



**PERCEPTION OF WOMEN OF REPRODUCTIVE AGE ON THE DETERMINANTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ENUGU SOUTH URBAN OF ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*The prevalence of sexual violence against women at global and local settings is becoming very worrisome. It is on this note that this study examined “Perception of Women of Reproductive Age on the Determinants and Consequences of Sexual Violence against Women in Enugu south Urban of Enugu State, Nigeria”. The study participants were women of reproductive age (15-49) in the study area. The sample size was 390 respondents selected using convenience of availability sampling procedure. Instruments for data collection were questionnaire, In-Depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Quantitative data were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and analysed using percentages and frequency distribution tables. Transcription of the electronic recorded interview and field notes provided data for the qualitative analysis which was thematically approached. Findings of the study show that sexual violence against women is high in Enugu south urban. The results also show that pornographic pictures/films, alcoholism, gender inequality and patriarchy are factors responsible for sexual violence against women in Enugu South urban. The study recommended that government at all levels should make sure that laws against sexual violence against women are implemented. There should be gender balance, and gender equality between both sexes. Sex education should be inculcated into the school curriculum.*

**Keywords:** Gender-based violence, Sexual violence against women, Public perception, Pornography, Patriarchy.

**Introduction**

Sexual violence against women is a global health issue that threatens the health and human rights of women. Sexual violence affects millions of women worldwide and it cuts across all geographical, regional, national, religious and socio-economic barriers, impeding the women’s rights to participate fully in the society.



According to World Health Organization, sexual violence is any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act by violence or coercion, unwanted sexual comments or advances, acts to traffic a person or acts directed against a person's sexuality, regardless of the relationship to the victim (WHO, 2002).

The World Health Organization (2007) revealed that between 15% and 71% of women in its 10-country study, which include nations as Japan, Ethiopia, Serbia, Montenegro and Brazil had experienced sexual violence. Moreover, the widespread prevalence of sexual violence is not limited to a particular country or region; it is a global phenomenon. It is also instructive to note that though it is a global phenomenon, in Sub-Sahara Africa, its prevalence ranks high even in comparison with levels in other developing regions (United Nations International Children Emergency Fund, 2006).

Public perception of the prevalence of sexual violence against women in a society is a first step in mobilizing public responses to tackle this problem (Klein, Campbell, Soler & Ghez, 1997). For Klein et al (1997), social and personal accountability for taking action against sexual violence against women comes from believing that the problem is widespread and poses a sufficient threat to the fabric of the community as to affect one's own life. The perceived importance among the public towards sexual violence against women as a social problem, and the beliefs regarding how widespread the problem is, are important factors that shape the social environment in which the victims and perpetrators are embedded and influenced how this social environment responds (Capezza & Arriaga, 2008; Flood & Pease, 2009; Gracia, 2014; WHO, 2002).

When there is limited public discussion of an issue, a condition of pluralistic ignorance exists. If no one is concerned, the issue seems unimportant and action unnecessary, given inaction. In the context of how sexual violence against women is perceived as a social problem, the way this violence is defined by the public is of particular importance. How this violence is defined will also influence what is or is not acceptable regarding the use of sexual violence against women (Gracia, 2014).

Understanding attitudes towards sexual violence against women is of paramount importance in order to better understand its root causes and therefore, develop more effective intervention measures. If we take into account that sexual violence against women remains not only a major social and public health problem, but is also a largely unreported crime (Gracia, 2014)

In London, 92 young people had been convicted of involvement in gang rape (Elombah, 2009). Added to this, Kenya equally has a track record of rape cases.



Sadly, Kenyan government's survey reveals that one in five women is victim of sexual violence. This survey indicates that more than 240 victims of women rape cases in Kenya are from 3 years of age and above (BBC, 2013). Particular interest is South Africa which is currently being spotlighted as the country with the highest record of rape in the whole world, with a rape case occurring every 26 seconds including rape of babies as young as 2-weeks-old (Ejim, 2013). It is observed that in South Africa, "one in four men had committed rape" (Elombah, 2009). Elombah, (2009) estimates that 500,000 rapes are committed annually in South Africa.

Schwartz and McCauley, (2014) reported that the situation is debilitating in Asia and Africa. Unfortunately, majority of the sexual assault offenders commit the crime with impunity in these developing nations because of cultural inhibitions and shyness. It is terrifying that 50 to 90 percent of all rapes or attempted rapes were unreported (Ejim, 2013). Most of the incest and molestation are never reported. More so, date rapes and stranger rapes are not reported due to shame, stigmatization, humiliation, guilt, cultural taboos, and to avoid victimization at the hands of medical authorities (Elombah, 2009). The regions of the world with the highest reported sexual violence towards women are Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia (WHO, 2013).

In Nigeria, it is a known fact that many of these rapists are young men in their teens, while others are matured adults (Obasi, 2007). Historical records show that no fewer than 1200 women were raped in Rivers state in 2012 (Kawu, 2013). As it happened, Rotimi, (2013) notifies that in Lagos State recently, a 2- and 3-year-old girls were raped by adults aged 25 and 35 years old respectively. Record has it that a 48-year-old man of Iyana Ejigbo, Lagos, had been sexually abusing his two daughters when he was exposed, and arrested (Odeh, 2013).

In Enugu south urban, Achara Layout to be precise, it was reported that there was a 78-year-old landlord who defiled his tenant's daughter. The 9 years old girl narrating her story said that the landlord used threats and intimidation on her before committing the act, she recalled how the suspect, invited her to his flat while he was alone and stripped her naked before assaulting her several times. After the act the girl started bleeding severely and was rushed to the hospital (Chiedu, 2012). Similarly, there was also that of a 10-year-old girl who was defiled by a student in one of the high institutions in Enugu State (Chiedu, 2012). It might not be out of place to say that rapists are actively on the prowl in the Enugu South urban hitherto, known for peace and social tranquillity.

In Enugu urban, there are non-governmental organizations (NGO's) like Sexual Assault Referral Centre (TAMAR SARC) and Women's Aid Collective (WACOL) that are rendering help to survivors of sexual violence. However, despite that, much still remain to be done with regards to sexual violence against



women in Enugu south urban, which is the basis for this study. Hence, the study focuses on Public perception of the determinants and consequences of sexual violence against women in Enugu South urban of Enugu State.

### **Materials and Methods**

The study was conducted in Enugu South urban in Enugu State, Nigeria. Enugu south urban is the administrative headquarters of Enugu South Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria. It is located in south eastern Nigeria and the native people of the area are Igbos. Enugu south urban is made up three (3) zones namely Uwani, Achara Layout, and Idaw River Layout. (Nnam, Maduako, Nnam, & Onwuzligbo, 2014). The Urban population is predominantly ethnic Igbos, although immigrants from other parts of the country also reside in the Area. The urban population is made up of mainly civil servants, traders, artisans and students/pupils of the various educational institutions in the State. The ethnic language of the people is Igbo language; English language is the general language in the area.

Enugu South has a population of 198,032 (National Population Commission, NPC 2006). However, the target population of this study is women of reproductive age (15-49) years living in Enugu South urban. But the actual number of women between the ages of 15-49 years is not known as at the time of study.

**Table 1: Population of Enugu South Local Government Area by Sex**

LGA	Males	Females	Total Population
Enugu South	93,758	104,274	198,032

Source (National Population Commission NPC, 2006)

The scope of this study was limited to women of reproductive age (15-49) years, and specifically investigated perception of women of reproductive age on the determinants of sexual violence against women in Enugu South Urban. The study was undertaken in the year 2017.

The sample size for the study was 390. The sample size was determined using the Fishers' Formula which is usually adopted when the target population of a study is not known. The population of females in Enugu South is 104,274. But the target population of women aged 15-49 years in Enugu South Urban was not known at the point of commencement of the study, hence the application of Fisher's Formula.

Using Fisher's Formula

The formula is applied thus:

$$n = \frac{Z^2(pq)}{d^2}$$

We use 0.5 for p, and 0.5 for q



p = proportion in the target population

q = complement of p

Z= standard normal deviation

d<sup>2</sup> = degree of accuracy

$$Z=1.96^2$$

$$d^2 = 0.05$$

$$P = 0.5$$

$$q = 0.5$$

$$P + q = 1 (0.5+0.5)$$

Using  $n = \frac{Z^2(pq)}{d^2}$

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 (0.5)(0.5)}{0.05^2}$$

$$= \frac{3.8416 \times (0.5)(0.5)}{0.0025}$$

$$= \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25}{0.0025}$$

$$= \frac{0.9604}{0.0025}$$

$$n = 384.16$$

$$n = 384$$

n = 390 to the nearest whole number

The study used both quantitative and qualitative instruments of data collection which include: Questionnaire, In- Depth- Interview (IDI) guide, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide for its data collection. For the quantitative instrument, the questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A dealt with the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, while Section B dealt with the substantive issues of the study. The questionnaire items were arranged thematically in line with the research objectives. For the qualitative instrument, the IDI schedule and FGD guide were drawn in response to research objectives.

The purposive sampling technique was adopted to select respondents for the qualitative instruments. Enugu South urban is made up of three zones which include: Uwani, Achara Layout and Idaw River Layout. Two (2) participants for IDI (In- depth-Interview) were purposively selected from each of three zones. Thus, six (6) participants were chosen for interview, using in-depth interview (IDI) schedule. On the other hand, twelve (12) respondents were also purposively selected for participation in Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

On the other hand, respondents for the questionnaire were drawn from the three zones (Uwani zone, Achara Layout zone and Idaw River zone). Convenience of availability sampling technique was adopted for the purpose. Two streets



were randomly selected per zone and sixty women were selected as respondents to the questionnaire per street. A total of three hundred and sixty (360) respondents were selected from the three zones.

**Table 2: Pattern for selection of respondents by zones**

Zones	Streets	Households	Number of respondents
Achara Layout	Awkunanaw st.	65	65
	Ufuma st.	65	65
Idaw River Layout	Achina st.	65	65
	Egbonnaji st.	65	65
Uwani	Bishop Ayaogu st.	65	65
	Adalabu st.	65	65
Total		390	390

In addition, eight (6) respondents were purposively selected from Health workers, NGO Experts, Police station and Courts who are assumed to be knowledgeable on the research interest to generate qualitative data using the In-depth Interview (IDI) Guide. Again twelve (12) respondents were purposively selected for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide.

The copies of questionnaire were self- administered and other- administered. The researchers and two research assistants administered the questionnaire on a face to face basis in order to explain any item in the questionnaire that may not be clear to respondents. The two research assistants were females and graduates of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) who are resident in Enugu and could speak and interpret Igbo Language fluently. They were trained on the research objectives.

The IDI and FGD were moderated by the principal researcher with assistance from the co-researcher who recorded proceedings of both the interview and the focus group discussion. English language was used as the language for administration of both instruments because our purposely selected respondents were all literate. The two research assistants kept field notes of the IDI and FGD. This ensured that no information was lost during the interview process. Data collected from this study were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Quantitative data were presented and analyzed using simple percentages, and frequency tables. Chi-square was used to test the research hypotheses. The qualitative data gathered through IDI and FGD were



transcribed, coded and analysed thematically, using narrative quotes extracted from the interview.

## **Results/Findings**

### **Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

The socio-demographic data of the study respondents is as presented in the table 3 below

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Socio-Demographic Characteristics (n=368)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
15-19	49	13.3
20-24	55	14.9
25-29	64	17.4
30-34	78	21.2
35-39	58	15.8
40-44	44	12.0
45-49	20	5.4
Total	368	100.0
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	368	100.0
<b>Marital status</b>		
Never Married	169	45.9
Married	155	42.1
Separated	32	8.7
Divorced	1	.3
Widowed	11	3.0
Total	368	100.0
<b>Occupation</b>		
Civil servant	105	28.5
Trader	47	12.8
Health worker	38	10.3
Self employed	68	18.5
Apprentice	5	1.4
Farming	3	.8
House wife	22	6.0
Others (specify)	80	21.7
Total	368	100.0
<b>Educational attainment</b>		
No Formal Education	4	1.1
FSLC	12	3.3
SSCE/GCE	119	32.3



OND/NCE	97	26.4
Degree holder/HND	97	26.4
M.Sc	23	6.3
PhD	4	1.1
Others (Specify)	12	3.3
Total	368	100.0
<b>Religious affiliation</b>		
Catholic	164	44.6
Protestant	192	52.2
African Traditional Religion	9	2.4
Others	3	.8
Total	368	100.0

#### **Field Survey, 2017**

The distribution above, shows that out of the returned questionnaire, the majority of the respondents based on age, falls within the age range of 30-34(21.2%), sex(females 368(100%), marital status(never married 169(45.9%), occupation(civil servants 105(28.5%) educational attainment(SSCE/GCE 119(32.3%), religious affiliation(Christians, protestant 192(52,2%) respectively.

**Table 4: Responses on the perception of people towards sexual violence**

<b>How would you describe the perception of people towards sexual violence against women?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Taboo	98	26.6
Inhuman	182	49.5
Normal	14	3.8
Moral Decadence	71	19.3
Others	3	.8
Total	368	100.0

#### **Field Survey, 2017**

Table 4 indicates that majority of respondents (49.5%) perceived sexual violence against women as inhuman. 26.6% of the respondents identified it as a taboo, followed by 19.3% of the respondents that looked at it as moral decadence while 3.8% of the respondents saw it as normal.



**Table 5: Respondents Views on Causes of Sexual Violence against Women**

<b>What are the likely causes of sexual violence against women?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Pornographic pictures/ films	158	42.9
Nude dressing	96	26.1
Alcoholism	46	12.5
Gender inequality	67	18.2
Others	1	.3
Total	368	100.0

**Field Survey 2017**

Table 5 shows that majority of the respondents (42.9%) believed that pornographic pictures/films are the leading causes of sexual violence against women followed by 26.1% of the respondents who believed that nude dressing was the cause. Again, the table shows that 18.2% of the respondents pointed that gender inequality was the cause of sexual violence against women, while 12.5% of the respondents blamed it on alcoholism.

The FGD participants, all stated that the use of internet by our youths makes them to have easy access to pornographic films which stimulates them sexually and they can jump to any woman they can hold on. They also said that there is moral decadence in our society, where virginity is no more held in high esteem. The participants pointed to nude dressing – women exposing some of their sensitive part of the body which arouse the sexual urge of men, which may result into rape. There was a more general acceptance that gender inequality is another cause of sexual violence against women. They agreed that men see women as inferior to them; they regard women as second-class citizens who must be subjected to them. What are the effects of sexual violence on women in Enugu south urban? The finding is shown in table below.

**Table 6: Respondents view on the effects of sexual violence on women**

<b>What effect does sexual violence have on women?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Unwanted Pregnancy	80	21.7
Stigmatization	126	34.2
Diseases	73	19.8
Trauma	82	22.3
Death	7	1.9
Total	368	100.0



**Field Survey, 2017**

The table 6 shows that majority of the respondents (34.2%) agreed that victims undergo stigmatization, followed by the respondents (22.3%) who said the victims experienced traumatisation. 21.7% of the respondents indicated that unwanted pregnancy was one of the effects of sexual violence. Again, the result also indicates that 19.8% of the respondents believed diseases were the consequences of sexual violence against women and 1.9% of the respondents agreed it can cause the death of the victim especially in the case of gang rape or abortion. This is in line with what one of the FGD participants said:

“The fear of loss of honour and respect made the victims to keep quiet because it is the woman who makes the complaint that ends up getting blamed for inviting such sexual advances. They don’t complain to anyone because of the fear that it would then be public and everybody would get to know” (a 35-year-old woman).

**Table 7: Respondents’ opinion on how to reduce sexual violence against women**

<b>How do you think sexual violence against women will be reduced?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Sex education	147	39.9
Increasing women's decision-making power	145	39.4
Implementing Govt's Laws	75	20.4
Don’t know	1	.3
Total	368	100.0

**Field Survey, 2017**

Table 7 shows that majority of the respondents (39.9%) indicated that sex education would help to reduce sexual violence against women. Again, from the table, 39.4% of the respondents specified that increasing women’s decision-making power would help to reduce the issue of sexual violence against women while 20.4% of respondents pointed out the need to implement government’s laws in order to curtail this menace.

This was corroborated with the response from the qualitative data. An Executive Director, SIRP (NGO) suggested that:

“Violence against Persons Law 2015 should be popularised using radio jingles, flyers written in English and Igbo languages to sensitise people about the implication of sexual violence: health implication and psychological implication, through sensitisation and criminalising the practice” (IDI, Executive Director, SIRP Enugu)



According to a 41-year-old female participant in IDI:

“The society can help in minimizing this menace by making the offenders pay for their crime and helping the victims to open up and break the silence. It can be brought to a stop by educating men to a level where they see women as equal to them and give them respect. I think offenders should be brought to book without mercy or intervention of people in authority. With time, we will see some positive changes” (IDI, Health Worker, Enugu south urban).

Similarly, a 32-year-old Medical Doctor in IDI maintained that:

“Government should establish a law and see to it that such laws are carried to the later, making sure that the perpetrators are brought to book. He also said that sex education should be incorporated into the school curriculum for primary schools and secondary schools” (IDI, Medical Doctor, Enugu south urban).

Again, all the FGD participants suggested that to reduce sexual violence against women, there is need for sex education starting from home where mothers will take the responsibility of teaching their children sex education especially their female children; implementing government’s laws, and government promoting gender equality. These will go a long way to reduce sexual violence against women in Enugu south urban.

Response from IDI interview conducted with Police Inspector (NPF), he has this to say:

“There is Women Rights Law 2015: Law against violence against women, including sexual violence against women 2015; but it has enforcement challenges. As police, our duty is to enforce the provisions of the law and ensure prosecution of offenders. We have a free gender desk in CPS (Central Police Station) Enugu and we also work with TAMAR SARC Enugu” (IDI, 36 years old Police Inspector, Nigeria Police Force Enugu).

A corresponding view from a 60-year-old Executive Director (SIRP: an NGO); he said thus:

“There is a law: Violence against Persons law of 2015. It is a violation of the Rights of the Girl Child. He also refers to international statutes: CEDAW (Convention Against all forms of Discrimination against Women), if these laws are implemented the issue of sexual violence against women would be reduced” (IDI, Executive Director, Society for the Improvement of Rural People (SIRP, NGO) Enugu).

The data from the FGD reveals that majority of the participants accepted that government’s laws against sexual violence are not being implemented due to corruption, bribe and lazier-fair attitude exhibit by some law enforcement agencies. They believed that implementing government’ laws will help to reduce violence against women.



## **Discussion**

Regarding the public perception of sexual violence against women, it was found that sexual violence was perceived as inhuman, taboo and moral decadence. From the findings, 49.5% of the respondents, which is the majority, saw sexual violence against women as inhuman in Enugu south urban. 26.6% of the respondents perceived sexual violence as a taboo and 19.3% of the respondents saw it as moral decadence in the society. This is in line with an IDI interview conducted with Police Inspector, Nigeria Police Force (NPF) Enugu who said he saw it as a decline in our moral values, that is, there is a high level of moral decadence in our society today. Things that were seen as taboo before are no more seen as such.

Next, the study found that majority of the respondents (42.9%) believed that pornographic pictures/films were the leading cause of sexual violence against women in Enugu south urban. This is in line with Marshall, (1988) who suggests that pornography serves as a model for sexually aggressive behaviour for some individuals, encouraging them to engage in behaviours depicted in pornography that they viewed. Based on this finding, it shows that an individual who views sexually violent pornography can experience a change in attitudes towards women; repeated exposure to sexually violent pornography can contribute to sexual offending behaviour. The use of pornography is a factor in shaping the attitudes and behaviours in some men who use it and that it is a factor in some men's sexual aggression (Stinson, Sales, & Becker, 2008).

The study further shows that the effect of sexual violence against women is very devastating; 29.3% of the respondents said that victim experience humiliation, 24.3% of the respondents showed that the victim is traumatized while 19.9% posited that the victim is depressed. This is consistent with the findings of Alhassan (2013) who observed that victims often have symptoms of depression or traumatic stress; 30% of victims will develop major depressive or post-traumatic stress disorders in their lifetime. The study also reviews that 26.4% of respondent agreed that the victims sustain injury. Some victims get unwanted pregnancy or diseases like HIV/AIDS, gonorrhoea, syphilis among others that may permanently damage their reproductive system or resulting to untimely death. This is line with Nzeakor (2002) who pointed that sexual violence against women may lead to unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, and death. In line with Litchfield (2012) findings, psychologically too; sexual violence may bring guilty, anxiety, fear, disappointment, frustration, anger at self, depression and low self-esteem. Mentally, it can further lead to post- traumatic stress disorder and depression (WHO, 2010). Other effect is that it can hamper development in the society, if women are kept subordinated and not given the full potential to exercise the capabilities they have.



Further still, this study found some measures that can be put in place to reduce the incidence of sexual violence against women in Enugu south urban. 39.9% of respondents suggest sex education – enlighten the people on the implication of sexual violence against women, it will go a long way to reduce the prevalence of sexual violence against women in Enugu south urban. 39.4% of the respondents said increasing women’s decision-making power will help to reduce sexual violence against women in the study area: promoting gender equality, while 20.4% agree that if government’s laws are being implemented it will curtail this menace; and we will have better society. This is supported by Akumadu (2007) who opined that what is more important is the enforcement of the law to protect those it is supposed to protect.

### **Conclusion**

Sexual violence against women is a serious and prevalent problem globally. Factors, such as pornographic pictures/ films, patriarchy, gender inequality, and alcoholism have been found to affect sexual violence against women in Enugu south urban. Hence, there is a dire need for sex education, increasing women’s decision-making power and implementing government’s laws for us to have a better society.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government in all levels, non-governmental organizations and other stake holders should make sure that government’s laws against sexual violence should be implemented so that the perpetrators would be sanctioned severely in order to serve as deterrence to others, thus, reducing the crime.
2. There is need for policy makers to engage in women-centred policies and programmes to increase women’s decision-making power.
3. The study equally suggests that there should be gender balance – gender equality between both sexes.
4. It is found that most communities in Nigeria is patriarchal, hence, the promotion of women’s rights should be ensured by government in order to help women to take decisions about the vital issues of their lives such as their sexuality.
5. The study also recommends that government should inculcate sex education into the school curriculum from primary to secondary schools in order to sensitize people about the danger of sexual violence against women, so that we will have better society.



6. The study again recommends that women should dress modestly; rather than nude dressings which arouse the sexual urge of men, because it may lead to sexual violence against women.

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