

## **The Role of Religion and State in Preventing Female Children Rape in Nigeria**

**Apyewen, Utensati Ande**

*Department of Religious Studies Federal University Wukari. 200 Katsina-Ala Road, P.M.B. 1020 Wukari, Taraba State, Nigeria*

**Philip, Etse Diaka**

*Department of Religious Studies Federal University Wukari. Taraba State, Nigeria*

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### **ABSTRACT**

The incidence of rape and sexual related violence against female children has become a source of worry to governments, development planners, researchers and religions across the globe. In Nigeria, hardly a day passes without reported or rumoured cases of rape especially during covid-19 Pandemic. Female children rape is a serious crime and has transformed into other felonious offences, such as physical violence and murder. This paper examines the role religion and state in preventing female children rape in Nigeria. It adopted a secondary method of inquiry and participant observation in its analysis. The study revealed a high magnitude of female children rape in Nigeria from 2013-2020. The findings identified, men raping children for ritual purposes, under-reports of rape cases, mishandling of rape cases, indecent dressing, children being left alone without parental care, child labour and moral decadence or anarchy in the society as the practice that causes female children rape in Nigeria. It further revealed the effects of female children rape in rank order to include; emotional traumas, social stigma, sexual transmitted infections, termination of child's life, and physical pains and injuries. The paper is of the view that religion and state are veritable tools for preventing female children rape depending on how religion and state are perceived by their faithful and citizen. It recommended among other that for religion and state to successfully prevent rape and murder of girl child in Nigeria, religious faithful and citizen must live not only by percept but also by precept.

**KEYWORDS:** Religion, State, Female, Children, Rape,

Date of Submission: 11-07-2020

Date of Acceptance: 27-07-2020

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Rape has unveiled its ugly mask in every society around the globe. The brutal nature of this shameless social problem in Africa, especially in Nigeria is becoming worrisome. Sex from time immemorial is controlled by religious and social norms in the society because there are religious and social sexual norms and ethical standards that guide how humans express their sexuality even though it varies from one religion or culture to another. However, the variation of religion and social sexual norms in different religions or cultures does not rule out the fact that rape is considered a taboo and strongly condemned and shunned by religion and state all over the world. It is more serious when it involves (minors) babies of eight years and below. The news of female children rape is worrisomely increasing in Nigeria today. According to Chiedu (2012), there are several cases, which are very irritating. Now and then, it is reported that a teacher has raped a student, a religious leader has raped his flock, robbers have raped a victim, a man has raped a sister-in-law or daughter-in-law, a master has raped a housemaid, a security man has raped his master's wife, a boss has raped his staff, a father has raped his daughter, a young man has raped a grandmother, a minor has raped a fellow minor, a traditional ruler has raped a subject, and an 80-year-old man has raped an 8-year-old girl. What lures men into raping children really confuses people. Despite the religiosity and the legal systems that coexist in Nigeria, the menace of female children rape in Nigeria tends to escalate geometrically during covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it is so embarrassing and heart breaking to hear that even law enforcement officers and the religious leaders that are meant to protect these victims also rape assault them sexually and even kill their victims. It is based on this background that this paper attempt to examine the role of religion and state in preventing female children rape in Nigeria. The paper defines the term rape, religion and state. The main body of the work discusses the magnitude of female children rape in Nigeria, practices that cause or increase rape in Nigerian society, the effect of rape on the victims, the role of religion and state in preventing female children rape in Nigeria.

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Religion** has no universally accepted definition. It can be defined as a set of ideas and beliefs about the “supernatural” and its impact on the lives of human beings. Supporting this fact Daramola (2002) defined religion as a human activity consisting of beliefs, ritual practices, moral codes and form of organization, as seen in churches, shrines, mosques, temples and other places of worship. This means religious beliefs give meaning to life; provide certain guidelines of behaviors, certain codes of conduct which individuals are expected to follow which bring a positive impact on their lives.

**State** is a “politically unified people occupying a definite territory or nation,” With key elements such as people, territory, government and independence. Supporting this fact, Apyewen (2020) defined the state to include people, territory, government and independence. He noted with example that, all people who occupy the geographical location of Nigeria and are governed by a political system make a state. In this paper, the state is the government of a country. For example, the federal republic of Nigeria is a state because it has a population of people, territory, government and independence.

**Rape** is the crime of forcefully having sexual relationship with somebody against the person’s wish or consent. The term rape according to Wikipedia (2017) originated from Latin word “rapere” meaning to snatch, grab or to carry off. Webster’s Universal Dictionary and Thesaurus (2007) defines rape as an act of forcing a person to have sexual intercourse against his or her will. According to Brigneti and Egbonimali (2002), rape is an act of sexual violence that involves intercourse without consent or against someone being unwilling to engage in the act. In this paper the writers give a classified working definition of rape as denial of women self-preservation; it is the intrusion of their privacy, it is a sexual abuse or violence against female gender. Female children rape is a form of sexual abuse committed against female children that are not old enough or old enough to have sex, in which an adult or older adolescent uses the children forcefully for sexual gratification. There exist different types of rape Nigeria. The most common one are; gang rape, rape by religious leaders, security officers, teachers, traditional rulers, armed robbers, friends and that of relatives.

### **Magnitude of Female Children Rape cases in Nigeria from 2013 -2020**

One of the ugliest rape cases in recent time as observed by The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) was the rape of a 3 year old girl by the biological father in 2013. The act was done when the father was changing the daughters pampers (Vanguard National Newspaper, 2013). Female Child rape and murder was also investigated in Cross-Rivers State and it was revealed that a 24 year old man-Chijioke Nwafor has raped an 8 year old Miss Alice Eneji to death, Chijioke has forcefully engaged Alice in a marathon sex at St. Patrick’s Primary School Okuku which resulted to the victims death. The Police Relation officer Mr. Hogan Basse confirmed this to Vanguard Newspaper (Premium Times National Newspaper, 2013).

In Kano state, a police orderly attached to the Executive Chairman of Kano Local Government Council of Kano State and four others have been arrested for allegedly gang-raping a 17-year-old girl at gun point. The Police Corporal, whose identity is being concealed by Kano State Police Command, was said to have conspired with four other persons to carry out the act by using his service pistol to subdue the lady at a location at Shanono, headquarters of Shanono Local Government Area (Vanguard National Newspaper October 10, 2014). Still in Kano state, a policeman has been arrested for raping a seven-year-old girl in Brigade quarters of Kano metropolis, Daily Trust gathered that Corporal Sani Salisu had the carnal knowledge of the minor on Wednesday inside a kiosk located at Mangoron Mahauta in Brigade quarters. The spokesperson of the Kano police command, ASP Magaji Musa Majia, confirmed the report in a statement, saying the cop had already been arrested in their effort to flush out bad eggs in the force. (NewswireNGR, Daily Post NIGERIA, May 1, 2015)

In Ibadan, Oyo State, according to Information Nigeria News May 9, 2016, one Pastor was arrested for raping a 7 year old girl (Bidemi) on the altar of his church in May 2016. The accused confessed that he really attempted the crime but could not penetrate. What a sacrilege that a pastor would use an altar of God for rape nest.

In Calabar, also, one Mr. Macellinus Nwabiri defiled his 3 year old step daughter. She was admitted to the General hospital Calabar where medical reports stated that the hymen of the victim had been broken, confirming that the rape actually happened. Further, medical investigations by Nigerian Navy hospital Calabar also confirmed the act (Cross River Watch, 2016).

In Osun State, a man of 27 year old has been arrested by the police and charged to court after reports that he had forcefully defiled a 2 year old toddler (Vanguard National Newspaper, 2016).

In Kaduna State, a 24 year old Haruna Tukur, a bus conductor has been arrested, and charged to magistrate court in the state in 29th February 2016 for raping a 5 year old girl repeatedly even after he had been arrested and set free on bail for raping the same child. According to Garba (2016), this case has prompted an outrage in social media, as the culprit has been reported to have repeatedly raped the child for two years starting from when she was only 3 years old. Still in Kaduna, Mr. Daniel Joseph a 31 year old man has been handed over

to Kaduna police command for raping his 2 year old daughter in Gonin-Gorachikum local government area of the state. The mother of the child was late and the culprit used the opportunity to destroy what he should protect. The crime was confirmed by a medical doctor who reported penetration and serious infection (Daily Post, 2016).

In Enugu State, National Mirror (2016) reported that a 16 year old boy has raped three kids including a 10 month old baby girl in Udi local government area of the state. According to National Mirror (2016), the police in the state confirmed the arrest of the rape suspect, adding that the case has been transferred to the police headquarters in the state where the suspect was being detained. Again in December 2016, in Enugu-Ezike Community in Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area of Enugu State, one Mr. Ojobo has been arrested by Enugu State Police Command for raping 11 children between the ages of 3 and above. Olujisting (2016) stated that the culprit confessed that he flashed a magic white cloth before the children who became unconscious and followed him to where he abused them sexually for ritual purpose of becoming rich.

In Abia State, one Mr. Emeka Asirionu, a 65 year old man has been arrested and paraded for raping a 2 year old girl child kept under his care at Oriendu near Umuahia. According to Abia state commissioner of police Mr. Adeleye Oyebade, the suspect was arrested on September 28, 2016 (Punch Newspaper, 2016).

In Ebonyi State, the news of girl child rape is not less serious as an 8 month old baby was reported to have been defiled by the very man who is her biological father. According to the mother of the baby (the wife of the rapist), the incident has repeated itself which attracted the mother's attention. Still in Ebonyi state, a 16 year old boy has been arrested for raping a 4 months baby. According to Vanguard National Newspaper (2017), the boy carried the baby into his room and raped her repeatedly until the baby started bleeding through the private part and anus.

Baby rape has also been cited in Imo state. For instance, five men were reported for allegedly raping an 8 year old girl. The girl who hawks sachet water was lured by the rapists to a lonely part of Relief Market in Owerri where they serially raped her until she became unconscious (Vanguard National Newspaper 2017).

In Kano State, a 6 month old baby girl has been raped by the husband of her mother's friend in 2016. The man raped the baby with the help of his wife who held the infant's legs. The rapist (name withheld) confessed that his wife and he were barren, and have agreed for the rape of the baby as they have been told by a ritualist that the only way they could have their own babies was for the man to rape a baby for rituals (Dachen, 2017; Nigerian News Today, 2017).

In Enugu state, Police also arrested a 50 year old headmaster, Mr. Nathaniel Idoko from Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area of Enugu State for allegedly raping his four female pupils aged between 5-6 years in a bush in July 2018 (Ossai, 2018; Njoku, 2018).

In Kano State, The Police arrested the Ward Head of Yargaya village, in Dawakin Kudu Local Government Area of Kano State, Alhaji Saje Sani, and six of his subjects for defiling a 13-year-old girl in the village. The Command's Public Relations Officer, Magaji Majiya, disclosed this while parading the suspects before journalists in Kano (Premium Times July 12, 2017). Still in Kano, The police have arrested a cleric, Samuel John, of Whether-Head in Sabon Gari, Kano, for allegedly serially raping 13-year-old twin sisters and their 11-year old sister. The police spokesperson in the state, Magaji Majiya, told premium times that the pastor was arrested after the parents and neighbours of the victims reported his alleged randy act (Premium Times August 15, 2017).

In Lagos state, an Islamic cleric, Abdulsalam Salaudeen, was remanded by an Ikeja Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Court for allegedly defiling a five-year-old girl in a mosque. The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Salaudeen, 43, is being tried for allegedly defiling the child, who was under his tutelage (Vanguard News, January 9, 2019).

In Osun State, July 1, 2019 there is reported case of an Islamic cleric Habeebulah Abdulraman been accused of raping a 16 year- old female student of his Islamic school but later claimed she was his wife and the cleric was re-arrested again in November 2019 (Premium Times July, 3 2019, November 24, 2019)

In Jigawa State, The State Police Command has arrested 11 suspects for allegedly raping a 12-year-old girl (name withheld). The spokesman of the command Abdu Jinjiri, confirmed the arrest to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), on Sunday in Dutse. (Premium Times May 30, 2020).

In Delta State, June, 8 2020 the Nigeria police, warri arrestone Bishop Elijah Orhonigbe the General Oversea, Victory Revival Fasting and Prayer Ministry in warri for raping a 19-year-old daughter of his member (Daily Post June 8, 2020).

The Edo State Police Command has arrested one of the suspects linked to the rape and murder of Miss Vera Uwaila Omozuwa. a 22-year-old 100-level student of the University of Benin, Edo State who was raped and killed by unknown persons while reading in RCCG church Ikpoba Hill branch in Benin city. Confirming the arrest, Spokesman of Edo Police Command, Chidi Nwabuzor told newsmen that the suspect was arrested after the fingerprint on the fire extinguisher she was attacked with was examined (The Sun Newspaper May 30, 2020, Daily Post June 2, 2020).

Rape and murder of female child was revealed in Oyo State on Monday June 4, 2020 where one Barakat Bello, 18-year-old student of Department of Science Laboratory Technology (SLT), Federal College of Animal Health and Production in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital was attacked by some hoodlums who gang raped and killed her at Akinyele Kara Market along Old Oyo Road, Ibadan (Daily Post June 4 2020).

In Benue state, the state Police Command records six new rape cases in the last one week. Parading some of the suspects at the Command Headquarters in Makurdi, the State Police Commissioner, Mr Garba Mukaddas said the suspects were arrested a few days ago in three Local Government Areas of the state. According to him “on June 9, a case of rape was reported at Orokam Police Division Ogbadibo LGA that 27-year-old Patrick Onoja dragged a seven-year-old child into a Church hall at Ngurute and had carnal knowledge of her. “The victim is currently receiving treatment at the General Hospital, Ijadoga while the suspect is in custody and has confessed to the crime. “Similarly a report was received at ‘B’ Division Police station Makurdi, on June 5, that 28-year-old Terver Awuha who is a family friend of the complainant lured her daughter, Bella who is 6yrs old to his house and defiled her. The suspect has been arrested and has also confessed to the crime.” He said the ‘A’ Division Police Station in Gboko LGA also received a complaint on June 9, that one Apaa Gbafan a landlord allegedly trespassed into his tenant’s house and forcefully raped a 15-year-old girl who was asleep. He said the suspect was arrested and investigation into the matter was ongoing. “Also in the same Gboko LGA a case of rape was reported at ‘A’ Police Division on June 9 that on that day, 22-year-old Igbadoo Ahondu met one Kumasuun a 14-year-old girl in the farm and forcefully had carnal knowledge of her in a nearby bush. The suspect has been arrested and the case is still under investigation. “Similarly, on June 9 at about 5 pm information was received at ‘D’ Division Police station Ankpa Quarters, Makurdi, that the complainant left her niece, 14-year-old Doofan at home to take care of her daughter while she went to the market. “When she returned from the market, she discovered that one Terzungwe Nyiter who is 30 years old forcefully raped her niece. The suspect was immediately arrested and investigation into the case is still in progress,” he stated. Continuing, the Police Commissioner said another complaint of rape was received on the same June 9, at about 3 pm at the ‘B’ Division Police station that one Denan Agena of behind Mechanic village Kanshio forcefully took a 14-year-old child to an uncompleted building and raped her. He said during investigation the suspect was arrested and he confessed to the crime. (Vanguard News June 13, 2020). In Oyo State Police Public Relation Officer Mr Olugbenga Fadeyi confirmed the rape and killing of one Grace Oshiangwu age 21 year -old, was macheted on her head in a church mission building locate at Idi-Ori, Sasa-Ojoo in Akinyele LGA of Oyo state on June 13, 2020 by unknown assailant(s) ( Sahara Reporters June 14 2020).

Nigeria Inspector General of Police Mr Adamu Mohammed on Monday June 15, 2020 said a total of 717 rape cases were reported nationwide between January and May this year. He disclosed this at a time protests are holding across the country against increasing cases of rape, defilement and murder of minors (Punch newspaper June 15, 2020).

The Police Command in Ebonyi said on Saturday that it had arrested two teenage boys aged 15 and 14 for allegedly gang-raping a 15-year-old girl. The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in the state, Loveth Odah, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Abakaliki that the suspects had confessed to the crime. Mr Odah said the incident happened at Nkelegu Ishieke community in Ebonyi Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. (Premium Times News June 20, 2020).

In Nasarawa state, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) arrested Ahmadu Yaro, 27 for raping 3-month-old baby on May 27, 2020 (Nigerian Tribune June 24, 2020).

The magnitudes of rape cases are becoming worrisome as it is taking new demission. It has turn to rape and killed. However, it is unfortunate that most cases of rape are under-reported mainly due to fear of stigmatization, the intent to protect the victims, belief that the police may fail to solve the crime as well as considering the low rate of prosecution of offenders by the Police.

### **Causes of Female Children Rape in Nigeria**

Several practices exist in Nigeria societies that cause female children rape and murder. Rituals practices are one of them. Due to unemployment, acute economic recession and the quest for materialism, power and fame in the country, many young men, political and religious leaders have sold their consciences to money, affluence or fame, power and materialism. For instance, according to Nairaland Forum (2015), some people believe that when women, especially virgins (children) are raped, the destiny of the victim is transferred to the perpetrator through magical means. An example of this is where a rapist used white cloth to charm 11 children and abused them sexually. He confessed that the act would reap the destiny of the victims spiritually to make him rich, but that he had not started being rich by the time he was caught (Olujisting, 2016). The rape of 6 month old in Kano was also for ritual purpose (Dachen, 2017; Nigerian News Today, 2017).

The practice where rape cases were under-reported causes rape. In Nigeria, Many families and rape victims feel that reporting of rape incidents would circulate the news of the victims’ defilements which may result to shame, ridicule and social stigma. Consequently, many families prefer to conceal rape assaults that

involve their family members in order to save themselves from shame, character assassination, backlash, rigorous legal procedures and public embarrassments among others. As a result, rape victims do not have the zeal to pursue their cases to conclusion. This undue silence over rape crimes encourages rapists go scot free, leading to more rapes (Uzoanya, 2015; Achunike et al., 2014; This Day Live, 2018).

Mishandling of rape cases is practices that cause rape of female children in Nigerian society. It is an established fact according to Achunike and Kitause. (2014), that rape and sexual violence against women are not prosecuted as expected. Most cases of rape and murder of girl child often go without any of the culprits being prosecuted in Nigeria. Falayan et al. (2014), stress that sometimes, the police do not take appropriate actions by not making an official report. The Nigerian criminal code law section 357 of criminal code Act, laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recommends life imprisonment for rape convicts and 14 years imprisonment for attempted rape (Ito, 2015). The Nigerian senate has also approved life imprisonment for rapists of children under 11 years and people who have sexual intercourse with minors. Child Rights Law in Nigeria (31(2) enacted by the federal government in May 2003, recommended life imprisonment for anyone convicted for rape. However, only very few persons have been convicted since the enactment of the law to 2020. This is because sexual abuse matters in law court are sometime frustrated by the government which usually acts as the prosecution. The governmental prosecution of the offenders according to Uzoanya (2015) may have not been encouraging as it has been reported that sex offenders have in some cases asked to do community service as a form of punishment, contrary to the stipulated laws. Furthermore Ejim (2013) observed that Nigerian laws appear to in addition victimize and humiliate the female folk as they do not bring justice to them. The rigorous requirements involved in producing the authentic evidence of rape in question seem to trivialize the whole matter. For instance, before a rape case is established, the victim must get a medical report to confirm that rape has taken place, as well as getting police report within the shortest interval of time. Unfortunately, some Nigerian police demand bribe from rape victims in order to investigate rape cases and give reports, and when the bribe is not given to them, they accuse the rape victims of consenting to the sexual intercourse with the rapists. In some cases, the complainant becomes the accused and vice versa, depending on who gives the highest bribe. Olatunji (2012) conducted an extensive review of the Nigerian anti-rape law and identified some short-comings of which some are; that a rape victim must establish that penetration occurred, and that consent was not given. These limitations with establishing consent make proving many of the few valid rape cases difficult. Consequently, rapists increase in number as they are not adequately punished

Indecent dressing is another practice that causes rape in Nigeria. Many parents purchase all sorts of dresses for their children which expose the inner body and contour of the kids that should be covered from public views, such as thighs, buttocks, stomach and breasts. These days, young female children are dressed shabbily in boxers, knickers, pants and leggings (Achunike et al., 2014). As a result, one wonders whether the parents of these kids still remember that these children are females who need woman dignity and respect. Female children who indulge in such dresses become attractive to their male counterparts. Therefore arouse sexual urge in men and adolescents especially the sexy and irresponsible ones. Ayogu (2011), after conducting a research on sexual abuse revealed that parents knowingly or unknowingly buy clothes with inscriptions such as “I am a sexy girl”, “Kiss me deep”, “hug me tight”, “Romance me” or “Fuck me baby” for their female children to wear. Expectedly, such ludicrous and psychedelic dresses that advertise female nudity are inviting to rapists to carry out their exploits.

In Nigeria, most children are being left alone without parental care. Parental irresponsibility causes rape of female children in Nigeria. Many parents due to quest for money or tight office work and other activities most time abandon their little female children early in the morning at home at the mercy of yard members or even without anybody to guard them, and come back late in the night. In such situations, children are denied love, affection, close monitoring and guidance. The children become their own parents, loitering around without restrictions or being monitored. These attitudes expose children to all sorts of dangers including rape and murder.

Female children rape is cause by child labour. Due to economic recession and poverty in Nigeria, children especially girls hawk goods along the streets as early as 4 or 6 years old. The introductions of young girls into street trading or hawking increase the chances of child rape in Nigeria (Ali, 2018; Chukwu et al., 2018; Agbo, 2017). Unfortunately still, most of these hawkers go nude as they hawk their wares. Commenting on the nudity of Nigerian girl hawkers, Nairaland Forum (2016) opines that girl hawkers in the country have carried out a dressing code of wearing indecent dresses such as miniskirts, leggings, nickers and hanging tops that expose their little bodies-nipples, novels, hips, and laps. Furthermore, these girls in a bid to sell their goods are usually determined to follow their presumed customers to any length to dispose of their items. Some criminals and rapists capitalize on the children’s innocence and gullibility and lure them to lonely places where they may be raped and murder.

Moral anarchy is a major practice that causes female children rape and killing in Nigeria. Social norms and values which hold societies together are enshrine in religion and legal systems of the state are sacred from

each religion and state. Every religion and state provides the members with moral codes or values that regulate human conduct in the society. It teaches a life nurtured in sensitivity to self, others and God for healthy society. These requirements for a healthy society seem to be on the want or rotten in Nigeria, especially where the people tend to say nothing and do nothing about the moral virtues of the citizens. Okwu (2003) had noted that morality as an important ingredient of living in human society is increasingly being abandoned in private and public life in our society. There are several reports on rape and murder of women and girl child, armed robbery, and assassination. Female children Rape and killing is a pointer to moral decadence and anarchy in Nigeria. Moral decadence and anarchy are indication of the decline of religion and state. This practice promote rape and murder of girl child in Nigeria since the moral codes that regulate human conduct in the Nigeria society are on decay

### **Effects of Rape on the Victims**

The issue of rape is both a physical as well as spiritual problem. A female child, who has been raped, faces a lot of physiological, psychological, moral and social problems. For instance, genital tract traumas could lead to bleeding, fistulas; abnormal vaginal discharges, sexually transmitted infections like HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies which may result to unsafe abortions as well as sexual disorders, death and mental illnesses amongst other negative effects. This is in addition to the social stigma that accompanies being identified as a rape victim. According to Ashiru & Orifowomo (2015), rape devastate the lives of the victims and their families, causing severe physical and psychological pains and sufferings, including death, sexually transmitted infectious diseases and unwanted pregnancies. It is a form of gender-based violence which knows no border. Achunike and Kitause(2014) provide vivid accounts of rape in Nigeria and its impact on victims, including physical injuries, fatigue and chronic headaches, and emotional problems, such as suicide attempts, stress disorders, depression, and sexual dysfunction.

### **The Role of Religion and State in Preventing Female Children Rape in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, there are many religions; however, only three are recognised. These are African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam. These Religious beliefs, text, doctrines in Nigeria have clear stands on the treatment of women and female children. They both condemn rape. In the indigenous culture of Africa and traditional religion, rape is not appreciated by society. The rapist was scorned in his community; he could not join the association of good and respectable people. In some societies, such people are stoned to death or banished from the society or pay fine.

Islam and Christianity teach that men and women are created equal by God. Christianity does not condone rape and murder. For example, at the time when God wrote the first rules for His people, women were considered a man's property. God's laws set Israel apart from its neighbouring countries by elevating a woman's status and protecting her. The punishment for rape was death for the rapist. The punishment for adultery was death of both parties involved, but God makes a distinction for rape: "Only the man who has done this shall die. Do nothing to the woman; she has committed no sin deserving death" and the punishment for rape is death by stoning (Deuteronomy 22:25-26). In the New Testament, Children were central to the new social order Jesus initiated. When he set a little child in the midst of the disciples and said, "The kingdom of God belongs to such as these " (Mark 10:14), he demonstrated enormous regard for children. By blessing and laying his hands on children, Jesus received children as people in their own right; he gave them status and dignity (Mark 10:16).

In Islam, human sexuality is governed by God's law. Accordingly, sexual violation and murder are regarded as a violation of moral and divine law. Islam views human life as a sacred gift from God. The Koran repeatedly stresses the sanctity of life. In Nigeria rape and murder are criminalized in the Sharia penal laws which were introduced in 1999 and are now in force in 12 states in the northern Nigeria for Muslims (The Sharia Penal Codes, 1999).

In Nigeria we have a federal and state government. The state at both federal and state level has initiate laws and bills: The Nigerian criminal code law section 357 of criminal code Act, laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recommends life imprisonment for rape convicts and 14 years imprisonment for attempted rape (Ito, 2015). The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, section 33 provided that every person in Nigeria has a right to life. It prescribed death penalty as punishment for Capital crimes such as murder, terrorism-related offenses, rape, robbery and kidnapping.

In August 2005 the Federal Government constituted the Committee on the Review of Discriminatory Laws against Women, which operated under the auspices of the National Human Rights Commission with a mandate to review discriminatory legislation, including rape. It submitted its final report to the Federal Minister of Justice on 16 May 2006 (Amnesty International, 2008). Moreover, some states in the Nigerian federation have child right acts which are ostensibly made to fight against all forms of child abuse, including rape and murder.

The House of Representatives Abuja on Tuesday March 5, 2013 approved life imprisonment for any person convicted of rape. They equally approved a minimum of 20 years in jail terms without an option of fine for persons convicted. The senate in Nigeria has also passed a bill in 2015 which prescribed life imprisonment for rapists and anybody who has sexual relationships with children under the age 11 years (Akumadu, 2007). To further prevent rape and murder of female children, the Nigeria governors' forum has agreed to declare a state of emergency on rape and gender-based violence against women and children in Nigeria (Punch newspaper June 11 2020).

Despite with the above mentioned role of religion and state towards preventing rape in Nigeria, the menace of female children rape and murder is on increase in daily basis especially during covid-19 pandemic. This is because laws in Nigeria against rape have not been implemented fully against offenders thereby paving way for the continuation of rape in the country. Furthermore, religious faithful and the citizen are not obeying the texts and doctrines of their religion as well as the legal systems that coexist in the country against rape.

## **II. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In view of the above discussion, the paper strongly recommended that;

Religions and state should note that the masses of society which incidentally are their members ought to be taught not to commit rape or cover up the perpetrators of such in the society or places of worship. They have to educate the uneducated, reeducate the miseducated among member of the society to prevent rape and murder of female children.

It is a known fact that the religious affiliates' attitude and norms aid in the concealment of rape and murder acts. Religion should strengthen their beliefs, texts, and teachings to de-emphasized sexual abuse, and state in the other hand should strengthen its legal systems to protect female children. They are to speak out against the members, political and religious leaders who have involved themselves or aid other to involve in rape and bring the culprits to justice as quickly as possible.

Female children should be taught that they must report to their parents anybody who tries to touch their private parts at home, place of worship, schools and the like. Furthermore, mothers being naturally closer to children should have strong cordial relationships with the children to enable children to confide in the mother's any event in their lives on a daily basis.

Religions in Nigeria (African Traditional Religion, Christianity and Islam should de-emphasized indecent dressing among their adherents especially among female children. Female children should be dressed properly to maintain the dignity of womanhood and on no account should female children be left under the care of private male teachers, family drivers, male neighbours, or security guards alone and they should be discouraged from sitting on the laps of males.

## **III. CONCLUSION**

Female children rape in Nigeria is going beyond control if no proactive steps are taken seriously and immediately. Rape is discovered to have taken new dimension in Nigeria at the moment with some of the female children been rape and murdered. Many female children in Nigeria lost their virginity and life through raping. The study identified rituals purpose, mishandling of rape cases, under report of rape cases, indecent dressing, child labour and moral decadence in the society as the major practice that increases rape cases in Nigeria. And that the evils of rape are perpetrated mostly by security agent, clergymen, family friends, uncles, and even unscrupulous parents. A female child, who has been raped, faces a lot of physiological, psychological, moral and social problems. In a response to prevent female children rape in Nigeria, religions strengthen their beliefs, texts, and teachings and the Nigerian authorities at both federal and state have initiate laws and bills to prevent female children rape but these seem to be scanty and not working. Religions and The Nigerian authorities at both federal and state levels have failed to address adequately women and female children rape. There are scanty of religious teachings, federal or state legislations criminalizing rape and sexual related violence against women and children in Nigeria. Most bills initiated by religious, governmental and non-governmental organization against rape and other sexual related violence against female children are still pending. Regrettably too current provisions relating to rape are not adequately enforced in the Nigerian criminal justice system. These provisions are inadequate and in some cases outdated and urgent legislative reforms are needed to ensure conformity with Nigeria's obligations under international human rights law. From the beginning of this paper, religion and state can be a vital tool for preventing female children rape if religious adherents, leaders and the citizen are not only the hearers of the word and the law but also the doers of the word and the keepers of the law. They should not continue to live a life of hypocrisy. They should allow their religions and state to build them and transform them. They must allow what they learn from their religious doctrines and legal systems of the state to transform them. This will help in preventing the emerging female children rape and murder in Nigeria.

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ApyewenUtensatiAnde, et. al. "The Role of Religion and State in Preventing Female Children Rape in Nigeria." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 25(7), 2020, pp. 56-64.