

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/366323369>

Rape and sexual violence in three Nigerian postcolonial play-texts

Chapter · December 2022

CITATIONS

0

2 authors:



Abdulrasheed Abiodun Adeoye - Formerly Rasheed Abiodun Musa
University of Ilorin

73 PUBLICATIONS 32 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



Femi Yinka Atteh
University of Ilorin

2 PUBLICATIONS 0 CITATIONS

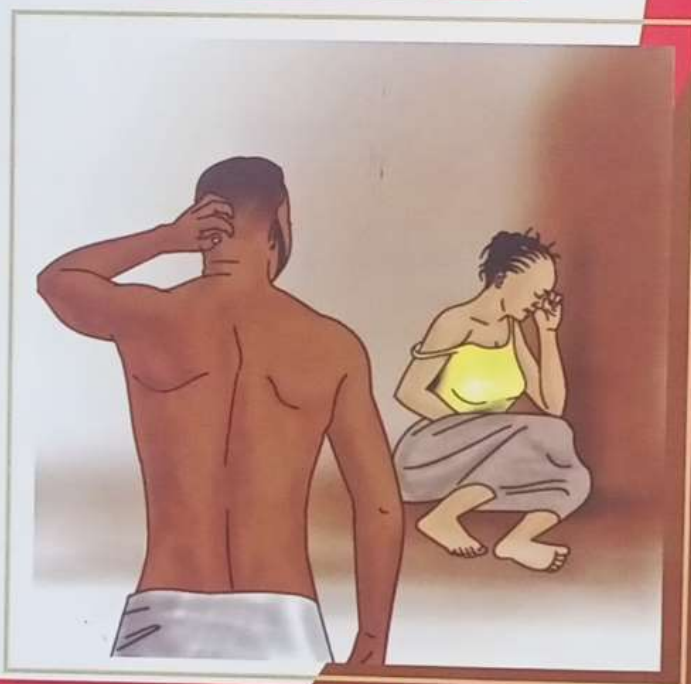
SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Mask of Fire: ceremony of power by LeeYunTeak [View project](#)

CULTURE AND **SEXUAL** VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA



EMMANUEL SAMU DANDAURA
ADO MUHAMMED YAHUZA



Published by

National Institute for Cultural Orientation,
23 Kigoma Street, Wuse Zone 7, Abuja, Nigeria
www. <https://nico.gov.ng>
email: nicopublications@gmail.com

© Emmanuel Samu Dandaura and Ado Muhammed Yahuza

First Published in 2022



The National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO) is Nigeria's prime specialized federal public institution responsible for academic research and training on Nigeria's diverse cultures. NICO was established by Act 93 of 1993, as a joint initiative of the Nigerian Government and UNESCO during the World Decade for Cultural Development Programme (1988-1997), which emphasized the cultural dimension of development. The idea is also enunciated in the Cultural Policy for Nigeria (1988). As the apex cultural research and training institution, NICO projects Nigeria's contributions to world civilization through research, documentation and other cultural services, both tangible and intangible.

ISBN: 978-978-57910-4-4

Disclaimer:

The editors have done their best to ensure that the content of this book meets the highest possible standard. However, the individual authors are responsible for the accuracy of the content of their chapters and have undertaken to ensure that no portion of their contributions infringes upon any law or regulation including the copyright of others. In case of any infringement, the individual authors shall be liable and would also indemnify the National Institute for Cultural Orientation and the editors for any damage caused by their acts of omission or commission.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever, stored in retrieval systems or be transmitted in any form, by any means; mechanical, electronic, photocopying or otherwise without the expressed written consent of the copyright holders.

Printed by: Osborn Global Concepts

RAPE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THREE NIGERIAN POSTCOLONIAL PLAY-TEXTS

AbdulRasheed Abiodun Adeoye and Femi Yinka Atteh

Introduction

There is no contestation on the evils of rape and sexual violence locally, nationally and universally. However, there are many contestations on the causes, forms and nature of rape and sexual violence. These contestations are indeed products of differences in culture, human evolution, myth and modernity. Culture and myth are intertwined and are organic even though inelastic. The concepts of culture and myth also find their ways into modernity, and in the present form, modernity has grown through series of stages, standing now to celebrate the intellectual castle of postcoloniality with its attendant variation in literature and literary studies.

Consequently, postcolonial texts have mitigated upon the dangers and evils associated with rape and sexual violence all over the world. In Nigeria, there are series of postcolonial texts that dramatise the evils of these two concepts. From Clark Bekederemo, the pacesetter on women matters to Femi Osofisan who is reputed to be the arrow head of women liberation struggle and recent Nigerian dramatists such as Ahmed Yerima, Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh, 'Bayo Afolabi, Oludolapo Ojediran and so on, the issues of women struggle which have been built on many forms of feminism cannot be overemphasised. Published play-texts from these postcolonial dramatists have also mostly succeeded to treat the dangers of rape and sexual violence through different thematic concerns within the borderlines of a nation in search of healing. The healing is clear and unambiguous in context. It is healing from rape, healing from depression caused by rape, healing from sexual violence, healing from death as a result of sexual violence and general healing to revive our lost culture that is mostly against sexual violence in Nigeria. Through content analysis and within the gaze of postcolonial theatre, this paper, therefore, examines 'Bayo Afolabi's *The Misogynist (Hater of Women)*, Ahmed Yerima's *Pari* and Oludolapo Ojediran's *Miss! Mrs!! Ms!!!* as mitigatory texts against rape and sexual violence in Nigeria.

Contestations on Rape and Sexual Violence

Rape is an act of force or subjugation of intention against the victim. The victim here could be the girl-child, the male-child, man or woman; embracing in the process, the genderless nature of rape universally. Sexual violence can also be seen as series of violence induced actions that are engineered by perpetrators to get undue advantage of their victims for sex or sexual action. Rape is a Latin word, *rapere* which contextually means; "to snatch, to grab, to carry off" (Burgess-Jackson, 1999 and Saunders, 2001). Sadly, there are different types of rape that are generally recognised in scholarship. In fact, UCSB's Sexinfo (2010), Gary (2011) and Rosdahl (2012) have

agreed that the sexual assault of rape includes; "date rape, gang rape, marital rape, incestual rape, child sexual abuse, prison rape, acquaintance rape, war rape and statutory rape".

In Nigeria, we also have one major form of rape which is known as ritual rape. Indeed, a virgin-lady can be raped to perform ritual of money making. Men are also expected to sleep with their dead wives in some southern part of Nigeria. The breasts or private parts of women or ladies have also been supposedly used by their fellow human beings for money rituals. The recent activities of *Yahoo Boys* who have grown into *Yahoo Plus* (an euphemism for ritual dominations of their surroundings or people around them) and so on, are sad testimonies on the Nigerian nation.

Indeed, consent is a key factor in the sexual process. Once any of the party is not interested or he or she is declining, lack of consent is akin to sexual assault and most assaults often lead to rape. Rape is indeed taking by force, what a partner is not willing to give naturally. Rape is a violation of one's integrity and it is anti-culture, anti-human, socially-repressible and biologically dangerous to the human body. This violation often leads to suicide or death as the case maybe. It is therefore, important for mitigatory strategies to be deployed as humanity attempts to stop this unpalatable slide into the bestiality.

Sexual violence is a lunatic forceful way of violating human essence. It usually involves bodily harm, subjugation, repression and punishment of the victim. Sexual violence is an instrument of coercion that most often violates human rights and reduce perpetrators to animals in human skin. Curiously, married men and women have also lost their lives to sexual violence globally and Nigeria has shared in this social misdemeanour. Sexual assault, child sexual abuse, sexual assault of men and boys, intimate partners sexual violence, incest, drug-facilitated sexual assault and so on (<https://www.rainn.org/types-sexual-violence>.) are some of the common sexual violence forms that have been researched on.

The diagram below from Jmckeonie (talk) in 2008 under creative commons shows the statistics of how rape is formulated:

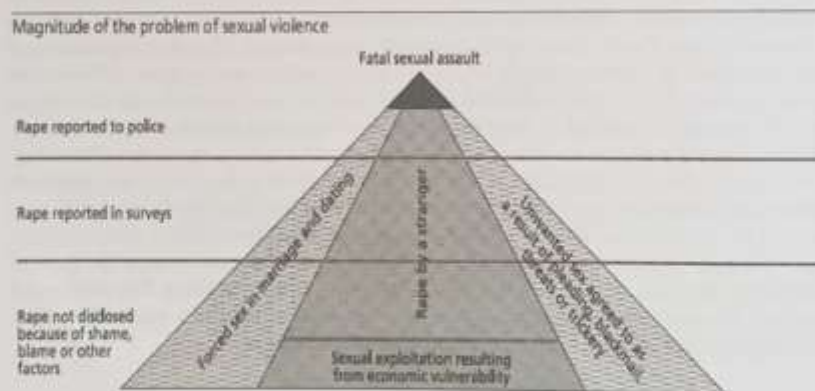


Diagram 1: Diagram Showing how Rape Statistics are Formulated

A critical analysis of the diagram above relates to us, the unfortunate information process of sexual violence which is reviewed through cases reported to the police, gotten through surveys and the few ones not disclosed because of shame, blame or other unknown factors. Importantly as well, the contexts of rape and sexual violence are diverse with several meeting points and points of departure that are stimulating

researchers, Human Rights Activists, non-governmental and governmental organisations to act.

A Resume on Postcolonial Literature

In surface realism, postcolonial literature is encased in the literature that is used to fight back colonial writings, hegemonies and inequalities. However, postcolonial literature overlaps to include major challenges of the 21st century such as unemployment, killing, recolonisation, rape, and sexual violence. Indeed, postcolonial texts have been rebranded into the art of performativity in the crest of reality known as postcolonial theatre. In summary, postcolonial theatre "centres around cultural revival, deliberate fight against the oppressed and the marginalised, struggle for equitable distribution of national resources, bringing back lost memories and reclaiming ruins, and re-invention of relevant dramatic and theatrical conventions" (Adeoye, 2019). Importantly also, postcolonial texts clearly attempt to find voice for the voiceless or bringing the "others" or the "subalterns" to the front-burner of academic debate. The suppressed voices here are the victims of rape and sexual violence while the three playwrights have also condemned in totality, the evils associated with rape and sexual violence.

Synopses of Three Play-texts

1. 'Bayo Afolabi's *The Misogynist (Hater of Women)* has as central theme, anti-feminist indoctrination from the main characters, Mr. Funsho Kokosanri (Baba Deola A.K.A. Bachelor boy) who hates everything about the female gender. He is the lord of patriarchy and for no just reason, his hatred for women is extended to his wife (Mama Adeola) and Daughters (Adesola, Adeola and Adedoyin). In fact, Baba Deola is so notorious that he gives Dr. Femi, his doctor friend a bad name known as "Feminine Femoh city. D. Dol". He beats his wife, Mama Adeola and his Daughters frequently with no justifiable reason to register his hatred for the female gender. This 90 page-play with Five Acts makes Baba Deola to relive the bad lessons that he undergoes in his family especially in the hand of Mama Nike, his Step-mother. Even with education and sophistication, Baba Deola sticks to his gun until the same female gender that he despises so much rescued him from accident. This leads to his inevitable change. This change also makes him to accept the fact that females are not inferior to males and that the defining moment is the humanity in us.
2. Ahmed Yerima's *Pari* is about the transformation of the human mind to that which is not desired of. Ama, a Christian character in the play transforms to become Khadijat through the dreaded Bokoharam bandits. Thus, the old Agnes is now Ama and Khadijat combined together. This new name is as a result of her search and desperation to rescue or do anything to regain her daughter back from Bokoharam bandits. So, from Christianity, Ama (Agnes Shettima) becomes a Muslima and her hybrid disposition is within the dilemma of neuro-psychosis. She belongs to the multiple images of the multiple character disorder. Tada, Ama's husband known as Deacon Jacob Shettima is also disillusioned about the loss of Hyelapari Shettima now Pari, their only daughter and the eponymous character in the play, *Pari*. Thus, this tragic-filled play is about the truth of the Nigerian terrorists' activities. Their recruitment patterns, and the ordeals of their victims are also relived in the play.

Far from the general notion of blaming the soldier-boys in the Bokoharam enclaves is the fact that, these boys are also victims of circumstances. Ibrahim, Pari's "husband" is also a victim recruited unwillingly into the camp of Bokoharam. The illustrative

aside to this successful play lies in the fact that Christianity, Islamic and traditional African religions are perpetually in harmony and disharmony with themselves and their followers. This is a play of sorrow in which Pari, Ama, Tada, Ibrahim and other major characters lose their sanity while the events that happens at overlapping rates make them to become sub-humans searching for liberation and deliverance.

3. Oludolapo Ojedian's *Miss! Mrs!! Ms!!!* is a radical feminist manifesto that wants women to kill the fear of religion, society and culture in them if, in truth, they want genuine liberation from rape and sexual violence, the core subject of this paper. The 21st century language has empowered the users of English language to see "Miss" pejoratively as a young lady bubbling with zeal and displaying all feminine attributes while "Mrs" has been accepted as any married woman who has crossed the zone of illusion for reality of marriage. Interestingly, "Ms" interprets the reality of any woman who has grown beyond marriageable age but who is not married. This refusal to marry is a personal choice in most cases and while in few cases, it is a product of frustration and the search for inner freedom and liberation from masculinity. "Ms" is also seen as a single mother who bears the brunt of existence through a direct or indirect implementation of the theory of existentialism. In all, this play queries the essence of marriage without freedom. It also asserts the fact that, marriage is not the ultimate if marital abuse and sexual violence are to be avoided. The tango between Modunke versus Husband, Mama Modunke versus Mother-in-law, Modunke versus Doctor, Modunke versus Counsellor and later, Modunke and Dieko are wired conflict scenarios that make this Nine Scenes play to live up to the billing of a play that rejects the conservative and traditional roles of women, embarrassing in the progress, the neo-radical freedom of feminism and its attendant realities in the 21st century. Within Miss, Mrs and Ms, the society has to find the missing rib and that rib must be found without rape and sexual violence.

Rape and Sexual Violence in *The Misogynist (Hater of Women)*

Baba Deola, the consistent hater of women is a failure in human evolution. He fails to transits from the old myth and conservatism to the flexibility of total understanding and inclusiveness needed in the 21st century. He despises the marriage institution and urinates on it, developing in the process, a psycho drama of a man suffering from self-inflicted psychological injury. In fact, his hatred generally for women is legendary:

Baba Deola: ...Women! Woe men, woe unto men. The negative form of men. Devils all... Stupid women. They think they are smart, that you don't know. They think it is all men that have their brains below the belly button, hanging upside down!... (p.3).

Challenging God's for creating women, Baba Deola's apostasy is also not particularly edifying. He starts his tirades and blasphemy and he crosses his rivers of illusions unmolested:

Baba Deola: (*Continues*) Women! If not to satisfy the bestial instinct in man... I wonder what was going on in God's mind when he made man rely on women for procreation. I wonder why God created them in the first place, after all Adam never complained of loneliness before God imposed Eve on him. It was that woman Eve that caused Adam to be chased out of Eden and cursed by God. Adam was a happy man until Eve arrived on the scene. Are you aware that Eve was coined from evil? (p. 19).

In spite of Dr. Femi's warning, appeal and counselling, Baba Deola belongs to the old brigade who has no value for the female gender. The Playwright cast Dr. Femi as a

psychologist and a true friend of Baba Deola who tries to get him out of the hangover and hatred for females.

One may be tempted to ask the ultimate question of why will a man hate the female gender to this ridiculous or ludicrous level? Baba Deola's hatred is also partly caused by women although we are not justifying this. We should not forget that Baba Deola's Mum dies when he is 12 years old and his father's new wife, Mama Nike treats him badly too. In fact, Baba Deola narrowly escapes being poisoned by Mama Nike and in Mama Nike's account, Baba Deola's escape is still painful to her:

Mama Nike: ... Yes, today is today, I will avenge Bunmi's death. How can I allow this one to be the heir to my husband's property, that cocoa plantation especially? Nobody waits for the Iroko tree to grow big before cutting it down. The other time, I placed poisoned meat on his plate of rice. My daughter went, removed and ate it, on the excuse that she suspected Funsho changed the meat on her food, because according to her, "mummy can't give Funsho big meat like that. She says big boys don't need big meat". I should have waited to supervise the eating of their food that day, but my conscience will not allow me. Now, I am wiser. I will make sure they kill him before I leave this place. No more mistakes this time (p. 48).

This is an inhuman self-confession and this partly makes Baba Deola to become hater of women. He is driven by revenge and the sheer intention to avenge what he suffers in the hands of women while growing. Baba Deola remains a study in vengeance.

In the play, marital abuse, rape and sexual violence are sub-themes that swell the plot structure of a man's hatred for women. Baba Deola's uncomplimentary remarks against women make the play a psychodrama of sadness. Here are some of his caustic tirades:

- i. She refuses to accept that she is like a slave in this house. All these women liberation trash is already getting into her numb head (p. 14).
- ii. I bought her with my hard-earned money (p. 15).
- iii. Feminism, womanism, woman empowerment and all the idle trash (p. 15).
- iv. ALL WOMEN ARE DEVILS (P. 15).
- v. Look at the ways they influence matters with their so-called 'Bottom Power'. The average woman is a hedonist, an opportunist and a whore to the core (p. 74).
- vi. They cherish Sugar Daddyism, and maintain regular sexual relations with men who are older than their grandfathers, just for money (p. 78).

Dr. Femi condemns Baba Deola's misogynist's behaviour. Indeed, he tries as much as possible to get him out of his hatred for women. Thus, Baba Deola beats his wife, daughters and inflicts bodily injuries on all the female characters around him. In the end, the "Bachelor Boy" known as Baba Deola is liberated by his friend, Dr. Femi and mainly by women that he despises so much. That itself is the irony of Baba Deola who starts from hater of women to lover of women.

Rape and Sexual Violence in *Pari*

A reading of *Pari* conjures the picture of Nigeria as a failed state. Optimists may disagree with this assertion because of the desire to make meaning out of a nation going into extinction. However, the visible self-apprehension and illusion seen in the behaviours of the major characters in the play call on the individuals and the state to brace-up to face the evils of lawlessness, rape and sexual violence in Nigeria. *Pari*, a

carefully written play has two major characters (Pari and Ibrahim) suffering from the anguish of rape, sexual violence and forced soldiering. Sadly enough, Pari is a victim and Ibrahim, her victimiser also started as a victim of the society. The bond between the Pari and Ibrahim is forced love and this love grows from anguish to reality. It moves from the theory of what is not expected to the practicality of what has happened.

It is important to consider the melancholy below between Ama and Pari on the evil of rape and the animalistic behaviour of man:

Ama: Then what happened?

Pari: After a little distance from the school, we got to the place where vehicles were parked, and we were hauled into them like cattle. After some distance, we drove into the Sambisa Forest.

Ama: What happened after?

Pari: Hell broke loose. We were really scared, and the hooded men melted our very resistance. Then one day they said we all had to get married. We resisted it. One girl who screamed her refusal was blindfolded and before our very eyes, she was killed. Petrified, we gave up everything. Then they started to rape us. Some of us died from the pain. Some died from the air raids, and some just died of heartache and pains. Those who lived or survived like me, were living carcasses from the world beyond.

Ama: You, my child, when where you touched? (p. 36).

In another vein, Pari recounts her transition from sadness to temporary joy:

Pari: ... In five minutes, we were married. And after that, he cared for me like a wife... Between the sadness and agony, my soul found a still, calm happiness with his wild spirit... the type that mingles with a flow of tears and anger (p. 36).

Pari gives birth to twins inside the forest and in the hands of her Bokoharam tormentors. As a mother, Pari's new role is sudden and unexpected. She thus becomes a victim of rape and sexual violence which is akin to war rape.

The victim who later becomes the victimiser, Ibrahim also narrates his ordeals in the hands of Bokoharam:

Ibrahim: ... My friends, Zaki and Yakubu, has begged me to join them.

Tada: Join who?

Ibrahim: The Jihad. The Sunna Lidda'Awah Wal-Jihad.

Tada: Boko Haram?

Ama: Who?

Ibrahim: Yes. Young men living in hopelessness, angry at nothing in particular... At the end of the day, between the women and drinks, talks and dreams, I felt I could do something. What it was, I did not even know... (p. 46).

Ibrahim, the young boy from Mblabla goes to Chibok, Borno State, seeking for refugee and from there he ends up as a victimiser raping girls, killing innocent souls and answering to the calls of the Bokoharam Commanders.

Pari is a play of emotion and the emotion is about all of us. *Pari* is a play of rape and what is being raped and violated is our collective essence. *Pari* is a play about sexual violence from the boys who are soldiers, fighting for what they do not know and this

sexual assault is caused by the state and the failure of our leaders to provide adequate security.

Rape and Sexual Violence in *Miss! Mrs!! Ms!!!*

Modunke: I will maintain my words; I don't want to see him. All I see over me are blisters, wounds, scars and sorrow. I thought he loved me until the abuse started.

Doctor: What happened?

Modunke: Abuse happened!

Doctor: How?

Modunke: (Giggles) I thought it was love, I thought I could cope. It started with words of mouth, later it grew to a slap, it graduated into punches and then the rape. Doctor, I don't want to see him (p. 1).

The above is a lamentation of marital abuse that graduates into sexual violence and rape. It is Modunke, whose Husband violates, turning her into an animal that should be beaten without any provocation.

Rape, beating and sexual violence in her matrimonial home prevents Modunke from loving again. She craves to be alone and from Miss, she becomes a Mrs and ends up as an Ms, crossing the three stages of the feminine world with trials and tribulations. Dieko's attempt to revive real love out of Modunke's psyche and make her a real woman also fails. Modunke is now a free woman who is very careful with men. Afterall, once bitten, we have to be twice shy. The conversation below summarises the "I cannot love again" impression from Modunke inspite of Dieko's plea:

Dieko: Yes, I do. Any man that beats a woman is a beast... I do understand... If you ever want to cry, I want to be the shoulder you cry on. I want to be the shoulder you lean on. I want to be the source of your laughter and screams. I want to be there always. I want to...

Modunke: You can't do all that. He said more than these. I trusted him, but he broke the trust. Now I am estranged with even myself (p. 51).

So, if we blame divorced women in the society who are victims of rape and sexual violence from refusing to marry, let us blame ourselves who turn them into the monsters that can no longer love but rather see men as objects to be used and discarded. Afterall, men are the ones who turn them to become haters of men.

Recommendations

Considering the main themes and sub-themes of rape and sexual violence that are found in the three postcolonial texts discussed so far, we want to make the following recommendations. That:

- (i.) postcolonial writers should consider the themes of rape and sexual violence as apt and relevant in their writings;
- (ii.) mitigatory strategies within the medical cum cultural ethos should be deployed to solve the problem of rape and sexual violence. Baba Deola in *The Misogynist (Hater of Women)* is a good example of a man that can be helped and his liberation actually comes from a psychologist, Dr. Femi. The implication of this is that victim of rape and sexual violence can be helped and liberated;
- (iii.) adequate security should be provided for the citizens by the Nigerian Government. This is indeed, why government exists in the first place. The failure of Government at providing adequate security, whether we like it or not, is a major factor that makes Bokoharam bandits to fester and they have, as at now, gone beyond the control of Government;

- (iv.) literary texts are good as reading materials. However, literary texts, especially, the dramatic texts should be produced on the living stage. Thus, we can graduate from the lifeless text to the living text that will engender performance. Performances of postcolonial texts against rape and sexual violence can thus be taken round schools, villages and states as engineering and re-engineering instruments that can mitigate against rape and sexual violence; and
- (v.) these three postcolonial texts can be translated into three main Nigerian local languages of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba for effective dramatic communication against rape and sexual violence.

Conclusion

Rape and sexual violence that we are witnessing in Nigeria is the failure of all of us. Consequently, rape and sexual violence are critical issues that should not be left in the hands of Human Rights Activists or non-governmental organisations alone. Rather, all of us should face these issues squarely. Indeed, we have examined in this chapter, three postcolonial texts on rape and sexual violence in Nigeria. These play-texts are Bayo Afolabi's *The Misogynist (Hater of Women)*, Ahmed Yerima's *Pari* and Oludolapo Ojedian's *Miss! Mrs!! Ms!!!* and the messages of hope against rape and sex violence therein cannot be overemphasised.

The three postcolonial texts have also literarised various strategies adopted by rapists as they violate their victims. These strategies range from marital abuse, coercion, betrayal, revenge and assault to sexual violence. Depending on the situation, these strategies as crude as they are, also question our basic existence because rape and sexual violence is drawing us closer to the state of lawlessness. The study concludes that archetypal characters of rape and sexual violence such as Baba Deola, Ibrahim and his Boko haram leaders, and the Husband of Modunke in the three plays should not be emulated while Dr. Femi, Ama and Dieko in the three plays have good habits that should be emulated. To kill rape and sexual violence in Nigeria, forgiveness is important in our relationships while adequate security cannot be overemphasised as we ultimately pray for the maintenance of law and order in the social process.

Works Cited

- Afolabi, Bayo. *The Misogynist (Hater of Women)*. Ibadan: Penthouse Publication, 2014. Print.
- Adeoye, AdulRasheed Abiodun. *Poetics of Legislation and De-Legislation on Play Directing*. (186th Inaugural Lecture of University of Ilorin) University of Ilorin: Library and Publication committee, 2019. p. 2. Print.
- Burgess-Jackson, Keith. *A Detestable Crime: new philosophical essays on rape*, Oxford University, New York, 1999. p. 16. Print.
- Gary, Kelly. *Sexuality today*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. ISBN 978-0-07-353199-1. 2011. Print.
- Jmckeonie (talk) *Diagram Showing how Rape Statistics are Formulated*. CC-BY-SA-3.0. Creative Commons, 2008. Print.
- Ojedian, Oludolapo. *Miss! Mrs!! Ms!* University of Ilorin: Department of Performing Arts, 2021. Print.

Rosdahl, Caroline. *Textbook of basic nursing*. Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer Health/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. ISBN 978-1-60547-772-5. 2012. Print.

Saunders, Corinne. *Rape and Ravishment in Literature of Medieval England*, Boydell & Brewer, 2001 p. 20. Print.

Yerima, Ahmed. *Pari*. Ibadan: Kraft Book, 2016. Print.

A "UCSB's SexInfo" L. Soc.ucsb.edu. Retrieved 2010-12-31.

<https://www.rainn.org/types-sexual-violence>. Retrieved on 21st May, 2022