her final rescue. Ifunaya was another victim raped by her neighbour during the COVID-19 pandemic. She tried to free herself from the rapist, but, unfortunately, she was overpowered. All her efforts to get justice proved abortive. She lamented that she has to live with the traumatic experience.<sup>8</sup>

Manifestation of rape cases is like cancer which has no respect for age, colour, sex or race and more in a pandemic lockdown situation. It is against this backdrop of rampant cases of rape that the Executive Director

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<sup>3</sup> Sandra Chiefe, "27 year old son raped his 60 year old mother," *Vanguard News*, September 10, 2013, [www.vanguardng.com](http://www.vanguardng.com).

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<sup>5</sup> Abdulkareem Haruna, "Police arrested the rapists that raped Hadizat Saidu's daughters," March 8, 2020, [www.premiumtimesng.com](http://www.premiumtimesng.com).

<sup>6</sup> Father raped his daughter at a gunpoint. *The Voice Newspaper*, March 15, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Kehinde Sodeke Raped. [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com). Retrieved 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Ifunaya Raped by her neighbor. <https://www.voanews.com/episode>. Retrieved December 26, 2021.

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of Partners for Justice, Itoero Ezeanaba, lamented the unprecedented increase in rape cases during the lockdown. She asserts that "...we are worried, the lockdown led to an over 50% increase in the number of reported cases of sexual violence at our centre". About 85% of the victims of the rape cases were children. The worrisome aspect of it is that rape is carried out by those known to the victims, not strangers. This is understandably due to movement restriction, loss of income, isolation, overcrowding and high levels of stress during the lockdown. All these factors increased the likelihood of children experiencing physical, psychological and sexual violence at home.<sup>9</sup> Between January and May 2020, Nigeria's Inspector General of Police stated that the force arrested 799 suspects associated with 717 rape cases. Out of the figure, 600 have been charged in court while 55 cases were still being investigated.<sup>10</sup> It was as a result of this evil act that Nigerian women took to the street to take action as rape cases surged during the pandemic. The women were bent on addressing the problem of sexual violence, saying that cases have ended in few prosecutions, widespread stigmatisation and a tendency to blame the victims.<sup>11</sup>

While rape is not a strange criminal act globally, it assumed a threatening dimension owing to COVID-19, where both attracted targets (victims) and motivated rapists, or sexual predators, are trapped under COVID-19 restrictions.<sup>12</sup> This paper is, therefore, an attempt to examine the incidences of rape in Nigeria during the COVID-19 lockdown and its connection to social insecurity from a Christian perspective. It is quite unfortunate that the menace of rape does not exclude the so-called men of God who are considered to be role models for their members. Many pastors were caught and arrested during the COVID-19 lockdown. A few of such cases are: Pastor Peter Taiwo of Christ Apostolic Bible Church, Aja Oke, Saje, Abeokuta, who was caught while defiling a 16-year-old choir member of his church. He was arrested along with his wife, Elizabeth Taiwo, for allegedly conniving with her husband by locking the doors against the victim.<sup>13</sup> Another pastor, by the name Imfon Inyang was arrested in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, for attempting to rape a 21-year-old

<sup>9</sup> Itoero Ezeanaba. Creating a safe haven for Sexual Violence Survivors, 2020. Guardian.ng. Retrieved 10 January, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> www.interchopen.com/chapters. Retrieved 17th December, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> www.globaltimes/page/202104/12. Retrieved on 17th January, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> The Guardian, 16 June, 2020. Retrieved 4th January, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Pastor's wife connives as husband rapes choir member in Ogun State, January 9, 2022, https://punching.com. Retrieved 9th January 2022.

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girl. The State's Commissioner of Police, Imohini Edgal, disclosed that about eight girls between the ages of 13 and 16 were living with the Pastor and that he had in the past repeatedly raped one of them.<sup>14</sup> A 35-year-old pastor in Akwa Ibom State, Mr Nnamso Friday Jacob, otherwise known as "Major Prophet Honesty Jesus", drugged a girl before he raped her. The incident occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic in a church, the Living Power of Zion Church, Ndue Eduo, Okon Eket in Eket Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The innocent girl went for counselling and deliverance, which was fixed by the suspect himself, who was the general overseer of the church. She offered the girl an intoxicating liquid substance and unlawfully had carnal knowledge of her.<sup>15</sup> A pastor of the Living Faith Church (Winners Chapel) in Njaba Local Government Area of Imo State claimed he was tempted when he was accused of raping an 11-year-old girl in the home of another pastor. He said although he was tempted to rape the teen, he never raped her.<sup>16</sup> In fact, the number of rape cases cannot be exhausted in a study of this nature.

### Panoramic Overview of Rape

Rape, according to Nigeria Criminal Code, is "any unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl without, or if the consent is obtained by force or by means of threats or intimidation of any kind, or fear of harm, or by any means of false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or in the case of a married woman by impersonating her husband, is guilty of an offence of rape."<sup>17</sup> Rape and its attendant traumatic experience on the part of the victims have brought various societal discomforts. Non-governmental organisations, corporate bodies, civil society and social activists have condemned the increase in the number of rape cases strongly and have challenged governments at every level to do what is required of them. Rape has become an epidemic,<sup>18</sup> and many of the victims suffer

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<sup>17</sup> Brigneti Paola, Egbonimali, Shadrack, "Rape in Nigeria: Theory and Reality" *DELTAWOMEN* (2012). <https://scholar.google.com>. the consent is obtained by

<sup>18</sup> E.L Oyetade, *Rape and its Effects on the Society*, 2020, <https://www.scout.org>.

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humiliation, depression, and stigmatisation and sometimes resulting in suicide.

### Causes of Rape

There are some pertinent questions related to rape: what could be the underlining reasons for perpetrating rape? Why do rape cases keep increasing? These are examined in this section.

**Poorly Defined Criminal Laws:** The issue of poorly defined criminal laws has been the bane of the country since independence. The country's criminal law enforcement gives the perpetrators the boldness to go ahead and commit the act with impunity since no single offender has been brought to book for the public to have confidence in the judiciary. The Child Rights Law in Nigeria (31(2) of 2003 states that anyone convicted of rape is liable to life imprisonment. Unfortunately, nobody is enforcing the law. Thus, women and girls are being raped and molested unabatedly.<sup>19</sup>

**Culture of Silence:** Most rape cases are not reported because the affected families prefer to keep it secret. This is because of the stigma and mockery attached to it.<sup>20</sup> As a result of this, they try to sweep it under the carpet. This was not the case in the past, as there was a culture of naming and shaming rapists. However, education, modernity and civilisation have swept the cherished culture under the carpet of forgetfulness.<sup>21</sup> What we witness today is where the family of the perpetrator promise the family of the victim certain compensation so that the offender will not be reported.

**Effect of Social Media:** There is no doubt that social media has brought a lot of positive changes to the world. While many youth use social media to develop themselves in this highly competitive economy, others make use of social media for despicable and unspeakable things. They watch various pornographic sites and television programmes that expose the body of the opposite sex.<sup>22</sup> Youth nowadays are very

<sup>19</sup> N. Odeh, "Siege of Child Rapist" (2013) in *The News* 06 May, 2013) [www.ajol.info/article/view/109104](http://www.ajol.info/article/view/109104)

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inquisitive. They want to put into practice what they have read or seen. As a result of the environment they find themselves in, they are under pressure to experiment with sex.

**Peer Influence:** The adolescent stage is a very sensitive period. This is the period when youth think they have arrived and can do things without being monitored or supervised by their parents. Through this, innocent youth who keep regular or move with those who are rapists will definitely get involved in the act. Most youths want to remain relevant and the only way they think they can be relevant is to experiment with sex through raping. Many youths who are influenced by their parents positively behave more responsibly and act within the confine of the acceptable sexual norm in such society than those who allow friends and peers to influence them.<sup>23</sup>

**Indecent Dressing:** Before the recent trend, one of the reasons for engaging in rape was the provocative way ladies dressed. Many young ladies and adults dress in such a way that attracts the opposite sex and causes them to have lustful thoughts that may eventually lead to rape.<sup>24</sup>

Indecent dressing, most common among women and girls, is an inappropriate mode of dressing that often exposes parts of one's body that ought to be covered from public view.<sup>25</sup>

**Parental Upbringing:** Most of the new generation parents have a kind of lackadaisical attitude towards the training of their children. They are more concerned about how to accumulate wealth to the detriment of their families. Youth and adolescents want to express themselves in the best possible way they know, and when parents are not around to curb some of the excesses of their children, they make use of the opportunity to do things they cannot ordinarily do in the presence of their parents. They engage in activities like extramarital affairs, incest and drinking. Any child brought up in this kind of setting may probably become a rapist.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Diara, B. & Nweze Stanley. "Saint Paul and the Concept for Sexual Immorality". In *Journal of Bible Exposition*, 1 no.1 (2011): 113.

<sup>25</sup> Sola, Olorunda. "Indecent Dressing among Youths in South West Nigeria". (2018). [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net).

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**Adolescent Stage:** Various studies on an adolescent study revealed that adolescents generally have a strong desire for sex.<sup>27</sup> They explore every opportunity available to them to satisfy their sexual drive. This could be attributed to hormone increases. Adolescence is seen as a period of sexual activeness.<sup>28</sup>

**Decline in Moral Values:** In Nigeria, moral values have declined drastically. The cherished culture of respect for the opposite sex, the sanctity of life, and culture of shaming are gradually disappearing. Youth nowadays do not see anything bad in engaging in acts that are detrimental to the peaceful co-existence of society again. This is why many go into internet fraud to make ends meet. Parents have passion for their own biological children and pastors have affairs with their female converts.<sup>29</sup>

**Poverty in the land:** The high level of poverty in the land has forced many families to allow their female children to engage in businesses that are not meant for their age. We see this in our various motor parks and marketplaces on a daily basis. Many parents allow children and teens to hawk at unholy hours. They engage in this in order to augment the family income. As a result, these young ones are exposed to the avoidable danger of being raped.<sup>30</sup>

### Effects of Rape on the Perpetrators and the Victims

As a result of the weak criminal justice system in the country, as said earlier, many rapists commit their dastardly acts and go scot-free. However, apart from the fact that such persons be haunted for life which will automatically affect them psychologically, the offenders, if arrested, may end up behind bars. The health consequences of such acts are unimaginable as many of the women and girls raped die of one disease or the other. Social stigma is another effect on the perpetrators. Nobody will

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<sup>28</sup> Benwell, G. "Illustrated Medical Dictionary", London: 2002. A Dorling Kindersley Books.

<sup>29</sup> Samson, B. and Allida, V. Moral Decline in Schools: Reflections on Public Secondary Schools in Iganga District, Uganda. *Baraton Interdisciplinary Research Journal (special issue)* (2018): [www.ueab.ac.ke](http://www.ueab.ac.ke).

<sup>30</sup> Donna, Greco and Sarah, Dawgert: "Poverty and Sexual Violence: Building Prevention and Intervention Responses". *A Guide for Counsellors and Advocates*. (2007).

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<sup>27</sup> Titis, Prawitasari, Hartono, Gunardi, and Bambang, Madiyono: "Adolescent rape: Characteristics and short-term impact". 2016. [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net).

<sup>28</sup> Benwell, G. "Illustrated Medical Dictionary", London: 2002. A Dorling Kindersley Books.

<sup>29</sup> Samson, B. and Allida, V. Moral Decline in Schools: Reflections on Public Secondary Schools in Iganga District, Uganda. *Baraton Interdisciplinary Research Journal (special issue)* (2018): [www.ueab.ac.ke](http://www.ueab.ac.ke).

<sup>30</sup> Donna, Greco and Sarah, Dawgert: "Poverty and Sexual Violence: Building Prevention and Intervention Responses". *A Guide for Counsellors and Advocates*. (2007).

want to relate or entrust anything to a rapist. His action has suggested that he cannot be trusted.

The effect on the victim is also great. Rape devastates the lives of the victims and their families, causing severe physical and psychological pains and suffering, including sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies and death. It can also lead to low self-esteem and symptoms of depression and traumatic stress if not properly handled by an expert.<sup>31</sup> Rape leaves painful memories and lifelong consequences on the victim. It inflicts permanent damage on the victim. They are more likely to abuse drugs and suffer from self-blame, physical injuries and inability to form or maintain a healthy and trusting relationship.<sup>32</sup>

Rape comes with the stigmatisation of the victim, resulting in rejection by families and communities. Besides, the police are sometimes unwilling to make official reports. Owing to this stigma, women and adolescents may be unwilling or unable to obtain a medical examination report that will substantiate their report of rape. Sexual violence breaks every social convention relating to sexuality. The high rate of rape and the low reporting underscores the need for specific actions to address sexual violence and stem the tide.<sup>33</sup>

### A Synopsis of Rape Cases in a few African Countries

Violence against women in general, most especially the menace of rape, cuts across nationalities and socio-economic groups. Violence against women, particularly rape, takes place under various conditions, including war situations. There is a need to have a survey of rape cases in a few other African countries. This is in order appropriately situate the extent of the synopsis in the Nigerian context.

In Ghana, the prevalent form of violence against women and girls include physical violence and rape. It is one of the frequently reported crimes in Ghana. This involves defilement of a child under 16 years, sexual harassment, forced sex in marriage, incest, and so on. A survey conducted by the Domestic Violence Victim and Support Unit (DOVVSU)

<sup>31</sup> Ashiru, M. O. A. & Orifowomo, O. A. 'Law of Rape in Nigeria and England: Need to Re-invent in the Twenty-First Century' *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization* 38. (2015): 38.

<sup>32</sup> Afhassan, A. "Child Rape: Who speaks for the victims?" (2013).

[www.hoprformigeriaonline.com/child-rape-who-speaks-for-the-victims](http://www.hoprformigeriaonline.com/child-rape-who-speaks-for-the-victims).

<sup>33</sup> Evelyn J. "They came with two guns": The Consequences of sexual violence for the mental health of women in armed conflict. *Review*. (2010) 92, no. 877

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in Accra revealed an annual increase rape cases. Also, a further study conducted by Gender Centre in Ghana revealed that in over 95% of rape cases, the perpetrators were male relatives.<sup>34</sup> A book titled "Combating domestic violence: A manual for churches and service providers" revealed that three men raped a thirteen-year-old girl on her way from an errand.

Rape is one of the most widespread crimes in Ethiopia. According to a report by the UN, Ethiopian women are likely to be exposed to domestic violence, especially rape, at the hands of their partners. The report revealed that about 60% of Ethiopian women are raped. The shame associated with rape deters many victims from speaking about their experiences.<sup>35</sup> The stigma associated with rape deters many victims from speaking about their experiences. The culture of sexual discrimination against girls and women is common in patriarchal communities like Ethiopia, where girls are supposed to stay in-door and serve men. For instance, a 25-year-old Amhara, a student at an Ethiopian public university, was raped by her stepfather.<sup>36</sup>

Incidences of rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continue to occur with impunity despite the intervention of the UN Security Council for almost a decade. Suspects implicated in such incidents are released from custody or kept in proximity to civilian centres. In DRC, women and girls face a heightened risk of rape when performing livelihood activities such as collecting firewood, grass or water, going to markets or tending fields, as is the case in the Central African Republic.<sup>37</sup> A militia interviewed by the producer of the film *The Greatest Silence*, filmmaker Lisa Jackson, admitted to many rapes. Some have lost count of how many women and girls they had raped, but one of them noted that it could have been 25.<sup>38</sup>

The Burundi Sexual Violence Assessment Report of 2011 showed that the civil war in Burundi resulted in the massive displacement of about 204,000 people. Rape became frequent in some places for girls and women

<sup>34</sup> Aryee, E. Psychological Effects of rape on victims. Unpublished dissertation (B.A) Department of Psychology, University of Ghana, (2000).

<sup>35</sup> Reflections Documentation of the forum Gender: Published by Panos Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. Editor, Yonas Admassu.

<sup>36</sup> Yohannes Metiretie Adnew. Testimony of an Ethiopian girl sexually assaulted by her stepfather. In *Journal of Medical Cases Reports*, 2018, 12(1).

<sup>37</sup> United Nations Security Council: Report of the Secretary General on the conflict-Related Sexual Violence, 2016

<sup>38</sup> Lisa Clifford. Special Report: Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 2008.

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who went out to gather firewood and food, to the point that most women had to leave their homes to seek shelter at night in public buildings. In Burundi, when it comes to sex, men have higher power than women and there exist certain cultural proverbs and practices in the community that lend credence to rape.<sup>39</sup> The rape of women and girls in Tutsi was used as a tool to humiliate and annihilate the ethnic population.<sup>40</sup> Women in Burundi were not just raped behind closed doors; they were raped on the streets, at checkpoints, in cultivated plots, and in or near government offices, hospitals, churches and other public buildings.

Cases of rape are prevalent in Sudan among the militia groups who used the opportunity of displacement to perpetrate their acts. Government troops in Sudan, along with the Janjaweed, go to villages, killing the men and raping the women. A displaced woman named Almira told Refugees International that she begged, "As you have raped me, please don't leave me alive. Kill me with your gun." Women were lined up in Sudan communities and raped, often publicly, while being jeered at and taunted. They fled the villages, separated from their children and tried to find safety in camps for internally displaced in the urban centres near their homes. Many women and girls died along the way from the brutality of the attacks.<sup>41</sup>

### Christian Perspective on Rape in Nigeria

Christianity condemns rape in its teaching. As a deeply influential document, the Bible has a lot to say when it comes to attitudes towards sex, shame and gender identity. Bible has been the most influential document in shaping the ideals of western culture regarding the place of women and the relationship between sexes. Sexual relations are portrayed as holy, ordained by God and not to be indulged frivolously, and certainly not to involve violent trampling on the rights and dignity of the marriage partner.

Account of sexual assault against women is heartbreaking and gruesome. The cases of rape recorded in the Bible were not swept under the carpet as

<sup>39</sup> Helena Yeboah, Review Article: Sexual Violence against women and girls in Burundi. In *International Journal of current research*.

<sup>40</sup> Hamel, M.E. Ethnic belonging of the children born of rape in post-conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina and Burundi. *Journal of the Association for the study of Ethnicity and Nationalism*. 22.

<sup>41</sup> Refugees International: Ending Sexual Violence in Darfur: An Advocacy Agenda. *Christian Perspective on Rape in Nigeria*

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perpetrators of the evil acts were made to face the full wrath of the law. For instance, in Genesis Chapter 34, when Jacob's daughter, Dinah, was sexually violated by the son of a neighbouring ruler, Shechem, her brothers murdered him, his father and all of the men of his city for revenge. An unnamed concubine was also gang-raped and left to die from the tribe of Benjamin. The other tribe went to war against them upon hearing of her injustice (Judges 19-21). Tamar was also raped by her half-brother, Amnon, her brother Absalom killed him and incited a rebellion against his father, King David (2 Sam.13).

Also, in the New Testament, rape was mentioned directly, but within the Jewish culture of the day, rape would have been considered sexual immorality. In fact, Jesus and his apostles spoke against sexual immorality and offered it as a ground for divorce. (Mt.5:32). It is also clear that Christians are to obey the laws of their governing authorities. (Rom. 1:3) It is not only that rape is morally wrong, it is also wrong according to the law of the land. As such, anyone who commits such a crime should expect the consequence, which includes arrest and imprisonment. Care and compassion are expected to be extended to the victims of rape. Christians should model the love and compassion of Christ by assisting victims of rape in any way possible.<sup>42</sup>

Cases of rape in the Church have become a burning issue in Nigeria. The way the menace is being reported on a daily basis calls for urgent attention from government and security agencies. While we blame the perpetrators of this act for their lack of human feelings, what do we say about the so-called ministers of God who take advantage of the psychology of worshippers to engage in rape? 1 Timothy 3:1-7 states the importance of ministerial integrity. Some pastors today thrive on corruption as they exploit their followers sexually, financially and materially, all in the name of winning their lives for Christ.<sup>43</sup> Pastors, who are expected to serve as a model of faithfulness, honesty, chastity and self-discipline, engage in actions that are not expected of them. The proven character of ministers of God should be more important than personality, preaching gift and administrative abilities. A pastor must be blameless, not arrogant or quick-tempered, a drunkard or violent, a rapist or greedy.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> What does the Bible say about rape? [gotsquestions.org](http://gotsquestions.org). Retrieved 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2022.

<sup>43</sup> Chukwu, G. Ministerial Ethics: "A Devotional Ethics for Pastors and Christian Leaders". *Shomola Nongraphics* (2003).

<sup>44</sup> O. A. Oderinde: "Ethical Misconduct among Nigerian Church Leaders in the context of 1 Timothy 3:1-7" *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. (2014).

The expectations of God and society from ministers of the gospel are very high, considering the fact that Christianity is an ethical religion that affects every aspect of our human lives.<sup>45</sup> When a man of God, so to say from whom much is expected, descends so low and his integrity is being questioned, there is danger. The result leaves so much to be desired. The present state of Nigeria could be a reflection of the state of the Nigerian Church.<sup>46</sup> The Church should be a place where people find help and healing when in crisis. While religious activities are not necessarily evil, the heightened competition by both influential and obscure pastors to showcase themselves as spiritually powerful and financially favoured by God has led to all sorts of immoralities such as rape being perpetrated by many leaders of the Church. They are involved in sexual exploitation of gullible and vulnerable women. Stories of girls and women being sexually abused by these so-called men of God abound. The Church owes its members educational programmes that facilitate awareness of rape and its personal, psychological, sociological, legal and moral consequences. The Church can guide victims of rape with the available support system. Church, being a sacred religious place, can help in fighting this gender-based violence that injures the psychological and physical well-being of a person. The dramatic rise in rape cases has silenced and affected many victims, hence becoming a challenging issue for the Church and society as a whole. In many situations, clergymen who should be offering guidance to the problem are also perpetrators of rape.

Economic hardship and political tension are prompting many people who are desperate to find solutions to their problems to move from one church to the other in search of solutions. A 60-year-old pastor was found guilty of multiple rapes against children and adults in his congregation.<sup>47</sup> Miss Uwalla Vera Omozuwa, a student of Microbiology at the University of Benin, Nigeria, was raped and killed in one of the parishes of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Benin City. The death of Vera is part of a recent spate of violence involving young women and girls in Nigeria. Rapists do not have regard for sacred places as they perpetrate

<sup>45</sup> Mitiadis, Prolos, and Ioannis Prolos, "Christianity As A Source Ethics" (2015), [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net).

<sup>46</sup> Olusegun Peter Oke "Curbing the menace of Corruption for Good Governance: The Role of Religious Leaders." In Ayantayo, J. K. Dada, O. A. & Labeodan, H. A. (eds.) Religion and Governance in Nigeria. Ibadan, Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan. (2012).

<sup>47</sup> Pastor, 60 is found guilty of multiple rapes of children and Church congregation, January 14, 2020, [www.Dailymail.co.uk>news](http://www.Dailymail.co.uk>news).

their heinous acts anywhere. One cannot but point out here that the COVID-19 pandemic restriction, as ordered by the government in order to contain the spread of the virus, increased incidences of rape in the country. It is becoming crystal clear that the government in Nigeria and Africa at large are not just fighting the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic but also the rape epidemic.<sup>48</sup> Nowhere is safe for girls and women anymore in the continent.

### Rape Cases in the COVID-19 Pandemic and Social Insecurity in Nigeria

Nigeria and many other countries have been experiencing social unrest such as Boko Haram terrorism, herdsmen attacks, kidnapping, and religious/ethnic unrest. As a result of this restlessness, the country was ranked 147th out of 163 countries on the Global Peace Index in 2020.<sup>49</sup> The impacts of these series of discontents on society are unimaginable. For instance, agricultural production has been badly affected due to a series of attacks from Boko Haram in the North Eastern part of the country, resulting in loss of lives and property and mass displacement of people. Social security is a human right which every country in the world must provide to all its citizens as a means to end poverty in all spheres. The idea of social security is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).<sup>50</sup> It should be enjoyed by all without any regard for age, colour, ethnic group, sex or status as it provides the basic level of advantage to enable individual members of the society and families to acquire essential health care, basic shelter, housing, water, food and basic education. Therefore, a country that cannot provide for its citizens the minimum level of protection with all the natural and human resources at its disposal is a failed country. Social security opens doors for the realisation of several other human rights, such as the right to education and health.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Ejoro, U. Amid COVID-19 lockdown, Nigeria sees increased Sexual and Gender Violence. [puhizercenter.org](http://puhizercenter.org).

<sup>49</sup> Nigeria ranks 147 in 2020 Global Peace Index. Nigeria Global Peace Index. [countryeconomy.com](http://countryeconomy.com).

<sup>50</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948. [socialprotection-humanrights.org](http://socialprotection-humanrights.org).

<sup>51</sup> Social Development Policy Guide: ESCAP: United Nations Economics and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. [socialprotection.org](http://socialprotection.org). (2018).

Human Rights (1948).<sup>50</sup> It should be enjoyed by all without any regard for age, colour, ethnic group, sex or status as it provides the basic level of advantage to enable individual members of the society and families to acquire essential health care, basic shelter, housing, water, food and basic education. Therefore, a country that cannot provide for its citizens the minimum level of protection with all the natural and human resources at its disposal is a failed country. Social security opens doors for the

Social security refers to a set of policies and programmes drawn by a responsible government to support every stratum of society to maintain an adequate standard of living and good health throughout their lives. It plays a critical role in reducing and preventing poverty among the populace. It is mainly for the enhancement of social cohesion, human development and stimulation of economic growth. The well-being of citizens should be on the front burner of any responsible and responsive government. It is important for every government to make sure that the security of the lives and property of its people is important. Political leaders must do the right thing and have the interest of the citizens at heart.<sup>52</sup> Failure of government to provide the afore-mentioned necessities of life to members of the public is what we regard as social insecurity. Nigeria has its own share in the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic that ravaged the entire world. The COVID-19 pandemic really exposed the unpreparedness of government in Nigeria. The citizens deserve to enjoy good and quality lives where the security of their lives will not be toiled with. Unfortunately, the Nigerian government, since independence, has not been doing well in the area of provision of basic amenities for her teeming population.<sup>53</sup>

In order to contain the activities of Boko Haram and other ethnic militias in the country, the Federal Government, through the office of the Minister of State for Budget and National Planning, spent \$6.4bn on interventions and humanitarian services in the six north-east states in 2016 and 2017 alone. This translates to an average of \$3.2bn per annum. It also represents about 8% of combined spending by the federal and state governments in the country. Governments have also had to sustain this expenditure amidst unemployment and other infrastructural challenges that require huge fiscal spending.<sup>54</sup> Even the Federal Government of Nigeria has, in the past few years, spent a whopping sum of money in addressing insecurity in Nigeria through the purchase of arms and ammunition for our men in uniform to fight insurgents.<sup>55</sup> However, the money earmarked for the purpose was either embezzled or mismanaged by those in the corridors of power, while the majority were impoverished in the midst of plenty.

<sup>52</sup> International Labour Standards on Social Security-ILO

[www.ilo.org/standards/lang-en](http://www.ilo.org/standards/lang-en)

<sup>53</sup> Adie Vanessa Offiong Nigeria: A pandemic and a weak health system-  
[gga.org/nigeria-a-pandemic](http://gga.org/nigeria-a-pandemic).(2020).

<sup>54</sup> Nigerian government, states spend \$6.4 billion on intervention in North East,

[www.premiumtimes.com/news](http://www.premiumtimes.com/news)

<sup>55</sup> Nigeria to release the sum of \$1 billion from excess oil account to fight Boko Haram. (2017) [www.reuters.com/article](http://www.reuters.com/article).

It is then apt to say that the various cases of rape of girls and women, followed by death in most cases, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, is an indication that the government of the day has failed to put the right machinery in motion to address the menace. We have laws against rape in our constitution, but weak enforcement has been the bane of the judiciary and the security agencies. The shocking revelation by the Nigerian police corroborates our position on this matter as the Inspector General of Police, Mohammed Adamu, said to newsmen at the State House in Abuja that 799 suspects have been arrested between January and May 2020 alone, while 631 have been investigated and charged to court.<sup>56</sup> While we commend the effort of the police for their great effort, what do we say of those who have lost their lives in the hands of the perpetrators of this reprehensible act? The implication of this discourse is that there is total neglect by the government of critical areas that need to be addressed.

It is important therefore that social security should be topmost on the programmes and policies of any government that is ready to make an inextinguishable impact on the lives of its citizens. The exodus of people from the country to other parts of the world is due to a lack of social security. Citizens are exposed to danger on a daily basis. Nigerians can no longer beat their chests and say they are proud of their country. Western countries are not better off in terms of natural and human resources, but those developed economies today are so-called because those at the helm of affairs put the interest of their people at heart over and above their personal interests.

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### Concluding Remark

This paper has discussed the incidences and causes of rape in Nigeria and called on all stakeholders, like the government, non-governmental organisations, the media, religious leaders, traditional rulers, political stalwarts, parents/guardians, caregivers, social workers and the National Orientation Agency (NOA) to try everything possible to address the menace of rape with every urgency it deserves. We therefore want to conclude with some recommendations; if these are adopted, they will significantly minimise, if not totally eradicate, this menace and make Nigeria safe again for girls and women.

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<sup>56</sup> Bolaji Ogundele. Police Arrested 799 suspected rapists (2020).

thenationonlineng.net/police.

## Recommendations

There is a need for parents to be more vigilant. They should monitor their children closely for any sign that suggests that they have been abused. They should not allow their children, most especially the female ones, to be with house helps or someone they do not know or cannot trust at all. Education of the girl child is of paramount importance.

Parents and guardians should pay regular unscheduled visits to their wards in higher institutions of learning. This will help them to know the friends they have, and they will also be on the alert that their parents can visit at any time. This will prevent them from going out of school to places where they can be attacked and raped. Parents nowadays are fond of travelling to attend occasions at far places while visiting their children in a school that is just a stone's throw from home is considered difficult.

Governmental and non-governmental organisations in the country should join hands to make sure that all laws as enshrined in the constitution are fully implemented without giving consideration to anyone as a sacred cow. Violence in whatever form and nomenclature must be discouraged. All cases involving rape and gender-based violence must be thoroughly investigated and the perpetrator(s) brought to book without delay as justice delayed is justice denied.

Security agencies should be above board in handling rape cases brought before them. They should be professional in the way they handle such cases. Many cases of rape are not reported because of the attitude of security agents who are to investigate the matter. On many occasions, they heap blame on the victim. This may result in depression which may eventually lead to the death of the victim.

Civil societies, social commentators and activists can also divert their energy to the creation of awareness by organising seminars, workshops, symposiums, and house-to-house enlightenment through the media by building community structures to protect and defend women; and providing assistance to victims of violence.

In addition to the above, celebrities, actors and actresses must also embark on mass sensitisation and campaigns to create awareness to break the culture of silence on rape and other sexual violence. This culture of silence has sent many victims to their early graves. *What will I say? How will society see me?* All these rhetorical questions lead to depression. Many victims do not know their rights and the processes and procedures for enforcing them. Celebrities can do more by using their God-given talents to organise drama and playlets in villages and communities. The

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Civil societies, social commentators and activists can also divert their energy to the creation of awareness by organising seminars, workshops,

grassroots sensitisation will help a lot in reducing the scourge of rape in the country.

All State governors should, as a matter of urgency, declare a state of emergency on security in Nigeria. Laws against gender-based violence and rape should be domesticated by all States. It is not about a mere declaration of a state of emergency. They should commit huge sums of money to secure the lives of girls and women, particularly as they are regarded as weaker vessels.

There should be zero tolerance for rape. Government and families of rape victims should not allow out-of-court settlements. They should disregard the myth surrounding rape, that when the identity of the victim is known, she may find it difficult to get a husband as she will be labelled and stigmatised.

Stiffer penalties and punishment should be introduced. The action of some States' houses of assembly is a step in the right direction. Some concerned States have passed bills with the effect that anybody caught raping a minor or adult should be castrated or sentenced to life imprisonment. This will teach others lessons they will never forget in a hurry when they face the negative effects of their actions and the punishment that follows.

All States of the federation should make provisions for victims of rape and provide counsellors for them. Many rape victims die in silence as a result of not having the knowledge of what to do after they were raped. The provision of a counselling unit at the hospitals specially designated for victims of rape will help the victim develop self-confidence with the assurance of confidentiality from the counsellor. Rape test centres and the employment of nurses or other health care providers such as social workers and caregivers to render assistance should also be given serious attention.

Furthermore, it will not be out of place to set up special courts where offences of rape will be handled. Investigation of rape cases should not be allowed to drag on for long. They should be transparent enough in order for the citizens, especially the poor masses, to have faith in them. It is our submission that if these measures are adopted, the rising incidents of rape will be reduced drastically.

All rape victims should be shown much love and care to re-engineer their self-esteem. They should be assisted in whatever way possible. Government should also take the lead in providing the necessary help where possible.

Pastors should practice what they preach at all times. It is expected that they should be above board in everything they do. Members hold the provision of a counselling unit at the hospitals specially designated for victims of rape will help the victim develop self-confidence with the assurance of confidentiality from the counsellor. Rape test centres and the employment of nurses or other health care providers such as social workers and caregivers to render assistance should also be given serious attention.

them in high esteem as the oracle of God. They should try and guide against anything that will tarnish their image.

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