

Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls: Prevention and Response for The Elimination in Ekiti State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *Sexual violence against women and girls appears rampant in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Reports of instances of rape and sexual abuse on women and girls including incest are on the increase despite several actions taken by the State and other stakeholders against the act. The study investigated sexual violence against women and girls, prevention measures and response for its elimination in the State. The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative research designs for the study. Information was obtained using both primary and secondary sources. Questionnaire was completed by one hundred and sixty (160) female and male respondents drawn from the State including Non-Governmental Organisations whose focus was on sexual violence. Key informants' guides were used to interview some sexual violence duty bearers. Data obtained for the study were analysed using frequency counts and percentage scores. The study showed that there was a high prevalence of sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State. The findings also indicated that Government had responded positively towards elimination of sexual violence in the State through enacting appropriate laws against offenders and perpetrators caught were fined, jailed or shamed. The study revealed that cases of sexual violence were increasingly reported in the State as against low reportage recorded in the past. Government also made frantic efforts towards prevention of sexual violence against women and girls by establishing a Management Committee comprising relevant stakeholders to check all forms of sexual violence in the State. However, the study discovered that cases of sexual violence against women and girls were still common. The study therefore, recommended that the laws against all forms of sexual violence against women and girls should be effectively implemented in order to completely eliminate the menace in Ekiti State.*

KEYWORDS: sexual violence, prevention, response, prevalence, elimination, women, girls

INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence against women and girls is deeply rooted in gender inequality. It is perpetrated against the girl-child because the respect and value that they deserve were not accorded to them in the society. Sexual violence against women and girls is a global pandemic that includes sexual

abuse and rape. It is the term used to describe any sexual harmful act that is perpetrated against any girl-child without her consent. According to Ferran (2022), sexual violence against women and girls or gender based violence is the most pervasive, yet least visible human rights violation worldwide. Social norms appear to allow men to use violence, including sexual, to reinforce gender inequality. Babatunde, Okuola, Adeniyi, Ijarotimi, Adefisan, Ogunkorode, Olofinbiyi, Adepoju & Fasuba (2021) sexual violence against women and girls remains a huge pandemic socio-medical burden especially with outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. Multi-sectoral health promotion interventions are the critical means of filling the gaps at various levels of prevention.

According to Ekiti State Gender Based Violence Prohibition Law (2019), sexual violence against women and girls is a sexual abuse that includes forceful engagement of a woman or girl in a sexual conduct that abuses, humiliates or degrades the woman or girl sexual integrity. It is also sexual contact by a person aware of being affected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) or any other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) without that other person being given prior information of the infection. Krug et al (2002) defined sexual harm/violence as any act, attempt to obtain a sexual favour, unwanted sexual comments or advances or acts to traffic or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion by any person irrespective of their relationship to the survivor in any setting like home front or work place.

Sexual violence against women and girls includes all forms of sexual abuse such as rape, incest, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation. It is non-consensual, attempted or completed contacts between male and female sex organs or any orifices of the female body or using the finger or object to touch any female sex organs. The main act is the use of force, threat or coercion to intimidate the victim/survivors and cause the girl-child to submit herself for sex (Ilesanmi & Afolabi, 2016). According to Para-Mallam (2022), sexual violence against women and girls, including rape, is one of the most significant aspect of discriminatory violence against the girl-child. Lancet Psychology (2022) noted that sexual violence against women and girls is a public major problem and violation of women's human rights. According to Afolabi (2019), gender based violence and sexual violence against women and girls are human rights' violations and the most common human humiliation worldwide that should be eliminated from the society. Ferrari, Torres-Rueda, Chirwa, Gibbs, Orangi, Barasa et al (2022) said that violence against women and girls is a human rights violation with social and health consequences for survivors, perpetrators and the society. Several evidence on social, health impact, the cost of preventing sexual violence against women/girls are critical to making the case for investment in particularly low and middle income countries where health sector resources are highly insufficient. Ferran (2022), opined that in all societies, women and girls have less power than men over their bodies. According to WHO (2024), forms of sexual violence include rape, gang-rape, marital rape, date rape, rape by strangers, systematic rape during armed conflicts, forced marriage, child marriage, forced prostitution and trafficking in persons.

UNHCR (2019) noted that gender based violence covers harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms. Sexual violence against women and girls is a form of gender based violence. According to Concern Worldwide (2022), causes of gender based violence and sexual violence against women and child are harmful gender norms, hunger, war and conflict. STRASBOURG (2022) opined that the harmful impact of sexual violence on women and girls worldwide include online violence used to discredit women's collective power; sexual violence is used to disable a conducive environment for women's work in the society. Ilevbare (2021) noted that what triggers violence was the culture of patriarchy where men are favoured and deemed to be future leaders. According to her, this had been fuelling gender based violence and sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State and Nigeria.

WHO (2022) describes intimate partner violence as a situation where a woman personally reports experience of being subjected to one or more acts of physical or sexual violence by a current or former husband or male intimate partner since the age of 15 years. Sexual intimate partner violence occurs when a woman is physically forced to engage in sexual intercourse when she does not want to; having sexual intercourse out of fear for what a violent partner might do or through coercion, or being forced to do something sexual that the girl-child consider humiliating or degrading or a combination of these acts.

UNICEF (2021) noted that worldwide, approximately one out of three girls and women will experience sexual violence in her life. Survivors are most times subjected to victim-blaming, stigmatized or ostracized from their families and communities. From 2005-2020, women and girls were raped, forcibly married, sexually exploited. Other forms of sexual violence were perpetrated against at least 14,200 children. Usigbe (2018) opined that media in Nigeria are filled with stories of sexual violence against women and girls at home or in the streets with gory endings. CWEENS (2017) indicated that sexual violence affects women, girls, men and boys, but over 80% of victims are female.

Due to series of heinous sexual violence against women and under-aged girls in Nigeria, the Nigerian Governors' Forum declared an emergency on sexual violence. This made their spouses to start anti-gender based violence/sexual violence campaigns and the Nigerian National Assembly demanded for strict legal penalty for sexual violence offences. However, the absence of strong institutional mechanisms to prevent and punish perpetrators of the crimes reduced the capacity of this initiative. There were also involved complex issues around sexual violence crime to be addressed. Sexual violence against women and girls is rooted in socio-cultural attitudes, norms and practices. Also, low access to justice for victims of sexual violence persisted despite improvements in the legal system. Ilevbare (2021) said that there was the culture of silence where victims or survivors do not report sexual violence against women because of stigmatization. Sexual violence and discrimination are twin evils which must be confronted by all means.

According to WHO (2024), there was high prevalence of gender based violence among people with disabilities and greater risks of intimate partner violence among them compared with those without disabilities. The organization therefore, called for greater attention to violence against women with disabilities and older women in the society. WHO (Ibid) noted that intimate partner and sexual violence are the most common forms of gender-based violence globally and that this affected around one in three women and girls. Gender Based Violence is rooted in unequal power and control over women. Ilevbare (2021) said that from reports, women are most victims of gender based violence and such tendencies are more convenient with people living with disabilities.

Ojigho (2020) opined that in any part of Nigeria, be it in the North, south, city or rural villages, whether you are Christians or Muslims, women and girls are more at risk of rape and sexual violence. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) stated that a Thomson Reuters Foundation survey from 2018 ranked Nigeria as the 9th most dangerous country for women. Okunola (2021) opined that Nigeria is one of the least safe places for women on the globe. The Violence Against Person (Prohibition) Act or Law is a very important legal tool that could help to make women and girls free from sexual molestation in the country. The Violence Against Person (Prohibition) Law passed in 2015 was the first Nigerian Law to recognize that males can also experience rape and sexual abuse. Figures from United Nations Children Funds (UNICEF) showed that one in four girls and 10% of boys have been victims of sexual violence while fewer than 5% of those who reported cases of violence have received any kind of support (Ojigho, 2020). According to European Added Value Assessment (2021), both men and women experience incidents of online violence and abuse, however, women are more likely to be victims of repeated and severe forms of harmful actions online or with the help of technology. Women and girls have been victims of non-consensual image or video sharing, intimidation and threats through the social media platforms including rape, online sexual harassment, stalking, including the use of tracking apps and devices as well as impersonation through digital means. There are specific impacts on women exposed to intersecting forms of discrimination. Sexual violence online is used to discredit women collective power and it disables a conducive environment for women's work in the society. The means of combating violence in digital world is made possible through tools and national practices. However, more efforts are needed because the digital dimension of violence against women and girls remains insufficiently addressed (ibid).

The World Health Organisation (2014) identified integral part of human rights to include free of coercion, discrimination and evidence, access to sexual and reproductive health care services, seeking, receiving and impacting information related to sexuality, obtaining sex education, choosing your own partner and deciding that you want to be active or have consensual sexual relation or not, engaging in consensual marriage, not forced and having satisfying, safe pleasurable sexual life. UNICEF (2021) noted that preventing sexual violence against women and girls starts with changing gender norms, digital motivation that is equitable, inclusive and diverse could help. One of the game changer to sexual violence against women and girls is to give them social

protection. According to Centre for Health, Ethics, Law and Development (CHELD, 2015), the challenges to eliminating violence against women and girls could be legal and cultural. Several acts of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence are often done to intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, threaten or hurt the girl-child. Many women and girls died or their reproductive organs were severely damaged during the practice of female genital mutilation which is an aspect of sexual violence against women and girls. Some people believe that circumcising or mutilating girls and women prevent promiscuity and enable them to be more marriage-able. Moreover, aspects of the Penal Code of the Northern Nigeria permits wife battery as discipline for her if no grievous harm was inflicted on the woman during the beating. Since, it was not common for women to speak up in the public, many victims/survivors of sexual violence, may not report cases but suffer in silence.

According to Lancet Psychology (2021), health consequences of sexual violence are short and long term is mental, physical and reproductive problems for the girl-child survivors. Sexual violence against women also negatively affects the wellbeing of their children and health. Sexual violence has high socio-economic cost for women and girls' victims/survivors, their family as well as the entire society. Other consequences of sexual and physical violence are homicide, suicide, injuries, unwanted pregnancies, induced abortions, gynecological problems sexually transmitted infections (STDs)/HIV AIDS. According to WHO (2013), the fatal outcome of sexual violence against women and girls include problems like homicide or suicide; injuries as reported by 42% of women who experience intimate partner violence; unintended pregnancies; induced abortions; gynaecological problems; sexually transmitted infections. Women who had been physically or sexually abused were 1.5 times more likely to have a sexually transmitted infection. Intimate partner violence in pregnancy increases miscarriages, stillbirths, pre-term deliveries and low birth weight babies, depression, post-traumatic stress, anxiety disorders, sleep difficulties, eating disorders, headaches, pain syndromes (back pain, abdominal pain, chronic pelvic pain) gastrointestinal disorders, limited mobility other poor overall health. Sexual violence during childhood, can lead to increased smoking, substance use, and risky sexual behaviours, perpetration of violence (for males) and being a victim of violence (for females).

According to CHELD (2015), to reduce sexual violence against women and girls including other acts of violence, Nigeria adopted a Framework Plan of Action for the National Gender Policy. The Federal and State Government in Nigeria also adopted several legislative and policy instruments that include the Violence against Person's Prohibition Act of 2015 that prohibits female genital mutilation, harmful widowhood practices and all forms of violence against persons in private and public life. Absalem (2022) said that the national legal framework on violence against women should cover implementation of national policies. Survivors should have access to justice and essential services which include provision of shelters and protection orders. Harmful gender stereotypes and practice should be eradicated to make women and girls safe from sexual violence and intimidation. There must be adequate data on the prevalence of sexual violence against women

and girls. Women must have access to sexual and reproductive rights; women must be visible in services around peace and security.

Trafficking of women and girls must be eliminated. There must be government political will against sexual violence acts. If government pays more attention to designing and implementing effective policies remains committed to allocating the necessary budget and uphold international obligations to women and girls, the girl-child will be able to participate equally and fully in community/societal development. Fayemi (2021) opined that government has zealously been implementing the Gender Based Violence Prohibition Laws and other relevant laws in protecting the rights of women and girls in Ekiti State. Sensitisation programmes have been organized on gender based violence and sexual violence against women and girls, including those living with disabilities. She added that sex predators do not care whether one is disabled or not or puts on skimpy skirt or not. In the same vein, Ilevbare (2021) said that no efforts should be spared in tackling the rampancy of psychological, economic, physical and sexual violence against women.

According Lancet Psychology (2021), WHO said that 30% of women, that is 1 in 3 women have experienced either physical or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence globally. One third or 27% of women aged 15-49 years in relationship have been sexually or physically abused by their partners. Lancet Psychology (2021) opined that the risk factors for sexual and intimate partner include low education level; history of exposure to child maltreatment; witnessing violence between parents; antisocial personality disorder; use of excessive alcohol; harmful masculine behaviours; discriminating laws; gender inequality and community laws that ascribe higher status to men while lowering women's status. Ochab (2023) called for more effective action to combat violence against women and girls. She also called on governments worldwide to share and reconsider how they were investing in the prevention of gender-based violence. Preventive is key. The responses to gender based violence are always reactive, rather than proactive.

Statement of the Problem

Gender based violence against women and girls are a persistent and universal problem occurring in every culture and social group in Ekiti State. Around the world, at least one in every three women has been abused by someone she knows, including a member of her own family, an employer or co-worker. According to (Iliyasu, Abubakar, Aliyu, Galadanci & Salihu, (2011), violence against women and girls is the most pervasive yet, least recognized human rights abuse in the world. Violence against women and girls is often known as gender-based violence because it stems from women's subordinate status in the society. The second World Conference Human Rights in Vietnna in 1993 and fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, from September 4th – 15th gave priority to the issue which jeopardies women's lives, bodies, psychological integrity and freedom. Although, men and boys can be victims or survivors of some types of gender based violence (especially sexual violence) around the world, including Ekiti State, it has greater impact

on women and girls. Moreover, sexual violence against women and girls has no educational, social, economic, national or cultural borders.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO, 2014), several women and girls in the world suffer sexual violence. Thirty five (35%) of all women and girls have at some point in time in their lives experienced intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) or non-partner sexual violence. However, sexual violence and its health consequences are rarely addressed, especially, in low resource settings where access to care is limited. Sexual violence appears to threaten and shape every female's lives even if they themselves are not victims. This study focused on prevalence of sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State; causes of sexual violence against women and girls in the State; consequences of sexual violence against women and girls in the State; measures put in place for prevention sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State and the interventions by government and other stakeholders towards the elimination of sexual violence against women and girls in the State.

Main Objective

This paper investigated sexual violence against women and girls, prevention and response for its elimination in Ekiti State.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives for the study:

- i. investigated the level of prevalence of sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State;
- ii. identified the causes of sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State;
- iii. identified the consequences of sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State;
- iv. examined the measures put in place for prevention sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State;
- v. investigated the interventions put in place by government and other stakeholders for the elimination of sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State.

RESEARCH METHOD

The descriptive survey design was used in the study. Both quantitative and qualitative research designs were utilized for the study. The information for the study was obtained from both primary and secondary sources through two research instruments and existing literature. The questionnaire for the study was completed by one hundred and sixty (160) female and male respondents drawn from towns and villages in the Ekiti State including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) whose focus were on sexual violence against women and girls. The key informant interview guide (KIIG) was used to interview twelve (12) representatives of sexual violence duty bearers like

Police, NAP TIP, Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) Coordinator at Ekiti State Teaching Hospital, Ado Ekiti and Local Government Areas, International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Nigeria, Civil Defense Corps, Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Gender-Based Violence Desk Officers in tertiary institutions, Civil Society for HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (CiSHAN), parents, and Inter Religious Bodies (a Christian and Muslim).

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Face and content validity of the questionnaire instrument was done by experts who made corrections on them. The corrections were effected on both the questionnaire and key informant interview guide (KIIG). The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was obtained through test-retest method of two pilot studies on 20 samples each at two weeks interval. These 20 samples were not part of the respondents used for the study. The data obtained were collated and scored. The scores were analysed, using t-test analysis. A reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.76, which was considered high enough for the reliability of the questionnaire instrument.

Instrument

Quantitative and qualitative tools were used for the study which assisted the researcher to achieve maximum result. The instrument used to access quantitative data was questionnaire while qualitative data were obtained through key informant interview guide (KIIG). The questionnaire was divided into six (6) sections, A, B, C, D, E, F based on the specific objectives and the socio-demographic characteristics of the study respondents. Two (2) research assistants were trained to join the researcher to administer the instruments on the respondents and interview the key informants.

Data Analysis

The completed copies of questionnaire were collected, collated and analysed using frequency counts and percentages. The key informant instruments were recorded on tape and the informants' responses were transcribed verbatim. Appropriate interpretation of the statements of the respondents ensured. The statements were found to have contextual importance and connotations were extracted and used as exerts to support statistical data of the study.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondent**

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age:		
Below 25 Years	25	15.6
Between 26 – 35	77	48.1
Between 36 – 45	41	25.6
Above 45 Years	17	10.6
Sex:		
Male	52	32.5
Female	108	67.5
Religion:		
Christian	126	78.8
Muslim	33	20.6
Traditional	1	0.6
Educational Level:		
Primary	0	0
Secondary	5	3.1
Tertiary	155	96.9
Marital Status:		
Single	44	27.5
Married	116	72.5
Occupation:		
Unemployed	7	4.4
Privately Employed	57	35.6
Public Employed	29	18.1
Self Employed	30	18.8
Others (NGO)	37	23.1

Table 1 reveals that 25 (16%) of the respondents who were below 25 years old; 77 (48%) were 26-35 years of age; 41 (26%) fell within the ages of 36-45 years and those above 45 years were 17 (10%). This shows that majority of the respondents were between ages 26-35. The table indicates that there were 52 (33%) males and 108 (67%) females. This means that there were more female respondents than males who participated in the study. The table further shows that 126 (79%) were Christians; 33 (20%) were Muslims while 1 (0.6%) was traditional practitioner. There were no

primary school holders among the respondents, however, there were 5 (3%) secondary school certificate holders while majority, 155 (97%) were tertiary education graduates. The table reveals that 44 (28%) were single while 116 (72%) were married. It was revealed that 7 (4%) were unemployed, 57 (36%) were privately employed, 29 (18%) were in public employment, 30 (19%) were self-employed while 37 (23%) worked with non-governmental organisations in Ekiti State. This implies that majority of the respondents were privately employed.

Table 2: Prevalence of Sexual Violence in Ekiti State

Items	Yes	%	No	%
Sexual Violence was high in Ekiti State	139	86.9	21	13.1
Level of Sexual Violence against Girls was high	151	94.4	9	5.6
Level of Sexual Violence against Women was high	131	81.9	29	18.1
There was high level of intimate partner sexual violence against women than against men.	146	91.2	14	8.7
There was high level of trafficking of girls for sex than boys in Ekiti State.	150	93.8	10	6.2
Sexual harassment is the most common sexual violence against women	136	85	24	20.0
Sexual harassment is the most common sexual violence against girls.	154	96.3	6	2.8
Rape is the most common sexual violence against women.	126	78.8	34	21.2
Rape is the most common sexual violence against girls.	154	96.2	4	3.7
Unwanted touches are the most common sexual violence against women.	135	84.4	25	15.6
Unwanted touches are the most common sexual violence against girls	156	97.5	4	2.5

Table 2 shows that 86.9% of the respondents agreed that incidents of sexual violence were high in Ekiti State as against 13% who disagreed with this. The table further shows that 94.4% and 81.9% of the respondents agreed that sexual violence was high against girls and women respectively. Also, 91.2% indicated that there was high level of intimate partner sexual violence against women than men. There was high level, (93.8%) of trafficking of girls for sex than boys in Ekiti State. Sexual harassment was most common against women (85%); girls (96.3%); rape was common against women and girls (78.8%) and (96.2%) respectively; unwanted touches (84.4%) and (97.5%) common against women and girls respectively in Ekiti State.

Table 3: Causes of Sexual Violence in Ekiti State.

Items	Yes	%	No	%
Dis-respect for the female gender in the society causes sexual violence against women and girls.	153	95.6	7	4.4
Poverty or in-ability of women and girls to meet their daily needs causes sexual violence against them.	160	100	0	0
Cultural and social norms in the communities cause sexual violence against women and girls.	160	100	0	0
Male supremacy causes sexual violence against women and girls	160	100	0	0
Inequality among couples causes sexual violence against women.	155	96.9	5	3.1
Lack of value for women and girls or patriarchy in the society causes sexual violence against women and girls.	156	97.5	4	2.5
Lack of appreciation for contributions made by women to the homes cause sexual violence against women and girls.	158	98.8	2	1.2
Alcoholism of intimate partners causes sexual violence against women and girls.	153	95.6	7	4.4
Crowded houses/rooms cause sexual violence against women and girls.	160	100	0	0
Co-habiting with strangers causes sexual violence against women and girls.	160	100	0	0
Drug abuse causes sexual violence against women and girls.	160	100	0	0

Table 3 reveals that (95.6%) of the respondents agreed that the causes of sexual violence against women and girls was dis-respect; (100%) for poverty; (100%) for cultural and social norms in communities; (100%) for male supremacy; (96.9%) for inequality among couples; (97.5%) for

lack of value for women and girls/patriarchy by the society; (98.8%) for lack of appreciation for contributions made by females to the society; (95.6%) for alcoholism of intimate partners; (100%) for crowded houses/rooms, co-habiting with strangers and drug abuse respectively.

Table 4: Consequences of Sexual Violence in Ekiti State

Items	Yes	%	No	%
Victims may not be able to participate adequately if their sexual violence cases were not well managed.	160	100	0	0
Survivors of sexual violence often face stigmatization and discrimination in the society	160	100	0	0
Sexual Violence may lead to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)	160	100	0	0
Victims of sexual violence may lose their self-control to become promiscuous or sex addicts	154	96.3	6	3.7
Sexual violence inflicts psychological scars on women and girls victims.	160	100	0	0
Some victims of sexual violence may drop out of school which can end their education for life.	160	100	0	0
Unwanted pregnancies and babies	160	100	0	0
If perpetrators of sexual violence are caught, they may be jailed and their lives will be marred for ever	160	100	0	0

Table 4 indicates that all the respondents, (100%) agreed that the consequences of sexual violence against women and girls were that victims/survivors may not be able to participate adequately if their sexual violence cases were not well managed; they often face stigmatization and discrimination in the society; sexual violence lead to sexually transmitted infection (STIs) and (96.3%) respondents noted that survivor/victims may lose their self-control to become promiscuous or sex addicts. Also, all the respondents agreed that other consequences of sexual violence against women and girls included psychological scars, victims dropping out of school/end to their educational pursuits and unwanted pregnancies /babies. All respondents (100%) agreed that the consequence for perpetrators should be prison terms which may mar their lives forever.

Table 5: Measures for Prevention Sexual Violence in Ekiti State.

Items	Yes	%	No	%
Women and girls should be at alert against any suspicious opposite sex that may sexually abuse them.	160	100	0	0
Survivors of sexual violence against women and girls should report promptly to the duty bearers like the police/other security agents, Ministry of Women Affairs, Non-Governmental Organisation, Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) Offices, International Federation of Women Lawyers, (FIDA) among others.	160	100	0	0
To prevent sexual violence perpetrators when caught were punished via jail terms and shamed	160	100	0	0
Perpetrators of violence against women and girls when caught should be punished by making them to pay fines.	155	96.9	5	3.1
The girl-child should be protected against sexual violence	160	100	0	0
Adequate sensitization programmes should be done stating the ills and consequences of acts of sexual violence against women and girls.	160	100	0	0
The Ekiti State Gender Based Violence Prohibition Laws, 2019 should be translated into Yoruba and English versions to be read on radio/television stations regularly.	160	100	0	0
All reported cases of sexual violence against women and girls should not be treated levity by the police and security officers.	160	100	0	0

Table 5 shows that all, (100%) of the respondents opined that the measures for prevention of sexual violence against women and girls should include the girl child being careful when dealing with the opposite sex; victims/survivors should report sexual abuses to and of the duty bearers used in this study used in the study promptly; severe punishment such as shaming and prison terms should be meted out to perpetrators to serve as detriment to others; however, (96.9%) of the respondents opined that perpetrators of violence against women and girls when caught should be punished by making them to pay fines . All the respondents agreed that the girl child should be protected against any form of sexual violence; adequate sensitisation/advocacy programmes needed to be organized for relevant stakeholders like youths, selected adults and parents; Yoruba and English

versions of Ekiti State Gender Based Violence Prohibition Law, 2019 should be aired on all Radio/Television stations regularly for local people to understand; all reported cases of sexual violence against women and girls should not be treated with levity by the police; the police should be more proactive when handling cases and justice should be served against perpetrators to discourage the acts of sexual violence in the State.

Table 6: Interventions towards Elimination of Sexual Violence in Ekiti State.

Items	Yes	%	No	%
Sexual violence against women and girls can be eliminated in Ekiti State.	145	90.6	15	9.4
Ekiti State Government has been responding adequately to sexual violence against women.	155	96.9	5	3.1
The State Government established Gender Based Violence (GBV) Committee in the State to work against and check cases/acts of violence in the State	155	96.9	5	3.1
This Gender Based Violence (GBV) Committee was replicated in all the Local Government Areas	111	69.4	49	30.6
The State Government provided a safe house and Women Development Centre for victims /survivors of all forms of abuse	155	96.9	5	3.1
Gender Based Violence Policy Document and Gender Based Violence Students' Clubs were also established in secondary schools, colleges and tertiary institutions in the State	111	69.4	49	30.6
The State Government has enacted the appropriate laws on sexual violence against women and girls.	155	96.9	5	3.1
Ekiti State Government is adequately implementing the laws on sexual violence against women and girls.	151	94.4	9	5.6
There are whistle blowers on sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State.	115	71.9	45	28.1
Parents are doing enough to eliminate sexual violence against women and girls	111	71.9	45	28.1
Police are doing enough to eliminate and end sexual violence against women and girls	72	45	88	55

Table 6 reveals respondents' views on State Government's and Stakeholders' interventions/responses towards the elimination of sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State. It is evident that majority of the respondents, (90.6%) believed that sexual violence against women and girls can be eliminated in the State; (96.9%) also agreed that Government had responded adequately to sexual violence against women and girls; 96.9% agreed that the State Government established Gender Based Violence (GBV) Committee in the State to work against and check cases/acts of violence in the State; 69.4% agreed that Gender Based Violence (GBV) Committee was replicated in all the Local Government Areas in Ekiti State; 71.9% of the respondents agreed that the State Government provided a safe house and Women Development Centre for victims /survivors of all forms of abuse in the State; (96.9%) said that the State Government had enacted appropriate laws on sexual violence against women and girls; 69.4% agreed that Gender Based Violence Policy Document and Gender Based Violence Students' Clubs were also established in secondary schools, colleges and tertiary institutions in the State; (94.4%) also agreed that Ekiti State Government had adequately implemented the laws on sexual violence against women and girls; (71.9%) said that there were whistle blowers on sexual violence against women and girls; (69.4%) of the respondents agreed that parents did enough to eliminate sexual violence against women and girls while (55%) said that the police did not do enough to eliminate and end sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State.

Statements of the Respondents on the following General Questions

Table 7: Measures taken by the State Government for prevention of sexual violence against women and girls in the State

Responses	Frequency	Percent (%)
Provision of Laws	58	36.3
Awareness Campaign creation against sexual violence	40	25
Monitor and database creation for sexual offenders	22	13.8
Publish names of sexual offenders	13	8.1
Punishment for perpetrators	19	11.9
Collaboration with NGOs	8	5
TOTAL	160	100

On table 7, majority of the respondents (36.3%) rated provision of laws high on measures that were taken by Government to prevent sexual violence against women and girls while awareness creation campaign was rated next by (25%) of the respondents. Collaboration of Government with Non-Governmental Organisations was rated the least (5%) measure in preventing sexual violence against women and girls in the State.

Table 8: How you think that individuals can further respond to sexual violence against women and girls in order to eliminate it totally in Ekiti State

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Report cases of sexual abuse	50	31.2
Girls should be more careful and security conscious	10	6.2
Community mobilization against sexual violence	15	9.4
Be our brother's keeper	10	6.2
Stigmatize perpetrators	10	6.2
Individual collaboration with Government and become whistle blowers	35	21.9
Parent should look more after their children	30	18.8
TOTAL	160	100

On table 8, most of the respondents, (31.2%) of the respondents rated prompt report of cases of sexual violence against women and girls as the highest way that individuals can respond to assist in eliminating the evil acts. Individual collaboration with Government and acting as whistle blowers were rated as the next means of ending sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State.

Table 9: How you think that the State Government can further respond to sexual violence against women and girls in order to eliminate it totally in Ekiti State

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Death Penalty on perpetrators	13	8.1
Make rape capital offence and strong Punishment for offenders	9	5.6
Special Schools for victims of sexual abuse	7	4.3
Security of lives	4	2.5
Castrate offenders	16	10
Free education for girl-child from primary to secondary.	22	13.8
Compensation or Financial Assistance for women and men victims.	34	21.2
More collaboration with NGOs	7	4.3
Creation of help lines for free toll call	4	2.5
Improve the economy	7	4.3
Include sex education in schools curriculum	9	5.6
Government should not be bias in sexual violence case	12	7.5
Enforcement of fines against offenders	4	2.5
Implementation of the existing laws	4	2.5
Free medical care for victims	4	2.5
Discourage videos that exhibit sexual violence, stop or regulate Big Brother Naija	4	2.5
TOTAL	160	100

Table 9 shows respondents' opinions on how they felt that the State Government can further respond to sexual violence against women and girls in order to eliminate it totally in the State. Majority of the respondents, 34(21.2%) rated compensation and financial assistance for victims/survivors highest; 22(13.8%) of the respondents rated free education for the girl child next; 16(10%) of respondents rated castration of offenders/perpetrators in the 3rd place while 13(8.1%) of the respondents rated death penalty for offenders as one of the main means of eliminating sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State.

Responses of Key Informants

On the mandate of the informants in respect of issues of sexual violence against women and girls, 98% of the twelve (12) key informants said that it was to protect women and girls from all forms of abuse. In addition, the NGO informant said its' mandate was to put an end to any form of gender based violence. The health practitioner's mandate was to provide medical assistance for any abused victims/survivors at all times.

On the prevalence of cases of sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State, 70% of informants agreed that this was high; 25% said that this was moderate while 5% said that cases of sexual violence against women and girls was low in the State. Majority, (60%) of the informants opined that more cases of sexual violence against women and girls were reported to their offices yearly in Ekiti State while 40% said that cases of sexual violence against women and girls were rarely reported to their offices. The police was among those that recorded low reportage of cases of sexual violence against women and girls.

On identity of the perpetrators of sexual violence against women and girls, 80% of the informants agreed that they were people known to the victims/survivors like intimate partners, neighbours, colleagues, bosses, uncles, siblings, fathers and husbands while 20% said that the perpetrators were strangers.

Many, (40%) of the interviewees, said that few perpetrators of sexual violence against women and girls were identified; fewer (30%) said they were identified and arrested; very few (20%) of the informants said that perpetrators have been fined and 10% said that they were shamed. However, 5% did not give any answers on this.

On how sexual violence against women and girls can be prevented in Ekiti State, 70% of the informants agreed that people should be given proper orientation/awareness against sexual violence against women and girls and it's ills; punishment for perpetrators; victims/survivors/people should speak up and report cases to duty bearers in Ekiti State. Thirty (30) percent of the informants said that they did not think that the evil act could be prevented.

Responding to what the informants have been doing to end sexual violence against women and girls, the religious leader said that churches have been preaching against the act; the traditional

leader said that perpetrators caught were reported to the police for appropriate punishment; the health practitioner said her colleagues encouraged victims to report cases and that survivors were treated in health facilities as appropriate; the police said that security agents protected victims and prosecuted perpetrators that were reported; the non-governmental organization (NGO) and Civil society for HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (CiSHAN) informants said that their organisations created awareness and served as the voice for voiceless victims and survivors of sexual violence against women and girls in the State.

On how Ekiti State Government responded/intervened on ending sexual violence against women and girls, 75% of the key informants agreed that the State Government had raised her voice against sexual violence against women and girls, punished perpetrators caught and reported, waged war against violence. They added that government responded promptly to cases of sexual violence against women and girls in the State.

The informants identified the following actions of the State Government to end sexual violence against women/girls: i. creating gender based violence management committee to monitor and guide against gender based violence including sexual violence against women/girls and replicating them in the 16 Local Government Areas of the State; ii. establishment of Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) for proper reporting and recording of cases of violence; iii. protection of whistle blowers, witnesses and victims; iv. establishment of Gender Courts in the State; v. collaboration with the Federation of International Women Lawyers (FIDA) to work against all forms of violence including sexual violence against women and girls; vi. appointment of Gender Based Violence Desk Officers in secondary schools and tertiary institutions in the State; vii. establishment of Women Development and Transit Home survivor/victims of Gender Based Violence including sexual violence against women and girls in the State; viii. establishment of students' Anti Gender Based Violence Clubs in secondary schools and tertiary institutions in order to enhance prompt reportage of cases and proactive actions against all forms of violence including sexual violence against women and girls.

On laws enacted by the State Government to eliminate sexual violence against women and girls, 90% of the informants agreed that Ekiti State Government enacted appropriate laws against Gender Based Violence including sexual violence against women and girls, such as Ekiti State Gender Based Violence (Prohibition) Law, 2019; law to protect the Rights of Widows in Ekiti State, 2002; law to prohibit female circumcision or female genital mutilation in Ekiti State, 2002; Ekiti State Child's Rights Law, 2006; Equal Opportunity Law, 2013 (Ekiti State Government, 2020). All these laws protect women and children against all forms of violence including sexual violence against women and girls in the State.

On the most effective law in preventing and eliminating sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State; 90% of the key informants opined that the Ekiti State Gender Based Violence (Prohibition) Law, 2019 was the most effective law in eliminating or ending the evil act while 10%

of the informants opined that the law had been moderately effective because despite the Law, there were still reported cases of sexual violence against women and girls in the State.

On the challenges to eliminating sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State; 70% of the informants rated low reportage of cases as the major challenge; then the police attitude towards reported cases was rated next; followed by stigmatization against victims/survivors. Other challenges identified were parents' compromise to non-prosecution of offenders; low advocacy by the State Government against sexual violence against women and girls on the media; very few perpetrators of the offence were prosecuted or punished.

On how the challenges to eliminating sexual violence against women and girls could be surmounted, 90% of the key informants opined that victims/survivors should report all cases to the duty bearers such as the law enforcement agents, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Women Affairs, Office of the Wife of the Governor; Ministry of Education and Non-Governmental Organisations with focus on sexual violence. Also, the key informants said that Government should work more on measures for eliminating sexual violence against women and girls; Government should allocate and release more funds for more interventions; duty bearers should take actions against perpetrators of sexual violence against women/girls. The State Government should take proper care of survivors in Ekiti State.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The study showed that incidents of sexual violence were high against girls and women respectively in Ekiti State. There was high level of intimate partner sexual violence against women than men. There was high level of trafficking of girls for sex than boys in Ekiti State. Sexual harassment, rape, unwanted touches were common against women and girls in the State. This finding agrees with Ferran (2022) and Lancet Psychology (2022) who noted that sexual violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights violation. It also agrees with Usigbe (2018) who said that sexual violence against women and girls are rampant.

The study revealed that the causes of sexual violence against women and girls was dis-respect; poverty; cultural and social norms in communities; male supremacy; inequality; lack of value for women and girls/patriarchy by the society; lack of appreciation for contributions made by females to the society; alcoholism of intimate partners; crowded houses/rooms, co-habiting with strangers and drug abuse. This finding is in concurrent with Concern World (2022) that listed the causes of gender based and sexual violence to include hunger and poverty among others.

The study discovered that the consequences of sexual violence against women and girls were that victims/survivors may not be able to participate adequately if sexual violence cases against them were not well managed; they often face stigmatization and discrimination in the society; sexual violence sometimes lead to sexually transmitted infection (STIs) and that survivor/victims may lose their self-control and become promiscuous or sex addicts. Other consequences of sexual

violence against women and girls included psychological scars, victims dropping out of school/end to students' educational pursuits, unwanted pregnancies /babies and prison terms for perpetrators which may mar their lives forever. These findings agree with Ferrari, Torres-Rueda, Chirwa, Gibbs, Orangi, Barasa, et al (2022) who stated that violence against women and girls has social and health consequences for survivors and UNICEF (2021) that noted that survivors are at times subjected to victim-blaming, stigmatization by their family.

The study showed that the measures that can prevent sexual violence against women and girls are that the girl child should be careful when dealing with the opposite sex; victims/survivors should report sexual abuses to duty bearers promptly; justice should be served against perpetrators; severe punishment such as shaming and prison terms should be meted out to perpetrators to serve as detriment to others. Moreover, perpetrators of violence against women and girls when caught should be punished by making them to pay fines. The girl child should be protected against any form of sexual violence; adequate sensation/advocacy programmes needed to be organized; Yoruba and English versions of Ekiti State Gender Based Violence Prohibition Law, 2019 should be aired on Radio/Television stations; all reported cases of sexual violence against women and girls should not be treated with levity by the police; the police should be more proactive when handling cases.

The study revealed that sexual violence against women and girls can be eliminated in the State and Government had responded adequately to sexual violence against women and girls by creating the State Gender Based Violence Committee and this Committee was replicated in all the 16 Local Government Areas in the State under the supervision of the Chairmen and their Spouses; Gender Based Violence Policy Document and Gender Based Violence Students' Clubs were also established in secondary schools and tertiary institutions in the State. Government had enacted appropriate laws on sexual violence against women and girls; Ekiti State Government had adequately implemented the laws on sexual violence against women and girls; there were whistle blowers on sexual violence against women and girls; parents did enough to eliminate sexual violence against women and girls; the police did not do enough to eliminate and end sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State.

The study discovered that provision of laws was high on measures that were taken by Government to prevent sexual violence against women and girls while awareness creation was the next measure employed by Government against the act. Collaboration of Government with Non-Governmental Organisations was the least measure in preventing sexual violence against women and girls in the State.

The study showed that prompt report of cases of sexual violence against women and girls was the highest way that individuals can respond to assist in eliminating the evil acts. Individual collaboration with Government and acting as whistle blowers was the next suggested means of ending sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State.

The study found out that the State Government can further respond to sexual violence against women and girls in order to eliminate it totally in the State by giving compensation and financial assistance to victims/survivors. Free education for the girl child, castration or death penalty for offenders/perpetrators was among means of eliminating sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there was a high prevalence of sexual violence in Ekiti State. The study also indicated that the State Government had positively responded to the elimination of sexual violence against women and girls in the State through enacting appropriate laws against the menace. Perpetrators of the offence caught were fined, jailed or shamed. The study concluded that cases of sexual violence were increasingly reported in the State as against low reporting recorded in the past. The State Government also made frantic efforts towards prevention of sexual violence against women and girls through the establishment of Ekiti State Gender Based Violence Management Committee comprising relevant stakeholders to check all forms of sexual violence against women and girls in the State. This Committee was also replicated in all the 16 Local Government Areas. The Ekiti State Gender Based Violence Management Committee also mandated all the tertiary institutions in the State to develop their own Gender Based Violence (GBV) Policy Document for staff and students. The institutions were also made to establish Students' GBV Clubs that serve as "neighbourhood" watch against sexual violence against students on campus and environ.

The study also concluded that sexual violence against women and girls could be eliminated if more efforts could be made by all stakeholders working against sexual violence in the State. However, the study concluded that there were increasing cases of sexual violence against women and girls in the State. Although a lot has been done in the State to end sexual violence against women and girls, the State Government and all stakeholders needed to do more in order to completely eradicate sexual violence against women and girls in Ekiti State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following were recommended.

1. The laws against all forms of sexual violence against women and girls should be effectively implemented in order to completely eliminate the menace in Ekiti State.
2. There is the need for more collaborative research in order to have a deeper insight into the causes of all the variants of sexual valence against women and girls in Ekiti State.
3. Government should investigate, protect women/the girl child targeted and hold those responsible accountable.

4. The State Government should establish more institutions that can address the root causes of sexual violence against women and girls. Also, in view of the impunity of the crime, implement enacted laws and policies for stronger response that can support victims and survivors should be put in place.
5. Government should train law enforcement agencies to be proactive, effectively investigate and prosecute offenders of sexual violence against women and girls in the State.
6. Government should guarantee easily accessible, safe and specialised mechanisms enabling female survivors/victims to report abuse as appropriate.
7. Survivors should be provided with clinical health services, dignity kits, psychosocial supports and more safe spaces that they need to access care and protection.
8. Such safe places should enable women and girls to be actively involved in activities for empowerment and gain access to critical information on their risks, rights and needs that include where to report sexual abuse to and obtain relevant life information.
9. Government and all stakeholders/duty bearers including the Police, NAPTIP, SARC Coordinator, FIDA, Civil Defense Corps, Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Gender-Based Violence Desk Officers in tertiary institutions, Civil Society for HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (CiSHAN), parents, and Inter Religious Bodies (a Christian and Muslim) on sexual valence against women and girls should work more in order to end the evil act.

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