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THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT (TFD) AS A VIABLE TOOL FOR COMMUNICATING ANTI-RAPE BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

Rape is one of the most inhuman gender-based violence that inflicts untold physical, emotional, and psychological injuries to the victim. Recently, there seems to be an upsurge in cases of rape in Nigeria, with many victims end up being murdered. A plethora of reports from civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and other related bodies suggest that inadequate prosecution of sexual offenders may have been the reason behind the spike in rape cases. They cite victim-bias posturing of prosecution process as one of the reasons that discourages rape victims from opening up. Under such circumstance, rape victims are muted by a flawed criminal justice administration system that seems to embolden and fertilize rape culture. On the other hand, the government seems to be more focused on passing new anti-sexual violence legislations even when they do not seem to be effective in getting us out of the woods. This shows that there is a missing link between the authorities and the constituency of the general public from which many victims of sexual violence usually emerge. It also betrays an insistence on a top-down approach to addressing rape that does not pay attention to important socio-cultural nuances fertilizing rape culture. It is against this backdrop that this paper advocates the deployment of Theatre for Development (TFD) as an alternative approach to mitigating the menace of rape and other allied sexual violence. Central in this paper is the argument that there is a link between how women are perceived in our communities, and rape. As such, any approach to addressing rape must be participatory and located within the larger cultural backdrop. This is in keeping with the principles of Participatory Development Theory upon which the paper is anchored. Given its emphasis on collective participation in problem-solving processes, TFD can arouse people's critical consciousness, inspire subversion of oppressive social norms, break the culture of silence and promote the ethic of care. These are necessary preconditions for mitigating the rising cases of rape in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Theatre for Development, Community participation, Anti-Rape Legislation, Critical Consciousness.*

Introduction

Rape is one of the cruelest forms of gender-based violence that has continued to persist globally. In Nigeria, hardly a day passes by without the news of rape being passed across on the media. It is a social pandemic that cut across different ages, regions, religions, tribes, socio-economic status and even gender because it has been reported that males are also being raped. This notwithstanding, a plethora of rape literature seems to agree that the female gender is the primary victim of rape. Reasons for the female gender's higher level of vulnerability to sexual violence are

not farfetched. They can be attributed to our cultural situation that is unapologetically patriarchal. A situation in which people are socialized into believing that women are only supposed to be seen not heard. And that they only exist to be possessed by men. As such, women and girls are structurally schemed out of mainstream decision-making processes that may impact positively on their general well-being. The consequence of this is that women and girls are relegated to the lower rung of the socio-economic ladder. Under this circumstance, they often lack adequate self-efficacy (agency) to defend themselves from acts of violence against them. Hence, the exponential rise in cases of sexual violence, especially rape.

Between January and May 2020, the Nigerian Police Chief Mohammed Adamu reported to have arrested about 799 suspects in connection with rape cases in the country. Some of these cases were so painful that they sparked off national protests. A typical example is the case involving Uwaveru Omozuwa, a University of Benin undergraduate student who was raped and murdered in a church where she had gone to study. Her gruesome murder led to a nationwide protest tagged 'Justice for Uwa'. 'Justice for Uwa' protests started in Benin City, Edo State, and spread across different states of the federation including the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. These protests might have instigated the discoveries of other rape related cases as more victims became more emboldened to speak out. More so, before the dust settled down, the Legislature swung into action by passing an important anti-sexual violence legislation that is aimed at addressing the menace in Nigeria's tertiary institutions. The bill is entitled "A Bill for an Act to Prevent, Prohibit and Redress Sexual Harassment of Students in Tertiary Educational Institutions and for other matters connected therewith 2019".

No doubt, anti-sexual violence legislation, prosecution of perpetrators of rape and provision of appropriate medical and psychological care for victims are all plausible approaches to addressing the scourge. In this paper, we argue that Nigeria has laws that are adequate enough to comfortably prosecute rape offenders. Despite the existence of these laws however, very little seems to have been achieved in terms of prosecution and conviction of offenders. This means that we need to change our approach to one that is capable of interrogating more nuanced socio-cultural dynamics that exert a significant influence on not only our criminal justice administration, but also our collective perception of rape as a people. An approach that can also mobilize people at the grassroots to collectively seek a more suitable solution for rape in their local communities. Theatre for Development (TfD) is

capable of footing this bill.

TfD is an alternative theatre practice that emerged from the need to return theatre back to the people so that they can use for the advancement of their collective good. As a participatory approach, TfD harnesses a people's indigenous performances and other modes of expression to chart a course for their advancement. It pays attention to the importance of local people's participation in the process of their development. That is, TfD leverages people culture as a means of engendering sustainable and people-centred development.

Statement of the Research Problem

There is an upsurge in reported cases of rape and other related sexual violence in Nigeria. On a daily basis, victims of rape are identified with many among them end up being murdered. Conventional efforts towards addressing this menace have largely been top-down with little or no recourse to salient socio-cultural nuances that fertilize rape culture. For instance, civil society organizations and other related bodies have always created awareness on rape and provided psycho-social help to rape survivors. The government on the other hand seems to be more focused on passing new anti-sexual violence legislations. These efforts, though commendable, do not seem to deter rape offenders from perpetrating this evil. One of the reasons for this is the cumbersome and victim-biased process of prosecuting rape cases that easily provides windows for perpetrators to wriggle their way to freedom leaving victims with emotional and psychological scars. In addition, there seems to be in existence a culture that always blames the woman or victim of rape in many Nigerian communities. This is an indication that any approach that is geared at effectively addressing this social menace must take into cognizance some of these socio-cultural factors that encourage rape culture. It is in this respect that TfD comes handy as one of the approaches that when effectively deployed, can significantly mitigate the situation.

Aim and Objectives

The main aim of this paper is to cast TfD as a more viable alternative approach of mitigating incidences of rape in Nigeria. This is hoped to be achieved through the following objectives:

- i. to undertake a panoramic review of the prevalence of rape in Nigeria

- ii. to identify relevant anti-rape legislations in Nigeria
- iii. to examine some of the factors that fertilize rape culture, and
- iv. to identify some of the potentials of the TfD approach that could help in mitigating the scourge of rape in local communities across the country.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Participatory Development Theory. The idea for participatory development emerged from the failure or inability of conventional development approaches to effectively address development needs in the third world countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America during the first and second world development decades (1950s and 1960s). During this period, otherwise known as the modernization era, third world development initiatives were modelled after approaches that worked in the rehabilitation of the post second world war European countries. The prevalent philosophy emphasized the need for local communities in developing world to jettison their traditional ways of life as a necessary precondition for attaining modernization- misconceived as development. After it was discovered that this approach was not compatible with the yearnings and aspirations of local people in the third world, new voices calling for a more participatory and culturally sensitive approach to development emerged.

According to Waisbord (2001), participatory theories criticized the modernization paradigm on the ground that it promoted a top-down ethnocentric and paternalistic view of development. The top-down approach of persuasion model implicitly assumed that the knowledge of government and other international agencies was correct, and that of indigenous populations were incorrect. (Waisbord, 2001 cited in Dinbabo, 2003, p. 15). Participatory development theory focuses on 'bottom-up' planning, and promotes the view that ordinary people have capacity to manage their own development. As such, the theory encourages the involvement of all stakeholders in the process of development.

One of the major voices in participatory school of thought has been Paulo Freire. In his seminal book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Friere proposes a change of strategy where students are on equal terms with their teachers and this is possible through mutual exchanges between students and teachers. For participatory theorists therefore, development requires sensitivity to cultural diversity. A central postulation of the participatory theory is that the answer to the development of local communities in developing world is not found in the bureaucracy and its centrally

mandated development programmes, but rather in the community itself. This view is theatrically adapted by Augusto Boal in his *Theatre of the Oppressed* where the imaginary wall that separates actors and spectators is torn down through the Forum Theatre apparatus. Hence, in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, and by extension TfD, spectators transmute to spect-actors, underscoring their power to influence the direction and outcome of the dramatic action.

Methodology

This is a descriptive qualitative study that mainly relied on review of documents related to the subject under discourse. They ranged from existing anti-sexual violence legal frame works, to newspapers and other related literature. Specifically, the Criminal Code Act (2009), the Penal Code, Child Rights Act 2003, and Violence against All Persons Prohibition Act (2015) were reviewed with the aim of showing how they address the issue of rape. Studies on TfD by scholars in the field were also reviewed in order to demonstrate the peculiarity of the approach that could change the narrative in the fight against rape.

Similarly, key informant interviews were conducted with experts in civil society and faith-based Interview Guide was also designed to interrogate the efficacy of extant laws in addressing rape and to gain deeper insight into the dynamics of fighting sexual violence by civil society organizations. Data elicited were transcribed, coded and analyzed thematically through narration.

Prevalence of Rape in Nigeria: A Panoramic Review

Rape is a pervasive social anomaly that seems to defy extant legal sanctions. It persists in different strata of the society, tasking government and other related duty bearers to rise to the occasion and deal with this problem. Worse still, there seems to be an exponential increase in rape cases since a national lockdown was declared by the Federal Government in March, 2020 as part of efforts to contend with the Covid-19 outbreak. Lending her voice to what can be termed a 'double pandemic', Ezeilo (2020) laments that “the rise of rape cases in Nigeria is scary, worrisome, and an ugly phenomenon especially the sexual abuse and exploitation of minors, that is, under-aged girls... it is becoming clearer that we are not just fighting the Coronavirus pandemic in Nigeria, but also the rape epidemic happening upon the Covid-19 pandemic”. Professor Ezeilo, who is herself a gender-based violence expert and the founder of Women's Aid Collective (WACOL) reeled out a number of reported cases

across the country. According to her, on the 26th of June (2020) the Katsina Police Command reported arrests of 40 suspected rapists within the period of the Covid-19 lockdown, between April and June, 2020. In the same vein, on the 24th June, 2020, the Akwa-Ibom Police Command in a press briefing, informed the general public about how they have arrested within seven days another Pastor and 11 others, for rape and defilement. In Enugu, it was also reported that a gun was used to intimidate a 16-year-old girl at Nsukka, to succumb to the rapist's unwarranted sexual attack. In another case received by WACOL in April, it was reported that a father began to have unlawful sex with his daughter as a minor, and it continued to adulthood. She had been impregnated by this father, having been forced to abort two earlier pregnancies. (Ezeilo, 2020). From these cases, it can be inferred that even though rape is a pervasive problem, women and girls are usually the victims of this cruel form of sexual violence. In a bid to better understand the rape phenomenon, there are scholars who investigated the social profile of some common victims of rape.

One of such studies is that of Odeyemi et al (2016) which focuses on out-of-school girls. It is anchored on the fact that Nigeria has the largest number of out-of-school children with a 58% net enrolment ratio for girls in primary school and a net secondary attendance rate of 44% for females. The study notes that since majority of out-of-school girls are from the poorest wealth quantiles, poverty may further increase their vulnerability to sexual violence. It was on this premise that the study was conducted to determine the prevalence of sexual coercion, abuse, and rape among out-of-school adolescents in Lagos, Nigeria and to describe the context in which they occur.

The study found that majority of the girls that were sampled who have had sexual intercourse, first had it between the ages of 15 and 19 years. Hence, the Median age at initiation was 16 years. Similarly, majority of respondents (64.1%) believed that it was common for females to exchange sex for gifts in their community. Again, most of the girls (67.1%) reported that it is common for girls to be raped in their locality. (Odeyemi et al., 2016, p. 03). The main reason given by respondents in this study for being out of school was inability to afford the cost of formal education. This situation has forced these young girls to live with employers, relatives, guardians, and friends, or live alone. These social, economic and environmental factors combine to render female adolescents vulnerable to sexual coercion and abuse.

Arguing further, Odeyemi et al. (2016) opine that the touchstone for coercion is an individual woman's lack of choice to pursue other options without severe social

or physical consequences. This position is reinforced by the WHO (2002) where it asserts that “sexual violence is more likely to occur where beliefs in male sexual entitlement are strong and where gender roles are more rigid”. They also cite studies in Bangladesh that point to the fact that women feel it is 'natural' for a man to have sex with his partner against her will and the woman always has to conform to his request. These researchers however, are of the opinion that a major contribution of Odeyemi et' al.'s study to rape literature is that it draws the nexus between poverty, school drop- out and higher level of vulnerability to sexual violence. It also shades more light on the power dynamics at play in sexual relationship between men and women. Power as a key driver of sexual violence is oftentimes codified in the way the society tolerates men excesses even to the detriment of their female counterparts. In many Nigerian societies, there are habits and practices that are considered to be tabooed only when women engage in them. A typical example is drinking alcohol. In some communities, men are culturally permitted to drink themselves to stupor, while the women are forbidden from taking a sip. This is worrisome because heavy drinking of alcohol has also been identified as a strong driver of sexual violence.

In his study, Nelson (2014) investigated the link between alcohol and violence on the one hand, and the role of alcohol use in the reproduction of masculinity on the other hand. According to him, in Oron, where he carried out his study, drinking alcohol is only considered appropriate for adult men. Women and young people are culturally prohibited to drink. Hence, drinking is an important identity marker for masculinity. This position is accentuated by a male participant in the study who asserted that “a man has to drink. Any man that does not drink is not a real man” (2014: 62). Heavy alcohol drinking was further found in the study to be a major cause of sexual violence in the study community. Thus, in our opinion, Nelson's study identifies an inextricable link between culturally permissive behaviours and violence against women; a nuanced socio-cultural dynamic that anti-rape legislation alone may not be able effectively address.

In the same vein, Edeh (2018) emphasizes that indeed “there are cultural practices that society engages in that excuse or otherwise tolerate sexual assault”. She opines that rape culture can be fuelled by, among others, the objectification of women's bodies, the blurred lines between sexual attraction and assault, the concealment of rape, social indifference to the plight of survivors and their family, victim-shaming, and blind trust towards family members and members of religious bodies. She also cites weak legal framework that perpetually fails to deter offenders from committing sexual violence. Ironically, Nigeria has in existence a number of

anti-sexual violence laws capable of mitigating the menace had they been deployed effectively. Some of them are discussed below.

Anti-Rape Legal Frameworks in Nigeria

Sexual violence is a social pandemic that is frowned at by all civilized societies. This is evident in the number of international conventions, regional treaties and local laws that have been enacted to address the menace. At the international level, the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) can be said to be the global legal framework that set the pace for this fight. Adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, CEDAW is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, the Convention defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. Countries that have ratified the Convention are legally bound to put its provision into practice. They are also committed to submit national reports, at least every four years, on measures they have taken to comply with their treaty obligations. Nigeria signed the Convention on 23 April 1984 and ratified the optional protocol to CEDAW on 8 September 2001.

Also, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, better known as the Maputo Protocol is another international framework worth citing here. It was established by the African Union and went into effect in 2005. It guarantees comprehensive rights to women including the right to take part in the political process. It was adopted by the African Union in Maputo, Mozambique in 2003. These international treaties were cited to demonstrate global posturing on issues of women's rights and dignity. They are backdrops against which many pro-women legal frameworks are established including Nigeria's anti-rape legislations.

In Nigeria, the chief legal framework is the 1999 Constitution. Although the constitution does not specifically prohibit rape, it clearly proscribes torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment. Section 34 (1) states that: "Every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person, and accordingly, (a) no person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment". Article 17 (2) (b) adds that human dignity shall be maintained and enhanced. The penal code is more specific in addressing rape than the 1999 constitution.

The Penal Code (Nigerian Laws Cap 89), applicable in northern Nigeria, criminalizes both rape and defilement (rape of girl under the age of 13 years).

Section 282 (1) of the Penal Code defines rape by stating that mere penetration is sufficient to constitute the sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of rape. This definition has been criticized on the grounds that by presuming only penetration of a vagina by a penis constitutes rape, it discriminates against women and girls who may have been raped by use of foreign object or who may have been penetrated orally or anally by the penis. Section 282 (2) further expatiates on the concept of rape by stating the circumstances in which it may occur thus:

A man is said to commit rape if he has sexual intercourse with her against her will; without her consent, or when her consent has been obtained by putting her in fear of death or hurt; with her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband and that her consent is given because she believes that he is another man to whom she is or believes herself to be lawfully married; with or without her consent, when she is under fourteen years of age or of unsound mind.

Based on the Penal Code, the criminal offence of rape is punishable by imprisonment of up to 14-years, which can be combined with a fine (Section 28 (3)). The Code also makes specific provision in relation to children under the age of 16 years who are sexually assaulted by those in positions of authority. Section 28 (5) on acts of gross indecency provides a punishment of imprisonment for up to seven years and a fine. Sequel to the Penal Code is the Criminal Code which also addresses the issue of rape.

The Criminal Code Act (Nigerian Laws Cap 38), applicable in the south of Nigeria, defines rape as:

Any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl without her consent, or with her consent, if the consent is obtained by force or by means of threats or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or by means of false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or in the case of a married woman by impersonating her husband, is guilty of an offence which is called rape. (Criminal Code, 1999).

'Carnal knowledge', as explained in Chapter 1 of the Criminal Code, implies penetration. This could also be interpreted as including penetration by a foreign object. Therefore, the Criminal Code provides a broader definition of rape than the Penal Code which uses 'sexual intercourse' rather than 'carnal knowledge'. Under section 35 (8), rape is punishable by life imprisonment, with the possible addition

of caning (UN Document, 1999). Rape of a girl under 13 years is commonly referred to as 'defilement' and is categorized as an offence against morality in the Criminal Code. Section 21 (8) provides that any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl under the age of thirteen years is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for life, with or without caning.

The Child Right Act (2003) is yet another legislation that prohibits rape of children below 18 years of age. In section 31 (1), The Act clearly states that “no person shall have sexual intercourse with a child”. It further states in section 31 (2) that “a person who contravenes the provision of subsection (1) of this section commits an offence of rape and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for life”.

Rape is also criminalized in the Sharia penal laws which were introduced in 1999 and are now in force in some northern states. The Kano State Sharia Penal Code Law (2000) provides in section 12(6) that:

A man is said to commit rape if (he) has sexual intercourse with a woman in any of the following circumstances: against her will; or without her consent; with her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her in fear of death or of hurt; with her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband and that her consent is given because she is or believes to herself to be lawfully married; or with or without her consent, when she is under fifteen years of age or of unsound mind. Under the Kano Penal Code Law, rape is punishable by death by stoning if the perpetrator is married, and caning (100 lashes) and up to life imprisonment if the perpetrator is unmarried.

Furthermore, the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act 2015 is another comprehensive legal framework that addresses issues of violence against all people. Since it came to force in the Federal capital Territory, some states of the federation have also domesticated the Act so that they can benefit from this landmark legislation. Part 1 Section 1 of the VAPP Act states that:

A person commits the offence of rape if: he or she intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person with any other part of his or her body or anything else; the other person does not consent to the penetration; or the consent is obtained by force or means of threat or intimidation of any kind or by fear of harm or by means of false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act or the use of any substance or additive capable of

taking away the will of such person or in the case of a married person by impersonating his or her spouse. A person convicted of rape is liable to imprisonment for life except: where the offender is less than 14 years of age, the offender is liable to a maximum of 14 years imprisonment; in all other cases to a minimum of 12 years imprisonment without an option of fine; or in the case of rape by a group of persons, the offenders are liable jointly to a minimum of 20 years imprisonment without an option of fine.

Finally, in a bid to stem cases of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, the senate has passed a bill tagged 'A Bill for an Act to Prevent, Prohibit and Redress Sexual Harassment of Students in Tertiary Educational Institutions and for other matters connected therewith 2019'. The bill defines sexual offences as including sexual intercourse with a student or demands for sex from a student or a prospective student, or intimidating or creating a hostile or offensive environment for the student by soliciting for sex or making sexual advances. The bill has pegged 14 years jail term, with a minimum of 5 years, without an option of fine for any educator who commits sexual offences in tertiary institutions. As at the time of writing this article, the bill is still awaiting assent by the president.

Based on the existence of these laws and legislations, we argue that with a functional and effective justice administration system in place, they can be able to curtail the rising cases of rape in Nigeria. Sadly, this does not seem to be the case as evident in the rising cases of rape across the country. It therefore impresses upon us to look into some factors in our communities that seem to either contribute directly or indirectly in fertilizing rape culture.

Factors Proliferating Rape Culture in Nigeria

Weak criminal justice system is a key factor that keeps proliferating rape culture in Nigeria. Technical and legal nuances that characterize the prosecution of rape cases hardly favour the victim. A typical example is the evidential requirement of corroboration to prove rape in court. This is usually hard for the victims to prove because people do not invite others to come and witness how they are being raped. Yet, failure to bring witnesses to corroborate the victim's story has seen many rape cases quashed out and suspects walked scot-free. Also, there is apparent bias in the manner rape cases are handled by the police. Attention is always focused on the victims where they are made to "recount their stories five, six, eight, ten times by the police" (Engbedi, 2020). This posturing is capable of scaring survivors away from

reporting, while emboldening perpetrators.

Culture of silence is another factor that fertilizes rape culture. This is a situation where parents or relatives of rape victim decide not to report the matter to the authorities in order to save their family name. The assumption held by these categories of people is that anybody or family associated with rape automatically drops down to the lowest rung of society's moral ladder. As such, they prefer to maintain a pretentious façade of moral uprightness than pursue rape cases involving their loved ones as victims.

Similar to culture of silence is fear of stigmatization. Many cases abound in Nigeria where rape survivors are being profiled by the society as morally unsuitable for marriage. Some have even lost promising relationship that was heading towards marriage because their would-be partner discovered she was a rape survivor. Given these circumstances, rape victims often prefer not to disclose it because of fear of stigmatization. There seems to be a prevailing opinion that male perpetrators are more likely to be 'pardoned' by the community than their female victim.

Furthermore, religious institutions seem to be shying away from mainstreaming the subject of rape in places of worship. In an interview with Pastor Joseph Yakubu, the founder and president of Youth Connect Ministry (YCM), he observes that “the church is often indifferent in talking about rape. The church may consider rape as a serious issue only when a victim is reported or a perpetrator is caught. But generally, the church does not consider it a serious issue because it hardly speaks about or against it”. He further submits that “the youths are poorly informed about rape. Hence, their knowledge is inadequate and unhelpful to the fight against rape” (Interview, 25/11/2020). Given that religious institutions are trusted as sacred spaces where people receive moral and spiritual instruction, they are uniquely positioned to champion the campaign against rape culture. Being neutral or indifferent about the matter could be a serious disservice to the fight against rape in Nigeria.

Power dynamics embedded in rape culture is another critical factor worth discussing here. In many situations, rape victims happen to be at the lower end of the power ladder with the perpetrators at the top. This typically manifests in cases of rape between employer who solicits sex from a potential employee, a boss who solicits sex from a junior staff in exchange for promotion and other professional incentives, and a lecturer who solicits sex from a student in exchange for grades, among others. This situation seems to frustrate anti gender-based violence and rape activists. Engbedi, the founder of The Consent Workshop (TCW) laments that

“there is only so much I can do to tackle that problem. I can't teach lecturers or professors about consent. For them, the issue is not consent, it is power, and using that to gain whatever they want. So, it's very complicated when you are dealing with an issue that is so systemic” (Engbedi, 2020). In summary, this suggests that there are different dimensions to the issue of rape in Nigeria that require a people-centred and culturally-sensitive approach to be able to surmount. Theatre for Development readily comes handy as one of those approaches.

Factoring Theatre for Development (TfD) in Addressing Rape Culture

TfD is an alternative theatre practice that lends itself to addressing specific and crucial development challenges of the people. It is “an unconventional means of doing theatre that varies from the manner which conventional theatre is conceptualized and performed. As the name suggests, it is a kind of theatre that focusses on galvanizing local community members to participate in a 'performative' dissection of pressing development challenges confronting them, with a view to finding lasting and sustainable solutions” (Shamagana and Bako, 2019, p. 113). TfD has been applied in diverse areas that include health, governance, maternal and child health, conflict situations, gender, children's right, among others, across many countries of the world.

Advocates of participatory development are of the opinion that TfD is an effective approach for mobilizing people to participate in addressing pressing issues that concern them. In other words, TfD facilitates endogenous development: a brand of social change that is instigated from within the social system. Tsaku (2012, p. 16) avers that TfD advocates a “perspective that promotes the involvement of the communities directly in the entire project circle. This approach creates a democratic process where the community members are involved in identifying and resolving their vast community needs and problems militating against their growth and development”. This is in contrast with exogenous kind of development which is top-down and inspired from without the social system.

Central to the concern of TfD is to rouse people's critical consciousness through participation. Critical consciousness is a prerequisite for collective action that leads to progress. The process of arousing people's consciousness is known as conscientization in TfD parlance. This is corroborated by Mda (1993, p. 84) where he writes that “the objective of theatre for development is to bring about a change in attitude, rather than merely giving the disadvantaged information that will increase their knowledge for its own sake. The change in attitude is achieved through the

audience's active participation in creating the message... conscientization is a process that comes through active participation, and does involve a change of attitude since one is drawn out of the 'culture of silence' and becomes an active activist in the analysis of social problems and in the search for solution". This implies that Tfd is a ready strategy for fostering community participation, and it has been found to be an effective method of communication among rural communities who constitute the 'silent majority' of Africa's teeming populations (Malomo, 2006, p. 27).

Painting a vivid picture of how Tfd operates, Kidd (2013, p. 199) that the process is built around problem-solving, decision-making and action. According him, "the meeting selects a problem which the community would like to solve. This becomes the focus for the whole session, which often lasts 2-3 hours. Participants suggest various solutions some of which are acted out. Through playing out of the activities needed to solve a problem, participants gain clearer idea of what is possible and usually agree on a plan of action, as the final outcome of the meeting." (2013, p. 199).

As a participatory approach, Tfd has been used to address a wide range of development issues. A typical example is the project implemented by the Centre for Performing Arts and Youth Initiative which aimed at advocating for youth reproductive health in Kabusa, a satellite community in the outskirts of Abuja. Though the Tfd methodological steps of problem identification, problem analysis and prioritizing, scenario building, rehearsals, performance and post-performance discussions, the intervention identified problems in the community that include rape, child molestation, drug and alcohol abuse, unwanted pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, widespread poverty and the notion that Kabusa is was being regarded as a sex depot among others. These issues were x-rayed in a drama performed at the community primary school with traditional leaders and community members in attendance. At the end of the workshop, participants agreed to support the young people and encourage them to seek reproductive health. It is important to note that prior to the intervention, issues of sexuality were regarded as dirty and mysterious and not discussed openly. Similarly, leaders came to the agreement that regularly reminding the young people of the dangers of irresponsible sexual behaviour was better than denying and refusing to accept that the young people were engaging in it. Actions that were proposed to be taken include not allowing young and vulnerable girls to work in bars, intensify vigilante and police patrol at night and improve access to

educative and health services including counseling and treatment. (Obonguko, 2013, p.260).

Furthermore, the role TfD can play in instigating critical consciousness around the subject of rape is demonstrated through Christensen's (2013) deployment of theatre for social change to address sexual violence on a college campus in the United States. Describing the project, Christensen writes that "the students were asked to engage in imaginative, improvisation exercises. These exercises provided the basis for the three, five-minute scenarios. These scenarios highlighted various aspects of rape culture that commonly occur on college campus. The structure of the presentation included having a peer facilitator introduce the presentation, lead a discussion of the scenarios, encourage audience members to join the performers and improvise solutions, summarize the learning points that occur as a result of the discussion and audience participation" (2013, p. 6). She also adds that "the presentation was collaboratively created and rehearsed as an interactive, improvisation-based, discussion-oriented programme" (2013, p. 6). At the end of the intervention, it was discovered that theatre for social change (TfD) has the ability to inspire subversion of social norms, encourage ethic of care and provide a conducive atmosphere for co-construction of knowledge.

On subversion of social norms, the project demonstrated that TfD can encourage "participants to abandon a conforming, passive role within a geographical space and social setting in which participants may otherwise prefer to maintain hegemonic social structures that perpetuate the acceptability of sexual assault" (2013, p. 11). This is particularly important because where it is not possible to change the perpetrator's behaviour, steps can be taken to prevent the assault from occurring. The intervention also provoked the emotion of participants and motivated them to challenge social norms that fertilize sexual assault: "many of the study members expressed frustration that their peers are perpetrating sexual assault in their community. This frustration seemed to inspire the participants towards embodying an attitude that sexual assault is preventable" (2013, p. 13). This is a crucial precondition for embracing the ethic of care.

Ethic of care entails the practice of promoting people's welfare and ensuring that no harm comes to them. Co-construction of knowledge underscores how the intervention encouraged participants to be open and receptive to the topic at hand. According to Christensen, "many participants testified that the presentation is interactive, engaging and physically active. Students mentioned that they liked being able to freeze the action of the play and change the outcome of the action.

Students seemed to leave the intervention feeling efficacious about his/her ability to change problematic situations in a real-life setting... the study members appreciated the opportunity to collaboratively construct knowledge and solutions to this social problem” (2013, p. 13).

Christensen's experience shows that TfD can contribute in changing the narrative of rape in Nigeria. In a social space where the culture of silence holds sway and rape culture persists, TfD can instigate subversion of these oppressive social norms. Norms that make the victim the subject for scrutiny instead of the perpetrator; norms that seem to outlaw discourses on rape in schools, communities and religious spaces; and norms that cast women as sex objects existing to serve men's hedonistic pleasures. The principle of participation upon which TfD is anchored has a liberating potential. It is capable of setting in motion a process of power negotiation between men and women in local communities across the country.

When TfD is deployed to engage different community level systems that include religious institution, schools, cooperative associations, women and men's groups, civil society, youth groups, criminal justice, health care, and cultural institutions, it will provide enabling platform for voices that have hitherto been muffled to be heard. Specifically, women and girls who are often the victims of sexual assault can develop self-efficacy to confront the menace. In the same manner, the entire community who are often the accomplices in this assault by either shielding the perpetrators, or maintaining a conspiracy of silence can rise to jettison this oppressive status quo. By and large, since power has often been identified as a key denominator in rape process, TfD, through its emphasis on participatory exchanges, can further provide a conducive atmosphere for power to be renegotiated. Even though TfD may not substantially change the economic fortune of women and girls, it will enable them to actively engage in rape discussion with other members of the community in spaces hitherto considered too 'sacred' for rape discourse. This can advance their socio-cultural fortune significantly.

Conclusion

It is important for us to note that rape is a menace that is being fertilized by many factors some of which have been highlighted here. These factors are interconnected by a complex web of human relations that are political, economic, social, cultural, and religious in nature. Relying on anti-rape legislations alone may not get us out of the woods because these legislations are implicated by some of these factors. This presents us with a pressing need to complement these legislations with

alternative approaches that have the capacity to change people's general perception and attitude around rape. It is on this premise that TfD is suggested as a viable strategy that can complement anti-rape legislations in the fight against rape and other forms of sexual assault in Nigeria.

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Interviews

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