



Experiences and Consequences of Sexual Violence among Female Adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the experience and consequences of sexual violence among adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. A descriptive cross sectional survey design was adopted for this study with population of adolescents was sixty three thousand four hundred and forty seven (63,447). The sample size of the study was 440 female adolescents which was estimated using Yaro Yamene method for finite population. A multi-stage sampling procedure was implemented for the study in three stages. The questionnaire titled the Experience and Consequences of Sexual Violence among Female Adolescents Questionnaire (ECSVQ) which comprised of section A, B, and C respectively. The validated instrument was considered reliable as the reliability coefficient value of 0.84 was obtained. Data collected was analyzed using Statistical Products for Service Solutions (SPSS) version 25.0. Female adolescents in disagreed on experiencing sexual abuse, did agree of being kissed forcefully, agreed on the health consequences of sexual abuse, agreed on the social consequences of sexual violence, agreed on the psychological consequences of sexual violence. It was concluded that female adolescents had experience sexual abuse such as force kissed, vaginal penetration, touching of breast among others. It was reported that victims of sexual abuse suffered social and psychosocial consequences. Based on the findings recommendations were made; sex education should be family based to enlightened the parents on how to take care of the growing children especially those at adolescent stage. Education and awareness programme should be organised for parents and children sexuality so as to increase their level of awareness and implications.

KEYWORDS: Sexual Violence, Female Adolescents, Social, Psychological Consequences

INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence has been a global social and health issues that is more dangerous in adolescents in Nigeria. According to UNICEF (2023), In more than one-third of countries, at least 5 per cent of young women reported experiences of sexual violence in childhood. Sexual abuse and violence are the second most lucrative crime in the world, estimated to affect up to 5% of the general child and youth population worldwide, with increasing numbers detected globally during the past decade (Larsen et al 2018). The recurrent cases of sexual abuse such as raping, trafficking, exploitation, harassment child labour among others continues to increase in spite of prohibition act against such negative behaviours. Studies of Chime, et al (2021) reported that higher proportion of victims of sexual abuse are adolescents between the ages of 12-18 years. Additionally, Enebe, et al (2021) in their study illustrated that the overall prevalence of sexual abuse among younger children was significantly high with a proportion of 71.7% and slightly above average were domestic violence. Additionally, Manyike et al. (2015) revealed that the prevalence and one time prevalence rates of sexual abuse among adolescents in south east Nigeria was 40% and 11.5% respectively with male perpetrators. There are certain factors that predict the occurrence of sexual abuse among adolescents were socioeconomic background, sociocultural status and parent's level of education among others.

The extent to which male and female adolescents exposes to sexual violence or abuse may varies. The physical characteristics of female adolescents are more obvious such as development of pointed breast, enlarge buttocks or hip region and changes in facial expression tends to make them vulnerable to sexual attack from the opposite. Gabriel-Job (2019) reported that female adolescents were over 12 times more likely to experience penetrative sexual abuse and good proportion of adult male are perpetrators of sexual abuse against the female. Manyike et al. (2015) added that there was a significance difference in sex abuse between male and female ($p=0.014$). It could be clear that most of the female adolescents are less powerful to defend themselves especially when they confine place thereby exposed to coerced sex.

Lack of access to adequate education may be a contributing factor to why children work, but even if education is provided, it may not keep all children from working. In most situations, school terms and school times are not adjusted to fit in with the pattern of children's work. Many children and adolescents are solely responsible for themselves and the economic welfare of their families. Where schooling is not free, some children may have to

work in order to earn money for their school fees or expenses (e.g. books and uniforms). Poverty and lack of education are common reasons why children work, but this does not justify the condoning of labour that is harmful and exploitative. Parents of working children are often unemployed or underemployed, yet their children are offered jobs because they accept less pay, are more malleable, and more easily exploited. Uwom (2013) mentioned some impacts of sexual exploitation on females which thus includes: The physical consequences, which can include genital injury, sexually transmitted diseases and the contraction of HIV/AIDS. There is evidence that adolescent girls are more likely to contract HIV from a single sexual contact than are adult women. Unwanted pregnancy can have further consequences including, for example, stigmatization and unsafe abortions. Emotional consequences can include the trauma of violent exploitation (which can have effects broadly similar to other traumatic experiences). In some societies, a sense of shame at having been violated, and especially if pregnancy results, can have severe consequences for the child. Social consequences can include ostracism by the family or community - especially if the child is disbelieved or blamed for what has happened.

The consequences of sexual violence cannot be overemphasized in developing societies like Nigeria. Such consequences range from physical, social and psychological problems that have long term effects on the victims. Olofinbiyi et al (2020) depicted that adolescents procured abortion from unplanned pregnancy traceable to violence sexual intercourse and adolescents who had experience sexual abuse are 4.2 times more likely commit abortion due to unintended pregnancy. Enebe et al (2021) and Hannabeth et al. (2020) whose studies illustrated that those who had been abuse sexually suffer for several infection and reproductive health problems that affect health. Urada et al (2019) in their view said that the consequences of sexually exploitation among female adolescents were at high risks of HIV and other forms of sexually transmitted infections. Alemayehu, et al (2015) added that victims of sexually abuse were mostly found themselves dropping out of school which was traceable to stigmatization and mockery. Bales (2021) asserted that several sexually transmitted infections are more prevalent among victims of sexual abuse. Ogunfowokan and Fajemilehin (2015) in their study indicated that more average percentage of sexual abuse victims encounter psychological disorders and other forms of physical problems such as vaginal injury, infections among others. Sexual abuse among female adolescents have been a regular news on mass media in Rivers State such as television, newspaper, radio and social media as perpetrated by adult men contributing to increase recurrent cases of health and psychosocial challenges such as unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted infections, teenage pregnancy, suicidal ideation, depression, phobia and even death. This study examines the experience and consequences of sexual violence among adolescent in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Statement of the Problem

The rate of sexual violence among adolescents in Nigerian society is becoming alarming and causes harm to children and young people, including significant damage to their physical, social and mental health. And also has profound and damaging consequences for their family, including siblings (who may also be at risk of abuse). Sexual abuse have links with other forms of crime, for example, domestic violence and abuse, online and offline grooming, the distribution of abusive images of children, criminal exploitation and child trafficking. The perpetrators of sexual exploitation are often well organised and use sophisticated tactics, they target areas where children and young people gather, use parties to create networks for abuse or use technology to organise both online and offline abuse. Reports from mass media in Rivers State on the current cases of sexual violence such as raping and child trafficking in recent time is increasing. Several adult men have been reprimanded for engaging in sexual violence such as having coercive or forced sex, raping, trafficking a girl child.

When adolescent experience, or are at risk of sexual violence or abuse the relationship between their needs and vulnerabilities, the harm they are experiencing and the risk posed by the abuser(s) create a dynamic and complex situation for the girl child. It is pertinent to note that adolescents who have been sexually abused suffer for suicidal ideation anxiety, depression, mood disorder, phobia, discrimination and stigmatization that reign their lives for a lifetime. Adolescents are becoming sexually active at a later age than in past years they are insecure in their environment especially in Ahoada East were it is volatile and more vulnerable to danger such as sexual violence such as raping, child trafficking, and pornography among others. It is plausible female adolescents in Nigerian society including Rivers State have experience one form of sexual abuse or the other. Therefore, the period of risk of sexual abuse with all its consequences of unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, STIs/HIV is also increasing. It was further observed that sexual exploitation is the second among the top ten risk factors in the global burden of all infectious diseases globally. Evidence stressed that lack of information and guidance about sex and sexuality has exposed most young people (adolescents) to the chance of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally. In spite the fact that people have been reprimanded for sexually abused female adolescents the evil event continue to bedevil adolescent in Emohua Local Government Area. Consequent upon this, the researcher investigated the experience and consequences of sexual violence among adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the experience of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?
2. What is the health consequences of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?
3. What is the social consequences of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?
4. What is the psychological consequences of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive cross sectional survey design was adopted for this study and the study was carried out at Ahoada East [Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria](#). The population of the study was sixty three thousand four hundred and forty seven (63,447) adolescents. The sample size of the study was 440 female adolescents which was obtained using YaroYamene method. A multi-stage sampling procedure was to select 440 adolescents. The instrument for collection of data was self-structured questionnaire titled the Experience and Consequences of Sexual Violence Questionnaire (ECSVQ). The instrument was presented for face and content validity and three experts in Public Health, Reproductive health and Psychology from the Department of Health Promotion and Public Health Education, Health and Safety Studies and Measurement and Evaluation Department. The instrument reliability was tested using test-retest method. the reliability coefficient of 0.84 was obtained which is fit for the study. Data collected was analyzed using Statistical Products for Service Solutions (SPSS) version 25.0. Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency count, percentage, and inferential statistical tools such as chi square and ANOVA were employed test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance

Presentation of Results

Research question 1: What is the experience of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on the experience of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State

| S/N | Experience of Sexual Abuse | Yes | No | Mean | SD | Remark |
|-----|--|-----|-----|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Have you experienced sex against your wish | 200 | 240 | 1.45 | 0.50 | Disagree |
| 2 | Have you encountered sexual assault? | 191 | 249 | 1.43 | 0.50 | Disagree |
| 3 | Have you been forced into sexual activity against your wish? | 102 | 338 | 1.23 | 0.42 | Disagree |
| 4 | Have you been molested to have sexual intercourse to make more money? | 88 | 352 | 1.20 | 0.40 | Disagree |
| 5 | Do someone force you to have unwanted kiss? | 242 | 198 | 1.55 | 0.50 | Agree |
| 6 | Have you been lured to expose sensitive part of your body? | 90 | 350 | 1.20 | 0.40 | Disagree |
| 7 | Have you been pushed to have penetrative sex by senior friends before? | 164 | 276 | 1.37 | 0.48 | Disagree |
| 8 | Have you been influenced to have sex against your wish? | 148 | 292 | 1.34 | 0.47 | Disagree |
| 9 | Has someone forcefully touched your private parts? | 174 | 266 | 1.40 | 0.49 | Disagree |
| 10 | Have you experienced unwanted stroking and cuddling? | 174 | 266 | 1.40 | 0.49 | Disagree |
| 11 | Has someone forced you to have romantic relationship with him? | 161 | 279 | 1.37 | 0.48 | Disagree |
| 12 | Has an adult touched your breast and ask you not to disclose? | 183 | 257 | 1.42 | 0.49 | Disagree |
| | Grand Mean | | | 1.36 | 0.47 | Disagree |

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation on the experience of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The table showed that female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State disagreed on experiencing sexual violence (Mean=1.36, SD=0.47). The table also showed that the female adolescents did agree of being kissed forcefully (Mean=1.55, SD=0.50)

Research question 2: What is the health consequences of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the social consequences of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State.

| S/N | Health Consequences | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | STD | Remark |
|-----|---|-----|----|----|----|------|------|--------|
| 1 | Female victim of sexual abuse is likely to suffer different health problems | 329 | 81 | 18 | 12 | 3.65 | 0.69 | Agree |
| 2 | Sexually abused person may suffer from infectious diseases | 329 | 99 | 0 | 12 | 3.69 | 0.61 | Agree |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-----|-----|----|----|------|------|-------|
| 3 | Female victims of sexual abuse are at risk of HIV/AIDS and other STIs | 368 | 57 | 0 | 15 | 3.77 | 0.62 | Agree |
| 4 | If the person is a female victim of sexual abuse, she may have unplanned pregnancy | 341 | 81 | 9 | 9 | 3.71 | 0.61 | Agree |
| 5 | Female victims of sexual abuse may carry out unsafe abortion due to unwanted pregnancy | 323 | 96 | 9 | 12 | 3.66 | 0.66 | Agree |
| 6 | There may be vaginal bleeding due to injury from forced penile penetration | 338 | 72 | 9 | 21 | 3.65 | 0.75 | Agree |
| 7 | Victim of sexual abuse may suffer from dislocation of pelvic or waist region | 275 | 126 | 18 | 21 | 3.49 | 0.79 | Agree |
| 8 | Sexual abuse may lead to death of the victim | 146 | 239 | 14 | 41 | 3.11 | 0.85 | Agree |
| | Grand Mean | | | | | 3.59 | 0.70 | Agree |

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation on the health consequences of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The table showed that female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State agreed on the above as health consequences of sexual violence (Mean=3.59, SD=0.70). The table also showed that the female adolescents agreed the highest that female victims of sexual violence are at risk of HIV/AIDS and other STIs (Mean=3.77, SD=0.62).

Research question 3: What is the social consequences of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on the social consequences of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State

| S/N | Social Consequences | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | StD | Remark |
|-----|---|-----|-----|-----|----|------|------|----------|
| 1 | A raped person might be stigmatized in the community | 123 | 275 | 12 | 30 | 3.12 | 0.75 | Agree |
| 2 | Victims of sexual abuse may suffer excommunication from the public | 84 | 218 | 60 | 78 | 2.70 | 0.97 | Disagree |
| 3 | People usually mock victims of rape | 235 | 178 | 9 | 18 | 3.43 | 0.73 | Agree |
| 4 | Victims of sexual abuse might be ashamed to meet with others in the community | 282 | 128 | 21 | 9 | 3.55 | 0.68 | Agree |
| 5 | Sexually abused may relate well with friends | 29 | 110 | 214 | 87 | 2.18 | 0.82 | Disagree |
| 6 | Victims of sexual abuse may relate to others | 44 | 161 | 178 | 57 | 2.44 | 0.84 | Disagree |
| 7 | Females who have been abused sexually would hardly make male friends | 209 | 165 | 45 | 21 | 3.28 | 0.83 | Agree |
| 8 | Females who have been abused sexually might face discrimination | 229 | 172 | 24 | 15 | 3.40 | 0.74 | Agree |
| 9 | Peers might mock there sexually abused friend | 221 | 147 | 39 | 33 | 3.26 | 0.91 | Agree |
| | Grand Mean | | | | | 3.04 | 0.81 | Agree |

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation on the social consequences of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The table showed that female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State agreed on the above as social consequences of sexual violence (Mean=3.04, SD=0.81). The table also showed that the female adolescents agreed the highest that victims of sexual violence might be ashamed to meet with others in the community (Mean=3.55, SD=0.68).

Research question 4: What is the psychological consequences of sexual abuse among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation on the psychological consequences of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State

| S/N | Psychological Consequences | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | StD | Remark |
|-----|---------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|------|------|--------|
| 1 | Most victims were discriminated | 161 | 231 | 21 | 27 | 3.20 | 0.79 | Agree |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-----|-----|----|----|------|------|-------|
| 2 | Raped persons might be isolated in the community | 167 | 196 | 26 | 51 | 3.09 | 0.95 | Agree |
| 3 | Sexually abused persons may face depression | 312 | 98 | 15 | 15 | 3.61 | 0.72 | Agree |
| 4 | Most females might be afraid of the opposite sex | 297 | 116 | 18 | 9 | 3.59 | 0.67 | Agree |
| 5 | Female victims may face anxiety | 303 | 104 | 24 | 9 | 3.59 | 0.69 | Agree |
| 6 | Victims of sexual abuse might have suicidal ideation | 306 | 98 | 27 | 9 | 3.59 | 0.70 | Agree |
| 7 | Female victims of sexual abuse would face shame | 285 | 125 | 24 | 6 | 3.57 | 0.66 | Agree |
| | Grand Mean | | | | | 3.46 | 0.74 | Agree |

Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation on the psychological consequences of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The table showed that female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State agreed on the above as psychological consequences of sexual violence (Mean=3.46, SD=0.74). The table also showed that the female adolescents agreed the highest that sexually abused persons may face depression (Mean=3.61, SD=0.72).

Research question 5: To what extent does socio-demographic factors determine the experience of sexual violence among female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Discussion of Findings

The findings showed that female adolescents disagreed on experiencing sexual violence. The result of this study is not surprising because adolescents are exposed to sexual abuse by male counterpart resulting from the relationship with the male folks. This was in agreement with the study by Chime, et al (2021) which affirmed that the proportion of female adolescent that experience sexual abuse (35.7%) and 40% of the victims were forced to watch pornography videos and perpetrators were neighbours among others. Enebe, et al (2021) buttressed that the prevalence of sexual abuse among adolescents was 71.7% while 52.1% suffer for child labour and economic violence among others. Gabriel-Job, (2019) in their study revealed that good percentage of adolescents at secondary school levels with sexual abuse experience was 35.5% and was statistical significant. It is possible that no female adolescents are free from sexual violence, hence, female adolescent experience sexual abuse.

The findings also showed that female adolescents in Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State agreed on the health consequences of sexual violence. The result of this study is expected because experiencing sexual abuse is risky and can leads several health problems of challenges among others. This result gives credence to study of Olofinbiyi, et al (2020) which indicated that the risk of unsafe abortion was 4 times more likely to occur among adolescents with reported cases of sexual abuse. Durowade, et al (2017) agreed that the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections was significantly high among adolescent experiencing prior cases of sexual abuse and child trafficking. Urada et al (2019) added that sexual abuse was the major risk factor of sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS and gonorrhea among others. It is pertinent that sexual abuse contribute health implications because forced sex are mostly unprotected that leads to unplanned pregnancy, contractive sexually transmitted infections and other health problems among others.

The findings also showed that female adolescents agreed on the social consequences of sexual violence. The result of this study is expected because sexual abuse is a taboo that the society reject and whoever that is victim are likely to face criticism such as stigmatization, discrimination, assault among others. The result of this study is in line with Iwunna, et al (2022) which indicated that victims of sexual abuse does not values or get ostracized in their community and are mocked by their peers. Elgazzar, et al (2020) affirmed that there was a statistically significant association between both the victim's and the assailant's ages and delayed disclosure ($p < 0.00$) and opined that sexual child abuse is a problem in our society and its reporting by the victims was often delayed. It is undeniable because the act of sexual abuse is shameful and embarrassing to the family and victim. Sexually abused person are easily criticized and stigmatize by people within the locality, hence, victim of sexual abuse suffer for social problems such as stigmatization, discrimination, poor relation, and communication among others.

The findings also showed that female adolescents agreed on the above as psychological consequences of sexual violence. The result of this study is required because the victim did not plan to be abused sexually thereby become emotionally unstable. This was in accordance with the study of Olofinbiyi, et al (2020) which revealed that sexual abuse were about 3 times more likely to predict suicidal ideation and depression especially among young people like adolescent. David, et al (2018) added that good proportion of female victims (34.4%) of sexual abuse suffer intra-familial abuse such as no family. It is plausible because victims of sexual abuse could be face the stigma and shame in the various communities thereby get depressed and grieved. Hence, sexual abuse inflict psychological consequences on the victims

Conclusion

Considering the findings of this study, it was concluded that female adolescents had experience sexual abuse such as force kissed, vaginal penetration, touching of breast among others. It was reported that victims of sexual abuse suffered for health, social and psychosocial consequences. Therefore, there is need to end this evil happening among females or girl child by improving on the health and safety welfare.

Recommendations

In regard to the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Sex education programme should family based activities to enlighten the parents on how to take care of the growing children especially those attaining adolescent stage.
- ii. Parenting lifestyle for child rearing should authoritative and security should be guaranteed to female adolescents to reduce their exposure to violence.
- iii. Adolescents should prioritize their health understanding their body development and need to stay from confined places so that they may not be sexually attacked or bullied.
- iv. Government should implement laws against sexual violence so as to protect the life of the young populations
- v. Education and awareness programme should be organised for parents and children sexuality so as to increase their level of awareness and implications.

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