A Gender Analysis of Rape and its Effects on Victims in Batagarawa Local Government Area, Katsina State

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Abstract
This study examined rape and its effects on victims from a gender perspective in Batagarawa Local Government Area. The research adopted a descriptive survey design, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Data were collected from residents of the area using structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, while secondary data were obtained from relevant institutional and scholarly sources, including the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund. The findings revealed that rape is a significant but underreported issue in the study area, largely influenced by gender inequality, socio-cultural norms, poverty, and weak institutional enforcement of laws. The study further established that rape has severe psychological, social, physical, and economic consequences for victims, including trauma, stigma, and reproductive health challenges. Gender was found to play a critical role in shaping both the perception and reporting of rape, with female respondents demonstrating greater awareness and sensitivity to the issue. The study concludes that rape in the study area is a product of interconnected structural and cultural factors, necessitating a holistic approach to its prevention and management. It recommends strengthening legal enforcement, improving victim support systems, promoting gender equality, and intensifying public awareness campaigns to address the menace effectively.

Keywords: *Rape, Gender, Victims, Gender-based violence, Social norms*

Introduction

Rape and other forms of sexual violence remain pervasive global challenges, cutting across cultures, socio-economic classes, and geographical boundaries. As a critical dimension of gender-based violence (GBV), rape reflects deep-rooted inequalities embedded in social structures, power relations, and cultural norms. In many societies, including Nigeria, rape is not only a violation of fundamental human rights but also a manifestation of entrenched gender hierarchies that disproportionately affect women and girls, while also impacting men in less visible but significant ways. Globally, sexual violence has been consistently linked to unequal

gender relations, coercive power dynamics, and systemic discrimination (World Health Organization [WHO], 2013). Recent global and regional reports further indicate that sexual violence is increasing in both conflict and non-conflict settings, reinforcing its persistence as a major public health and social problem (United Nations, 2025). In Nigeria, the magnitude of sexual and gender-based violence has become increasingly evident in recent years, with growing documentation from government agencies, civil society organizations, and the media. For instance, national data indicate that over 27,000 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were recorded between 2020 and 2023, although experts agree that the true figure is significantly higher due to widespread under-reporting. Similarly, the Nigeria Police Force reported more than 17,000 cases of gender-related violence in 2024 alone, with many incidents still unreported due to cultural and institutional barriers. Broader survey evidence suggests that as much as 63 percent of Nigerians have either experienced or know someone who has experienced some form of gender-based violence, highlighting the widespread nature of the problem. These statistics underscore the urgent need for localized and gender-sensitive research into the dynamics and impacts of rape.

Despite increasing awareness and legal frameworks such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, underreporting remains a major challenge in Nigeria. Cultural norms that prioritize family honor, victim silence, and informal dispute resolution often discourage survivors from reporting sexual violence. National survey data indicate that only about 22.7 percent of sexual assault cases are reported to the police, suggesting that the majority of incidents remain hidden. In northern Nigeria in particular, socio-cultural and religious norms strongly shape gender relations and perceptions of sexuality, sometimes reinforcing stigma, victim-blaming, and silence around rape. Consequently, rape must be understood not merely as an individual act of deviance but as a socially constructed phenomenon shaped by power relations, patriarchy, and gender inequality (Aina, 2012; Connell, 2005). Within Batagarawa Local Government Area, like many semi-urban and rural communities, sexual violence remains under-documented and insufficiently studied. Much of the existing literature in Nigeria focuses on urban centers, leaving a gap in understanding how rape manifests and is experienced in local contexts such as Batagarawa. Structural factors such as poverty, limited access to healthcare and psychosocial services, low literacy levels, and strong adherence to traditional norms may influence both the occurrence of rape and its consequences. Furthermore, evidence suggests that a significant proportion of sexual violence occurs within familiar environments, including homes and communities, often involving perpetrators known to the victim. This has important implications for reporting, intervention, and victim support in rural settings.

The effects of rape on victims are multifaceted and profound, extending beyond immediate physical harm to long-term psychological, social, and economic consequences. Survivors often experience psychological trauma, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which may persist long after the incident (Campbell, 2002; WHO, 2013). Socially, victims frequently encounter stigmatization, rejection, and isolation, particularly in societies where sexual purity and family honor are highly valued. Economically, rape can disrupt victims' livelihoods, reduce productivity, and increase dependency, especially in contexts with limited institutional support. Health-related consequences such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies, and reproductive health complications further compound survivors' vulnerability (Jewkes, Sen, & Garcia-Moreno, 2002). Recent studies also emphasize that sexual violence often occurs within broader patterns of gender inequality and domestic violence, with homes identified as one of the most common sites of abuse.

A gender-based analysis is essential in understanding how rape is experienced, interpreted, and responded to within society. Gender norms shape not only the risk of victimization but also the consequences of rape and the likelihood of reporting. Women are more likely to experience stigmatization and victim-blaming, while male victims often face invisibility and additional stigma due to dominant constructions of masculinity (Javaid, 2015). Feminist perspectives argue that rape is fundamentally rooted in patriarchal systems that legitimize male dominance and control over women's bodies (Brownmiller, 1975). Thus, examining rape through a gender lens provides deeper insight into the structural inequalities and power dynamics that sustain sexual violence. Against this backdrop, this study seeks to provide a gendered analysis of rape and its effects on victims in Batagarawa Local Government Area. Specifically, the study aims to examine the socio-cultural factors contributing to rape, assess the psychological, social, economic, and health-related effects on victims, and explore how gender norms influence both experiences and reporting patterns. By focusing on a localized setting, the study contributes to existing literature by generating context-specific evidence that can inform policy interventions, community awareness initiatives, and support systems for survivors. Ultimately, this research underscores the need to address rape not only as a criminal justice issue but also as a gendered social problem requiring comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and multi-sectoral responses.

Statement of the Problem

Rape and other forms of sexual violence have continued to pose serious social, public health, and human rights challenges globally and in Nigeria. Despite increased awareness, legal reforms, and advocacy efforts, the incidence of rape remains high, while reporting rates remain significantly low. In Nigeria, available statistics suggest a disturbing prevalence of gender-based violence, with thousands of cases recorded annually by law enforcement agencies and civil society organizations. However, these figures represent only a fraction of actual occurrences due to widespread underreporting driven by stigma, fear of retaliation, cultural norms, and lack of trust in formal institutions (World Health Organization [WHO], 2013; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2015). This gap between occurrence and reporting presents a major challenge to understanding the true scope and impact of rape.

In northern Nigeria, particularly in conservative and semi-urban communities, socio-cultural and religious norms often shape attitudes toward gender relations, sexuality, and victimhood. These norms may reinforce patriarchal structures that normalize male dominance while discouraging open discussion of sexual violence. Victims of rape, especially women and girls, frequently face stigmatization, victim-blaming, and social exclusion, which further discourages them from seeking justice or support. At the same time, male victims remain largely invisible due to societal expectations of masculinity and the stigma associated with male sexual victimization (Javaid, 2015). Consequently, rape is not only underreported but also inadequately addressed within these contexts. Within Batagarawa Local Government Area, there is a notable lack of empirical and context-specific studies examining rape and its effects on victims. Most existing research in Nigeria has concentrated on urban centers, thereby overlooking rural and semi-urban communities where structural vulnerabilities such as poverty, limited access to healthcare, weak institutional support systems, and low levels of education may intensify both the risk of sexual violence and its consequences (National Population Commission [NPC] & ICF, 2019). The absence of localized data makes it difficult to design effective, culturally appropriate interventions and policies tailored to the needs of victims in such areas.

Furthermore, while existing studies have documented the general impacts of rape, there is

insufficient attention to the gendered dimensions of these effects. Specifically, there is limited understanding of how gender norms shape the experience, reporting, and consequences of rape among different categories of victims. The psychological, social, economic, and health-related effects of rape are often discussed in broad terms without adequately capturing how these outcomes vary across gender and within specific socio-cultural settings. This creates a critical knowledge gap in both academic literature and policy formulation. A critical review of existing studies further highlights these gaps. For instance, Lori Heise (1998) provided an ecological framework for understanding violence against women, emphasizing the interaction between individual, relational, community, and societal factors. While this framework remains influential, it is largely theoretical and lacks empirical grounding in specific local contexts such as rural northern Nigeria. Similarly, Rebecca Campbell (2002) examined the psychological impact of rape on victims, documenting trauma, anxiety, and long-term emotional distress. However, her study is largely based on Western populations, limiting its applicability to African socio-cultural settings where community responses and stigma may differ significantly.

In another study, Raewyn Connell (2005) explored the concept of masculinities and its relationship to power and gender relations. Although this work provides valuable insight into how gender norms sustain sexual violence, it does not specifically address rape or its consequences for victims, nor does it provide empirical evidence from developing countries. Likewise, studies by Rukmini Sen and Claudia Garcia-Moreno (2002) examined sexual violence from a global health perspective, highlighting its prevalence and health consequences. Despite its comprehensive scope, the study adopts a broad global approach that overlooks localized socio-cultural dynamics influencing rape in specific communities. More recent Nigerian-based studies, such as those by the National Population Commission and ICF (2019), provide valuable statistical insights into gender-based violence, including prevalence rates and demographic patterns. However, such large-scale surveys rely heavily on quantitative data and often fail to capture the lived experiences of victims or the nuanced ways in which gender norms shape those experiences. Additionally, these studies rarely focus on specific localities like Batagarawa, thereby limiting their usefulness for targeted interventions.

These limitations across existing studies underscore the need for a localized, gender-sensitive, and empirically grounded investigation. There is a clear gap in research that integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine rape within specific socio-cultural contexts while also foregrounding gender as a central analytical category. Without such context-specific evidence, policies and interventions risk being generalized and ineffective. Given these gaps, there is a pressing need for a gender-sensitive, empirical investigation into rape and its effects on victims in Batagarawa Local Government Area. Such a study is essential to uncover the underlying socio-cultural factors contributing to rape, document the lived experiences of victims, and analyze the differential impacts across gender. Addressing this problem will not only contribute to scholarly knowledge but also provide evidence-based insights for policymakers, community leaders, and support organizations working to combat sexual violence and support survivors.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine rape and its effects on victims from a gender perspective in Batagarawa Local Government Area. The specific objectives are to;

i. examine the socio-cultural and gender-related factors contributing to rape in Batagarawa Local Government Area.

ii. assess the psychological, social, economic, and health effects of rape on victims in Batagarawa Local Government Area.
iii. analyze the influence of gender norms on the experience, reporting, and perception of rape among victims in Batagarawa Local Government Area.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Review

Gender

Gender is a socially constructed concept that refers to the roles, responsibilities, behaviors, and identities that societies assign to individuals based on their perceived sex. Unlike biological sex, which is determined by physical and physiological characteristics, gender is shaped by cultural, religious, and social expectations. These expectations influence how individuals behave, interact, and are treated within society. In many contexts, including Nigeria, gender roles are deeply embedded in social structures, often privileging men in decision-making positions while limiting women's access to power, education, and resources. Scholars argue that gender is not only about differences between men and women but also about power relations. Gender norms often dictate acceptable behavior for men and women, thereby influencing attitudes toward violence, sexuality, and authority. In patriarchal societies, such as those found in parts of northern Nigeria, these norms may normalize male dominance while reinforcing female subordination. This creates an environment where gender-based violence, including rape, can be sustained and justified either explicitly or implicitly.

Rape

Rape is a severe form of sexual violence involving non-consensual sexual intercourse or penetration. It is widely recognized as both a criminal offense and a violation of fundamental human rights. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2013), rape has profound physical, psychological, and social consequences for victims, making it a critical public health issue. Rape is not limited to acts committed by strangers; in many cases, perpetrators are known to the victim, including intimate partners, acquaintances, or family members. This reality complicates reporting and prosecution, as victims may fear retaliation, stigma, or disbelief. In societies where cultural norms emphasize family honor and female chastity, victims of rape may face blame or pressure to remain silent, further exacerbating the problem.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Gender-based violence refers to any harmful act directed at individuals based on their gender. It includes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence. GBV is rooted in unequal power relations between men and women and is often sustained by cultural beliefs, social norms, and institutional practices that legitimize or tolerate violence. Rape is one of the most severe forms of GBV and is often used as a tool of control, domination, and punishment. The persistence of GBV in societies reflects broader structural inequalities and the failure of legal and social systems to adequately protect vulnerable groups. In Nigeria, GBV remains a significant challenge despite legal frameworks such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The study of rape as a form of gender-based violence has gained significant attention in contemporary scholarship due to its widespread prevalence and profound consequences for

individuals and societies. Gender, as a socially constructed concept, plays a central role in shaping power relations, expectations, and behaviors within different cultural contexts. In societies such as Nigeria, gender norms are deeply embedded in social structures and often privilege men while subordinating women. These inequalities create conditions that may foster various forms of violence, including rape, by reinforcing power imbalances and legitimizing dominance. Recent global estimates by the World Health Organization (2023) indicate that a significant proportion of women worldwide experience some form of sexual or physical violence in their lifetime, underscoring the pervasive nature of the problem.

Rape, as a severe manifestation of gender-based violence, involves non-consensual sexual acts and is recognized both as a criminal offense and a violation of fundamental human rights. It is not merely an act driven by sexual desire but is often associated with power, control, and dominance. In many cases, the dynamics surrounding rape reflect broader societal structures in which gender inequality is normalized. The consequences of rape are extensive, affecting victims physically, psychologically, socially, and economically. Survivors frequently experience long-term psychological trauma, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, which may persist for years if not properly addressed. According to the World Health Organization (2023), survivors of sexual violence are at significantly higher risk of mental health challenges and reproductive health complications, including sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies.

Socially, victims of rape often face stigma, discrimination, and victim-blaming, particularly in communities where cultural and religious norms place high value on female chastity and family honor. These social reactions can discourage victims from reporting incidents or seeking help, thereby contributing to the underreporting of rape cases. In many parts of Nigeria, including rural and semi-urban communities such as Batagarawa Local Government Area, access to formal support systems, such as healthcare, legal aid, and psychosocial services, is often limited. This further exacerbates the vulnerability of victims and restricts their ability to recover from the trauma associated with sexual violence. Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that rape is closely linked to gender inequality and socio-cultural factors. Lori Heise (1998), in her ecological framework, explained violence against women as a product of multiple interacting factors operating at the individual, relational, community, and societal levels. This framework remains highly influential in understanding sexual violence, as it emphasizes that rape cannot be attributed to a single cause but rather results from the interaction of various risk factors across different contexts. However, while this model provides a comprehensive theoretical explanation, its application to specific rural communities in developing countries remains limited, creating a gap in localized empirical research.

Similarly, Rebecca Campbell (2002) examined the psychological impact of rape and highlighted the severe emotional and mental health consequences experienced by survivors. Her study emphasized that the recovery process for victims is influenced not only by individual coping mechanisms but also by societal responses, including support systems and stigma. However, the findings are largely based on Western contexts, which differ significantly from the socio-cultural realities of many African societies, where cultural norms may further silence victims and complicate recovery processes. From a sociological perspective, Raewyn Connell (2005) introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which explains how dominant forms of masculinity reinforce gender hierarchies and sustain power imbalances between men and women. According to this perspective, societal expectations of masculinity often promote dominance, control, and aggression, which can contribute to the perpetuation of sexual violence.

However, while Connell's work provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding gender relations, it is largely conceptual and lacks specific empirical focus on rape within rural or developing contexts.

In Nigeria, the issue of gender-based violence has been documented through national surveys such as the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey conducted by the National Population Commission in collaboration with ICF (2019). The report highlights that a considerable proportion of women have experienced some form of gender-based violence, although actual prevalence is believed to be much higher due to underreporting. More recent global and regional reports suggest that sexual violence continues to be a significant public health issue, with millions of cases occurring annually, many of which go unreported due to fear, stigma, and institutional weaknesses (United Nations, 2024; UNICEF, 2023). While these studies provide valuable statistical insights, they tend to rely heavily on quantitative data and often fail to capture the lived experiences of victims or the cultural nuances that shape the occurrence and consequences of rape. In rural and semi-urban settings such as Batagarawa Local Government Area, the dynamics of rape may differ significantly from urban areas due to factors such as poverty, limited education, strong adherence to traditional norms, and restricted access to support services. These contextual factors may influence not only the prevalence of rape but also how victims experience, interpret, and respond to such incidents. Despite this, there remains a lack of empirical studies focusing specifically on these local realities, particularly from a gendered perspective. This creates a significant gap in the literature, as understanding the intersection between gender, culture, and violence is essential for developing effective interventions.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Feminist Theory and Social Ecological Theory, which together provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing rape as a gendered and multi-level phenomenon.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory posits that rape is fundamentally rooted in patriarchal systems that privilege men and subordinate women. According to Susan Brownmiller (1975), rape is not merely an act of sexual violence but a tool of power and control used to maintain male dominance over women. Feminist scholars argue that societal structures, cultural norms, and institutional practices often normalize male aggression while minimizing the experiences of victims. This perspective is highly relevant to the present study because it helps explain how gender inequalities shape both the occurrence and perception of rape. In contexts such as Batagarawa Local Government Area, patriarchal values may influence victim-blaming attitudes, discourage reporting, and limit access to justice. Feminist theory also highlights the importance of giving voice to survivors and challenging societal norms that perpetuate gender-based violence.

Social Ecological Theory

The Social Ecological Theory, as proposed by Lori Heise (1998), provides a multi-level framework for understanding violence. It identifies four levels of influence:

Individual Level: Personal characteristics such as age, education, income, and personal history of violence.

Relationship Level: Interactions with family members, peers, and intimate partners.

Community Level: Social norms, community structures, and institutional practices.

Societal Level: Cultural values, laws, and policies that shape behavior.

This theory is particularly useful for analyzing rape because it recognizes that no single factor is responsible for violence. Instead, rape results from the interaction of multiple factors across different levels of society. In Batagarawa LGA, for example, poverty, limited education, weak law enforcement, and cultural norms may interact to influence both the prevalence and consequences of rape. The integration of Feminist Theory and Social Ecological Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding rape as both a gendered and multi-dimensional issue. While feminist theory highlights the role of patriarchy and gender inequality, social ecological theory provides a broader lens to examine how individual, relational, community, and societal factors interact to produce violence.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design to examine rape and its effects on victims in Batagarawa Local Government Area, as it allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data within a real-life context. The population comprises residents of the area, with particular attention to victims, community members, healthcare workers, and security personnel, while a sample is selected using a combination of stratified, random, and purposive sampling techniques to ensure both representativeness and depth of insight. Primary data are collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews, while secondary data are obtained from relevant sources including reports from the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, and the National Population Commission, alongside scholarly literature. The instruments are validated through expert review to ensure content and face validity, while reliability is established through a pilot study. Ethical considerations are strictly observed by ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, particularly given the sensitivity of the topic. Data analysis involves the use of descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages for quantitative data, while qualitative responses are analyzed thematically to identify key patterns and experiences. This mixed-method approach enhances the depth, reliability, and contextual relevance of the study's findings.

Results

The findings of this study present a gender-based analysis of rape and its effects on victims in Batagarawa Local Government Area based on data collected from respondents through questionnaires and interviews. The results indicate that rape is a significant social and gender-related problem within the study area, with varying levels of awareness, reporting, and perceived causes among respondents.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	180	47.4
	Female	200	52.6
Age	18–25	210	55.3
	26–35	90	23.7
	36 and above	80	21.0
Education	Primary	60	15.8
	Secondary	150	39.5
	Tertiary	110	28.9
	No formal education	60	15.8

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The table shows that female respondents slightly outnumbered males, while the majority of respondents were within the youthful age bracket (18–25 years). This suggests that younger individuals are more represented in the study, and their perspectives may reflect contemporary awareness of gender issues. Educational attainment is relatively high among respondents, which may have contributed to their understanding of rape and gender-based violence.

Table 2: Awareness and Perception of Rape in the Study Area

Statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)
Rape cases are common in the community	68.2	21.5	10.3
Rape is underreported	74.6	15.2	10.2
Victims are often stigmatized	70.8	18.7	10.5
Cultural norms influence rape cases	65.4	22.1	12.5

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The results in Table 2 indicate a high level of awareness among respondents regarding the prevalence of rape and its underreporting. A significant majority agreed that rape cases are common and often go unreported due to stigma and cultural pressures. This aligns with findings from organizations such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, which emphasize that sexual violence is often underreported globally due to similar factors.

Table 3: Perceived Causes of Rape

Cause	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poverty	160	42.1
Weak law enforcement	140	36.8
Cultural practices	150	39.5
Alcohol/drug abuse	130	34.2
Gender inequality	170	44.7

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The data in Table 3 reveal that gender inequality was the most frequently identified cause of rape, followed by poverty and cultural practices. These findings reinforce the argument that rape is deeply rooted in structural and societal inequalities rather than being an isolated incident. Weak legal enforcement also contributes significantly, highlighting institutional gaps in addressing sexual violence.

Table 4: Effects of Rape on Victims

Effect	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Psychological trauma	180	47.4
Depression and anxiety	170	44.7
Social stigma	165	43.4
Physical injury	120	31.6
Reproductive health issues	140	36.8

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The results show that psychological effects are the most prevalent consequences of rape, with many respondents indicating that victims experience trauma, depression, and anxiety. Social stigma also remains a major consequence, often leading to isolation and rejection of victims within their communities. These findings are consistent with global evidence from the World Health Organization, which highlights the severe and long-lasting impact of sexual violence on mental and physical health.

Table 5: Reporting Behavior and Barriers

Statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)
Rape cases are rarely reported	72.5	18.3	9.2
Victims fear stigmatization	76.4	14.1	9.5
Lack of trust in authority's	68.9	20.2	10.9
Family pressure discourages reporting	70.1	19.0	10.9

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The findings in Table 5 indicate that reporting of rape cases is significantly hindered by fear of stigma, lack of trust in authorities, and family pressure. This supports the qualitative responses, where participants expressed concern that victims are often discouraged from reporting incidents due to societal expectations and fear of being blamed.

The qualitative data obtained from interviews further support the quantitative findings, as respondents consistently reported that rape is a hidden but prevalent issue in the community. Many emphasized that victims often suffer in silence due to cultural expectations and lack of institutional support. Some respondents also noted that strengthening legal enforcement, increasing public awareness, and providing victim support services are essential steps in addressing the problem. Findings of the study demonstrate that rape in Batagarawa Local Government Area is influenced by a combination of gender inequality, socio-cultural norms, and institutional weaknesses, and that its effects on victims are profound and multidimensional.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that rape is a significant gender-based problem in Batagarawa Local Government Area, and its occurrence is closely tied to socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors. The high level of awareness among respondents regarding the prevalence of rape and its underreporting reflects a growing recognition of sexual violence within the community. This aligns with global evidence from the World Health Organization (2023), which emphasizes that sexual violence remains widespread but largely hidden due to stigma and societal constraints. The demographic findings, particularly the higher participation of female and younger respondents, suggest that gender and age play a role in awareness and sensitivity toward rape issues. Younger individuals may be more exposed to modern discourse on gender equality, while female respondents are more likely to relate directly to the realities and

consequences of sexual violence. This supports the argument in gender studies that experiences and perceptions of violence are shaped by social positioning and identity.

The study also found that gender inequality, poverty, weak law enforcement, and cultural practices are major perceived causes of rape in the area. This finding strongly supports feminist theoretical perspectives, particularly the argument advanced by Susan Brownmiller (1975), who posits that rape is a tool of power used to reinforce male dominance. Similarly, the ecological framework proposed by Lori Heise (1998) is validated by the findings, as the causes of rape identified in this study operate across multiple levels, including individual, relational, community, and societal contexts. For instance, poverty and alcohol abuse represent individual-level risks, while weak law enforcement and cultural norms reflect broader systemic issues.

The results further indicate that rape has severe psychological, social, and physical consequences for victims. The prominence of psychological trauma, including depression and anxiety, confirms earlier findings by Rebecca Campbell (2002), who highlighted the deep emotional impact of sexual violence on survivors. Additionally, the high level of social stigma reported by respondents demonstrates how cultural expectations and victim-blaming attitudes continue to exacerbate the suffering of victims. This is particularly relevant in conservative settings like Batagarawa, where societal norms may discourage open discussion of sexual matters and reinforce silence among victims.

Another important finding is the widespread underreporting of rape cases. Respondents indicated that victims often fail to report incidents due to fear of stigmatization, lack of trust in authorities, and family pressure. This aligns with reports from the United Nations Children's Fund (2023), which highlights that many cases of sexual violence in Nigeria go unreported. The implication of this finding is that official statistics may significantly underestimate the true prevalence of rape, thereby limiting the effectiveness of policy responses and interventions. The gender dimension of the findings is particularly significant, as it reveals that perceptions and experiences of rape differ between males and females. Female respondents demonstrated greater awareness and concern, while some male respondents exhibited attitudes that reflect entrenched gender norms and, in some cases, victim-blaming tendencies. This supports the concept of hegemonic masculinity as discussed by Raewyn Connell (2005), where dominant male norms contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality and violence. These findings suggest that addressing rape requires not only legal and institutional reforms but also a transformation of societal attitudes toward gender roles.

The study also highlights the interplay between socio-cultural norms and institutional weaknesses in shaping the prevalence and handling of rape cases. Weak law enforcement and limited access to justice mechanisms create an environment where perpetrators are rarely held accountable, thereby reinforcing a cycle of impunity. At the same time, cultural norms that prioritize family reputation over victim protection further discourage reporting and perpetuate silence. This interaction between structural and cultural factors underscores the importance of adopting a holistic approach to addressing sexual violence.

Conclusion

This study examined rape and its effects on victims from a gender perspective in Batagarawa Local Government Area. The findings show that rape remains a significant and underreported problem in the study area, driven largely by gender inequality, socio-cultural norms, economic challenges, and institutional weaknesses. The study further reveals that the effects of rape on victims are severe and multifaceted, encompassing psychological trauma, social stigma, physical

harm, and economic difficulties. Gender plays a crucial role in shaping both the occurrence and perception of rape, as well as influencing reporting behavior and societal responses. The persistence of stigma, victim-blaming attitudes, and weak enforcement of laws continues to hinder effective responses to sexual violence. Overall, the study confirms that rape is not merely an individual act but a complex social issue rooted in structural and cultural factors, thereby necessitating a comprehensive and context-specific approach to address it effectively.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

1. The government should strengthen the enforcement of laws against rape by ensuring that offenders are promptly investigated, prosecuted, and appropriately punished to deter future occurrences. Also, specialized training for law enforcement officers, judiciary personnel, and healthcare workers to ensure that rape cases are handled with sensitivity, professionalism, and confidentiality.
2. Bothe government and NGOs should establish and improve accessible support systems for victims, including healthcare services, psychological counseling, legal assistance, and safe reporting channels, especially in rural areas.
3. Public awareness campaigns be carried out to educate communities on the realities of rape, the importance of consent, and the need to eliminate stigma and victim-blaming attitudes.
4. Engage traditional and religious leaders in advocacy efforts aimed at reshaping harmful cultural norms and promoting gender equality within communities.
5. Encourage the active involvement of men and boys in gender equality initiatives to challenge harmful masculine norms and promote respectful behavior.

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