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Life Time Male Perpetration of Female Sexual Assault in Osun State: Report of a Community Survey

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ABSTRACT

Background: Societies across the world detest and legally outlaw all types of sexual violence. However, these objectionable acts are yet being perpetrated by many people most of whom are men. Rape and other sexual violations cause heavy, lifelong trauma to the victims who are mostly girls and women. This work seeks to study the perpetrators by determining the prevalence, patterns and the motivation for sexual assault by men in Osun State South West Nigeria to generate baseline data and serve as a prelude to providing interventional research work. **Methodology:** Over Four Months period from August to December 2016, a cross sectional survey was conducted amongst men aged 15 years and above living in Urban and Rural areas in six selected local government areas, namely Atakumosa, Ejigbo, Ede South, Ife Central, Osogbo and Irepodun. Research instrument used was a semi structured interviewer administered questionnaire. Data were analysed using the SPSS software version 17.0. **Results:** The mean ages of respondents were 30.75 ±11.55 years and 31.33 ±12.75 years in urban and rural areas respectively. Every respondent in both groups had primary school education. 46.5% and 46.3% are single in urban and rural areas respectively. The prevalence of perpetrators of grade 1 sexual assault among the respondents was 64.3 % and 53.3% in urban and rural areas respectively. For grade 2 sexual assault perpetration, 19.6 % in urban and 19.4% in rural respondents were involved. In grade 3 assault 17.4% and 17.2% of the respondents were responsible in urban and rural areas respectively. In all the three categories of sexual assaults majority of the victims were the partners of the perpetrators. Similar reasons were given by the perpetrators in both urban and rural areas. Having experienced domestic violence as a child (D.V) and or abuse during childhood were both predictors of male perpetration of female sexual assault ($p < 0.001$). **Conclusion:** Between one and three of five (1-3 : 5) of the respondents had Sexually assaulted women in Osun State and it constitutes a public health

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challenge that needs to be brought under control. Exposure to Domestic violence (DV) and childhood abuse are predictors of men who would perpetrate sexual assault against women later in life and should be targeted for intervention.

Key Words: Sexual assault: Perpetration: Community Survey: Rural, Urban

Introduction

Sexual offences including rape are common in all societies and women and children are the more vulnerable groups.^{1,2} Aside from physical and psychological trauma of sexual violence, many young girls and women have been known to take their own lives on account of being raped.³ This underscore the need to focus attention on violent sexual behaviours in human society.

Evidence based interventions are reliant on data. The literature is replete with studies on women as victims/survivors of sexual assaults, while men who are mostly the perpetrators are not much studied except probably those in custody of the law and the male college students.⁴ While studies of the experience of the survivors generate valuable information on the at risk groups and the magnitude of the problem as well as the desires of the victims for justice, it failed to provide pertinent data on the men who are the perpetrators in most cases. This may be part of the reasons why there has not been effective, specific and targeted intervention. Rape and other sexual aggressions carried out by men occurred in many settings, including homes, education institutions, work places and the larger society.^{4,5}

Sexual assault against women worldwide occurred in the context gender based violence and it is a reflection of power imbalance in our societies. Asides from the violation of the bodily integrity of the woman, sexual assault exposes limitation of the capacity of women to negotiate safe sex and to refuse sex when it is not desirable. These constitute violation of the fundamental human rights.⁶ and a negation of the objective of goal number 5 as expressed in sustainable development agenda SDG, which is attainment of gender equality as one cardinal prerequisite for human development.⁷

The laws that define and prescribe penalties for rape and related violence in Nigeria are contained in the Criminal code sections 357 and section 378 in southern part of Nigeria, while the Penal code 282 operates in Northern Nigeria.^{8,9} However, the National assembly in 2015 passed Violence Against Person Prohibition (VAPP) Act which is enforceable throughout the country.¹⁰ As at January 2021, 18 states including Osun state and the Federal Capital Territory FCT have domesticated the act. The VAPP act is comprehensive than the criminal and the Penal codes.

In view of the enormity of sexual violation by men and the negative consequences on women health, our study aimed at determining the life time prevalence of sexual assault perpetration by men, the patterns of assaults and the motivation for the act in the study areas. The specific objectives included finding the contribution of different grades of female sexual assault in the urban and rural areas and to discover the factors propelling the men into committing violent sexual assault against women. It is hoped that our work would provide baseline data and further inferences on this societal problem in our environment.

Methodology

- **Study Area:** Osun State is located in south-western geopolitical zone of Nigeria, with coordinates of 7.77°N and 4.57°E. It has a population of about 5 million from the National Population Commission (NPC) document of 2016 which was a projection from the 2006 National population census.¹¹ There are thirty local government areas (LGA) and one area office in the state. The people are Yoruba.

This male study was conducted as the second arm to the female work. The study design was a cross sectional study. Inclusion criteria included

Men aged 15 years and above, residence duration of six months in the area of study and consent to participate in the survey. Exclusion criteria: Refusal to give consent, residency less than six months and age less than 15 years.

There was no report on male sexual assault in the area, we therefore adopted the 3% prevalence from a range of 2% to 6% reported from female studies in the region.^{12,13} Using modified Leslie Fischer's formula for calculation of sample size, when the population is more than ten thousand.¹⁴ With $z = 1.96$ and a desired precision of 80%. The calculated sample size for one LGA is 174 respondents. We put questionnaire attrition (incomplete and missing) rate at 20% this is equal to 35 per LGA. The total questionnaire per LGA is equal to $(174+35=209)$. A total of 200 respondents who had complete information were analysed per LGA.

Multistage sampling technique was used in sample selection.

In stage one, six LGAs (20%) were selected randomly using ballot paper technique. Local government was used as the sampling frame for local relevance of our research.

Stage 2, in each of the selected LGA, one rural and one urban were chosen randomly by balloting, from lists of the rural and urban areas produced using administrative division of the state as contained in social and demographic health survey NDHS 2013.¹⁵ Questionnaires were administered in ratio 5:3 between urban and rural areas as a result of differential population density.¹⁵

Stage 3, enumeration areas EA were randomly selected two each from urban and rural areas also by simple balloting method. Stage 4, two streets were chosen each from urban and rural in the EA, making a total of eight streets in each LGA, 4 each in urban and rural areas.

In Stage 5 on a street, houses with odd numbering on the left and even numbering on the right were systematically selected on a 1 in 4 bases after obtaining a sampling unit of all houses on the selected street. When an eligible respondent was not available at first visit, repeat visits were made on till every eligible male in the chosen house was interviewed. This was done until the question-

naires were exhausted.

The semi-structured interviewer administered questionnaire was used to collect data over a four month from August to December 2014. All males aged 15 years and above in the chosen houses were interviewed by male interviewers, who have been trained as research assistants. The information collected are about Socio-demography, ever sexually assaulted a woman, the relationship with the victims, the reasons for the sexual assault. We also explored the exposure of the respondents to Domestic violence (witnessed father beat or assault mother) and child abuse (experiencing corporal punishment and childhood labour) while growing up.

- **Ethical approval:** Ethic Committee, College of Health Sciences, Osun State University approved the study. The data generated was entered into computer using SPSS 17.0 version. The data validity was ensured using double entry and random manual checks. Frequency tables and charts were generated. Bi-variate analysis was done using Chi-squared test, while logistic regression analysis was done and generating Odds ratios and 95% confidence interval. Significance level was considered at p values <0.05

In this survey Center for Disease Control CDC 2014 categorization of sexual assault were adopted with modification. Three different grades of sexual assaults were identified, namely, grade 1, comprise of verbal sexual request and subtle fondling of breast, buttox and other parts of a woman body. Grade 2 (attempted rape) refers to more aggressive/volent actions such as pulling a woman down, removal of clots and laying on top of her. Grade 3, Insertion of penis, fingers or objects in to a woman's vulva or vaginal.¹⁶

Results

Table 1, shows the socio-demographic features of the respondents, 35.5 % in urban and 40.0% in rural area are in the age group 15 to 24 years, the average age of respondents is 31.3 ± 12.8 years. Only 25.8 % in the urban and 8.8 % in the rural area are age group 45 years and over. Education status

revealed that all the respondents had primary school level, while 29.2 % and 22.5 % had tertiary education level in urban and rural areas respectively. Marital status showed that 43.3 % and 35.0 % are single in urban and rural areas respectively, while 54.2 % in urban area are married, while 47.5 % in rural area are married. The rest are either divorced or widower in both settlements.

The prevalence of grade 1, sexual assault perpetration is 64.3 % and 53.3 % in urban and rural areas respectively. Among these 82.1 % and 74.6 % were perpetrated against partners in urban and rural areas respectively. These are shown in table 2.

Table 3 depicts the prevalence of grade 2 sexual assaults perpetration. In urban area the prevalence was 19.4 % with 70.0 % perpetrated against partners. In the rural area, it was 19.6 % and 62.8 % were perpetrated against partners.

Table 4, showed the prevalence of grade 3 sexual assault perpetration. In the urban area it was 17.6 % and 17.1 % in rural area. Partners were

the victims in 67.7 % and 59.8 % in urban and rural area respectively.

Figures A showed some of the reasons why men sexually assault women in both rural and urban areas. Amongst these are: it is men entitlement, as punishment and under the influence of intoxicants.

Table 5 depicts the correlation of some identified variables to perpetration of female sexual assault. Respondents who were exposed to D.V were 3.9 times (Odds ratio) more likely to perpetrate female sexual assault compared to those who had no D.V exposure and this observation was found to be statistically significant ($P < 0.001$, 95%CI 2.685-5.383). Also respondents who had experienced child abuse were 4.1 times (Odds ratio) more likely to perpetrate female sexual assault compared to those who had not experienced child abuse, and it was significant statistically ($p < 0.001$, 95%CI 3.306-5.168). Thus having experienced D.V and having experienced child abuse were both predictors of male being perpetrator of female sexual assault ($p < 0.001$).

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Features

Variables	Categories	Settlements	Scores	Percentage
Age in years	15 - 24	Urban	265	22.08
		Rural	184	15.33
	25 -34	Urban	202	16.83
		Rural	140	11.67
	35 - 44	Urban	157	13.09
		Rural	87	07.25
	> 45	Urban	96	08.00
		Rural	69	05.75
Total				100.0
Education	Nil Formal	Urban	-	-
		Rural	-	-
	Primary	Urban	100	08.33
		Rural	120	10.00
	Secondary	Urban	412	34.34
		Rural	256	21.33
	Tertiary	Urban	208	17.33
		Rural	104	08.67
Total				100.0

Education	Nil Formal	Urban	-	-
		Rural	-	-
Primary		Urban	100	08.33
		Rural	120	10.00
Secondary		Urban	412	34.34
		Rural	256	21.33
Tertiary		Urban	208	17.33
		Rural	104	08.67
Total			100.0	

Table 2: Rural and Urban Prevalence of Grade 1 Female Sexual Assault

Settlements	Responses & %		Status of Victim	Number & %	
Urban	Yes, 463	64.3	Partner	380	82.1
			Non-partner	83	17.9
	No, 257	35.7	-----	-----	
Rural	Yes, 256	53.3	Partner	191	74.6
			Non-partner	65	25.4
	No, 244	46.7	-----	-----	

Table 3. Rural and Urban Prevalence of Grade 2 Female Sexual Assault

Settlements	Responses & %		Status of Victim	Number & %	
Urban	Yes, 140	19.4	Partner	99	70.7
			Non-partner	41	29.3
	No, 580	80.6	-----	-----	
Rural	Yes, 94	19.6	Partner	59	62.8
			Non-partner	35	37.2
	No, 386	80.4	-----	-----	

Table 4: Rural and Urban Prevalence of Grade 3 Female Sexual Assault

Settlements	Responses & %		Status of Victim	Number & %	
Urban	Yes, 127	17.6	Partner	86	67.7
			Non-partner	41	32.3
	No, 593	82.4	-----	-----	
Rural	Yes, 82	17.1	Partner	49	59.8
			Non-partner	33	40.2
	No, 398	82.9	-----	-----	

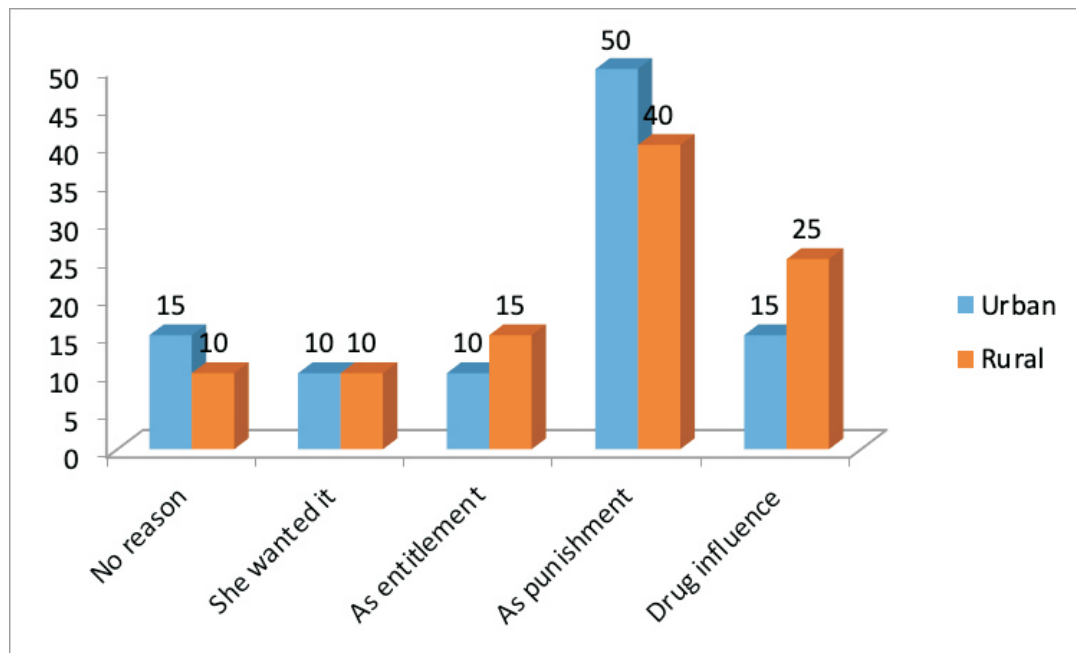


Figure A: Reasons Why Men Perpetrate Sexually Assault Against Women in Urban and Rural Area

Table 5: Correlates of Men Perpetration of Female Sexual Assault

Variables	Chi Square	OR	P-Value	Lower CI	Upper CI
Rural / Urban	3.128	0.548	0.201	0.399	0.750
Partner / Non-partner	4.080	0.677	0.043	0.464	0.989
Education Status	6.359	0.650	0.012	0.473	0.946
Marital Status	5.695	0.699	0.017	0.520	0.938
Experience D.V.	72.000	3.960	<0.001	2.685	5.383
Experience C. Abuse	27.104	4.133	<0.001	3.306	5.168

Discussion

There is dearth of population study on sexual assault in this environment especially study on men who are the main perpetrators that are responsible for the menace. This community survey was design to document the magnitude of female sexual assault perpetrated by men in Osun state south west Nigeria. The first of such study to the knowledge of the authors.

The study looks at different grades of female

sexual assault perpetration by men and disaggregated in to Rural and urban areas for details and to compare the patterns (IPV and non-partner) as well as the profiles of the perpetrators between the two areas. Although literature is replete with works on female sexual assault, the vast majority reported the experiences of women as survivors of sexual assault perpetrated by men.^{11,13}

From this study, the age group 15-24 years, the group that the world health organization WHO

referred to as adolescent and young adult (AYS) accounted for 35.5 % and 40 % of the respondents in the urban and rural areas respectively, this is in agreement with WHO work on the same subject.¹⁷ In a local work that studied the patterns of sexual assaults in Lagos, Nigeria it was found that perpetration of sexual assaults was higher among males who are less than 20 years of age.¹⁸ Similar findings was reported by another study from South Africa.¹⁹ A numbers of factors could be responsible for this trend in this age group. Youthful exuberance, lack of engagement in a vocation and tendency to violent behaviours and risky sexual conducts.²⁰ In addition many adolescents and young adults abuse psycho active drugs as we as alcohol.²¹ This study reported alcohol use among the perpetrators of female sexual assault. Men who are 45 years of age and older constituted 25.8% and 8.8 % of respondents in urban and rural settings respectively. The wide disparity in the prevalence of men aged 45 years and above in the urban and rural areas could be due to smaller population studied in the rural settlement. It may also be due to population characteristics in the rural area as being more of younger age group as reflected in the 15 to 24 age group.

Educationally, 29.2% of men in urban area and 22.5% of the respondents in the rural area had tertiary education, the percentages was much higher in secondary and primary educational achievements. However, education status has no statistical significant effects on male perpetration of female sexual assault, p value 0.012, OR 0.650. This is not surprising as even highly educated men including some in executive offices, the so call authority figures have been known to perpetrate sexual assault against women. This findings corroborate the report of another study by these authors titled “perpetration of sexual assault against female: which one is more important men attitude or knowledge”, it was shown that poor attitude rather than lack of knowledge is more responsible.²² However, some other studies reported that low educational level and poverty played significant role in promoting male perpetration of female sexual assaults.^{23,24}

From this study that the prevalence of grade I sexual assault (verbal coercion, fondle breast and buttock) was 64.4% and 53.3% in the urban and rural areas respectively; while the prevalence of grade II, attempted rape a more aggressive bodily violation of women were 19.4% and 19.6 % respectively in the urban and rural area; and grade III (completed rape vaginal penetration) had a prevalence of 17.6% and 17.1% in the urban and rural areas respectively. The study thus showed the prevalence of the two more violent assaults (grades ii and iii) were similar in both urban and rural areas. From another study it was reported that 24.5% of the respondents had committed grade I sexual assault, while equal percentage had committed either grade II or grade III.²⁵

The findings of this study differs from ours, as grade I sexual assault reported was only about a third of our report, while the prevalence of grades ii and iii were the same (similar to ours) but higher than our report. In our study, across the three grades of sexual assault perpetration, either in the urban area or in the rural area, the female partners were the major victims, thus confirming higher occurrence of intimate partner sexual violence (IPV). This is the common pattern worldwide. In a study from Ghana, it was reported that about 33% of women suffer IPV. Cultural factor may play a part in the high prevalence of grade I sexual assault in this study.^{26,27}

When perpetrators were asked the reasons for their actions, similar response were obtained in both rural and urban areas. Among the reasons given are as punishments to insults from women, men entitlements from partners and that some were carried out under the influence of alcohol and other psycho active drugs. Many international studies reported that acts of sexual aggressions including rape were committed under similar excuses.²⁸⁻³¹

Prevention is better and cheaper than cure, therefore can we identify perpetrators of female sexual assault beforehand? We further explored possible predictive factors of men perpetration of sexual assault against women. Respondents who had witnessed Domestic violence D.V. (witness to

the fathers beat their Mothers) were 3.9 times (Odds ratio) more likely to be a perpetrator of female sexual assault compared to those who had no D.V. experience and it was statistically significant with $P < 0.001$. Similar report was contained in world health organization fact sheet publication 2017.³²

Similarly, men with prior exposure to abuse while growing up were 4.1 times (Odds ratio) more likely to be perpetrators of female sexual assault compared to those who had no child abuse exposure, this was significant statistically with $p < 0.001$. This is in agreement with reports from South African and WHO 2017 fact sheet

report.^{19,32,33}

Conclusion

Male perpetration of sexual violence against women constituted public ill-health in Osun state. Exposure to domestic violence and suffering childhood abuse are independent predictors of perpetration of female sexual assault by men later in life.

Young boys below the age of 15 years in and out of schools and those who had experienced domestic violence DV as well as childhood abuse should be targeted by education programme aimed at tackling the menace in this environment.

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