

Sexual Coercion of Adolescent Girls in Yoruba Land of Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigates the magnitude and patterns of sexual coercion experienced by female adolescents in Southwest zone in Nigeria. The study population consists of all female adolescents aged 12-16 years. These adolescents are those who are either enrolled in the secondary school or those with limited education that was not in school at the period of this study. Samples of 475 girls were drawn from both the school and those not in schools. The sample was drawn from three different Yoruba speaking states in the south west Nigeria. The sampling techniques that were used were stratified and simple random sampling. The research instrument was a self constructed questionnaire title (SCAQ)- Sexual Coercion of female Adolescents Questionnaire. The instrument has a reliability coefficient of 0.76 and was validated using, face content, validity procedure of testing validity. The data generated were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages for describing the data. The appropriate statistics such as t-test, Pearson product moment correlation and chi-square were used to make inferences about the data. The analysis of the data shows that girls have experienced sexual coercion such as verbal threats, unwanted touch, deceived into sex or forced sex. Other forms of sexual coercion such as verbal pressure, threats or unwanted holding of hands unwanted hugging or kissing as well as forced sexual activities have been experienced by girls. Based on the findings, it was recommended that skill training needs to be provided in and outside the school system. Teachers and counsellors should convey prevention messages so as to sensitize or discourage sexual coercion of female students in school.

Key words: Forced sex, nonsexual sex, psychological damage, rape, sexual abuse, sexual assault

INTRODUCTION

One issue which is related to sexual behaviour is sexual coercion. Sexual coercion is the act of forcing or attempting to force another individual through violence, threat, verbal pressure, deception, cultural expectation and economic circumstances to engage in sexual activity against the individual wish. Sexual coercion is a continuum of behaviours ranging from unwanted touch, verbal intimidation, attempted rape, to cultural exploitation that require girls to marry and sexually service men against their will (Herse *et al.*, 1995).

Owuamanam (1995) reported a high prevalence of sexual coercion in public institutions in Nigeria. According to Owuamanam (1995) sexual harassment is a form of sexual exploitation in Nigeria, occurring in virtually every place, among children and adolescents in school and outside the school system. Lot and Rally (1980) defined sexual harassment as a continuum of behaviour ranging from physical sexual assault at one extreme through intimidation and encompassing verbal and nonverbal sexual insults on the other. In Africa, especially in Nigeria, some forms of sexual coercion are normal social relationships commonly observed between male and female, hence, there is need for an African definition of what sexual coercion is really is.

Kelly (2004) opined that forcing other people to have nonsexual or sexual activity is a behaviour found in

nearly every culture studied. Usually it is the male who force women into sexual activities against their will. According to (Hickman and Muelenhard, 1999), the social context play a major role in determining the type of forced sex and those that are allowed or condoned within a particular culture. These norms determine how women are perceived within the contexts of sexuality and relationships and also the degree to which their perceptions of the experience are used in the determining what is consensual. As reported by Thornhill and Palmer (2000), in the Nigerian culture, it would not be considered at all as inappropriate for a man to force his wife to have sexual intercourse, whereas in North America this is now generally considered to be a crime.

Herse *et al.* (1995) indicated that sexual violence occurs throughout the world. Sexual violence has a profound impact on physical and mental health. It can cause physical injury; it is associated with an increased risk of a range of sexual and reproductive health problems, with both immediate and long term consequence. The impact of sexual violence may be suicide, HIV infection or murder, the latter occurring either during a sexual assault or subsequently. Sexual violence can also affect the social well being of victims; individuals may be stigmatized and ostracized by their families and others as a consequence of sexual violence. Coerced sex may result into sexual gratification on the part of the perpetrator who are usually someone known to the individual.

In the view of Strong *et al.* (2005) a wide range of sexually violent act can take place in different circumstances and settings. This include for example - rape within marriages or dating relationships, rape by strangers, systemic rape during armed conflict, unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment including demanding sex in return for favours. Others are sexual abuse of mentally or physically disable people. Sexual abuse of children, forced marriages or cohabitation, including the marriage of children, denial of the right to use contraceptives or to adopt other measures to protect against sexually transmitted diseases, forced abortion, forced acts against the sexual integrity of women, including females genital mutilation and obligatory inspection of virginity, forced prostitution and trafficking of people for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Trafficked children for instance are often promised work in the domestic or service industry, but instead are usually taken to borders where their passports and other identification papers are confiscated. Ellsberg *et al.* (2001) reported that in Nigeria, it seems sexual violence has been a neglected area of research. Many people do not report sexual violence to the police because they are ashamed, or fear being blamed or stigmatized. The proportion of children who either report or receive treatment or medical services for immediate problem related to sexual violence is also relatively small. Studies such as Ajuwon *et al.* (2001) reported that the first sexual experience for many girls is through forced sex or unwanted sex.

According to Strong *et al.* (2005) a survey of 2002 readers of seventeen Magazines found 89% of girls said they had been targets of unwanted sexual comments, gestures, or look during their precollege school years. In another study 85 percent girls say they have been subjected to unwelcome sexual behaviour at least once in their school lives. 2/3 of the girls said they were harassed often occasionally.

Kelly (2004) reported that a substantial percentage of children and adolescents are subjected to sexual abuse by adults or other adolescents. This is also known as child molesting or pedophilia. Goldmen and Padayach (2002) observed that a term that is often used to describe the sexual abuse of adolescents is ephebophilia. Analyses of various surveys, in which the incidence of child sexual abuse was reported, have concluded that about 20 percent female are sexually abused as children or adolescents.

NASLS statistics in U.S. indicated that 17 percent of females reported having been sexually touched as children. The most typical forms of sexual activity reported included genital touch, kissing, oral sex and vaginal intercourse.

Johnson (2000) indicated that the dimension and level of severity of potentially abusive situation depends on the type of sexual behavior considered, the age of the

subject and the age of the perpetrator. If the perpetrator is 5 years older or the subject is younger than 12 years, the situation may be assumed to be abusive. Child molestation usually involves the use of power on a child in order to derive sexual pleasure from the child. The victims of abuse often blame themselves for what has happened, concluding that they have some how been bad or deserving punishment.

Children are often reluctant to report sexual abuse; they lack the verbal development to explain clearly what happened. When children report sexual abuse, they sometimes are not taken seriously. In some instances, adults want to avoid confrontations with relations or friends, children who report abuse sometimes communicate directly to close adult or professional person, either by demonstrating what happened or by using language (Watt, 1998).

Strong *et al.* (2005) reported that perpetrators of sexual coercion may include strangers, acquaintances, superiors or family members. Generally female victims are more likely to be assaulted by acquaintances (such as a friend or coworker or a family member) than by a stranger. More often the act is accomplished by psychological coercion alone, with no overt physical injuries to the victim. However, even when no lasting physical injury is sustained, the psychological damage done by this form of intimate violation may be substantial. Psychological damage is often particularly severe when the sexual assault is committed by parents against children due to the incestuous nature of the assault. Sexual violence in most cases reflects pre-existing social, cultural and economic disparities between men and women. As observed Strong *et al.* (2005) the relationship between the victim and perpetrators reflects existing power differences or struggles between people, for example older men and younger children. Its occurrence is in terms of dominance and submission. The vast majority of violent acts are committed by men against women or children.

Statement of the problem: Sexual coercion according to Ajuwon *et al.* (2001) is a serious public health and human right issues. Sexual coercion is the act of forcing or attempting to force another individual through violence, threat, verbal inconsistency, deception, cultural expectations, and economic circumstances to engage in any sexual activity against his or her will. Herse *et al.* (1995) defined sexual coercion as a continuum of behaviours ranging from unwanted touch, verbal intimidation, attempted rape, to cultural expectations that expects girls to marry and sexually service men against their will. In many cases, the victim lacks choice and experience severe physical, psychological and social consequence if she refuses advances from such men.

Owuamanam (1995) observed that sexual coercion is one of the prevailing social problems in the Nigerian society and it is prevalent in public institutions in Nigeria. Owuamanam (1995) observed that sexual coercion is a common form of sexual exploitation in Nigeria. The level of sexual coercion has now become a matter of concern not only to guidance counsellors, social workers but also those who are interested in the sexual reproductive health of adolescents and children. The preponderance occurrence of sexual coercion is noticeable recently by in Nigeria. Igbokure in Sunday Punch April 28, 2007 reported that some female students in the primary and secondary schools protested to the then Minister of education Dr. (Mrs) Ezekwesili over sexual harassment which they have been experiencing from their male teachers. The students urged the minister to let the male teachers know that the students came to the school to learn and not to be sexually harassed and intimidated. Girls and women at all stages of their lives are often the victims of sexual coercion. However it seems much of sexual coercion in Nigeria occurs to children and adolescents especially the females. The southwestern part of Nigeria consists of a major ethnic group which is referred to as Yorubas. Many traditional mores condone coercion of female. The society believes that a male could force sex on female if he has spent a lot of money on her. Even if the woman reports any violence, the society tends to blame the female. It seems the economic crisis and poverty in Nigeria is making the female increasingly vulnerable to sexual coercion and making them to be unable to resist pressure from old men who provide money and gifts in exchange for sex. In some cases parents even force their female children to marry people who offer them money even if the marriage is against the girl's wish.

Although rape is a criminal offence in Nigeria, some of the victims of rape do not report cases of rape. This is because of the belief that publicity resulting from prosecution of cases in court may have adverse effect on the female victim by making it difficult for her to find a husband; organizations that could provide adequate care and support for victims are not readily available. Consequently victims of rape and other mild coercive behaviour seem to suffer in silence while perpetrators go free.

This study therefore is to explore the magnitude and patterns of sexual coercion experienced by female adolescents in Nigeria:

- What are the different types of sexual coercions experienced by adolescent girls?
- Who are the perpetrators of this coercion of young girls in Nigeria?
- What percentages of adolescents have reported acts of sexual coercion from their teacher?
- What percentage of adolescents reported severe form of sexual coercion like rape, deceived or drugged into sex?

- Is sexual coercion common in Nigeria?

Hypotheses: There is no significant difference in the level of sexual coercion among in-school and out-of-school girls in Southwest Nigeria.

Age of respondents does not determine the level of sexual coercion.

METHODOLOGY

The design of the study is descriptive survey; the study was conducted between January to June, 2007 in Nigeria among girls in their 1st - 3rd years in the senior secondary school. Those who were not in school were also included.

The study population consists of all female adolescents children in Yorubaland. The Yorubas are one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, and they live mainly in the South western part of the country, they are mainly in the South western part of Nigeria. They are from Lagos, Kwara State, Oyo, Ondo, Osun and Ekiti States respectively. The adolescents are aged 12-16 years. These adolescents are those who are either enrolled in the secondary schools or those with limited education who were not in school at the period of this study. Data was collected both in and out of the classroom setting.

The sample consists of 475 adolescent girls, 410 were drawn from those in school while 65 girls were drawn out of school. 115 were aged 10-13 years while 360 were aged 14-16 years. The sampling techniques used were stratified and simple random sampling. Age, status as in school or out of school was used as strata. A self constructed questionnaire titled Sexual Coercion of Adolescent Questionnaire (SCOAQ) was used to collect the data for the study.

The study defined sexual abuse as being any verbal or physical sexual experience in the previous 12 months that was forced against the wishes of individual. Those below age 16 were considered as children. Five key aspects of abuse were measured using the following questions, have you received suggestive remarks of sexual interaction from someone before? Has someone shown you pictures of sexual dealing to encourage you or invite you for sex?

Do you receive unlimited sexual advances from someone? Have you experienced forced sex before? And have you experienced rape before? Etc.

The questionnaire provided clear behavioral descriptions of experiences to which subjects could answer Yes or No. Further information also dealt with the age of the subject; the relationship of the perpetrator of the abuse to the respondents (parents) siblings, friend, stranger etc. The instrument was validated using content validity procedure. For face validation three experts determined at face value the appropriateness of the instrument in measuring up what was studied, to ascertain if the instrument contained the appropriate items that

Table 1: The different types of sexual coercion, and percentages of adolescents reporting then

	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Unwanted comments, gesture or talk suggesting invitation for sex	145	30.5	330	69.5
Suggestive remarks of sexual interaction	135	28.4	340	71.4
Pictures of sexual dealing to encourage one to have sex	90	18.5	385	81.1
Unlimited sexual advances	110	23.2	365	76.8
Unwanted embraces	125	26.3	350	73.7
Unwanted kiss	105	22.2	370	79.9
Being touched to stimulate one sexually	70	14.7	405	85.3
Unwanted folding	120	25.3	355	74.8
Verbal threat	50	10.5	425	89.5
Touching of one's breast	60	12.6	415	87.4
Touching of ones buttock	100	21.1	375	78.9
Forced sex attempt	75	15.8	400	84.2
Forced to have sex	40	8.4	435	91.6
Experienced rape	15	3.2	460	96.8
Drug or deceived into sex	26	4.2	455	95.8
Forced to marry against one's wish	3	3.2	466	96.8
Punished by an elderly person for refusing sex	45	9.5	430	90.5

could actually elicit the intended responses on sexual coercion among adolescents. Expert judgments were used to determine the content validity of the instrument. The expert checked the extent to which the items were representative of the content and behaviour specified by the theoretical concept being measured. The scores of the test administration on the adolescent girls were correlated with that of another standardized questionnaire termed (ESCAAQ) 2001: Using Pearson Product Movement Correlation a correlation of 0.76 was obtained. This indicated that the (SCAQ) Sexual Coercion among Adolescent Questionnaire measured the same construct with the (ESCAAQ) experience of Sexual Coercion among Adolescent question (2000).

A reliability test was carried out on 25 adolescent girls, who would not take part in the final study and whose ages were 12-16 years using Pearson Product Movement Correlation. A reliability coefficient of 0.76 was obtained. The researcher and research assistants did the administration of the questionnaire on respondents from the school and outside the school system. In order to ensure that the questions were well understood by all respondents, personal interaction with the out of school and in school respondents was allowed by the researcher, this ensured that the questionnaire was well understood by respondents. In all 500 copies where administered only 475 were correctly filled and returned 25 copies were not returned.

The data generated were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages. Chi-square test was used in testing the generated hypotheses. The two hypotheses were tested a 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Question 1: what are the different types of sexual coercion experienced by adolescents in Nigeria?

In analyzing this question, data on responses of adolescents concerned with sexual coercion were collected and analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows the various types of sexual coercion experienced by young girls aged 12-16 years in Nigeria. A variety of sexual coercion types such as unwanted comments, gesture, suggestion, remarks touch kiss embraces, folding and unlimited sexual advances top the list of sexual coercion in Nigeria. The different types of sexual coercion experienced by adolescent girls in Nigeria include unwanted comments, gesture, suggestion and touching of breasts and buttocks. This is mostly experienced by girls.

Question 2: who are the perpetrators of sexual coercion of young girls in Nigeria? In analyzing this question, data on the responses of responses stating who forced them to do sexual things was used. The finding is shown on Table 2.

Table 2 shows the major perpetrators of sexual coercion of young girls are the teachers and adults in the life of the girls.

Question 3: what percentage of adolescent reported acts of sexual coercion from their teachers. What are types of sexual coercion?

In analyzing this question, the various experiences of adolescents concerned with the teacher were collected and analyzed, using frequency counts and percentages. The findings is shown on Table 3.

Table 3 shows the different forms of sexual coercion from the teachers who expect sex in exchange for marks or favour with girls.

Question 4: what percentage of adolescents have reported severe forms of sexual coercion in Nigeria

Table 2: Percentages and frequency counts of those who forced adolescents to do sexual things

Those who force me to do things which are sexual	Frequency	%
Another student	80.75	17
My teacher	190	40
Other adults	142.5	30
Family member	14.25	3
Strangers	47.5	10

Table 3: Sexual coercion from teachers

Types of sexual coercion	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Teacher want me to comply with his sexual overtures for marks	90	18.0	385	81.1
Teacher denied me of a benefit because I refuse sex	80	16.8	395	83.2
Colleague using sex as a form of bribe to obtain marks	115	24.2	360	75.8
Classmate obtain better grade for involvement in sexual relationship with teacher	105	22.1	370	77.9

Table 4: Experience of forced sex among adolescents

	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
rape	15	3.2	460	96.8
Deceived or drugged	20	4.2	455	95.8
Forced to have sex	40	8.4	435	91.6

Table 5: have you received suggestive remarks of sexual interaction from someone before

	No	Yes	Total	Xcal	Xtable
Student	295	115	410	0.041	3.84
Non- student	45	20	65		
Total	340	135	475		

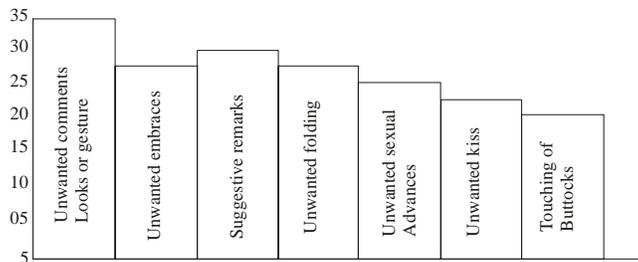


Fig. 1: Percentage of adolescents who reported sexual coercion during the last 12 months, by types of sexual abuse

In analyzing this question, responses of adolescents concerned with the experience of forced sex were collected and analyzed, using frequency counts and percentages. The findings are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 shows the experience of adolescent concerning forced sex.

Question 5: is sexual coercion a common problem in Nigeria?

Figure 1 shows that various percentages of girls have experienced different forms of sexual coercion such as verbal threat, unwanted touch, deceived into sex, forced sex and other forms of sexual coercion. Hence sexual coercion could be regarded as a common problem in Nigeria.

Figure 1 shows the seven top most type of sexual coercion experienced by young girls. This is an indication that sexual coercion is a common problem in Nigeria.

Hypothesis testing:

Hypothesis 1: In school and out of school do not experience sexual coercion the same way.

In analyzing this hypothesis, data concerned with responses of in school and out school adolescents were collected. Chi-square statistics was used to determine the difference in the experience of sexual coercion among respondents who are either students or non-students. The finding is shown on Table 5-7.

Since xcal 0.041 is < than xtable 3.84 at 0.05. Ho is accepted. There is no significant difference in the experience in the experience of suggestive remarks of sexual interaction from someone among student and non-student adolescents.

x cal 0.167 is less than x table 3.84. Hence there is no significant difference in the experience of sexual coercion between girls who are in school and out of school.

Table 6: have you been shown picture of sexual dealing to encourage or invite you for sex

	No	Yes	Total	x cal	x table
Student	385	75	410	0.167	3.84
Non-student	50	15	65		
Total	385	90	475		

Table 7: unlimited sexual advance from someone

	No	Yes	Total	x cal	x table
Student	300	110	410	4.539	3.84
Non-student	65		65		
Total	365	110	475		

Table 8: Experience of Suggestive remarks of sexual interaction

	No	Yes	Total	x cal	x total
10-13 years	75	40	115	0.604	3.84
14-16 years	265	95	360		
Total	340	135	475		

x cal 4.539 is greater than x table 3.84. Hence there is a significant difference in the level of unlimited sexual advances experienced by student and non-student adolescents.

From the analysis in Table 5, 6, 7, it is clear that girls in school or those not in schools experience the same magnitude and pattern of sexual coercion in Nigeria. However, unlimited sexual advances seem to be more prevalent among out of school girls.

Hypothesis 2: age of respondents does not determine the type of sexual coercion in Nigeria.

In analyzing this hypothesis, data concerned with responses of adolescents concerning sexual coercion and their age were collected. The data was analyzed using chi-square. The finding is shown on Table 8.

Since x cal = 0.604 is less than x total 3.84 at 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference in the experience of adolescents in terms age.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated sexual coercion among adolescents girls whose age are less than 16years. These girls were students and apprentices in the three different states on Nigeria. The study yielded considerable insight into the magnitude and patterns of sexual coercion experienced by female in school and out of school girls in Nigeria. The findings suggest wide pattern of sexual coercion with variation in magnitude and types. Figure 1 shows a variety of sexual coercion such as unwanted kiss, embraces, folding and unlimited sexual advance characterize or top the list of sexual coercion in southwest Nigeria or the Yoruba speaking area of Nigeria. The finding of this research found between 3.2-30.5% of respondents have experienced on form of sexual coercion before.

These findings corroborate that of Owuamanam (1995) and Ajuwon *et al.* (2001), who reported a high

prevalence of sexual coercion in public institutions in Nigeria, according to these researchers sexual harassment is common form of sexual exploitation occurring in virtually every place, among children and adolescents in school and outside the school system. The findings of this study about the high prevalence of sexual coercion among children and adolescents are not surprising. This may be because victims lack choice and faces severe physical, psychological and social consequences if she refuses sexual advances from the perpetrators. Also the traditional norms condone sexual coercion of female, if he has spent a lot of money on her. Even if the woman reports violence, the society tends to blame the female. Finally the economic crisis seem to be making girls increasingly vulnerable to sexual coercion and making them unable to resist pressure from older rich men who provide money or gift in exchange for sex. In spite of the fact that rape is a criminal offence victims of rape do not normally report cases of rape for the fear that prosecution of cases in court may have adverse effect on the female victims. Consequently victims of sexual coercion suffer in silence while perpetrators go free.

The findings of this study show that the major perpetrators of sexual coercion of young girls are their teachers and the adult in the life of the girls. About 40% of the sexual coercion is done by teachers. This finding agrees with a report by African right which found and highlighted the role of the teacher in facilitating or perpetrating sexual coercion. A recent survey in South Africa also found that girls aged 15 years found that school teachers were responsible for 32% of reported cases of sexual coercion in Zimbabwe. Teachers may perpetrate sexual coercion because the relationship between them and their students reflects power differentials or struggle between them and their students. In most cases school teachers attempt to gain sex, in return for good grades or for not failing pupils. This may be a cause of high rate of sexual coercion among teachers and pupils.

The findings of the research show that in school and out of school girls experience sexual coercion in the same magnitude. These findings go against that of Ajuwon *et al.* (2001) who reported a difference in the magnitude of sexual coercion among apprentices (or out of school) and in school girls. Hence the difference in magnitude of sexual coercion experienced by out of school girls in this study and that of Ajuwon *et al.* (2001).

The findings of this study shows age of respondents does not determine the types of sexual coercion experienced by them. This findings disagrees with that of Johnson (2000) who indicated that the dimension and level of severity of potentially abusive situation depends on the types of sexual behaviour considered and the age of the subject. The findings of this study may differ because of the differences in the location of two researches.

CONCLUSION

The major findings of this study indicate that sexual abuse or coercion is common among the Nigerian population. This suggests that school is not safe and those sexual activities among girls are not usually safe or consensual. Teachers are the most common perpetrators of sexual coercion. Many adolescents experience different or multiple kinds of sexual coercion.

The implication for policy programmes are that intervention aimed at improving reproductive health must address issues such as personal safety and prevention of abuse. The public at large needs to be sensitized in order to challenge the stereotypes that favour sexual coercion. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that skill training should be organized for female students and non-students. The media should educate the public about the stigma associated with it. Sexuality education programs are needed to appraise adolescent of their optima in case of a coercion or unwanted sexual advances.

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