

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AS DETERMINANT OF ATTITUDE TOWARDS DATE RAPE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTHWEST, NIGERIA

Oluwafemi O. Babatunde⁷ and Ajibola O. Falaye, Ph.D⁸

Abstract

This study investigated the influence of demographic variables on attitude towards date rape among undergraduates in public-owned universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The research was designed to find out the combinational effect of independent variables (gender, religion, age, parental socio-economic status, and parental education) on dependent variable (attitude towards date rape), and to measure the prevalence of rape supportive attitudes among undergraduate students. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design of the ex-post facto type. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the universities, while convenience sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. A convenience sample of 1,500 university students (700 male and 800 female) was selected. Age ranged between 18 and 40 years in males ($M = 22.39$; $SD = 4.63$) and females ($M = 21.89$; $SD = 4.10$). The College Date Rape Attitudes Survey (CDRAS) scale having Cronbach's alpha of 0.83 was used for data collection. Three research questions were raised and tested at 0.05 level of significance, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression analysis. The result of the analysis indicated that sex ($\beta = -.357$, $p < 0.05$) was significant with attitude towards date rape while age ($\beta = -.022$, $p > 0.05$), religion ($\beta = .025$, $p > 0.05$), parental educational level ($\beta = .030$, $p > 0.05$), family status ($\beta = .016$, $p > 0.05$), parent's status ($\beta = -.022$, $p > 0.05$) and parent's socio economic status ($\beta = -.010$, $p > 0.05$) was not significant with attitude towards date rape. Based on these findings, it was recommended that parents, government, school administrators, counselling psychologists and other stakeholders in the education industry should give sufficient attention to implementing intervention programmes that could help shape attitude of undergraduate students towards date rape and sexual violence in general.

Keywords: Date Rape, Demographic Variables, Attitude, Undergraduate Students, Public Universities

Introduction

With the growing media report of rape cases in Nigeria, rape and indeed date rape have become matters of urgent public health concern in the country. Even though Aborisade and

⁷ Oluwafemi O. Babatunde lectures at Department of Counseling and Human Development Studies, University of Ibadan. ofemibabatunde@yahoo.com

⁸ Ajibola O. Falaye, Ph.D, lectures at Department of Counseling and Human Development Studies, University of Ibadan. omololajibs@gmail.com

Fayemi (2013) contended that available statistics is alarmingly unreflective of the perceived rate in the country, the phenomenon in Nigerian tertiary institutions have not been adequately investigated, especially among at-risk female students (Oshiname, Olamide & Ajuwon, 2013).

Undoubtedly, the prevalence of date rape is quite a disturbing phenomenon, but even more importantly is the perception and attitude people hold towards it. Jensen (1993) already noted that a review of relevant literatures and theories indicates the prevalence of acquaintance rape on college campuses occurs largely because many undergraduates have attitudes that tend to support it. Oftentimes, people's perception and or acceptance of rape traceable to their subscription of certain myths about rape, rape victims and rape perpetrators. Burt (1983) has highlighted that substantial acceptance of rape myths by individuals implies an attitude of being accepting of rape.

The importance of attitude in predicting human behaviours has been highlighted by researchers overtime (Sanbonmatsu & Fazio, 1990; Bassili & Roy, 1998). Attitude refers to a person's beliefs and feelings that lead to certain action. In other words, a person's attitude toward something is defined by favourable or unfavourable evaluative reactions, whether expressed in ideas, feelings, or impulses to act (Olson & Zanna, 1993). Hence, in some ways our attitudes are powerful tools to evaluate the world and react towards situations and circumstances (Olson, 2015).

With specific reference to date rape or any other form of rape, however, scholars have posited that attitudes and beliefs, especially about rape, should be considered when seeking to explain triggers of aggressive sexual behaviour of males towards females and vice versa (Echeburúa, Sarasua, Zubizarreta, & de Corral, 2009; Frese, Moya, & Megías, 2004). Tolerance of rape, exhibited in the denial or justification of male sexual aggressiveness toward women, is one of these attitudes. Evidence has shown a link between rape-supportive attitudes and sexual aggressiveness (Lottes, 1991), with beliefs like "rape occurs because women enjoy sexual violence and are responsible for its prevention," "rape occurs because sex rather than power is the primary motivation for rape," and "rape occurs because women enjoy sexual violence and are responsible for its prevention," among others. The implication of these beliefs is that it may promote aggressive sexual behaviours towards women while also encouraging tolerance of abuse. Therefore, understanding individuals' attitude towards date rape, is the first step towards its prevention and formulation of effective treatment programmes for victims (Chang, 1998).

Researchers already identified several factors that influence attitudes towards date rape, drawing from samples resident in the United States (Kassing et al, 2005; Holcomb et al. 1991; Lanier and Elliot 1997), with gender being the most frequently examined variable. This is because findings showed that males are more likely to be tolerant of date rape-supportive attitudes or even blame the victims after date rape. These attitudes are traceable to the patriarchal structure of the contemporary society (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2005; Warsaw and Parrot, 1991). The relationship between religion and attitude towards rape was investigated but not significant relationship could be established (Nagel et al., 2005). In some

ways, religion perhaps plays a significant role in the convictions, beliefs and attitude individual's holds towards certain events, persons, and happenings around them. Hence, through this study it would be gratifying to ascertain the relationship between the two concepts, particularly against the backdrop of the well-known anti-sexual violence stance held by Christianity, Islam, and other widely practiced religions.

Similarly, Mori et al. (1995) though corroborated the fact that gender is significant, also revealed that age could predict attitude acceptance of rape myths. The possible relationship between the age and attitude towards a phenomenon such as date rape could be reflected in the understanding that age and indeed maturity plays a critical role in how individuals evaluate and respond to the world around. This is particularly noteworthy among youth whose explorative tendencies are quite remarkable at this phase of life. Whereas Abeid et al. (2015) found that there could be a predictive effect of social economic status on attitude towards rape and child abuse. The thinking here is that the amount of deprivation or otherwise experienced by the individual or even the family climate he grows up could shape his attitude towards life in many ways.

Curiously, results of years of research focusing on negative rape victim perception does not suggest a decline of that these judgments about rape (Anderson, 2007). The reason for this is still confounding though. But what seems obvious is that there is need more investigations to be carried out on the likely factors that could determine the attitude towards date rape. This is the gap this researcher hopes to fill. Hence, the researcher shall investigate how demographic variables such as gender, religion, age, marital status, parental educational and socio-economic status, and others act as determinant of attitude towards date rape among tertiary institutions undergraduates. The target population of this study is important since they are at their prime sexually.

Already, Oshiname et al (2013) investigated the knowledge and views of date rape (DR) among female University of Ibadan undergraduates. The study found that out of 610 female participants, 66.9% had perceptions tolerant of date rape; the study is nonetheless limited in some ways. Not only was the study focused on female undergraduate students alone, but the study was also equally silent on the extent to which demographic variables influenced the attitudes held by the students. Hence, the current study hopes to build up on this to capture the pulse of the sampled population on the phenomenon and the demographic factors motivating same.

Literatures are replete with the affirmation that rape is a major problem on campuses, with date rape or acquaintance rape being the most predominant. Additionally, Russo (2000) and Lohman (2001) asserted that other types of rape, such as acquaintance rape, marital rape, and stranger rape, are outnumbered by date rape.

According to Jensen (2003), there are ample evidence from literature and theory that suggests that date rape on tertiary institutions occurs because undergraduates still hold negative attitudes supportive of it. Hence, the importance of the current study, which investigates the attitude of both male and female undergraduates. The strength of the study is underscored by

the fact that it seeks to explore the combined knowledge and perceptions of both male and female undergraduates. This is because female students' preventative and help-seeking behaviors are influenced by their knowledge and perceptions of the issue (Oshiname et al, 2013). It is also important that the perception of males towards the phenomenon is appropriately tracked, especially against the backdrop of consistent date-rape consenting myth that males hold in a patriarchal dominant Africa and elsewhere.

More worrisome is the fact that in recent times statistics of sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned abortion and induced abortion appear to be on the rise among undergraduate students. Orij, Jeremiah and Kasso (2009) put the prevalence of abortion among undergraduate students at 47percent among 451 undergraduate students' samples in the University of Calabar. It is not unlikely that experiences such as forceful sexual intercourse and other exploratory sexual behaviours must have contributed to this. Worthy of note too is the fact that the attendant emotional and physical typified by physical injuries, depression, fear, insecurity among others make this study worth undertaking. Some victims with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) could even drop out of school in response to the overwhelming trauma accompanying the untoward experience, even with the debilitating effects on the significant others in their lives. They may also engage in retaliatory behaviours such as sexual promiscuity, robbery or even hooliganism. Expectedly, all these behaviours are not without some negative impact on the economy of the nation.

Consequently, with this study we shall investigate the place of demographic variables as determinant of attitude towards date rape among tertiary institutions undergraduate.

Research Questions

- i. What is the existing relationship between the independent variables (gender, age, family structure, religion, parental education, and socio-economic status) and attitude towards date rape among undergraduate students in public universities in Southwest Nigeria?
- ii. What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (gender, age, family structure, religion, parental education, and socio-economic status) to the prediction of attitude towards date rape among undergraduate students in public universities Southwest Nigeria?
- iii. What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables to the prediction of attitude towards date rape?

Methodology

The population for this study comprises all undergraduates in the University of Ibadan, Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, and Obafemi Awolowo University, all in Southwest, Nigeria. The three universities are all federal government-owned public institution.

The design employed in this study is a descriptive survey design that utilizes an ex-post type. The researcher was particularly interested in knowing the predicting influence of the independent variables on the dependent variables without manipulating the independent variable.

This study adopts a simple random sampling technique to select the universities, while convenience sampling technique was used to select the respondents. A convenience sample of 1,500 university students (700 men and 800 women) was selected. The age of participants ranged between 18 and 40 years in males ($M = 22.39$; $SD = 4.63$) and females ($M = 21.89$; $SD = 4.10$). All participants were university undergraduates from three public universities in Southwest Nigeria.

The College Date Rape Attitudes Survey (CDRAS) was used for data collection, and it has 17 items measuring attitudes related to date rape in the context of heterosexual college dating. The items are positively worded. On a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree, all items on the measure were rated. A student with a high score is less tolerant of date rape. Cronbach's alpha for the CDRAS scale was 0.83 with 17 statements (Lanier and Green 2006). In the College Date Rape Attitudes scale, there are four separate factors: entitlement, blame shifting, established roles, and extreme sexual excitement.

With the researcher, two research assistants were employed to administer the instrument in various halls of residence in the universities after due approval from the relevant authorities. Consent of respondents were sought. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed.

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was employed to find the relationship between the variables. The combined influence of the independent factors on the dependent variable was investigated using Multiple Regression Analysis, while the hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance to determine the extent and strength of relationship between the independent variables and dependent variables.

Results

Research Question 1

What is the existing relationship between the independent variables (gender, age, family structure, religion, parental education, and socio-economic status) and attitude towards date rape among undergraduate students in public universities in Southwest Nigeria?

Table 1. Mean Standard Deviation and Correlation Matrix of the Demographic Variables and Attitude Towards Date Rape

Var	Mean	Std. Dev.	Date rape	Sex	Age	Religion	PEL	FS	PS	PSES
Date rape	45.18	8.42	1.000							
Sex	1.48	.500	.354**	1.000						
Age	1.54	.592	.019	-.117**	1.000					
Religion	1.17	.374	.043	-.040	.019	1.000				
PEL	3.14	1.041	.025	.020	-.062	.023	1.000			
FS	1.15	.356	.029	-.045	-.171**	.187**	-.012	1.000		
PS	1.28	.787	-.005	-.048	.050	-.045	-.003	.180**	1.000	
PSES	1.85	.473	.012	-.076**	.157**	.027	-.070*	.071*	.095*	1.000

** Sig. at .01 level, * Sig. at .05 level

The table 1 shows that there is a negative significant relationship between sex ($r=.354^{**}$, $P(.000) < .05$) were found significant with date rape among undergraduate university, while age ($r=.019$, $P(.502) > .05$), religion ($r=.043$, $P(.118) > .05$), parental educational level (PEL) ($r=.025$, $P(.359) > .05$), family status ($r=.029$, $P(.299) > .05$), parent's status ($r=-.005$, $P(.844) > .05$), and parent's socio economic status ($r=.012$, $P(.675) > .05$) were not significant with attitude towards date rape among undergraduate students.

Research Question 2

What is the joint contribution of the independent variables (gender, age, family structure, religion, parental education, and socio-economic status) to the prediction of attitude towards date rape among undergraduate students in public universities Southwest Nigeria?

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis on sample data

Multiple R = .358^a
 Multiple R² = .128
 Adjusted R² = .124
 Std. Error of Estimate = 7.878

ANOVA

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	11822.503	7	1688.929	27.211	.000 ^b
Residual	80314.625	1294	62.067		
Total	92137.128	1301			

Significant at 0.05 level

It was found that the joint contributions of independent variables (sex, age, religion, parental educational level, family status, parent's status, and parent's socio-economic status) was significant ($F(7, 1294) = 27.211$; $R = .358^a$, $R^2 = .128$, $Adj. R^2 = .124$, $p < 0.05$). The total variation accounted for by the independent variables was 12.4% while the remaining 87.6% accounted for unidentified potential predictors of dependent variable (attitude towards rape).

Research Question 3

What is the relative contribution of each of the independent variables to the prediction of attitude towards date rape?

Table 3: Relative contributions of each of the independent variables to the predictions of dependent variable (attitude towards date rape) among undergraduate students.

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta contributions (β)		
(Constant)	53.296	1.680		31.721	.000
Sex	6.014	.442	.357	13.620	.000
Age	-.311	.381	-.022	-.816	.414
Religion	.566	.597	.025	.948	.343
Parental Educational Level	.244	.211	.030	1.157	.248
Family Status	.388	.645	.016	.601	.548
Parent's Status	-.238	.284	-.022	-.837	.403
Parent's socio-economic status	-.171	.471	-.010	-.362	.717

It was observed that sex ($\beta = .357$, $p < 0.05$) was significant with attitude towards date rape while age ($\beta = -.022$, $p > 0.05$), religion ($\beta = .025$, $p > 0.05$), parental educational level ($\beta = .030$, $p > 0.05$), family status ($\beta = .016$, $p > 0.05$), parent's status ($\beta = -.022$, $p > 0.05$) and parent's socio economic status ($\beta = -.010$, $p > 0.05$) was not significant with attitude towards date rape. The table further reveals that it was only the sex that had relative contribution on the prediction of date rape among undergraduate students.

Discussion of the Findings

Results showed a significant relationship between sex and attitude towards date rape among undergraduate university, while age, religion, parental educational level, family status, parent's status, and parent's socio-economic status, were not significant with date rape among undergraduate students. This result shows consistency with a similar investigation carried out by Sierra, Guitierrez, Quintilla, Bemudez & Buena-Casal (2010) an indeed many other works in this regard. In their study, Sierra et al (2010) found that it was only gender out of the total socio-demographic variables investigated that predicted rape supportive attitudes

among samples from Salvador, supporting the often-held belief that gender plays a most critical role in shaping sexuality.

It was also found that the joint contribution of independent variables (sex, age, religion, parental educational level, family status, parent's status, and parent's socio-economic status) was significant. However, the total variation accounted for by the independent variables was 12.4% while the remaining 87.6% might be because of extraneous variables not controlled by the dependent variable. Since there is paucity specific research ascertaining the relationship between demographic variables and attitude towards date rape among undergraduate population, hence, finding a benchmark studies in this regard are difficult. Consequently, further research efforts would be needed to ascertain what the other significant factors could be.

Results also indicated a significant difference in the gender of the respondents and their attitude towards date rape. It further revealed that male undergraduate students showed higher mean on their attitude towards date rape than female undergraduate students. Curiously, this result is in alignment with several studies that conducted (Preira and Graca, 2014; Mori et al., 1995; Golge, Yavuz, Muderrisoglu & Yavuz, 2003), but inconsistent with other findings (Jensen, 1993; et al, 2015). What is significant, however, is that generally, several investigations have consistently revealed that males are more consenting, tolerant, and supportive of rape myths than their female counterparts. Within the context of the result obtained in the current study, one could suggest that the result is probably hinged on the cultural reality of Nigeria as a predominantly patriarchal society, where men believe that women be subservient to them sexually, as indeed in other aspects of life.

Furthermore, results showed there is no significant relationship between their age of respondents and their attitude towards date rape. This contrasts with the finding of Abeid, et al (2015), who, in a Tanzanian study, found that as people became older, their belief in rape myths and acceptance of sexual assault attitudes declined. Hence, age could influence attitude towards rape. However, the current result aligns with the result obtained by Sierra et al (2010) investigated the elements linked to pro-rape attitudes; they found that it was only gender out of all the socio-demographic variables that predicted rape supportive attitudes. Possible reason for this outcome could be hinged the owing to the prevailing exposure in the tertiary institution environment, may undergraduate find themselves being swayed by the fad obtainable in their environment and this in many ways influences their attitude to phenomena.

On the relative relationship between religiosity and attitude towards date rape of undergraduate students, result showed that there is no significant difference between religiosity and attitude towards date rape among undergraduate students. This finding agrees with Boakye (2009), but differs from Wagel et al (2005), who discovered a substantial link between religious inclination and attitudes toward rape victims. Possible explanation for this finding could be hinged on the differences in the samples employed for their studies and the fact that undergraduate respondents are sufficiently educated not to be swayed by religious sentiments but rather by both their intellectual and emotional dispositions.

The findings also revealed that among undergraduate students, there is no significant correlation between academic level and attitude toward date rape. This result however is in contrast with the findings of Abeid et al (2015) and Oshiname et (2013) whose findings reveal that increment in academic level of respondents could also be linked with less consenting attitudes towards rape and even the knowledge of it respectively. On the other hand, the current result could be justified with the explanation that most studies on attitude towards rape tend to reveal that aside gender no other demographic variable plays a statistically conspicuous role in predicting attitude towards it.

Parental socioeconomic status and attitude towards date rape among undergraduate students also showed no significant relationship. This result could possibly be explained by the fact that irrespective of the economic standing, undergraduate students would often display attitude that seem to be in tandem with their individual prejudices on not on the strength of their parental economic standing, after all tertiary education itself is a leveller. When Chudasama et al. (2013) measured attitudes and myths about rape among medical students in Rajkot, India, they discovered no link between rape myth acceptance and residence or socioeconomic class. Anderson, et al. (1997) showed increased rape acceptability for men, older persons, and those from lower socioeconomic class backgrounds based on their findings of a meta-analytic evaluation of 72 studies of rape attitudes and individual variations that were statistically synthesized.

Family structure and attitude towards date rape among undergraduate students showed no significant difference. This contrasted with what Alarape and Lawal (2011) obtained that youth from polygamous families had more favourable feelings about rape than those from monogamous families. This result of this finding could perhaps be explicable against the backdrop that the participants are sufficiently matured to hold a position to the phenomenon under study without the overriding influence of their family structure. There is dearth of research findings that have examined the relationship between family structure and attitude towards date rape. It is hoped that the findings of this current work will fill this yawning vacuum.

Results further revealed that 78.3% of the respondents showed attitude supportive of date rape. From all indications, this prevalence rate is quite high and indeed lives so much to be desired about the possible extent of sexual violence obtainable among the population studied.

Conclusion

This study investigated the predictive effect of demographic variables on attitude towards date rape among undergraduate students at universities in Southwest Nigeria, with recommendations and suggestions for further studies submitted.

Recommendations

- Since our findings revealed that there is significant relationship between gender and attitude towards date rape, it is therefore important that specialized advocacy

programmes be implemented for undergraduate students in the country, with due consideration for the gender of the participants.

- Similarly, there should be clear-cut policies and practical, yet implementable laws enacted by not only the various arms of government and the institutions of higher learning on incidences of sexual violence in the society and the institutions of higher learning respectively.
- Counseling psychologists, health workers and security agents working among undergraduate students would also need to be sufficiently equipped and alerted on how to handle cases relating to date rape and allied matters.
- Similarly, government orientation agencies in the ministries of education, information and youth and social affairs should also embark on rigorous sensitization programmes of the populace on the need for adults' value the dignity of both sexes.

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