

CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AS PERCEIVED BY YOUTHS IN KWARA STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING PRACTICE

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Abstract

This study examined the causes and consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State. Descriptive survey design was used to select 398 respondents using stratified sampling technique. The instrument was a researcher-designed questionnaire, tagged: "Causes and Consequences of Sexual Violence Questionnaire (CCSVQ)". The reliability was ascertained by test-retest method with coefficient of 0.73. The findings revealed that influence of drug or alcohol, genetic predisposition (excessive urge for sex), indecent dressing, non-reportage of acts of sexual violence were the major perceived causes of sexual violence among youths. Sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancy, post-traumatic stress disorder among others were the main perceived consequences of sexual violence among youths. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference in the causes of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on age, but a significant difference was found based on gender. There were significant differences in the consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on gender and age. It was recommended based on the findings of the study that counsellors should help youths to desist from taking drug or alcohol and understand the emotional dangers impact of sexual violence such as psychological distress, emotional pain, post-traumatic distress, depression and shame as well as for them to live a life and free from sexual violence. Non-governmental organization (NGOs) and counsellors should collaborate with other professionals to raise awareness about sexual violence prevention and its consequences.

Keywords: Causes, Consequences, Youths, Sexual Violence, Kwara State

Introduction

Sexual violence is a serious crime against the young people across the world. It is a violent, aggressive and hostile act aiming to degrade, dominate, humiliate, terrorise and control the victim. It refers to sexual activity where consent is not obtained or freely given by one of the parties involved in a sexual relationship. Sexual violence occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity. It also comes in forms of defilement, rape, incest, sexual harassment, marital rape, unwanted sexual touch, words and putting mirrors between girls' legs. Others are use of bad /vulgar language, sex with woman during her post-natal period, words and signs related to sex and attempted defilement.

The International Labour Organisation (International Labour Organization, 2022) put the figure of sexual abuse globally to be 1.8 million. This figure shows that sexual violence is prevalent among youths and these may be due to alcohol consumption, ignorance of victim, poverty, lack of basic necessities, previous experience of rape or sexual abuse, and multiple sexual partners. Odimegwu and Somefun (2017) have shown that university female students are at a greater risk of sexual assault than males counterparts. Sexual violence impacts greatly on the physical, social and mental health of the victims. Physical injury with attendant reproductive consequences could result to emotional trauma, psychological distress, unwanted pregnancy, chronic pelvic pain, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (Rothman, Georgia, Roddy, Hatch & Doss, 2021).

Sexual violence subjugates women, robs them of their dignity and mocks them. According to Nwabunike and Tenkorang (2017), sexual violence has health implications and this may lead to headaches, chronic body pain, stomach problems and sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDs. Rothman, Georgia, Roddy, Hatch and Doss (2021) stated that sexual violence could lead to a range of gynaecological and reproductive health problems, such as unwanted pregnancy, vaginal laceration or infection, decreased sexual desire, genital irritation, pain during intercourse, chronic pelvic pain and urinary tract infections. Other possible consequences include depression, anxiety, social isolation, loss of self-esteem, contraction HIV/AIDS, STDs, unwanted pregnancy, physical injury,

suicidal ideation, distrust of others, substance abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder (Olayanju, 2014).

Essentially, a number of works had been carried out on a nature of sexual violence in and outside Nigeria. For instance, Uwayo (2014) carried out a study on factors contributing to intimate partner violence and the effectiveness of services available to help victims in Kisumu, Kenya. Olayanju (2014) assessed the statistical modelling of intimate partner violence in Nigeria taking into consideration its magnitude, risk factors and costs implications. The study of Raphel (2017) focused on causes and consequences of marital violence as expressed by married adults in Oyo State. Therefore, looking at all these studies altogether, none of the previous studies was carried out among youths in Kwara State. The research gap uncovered by the above studies is that; none of the studies was carried out in Kwara State and they did not focus on sexual violence among youths but on married people. In view of this, this study therefore investigated the causes and consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State, Nigeria. Although Adedokun (2023) reported that younger adolescents between 18 and 25 years were vulnerable to sexual violence due to their physical and emotional immaturity while women between 26 and 35 years experience sexual violence in the form of intimate violence or sexual assault by peers. Adetoyese (2023) findings revealed that Fifty nine percent (59%) of female students who were below 20 years of age were vulnerable to physical and emotional violence in Nigeria and 49% of survivors of sexual violence were affected with mental health challenges, including depression and post-traumatic stress. Age also play a significant in the consequences of sexual violence, with younger survivors potentially experience more severe and long-lasting trauma. Regardless of age, both male and female youths always face challenges in seeking help and support due to societal expectations and gender norms.

This study investigated the causes and consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study also considered the variables of gender, age and their influence on perception of the respondents regarding the causes and consequences of sexual violence.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in the study:

1. What are the causes of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State?
2. What are the consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference in the causes of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara state based on gender
2. There is no significant difference in the causes of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara state based on age
3. There is no significant difference in the consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara state based on gender
4. There is no significant difference in the consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara state based on age

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study because the researchers examined the causes and consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey is concerned with the collection and summarisation of numerical data. Descriptive survey employs questionnaire and/or interviews in order to determine the opinion, attitudes, preference, perception and expression of people of interest to the researcher (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 2023). The population for this study comprised all the youths in Kwara State, which is estimated to 688,828 according to National Population Census (2023). The sample for this study was 384 according to research Advisor (2006). This is determined against population size of 1, 000, 000, under 95% confidence level at 5.0% margin of error. However, the sample size was increased by 5% of 384 to cater for attrition. This made the sample for this study 404. In selecting the sample for this study, a multi-stage sampling procedure was applied to select the respondents. At stage 1, simple random sampling technique was used to select one Local Government Area from each of the three senatorial districts of Kwara state (South, North & Central). At stage 2, purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents from ministries, religious gatherings, tertiary institutions and government parastatals. Finally, stratified sampling technique was used to

select the respondents based on age and gender. The instrument for data collection was designed by the researchers adopting it from the literature review. The instrument was tagged: “Causes and Consequences of Sexual Violence Questionnaire (CCSVQ)”. The instrument has three parts i.e. sections A, B and C. Section A dealt with demographic data, section B sought for causes of sexual violence, and section C focused on consequences of sexual violence. Sections B and C were patterned in line with four (4) point Likert type rating scale format of: Strongly Agree; Agree; Disagree; and Strongly Disagree. Therefore, the average mean score = $1+2+3+4 = 10/4 = 2.5$. That is the average mean score is 2.5 and any mean score from 2.5 and above was considered the major causes and consequences of sexual violence, while mean score below 2.5 was regarded as the least causes and consequences of sexual violence as expressed by youths in Kwara State. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity which was done by five lecturers in the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin and all the corrections made were effected before the final copies were produced. Reliability was done through a test re-test method; the instrument was therefore administered twice on a group of youths in Ogbomosho North Local Government at an interval of two weeks. The correlation of the two sets of scores, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation was considered and the reliability coefficient was 0.73. Mean rating and standard deviation were used to analyse the research questions. The null hypotheses were tested using Independent t-test and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: *What are the causes of sexual violence as perceived by youths Kwara State?*

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviation and Rank Order Analysis of the Respondents’ Perception on the Causes of Sexual Violence

S/No.	As far as I am concerned, the following are the causes of sexual violence among youths	Mean	S.D.	Rank
1	influence of drugs or alcohol	3.62	.706	1 st
13	genetic predisposition (excessive urge for sex)	3.57	.588	2 nd
3	indecent dressing	3.49	.646	3 rd
15	online self-advertisement	3.48	.683	4 th
9	non-reportage of acts of sexual violence	3.38	.634	5 th
5	peer influence	3.34	.666	6 th
10	social media influence	3.31	.704	7 th
7	weak laws and policies on sexual violence	3.29	.709	8 th
8	delay in dispensation of justice in issue relating to sexual violence	3.27	.702	9 th
4	Pornography	3.23	.789	10 th
11	poor knowledge of sexual education	3.15	.803	11 th
14	personality disorder (lack of empathy for others)	3.07	.882	12 th
6	cultural practices that promote sexual violence (superiority of men)	2.97	.832	13 th
12	unsafe environment	2.93	.881	14 th
2	parental Influence	2.87	.846	15 th

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 revealed responses of the respondents’ perception on the causes of sexual violence. All the items were found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50 on Four Point Likert Type Rating scale. This indicated that youths agreed that all the items were perceived as causes of sexual violence among youths in Kwara State.

Research Question 2: *What are the consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State?*

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank Order Analysis of the Respondents’ Perceptions on the Consequences of Sexual Violence

S/No.	Consequences of sexual violence could expose Victims to:	Mean	S.D.	Rank
3	sexually transmitted diseases	3.75	.518	1st
7	psychological distress	3.72	.451	2nd
10	Emotional pain	3.69	.545	3rd
4	Depression	3.53	.645	4th
1	Shame	3.53	.694	5th
12	virginal infections	3.42	.660	6th
5	suicidal attempt	3.41	.700	7th
11	mental health disorder	3.40	.664	8th
15	unwanted pregnancy	3.36	.626	9th
6	post-traumatic stress disorder	3.36	.637	10th
2	chronic body pain	3.31	.701	11th
9	Anxiety	3.29	.680	12th
8	gynaecological complications	3.21	.671	13th
14	pain during sexual intercourse	3.14	.802	14th
13	decreased in sexual desire	3.03	.848	15th

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 revealed responses of the respondents’ perception on the consequences of sexual violence. All the items were found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50 on Four Point Likert Type Rating scale. This indicated that youths agreed that all the items were perceived as consequences of sexual violence among youths in Kwara State.

Hypothesis 1: *There is no significant difference in the causes of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on gender*

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of the Respondents’ Perceptions on the Causes of Sexual Violence Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Male	146	47.58	6.63	396	3.64*	1.96	.000
Female	252	49.79	5.32				

*Significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 3 showed that the calculated t-value of 3.64 was greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 with a corresponding p-value of .000 which was less than the 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value was less than level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that there was a significant difference in the causes of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on gender.

Hypothesis 2: *There is no significant difference in the causes of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on age*

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of the Respondents’ Perceptions on the Causes of Sexual Violence Based on Age

Year	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
18-25 years	217	49.08	5.89	396	.370	1.96	.712
26 years and above	181	48.86	5.98				

*Not Significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 4 indicated that the calculated t-value of .370 was less than the critical t-value of 1.96 with a corresponding p-value of .712 which was greater than the 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis two was accepted since the calculated p-value was greater than level of significance. Therefore, this implied that there was no significant difference in the causes of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on age.

Hypothesis 3: *There is no significant difference in the consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on gender*

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of the Respondents’ Perceptions on the Consequences of Sexual Violence Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Male	146	49.90	6.883	396	3.27*	1.96	.001
Female	252	51.86	4.955				

*Significant, p<0.05

Table 5 showed that the calculated t-value of 3.27 was greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 with a corresponding p-value of .001 which was less than the 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated p-value was less than level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implied that there was a significant difference in the consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on gender.

Hypothesis 4: *There is no significant difference in the consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on age*

Table 6: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value of the Respondents’ Perceptions on the Consequences of Sexual Violence Based on Age

Year	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
18-25 years	217	51.89	5.58	396	2.84*	1.96	.004
26 years and above	181	50.24	5.95				

*Significant, p<0.05

Table 6 indicated that the calculated t-value of 2.84 was greater than the critical t-value of 1.96 with a corresponding p-value of .004which was less than the 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis four was rejected since the calculated p-value was less than level of significance. Therefore,

this implied that there was a significant difference in the consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on age.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that influence of drugs or alcohol; genetic predisposition (excessive urge for sex); indecent dressing; online self-advertisement; non-reportage of acts of sexual violence were perceived among others as causes of sexual violence among youths. This finding of the study was in agreement with earlier study by supports the study of Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton and McAuslan (2016) who identified substance abuse, particularly alcohol and drugs, as a significant risk factor for sexual violence among youths. Similarly, Dranzoa (2018) stated that indecent dressing may trigger certain psychological responses in some individuals, potentially leading to distorted perceptions of consent. Some perpetrators might believe that provocative clothing implies a willingness to engage in sexual activities, thus justifying their violent actions.

The finding also showed that sexually transmitted diseases; psychological distress; emotional pain; depression; shame among others were the main perceived consequences of sexual violence among youths. The finding of this study is in line with the study of Hill, Pallitto, McCleary-Sills and Garcia-Moreno (2016) who asserted that immediate consequences of sexual violence for the woman may include unwanted pregnancy or a sexually transmitted disease. Similarly, Folayan, Odetoyinbo, Harrison and Brown (2014); Watts, Hossain and Zimmerman, (2013) reported that transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), psychological distress, emotional pain, depression, unwanted pregnancy, vaginal bleeding or infection, fibroids, decreased sexual desire, genital irritation, pain during intercourse, chronic pelvic pain, and urinary tract infections.

The finding revealed that there was a significant difference in the causes of sexual violence among youths in Kwara State based on gender. This implied that perception of male and female respondents were different on the causes of sexual violence among youths. The finding of the study supports the submission of Johnson (2019) who asserted that males, in particular, are more likely to view violent media as influencing aggressive behaviour and contributing to sexually violent tendencies than females. Garcia and Martinez (2020) found a gender significant difference in the

causes of sexual violence. The researchers further stressed that female participants often attributed sexual violence to societal factors such as gender norms, sexism, and patriarchy while males focused on individual factors such as the psychological makeup of perpetrators, substance abuse, and mental health issues. The reason for significant difference could be as a result of gender norms which may influence how individuals perceive and interpret incidents of sexual violence.

Another finding showed that there was no significant difference in the causes of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on age. This implied that respondents across age range were not different in their perceptions on the causes of sexual violence. The finding supports the study Johnson (2019) who found no statistically significant age differences in the perceived causes of sexual violence among the surveyed youths. In the same vein, Garcia and Lee (2020) found no notable age differences in how participants attributed the causes of sexual violence. It was stressed further that young adults' views were consistent with those of adolescents. The absence of age differences in perceived causes of sexual violence among youths might be attributed to increased empathy and shared experiences within this age group examined.

Findings revealed that there was a significant difference in the consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on gender. This implied that the perceptions of male and female participants were different on the consequences of sexual violence. The finding is in line with the study of Bentivegna and Patalay (2022) demonstrated that female youths tend to report higher levels of fear, shame, and depression following sexual violence compared to their male counterparts. Similarly, Nwabunike and Tenkorang (2017) indicated that female victims are more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms compared to their male counterparts. Males, however, might be more susceptible to experiencing feelings of anger and aggression in response to sexual violence (Uwayo, 2014). This could be as a result of the fact that most of the consequences of sexual violence are attributed to female victims.

Findings also showed that there was a significant difference in the consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State

based on age. This implied that perceptions of the respondents across age group were different. The finding supports the study of Rothman et al. (2021) who found significant difference based on age. It was stressed that young women tend to be more at risk of sexual violence than older women. On a contrary, Bentivegna and Patalay (2022) found that sexual violence was associated with higher levels of psychological distress, increased risk of self-harm and attempted suicide in both young adults and adolescents. The reason for the finding could be that older youths tend to have more access to information, formal education, and discussions around sexual violence. This can lead to a better grasp or knowledge of the physical, psychological, and emotional consequences that victims endure.

Implications of Findings for Counselling Practice

The findings of this study have implications for counselling practice. The study revealed that influence of drug or alcohol; genetic predisposition (excessive urge for sex); indecent dressing; unsafe environment; non-reportage of acts of sexual violence were perceived by youths as the causes of sexual violence. Guidance counsellors should assist by enlighten the youths on various factors responsible for sexual violence among them. Guidance counsellors can play a critical role in addressing the causes of sexual violence among youths by encourage good dressing, mental talks and gynecologist's enlightenment.

The study revealed that sexual violence can lead to severe consequences such as sexually transmitted diseases; unwanted pregnancy; post-traumatic stress disorder; depression; shame among others are the main perceived consequences of sexual violence among others. Counsellors can help youths understand the emotional impact of sexual violence, such as feelings of guilt, shame, fear, and anger. By explaining common emotional reactions, counsellors can help survivors feel less isolated and overwhelmed by their feelings. Guidance counsellors can teach coping strategies and stress management techniques to help youths navigate the emotional aftermath of sexual violence. These strategies may include mindfulness exercises, relaxation techniques, and grounding exercises. Guidance counsellors can advocate for policy changes within the community that prioritise supporting survivors of sexual violence. They can also collaborate with other professionals to raise awareness about sexual violence prevention and its consequences.

Conclusion

This research examined causes and consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State, Nigeria. It was concluded that influence of drug or alcohol; genetic predisposition (excessive urge for sex); indecent dressing; online self-advertisement; non-reportage of acts of sexual violence were the perceived causes of sexual violence among youths. Also, sexually transmitted diseases; psychological distress, emotional pain; depression; shame among others were the main perceived consequences of sexual violence among youths. The findings revealed that there was no significant difference in the causes of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on age, but a significant difference was found based on gender. There were significant differences in the consequences of sexual violence as perceived by youths in Kwara State based on gender and age.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

1. Youths should promote healthy behaviours and desist from any acts that could cause sexual violence which include abuse of alcohol or drugs, watching of pornography, online self-advertisement, negative peer groups, social media influence and indecent dressing.
2. Victims of sexual violence should seek adequate counselling and support services from professionals, as this will help them cope with and navigate the emotional pain and psychological distress, sexually transmitted diseases associated with sexual violence.
3. Professionals should educate youths in schools, regardless of gender, about the causes of sexual violence, empowering them with knowledge to prevent and address this issue effectively.
4. Guidance counsellors should provide a more comprehensive approach to educating youths, regardless of age about the causes of sexual violence, and ways to prevent and address this critical issue.
5. Tertiary institutions in Kwara state should incorporate education on the consequences of sexual violence, consent, and healthy relationships into their curriculum, with a focus on promoting gender inclusivity and respect.
6. Health educators and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) should provide age-appropriate and inclusive education on the sexual violence consequences, promoting awareness and prevention to empower youths regardless of age.

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