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## Newspaper Coverage of Rape-related Issues in Nigeria during Covid-19 Pandemic

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**ABSTRACT** This study examined how newspapers covered rape-related issues in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic; the focus of this study was to vividly study how sexual assault and rape trends escalated in the year 2020. The study adopted a quantitative approach using content analysis. The study involved three national newspapers (*Daily Trust, Sun and Punch*) with dedicated crime reporting pages published between January and December 2020. These newspapers circulate the same edition nationwide, including at weekends, and have online versions. The study found that most stories focused on reporting rape cases in Nigeria, followed by sensitization/advocacy/police parade of offenders and public condemnation of the rape incidents. The study also found that 13.5 percent of the causes of rape are due to cultist, criminal and gangster activities. In some other cases, to gain some form of respect or to be feared in the neighbourhood, gangsters go around oppressing and raping girls because they want to climb some form of the social ladder. Reports of rape cases amount to a total of 35 percent, which means a handful of survivors tend to report their rape cases and speak out in the hope of getting justice. However, a total of 1.1 percent report special courts for rape trials which implies that many victims may not know the appropriate court of competent jurisdiction for redress and speedy judgement. Most of these reported rape cases do not make it to court, and those reported do not get justice sought for. This study concludes that deliberate efforts on public sensitization/advocacy should be the hallmark of media coverage of rape in Nigeria. Also, the media should continue to protect the identity of rape survivors to avoid victimization and name and shame rape perpetrators by revealing their entire identity with their photographs in line with the sex offender's register.