Anomie and rape in varsities

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SIR: From a part-time lecturer at the University of Lagos to professor of Law at the University of Calabar, the sad involvement of intellectuals in moral debauchery of sex exploitation of female students has further confirmed the slip of the Nigerian society into moral anomie. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the university symbolizes structure of moral purity. The university is a architecture designed for the pursuit of intellectual growth of society and ought to be divorced from the everyday concerns. But as universities become encircled by communities, and as a collectivity of human beings; we cannot but find the saint and the sinner cohabiting. Rape is a subset of sexual assault which is gaining ground due to our docile and sentimental nature which downplays the inhumanity of some of us against the vulnerable. Rape in our ‘knowledge factories’, like the other reported cases outside the walls of universities indicate the erosion of trust in our society. While the UNILAG case indicated abuse of trust, the UNICAL involved abuse of office, threat and capitalization on the vulnerability of the student.  
  
Nigeria is not yet in the league of top 20 countries in the world where rape is more deadly but if we are not careful and enforce the necessary laws, it will get out of hand. The social networks of randy lecturers are strong that it sometimes frustrates any efforts at reporting. Why rape students? Sociologically, it is rational action because the benefit outweighs the cost as it is in Nigeria. Rapist lecturers operate like other typical offenders based on power, anger and sexuality. The compromised lecturers operate from the position of strength of their power as having the ability to determine who will be found worthy to graduate. Thus they feel insulted if their subtle request is rejected by the ladies. They set up obstacles such as test, examinations and openly insult and harass their victims all with the aim of having their way. Rather than taking money, having sex with the student becomes a weapon of perpetual domination and a victory of masculinity. To them, having their way is their ‘victory’ over a disrespectful student. Rape is therefore symptomatic of patriarchal societies like Nigeria. Lecturers who rape students have emphatic or social skill deficits and may justify their behaviours on the basis of cognitive distortions.  
  
The way forward is having a supportive judiciary in attending to rape cases and their punishment if the case ever gets to that stage. If a rape case appears before a male judge, he is more likely to make a mess of it. The female judge feels affected and likely to dispense off the case with justice. Universities should have dress codes to check nudity and appropriately sanction infractions. A rapist lecturer should face a degradation ceremony; a shaming parade within the university. Such a lecturer, after prima facie has been established, must be taken across campus and his picture published in the university calendar. Universities must also be fined if a case of rape is established within their confines. Doing this will make institutions enforce high moral standard among the workforce. Universities must have a unit to investigate gender and sexual harassment as is being done at the University of Ibadan under the Gender Mainstreaming office. This unit must be made to function and lecturers found culpable must be disciplined within the stipulated laws. Rape comes under offences against morality in the criminal code and we must arrest it as we cannot allow this moral anomie to continue.  
  
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