Rape, paedophilia, incest: The ugly trends of 2015

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Almost unbelievably, the out-gone year 2015, went down as the year in which Nigeria recorded the most incidences of sexual crimes, with cases of rape, incest and paedophilia assaulting our consciousness almost on a daily, if not hourly basis. Gboyega Alaka throws a retrospective look on the year, mirroring some of the horrific cases and seemingly pricking the conscience of perpetrators.  
  
Looked in the papers today? Most likely, you caught a glimpse of some sexual assault story or the other. Yeah, some violent rape or despicable paedophilia! The year 2015 certainly recorded an overdose of sexual assault cases, almost going down as the year with the most cases of sexual crimes in recent memory in the country.  
  
Suddenly, sex crime is in our faces, like never before, and it just seems like Nigerians have lost their sense of decency and responsibility. An online commentator even asked during a discussion, if the libido of Nigerian men has suddenly gone up. If it’s not the father assaulting his own baby-girl, it is the trusted uncle taking advantage of the niece or some under-age in the neighbourhood. Sometimes, it is the trusted neighbour, the respected grandpa, the revered pastor, imam, mualim or teacher, who is suddenly in the news, for having carnal knowledge of a minor. Sometimes, the victim is cajoled and benignly taken advantage of; but sometimes, it is forceful, violent rape; leaving the victim physically and psychologically bruised and scarred. In some extreme cases, the victims – especially those who resist, lose their lives or get maimed for life.  
  
As if to corroborate the unholy tag on the out-gone year, Mrs Itoro Eze-Anaba, founder of the Mirabel Centre, which rescues and rehabilitates victims of sexual assaults, as well as pursues prosecution of perpetrators, told this reporter of how the number of cases recorded at the centre climbed to over 50 and consistently remained there in the last quarter of 2015, compared to an average of 20 to 30 cases, which the centre used to record when it was founded over two years ago. It is important to note though that Eze-Anaba, even with this statistics, did not agree to the position that 2015 has recorded the highest cases of sexual assault in recent times, as she argued that what might seems like a rise could be ascribed to the fact that more people now report rape and other cases of sexual assault, unlike before.  
  
Even Ogun state, a state reputed for its laid-back and quiet lifestyle is not left out in the growing trend of horrific human assault, with official information showing that the state records an average of 15 rape cases every week in the out-gone year. This of course translates to an average of 60 cases in a month and even surpasses that of the Mirabel Centre, reputed to be the busiest as far as number of cases received in Lagos is concerned.  
  
As at December 2014, Lagos State Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Ade Ipaye revealed that the state was prosecuting as many as 113 suspected rape cases at the state High Court. He said four local governments – Alimosho, Kosofe, Agege and Oshodi-Isolo had been identified as the LGAs with the highest cases of sexual and gender-based violence in the state.  
  
Between March 2012 and March 2013, the Lagos State Police command revealed that the command recorded 678 reported cases of rape in the state.  
  
But if one would have to go by the fact that more people are beginning to report sexual assault cases in 2015, it may then mean that a grimmer picture knocks on our sense of reality. This undoubtedly connotes an epidemic, with a growth or spread rate akin – or worse than that of the dreaded Ebola disease, when it landed in on the West African coast in 2014.  
  
Unfortunately, Nigerians may not even have anything near a clear picture of the epidemic plaguing their land. Hajia Zainab Maina, a former Minister of Women Affairs not long ago, asserted that the number of gender-based violence cases reported in the country is still very low, compared to the real prevalence rates hidden by fear of stigma and secrecy. She noted that the overview on gender-based violence from 18 states of the federation covering the six geo-political zones include: 21.08 percent of sexual violations, 44.25 per cent of physical violations, 18.37 percent of domestic violence, 11.48 percent of harmful traditional practices and 2.92 percent of economic violations. She therefore posited that sexual violence ranked second amongst all violations and concluded that “this is the pattern on the national scale.  
  
In an article titled “Nigeria’s soaring cases of paedophilia,” Jide Ojo, Executive Director, OJA Development Consult, Abuja expressed fears that “if something is not done and very fast too, we (Nigeria) may end up being the country with the highest number of rape cases in the world.  
  
Nigerian man Jailed 330 years for rape and incest in the US  
  
As if to boost the negative reputation of the year 2015 and underline Ojo’s fear, a national newspaper a fortnight ago, broke the news of a Nigerian father, Emmanuel Ngene, who by the last yuletide, would have spent six years in jail out of his 330 jail sentence in a South Eastern USA jail, for first degree rape of his daughter. Although, the convict has continued to deny the allegations, together with his network of family and friends, insisting it was a frame-up engineered by his wife; the judgement nevertheless remains. Ngene was said to have had vaginal intercourse with his daughter approximately 10 times over the spate of one year; three of these times, he was said to have turned her on her stomach and penetrated her through the anus. The victim only opened up to her mother in August 2008.  
  
While that iota of a possibility of innocence may still remain on the part of Ngene, the American judicial system nevertheless remains convinced. After thorough investigation, the jury found him guilty of all 15 counts and also found the existence of an aggravating factor – that Ngene took “advantage of a position of trust or confidence.” The trial court therefore entered 15 separate judgement: four consecutive aggravated-range sentences of 300 to 369 months imprisonment for the four counts of first degree rape; three consecutive aggravated-range sentences of 300 to 369 months imprisonment for the three counts of first degree sex offence; four consecutive presumptive-range sentence of 16 to 20 months imprisonment for the four counts of incest, and four consecutive presumptive-range sentences of 16 to 20 months for the four counts of indecent liberties with a child.  
  
As he continues his hibernation in jail, holding firmly onto his claim of innocence, Ngene would occasionally wonder if he indeed should have pleaded guilty and get away with a 15-year jail term, as recommended by the prosecutor, rather than face up to trial and end up with a hopeless case of endless years in jail.  
  
Back home in Nigeria, even the aura of Christmas, a commemoration of the birth of the Christ and Saviour of the Christian faith, could not stop 62-year-old Adewale Enoch, obviously a Christian – at least by name; from raping a 12-year old daughter of his neighbour, right on Boxing Day in Abigi area of Ogun State. Enoch is now cooling off at Eleweran police station, Abeokuta, Ogun State, where he is likely to spend his New Year, after the father of the victim, decided against the culture of silence of the past, and reported the matter to the police.  
  
Amazing paedophilia statistics  
  
Before now, the argument most people put forward to somewhat justify rape and shift the blame on the women victims as the provocateurs was indecent exposure and sexually provocative dressing; but like a curious mind asked recently at a public debate on the rape epidemic: What could be so attractive in a two year old girl (or even eight, 10 or 14 year old)?  
  
Josephine Effah-Chukwuma, Executive Director, Project Alert, another organisation that addresses domestic violence, including rape and based in Lagos, recently said that “70 percent of reported rape cases in Nigeria today involve young people and children of ages 17 to zero.”  
  
In September, 41-year-old Emeka Igwe of Federal Housing Estate, Meiran, Ojokoro, Lagos State was apprehended for repeatedly raping his seven year-old daughter and inadvertently getting her addicted to masturbation.  
  
In the same vein, a 34-year-old factory worker, Mohammed Ahmed, was paraded by officials of the Osun State command of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps after he confessed to raping his 14-year old daughter six times.  
  
In the Bwari area of the Federal Capital Territory, one Monday Goodwill was arrested for defiling a 3 year-old girl. Incidentally, it was not his first time, as according to a police officer at Mpape Police Station, who craved anonymity, Goodwill had previously been convicted for raping a four year-old and got away on a N3, 000 fine.  
  
In Ogun State, a 60 year-old private hostel owner, Akinduro was apprehended by the police following reports that he raped a 12 year-old female student of the Mayflower School who was staying in his hostel.  
  
In Taraba State, 27-year-old Williams Julius was arrested by the police and taken before a court on allegations of rape. Julius was reportedly arraigned before a Magistrate Court in Jalingo, the state capital, for having forceful sexual intercourse with a five-year-old girl.  
  
A case of mental disorder  
  
In 2014, one Kayode Akanni, 25, of Pedepo Village via Ohunbe Ogun State, who was arrested after he defiled a three year old girl, who had come to see him like an uncle and father figure. Even he confessed that the girl’s parents had been leaving her in his custody for a long time, and that he didn’t know what came over him on the fateful day. The alternate implication of Akanni’s confession is therefore that parents must not make a habit of keeping their vulnerable wards with certain men just because things have always gone on well, for you never know when “the devil may come upon such men.”  
  
Interestingly, it might seems like more Nigerian parents fall into this trap because they only consider the ragged human specimen, with tattered hair and unkempt appearance, roaming the streets, as being with psychological disorder or mad. But what does one say of a 26 year-old who after being arrested for defiling an 18-month old child, confessed that the sight of the baby usually aroused his libido.  
  
Incidentally, even Wikipedia defines paedophilia as a psychiatric disorder in which an adult or older adolescent experiences a primary or exclusive sexual attraction to prepubescent children, generally age 11 and younger.  
  
Four -year-old raped to death  
  
In Bayelsa, a report made available to UNICEF (United Nations Children Emergency Fund) by the State Coordinator of the Child Protection Network (CPN), Mrs. Mariam Kombo-Ezeh, revealed how a four year old girl was raped to death by a 40 year-old man in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area. There was also the case of a 7 year-old, who died of HIV/AIDS contracted after being raped by a full grown man; and also the pathetic case of the gang-rape of a 13 year-old girl in Yenagoa, the state capital.  
  
The flip side  
  
Not to be discriminatory against the men-folk, there was also a recent case of a 60-year-old widow, who was raped by a youth of between 17 and 25 years in Opi Local Government area of Enugu State. Such incidences prevailed in the eastern part of the country about two, three years ago, and though many blamed it on the seeming haste of youngsters to get rich through rituals, the truth is, some might have been outright desire for bizarre sex.  
  
Abominable incest everywhere!  
  
Like never before, fathers also seem to have become more attracted to their daughters; jeopardising chances of any possibility of a safe haven for the girl child.  
  
In Delta State, the police arrested a 46 year old man, Morris Ndidwe for allegedly defiling his 11 year-old daughter. Ndidwe’s wife, while testifying, said she had earlier left their matrimonial home, following her husband’s insatiable thirst for sex, which saw him impregnate another girl, a neighbour’s daughter. She only returned recently, to find her husband abusing their eleven year-old daughter. She said: “My daughter told me what she was going through in the hand of her father whenever she (mother) was not around and when I asked my husband, he denied saying, he had stopped the act since he repented.”  
  
Things however got to a head, when she went to vigil one night and returned to again hear the story of how he had assaulted their 11 year-old daughter. “I decided to check my daughter’s private part, but my husband refused and almost beat me, but thanks to my neighbours who intervened.”  
  
In a similar case, 35 year-old Harrison Agu was arraigned before an Ikeja Chief Magistrate court on November 8 over an assault on his six year-old daughter. The accused pleaded not guilty to the crime, but the prosecutor, Inspector Simon Imhonwa insisted before the magistrate that Agu had regularly defiled the little girl within the last three years.  
  
In another bizarre occurrence, a seven year-old girl narrated how her father usually played with her private part and inserted his manhood in her mouth. The victim, who lives with her father in Ojokoro said her father would thereafter give her some money as gratification after fondling her breast and dipping his manhood in her mouth.  
  
The accused identified as Chukwuemeka Odunzie, allegedly started defiling his daughter early 2014.  
  
In the same vein, a national newspaper reported in September 2015 how a father confessed to raping his daughter “only six times,” as if he even has any right to sexual relationship with her, let alone, a forceful one.  
  
‘Men of God’ not left out  
  
In November 2015, the Nassarawa State Police command nabbed a 46 year-old pastor, Ifeanyi Bernard, for allegedly raping a 13 year-old girl in Karu Local Government Area of the State. The ‘man of God’ was said to have committed the crime on November 3 during a deliverance session between him and the teenager. The pastor on his part blamed the crime on the devil and promised not to let it happen again.  
  
In the same vein, a 40-tyear-old pastor, Abraham Akpan, was in September charged before a Lagos Magistrate Court for defiling a 16 year-old girl while conducting deliverance prayer on her. Akpan, who at the time of the crime, resided at 39, Hassan Ogunmola Street, in Ijaiye, Lagos, was said to have committed the crime between August 27 and 29 2015, in his apartment.  
  
Also in Ondo state, a 55-year old pastor, Jacob Ojomo was arrested for having carnal knowledge of a 15 year-old girl. The state commandant of Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Adeyinka Fasiu said the mother of the victim caught the pastor in the act and raised an alarm. He disclosed that the crime was perpetrated at the plaza axis of Oke Ijebu Road in the state.  
  
Ivory towers not left out  
  
In August 2015, one Professor Cyril Ndifon, dean, Faculty of Law, Univeristy of Calabar was alleged to have sexually assaulted a 20 year-old 400-level Law student of the university. A month earlier in July, one Dr. Akin Baruwas, a lecturer with the University of Lagos was alleged to have raped an 18 year-old female admission seeker. The latter case generated a lot of buzz and controversy, with the university disowning the suspected rapist.  
  
While cases of sexual assault and rape may not be new in our ivory towers, it might seem like more of the students are becoming bolder, and exposing their assailants.  
  
The Law on sexual offences in perspective  
  
Section 357 of the Criminal Code Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, addresses the problem of rape in a most decisive manner, stipulating that anyone found guilty of rape must be punished with life imprisonment.  
  
Perhaps, admitting that the crime rate has indeed attained an epidemic phenomenon, the Nigerian Senate in June 2015 passed the Sexual Offences Bill, 2015, prescribing a massive life imprisonment for rapists and those who have sexual intercourse with children under 11 years. The bill sponsored mainly by Senator Chris Anyanwu from Imo State, listed some of the offences as gang rape, lacing drinks with drugs with intent to sexually abuse (date rape), deliberately infecting partner with HIV and other diseases, child sex tourism, sexual harassment and prostitution of persons with mental disabilities.  
  
The bill also stipulates the storing of names of sexual offenders in a database for institutional and social discrimination, such that “culprits would never be employed in any institution where they may pose a risk to unsuspecting persons.”  
  
In addition, offenders would be subjected to compulsory medical examination, while as a deterrent mischief makers, who bring false allegations against any person, would also be liable to serious punishment.