

DIMENSION OF SEXUAL COERCION AGAINST GIRL'S CHILD EDUCATION: ITS IMPLICATIONS ON TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract (In English). *Sexual coercion is one of the threats to girl child education in Nigeria therefore, this paper centered on the dimension of sexual coercion against girl child education and its implications on tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Sexual coercion is an illegal behavior that has been bedeviling the female gender more especially the girl's child for a long period of time silently in some communities without proper precautions and public condemnation. This paper highlights the concept of sexual coercion, its nature, who the girl child is, and her education in the society including implications of sexual coercion or harassment in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The paper identified some challenges faced by the girl child in educational institutions of learning and brought into the limelight some solutions to such acts in tertiary institutions in the country. In conducting the research, the researcher adopted qualitative methodology in sourcing materials that are related to the topic where the survey method was employed, and data were collected through in-depth interviews and complemented with literary materials. Finally, the paper concludes by proffering solutions for curbing the menace of this ugly practice for the realization of effective learning of girls and women in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study recommended that there was an urgent need for engagement of various stakeholders in Nigeria and beyond, to checkmate the issue of gender in relation to education of the girl child in the society.*

Keywords: *Dimension, Sexual, Coercion, Girl's, Education, implication, Nigeria*

INTRODUCTIONS

Sexual coercion has been a serious problem faced by womenfolk for a very long time, at workplaces and other places including schools. Harassment and

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assault take different forms. It may be a case of sexual advances, physical or emotional.² It may as well be in direct request of sexual activities by gesture or words.³ The issue has become the order of the day in our tertiary institutions as mainly makes lecturers bask in the aura of their power to satisfy their lustful desires for female students with unspeakable impunity. These culprits often hide under the protection of their cliques to perpetuate the evil acts knowing that if such cases are reported, they would only be swept under the carpet by the authorities of the institutions.

Of course, a perpetrator can commit sexual abuse of any type because he/she felt that it must be done against the victim without considering any blemish or fault that may be associated with it. Therefore, sexual coercion can vary significantly from persistently asking for sex until someone gives in to threats of violence or revenge. As some types of coercion are not obviously intimidating some people may not realize they are experiencing or engaging in it. However, non-coercive sex involves the affirmative consent of both partners. This means that all sexual partners explicitly and enthusiastically give their verbal consent to sexual activities without the influence of any external pressures. It is agreed that some people can withdraw consent at any time for any reason into indulging in the act.⁴

Sexual coercion is the act of being physically, psychologically, financially, or otherwise forced or tricked into engaging in sexual activity; victims are most commonly women and children. Women run the risk of sexual abuse and violence across their whole life span.⁵ The risk of partner violence and rape, including dating violence and domestic violence; begins in late adolescence, peaks by middle age, and may even continue in the elderly. These acts are not a distinct phenomenon and have a degree of overlap that can be viewed along a continuum of sexual violence as they have common causes and methods of prevention.⁶

It is important here to note that behavior of sexual coercion can make someone think that he owes sex to another partner. According to Isah Shehu opined that character of such nature in some places comes from someone who has power over you like a teacher, landlord, religious scholar, or superior officer to mention but a few.⁷ In this circumstance, no responsible person with the fairness of Allah will attempt to go into this shameful act because it tarnishes someone's image before Allah and in the eyes of people. The fact that the shame is associated with it can remain forever with any person that is caught in it. Even though some people lack conscience of remorse for always doing wrong things. Therefore, for adolescents experiencing sexual coercion the consequences are heavy and has long-lasting bad impact in a person's life according to the view.⁸

² G., Alessandri, E., Perinelli, E. De, Longis, W. B., Schaufeli, A., Theodorou, L., Borgogni, L., Cinque, Job Burnout: The Contribution of Emotional Stability and Emotional Self-efficacy Beliefs. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 7(2), 2018, 1–29. <http://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12225>

³ H. J., Hejase, Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: An Exploratory Study from Lebanon. *Journal of Management Research*, 7(1), 2015, 107–121. <http://doi.org/10.5296/jmr.v7i1.6965>

⁴ Timothy Samuel (48 years), Civil Servant, interviewed at Abuja on 11th November, 2022.

⁵ L. Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1988.

⁶ J. Sarkar, Mental Health Assessment of Rape Offenders. *Indian J Psychiatry*. 2013; 55:235–43.

⁷ Isah Shehu (52 years), Muslim Scholar, interviewed at Dutse, Abuja on 12th November, 2022.

⁸ B. J., Young, and Furman, W. Interpersonal factors in the risk for sexual victimization and its recurrence during adolescence. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 2008; 37 (297-309).

Meanwhile, the difficulties that are associated with this ugly act cannot be over-emphasized.

METHOD

This paper is a survey type that adopted qualitative techniques to elicit primary data from the participants. The population for the study was civil servants and a student. To elicit the data, the researchers conducted In-Depth Interviews (IDI) and non-participant observation. The paper adopted a purposive sampling technique to select the participants for the interviews and observations, this has enabled the researchers to select participants who possess in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon investigated. This is because the aim of qualitative study is not to cover a large sample but to study a select few participants and examine the phenomenon deeply. The researchers purposively selected seven participants and were interviewed based on the issue investigated. The elicited from the participants were transcribed verbatim, coded, and analyzed based on the theme study. Similarly, data collated from the observations were integrated with the data generated from the interviews.

RESEARCH

Concept of Sexual Coercion

In attempting to define these two concepts “sexual and coercion” one needs to note that both terms are somehow related to each other in terms of usage. According to various understanding of scholars, these concepts sexual coercion refers to when a person pressures, tricks, threatens, or manipulates someone into having sex without consent or a type of sexual assault on genders either male or female in a pretend for having canal knowledge of someone forcefully. It is suggested that anyone who had experienced sexual abuse may feel that they have no option but to have sex. However, perpetrators use guilt or the threat of negative consequences to get what they want against the wish of the victim that is abused. Relatively, some perpetrators even promise rewards to victims to get sex that may not be real.⁹

As a matter of fact, different groups suggested that sexual coercion is not limited to only one gender, but some perpetrators male sometimes even sexually harass other male, or a female can as well harass male counterparts. But number of records indicate that male harassing female is more common in countries including Nigeria. But the extent of this largely affect education of girl’s child in some societies. Therefore, the barbaric sexual abuse of girls and women weakens the interest of some girl’s parents toward encouraging their children for education. As no parent will want his or her child to be abused sexually. This is why wherever this act occurs in the contemporary time is not taken lightly against the perpetrator in compared to what used to happen before against girls and

⁹ C. O., Grace, Keynote Address Presented at the Conference of the Federation of the University WOMWNE of Africa, held in Lagos, Nigeria on 16th -19th July 2009.

women. Therefore, sexual coercion of any type against anybody irrespective of gender is illegal that totally contravene the norms of living in the society.¹⁰

Description of Sexual Coercion

Variant sources indicate that sexual abuse has been secretly in existence from time immemorial in some countries including Nigeria. As the behavior is so often perpetrated by some bad people for decades to the extent that some perpetrators are hiding it from the notice of the public. However, serious-minded people in societies including Civil Societies Organization (CSO) are calling for the stamp out of this act with strong condemnation and publicity through various avenues of print and electronic media (Hamisu Ismaila). But some of the victims of this sexual coercion in places do keep silent to speak out because of the fear of stigmatization and humiliation on their personality.¹¹

But despite the widespread outcry over the rising cases of sexual abuse in Nigeria, there seems to be no end to this dastardly act in some places among people. It is, therefore, attested by some people that there is no day in a society that a reported case of sexual abuse would not have been aired out, especially through the media.¹² It was because of this ugly trend that Women's Aid Collective (WACOL) a non-governmental organization conducted a survey in 2018 that showed that women and girls in Nigeria suffer from sexual and gender-based violence in different spheres of life from a series of perpetrators. WACOL noted that sexual coercion and rape are among the forms of torture experienced by genders more especially females in almost all countries of the world including Nigeria. In addition, victims of sexual coercion in some places in Nigeria suffer in silence to the extent that some were affected with mental depression or contraction with HIV disease and worst of all unwanted pregnancy that endangers women's folk health and the future of survivors. Sexual abuse in Nigeria is an offense under section 21 of the Nigeria Criminal Code.¹³ But surprisingly do these laws really clamp down on the perpetrators? Admittedly, some people opine that Nigeria is one of the countries in the world where a perpetrator of illegal acts are going about freely without facing wrath of the law (WACOL). The United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF 2015)¹⁴ reported that one in four girls and one in ten boys in Nigeria had experienced sexual abuse before the age of eighteen. In addition to this report, Pauline Tallen, Nigeria's Minister for Women Affairs and Social Development in 2019 once claimed that about two million Nigerians particularly women and girls are raped every year. Amazingly, this figure that she quoted is not justified with any substantial data for convincing. However, if this her claim has been established, it means that there is a systematic failure on the part of Federal Government of Nigeria.¹⁵ More so, it is

¹⁰ Isah Shehu (52 years), Muslim Scholar, *Op. Cit.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Justina Mijindadi (47 years), Civil Servant, interviewed at Ushafa, Abuja on 9th November, 2022.

¹³ Chapter 21: Offences against morality Criminal Code Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990. Retrieved as at 3rd November, 2022.

¹⁴ Release of the findings of Nigeria Violence Against Children Survey UNICEF Nigeria 10th September, 2015

¹⁵ Daily trust paper 17th October, 2019.

added that due to the vulnerability of female gender girls and women are the greatest number among the poorest of the poor in Nigeria. It is continued that some of them have been plagued with the poverty of ignorance, illiteracy, discrimination and injustice, and oppression because of their weaker nature of creation by Allah.¹⁶

The fact about Nigeria is a multi-cultural country with several tribes across the thirty-six states including Abuja FCT. Whereby many Nigerian citizens practice dominant religions like Christianity, Islam, and traditional. One important thing here is that both pronounced dominant faiths dislike sexual coercion or harassment against genders in strong terms. Islam for example, is extremely stringent on sexual illegality even in the case of adult with the bounds of legal marriage. As a result of this, sexual abuse encompasses all the characteristics of evils, lack of religious commitment, loss of piety, and so on.¹⁷ Therefore, adultery is a major sin in Islam, abhorred by Allah and destructive upon a person's religion, family, and society.¹⁸

Who is a Girl-Child?

According to Grace Chibiko,¹⁹ girls' children simply refer to someone's biological daughter or offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age. This is the age that a child passed through before becoming an adult. The process of this period covers crèche, pre-primary (0-5), primary school (6-12 years), and secondary school education (12-18 years). It is expected that during this period a child is supposed to be in total control of parents or guardians and older siblings. These are the stages where the girl child develops her personality and character through modeling of parents, teachers, elders, and observation of people around her in society.

Education

Education means the art of teaching and the training of the young. The aim of education can be nothing less than all-round efficiency and the development of the child physically, intellectually, morally, and spiritually. Education enables one to learn how to appreciate things in life including rendering of services etc.²⁰

Girls Child Education

Girl's child education can simply be regarded as the aspect of education that aims at developing the skills and knowledge of girls and women from all races and backgrounds. This development include education at schools, colleges, health professional bodies, technical and vocational. Education of girl child will help empower her to come forward and contribute towards the development and prosperity of the country.²¹ Girl child education helps in creating a good life for

¹⁶ A. Bamisheye, Gender empowerment and Millennium Development. In Mercie Boucouvalas, (nd).

¹⁷ Isah Shehu (52 years), Muslim Scholar, *Op. Cit.*

¹⁸ A. Safiya, *Child abuse in Islam: legal implications*, Darul Ilm, (nd).

¹⁹ C. O., Grace, Keynote Address Presented at the Conference of the Federation of the University WOMWNE of Africa, held in Lagos, Nigeria on 16th -19th July, 2009.

²⁰ P. O. Adeyemo, *Principles of Education and practice of education*, Omolayo Standard Press, Akure, 1965.

²¹ C. O., Grace, Keynote Address Presented at the Conference of the Federation of the University WOMWNE of Africa, *Op. Cit.*

herself and others. She will have the ability to read and learn about her own rights and as such, will not be going about with ignorance because of lack of awareness.²²

There is no doubt an educated girl can prove to be successful in her respective professions like doctors, engineers, and scientists because of this opportunity. The most important role of education in a girl's education is to transform her and in return to her community. Whatever the case may be some scholars said that girl's education strengthens economies and reduces inequality among genders.²³ To them this contributes to more stable resilient societies that give all individuals the opportunity to fulfill their potential including those in which they are often represented at places. Education is pivotal to individual and national advancement thus it is a liberating and corrective measure for societal and institutional injustice. Therefore, to promote girl child education in Nigeria.²⁴

Implications of Sexual Coercion on Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

Although the implication of sexual coercion in tertiary institutions may vary depending on the individual severity and duration of the act in a particular institution at a time. On a serious note, the occurrence of sexual coercion has become so often against genders especially girls and women by evil people in some tertiary institutions. Sadly, the scenario of this act when heard about it mostly turns out to be annoying for the affected victims of tertiary institutions of learning in the country which they patronize for education. But one of the major impediments to girl's child education particularly in Nigeria is the act of sexual abuse and other related offences. If not, how can a perpetrator flagrantly commit sexual immorality and other sort of wrongdoing unchecked and some will still be bragging. But one thing that can put a stop to this act is the avoidance of general bad social behavior in school and societies.²⁵

Pertinently, one of the bedeviling challenges on tertiary institutions in Nigeria is the incessant attacks by armed bandits' groups on girls and women education. Armed banditries continuously razing havoc on number of societies and institutions to the extent of issuing threat to girl's child education in some states in northeast and northwestern Nigeria. According to BBC Hausa News of 13th October 2021 armed bandits in Kaduna and Zamfara warned that girls should not even make any attempt of going back to western schools again. This led to the kidnapping of many of them to the bush from College of Fisheries, Kaduna, and College of Agriculture Bakura. Some of those kidnapped were kept in the captivity of bandits for several weeks and months as sex slaves and forced marriage. While others were released back to the society after the payment of huge sum of ransom to the kidnappers from the relatives of captives and others. The most painful among all against girls and women of some institutions is the loss of education after constant attacks on them. This portends great danger and long-term consequences of sexual abuse against their education that create

²² L. Aisha, *Islamic Studies Teachings*, Islamic Education Trust, Minna, (n.d).

²³ Isah Shehu (52 years), Muslim Scholar, *Op. Cit.*

²⁴ A. Uche, and E. N. Nwosu, Socio-Cultural Inhibitions of Girl Child Education in Nigeria: Implication for Gender Balancing. *Journal of Teacher Education in Nigeria*, 2015.

²⁵ L. Aisha, *Islamic Studies Teachings*, *Op. Cit.*

almost insurmountable obstacles for some of them to return to school for education.²⁶

Some Solutions for Curbing Sexual Coercion in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

As has been discussed at the beginning of the paper. Sexual abuse is a bad behavior that is totally against any gender especially girls and women as it affects their will for education. Therefore, there is a need to properly check this act and brought it to control hence, it will jeopardize the chances of girls and women towards the pursuance of education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. In this light, some solutions were proffer that will stall this ugly act in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. These solutions include:

1. Government should ensure adequate safety of all learning centers for students and teachers.
2. There should be a quick intervention that will show support to all victims of sexual coercion and other related offenses.
3. Sensitization should be strengthened among people to desist from perpetrating evil acts against genders.
4. Any perpetrator caught with the act should be brought to justice for a stiffer penalty to serve as a deterrent to others.
5. Victims should not hesitate to speak out about any form of abuse against them to the public for immediate action against perpetrators.
6. Indecent dresses should not be allowed for wearing and enforcement of a decent code of dressing be properly in place.
7. The provision of CCTV cameras should be in place for proper monitoring of all activities on campuses.

CONCLUSION

From the foregone discussion, sexual coercion has become a great challenge to so many individuals across tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Even though in some tertiary institutions, any perpetrator of this act that is caught usually face stiffer punishment of law. However, the importance of girl child in the family and society cannot be farfetched. Therefore, it is vital for every parent, stakeholders, and government to continuously give them support and encouragement for them to achieve all round success in education. The fact that girls and women are so vulnerable to the frequent attacks from some people which make them to look for maximum protection from the society against any sort of threat and discrimination.

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2. Isah Shehu (52 years), Muslim Scholar, was interviewed at Dutse, Abuja on 12th November 2022.
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