Rape cases rampant among rural women – LASU study

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A study conducted by the Rape Research Team of the Lagos State University has revealed that women in rural communities in Nigeria are more exposed to rape compared to their counterparts in urban areas.  
  
This was one of the research findings disclosed at the recent national dissemination seminar held at the LASU main campus, Ojo.  
  
The research funded to the tune of N34m by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund was titled “Emerging Patterns and Determinants of Rape: Comparative Study of Rural-Urban Communities in Nigeria.”  
  
The study covered the six geopolitical zones in the country. The research members included the Deputy Vice Chancellor of LASU (Academics), Prof Olufunsho Omobitan; Prof Onipede Wusu, Olabusoye Olupooye, Sakiru Raji, Ibrahim Aliu, Adijat Olateju, Waheed Alausa and Afolasade Sulaiman.  
  
The study also produced empirical pieces of evidence that childhood sexual abuse experience was 35 per cent in the national sample while the rural-urban pattern shows that childhood sexual abuse experience was higher in urban communities (36 per cent) than in rural communities (34 per cent).  
  
“Moreover, (the study) shows that about 10 per cent of currently married women reported rape experience. Rural women reported relatively higher incidence of rape experience (11.5 per cent) than their urban counterparts (8.4 per cent).  
  
“What is more, among currently married women, over 20 per cent of currently married women experienced husband-perpetrated rape.  
  
“The pattern indicates that husband-perpetrated rape experience was higher in rural (23 per cent) than in urban (18 per cent) communities.  
  
“Furthermore, among the never-married females, the exposure to rape was 11 per cent, and across rural and urban communities, the exposure was higher in the rural (12 per cent) than in the urban (11 per cent) communities.  
  
“However, across age groups, exposure to rape differed among the never-married females. The most vulnerable age groups were the adults (15 per cent) compared to the young adults (13 per cent) and the minors (10 per cent),” the policy brief of the research stated.  
  
Commenting on the study and its outcome, the Vice Chancellor of LASU, Profe Ibiyemi Olatunji-Bello, said, “The achievement of the rape research team aligns with my administration’s commitment to make LASU the best university in the West African sub-region.  
  
“The achievement of this research team will bring us closer to realising the goal of making LASU a research and innovation hub. I congratulate the team most warmly for this feat.  
  
“Rape, you will agree with me, is a global social and public health problem. In virtually all cultures, violent sexual engagement and violation of all categories of females is a disturbing reality, hence this study’s outcomes and recommendations must be taken seriously by all stakeholders in Nigeria, including government agencies, lawmakers, advocacy groups, community leaders, school administrators, teachers, parents, guardians, religious leaders, individuals and the public.  
  
“It is incumbent on us to safeguard our female children as well as adult and aged children who are the major victims of rape in rural and urban communities.  
  
“This study, to the best of my knowledge, is an unprecedented, most comprehensive and empirical study on rape in Nigeria.  
  
“Since this study covers all the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria, certainly, it has produced pieces of information that can be used to tackle rape in our society.”  
  
Omobitan, who is the principal investigator of the study, said, “We went to all the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria to look at the patterns and the determinants.  
  
“It is not uncommon to hear today that elderly people are being raped; women over 60 and 65. In those days, it wasn’t like that.  
  
“That is part of the emerging patterns, Even minors, a child of five and six years, these are other areas that we looked at. The purpose of today’s event is to present our research findings to members of the public.”  
  
The coordinator of the research team, Prof Wusu, providing context for the study, said the project formally kicked off in April 2021, with funding from TETFund and was concluded earlier this year.  
  
He revealed that the team used a mixed-method approach to generate and analyse quantitative and qualitative data on emerging patterns and determinants of rape among females in rural and in urban communities, in 12 Nigerian states, with findings suggesting that rape incidence is generally higher in rural than in urban communities in Nigeria.  
  
Some of the recommendations of the study include designing and implementing child protection law, which aims to prevent childhood sexual abuse.  
  
“Relevant government agencies and non-governmental agencies should intensify campaigns against sexual violence in all ethnic groups (especially Igbo, Yoruba and minority groups) in rural and urban communities.  
  
“A sustained campaign against harmful lifestyles is also imperative. Parents, guardians and young females must not underestimate the risk of rape attacks from family members and neighbours,” the researchers stated.