LASU scholars seek stricter measures to curb rape

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Hold seminar to present findings  
  
A team of researchers at the Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo, has stressed the need for stricter punitive measures to curb rape in the country.  
  
Presenting its research findings to the public last week at the ACEITSE Lecture Hall on LASU main campus in Ojo, Lagos, the team noted that sexual offenders should be dealt with, while legal reforms must be instituted, and laws on substance abuse effectively enforced.  
  
The research project was entitled: Emerging Patterns and Determinants of Rape: Comparative Study of Rural-Urban Communities in Nigeria.  
  
The team, while highlighting the causes of rape, stressed that sexual offenders should face stricter punishments.  
  
The Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ibiyemi Olatunji-Bello, described the study as “an unprecedented, most comprehensive, and most profoundly empirical study on rape in Nigeria”. She charged relevant stakeholders to take the outcome seriously.  
  
The VC said the recommendations of the research should be taken seriously by stakeholders, including government agencies, lawmakers, advocacy groups, community leaders, school administrators, teachers, parents, guardians, religious leaders, individuals and the public.  
  
She urged everyone in positions of power at any level to safeguard female children as well as adults and aged women who are the major victims of rape in rural and urban communities.  
  
“Rape, you will all agree with me, is a global social and public health problem. In virtually all cultures, violent sexual engagement and defilement of all categories of females is a disturbing reality,” she said.  
  
The don reaffirmed her administration’s commitment to advancing research and innovation to make the institution the best in Africa.  
  
A highpoint of the programme was the unveiling of the project policy brief by Prof. Olatunji-Bello for the benefit of the university, the state, and the nation.  
  
The Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academics and Principal Investigator of the research team, Prof. Olufunsho Omobitan, noted that the project had encouraged interdisciplinary collaboration across the university, involving scholars from the departments of Economics, Sociology, Counselling, Geography and Planning.  
  
Coordinator of research team,Prof. Onipede Wusu, said the project kicked off in April 2021 with the N34 million research grant from TETFUND. He said the team utilised a mixed-method approach to generate and analyse quantitative and qualitative data on emerging patterns and determinants of rape among females in the rural and urban communities in 12 Nigerian states which cut across the six geopolitical zones of the country with a sample population of 3,023 (all females).  
  
The findings showed that rape is generally higher in rural areas than in the urban communities of Nigeria.  
  
The research also revealed that family members and neighbours are the principal perpetrators of rape while listing childhood sexual abuse experience, ethnicity, childhood family background (especially the broken homes) as critical risk factors of various forms of rape.  
  
The research findings, presented by each of the eight members of the team, established that there are incidents of childhood sexual abuse, rape among young females, women of reproductive age, elderly females and marital rape in rural and urban communities.  
  
The research findings showed the prevalence of sexual violence across different age groups, with childhood sexual abuse rates at 35 percent nationally, and slightly varying between urban and rural areas, and 10 per cent of currently married women and 11 per cent of never-married women reported experiences of rape, while vulnerable adult groups reported 15 percent prevalence.  
  
Members of the research team who were drawn from five departments of two faculties comprise Prof. Olufunsho Omobitan, Prof. Onipede Wusu, Prof. Folashade Airat, Dr Ibrahim Rotimi Aliu, Dr Adijat Olateju, Dr Alausa Waheed, Dr Busoye Olupooye, and Dr Sakiru Raji.