



DATE RAPE EXPERIENCE AND HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG FEMALE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS IN ABUA-ODUA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

Date rape, despite evidence indicating its prevalence, is not fully recognized in Africa, including Nigeria. This study evaluated the date rape experience and help-seeking behaviour among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua Local Government Area of Rivers State. The descriptive survey design was adopted. A sample of 198 respondents was drawn from a population of 1955 students in public secondary schools in the study area. A self-structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents and data was analysed using SPSS version 26. The study revealed that the majority (91.7%) of the students have had sexual encounters; and among these, the majority (91.8%) had experienced date rape from a boy/man friend. Forced vaginal sex (73.7%) was the highest form of date rape experienced. The majority (43.6%) of the assaults took place in the respondent's house after serious threats (55.4%) and many of the victims (53.5%) declined to get medical care. There was a significant difference in the incidence of date rape experience ($F= 5.913, p= 0.017$), forms of date rape ($F= 3.288, p= 0.041$), context of date rape occurrences ($F= 12.858, p= 0.000$), and helping-seeking behaviour after date rape experience ($F= 3.411, p= 0.021$) among respondents by class. Relevant authorities should use extant laws of the land to punish perpetrators to deter the would-be perpetrators.

Keywords: Date rape, Help-seeking behaviour, Secondary school students, Abua-Odua

Introduction

Rape is a serious violation of human rights as well as a public health concern. It is a generally recognised deviant criminal behaviour that is frequently made possible by the use of coercive techniques such as threats, violent aggressive behaviour, verbal pressure and deceit or manipulation to force the victim to succumb to the sexual act. It jeopardises the victim's autonomy, as well as their physical and mental integrity. Rape is a dehumanizing act and a violation of the fundamental right of the victim (Simonovic, 2021) and is condemned by all and sundry including various international human rights treaties and conventions like the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

It has been reported to cross national and racial boundaries as well as those of class, religion and education (United States Agency for International Development, 2016). Although violence against women is a universal phenomenon, the degree of violence varies from one society to another (World Health Organization, 2010). In Nigeria, about 11,200 women and children were raped in 2020 according to a United Nations report (Tolu-Kolawole, 2021). There are different forms of rape, date rape is just one of them. Date rape is a form of rape in which the individual (victim) is coerced into performing an unwanted sexual act by a friend, romantic partner or peer by using physical force, verbal threats, abuse of authority, administration of incapacitating substances or threat of physical force (Dude, 2022) and may involve anal, oral, vaginal or digital sex (the insertion of a finger into the female vagina or anus). Date rape, because it involves a breach of trust, may be just as devastating as a sexual assault by an unfamiliar person.

Date rape (also known as acquaintance rape) is a problem that many school administrators face when attempting to maintain a secure school environment for students (Aeby et al., 2018). Due to the sensitive and contextual nature of acquaintance rape, many schools have implemented interventions for which there is scant data to support their efficacy. The "miscommunication hypothesis," which contends that miscommunication between men and women concerning sexual consent contributes to acquaintance rape, is still the foundation of many such interventions. Numerous schools use this strategy in their intervention programmes, frequently adopting a "risk management" position despite the paucity of evidence supporting its efficacy. Risk management may be useful in assisting women in recognising potentially risky circumstances however, this approach implies that it is up to the woman to avoid being raped. This could reinforce the victim-blaming cycle and overlook the fact that the majority of rapes are carried out by males who are trusted by their victims rather than by total strangers (Foundation for Rape Information and Services, 2020).

Rape-related experiences hurt the physical, psychological and social health of survivors. Unwanted pregnancies and their related issues, sexually transmitted infections, post-traumatic stress, depression and suicidal thoughts are some of the health-related consequences of rape. Rape survivors may be more likely to abuse drugs and other substances as a result of their experiences. Delaying treatment is a typical but improper health-seeking behaviour among date rape survivors, which can impair recovery and the holistic care that the experience necessitates (Ogunwale et al., 2019).

Issues relating to date rape are receiving increased public health attention in the developed world, however, efforts to bring this violent behaviour to the attention of the public in developing countries like Nigeria are still lacking (Ogunwale & Oshiname, 2017; Ogunwale et al., 2019). In Nigeria, date rape is an emotionally charged subject, and many survivors chose not to disclose their experiences or share their stories hence they are prevented from receiving formal and informal social support (Ogunwale & Oshiname, 2017). In addition, numerous victims in the country rarely seek out medical attention, legal options or psychosocial support (Ogunwale et al., 2019) hence this has hampered research in this area and mitigated the development of effective strategies to address the situation. Help-seeking behaviour is any action that involves actively seeking assistance from the medical system or dependable/trusted friends and family. It also includes asking for understanding, direction, care and general support when one is in distress or comes across difficult conditions. Help-seeking behaviour also includes an adaptable coping mechanism that involves attempts to obtain external support to deal with psychological health concerns (Dude, 2022). This encompasses sources of external support that are formal (like health services) and informal (like friends and relatives).

The prevalence of date rape in Nigeria has not been extensively investigated and frequently young adults' perceptions of sexual assault put them at risk for such crimes. The design of this study is aimed at exploring date rape experiences and help-seeking behaviour among female senior secondary school students in Abua/Odua LGA, Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Date rape is one of the serious forms of sexual assault that is not completely recognised in Africa, including Nigeria despite evidence suggesting its pervasive nature. Its prevalence rate differs from country to country which contributes to its perpetuation. Date rape poses a significant health risk to the victim. The female victims irrespective of age experience physical, social and psychological consequences. The female survivors frequently suffer from various physical and vaginal injuries as well as reproductive health issues like sexually transmitted infections, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome and unintended pregnancies. Female students who are survivors of date rape may have their social lives adversely affected as peers may ridicule them, treat the incident with levity and in some cases are stigmatized them; these may have adverse effects on their psyche and have overreaching effects on their academic performance. The researchers have observed that many female students who have been raped by their boyfriends often experience intense psychological consequences which include anxiety, depression, negative feelings about sex, feelings of helplessness as well as post-traumatic stress. They also noted that there appear to be certain perceptions that these students who had experienced these assaults either invited or encouraged these sexual assaults. There have been several studies on the subject matter in different locations in Nigeria however, not much has been done in the Abua-Odua local government area. It is on this premise that this research was carried out to

investigate date rape experiences and help-seeking behaviour among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua local government area, Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main of this study is to investigate date rape experience and help-seeking behaviour among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua Local Government Area, Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives seek to;

1. evaluate the incidence of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State
2. identify the forms of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State.
3. assess the context of date rape occurrences among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State
4. evaluate the helping-seeking behaviour after date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State

Research Questions

1. What is the incidence level of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State?
2. What are the forms of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State?
3. What is the context of date rape occurrences among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State?
4. What are the help-seeking behaviours after the date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State?

Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** There is no significant difference in the incidence of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State by class.
- H₀₂:** There is no significant difference in forms of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State by class.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant difference in the context of date rape occurrences among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State by class.
- H₀₄:** There is no significant difference in help-seeking behaviour after the date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State.

Methodology

The study utilized the descriptive survey design. It was carried out in Abua–Odua (also spelt as Abua/Odua), one of the twenty-three local government areas in Rivers State, Nigeria. Its headquarters is located in Ayama/Abua Central Abua. The study's respondents were chosen through a multistage sampling technique. Public secondary schools in the study area were separated into five strata in the first stage, and one school was randomly chosen from each stratum, resulting in the selection of five schools. The students in the senior secondary (SS) section were divided into SS I, SS II, and SS III classes in the second stage using the stratified sampling method. Then, in the third stage, eight students from each class were chosen at random to produce a total of 120 respondents for the study. Data was collected using a self-structured questionnaire. A letter of introduction was presented to the principals of selected schools for identification and permission to conduct the study. Consent forms were given to parents/guardians for permission of their wards to participate in the study. Administration was done by personal contact and lasted over two weeks. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the incidence level of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State?

Table 1 shows Incidence of Date rape among female Senior Secondary School Students

Variable	Description	Freq	%
Do you currently have a boy/man friend?	Yes	97	80.8
	No	23	19.2
How many boy/man friend(s) do you currently have?	1	86	88.7
	2	11	11.3
Have you ever had sex before?	Yes	110	91.7
	No	10	8.3
Has your boy/man friend(s) ever forcefully had sexual intercourse with you?	Yes	101	91.8
	No	9	8.2

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 1 presented the summary of the incidence of date rape among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State. The result showed that more than three-quarters (80.8%) of the female students had a boy/man friend(s) and more than three-quarter of those that had a boy/man friend agreed to have only one boy/man friend. The result also showed that a vast majority (91.7%) of the respondents have had sex before and among those that have had sex before, a vast majority (91.8%) agreed to have experienced date rape from a boy/man friend.

Research Question 2: What are the forms of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State?

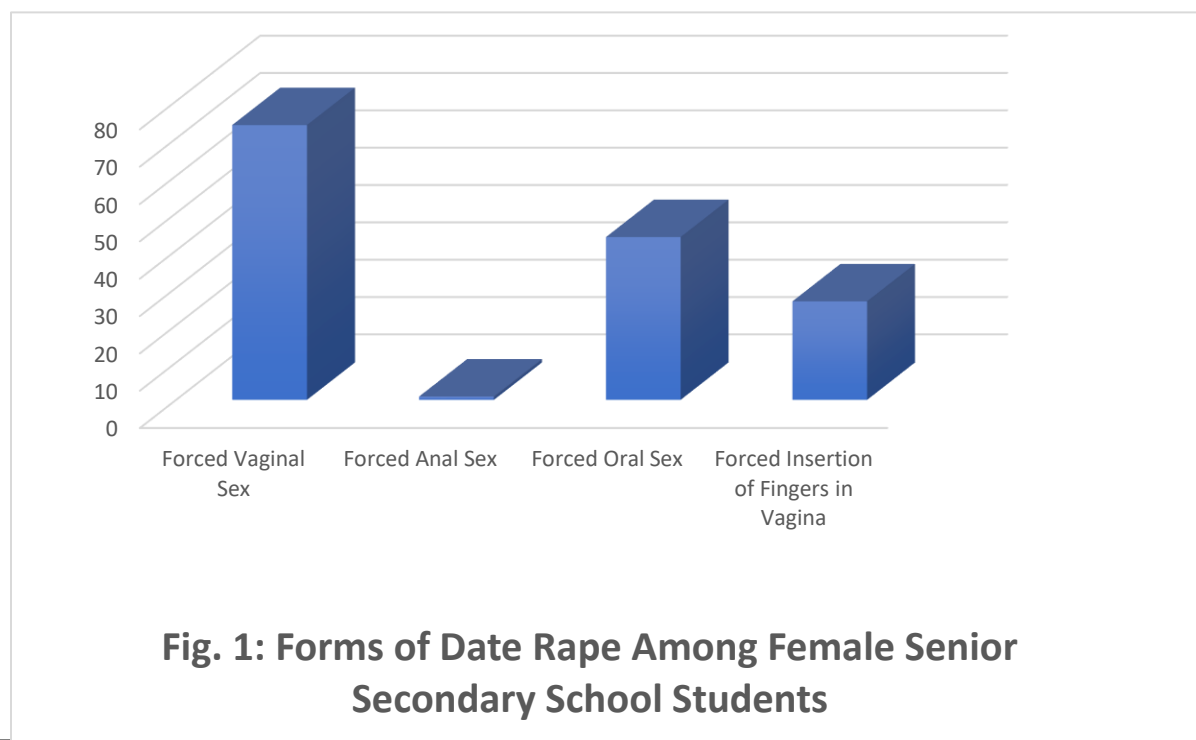


Fig. 1: Forms of Date Rape Among Female Senior Secondary School Students

Figure 1 presented the summary on forms of date rape among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State. The result showed that the highest form of date rape experienced by the students was forced vaginal sex (73.7%), and this was followed by forced oral sex (43.6%), forced insertion of fingers in the vagina (26.4%), while forced anal sex (0.9%) was the least form of date rape reported by the female students.

Research Question 3: What is the context of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State?

Table 2: Context of Date Rape Experience

Place of Date Rape Experience	Yes	
	Freq	%
I was raped at my boy/man friend's house	38	37.6
I was raped in my house	44	43.6
I was raped at a guest house/hotel room	3	3.0
I was raped at my boy/man friend's office	1	1.0
I was raped in the bush	15	14.8
Mode of Date Rape Experience		
I was raped after serious threatening	56	55.4
I was raped after physical/violent abuse (manhandled or beaten)	15	14.8
I was raped under the influence of alcohol/drug	9	8.9
I was neither threatened nor violently abused but was raped	21	20.9
Mode of Objection to Date Rape		
I only verbally resisted by saying "NO" or PLEASE DON'T	69	68.3
I physically resisted by fighting, beating, biting, screaming etc	13	12.9
I combined verbal and physical resistance	19	18.8

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The summary on the context of the date rape experience as presented in Table 2 above showed that the majority of the date rape took place in the female student's houses (43.6%). The result also showed that more than one-third of the female students were raped at a boy/man friend's house (37.6%), while some were raped in the bush (14.8%). The result further showed that more than half of the female students (55.4%) agreed they were raped after serious threatening, less than one-quarter (20.9%) agreed they were neither threatened nor violently abused, but were raped, a fraction (14.8%) agreed they were raped after physical/violence abuse (manhandled or beaten), and 8.9% agreed they were raped under the influence of alcohol. In addition, more than two-thirds (68.3%) of the female students agreed that they only verbally resisted by saying "NO" or PLEASE DON'T, 12.9% physically resisted by fighting, beating, biting, screaming etc., while 18.8% combined verbal and physical resistance.

Research Questions 3: What are the help-seeking behaviours after date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State?

Table 3: Help-seeking Behaviour after Date Rape Experience

Variable	Description	Freq	%
Did you seek medical assistance after the date rape experience?	Yes	47	46.5
	No	54	53.5
If your answer to question 1 above is “NO”, what was your reason for not seeking medical assistance?	Fear of ridicule and stigma	6	11.1
	I did not sustain an injury	0	0.0
	I treated myself at home	31	57.4
	He used condom	12	22.2
	No reason	0	0.0
Did you seek legal assistance after the date rape experience?	Yes	19	18.8
	No	82	81.2
If your answer to question 3 above is “NO”, what was your reason for not seeking legal assistance?	I did not regard it as rape	6	7.3
	Fear of ridicule and stigma	33	40.7
	It was not our first time	12	14.8
	Because I love him	31	38.3
	I did not know if he was right or wrong	0	0.0
Did you seek for counselling after the date rape experience?	Yes	36	35.6
	No	65	64.4
If your answer to question 5 above is “NO”, what was your reason for not seeking counselling service?	It was not necessary	7	10.8
	Fear of ridicule and stigma	17	26.2
	I still love him	9	13.8
	It was not our first time having sex	14	21.5
	Did not know who to confide in for counselling	18	27.7

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 3 presented the summary of the help-seeking behaviour of female senior secondary school students after the date rape experience. The result showed that more than half (53.5%) of date rape victims did not seek medical assistance, more than half (57.4%) of those that did not seek medical assistance did not because they treated themselves at home, less than one-quarter (22.2%) did not seek medical assistance because the perpetrator used condom, while a fraction (11.1%) said the fear of ridicule and stigma was the reason for not seeking medical assistance. The result also showed that the majority (81.2%) of date rape victims did not seek legal assistance, and the foremost reason given was fear of ridicule and stigma (40.7%). Other reasons given for not seeking legal assistance were because I still love him (38.3%), it was not or first time (14.8%), and I did not regard it as rape (7.3%). It was further observed from the result that less than two-third (64.4%) of date rape victims did not seek counselling after the date rape experience, and the major reason for not seeking counselling after their experience was, “I did not know who to confide in for counselling” (27.7%), fears of ridicule (26.2%), “it was not our first time of having sex” (21.5%), “I still love him” (13.8%), and “it was not necessary” (10.8%).

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in incidence of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State by class.

Table 4: ANOVA on the difference in incidence of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students by class

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	4.624	1	4.624	5.913	0.017	Significant
Within Groups	84.466	108	0.782			
Total	89.091	109				

The summary of ANOVA on the different incidences of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State as presented in Table 4 showed there is a significant difference ($F=5.913$, $p=0.017$) in the incidence of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the incidence of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State by class was rejected at 0.05 alpha level.

2. There is no significant difference in forms of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State by class.

Table 5: ANOVA on the difference in forms of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students by class

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	9.867	2	4.934	3.288	0.041	Significant
Within Groups	147.043	98	1.500			
Total	156.911	100				

Table 5 presented the summary of ANOVA on differences in forms of date rape experience among senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State. The result showed that there is a significant difference ($F=3.288$, $p=0.041$) in the forms of date rape experience among senior secondary school students by class. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the forms of date rape experience among senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State by class was rejected at 0.05 alpha level.

3. There is no significant difference in the context of date rape occurrences among senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State by class.

Table 6: ANOVA on the difference in context of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students by class

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	37.157	2	18.579	12.858	0.000	Significant
Within Groups	140.153	98	1.430			
Total	177.310	100				

The summary of ANOVA on difference in the context of date rape occurrences among female senior secondary school students as presented in Table 6 showed that there is a significant difference ($F=12.858$, $p=0.000$) in the context of date rape occurrences among female senior secondary school students by class. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the context of date rape occurrences among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State by class was rejected at 0.05 alpha level.

hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in context of date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State by class was rejected at 0.05 alpha level.

4. There is no significant difference in helping-seeking behaviour after the date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State.

Table 7: ANOVA on the difference in helping-seeking behaviour after date rape experience among female senior secondary school students by class

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value	Decision
Between Groups	7.912	3	2.637	3.411	0.021	Significant
Within Groups	74.999	97	0.773			
Total	82.911	100				

Table 7 presented the summary of ANOVA on helping-seeking behaviour after date rape experience among female senior secondary school students. The result showed that there is a significant difference ($F= 3.411$, $p= 0.021$) in helping-seeking behaviour after date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State by class. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in helping-seeking behaviour after date rape experience among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State by class was rejected at 0.05 alpha level.

Discussion

The findings shown in Table 1 revealed that more than three-quarters (80.8%) of female students had a boy/man friend(s) and more than three-quarters of those that had boy/man friend agreed to have only one boy/man friend, while a fraction (11.3%) agreed to have two boy/man friends. The result also revealed that the majority (91.7%) of the female students have had sex before; and among those that have had sex before, the majority (91.8%) agreed to have experienced date rape from a boy/man friend. This finding implied that date rape is a very common relationship experience among students and adolescents in the study area. This agreed with Ybarra and Langhinrichsen-Rohling (2019) who reported a high prevalence of date rape and violence among adolescents and associated the high incidence with the acceptance of relationship violence and pressure to have sex in brief among adolescents as normal. A similar study by Aborisade (2016) also reported a high incidence of date rape among women and linked the high incidence to emotions and societal beliefs (myth about sex).

Figure 2 revealed the highest form of date rape experienced by female senior secondary school students was forced vaginal sex and this was followed by forced oral sex, forced anal sex was the least form of date rape reported by the female students. This finding implied that the majority of the date rape experience among the female students was forced vaginal sexual intercourse. The finding is in tandem with Ogunwale et al., (2012) who reported that forced vaginal sex was the major form of date rape, followed by forced insertion of fingers in the vagina and forced oral sex.

Table 2 revealed that the majority of the date rape took place in the female student's house. The result also revealed that more than one-third of the respondents were raped at a boy/manfriend's house, and some were raped in the bush. It was further revealed that more than half of the female students were raped after serious threats, less than one-quarter were neither threatened nor violently abused but were raped, and a fraction were raped after physical/violent abuse and under the influence of alcohol. The majority of the victims only verbally resisted by saying "No" or Please don't, a fraction physically resisted by fighting and others combined verbal and physical resistance. The finding is partly at variance with Ogunwale et al. (2012) and Laima et al. (2020) who reported that the majority of date rape took place in the perpetrators' house/office. However, there was agreement in the area of being raped after threatening and after physical/violent abuse. Singh et al. (2014) reported that perpetrators of date rape sometimes induced their victims with alcohol and other related drugs to aid their crime. A similar study by Lee et al. (2018) revealed that female students were very opposed to dating rape in any guise and this could them make interpret innocent moves with a sexual lens.

Table 3 revealed that more than half of date rape victims did not seek medical assistance, and more than half of those that declined medical assistance claimed they treated themselves at home. The fact that the perpetrator used a condom was one of the reasons for not seeking medical care, another reason was the fear of ridicule and stigma. It was also revealed that the majority of date rape victims did not seek legal help, and the foremost reason given was fear of ridicule and stigma and more than one-third declined legal assistance because they still love him (the perpetrator). It was further observed that about two-thirds of date rape victims did not seek counselling after the date rape experience, and among the major reasons for their decline were not knowing who to confide in for counselling, fears of ridicule and 'it was not our first time of having sex'. The finding implied that the victims' help-seeking behaviours were low due to a lack of trust, fear of ridicule and stigma, and acceptance of sexual abuse as normal in a relationship. The finding gave credence to Murphy et al. (2020) who reported high non-disclosure and poor help-seeking behaviour among rape victims. They reported violence among the perpetrators and argued that the severity of violence increased the likelihood of disclosure and help-seeking behaviours of victims. A similar study by Leonardsson and Sebastian (2017) also revealed the likelihood of disclosure and help-seeking is predicated on the severity of the injury the victims sustained. They further argued that the level of education increases the chances of help-seeking among victims of date rape.

Hypotheses tested at 0.05 alpha level revealed there was significant difference in incidence of date rape experience ($F= 5.913, p= 0.017$), forms of date rape ($F= 3.288, p= 0.041$), context of date rape occurrences $F= 12.858, p= 0.000$), and help-seeking behaviour after date rape experience ($F= 3.411, p= 0.021$) among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State by class. In a similar study, Ogunwale et al., (2012) reported a significantly high incidence of date rape among older students which is at variance with the findings of this study. The variance could be attributed to the fact that adolescents attained early sexual activity now than when their study was conducted. Ogunwale and Oshiname (2017) and Laima et al., (2020) reported significant differences in the location of date rape with perpetrators' residences the major place for date rape to occur. In addition, Dumbili and Williams (2017) reported that some perpetrators of date rape coerced their victims to drink alcohol and carry out vaginal penetration when their victims were inebriated. Murphy et al., (2020) argued that fears of stigma, poverty, severity of violence, and closeness to perpetrator significantly influenced help-seeking behaviours of date rape victims.

Conclusion

Based on the finding of this study, it was concluded that the incidence of date rape was high among female senior secondary school students in Abua-Odua LGA, Rivers State. The majority of the students were sexually active and many had multiple partners (boy/man friend). The most form of date rape in the study area was forced vaginal entry; the majority of the victims claimed that the incident occurred in their homes and that they did not seek medical assistance. Reasons for not seeking medical care included the fact that the perpetrator used a condom, fear of ridicule and stigma. The majority of the victims did not seek counselling after the date rape experience, and among the major reasons for their decline was not knowing who to confide in for counselling and fears of being ridiculed.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Date rape is an abuse and violation of human rights. Thus, relevant authorities should use extant laws of the land to punish perpetrators to deter the would-be perpetrators.
2. Target-specific educational programmes that centred on healthy dating and relationships and issues around it should organise seminars delivered by in-school management and NGOs to educate students on danger signs and how to protect themselves from date rapists.
3. The poor help-seeking behaviour observed among the date rape victims is a clarion call on all to empathise with- and support victims of rape. Providing them with the most needed emotional and psychological support will encourage them to seek appropriate medical help, legal help, and psychological help (through counselling). This will prevent or mitigate post-traumatic disorder that might ensue as a consequence of the rape experience.
4. Parents should endeavour to provide emotional and psychological support to their wards, providing appropriate guidance through the confusing period of adolescence to make good choices in their relationships as they progress in their educational careers.

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