

## **Effects of Sexual Coercion on University Female Students**

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**Abstract:** *This study deals with the effects of sexual coercion on females in Nigeria universities. The sample consisted of 1,200 sexually coerced female students, selected from nine universities drawn from South West using purposive sampling technique, simple random and stratified random sampling techniques. An instrument titled 'Sexual Coercion Questionnaire' was used. It was evident in the findings that university female students that were sexually coerced suffered health problems, educational problem, emotional, social, and psychological effects such as feelings of worry, anxiety and other consequences. Based on the findings, it was recommended those University females that are victims of sexual coercion should be given proper medical care by the university authority. Female students should advocate for an effective security in Nigeria Universities. Counsellors in universities should organize seminars on female's health, argue for a well secured accommodation and healthy environment for university female students and design effective programme on sexually acceptable behavior that would enhance a change of behaviour among university students. This research is crucial because it revealed the level of affliction and troubles experienced by university female students. It also provides baseline information for prospective researchers on the prevalence and effects of sexual coercion.*

**Keywords:** *Sexual Coercion, Effects, Behaviour, University, Females*

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### **I. Introduction**

Violence against females is widely spread everywhere, females are physically and sexually abused. Despite the history of conflicts and widespread of human rights violation in Nigeria, little is known about the prevalence and consequences of sexual violence among University students, which is an egregious violations of women's right. This terrible occurrence is largely suffered in silence with severe consequences.

Sexual coercion is an act of violence and crime. It could be defined as any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted and takes place without consents with verbal insistence.

Evidence from different researches reveals that sexual coercion is a public health challenge with lots of evil and negative effects. It is an attempt by perpetrators to obtain sexual act through impersonification, pressure, intimidation, use of drug, intoxication, use of traditional charm, physical force, and so on regardless of their relationship to the victim

Sexual coercion as perceived by Ellis, Atkeson and Calhoun [6] is sustained by fear and pain which could bring about feeling of powerlessness, anger, confusion, shame and despair. The rate of occurrences of sexual assault among females in Nigeria universities is staggering, at least 1 in 4 females are or will be victims in their time in school and the number of occurrences of sexual assault is the acute damage done to the victim.

New York City Alliance against Sexual Assault [12] opined that the impact of sexual coercion on victims are substantial, victim could be severely traumatized by assault, quite vulnerable to immediate and long term physical, emotional, educational, psychological, social and reproductive health problems. Anteghini [2] opined that the immediate physical effects of sexual coercion may be pain and bodily injury and specifically physical effects may include: bruises, broken bones, illness, STIs, nausea, vomiting and headaches. Longterm physical effects may be disturbed sleep patterns, nightmares, insomnia, loss of appetite, and stomach pains. There could be economic loss and death.

According to Dolezal, McCollum and Callahan [5], Students that are exposed to such severe and pervasive behaviours may be limited in achieving their educational aims and objectives because they may find it difficult to concentrate on learning. They may experience poor mental process, cut classes, their grades may drop and it could lead to withdrawn. According to National Centre for Injury Prevention and Control [10], 20% of rape victims report missing lectures due to the time used for health care, counselling and court dates as a result of their attacks, with 1 in 5 reporting more than half of a semester out of campus because of the physical and mental strain incurred. They stresses further that females who experienced sexual coercion had greater than a three-fold increase in risk for not completing their university education than females that do not. Some

scientists argued that all forms of sexual coercion are methods men use to intimidate females in keeping them dependent and [14].

Williams, McKibbin, Todd, Emily, Miner, Vincent and James [16], observed that victims of sexual coercion suffer behavioural consequences such as unprotected sex. They opined that such experience could lead an innocent student to a high level of sexual malpractices; like participating in sex work, engaging in multiple sexual partners, early consensual sex, drug addiction and alcoholism. Freud [7] opined that anxiety neurosis could arise from abnormal sexual practices to develop psychological trauma due to the assault received.

The experience of being raped or sexually assaulted can lead to suicidal behaviour, adolescents could contemplate suicide particularly victims perceived having lower levels of beliefs in their ability to cope with stress. Similarly, Bryant and Range [4] found that females who had been severely physically and sexually coerced had fewer overall reasons for living and as a reason for committing suicide than non-coerced female students. In Ethiopia, 6% of raped schoolgirls reported having attempted suicide. A study of adolescents in Brazil found prior sexual abuse to be a leading factor predicting several health risk behaviours, including suicidal thoughts and attempts.

Heise, Moore, and Tobia [8] and Adegunle [1] clearly spell out the profound impact of sexual coercion on reproductive health, which includes gynaecological problem through abortion, genital trauma, cervical ectoplasm, the risk of unwanted pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infection such as chlamydia, genital infections, gonorrhoea, pelvic inflammatory infections, urinary tracts diseases and HIV/AIDS, one of the most complex and complicated health problems confronting the whole world today. Adolescent girls are particularly susceptible to HIV infection through forced sex because rapists are not likely to indulge in the use of condom which is about the only preventive measure against HIV/AIDS today. These infections could affect female adolescent's probability of reproductive success if there is no immediate medical attention, it could result to Emotional consequences of sexual coercion experienced by victims according to Mullugeta [9] includes guilt's feelings of worthlessness, fear and guilt about sex, anxiety, depression, anger, low self-efficiency, panic attacks, negative self-esteem, powerlessness, inability to distinguish sexual coercion from affectionate behaviour, difficulties in maintaining appropriate personal boundaries, difficulty in trusting people, feelings of shame and self blame.

According to Ogunbameru [13], victims of Sexual coercion often suffer social problems due to trauma and persistence fear. It could lead to unplanned marriage, wrong choice of partner, single parenthood, marital instability and regrets. Female students could be stigmatized by their classmate; there could be strained relationships with family, friends and intimate partner. It could undermine ethical standards and discipline in an institution of learning.

Bagley, Bolitho, and Bertrand [3] stressed the psychological problems attached to sexual coercion such as depression, anxiety and or panic attacks, sleeplessness or nightmare and impaired memory. In a study carried out by Seblework [15] on the assessment of sexual coercion on adolescents, it was found that victims often experience Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.

This study had amply demonstrated that there is high prevalence of sexual coercion activities among university students. The increased problems generated by the sexual coercion experienced by University female students necessitated the Nigeria National Council of Education (NNCE) in 2009 [12] to constitute a committee to investigate the problem. Cases of sexual coercion has become a National issue to the extent that a bill was passed in the sitting of the Nigeria National Senate meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2013, clamoring against sexual coercion of any kind in the country.

## **II. Methodology**

Sexual coercion is an important public health issue due to its negative association with social and health outcome. It has been observed to be one of the social problems in Nigeria universities that pose challenging questions on student's moral level and degrading the moral fabric of this country. The rate of occurrence of sexual violence continues to severe consequences with lifelong complications. failure, neurosis and acquiring of sexually transmitted diseases, feelings of powerlessness and increase daily without check cutting across every female student irrespective of their age and class level. The frequent occurrence of sexual coercion is the acute damage done to the victims physically, socially, emotionally, and psychologically. It encompasses fear, pains, anxiety, worries, depression, academic helplessness. Sexual coercion among University female students has now become a matter of concern to guidance counsellors. This calls for thorough and comprehensive investigation on the prevalence, and health consequences of sexual coercion on female students in Nigeria Universities.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of sexual coercion on the university female students. In dealing with the problem of the study, and to achieve the purpose of the study, this question is raised to pilot the study:

□ What are the effects of sexual coercion on university female students?

The study employed the descriptive research of the survey type. This design was considered appropriate because it focused on existing characteristics of a particular group in order to satisfy the curiosity and the desire for better understanding of the consequence of sexual coercion on University female students. It also involves the distribution of large copies of the instrument used. The population for this study consisted of all University female students, in the various Federal, State and Privately owned Universities in the South-West, Nigeria. The sample consisted of 1,200 University female students selected from nine Universities drawn from the South West using multistage sampling technique.

A research instrument titled ‘Sexual Coercion Questionnaire (SCQ)’ was used. The instrument was in four sections, the first section sought information on the Female students bio-data such as age, marital status and so on, section two contains items on the occurrence of sexual coercion experienced by University female students, section three consisted of items which are meant to measure the factors that could influence female students’ sexual coercion, while Section D contains items measuring the effects of sexual coercion on University female students. Test re-test method was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient of 0.75 was obtained. The administration of the instrument was done by the principal investigator and assisted by some research assistants. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive analysis. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the general question.

### III. Descriptive Analysis

#### Question 1

What are the effects of sexual coercion on University female students?

In answering this question, scores on the effects of sexual coercion were used.

As indicated in the table above, the result showed that 837(69.8%) felt worried after being

**Table 1: Frequency Counts and Percentages Showing the Effects of Sexual Coercion on University Female Student**

ITEMS	YES		NO	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Feeling worried	837	69.8	363	30.3
Easily frightened	811	67.6	389	32.4
Feeling unhappy	856	71.3	344	28.7
Feeling of shame	870	72.5	330	27.5
Feeling of insecurity	882	73.5	318	26.5
Hatred towards the opposite sex	923	76.9	277	23.1
Failure in courses	918	76.5	282	23.5
Difficulty in relating with friends	930	77.5	270	22.5
Unwanted pregnancy	941	78.4	259	21.6
Engaging in abortion	950	79.2	250	20.8
Contact of sexually transmitted diseases	956	79.7	244	20.3
Imagining violent situations that is not real	946	78.8	254	21.2
Thought of committing suicide	930	77.5	270	22.5
Uncontrollable weeping	878	73.2	322	26.8
Withdrawal from school	854	71.2	346	28.8

coerced sexually, 811 (67.6%) of the students were easily frightened, 856 (71.3%) felt unhappy, 870 (72.5%) felt ashamed, 882 (73.5%) felt unsecured, 923 (76.9%) of the University female students developed hatred towards the opposite sex. Nine hundred and eighteen (76.5%) of the female students failed some of their courses due to the effects of sexual coercion experienced. Nine hundred and thirty (77.5%) of the female students have difficulties in relating with friends, 941 (78.4%) had unwanted pregnancy, 950 (79.2%) engaged in abortion after being coerced while 956 (79.7%) contacted sexually transmitted infections. Nine hundred and forty-six (78.8%) of the female students cultivate the habit of imagining violent situation that was not real due to the sexual coercion experienced.

Nine hundred and thirty (77.5%) had thought of committing suicide to cover the shame of being coerced, 878 (73.2%) experienced uncontrollable weeping while 854 (71.2%) of the University female students withdraw from the University because they were sexually coerced. The result revealed that majority of the University female students suffered different kinds of consequences due to the sexual coercion experienced.

#### **IV. Discussion**

The result of this study revealed that University students that were sexually coerced suffered physical health problems, emotional, social and psychological effects such as feeling of worry, anxiety, inability to achieve desired educational goal and others. The observation of Dolezal, *et al.*, [5] was in support of this study that University female students that are sexually coerced suffered social, health and psychological problems. He also added that, they are limited in achieving educational aims and desire as it interrupts their education which could result to withdrawal. In line with this report, New York City Alliance against Sexual Assault [11] opined that, victims of sexual coercion could be severely traumatized by assault.

The limitation of the study is that respondents were feeling reluctant to report their sexual coercion experience for fear of further intimidation. Nevertheless, their action does not in any way affect the reliability of the result of the study.

#### **V. Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that university students are sexually coerced irrespective of their age, class level, religion or status, leaving them with severe physical, mental, emotional, social, educational and psychological consequences. This study will be of importance to scholars and readers because it provides information on the aftermath of sexual coercion on victims.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that University females that are victims of sexual coercion should be given proper medical care by the university authority. Female students should desist from acts that could expose them to any form of sexual assault and also advocate for an effective security in Nigeria Universities. Counsellors in universities should organize seminars on female's health, addressing a well secured accommodation and healthy environment for university female students and design effective programme on sexually acceptable behavior that would enhance a change of behaviour among university students. Sexual coercion policy should be established and enforced. Victims should be encouraged to report their experience with adequate information on how it occurred and not to shy out their rights and the university authorities should handle such reports effectively with adequate measure of discipline.

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