

BARRIERS TO RAPE REPORTING FOR NIGERIAN WOMEN: THE CASE OF FEMALE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the key findings of a research project that investigated perceived relevance among barriers to reporting rape for female university students. Existing literature suggests that the refusal of victims of rape and other forms of sexual victimisation in Nigeria to report their experiences have social underpinnings. Using qualitative information gathered from in-depth interviews of twenty-three rape victims selected through snowball sampling, the study found that rather than social stigma, the fear of retaliation by their assailants dominated the concerns of the university rape victims. Other important barriers to rape reporting include lack of confidence in the criminal justice system, social stereotypes and prejudice against victims. Apart from the need for the government and private sector to intervene in the inadequacies of on-campus accommodation of public universities, campus-based rape and sexual assault prevention strategies could also be developed from collaboration among professional counsellors, students, faculty, health centre workers, and campus police.

Keywords: Rape reporting, Sexual assault, Victimisation, Female university students

INTRODUCTION

Though rape has been widely acknowledged as one of the most underreported crime in the world (Layman, Gidycz, and Lynn, 1996; Lee, Pomeroy, and Rheinboldt, 2005; Sable, Danis, Mauzy, and Gallagher, 2006), the refusal of victims of rape and other forms

of sexual victimisation in Nigeria to report have several social underpinnings. The records of the Nigerian Police are replete with statistics and sometimes names of armed robbers, carjackers and murderers; however, they are largely silent on rape cases. Under the Nigerian law, both the

Penal Code and Criminal Code have defined the offence and prescribed punishments. In spite of this, the rate of reporting of rape and sexual assault by victims remains low.

Meanwhile, almost on a daily basis, news reports are made of either a teacher raping a pupil, a religious leader raping a member of his flock, robbers raping a victim, a group of boys or men raping a lady, a father raping his daughter, a young man raping a grandmother, and so on. It is, therefore, a subject of concern that the statistics on such a crime will be alarmingly unreflective of the perceived rate in the country. Indeed, there is statistical evidence that suggests that most rape in Nigeria go unpunished. According to a report by CLEEN Foundation (2013), only 28 per cent of rape cases in the country are reported to the police. Also, in a poll conducted by NOI Polls Limited (2013), it reported that almost 3 out of 10 Nigerians admitted to personally knowing someone who has been a victim of rape. In addition, statistics show that about one in 50 cases of rape are reported, and the percentage of reported cases has continued to reduce over the years despite the consistent increase in the number of incidents (Chiedu, 2013). Consequently, it has been described in the country as “a crime whose victims love to remain anonymous” (Yishua, 2011).

The peculiarity of the underreporting of rape and sexual violence in Nigeria is underlined by the deficiencies of government to establish structures that would encourage victims to boldly come out. A coalition of civil society groups, in decrying the spate of rape in the country,

condemned the law against rape which the Nigerian Constitution portrays as merely a misdemeanour (Ogbo, 2013). Also, unlike what obtains in other countries, stigmatisation is considered as one of the strongest factors inhibiting the reporting of rape, as the Nigerian society are strongly prejudiced against rape victims (Amaka-Okafor, 2013; Chiedu, 2013). Rape victims are often perceived as facilitating their victimisation through ‘suggestive attitudes,’ and ‘indecent dressing’; in spite of the fact that there is no law that regulates dressing in the country. Therefore, victims of rape or sexual assault are perceived as people of low moral virtues that must have led their assailants to the crime. Amaka-Okafor (2013) described this social perception of rape by Nigerians as part of the ‘culture of rape’. She condemned the non-recognition of domestic rape (between husband and wife) by the nation’s constitution as a factor that fuels the culture of rape in the country. This, by extension may account for the reason for the low reporting of date rape as the female partner will be roundly condemned by the public if she comes out to report being raped by her boyfriend. In this case, it has been reported that even the law enforcement agents make mockery of such report by victims as they often consider it inconceivable for a girl to report being raped by her boyfriend (Chiedu, 2013).

As the rape scourge continues to eat deep into the social fabrics of the country, the ivory towers are not spared as there are increasing accounts of sexual assaults in several institutions of higher learning in the country (Chiedu, 2013). Added to this

is the growing rate with which videos of the sexual ordeals of the victims are uploaded on social media to further ridicule them the more. One of such instances was a 10-minute uploaded video (on Facebook) of rape incidence suffered by a female student by a gang of her fellow students in which she had to beg her assailants to kill her and save her from further gruesome sexual harassment. Gang rape is also very prevalent in many of the nation's universities as it is used as an expression of abuse and power among cult gangs. The case of rape victimisation among university students was particularly made relevant due to the likelihood of the assailant(s) influencing the reporting behaviour of the victims. Also, apart from stranger rape, date or acquaintance rape is expected to be very prevalent in the universities (Sable et al., 2006), but grossly underreported partly as a result of unacknowledged status of such rape incidences.

Hence, this study sought to expose the knowledge about the perceived impediments to reporting rape victimisation and to explore the peculiar experiences of students of higher learning. The focus of this paper is to investigate the perceived relevance among barriers to reporting rape for university female students. How important are potential barriers to reporting rape and sexual assault? What is the level of confidence in the criminal justice system as a mechanism for seeking redress? To what extent does the rape experience of victims influence their decision to reporting rape and sexual assault?

METHODS

Settings for the Study

This study conducted a qualitative victimisation survey that covered four universities in Lagos and Ogun states, Nigeria. The study designed an In-depth Interview Guide (IDI) that consisted of two sections of ten (10) questions which sought to elicit responses about the participants' perceptions and attitudinal beliefs about rape and sexual assault; the importance of the barriers to reporting, and beliefs about the criminal justice system of the country. In addition, the instrument included a series of questions used to gather social and demographic data. The instrument did not include any published or standardised scales that would have provided benchmarks for reliability and validity. In place of this, peer reviewers that comprised of experts in the field of social work, sexual assault criminology and sexual health officials of the University College Hospital, Ibadan were engaged to examine the face and content validity of the instrument. Their suggestions and comments were duly considered as they were of good value to the study.

Measures

In arriving at the respondents of the study, the use of snowball sampling technique was deployed. This is as a result of the peculiar difficulties in accessing and engaging rape survivors in research of this nature especially in socially conservative Nigeria. In all, the study engaged twenty-three (23) female victims that are survivors of rape as students of the selected universities.

Sampling Procedure

The researcher was able to draw his initial sample from students of Tai Solarin University of Education after series of open invitations were made to student victims of rape incidence. From an initial response of three (3) survivors that consented in participating in the study, twenty more respondents were interviewed through face-to-face and telephone interviews. The data collection exercise was conducted between February and June, 2013. Though not all the respondents were student as at the time they were interviewed, but all rape experiences shared occurred at the time they were students.

Administration of the Instruments and methods of Data Analysis

Approvals for the study were obtained from the Ethics Committee of Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State. The respondents were duly informed about the purpose of the study and other rights as respondents of the study including confidentiality. Data collected from the field was analysed in order to meet the research objectives and answer

the research questions raised. Information from in-depth interviews collected with electronic tapes and notes were transcribed, synthesized and organised under thematic headings using software for qualitative analysis. All names used to refer to the rape victims are fictitious and are only meant to represent the real persons interviewed.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

As evident in Table 1, the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were quite diverse. The table shows that the respondents are relatively young with majority within age 21-25 (11, 47.83%). It is important to note that majority of the respondents (13, 56.52%) were assaulted at very young age of 16-20. The fact that the students were raped when relatively very young is likely to have severe psychological and emotional consequence for them. In addition to the youthful status of the survivors when they were raped, they were equally in their early years at the university as at the time of the incidence.

Table 1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable		N	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)	16-20	3	13.04
	21-25	11	47.83
	26-30	6	26.09
	30+	3	13.04
	Total	23	100
Age (at the time of rape)	16-20	13	56.52
	21-25	9	39.13
	26-30	1	4.35
	30+	Nil	Nil
	Total	23	100
Level in the University (at the time of rape)	100	12	52.17
	200	6	26.09
	300	3	13.04
	400	1	4.35
	500	1	4.35
	Total	23	100
Institutional Affiliation	Tai Solarin University of Ibadan	13	56.52
	Olabisi Onabanjo University	6	26.09
	Lagos State University	3	13.04
	University of Lagos	1	4.35
	Total	97	100

Source: Survey 2013

The research had more respondents from Tai Solarin University of Education (13, 56.52%) because that was the initial location of the study before it was extended to respondents of other universities largely facilitated by the snowballing approach adopted by the researcher.

Perceived Importance of Impediments to Reporting Rape Victimisation

Though the respondents were first asked if they reported their assault to the police or school authorities, their response showed that none of them reported the incidence to formal authorities. Even 6 (26.09%) of them that initially nursed the idea to report

were advised against reporting. Therefore, the research moved to have a clear understanding of the key factors that impedes the reporting of rape incidence to the appropriate authorities. They were requested to mention (as many as

applicable to them personally) the key reasons for their inability to report the incidence appropriately. Table 2 shows a list of barriers identified by the respondents of the study that discouraged them from seeking justice.

Table 2: Respondents' perceived importance of impediments to reporting rape and sexual assaults

Impediments to reporting	N	Percentage (%)
Inability to identify assailant	3	13.04
Dislike or distrust of police and justice system	8	34.78
Cultural barriers to obtaining help	7	30.43
Unaware of the need to report	2	8.70
Fear of being stigmatized	18	78.26
Fear of not being believed	9	39.13
Fear of retaliation	21	91.30
Financial dependence on perpetrator	6	26.09
Does not want perpetrator to be prosecuted	5	21.74
No use, harm has already being done	3	13.04
Advised not to report by friends, family, significant others	6	26.09

Source: Survey 2013

As evident from Table 2, the perceived barriers of the university rape victims in reporting their victimisation are quite diverse. However, it is glaring that the fear of retaliation (21, 91.30%) and fear of stigmatisation (18, 78.26%) account for the most perceived importance of barriers to reporting rape and sexual assault. Most of the respondents interviewed stated that they were raped by students that are members of the secret cults. This explains their reluctance to report the case to either the school authority or police force for fear of retaliation by the cultists. One of them who was deflowered by a 3-man gang rape incidence volunteered:

...from some of the things they said when they broke (they) into my room, I knew they had information from my close friends...they stated that they learnt I was a virgin and they were there to give me a first experience of sex. I was warned not to report otherwise I will live to regret it. Even my neighbours know some of them but warned me not to report as the consequence might be grave...
(Anne,200 level, TASUED)

Most of the respondents perceive that fear of retaliation is an important barrier that disabled them from reporting and this is not too different from that of Anne (not real name). However, the case of Sandra (not real name) is different. She left her campus (University of Lagos) in company of three female friends to hang out with six men who took them on a boat cruise to an Island within Lagos. On getting to the Island, not only were they drugged and raped, the orgy was also recorded by the men. They were warned not to report the incidence to any one; otherwise, the video will be uploaded on the internet. She continues:

...they threatened to upload the video on the internet and Bluetooth it to several peoples' phones. I can't bear having them do that to me so I kept it to myself though they are well known to me. I would have really loved to report them because they were very brutal with us. They dehumanised us in a way I can't explain. Now I have left them to God to punish them. Even though it happened four years ago, I still live in fear that they may just decide to upload the video because they still have it with them..

(Sandra, 400 level, UNILAG)

This result raises objection to the position of most literatures that identified fear of stigmatisation as the most perceived barrier to rape reporting in Nigeria (Bachman, 1998; Ayinde, 2008; Ogbe, 2013). This indicates that there are

peculiar barriers to rape reporting by college students that are different from what is obtainable in the larger society. However, a significant number of them (18, 78.26%), still fear stigmatization. Felicia (not real name) said:

...I cannot report because our people don't like to associate with girls that are raped. Even I noticed that as soon as it happened to me, most of my neighbours were no longer free with me. Several times they will be whispering, talking about me, once I approach them, they will stop and start making gestures to themselves. I had to move out of that house because of that...

(Felicia, 200 level, TASUED)

As against the common position of literature that one of the key barriers to reporting rape is not wanting friends and families to know about the rape and sexual assault (Lee, Pomeroy and Rheinboldt, 2005; Sable et al., 2006), six (26.09%) of the respondents were advised by their parents not to report, while 14 (60.87%) of them were convinced by their friends not to take further actions to avoid social stigmatisation. The development of the social media and other communication technologies seem to have opened up new mechanisms for rapists in the country to threaten their victims into concealing the rape events. Added to this is the social prejudice against rape victims that is very pronounced in the country and is important barrier to reporting rape victimisation.

The reporting behaviour of campus rape victims are equally influenced by the stereotypes that the society has about seductive and vindictive women. These stereotypes are often used by defence attorneys to prejudice the juries against victims, resulting in a reduced chance of prosecution and conviction (O'Toole and Schiffman, 1997; Shepherd, 2002).

The level of confidence in the criminal justice system as a mechanism

Empirical evidence suggests that rape reporting behaviour of women will be enhanced when there is a high level of confidence in the criminal justice system (Starzynski, et al., 2005; Littleton et al., 2006; Sable et al., 2006). Hence, measures to encourage women who suffer rape or sexual assault to come forward to report should obviously commence with appropriate steps to ensure a reliable justice system. This study moves to examine the social perception of the criminal justice system as a mechanism of seeking redress for sexually assaulted women. Since the findings reveal that none of the victims went as far as reporting their assault to the police or school authority, they cannot offer responses that relates to their experience with the country's justice system. Therefore, they were requested to express their general perception of the criminal justice system. Of the 23 respondents, 16 (69.56%) of them stated that their perception of the justice system is based on the experience of people close to them, while the perception of the remaining 7 (30.43%) is based on their knowledge of the general impression of the justice system to the public.

The general perception of the respondents about the justice system of the country is negative. Eighteen (78.26%) of them believe that the justice system of the country cannot effect redress when one's right is trampled upon. Even the 5 (21.74%) of them that believes that redress can be facilitated by justice system holds that one has to be strongly connected or ready to buy the justice. In the words of one of them:

...if you are somebody or you know a person that is somebody in this country, then you can always get justice...It will be difficult if you are 'a nobody', especially if you are seeking justice against an influential person. Even in a rape case against a person whose father is rich, you will end up coming out guilty...

(Felicia, 200 level, TASUED)

This opinion is shared by the other five respondents that hold the belief that the justice system is still potent. However, for those that feel otherwise, the justice system in the country is non-existent. One of them, Abigail (not real name) offers explanation:

...we all know that there is no justice in this country, so why will I expose myself to more dangers by reporting such case. The police will make a laughing stock of you as soon as you mention the word 'rape'. A friend of mine that went to report to the police when her boyfriend raped her, told me that the police on duty

told her it's a domestic affair since it's her boyfriend. He told her to go and settle with him, as it is not worth reporting...

(Abigail, 200 level, LASU)

Another one (Annabel) added:

...even when the police want to help you to get justice, they are not able to do so.... If I go to them to report, what evidence can I present to them for them to believe me? How will they be able to find out the truth? I don't think they are capable to do anything. They will just throw away my case or be asking me just to keep coming without doing anything...

(Annabel, 400 level, OOU)

Considering that the findings of the study indicate that fear of retaliation is the most important barrier to rape reporting among university female rape victims, if the criminal justice system of the country is perceived to be reliable, then the rape reporting behaviour of the victims will be more positive. The expression of the respondents on the lack of confidence in the criminal justice system of the country is in tandem with the position of literature on the social perception of the people about the justice system (Adeyemi, 1990; Ugwuonye, 2011). In an editorial published in the Guardian Newspaper 2009; in his comment, the former Chairman, editorial board of the Guardian Newspaper, now Senior Special Assistant on Media to President Goodluck Jonathan, Reuben Abati responding to the case of a twelve year-old Junior Secondary School (JSS) student of Queens College, Lagos.

He states that the lack of confidence and weakness of the criminal justice system is a strong factor that negatively impacts on the rape reporting tendency of the victims. He mentions a case of the inadequacies of the justice system:

One courageous young lady once took her case to AIT, she reported that when she got to the police station to report that she had just been raped, all the policemen on duty laughed. They didn't take her seriously. She sounded like a married woman who had gone to the police to report that her husband had beaten her. No Nigerian policeman would take such a case seriously. The woman is likely to be asked to go and settle with her husband. It is for this same reason that bigamy is a dead law in our country. Rape is equally difficult to prove in a court of law, the processes and requirements are humiliating for the affected woman.

(Reuben Abati, SSA to the President, 2009)

From the findings of the study and review of existing literature, it is evident that the social perception of rape victims on the criminal justice system is negative and capable of bringing about second victimisation. This research clearly indicates that victims of rape would rather seek redress through spiritual means than report their rape and sexual assault to the police. This finding supports the literature that has identified the growing lack of

confidence in the criminal justice system as a bane to crime reporting in the country (Adeyemi, 1990; Ugwuonye, 2011). The attitude of the police towards rape as an offence is highly reflective of the overall perception of the crime in the larger society. The corroborates finding of the study corroborates available literature (Abati, 2009; Ogbo, 2013) that police officers are often prejudiced in their treatment of rape cases. In addition, the problem of the burden of proof that falls on the victims is another barrier to reporting crime as the Nigerian Police have not attained the level of forensic technology that would enable them determine the victimisation of rape and sexual assault without making victims to go through unnecessary rigours.

The influence of the rape experience of victims on decision to report

Studies have shown that the rape experience of victims can be instrumental to decision to report the assault to appropriate authorities (Lee et al., 2005;

McGregor, 2005; Starzynski et al., 2005). Layman et al. (1996) posits that acknowledged rape has a higher tendency of being reported than unacknowledged rape, while Bohner et al (2005), assert that victims of coercive rape incidence have higher tendencies to report. As this is well established in the researches that focused on the larger society, this study moved to examine the efficacy of this theory on the rape reporting behaviour of students in higher institution. Though none of the respondents of the study went as far as reporting the crime to the police, we examined the rape experience of the 6 (26.09%) victims that were motivated to report the incidence before they were persuaded against it by members of their family and friends. They were first requested to state the relationship between them and their assailants as at the time of the rape incidence. Table 3 shows the type of rape suffered by the respondents of the study.

Table 3: Types of rape experience of the victims

Rape Types	N	Percentage (%)
Date Rape	3	13.04
Acquaintance Rape	8	34.78
Stranger Rape	12	52.18
Total	23	100

Source: Survey 2013

The table shows that majority of the respondents (12, 52.18%) are victims of stranger rape, followed by those that suffered acquaintance rape (8, 34.78%). The prevalence of stranger rape among the respondents may not be unconnected with the residential status of their institutions. Apart from the University of Lagos, the

other selected institutions in the study are non-residential, in which students are expected to arrange for their own accommodation outside the campus. This puts them in a state of insecurity in the community that they reside, with miscreants taking advantage of the situation to molest the students. This is

particularly the case in Ijagun and Ijebu-Igbo areas that accommodate TASUED and OOU students respectively. Furthermore, the study requested the

victims to describe the nature of their rape experience Table 4 shows a variety of their experience.

Table 4: The nature of the rape experience of the victims

Nature of rape event	N	Percentage (%)
Single rapist, minimal physical assault, no use of weapon	7	30.44
Single rapist, severe physical assault, use of weapon	3	13.04
Gang rape, minimal physical assault, no use of weapon	5	21.74
Gang rape, severe physical assault, use of weapon	8	34.78
Total	23	

Source: Survey 2013

The pattern of rape experience of the victim (from the table above) shows that those who suffered violent rape are more than those whose physical assault was mild. The position of this research is that gang rape cannot be visited on a victim with ‘minimal physical assault’. Therefore, unlike the position of some of the respondents (5, 21.74%) that perceived that they had a ‘non-violent’ gang rape, we categorised them under violent rape. Consequently, a total of 16 (69.57) of the respondents were victims of violent rape. Upon further scrutiny, it was found that the victims that indicated that they had a ‘non-violent gang rape’ made their choice based on their submission to the assaulters to accept being sexually assaulted.

In respect of the six victims that initially wanted to report their assault to the law enforcement agents, three of them fell into the category of those that were raped by single assailant who inflicted injuries on them with the use of weapons, while the other three were gang raped with severe

injuries. It is noteworthy that all the six were raped by acquaintances that they were not dating. There are some similarities in the reasons they gave for deciding to report. The sense of betrayal of trust, and physical assault that resulted in body injuries which made some of them seek for medical help were common features of their rape experience. One of them Faith (not real name) gave details of her experience and what informed her decision to go to the police:

...being in the same group with him for a certain assignment, it was normal for us to meet and work together. On that fateful day, he called me to inform me that other members of our group were already at his place. I got there to find out that there was no one with him, he invited me in, then started saying things that I initially thought was a joke...how he loves me and all that...he was

dating another classmate of mine that I know, so I never expected him to want to do this. I got up to leave when he was becoming insistent but he pulled me back and pushed me to his bed with a strong force. My head hit the wall in the process and I became semi-unconscious. I was helpless as a result of the effect of the impact of the hit on my head. He had his way with me and was laughing scornfully as I struggled to make my way out of his room...

(Faith, 300 level, LASU)

It was observed by the researcher that Faith felt strong emotion of betrayal and shame as a result of the incidence due to the level of trust she reposed in her assailant as a boyfriend of her colleague. The physical assault that she was also subjected to must have sparked off the decision to report. In the case of Hannah (not real name) who was a victim of gang rape she confessed:

...he asked me out, he wanted to date me but I refused because I was dating another person who is not a student. He seemed to have accepted and agreed that we could be friends. I have nothing against that so I accepted...the day it happened, we were both on our way home from school when he invited me to branch at his place to have a drink before continuing my journey. I never

suspected anything so I entered his room. He gave me a cup of water which I drank then we started chatting about different school life. I can't remember at what point I slept off, I woke up to see him pulling my dress off, I struggled weakly because I couldn't get a grip of myself. He was hitting me as he was removing my dress, I must have fainted at some point because I never knew when his friends came in. I only woke up to realise that four of them had slept with me. I was a virgin until that day, I was in my first year...I felt dead...

(Hannah, 400 level, TASUED)

The key semblances in the case of those that wanted to report include shock at being raped by unexpected assailant, the brutal manner that the rape happened, the fact that the assailant was known (unlike stranger rape), there was no video recording or other forms of threat, and they were all raped by people they will continue to have contact with. These are the key similarities in the rape experiences of those that took the decisions to report their assault to the police before they were persuaded against taking such action. The study aligns with the literature that holds that victims will be more predisposed to report rape when the offender betrays trust than in date or stranger rape scenario (Gartner and MacMillian, 1995). The study found acquaintance rape when violence is involved, either by single or gang offenders, as more deserving to

report. This might be due to the psychological effects that may follow such betrayal of trust and problems in dealing with a 'friend's' betrayal.

CONCLUSION

The negative attitude towards rape reporting as revealed in this study portends an ominous situation to crime control in Nigeria. Although there have been great strides in the agitation towards assisting victims of sexual assault, victims still face multiple barriers when coming forward to report victimisation. There are a number of reasons to encourage survivors of rape or sexual assault to report. The major benefit for the society would be to increase the consequence of the crime, which might result in preventing rape or sexual assault. Meanwhile, what the survivor stands to benefit may be an increased opportunity to receive the medical and psychological first aid to assist in recovering from an event with significant psychological and physical trauma. Without doubt, there is need for timely institutional intervention that would bring about positive attitude towards crime reporting in the country. The results of this study indicate a need for education about the cultural influences on rape and rape reporting. The efforts to dispel the existing myth about rape and its causes must be made in order for the stereotypes against the victims to be reconsidered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome of this research draws attention to the need for government to intervene in the problem of on-campus accommodation needs of universities of the country. Safety of students cannot be guaranteed outside their campuses, hence,

the need for government to prioritise accommodation provisions to higher institutions in the country. Furthermore, campus-based rape and sexual assault prevention strategies could be developed from collaboration among professional counsellors, students, faculty, health centre workers, and campus police. These partners could review local rape statistics and formulate policy specifically designed to make the campus a safe place to learn. Through the coordination of the efforts of interested campus-based organisations, date rape could be reduced.

The findings of this study also indicate the need for the criminal justice system of the country to be revamped in such a way that it will become more effective in treating rape cases. It is suggested that the police should establish an Anti-Sexual Assault unit within its ranks to specially attend to rape cases. This unit should be adequately equipped with necessary forensic technologies to aid its investigations. This will enable the courts to possess more incontrovertible evidences to prosecute rape cases. There is no gain saying about the fact that if the justice system is more receptive to victims, it will positively impact on rape reporting behaviour and reduce sexual violence victimisation.

Finally, this study has been able to reveal the importance of barriers to reporting rape. However, a careful design of treatment and intervention modalities, mindful of the persistent attitudinal barriers to their use, may help diminish barriers to reporting the crime of rape. This study has consciously underlined the need for the development of a more informed and proactive approach for our

public education efforts. We advise that more research in this area should be considered to inform prevention and intervention policy, therefore making sure that victims of this crime receive the most sensitive and protective treatment that can be offered. In addition, further researches should be conducted to identify the participants' preferred methods of education and which educational interventions will be most effective in reducing these barriers. We conclude that research into the perceived importance of barriers to reporting is an important agenda that would help to drive reforms in rape treatment in Nigeria and cover the gap in the literature on the victimology of rape in the country.

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