Nasarawa varsity don raises the alarm over high rape case

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A Professor of Social History in the Department of History and International Studies at the Federal University of Lafia, Zara Kwaghe has expressed serious worry over the rising cases of rape, especially thosei involving minors in the state and across the country as a whole.  
  
Prof Kwaghe expressed deep concerns over the situation during an exclusive interview with Arewa PUNCH in Lafia on Thursday.  
  
According to her, it had become imperative for all stakeholders to urgently join forces in the fight against rape in the country in order to tackle the menace quickly.  
  
The Don who went emotional while speaking with our correspondent, lamented that most families of minors who had experienced rape have refused to tell their stories because of the fear of stigmatisation on their families.  
  
However, she urged the victims and their families to always call out for help from the authorities and members of the public in order to ensure that the culprits do not escape the long arms of the law.  
  
“Minors being raped is something that has been with us for a very long time. It is not a new thing in our country, but it is becoming something that we hear every day, something that is happening, occurring all the time, which is not supposed to be so.  
  
“This is where every one of us should put our hands on deck to make sure that such things are not encouraged.  
  
“It is sad that many minors who are victims of rape and have been violated realise that this evil deed was committed on them by the people that know them.  
  
These actions many times are carried out by people that are close to them,  
  
members of their families or people that are part and parcel of them.  
  
“These are people that nobody will suspect. Children are entrusted in their care. But that trusted person is the one that ends up violating the minor.  
  
“It is important that I say this because everything boils down to the parents. The government may give policy, but the parents and family members are the ones who will ensure that they take care of their children.  
  
“I read the case of someone who abducted a child, and that person was a neighbour to the family of the child.  
  
“So what am I saying? Every parent must make sure that they take care of their own children and not just hand them over to people they don’t know or fairly know.  
  
“Many people are carrying children for rituals and spiritual things. So it is important that it is not only the government that should watch out. We should watch out, too. When we see something, we should speak out. We should not keep quiet. As members of the society, when we see things that are not right, we should not keep quiet,” she added.  
  
Speaking on other issues bordering on gender disparity affecting women in the country, Professor Kwaghe called on the government to look towards ensuring gender balance in governance.  
  
She lamented that women across the country were being relegated to the background even though most of them are qualified to be among the decision makers.  
  
Meanwhile, the Professor of History and International Relations, called on women who are yet to develop themselves in the aspect of education or acquiring a skill, to urgently do so in order to maintain relevance in their homes and the society.  
  
She added, “Women should be given positions for them to be able to be part of decision making in every area they find themselves. Like you may know, former President Olusegun Obasanjo came up with the 30 per cent affirmative for women. He signed it, but even that 30 per cent was not well distributed.’’  
  
“And you see in countries where women have been recognised and given that opportunity to be strong part of governance, like Rwanda, you will see a lot of things happening. Women are everywhere contributing to the growth of the country.  
  
“So, women should be given opportunities like any other person.  
  
“If there are openings and you have women applying for it, they should be given just like any other person. One of the things I said and I keep saying is that women should make sure they also improve themselves in everything they are doing.  
  
“Wherever they (women) find themselves and whatever they are doing, they should make sure they improve themselves so that when the opportunity comes, nobody will say because you don’t have this, that is why we can’t give you the opportunity.”  
  
Speaking further with Arewa PUNCH, the Professor explained that patriarchy which is perpetuated through several socio-cultural practices such as child marriage, female restrictions, widowhood rites, gender stereotypes, subjugation, among others had restricted women from their ambitions to excel.  
  
Kwaghe, insisted that for women to break away from such challenges that limits their ability, they must be encouraged to tell their stories, adding that doing so would ensure a change in the society.  
  
“Women are in a better position to tell their experiences. No one can tell it better than the one who experiences it. Balarabe Ramat Yakubu is a good example of a woman who has written her life stories, which is a statement against child marriage as well as a plea for girls’ education.  
  
“As women continue to write their experiences and that of other women, in no distant time, a knowledge bank would be created and ready for harvest. There are some extraordinary female role models that history is largely silent on. These women die without their stories being recorded.  
  
“It is not enough to just write, women should tell their children, especially the male child at home, stories of both outstanding and the ordinary everyday women whose invaluable contributions keep the society moving. That way, they will learn to appreciate the roles and contributions of women in the society,” she pointed out.  
  
The Professor called on the government at all levels to support the passing of bills that promotes women’s rights in order to bridge the gaps that had existed over time.  
  
On his part, the Police Public Relations Officer of the Nasarawa State Police Command, DSP Ramhan Nansel, described rape as a criminal offence, which is punishable with life imprisonment or 24 years imprisonment.  
  
He narrated that between the months of January and May 2024, the Command had arrested a total of 20 suspected rapists in the state, adding that some of them had been charged to court, while others were still being investigated.  
  
Nansel blamed the causes of rape on the failure of parents to carry out their responsibilities by always monitoring the movements and activities of their children, especially during their juvenile stages.  
  
He appealed to the traditional and religious leaders to assist in sensitising the young citizens across communities, churches, and mosques on the need to avoid all forms of crime, including rape that could land them in prison.  
  
He added, “I am of the opinion that one of the major causes of rape is moral decadence. Some parents have abdicated their parental responsibilities and have allowed the society or environment to train their children for them, and the way we can go out of this, is for parents to face their parental roles and play it beautifully.  
  
“I am also very concerned that most victims of rape do not usually speak up. Rape is something that happens in the closet, and it is something that is difficult for the police to prevent.  
  
“However, members of the public can assist the police by speaking up so that the police can investigate the case and prosecute accordingly. In doing so, when we begin to name and shame them (rapists) and incarcerate them, it will serve as deterent to any other person that may be nursing such ambition,” the police spokesperson concluded.