Betrayed at Home: The horrors of fathers raping their daughters (1)

Date: 2025-09-02

Source: https://punchng.com/betrayed-at-home-the-horrors-of-fathers-raping-their-daughters-1/

A disturbing rise in incest and sexual abuse by fathers and stepfathers is leaving young girls across Nigeria scarred, both physically and emotionally. Poverty, moral decay, and a culture of silence have created a toxic environment where predators now live under the same roof as their victims, while justice is slow or elusive, writes ONOZURE DANIA  
  
She was only 10. The first violation came from her father. Then, after her parents separated, the man her mother married, her stepfather, allegedly preyed on her too.  
  
Her father, Adebowale Adegboye, allegedly raped her. Years later, her stepfather, Idowu Akinseye, reportedly violated her too. By the time she was rescued, she had already been through an abortion allegedly procured by a medical doctor, Israel Ojo.  
  
Her case is not isolated. Across Nigeria, police records and court proceedings reveal an unrelenting tide of incest and sexual abuse committed by fathers, stepfathers, and other trusted adults.  
  
On April 27, 2025, an Ondo State Magistrate Court sitting in Akure ordered the remand of the two men, Adegboye and Akinseye, in prison custody for allegedly raping the 10-year-old girl.  
  
The duo was alleged to have had carnal knowledge of the victim at different times in Akure, the Ondo State capital, before they were arrested by the men of the state police command.  
  
A medical doctor, Israel Ojo, who allegedly aborted a pregnancy for the minor, was also arrested and charged in court alongside the other two defendants.  
  
Both Adeboye and Akinseye were charged and arraigned before the court on a five-count charge bordering on incest, abortion and indecent assault while the medical doctor was charged with abortion.  
  
Even in rural communities, the stories are the same.  
  
On April 11, 2025, Bauchi police arrested 50-year-old Umar Sule, who repeatedly raped his 17-year-old daughter in their matrimonial home while her mother was away visiting relatives.  
  
She became three months pregnant. “The incident happened when her mother travelled,” police spokesman Ahmed Wakil said.  
  
“Her father took advantage of her. When the mother returned, she noticed the pregnancy, and the girl disclosed that it was her biological father.  
  
“During interrogation, the defendant willingly admitted his wrongdoing and added that he had been molesting her several times on different occasions, which led to her pregnancy for three months, according to an examination report obtained from a medical practitioner,” Wakil said.  
  
The stories are heartbreakingly similar. In Ogun State, in 2023 a five-year-old girl told her mother about pains in her private parts.  
  
She revealed that her father, the 28-year-old Adeyemi Babatunde, had laid her on a bed and assaulted her.  
  
“On interrogation, the suspect confessed to the crime but claimed not to know what came over him,” police spokesperson Abimbola Oyeyemi said, after the arrest of Babatunde.  
  
In June 2020, Lagos, police arrested 61-year-old Eke Kanu for allegedly impregnating his 19-year-old daughter.  
  
“The victim stated that her father started having sexual intercourse with her when she was young and threatened to deal with her if she told anybody”.  
  
The then Police Public Relations Officer Bala Elkana, said, “When he(Kanu) discovered she was pregnant, he took her to a chemist to terminate it.”  
  
A Lagos father, the 33-year-old Chibuike Kalu, was accused of defiling his 14-year-old daughter. He confessed to the crime, according to police.  
  
In yet another case, a salesman, Chinedu Obi, 26, was charged with raping his employer’s 12-year-old twin daughters since 2019.  
  
Some cases have reached the courts years after the alleged crimes took place.  
  
At the Ikeja Special Offences and Domestic Violence Court, prosecutors are trying Taiwo Oyelabi for allegedly raping his daughter, who was four months pregnant at the time of his arrest. His other daughter reportedly fled home to escape his advances.  
  
In 20204, the trial of Oyelabi, who is facing a single charge of rape, a violation of Section 358 of the Lagos State Criminal Law of 2015, began at the Ikeja Special Offences and Domestic Violence Court.  
  
One of the witnesses, during a court sitting, Inspector Iyabo Bakare, presenting the prosecution’s case, informed the court that the defendant was apprehended on April 16, 2018 following a report made to the Igando Police Station alleging an inappropriate relationship between Oyelabi and his daughter.  
  
She had told the court that he was subsequently detained for further investigation.  
  
According to Inspector Iyabo’s testimony, Oyelabi confessed to the alleged crime during questioning by both the Inspector and the Divisional Police Officer.  
  
The witness further stated that the defendant has two daughters. While the second daughter claimed she left home due to her father’s inappropriate advances, the victim allegedly said she had nowhere else to go.  
  
Inspector Iyabo additionally revealed that the victim was four months pregnant at the time of the report.  
  
The recurring details are disturbingly similar threats to keep the child silent, pregnancies concealed through abortion, and years of abuse before anyone speaks out.  
  
It is a story that plays out in homes across Nigeria, one that remains largely hidden behind closed doors, yet leaves lasting scars on young girls. Even as more survivors speak up and some offenders are jailed, experts warn that cases of fathers molesting their daughters appear to be increasing.  
  
Speaking about the rampant way children are being abused by their fathers, relatives and adults who are supposed to protect them, a legal practitioner and Executive Director of the Cece Yara Child Advocacy Centre, Mrs. Bisi Ajayi-Kayode, said Child sexual abuse is not always about lust often, it is about power and control.  
  
This was the stark reality shared by Ajayi-Kayode, as she recounted her experiences working with survivors.  
  
“Fathers or relations who sexually abuse their daughters do so because of power control,” Ajayi-Kayode said. “It’s not about attraction; it’s about dominance. They know these children depend on them and trust them, and they exploit that trust.”  
  
Ajayi-Kayode lamented that there are no global statistics capturing the true scale of paedophilia, but available data paints a grim picture. “Ninety percent of child sexual abuse cases are familar. Fathers have that control. A good number of these children don’t even know what is happening until they get to secondary school,” she said.  
  
She recalled one case that still haunts her, a 13-year-old teenager whose father began molesting her when she was much younger. “  
  
She was only a little girl when it began. At first, she believed it was a father’s way of showing affection. It wasn’t until she reached secondary school that she realised the truth that her father had been sexually abusing her for years.  
  
“This girl thought it was father-daughter love, it was only when she got older, learned more in school, and heard others speak about abuse that she realised what had been happening to her,” she said.  
  
Ajayi-Kayode, who has seen too many cases like this in her work, insisted that sexual abuse of children, particularly by fathers or relatives, is rarely about sexual attraction. “Fathers or relations who sexually abuse their daughters do so because of power control,” she said. “They know these children depend on them and trust them, and they exploit that trust.”  
  
She also expressed disbelief at cases involving very young infants. “I don’t know why the boyfriend of a mother of a four-month-old baby would see anything sexual in that child,” she said.  
  
While men make up the majority of offenders, Ajayi-Kayode noted that women also commit sexual abuse against children, though less frequently. “Women also sexually abuse children, but it is not as pronounced as that of men,” she said.  
  
Fathers who rape daughters are Sick  
  
The Chief Medical Director of Amazing Health Care Clinic, Dr. Yetunde Fasakin, warned that incest cases involving fathers raping their daughters are on the rise in Nigeria, blaming the trend on untreated mental illness, personality disorders, and a culture of silence that shields abusers.  
  
“Fathers raping their children will continue to be on the increase because many of them are sick,” she said in an interview. “Some have personality problems, some are perverts, some are paedophiles. And the culture of easy money in our society makes women and girls easy targets.”  
  
Dr. Fasakin said the problem is worsened by parental neglect, unsafe living conditions, and the reluctance of mothers to speak out.  
  
“Many mothers no longer care. They don’t take care of their children. I once saw a small girl urinating on the street that’s wrong. When mothers are careless, it becomes easy for people to molest them,” she said.  
  
“In some homes, father, mother, sons, and daughters live in one room. Before you know what is going on, a lot happens,” Fasakin added.  
  
Fear and Silence  
  
According to her, many women keep quiet when their husbands molest their daughters, often due to fear of threats.  
  
“Women usually don’t say anything about their husbands raping their daughters. They keep quiet when threatened. It’s only when the child starts feeling uncomfortable, perhaps after talking to friends, that the truth comes out,” she explained.  
  
Dr. Fasakin, a psychiatrist, who has handled several such cases said children often reveal abuse only when separated from their parents during consultations.  
  
“When a small child is abused whether by a boy, father, or someone else we separate the child from the parents so they can speak freely,” she said.  
  
“Often, it’s only when the child starts misbehaving or saying strange things that the abuse is discovered,” she said.  
  
While stressing the need for perpetrators to face the law, Dr. Fasakin insisted that mental health evaluations and therapy should be part of the process.  
  
“Such men need to be seen by professionals. Their personality needs to be known. Some of them are sick,” she said. “The child must go through proper therapy because of the emotional trauma. Family psychotherapy and individual psychotherapy are very important. We are not just throwing them into prison they must be seen.”  
  
She warned that survivors often suffer long-term effects, including low self-esteem, poor academic performance, and health complications.  
  
“If their hymen is broken in such circumstances, there’s also the risk of infection, which they may not understand. That’s why they must see a psychiatrist and receive proper medical care,” she said.  
  
Dr. Fasakin urged families to return to a culture of close supervision and protection of children, warning that failure to act will allow the problem to persist.  
  
“Until we go back to what it used to be, when children were closely watched and protected, this will continue,” she said.  
  
On his part, Dr. Tamuno-opubo Addah, a psychologist at Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, and Founder of the Mental Health Support Initiative, says the reasons are layered and disturbing.  
  
“One major factor is power and control,” Dr. Addah explained. “Some fathers abuse their position of authority in the home, knowing the child depends on them emotionally, financially, and physically.”  
  
According to him, family secrecy remains another critical driver. “Many families still choose to cover up abuse to ‘protect’ their reputation. That silence gives offenders the freedom to continue without consequences,” he said.  
  
He also pointed to weak law enforcement in some areas, noting that “cases are poorly investigated or take too long to prosecute. If offenders know they might never be punished, there is no deterrent.”  
  
A cycle  
  
Dr. Addah stressed that many abusers were themselves victims of sexual abuse as children. “The trauma and distorted experiences become a learned behaviour,” he said. “This doesn’t excuse their actions, but it explains how abuse can continue across generations.”  
  
Substance abuse and untreated mental health problems add to the risk. “Alcohol, drugs, or psychological disorders can lower self-control and increase aggressive or exploitative behaviour,” he explained.  
  
Citing Trauma Theory, Dr. Addah described the devastating impact such abuse has on a child. “Severe and repeated trauma, especially from someone trusted, can damage a child’s mental, emotional, and physical well-being,” he said.  
  
Emotionally, survivors often battle shame, guilt, low self-worth, and depression. “Many find it hard to trust others or form healthy relationships. This can cause long-term problems with intimacy and connection,” he noted.  
  
The mental scars can include anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, nightmares, and flashbacks. Behaviourally, some children withdraw completely, while others may act out aggressively, engage in risky behaviour, or harm themselves.  
  
“Without proper intervention, these effects can persist into adulthood, influencing their careers, relationships, and even how they parent,” Addah warned.  
  
The psychologist emphasised that the solution must be multi-pronged. “We need stronger laws and faster prosecutions. Punishment must be certain and swift,” he said.  
  
He also called for mandatory reporting by teachers, doctors, and neighbours when there is reasonable suspicion of abuse. Public education, he argued, is essential so that “both children and adults can recognise abuse early and know how to report it.”  
  
Addressing root causes is equally important. “We must offer parenting and mental health programmes to reduce risk factors like substance abuse and unresolved trauma in adults,” Addah said.  
  
He urged communities to establish safe houses for at-risk children.  
  
For children already harmed, Addah stressed the need for immediate safety. “The first step is removing them from the abusive environment,” he said.  
  
From there, professional therapy becomes critical. “Trauma-focused treatments like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing can help survivors process their experiences safely,” he explained.  
  
Support networks also matter. “A trusted relative, mentor, or friend can be vital for emotional healing. Peer groups help survivors realise they are not alone,” he said.  
  
He further urged long-term care. “Recovery from trauma can take years. Survivors should have access to continuous counselling and regular emotional check-ins.”  
  
Speaking on the disturbing rise of incest, Mrs. Titilola Akinlawon (SAN), identified poverty, idleness, and the unchecked spread of pornography on social media as major factors.  
  
The Senior Advocate of Nigeria, blamed the rising cases of fathers defiling their daughters on poverty, idleness, and the growing influence of social media pornography.  
  
Akinlawon described poverty as the root cause of many of the tragic cases that make headlines.  
  
“The first thing there, is poverty. It’s poverty that will make them to be in the same place at the same time,” she said. “It’s poverty that will make the father to be in the same room with the daughter.”  
  
Cramped room  
  
According to her, cramped housing conditions where entire families live in a single room create an environment that increases the risk of abuse.  
  
She also attributed the trend to a moral decline influenced by technology. “You cannot lose sight of the fact that the devil is on the prowl, looking for whom to devour. For me, I take it that we are in the end times and these are the things we have been warned would happen,” she explained.  
  
Pornography  
  
Akinlawon added that the easy access to pornography on mobile phones and social media has worsened the problem.  
  
“It’s not as if these things did not happen before, but with the advent of social media and mobile phones, you can easily get to know of all these things. That’s why it seems more common now than before,” she said.  
  
She noted that unemployment and idleness leave many men vulnerable to negative influences.  
  
“When the man is idle, it’s the devil’s workshop. When there’s no work for the man to do and he is frustrated, after watching pornography or taking so much drink, what’s next? To defile the daughter,” she lamented.  
  
Improve housing  
  
On solutions, Akinlawon called for deliberate government intervention to tackle poverty and improve housing.  
  
“For the government, we have to be sure that we try to cut poverty for starters. There should be a more conducive housing situation. You cannot have a family of six or more staying in one room, probably without windows,” she advised.  
  
She insisted that minimum housing standards must be enforced, alongside stronger economic and social policies, if society is to reduce the menace.  
  
For Lagos-based lawyer, Samuel Adeyemo, he said there was no justification for fathers or any man who prey on minors.  
  
Adeyemo said that defilement is such a grievous crime that if he had divine power, offenders would face instant judgment.  
  
“You see, if I were God I would kill that man. But thank God I am not God and I cannot be God. If I were God, you abuse a minor, you defile a minor, I would kill you,” he declared.  
  
Adeyemo strongly backed the Lagos State Government’s crackdown on sexual abuse, applauding policies designed to protect children.  
  
“I support the effort of the Lagos State Government to get rid of this menace in our society. Every step the Lagos State Government is taking to ensure that this does not happen in this state, I support it wholeheartedly.  
  
“Not only in Lagos State the whole country. But I live in Lagos State, so I see what the government is doing,” he said.  
  
He also stressed that such crimes often defy logic. “To me, I do not think you can be in the right frame of mind and defile your own daughter.  
  
“It does not make sense. Except you can prove that your brain was not functioning properly, there is no excuse. It is not excusable. It does not make any sense,” Adeyemo said.  
  
The lawyer expressed disbelief that anyone would choose such a path, insisting there are always other alternatives.  
  
“If you know you are so moved, there are other alternatives you could look into, not minors,” he stated.  
  
In his view, offenders should face the full weight of the law. “Any father who does something like that should be sent to where he belongs,” he added.  
  
Also the Mirabel Centre, Nigeria’s first sexual assault referral centre, revealed alarming statistics about the prevalence of incest and sexual violence within families.  
  
According to the Centre’s Manager, Joy Shokoya, more than 9,600 survivors of sexual assault have sought help at the centre since its inception, with over 1,000 of those cases linked to incest.  
  
“In our records, more than 10 percent of survivors were abused by their fathers,” Shokoya disclosed. “And let’s not forget that sons are also abused. From our experience, the only factor responsible for a father defiling his daughter is simply perversion. It is a deliberate act by perverts who look at a child and derive pleasure from abusing them sexually. They are not mentally deranged.”  
  
Shokoya lamented that cultural and societal attitudes often silence victims and their mothers when the perpetrators are close family members.  
  
“We find, most of the time, that when a woman speaks up about her child being abused by her biological father or stepfather, she is considered vindictive and is strongly fought, intimidated or threatened by the perpetrator’s family,” she said.  
  
The Centre Manager called for stronger collective action and a cultural shift towards supporting survivors rather than shielding abusers.  
  
“Our recommendations would be to collectively stand up against this menace,” she urged. “  
  
Sometimes our advocacy is loud until our son, brother or someone close to us is involved. That is when many choose to stay silent or even defend the perpetrator, ” she said.  
  
On the legal response to sexual and gender-based violence, Shokoya acknowledged progress in Lagos State but warned against selective justice.  
  
“Lagos State is doing well regarding the prosecution of cases such as this,” she noted.  
  
“However, the law must not be seen to be biased in cases where the perpetrators are influential and can buy over both the security and judicial officers,” she said.  
  
She stressed the need for continuous public education and advocacy.  
  
“Where there has been sensitisation and awareness creation, we must continue to speak up and speak loudly against all forms of sexual and gender-based violence,” Shokoya added.  
  
For Mr Ebenezer Omejalile, Co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of the Advocates for Children and Vulnerable Persons Network, these are not isolated horrors but symptoms of a wider, festering crisis.  
  
“The stories are haunting. A girl in Ogun State impregnated by her father and forced into an illegal abortion.  
  
Another in Agbowa bearing a child for her father while he fled justice. There is a case in Ikorodu where a partially blind man was accused of sexually molesting his daughter and a prosecutor called it a “family matter,” Omejalile said.  
  
“Child protection in Nigeria is a different ballgame right now,” Omejalile said. “In nearly two decades of this work, I have seen fathers turn their daughters into sex tools, often when mothers are away hustling to provide for the family.”  
  
An Iceberg of Abuse  
  
Omejalile calls the rising tide of incest “an iceberg phenomenon.”  
  
“The cases that reach the courts are just the tip. “There are far more cases happening silently in homes across Nigeria that are never reported, prosecuted, or even acknowledged,” he said.  
  
He estimates that most victims are between 11 and 15 years old. “We have handled cases where fathers impregnated their daughters and performed illegal abortions.  
  
In one Ogun State case, a well-known pastor repeatedly abused his first daughter until she became pregnant,” he recounted. “She feared he would start on her younger sister next.”  
  
Fighting Through the Iceberg  
  
Omejalile describes the crisis as an iceberg: the visible cases are only a fraction of what happens in silence.  
  
“We have seen fathers groom their sons with pornography, turn their daughters into wives, and threaten mothers who speak out,” he said. “And yet, when you try to fight, you meet resistance at every level.”  
  
His organisation has stood in court as star witnesses, braved threats, and pushed back against political and institutional shields.  
  
“If you don’t have the DNA to fight this fight, the perpetrators will escape,” he said quietly. “We have spent years chasing justice for some victims and we will not stop.”  
  
Why Is This Happening?  
  
The causes, Omejalile explained, lie in a mix of moral failure, weak family supervision, and systemic breakdowns.  
  
“Poverty is often blamed, but poverty is not a disease,” he said sharply. “Some perpetrators say ‘demons pushed them’ or blame joblessness, but at the core is perversion a deliberate act by men who lack moral attachment to society.”  
  
He added that unemployment and social disintegration play a role: “Many girls are left alone with their fathers for long hours because their mothers are working. Unemployment frustrates men, and daughters become targets of their libido and anger.”  
  
Systemic Complicity  
  
Even when cases surface, Omejalile says, the justice system often fails survivors.  
  
“In Ikorodu, a prosecutor told the court that a rape case was a family matter,” he said, his voice heavy with disbelief. “How do you call a crime against the state a family matter? That rubbishes the law and emboldens offenders.”  
  
In some cases, he said, magistrates waver under influence or powerful perpetrators flee. “We had a case where a man from the East impregnated his daughter and ran away before we could hold him. The girl refused to testify against her father because of family pressure.”  
  
Devastating Impact  
  
The scars are deep physical, emotional and generational. “Some of these girls bear children for their fathers. Others suffer in silence with lifelong trauma,” Omejalile said.  
  
Call to Action  
  
He insists that only decisive and collective action can turn the tide.  
  
“We must enforce existing laws the Child Rights Act, the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act, state child rights laws without bias, no matter how influential the perpetrator is,” he urged.  
  
“We must also rebuild family and community bonds, improve education, and provide economic stability so mothers are not forced to leave their daughters vulnerable. Leaving a girl child alone with a father in some homes is now a no-go area.”  
  
Hidden Hands of State, Non-State Actors  
  
Omejalile called it a dual failure, state actors on one side, non-state actors on the other.  
  
“The police, the judiciary, and the Ministry of Justice many times, they sabotage cases,” he said.  
  
“Some officers aid and abet these crimes, especially when the perpetrators are wealthy or influential. We have seen cases delayed for years because someone collected money or wanted to protect their own,” he added.  
  
According to him, one case still burns in his memory, Gordon Anuqa, a man accused of abusing his daughter for several years.  
  
“For almost three years, that case was buried,” Omejalile recounted. “Important evidence went missing: the girl’s statement, the mother’s report gone.  
  
He noted that there is a policewoman at the Lagos State Gender Unit, Ikeja, Rebecca Jacob, whom he alleged tampered with the file and boasted nothing would happen to her. The magistrate struck out the case because of ‘insufficient evidence.”  
  
It took media pressure, petitions to the Commissioner of Police, and relentless advocacy to have the case reopened.  
  
“We wrote to Panti, to the Ministry of Justice, to the Special Offences Court,” he said. “We had to expose names, face the threats, and stand firm. If we hadn’t, that man would still be walking free.”  
  
Role of Community Gatekeepers  
  
He stated that non-state actors NGOs and community leaders are not always innocent either.  
  
“Some community gatekeepers, CDA chairmen, so-called chiefs and ‘Obas’ will tell you to drop the case,” he said bitterly.  
  
“They come with politics APC this, PDP that. I told one of them: ‘If your party shields a rapist, we will tell the world your party harbours rapists.’ That’s when they started begging,” Omejalile said.  
  
He added that some NGOs weaken the fight by going “cap in hand” for favours, allowing cases to die quietly.  
  
Cost of delay  
  
Delays, he says, are deadly for justice. “You see a case go to a magistrate court, and they claim they are waiting for DPP advice. Meanwhile, the perpetrator has already secured bail from a higher court. “If we don’t chase those files, call the judges, write letters, the case vanishes,” he said.  
  
System needs cleansing  
  
Omejalile, the incest crisis is as much about moral decay as it is about institutional rot.  
  
“Some of these fathers are not mentally ill they are perverts,” he said. “They exploit poverty, broken homes, and a porous justice system. And they do so knowing that, in many cases, police or judicial officers will shield them.”  
  
He called for sweeping reforms: proper enforcement of Section 137 of the Lagos State Criminal Code, accountability for corrupt officers, and stronger oversight of both the police and the judiciary.  
  
“The judiciary must sanitize itself before claiming to be noble,” he said. “The law must be blind to influence, or we will keep chasing perpetrators for decades.”