

Reported Rape Cases in Northwest Senatorial District, Jigawa State, Nigeria, 2016–2025: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Administrative Records and Security Personnel Perspectives

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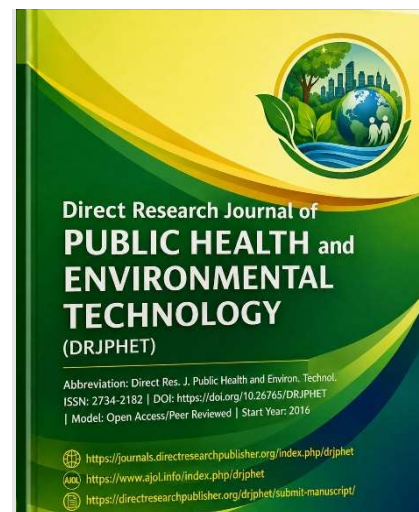
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ABSTRACT

Background: Rape is a serious social, legal and public-health problem, but administrative records capture only incidents that reach formal institutions. Local evidence from the Northwest Senatorial District of Jigawa State, Nigeria, is limited, particularly evidence that combines long-term security-agency records with stakeholder perspectives. **Aim:** This study examined reported rape cases recorded by security agencies in the district from 2016 to 2025. It also explored stakeholders' views on contributing circumstances, reporting barriers, consequences, institutional challenges and possible responses. **Methods:** A mixed-methods design was used. The first component was a retrospective descriptive review of administrative records from the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), 2016–2025. The second was a qualitative field survey using open-ended questionnaires. These were distributed by stratified sampling to community members in six local government areas and to staff of three general hospitals (sample size of 400 from a population of 885,741, calculated with Taro Yamane's formula). The 386 responses analysed were coded manually and organised into themes. Administrative data were analysed descriptively. **Results:** The agencies recorded 1,894 cases: 1,630 by the Police and 264 by the NSCDC. Annual Police records ranged from 90 cases (2021) to 225 (2020). The Police recorded 1,197 cases as charged to court and 1,110 as convictions. The NSCDC recorded 235 cases as prosecuted and 29 as dismissed. Victims aged 6–15 years were the largest group (48.1%), and perpetrators aged 30 years or below were the largest perpetrator group (41.3%). Respondents identified poverty, parental negligence, peer influence, substance abuse, illiteracy, insecurity and hostility towards women and girls as perceived contributing circumstances. Stigma, fear of retaliation, victim blaming, low confidence in the justice system and prolonged legal processes were identified as barriers to reporting. They also described psychological, physical, reproductive and social consequences. **Implications:** The records show a persistent documented burden, with children and adolescents most affected. They are not prevalence estimates, and annual changes may reflect reporting and recording rather than true incidence. The findings support a coordinated response by security agencies, health services, the justice system, communities and survivor-support services. This should include survivor-centred training and referral pathways, public sensitisation against stigma and victim blaming, and stronger child protection.



Keywords: Rape; reported cases; sexual violence; administrative records; security agencies; underreporting; Jigawa State; mixed methods

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence is a major social and public-health concern with consequences that may extend from immediate physical injury to psychological distress, reproductive health problems, social stigma and disruption of family relationships (Friskney et al, 2025). Recent global evidence has also highlighted the substantial burden of sexual violence experienced during childhood. UNICEF reported in 2024 that more than 370 million girls and women alive today experienced rape or sexual assault before the age of 18, demonstrating the scale of sexual violence and the particular vulnerability of children (Agboli, 2023)

Rape occurs globally and it has far-reaching physical, psychological, social, and other effects on victims, which can be longstanding (Friskney et al., 2025). Rape is defined medically as unlawful sexual activity and usually sexual intercourse carried out forcibly or under threat of injury against the will, or involving a person who is below a certain age or incapable of valid consent (Agboli, 2023). In many African societies, women may face limitations in controlling their sexual lives because of socioeconomic and gender-related inequalities (Murray et al., 2023). Sexual violence against women has been linked to gender power inequalities and hierarchical gender relations (Murray et al., 2023).

Some women may be exposed to sexual exploitation because of financial difficulties and economic dependency (Murray et al., 2023). A relationship presented as financially beneficial may become exploitative when a financially powerful person takes advantage of another person's dependency or vulnerability (Murray et al., 2023). A person who is financially deprived, helpless, or dependent may therefore become vulnerable to sexual exploitation by someone perceived as a source of financial or psychological support (Murray et al., 2023).

An increase in reported rape cases may reflect greater awareness and reporting, an actual increase in cases, or a combination of both factors (Idoko et al., 2020). Reported cases may represent only a proportion of the actual burden because rape can remain unreported or fail to progress through formal justice processes (Machisa et al., 2023; Pas-iwen & Cawi, 2026). Research on rape reporting and case attrition therefore highlights an important gap between sexual violence occurring and cases progressing through legal or criminal justice systems (Machisa et al., 2023; Pas-iwen & Cawi, 2026). Social media can also influence the exposure and public visibility of rape cases (Khalid et al., 2021).

Rape cases may remain unreported or may disengage from the legal system because victims can experience stigma, fear, and other barriers to pursuing justice (Friskney et al., 2025; Pas-iwen & Cawi, 2026). Negative beliefs and rape myths can contribute to victim-blaming attitudes and may further discourage victims from reporting or pursuing cases (Murray et al., 2023).

Such attitudes can affect how victims are perceived and how sexual violence is understood within society (Murray et al., 2023). The supplied references document substantial rape incidence and reporting burdens, although estimates vary according to setting, definition, data source, and reporting practices (Idoko et al., 2020; Karakasi et al., 2025). Reported figures may underestimate the true burden when cases are not reported or when cases are lost during criminal justice processes (Machisa et al., 2023; Pas-iwen & Cawi, 2026). Rape is treated as a criminal offence, but its legal definition and the way cases are processed can differ across jurisdictions (Agboli, 2023). Differences in policing, prosecution, and case attrition can also influence the number of cases that ultimately proceed through the criminal justice system (Machisa et al., 2023).

Rape is one of the most demoralizing crimes committed against society on a global scale; however, case progression and conviction are very low as shown by the attrition of cases. Various research studies focus on the victims' point of view for explaining this phenomenon, usually at the police level. (Pas-iwen & Cawi, 2026) Idoko, (2020) demonstrate that in Nigeria, rape must be understood not only as a criminal-justice issue but also as a public-health, social-protection and human-rights concern. Sexual violence may remain unreported because survivors or their families fear retaliation, stigma, disbelief, victim blaming, social consequences, or unsatisfactory institutional responses. In their study (Idoko et al, 2025) the qualitative analysis is similarly identified as fear of retaliation, stigma, victim blaming, lack of confidence in the criminal justice system, family or cultural taboo, prolonged court processes and concerns about prosecution as reasons why some incidents may not reach official records.

It was revealed in research conducted by (Khalid et al, 2021) that filing time at the prosecutor and court level is significant in case attrition; these delays are attributed to the legal process, power imbalances, and societal pressure especially familial influence. Jigawa State presents an important setting for examining documented rape cases because the study area includes communities within Kazaure, Gumel and Ringim Emirates. The present study focuses on selected local government areas in the Northwest Senatorial District and combines ten years of administrative records with perspectives from 386 respondents drawn from institutions and communities involved in prevention, reporting, investigation, adjudication, treatment and social response.

A key gap addressed by this study is the absence of a clearly separated analysis of administrative case records and stakeholder perspectives for the ten-year period 2016–2025. The study therefore does not claim to estimate population prevalence. Instead, it describes reported/recorded cases and uses qualitative evidence to provide contextual explanations for reporting barriers,

perceived contributing circumstances, consequences and institutional challenges.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study was to examine reported rape cases recorded in the Northwest Senatorial District of Jigawa State from 2016 to 2025 and to explore stakeholder perspectives on reporting, contributing circumstances, consequences and institutional responses. The specific objectives were to: (i) describe the annual pattern of rape cases recorded by the Nigeria Police Force and the NSCDC from 2016 to 2025; (ii) describe the recorded case outcomes reported by the two agencies during the study period; (iii) describe the available age distribution of victims and perpetrators in the administrative records supplied for the study; (iv) explore perceived contributing circumstances, reasons for underreporting, consequences and challenges associated with rape cases; and (v) identify measures proposed by respondents for improving prevention, reporting, investigation, survivor support and institutional response.

METHODOLOGY

Study design and area

The study used a mixed-methods design comprising a retrospective descriptive review of administrative records and a qualitative field survey. It was conducted in the Northwest Senatorial District of Jigawa State, which comprises three emirate councils (Kazaure, Gumel and Ringim) and twelve Local Government Areas (LGAs). Two LGAs were selected from each emirate: Kazaure and Roni (Kazaure Emirate), Gumel and Sule Tankarkar (Gumel Emirate), and Ringim and Babura (Ringim Emirate).

Administrative records

Records of reported rape cases for 2016–2025 were obtained from the Nigeria Police Force and the NSCDC, State Headquarters, Dutse. The unit of analysis was the recorded rape case. The Police records contained 1,630 cases and the NSCDC records 264, giving a combined total of 1,894 recorded cases. The researcher confirmed that no case was duplicated across the two agency datasets. The variables available were year, number of reported or recorded cases, case outcomes, and age categories for victims and perpetrators. Because these records are generated by institutions, the findings are interpreted as documented cases and not as population prevalence. The combined figure of 1,894 is a count of recorded cases and not a count of qualitative respondents.

Population, sample size and sampling

The reference population for the qualitative survey

comprised 885,181 community members in the six selected LGAs (Kazaure 161,161; Roni 77,414; Ringim 192,407; Babura 212,955; Gumel 106,371; Sule Tankarkar 134,873) and 560 staff of three general hospitals (General Hospital Kazaure 236; Gumel 181; Ringim 143), a total of 885,741. A sample of 400 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error. Open-ended questionnaires were distributed to respondents by stratified sampling [state the strata used and the number of questionnaires allocated to each stratum]. A total of 386 completed questionnaires were retrieved and analysed (response rate 96.5%).

Research instrument

An open-ended questionnaire was used to elicit views on perceived contributing circumstances, the effects of rape, reasons for non-reporting, types of rape identified in the community, age ranges of victims and perpetrators, possible solutions, and challenges faced by security agents.

Data analysis

Administrative records were analysed descriptively using counts and percentages calculated against the number of cases reported or recorded in each year. The qualitative responses were analysed manually using thematic analysis, as described in the Results.

Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the heads of the two security agencies, the hospital management board, and relevant community leaders. Informed consent forms were provided to the respondents, and they were assured of the confidentiality and privacy of the information supplied. Letters of introduction were presented to the Commissioner of Police, State Headquarters, Dutse, Jigawa State, and the State Commandant of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Dutse, Jigawa State. Both letters bore reference number HAFP/SAMS/SP/SK/055/1/156 and were dated 4 May 2026. Subsequently, a formal response was received from the Nigeria Police State Command, Jigawa State, with reference number CD:1200/JGS/X/VOL.I/96, dated 21 July 2026.

RESULTS

The results are presented in two parts. The first reports the administrative records supplied by the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), State Headquarters, Dutse, Jigawa State, for 2016–2025, together with the age distributions recorded for the cases (Tables 1–5). The second reports the thematic analysis of the open-ended questionnaire

Table 1: Nigeria Police Force administrative records, 2016–2025.

Year	Reported cases	Charged to court	Recorded convictions	% charged	% convicted of reported
2016	150	100	80	66.7%	53.3%
2017	100	80	75	80.0%	75.0%
2018	200	150	125	75.0%	62.5%
2019	180	100	100	55.6%	55.6%
2020	225	125	125	55.6%	55.6%
2021	90	85	85	94.4%	94.4%
2022	175	100	100	57.1%	57.1%
2023	200	157	120	78.5%	60.0%
2024	210	200	200	95.2%	95.2%
2025	100	100	100	100.0%	100.0%
Total	1,630	1,197	1,110	73.4%	68.1%

Note. Percentages are calculated against reported cases. *Source:* Nigeria Police Force administrative record supplied for the study, 2016–2025.

Table 2: NSCDC administrative records, 2016–2025.

Year	Recorded cases	Prosecuted	Dismissed	% prosecuted	% dismissed
2016	37	30	7	81.1%	18.9%
2017	29	27	2	93.1%	6.9%
2018	19	18	1	94.7%	5.3%
2019	16	15	1	93.8%	6.2%
2020	22	21	1	95.5%	4.5%
2021	18	15	3	83.3%	16.7%
2022	31	30	1	96.8%	3.2%
2023	27	20	7	74.1%	25.9%
2024	35	31	4	88.6%	11.4%
2025	30	28	2	93.3%	6.7%
Total	264	235	29	89.0%	11.0%

Note. Percentages are calculated against recorded cases. *Source:* NSCDC administrative record supplied for the study, 2016–2025.

Table 3: Combined administrative records, 2016–2025.

Agency	Recorded cases	Share of 1,894	Recorded outcome information
Nigeria Police Force	1,630	86.1%	1,197 charged to court; 1,110 recorded convictions
NSCDC	264	13.9%	235 prosecuted; 29 dismissed
Total	1,894	100.0%	Outcomes are agency-specific and should not be pooled as equivalent legal stages

Source: Administrative records supplied by the Nigeria Police Force and NSCDC for the study.

responses of 386 respondents, covering the manual coding process, the resulting themes, their socio-ecological mapping and the relationships between themes (Tables 6–9). All percentages in the administrative tables were recalculated from the supplied counts. Because the two agencies record different stages of case processing, outcome figures are reported separately for each agency and are not pooled.

Nigeria Police Force records

Table 1 shows that the Police recorded 1,630 reported cases over the ten-year period (mean 163 cases per year). The annual count varied considerably, from a low of 90 cases in 2021 to a high of 225 cases in 2020. Reported cases rose from 150 in 2016 to 200 in 2018, fell to 180 in 2019 and peaked at 225 in 2020. They then fell sharply to 90 in 2021 (60% below the 2020 figure), recovered to 175 in 2022, 200 in 2023 and 210 in 2024, and declined to 100 in 2025. Of the 1,630 Police-recorded cases, 1,197 (73.4%) were recorded as charged to court and 1,110

(68.1%) as ending in a conviction (Table 1). The annual proportion charged ranged from 55.6% (2019 and 2020) to 100.0% (2025), and the proportion convicted ranged from 53.3% (2016) to 100.0% (2025). In 2019–2022, 2024 and 2025 the number of recorded convictions was identical to the number charged.

NSCDC records

Table 2 shows that the NSCDC recorded 264 cases, ranging from 16 in 2019 to 37 in 2016 (mean 26.4 per year). A total of 235 cases (89.0%) were prosecuted and 29 (11.0%) were dismissed, so that every recorded case has a stated outcome. The proportion prosecuted ranged from 74.1% in 2023 to 96.8% in 2022. The proportion dismissed was highest in 2023 (25.9%; 7 of 27 cases) and 2016 (18.9%; 7 of 37 cases).

Combined administrative records

Together, the two agencies supplied 1,894 recorded rape

cases for 2016–2025 (Table 3). Police records accounted for 86.1% of the combined total and NSCDC records for 13.9%. The outcome information is specific to each agency and the stages recorded (charged, convicted, prosecuted, dismissed) are not equivalent.

Age distribution of perpetrators and victims

The frequencies in the supplied age distributions sum to 1,894, the same total as the combined agency records, and they are therefore treated as administrative-record distributions. Perpetrators aged 30 years and below formed the largest category (782 cases; 41.3%), followed by those aged 31–50 years (689; 36.4%) and 50 years and above (423; 22.3%) (Table 4). Among victims, those aged 6–15 years formed the largest category (911 cases; 48.1%), followed by those aged 16–25 years (671; 35.4%), 26 years and above (168; 8.9%) and below 5 years (144; 7.6%) (Table 5). Victims aged 25 years or younger accounted for 1,726 cases (91.1%), and victims aged 15 years or younger for 1,055 cases (55.7%).

Table 4: Age distribution of perpetrators in the administrative dataset.

Perpetrator age group	Frequency	Percentage
50 years and above	423	22.3%
31–50 years	689	36.4%
30 years and below	782	41.3%
Total	1,894	100.0%

Source: Administrative dataset supplied for the study (N = 1,894).

Table 5. Age distribution of victims in the administrative dataset.

Victim age group	Frequency	Percentage
Below 5 years	144	7.6%
6–15 years	911	48.1%
16–25 years	671	35.4%
26 years and above	168	8.9%
Total	1,894	100.0%

Source: Administrative dataset supplied for the study (N = 1,894).

Manual coding of the qualitative responses

The qualitative responses from the 386 open-ended questionnaires were analysed manually using thematic analysis. The researcher read the responses repeatedly, identified relevant statements, assigned initial codes based on their meaning, grouped similar codes into categories, and reviewed and organised the categories into broader themes in line with the study objectives. The emerging themes were then checked against the original responses to ensure consistency and accurate interpretation. Table 6 illustrates this progression from response content to initial code, category and theme using 22 representative statements. For example, statements about poverty, parental negligence, peer influence and

substance abuse were coded separately but fell into socioeconomic, family, social and individual behavioural categories under the theme “perceived contributing circumstances”, whereas statements about fear of retaliation, family pressure and fear of stigma formed the theme “factors contributing to underreporting”.

Themes identified

Eight themes were identified (Table 7): perceived contributing circumstances, perceived consequences, reasons for underreporting, types of rape identified, age ranges identified, suggested solutions, challenges faced by security agents, and institutional and community response. Respondents described contributing circumstances that were economic (poverty, hawking), family-related (parental negligence), social and behavioural (peer influence, substance abuse, pornography), and related to security and gender relations (insecurity, hostility towards women and girls). Perceived consequences were psychological, physical, reproductive and social, and included damage to family image. Reasons for underreporting included fear of retaliation, victim blaming, low confidence in the justice system, prolonged judicial processes, open court hearings, and cultural and religious factors. Respondents distinguished statutory, acquaintance, intrafamilial, forced and stranger rape, and perceived that both perpetrators and victims span a wide range of ages, including very young children. Suggested solutions combined legal action, public sensitisation, reduction of poverty and illiteracy, specialised training of personnel and Sexual Assault Referral Centres. Security agents reported a lack of cooperation from victims’ families, withdrawal of cases under pressure from perpetrators’ families, late reporting and perceived political influence. No frequencies were supplied for the sub-themes, so the findings are descriptive.

Socio-ecological mapping and relationships between themes

Mapping the evidence from the eight themes onto a socio-ecological structure (Table 8) showed that individual factors (substance abuse, fear of retaliation, trauma, depression, suicide), family factors (parental negligence, abuse by relatives, family image, withdrawal of cases), community and cultural factors (stigma, myth and ritual, victim blaming, peer influence), institutional factors (police attitudes, prolonged trials, political influence, weak prosecution) and structural factors (poverty, illiteracy, insecurity, hostility towards women and girls) were all represented. Four interpretive links between themes were identified (Table 9): severe consequences, especially stigma, reinforce silence and underreporting (Theme 2 to Theme 3); underreporting, late reporting and case withdrawal weaken investigations (Theme 3 to Theme 7);

Table 6: Illustrative manual coding process of qualitative responses (n = 386).

S/N	Illustrative response content	Initial code	Category	Emerging theme
1	Poverty and economic hardship may expose girls to situations where they become vulnerable to sexual abuse.	Poverty/economic hardship	Socioeconomic vulnerability	Perceived contributing circumstances
2	Some parents do not adequately supervise or protect their children.	Parental negligence	Family-related factors	Perceived contributing circumstances
3	Peer influence and negative social behaviour can contribute to sexual misconduct.	Peer influence	Social influence	Perceived contributing circumstances
4	Substance abuse may contribute to inappropriate or violent sexual behaviour.	Substance abuse	Individual behavioural factors	Perceived contributing circumstances
5	Victims may be afraid that the perpetrator will retaliate against them or their families.	Fear of retaliation	Fear and insecurity	Factors contributing to underreporting
6	Families may put pressure on victims or their relatives to withdraw reported cases.	Family pressure	Social pressure	Factors contributing to underreporting
7	Victims may fear being blamed, stigmatised, or disbelieved when they report rape.	Fear of stigma/blame	Social barriers	Factors contributing to underreporting
8	Some cases are difficult to prosecute because of inadequate cooperation from victims' families.	Lack of family cooperation	Investigation/prosecution difficulties	Challenges in responding to rape
9	Late reporting can make investigation and evidence collection more difficult.	Late reporting	Case-handling difficulties	Challenges in responding to rape
10	Victims may experience depression and psychological trauma following rape.	Depression/psychological trauma	Mental health consequences	Consequences of rape
11	Rape may result in unwanted pregnancy and other reproductive health problems.	Unwanted pregnancy	Reproductive health consequences	Consequences of rape
12	Some victims may sustain physical injuries or suffer serious health consequences.	Physical injury	Physical health consequences	Consequences of rape
13	Rape may lead to social stigma and damage the victim's family or social relationships.	Stigmatisation	Social consequences	Consequences of rape
14	Respondents identified rape involving minors as one form of sexual violence.	Statutory rape	Rape involving minors	Types of rape identified
15	Rape may be committed by acquaintances or persons known to the victim.	Acquaintance rape	Perpetrator–victim relationship	Types of rape identified
16	Sexual assault may also occur within families or be committed by relatives.	Family/relative rape	Perpetrator–victim relationship	Types of rape identified
17	Respondents identified younger persons, middle-aged persons, and older persons among perpetrators.	Different perpetrator groups	Age-related characteristics	Age groups involved
18	Children and adolescents were identified among the groups affected by rape.	Child/adolescent victims	Age-related vulnerability	Age groups involved
19	Public education and sensitisation were suggested as ways of preventing rape.	Public sensitisation	Community prevention	Suggested preventive measures
20	Respondents suggested specialised training for personnel handling sexual violence cases.	Specialised training	Institutional capacity building	Suggested measures for prevention and response
21	Strengthening Sexual Assault Referral Centres was suggested to improve survivor support.	SARC strengthening	Survivor support services	Suggested measures for prevention and response
22	Effective legal action and appropriate prosecution were considered necessary to improve response to rape.	Effective legal action	Justice-system strengthening	Suggested measures for prevention and response

Note. The table illustrates the coding process and is not an exhaustive list of codes. *Source:* Analysis of qualitative questionnaire responses.

Table 7: Thematic summary and interpretation of qualitative findings (n = 386).

Theme	Sub-themes / categories	Interpretation	Implication
Perceived contributing circumstances	Poverty; hawking; parental negligence; moral decadence; peer influence; perceived influence of economic, family, social, behavioural domains. These are norms. Attitudes that shift blame (perpetrators and survivors); perceptions, not proven causes. to survivors need to be illiteracy; myth and ritual; insecurity Some items (clothing, "moral decadence") may reflect prevailing robbery); pornography; hostility towards women and girls; blaming narratives, rather than isolation/opportunity evidence of causation.	Respondents see rape as multidimensional, spanning levels at once (poverty, child supervision, insecurity, gender domains). These are norms. Attitudes that shift blame (perpetrators and survivors); perceptions, not proven causes. to survivors need to be challenged.	Prevention should target several levels at once (poverty, child supervision, insecurity, gender domains). Attitudes that shift blame (perpetrators and survivors) need to be challenged.
Perceived consequences	Stigmatisation; post-traumatic effects; death/injury; infectious diseases; unwanted pregnancy/abortion; sexual-behaviour outcomes; suicide; depression; damage to family image	The consequences are psychological, physical, reproductive and social. Family-image concerns show that harm extends beyond the survivor to the family and community.	Survivor-centred health, psychosocial and social-support services are needed.
Reasons for underreporting	Fear of retaliation; victim blaming and fear of disbelief or intrusive police questioning; low confidence in the justice system; abuse by parents/relatives and the taboo around it; difficulty prosecuting; stigmatisation; open court hearings; prolonged judicial processes; cultural and religious factors	Barriers operate at individual, family, community and institutional levels.	Administrative records reflect documented burden, not the true occurrence of rape. Official figures likely understate the problem.
Types of rape identified	Statutory rape (minors); acquaintance rape; rape by parents/relatives; forced rape; stranger rape	Respondents recognise a range of perpetrator-victim relationships, including familiar and intrafamilial ones, not only stranger rape. No frequencies were supplied.	No type can be claimed to be "most frequent". Findings are descriptive and typological only.
Age ranges identified	Perpetrators: ≤30; 31–50; ≥26 years. Victims: <5; 6–15; 16–25; ≥26 years	Respondents perceive that perpetrators and victims span a wide range of ages, including very young children.	The quantitative age distribution (N = 1,894) is administrative-record data and must not be conflated with the 386 qualitative respondents.
Suggested solutions	Effective legal action; sensitisation (government and religious bodies); reduced poverty and illiteracy; specialised training of personnel; Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC)	Respondents favour a multi-sectoral approach combining prevention, accountability, education, institutional capacity and survivor support.	Recommendations should be framed as multi-agency and tied to specific sectors.
Challenges faced by security agents	Lack of cooperation from victims' families; case withdrawal under pressure from perpetrators' families; late reporting; perceived political influence	These factors may affect investigation, evidence preservation and case progression.	Strengthen case-management procedures, family engagement and safeguards against interference.
Institutional and community response	Coordination between security agencies and other services; improved survivor protection; public education; access to health and psychosocial support; stronger legal and institutional procedures	Findings support an integrated response, not reliance on enforcement alone.	Supports a coordinated referral pathway across police, health, legal and community actors.

Source: Analysis of qualitative questionnaire responses.

Table 8: Cross-cutting analysis: socio-ecological mapping of themes.

Level	Evidence from themes	Key message
Individual	Substance abuse, fear of retaliation, trauma, depression, suicide	Individual vulnerability and psychological harm are central.
Family	Parental negligence, abuse by relatives, family image, withdrawal of cases	Families can be protective, but they can also be a source of harm or suppression.
Community / cultural	Stigma, myth and ritual, religious and cultural factors, victim blaming, peer influence	Social norms shape both occurrence and silence.
Institutional	Police attitudes, prolonged trials, open court hearings, political influence, weak prosecution	Institutional barriers discourage reporting and reduce accountability.
Structural / societal	Poverty, illiteracy, insecurity, hostility towards women and girls	Broader inequality and insecurity create conditions of vulnerability.

Source: Analysis of qualitative questionnaire responses.

Table 9: Relationships between themes.

Link	Interpretation
Theme 2 → Theme 3	Severe consequences, especially stigma, reinforce silence and underreporting.
Theme 3 → Theme 7	Underreporting, late reporting and withdrawal of cases weaken investigations.
Theme 1 → Theme 6	Perceived circumstances (poverty, illiteracy) map directly onto the proposed solutions.
Themes 3 + 7 → Theme 8	Institutional barriers justify the call for an integrated, coordinated response.

Source: Analysis of qualitative questionnaire responses.

perceived circumstances such as poverty and illiteracy map onto the proposed solutions (Theme 1 to Theme 6); and institutional barriers justify an integrated, coordinated response (Themes 3 and 7 to Theme 8). These links are interpretive and were not tested statistically.

DISCUSSION

Principal findings

This study combined ten years of administrative records from two security agencies with a thematic analysis of 386 qualitative responses to describe the documented burden of rape in the Northwest Senatorial District of Jigawa State and the circumstances that shape its reporting and handling. Three findings stand out. First, 1,894 cases were recorded across the two agencies, with the Police accounting for the large majority (Tables 1–3). Second, recorded victims were overwhelmingly children and young people, and recorded perpetrators were most often aged 30 years or younger (Tables 4 and 5). Third, respondents located rape within overlapping economic, family, community, institutional and structural conditions and described barriers to reporting and prosecution at each of those levels (Tables 6–9). These findings are interpreted below against the wider literature, with attention to what administrative data can and cannot show.

Scale of the documented burden and agency differences

The Police supplied 1,630 of the 1,894 records (86.1%) and the NSCDC 264 (13.9%) (Table 3). This difference is more plausibly explained by the agencies' mandates, the routes through which complaints reach them and their recording systems than by any difference in the underlying occurrence of rape. A comparable dependence on institutional gateways was seen at a Lagos sexual assault referral centre, where the police were the source of 76.7% of referrals and only 8% of survivors referred themselves (Sodipo et al., 2018). The annual Police series fluctuated widely, peaking at 225 cases in 2020, falling to 90 in 2021 and rising again to 210 in 2024 (Table 1). The coincidence of the 2020 peak and the 2021 trough with the COVID-19 period invites speculation, but the data do not support a causal reading. Nationwide Greek police data for 2020 and 2021 showed a stable rate of reported domestic rape alongside a significant rise in reported domestic violence,

and the authors cautioned that increases in reported cases after lockdowns might be only apparent and could reflect reporting rather than occurrence (Karakasi et al., 2025). The same caution applies here. Fluctuations in Table 1 may reflect reporting behaviour, access to police stations, recording practices or real changes in incidence, and the present design cannot separate these.

Case outcomes and attrition

The outcome fields in Tables 1 and 2 describe how recorded cases were disposed of, but they are not a cohort analysis of attrition. With that caveat, the proportions are high: 73.4% of Police-recorded cases were charged and 68.1% ended in a recorded conviction, while the NSCDC prosecuted 89.0% of its cases and dismissed 11.0%. Studies that follow reported rape cases through the justice system have generally found much greater loss of cases. In a national sample of 3,952 rape cases reported to South African police in 2012, 35% were closed by the police, 31% were declined by prosecutors, 16% were enrolled but later struck off the roll, and 9% ended in conviction (Machisa et al., 2023a). The Jigawa figures should therefore be read cautiously. Recorded convictions equal the number charged in six of the ten Police years (Table 1), which suggests that outcome fields may have been compiled differently from year to year or may count only finalised cases. Case-level tracking from complaint to final disposition would be needed to estimate attrition properly, and the NSCDC years with the highest dismissal proportions, 2016 (18.9%) and 2023 (25.9%), would merit similar review (Table 2). Where attrition does occur, the literature and the respondents point to similar mechanisms. Thorough police investigation, forensic evidence and the arrest of perpetrators were key to case progression in the South African national sample, and extra-legal factors such as victim characteristics and the victim–perpetrator relationship also influenced attrition (Machisa et al., 2023a). In a companion analysis, weaker investigations of multiple-perpetrator rapes were associated with higher attrition, and the authors called for more effective supervision of rape investigations (Machisa et al., 2023b). In the Philippines, extrajudicial settlement and prolonged, exhausting proceedings contributed to victims' disengagement from the legal system (Pas-iwen & Cawi, 2026). In Ghana, the cost of forensic examination for poor victims, stigma, lack of psychosocial support and long adjudication have been identified as obstacles to

successful prosecution (Agboli, 2023). These accounts parallel the challenges reported by security agents in the present study, namely lack of family cooperation, withdrawal of cases under pressure from perpetrators' families, late reporting and perceived political influence (Table 6, rows 6, 8 and 9; Table 7, Theme 7), and the prolonged judicial processes and open court hearings that respondents gave as reasons for not reporting (Table 7, Theme 3).

Age of victims and perpetrators

Victims aged 6–15 years formed the largest group (48.1%), 91.1% of recorded victims were aged 25 years or younger, and children aged 15 years or younger accounted for 55.7% of cases (Table 5). This concentration is consistent with the Lagos referral-centre review, in which defilement was the most commonly recorded form of assault (71.6% of 2,160 cases) and rape the second (20.3%), although those data, like ours, are record-based and do not show how often each form occurs in the community (Sodipo et al., 2018). It also matches respondents' identification of statutory rape and of child and adolescent victims (Table 6, rows 14 and 18; Table 7, Theme 4 and Theme 5). Survey evidence suggests that the records capture only part of the picture: in the 2014 Violence Against Children Survey in Nigeria, 26% of females aged 13–24 years reported sexual violence but only 37% of them had ever told anyone, and the most common reason for not telling was not feeling a need or desire to do so (Nguyen et al., 2018). Legal definitions also shape what is counted. Agboli (2023) argues that the gender- and age-specific definition of rape in Ghana limits protection and recommends gender-neutral reform. Whether comparable definitional issues affect how cases involving boys and very young children are classified in Jigawa State could not be determined, because the supplied data do not report victim sex or offence classification. Perpetrators aged 30 years and below formed the largest group (41.3%), but those aged 31–50 years (36.4%) and above 50 years (22.3%) together accounted for more than half of the records (Table 4). This spread agrees with respondents' view that perpetrators come from younger, middle-aged and older groups (Table 6, row 17) and cautions against prevention that targets one age group only. Because the dataset does not link perpetrator and victim ages or record the relationship between them, the age distributions cannot show how many offences involved relatives or acquaintances, even though respondents described acquaintance and intrafamilial rape as distinct forms (Table 7, Theme 4). Both distributions describe the administrative dataset and must not be conflated with the 386 qualitative respondents (Table 7, Theme 5).

Perceived contributing circumstances

Respondents' accounts of contributing circumstances

(Table 6, rows 1–4; Table 7, Theme 1) are best understood through the integrated ecological framework, which treats violence against women as the product of interacting individual, situational and sociocultural factors (Heise, 1998). In that framework, unemployment and low socioeconomic status, isolation and delinquent peer associations sit at the community level, alcohol use at the situational level, and rigid gender roles and male entitlement at the societal level (Heise, 1998). Poverty, isolation, peer influence, substance abuse and hostility towards women and girls map onto these levels, which is why they are placed at the corresponding levels in Table 8. The extension of the model to include a global level (Fulu & Miedema, 2015) is relevant to respondents' references to pornography and moral decadence as changing social influences. Concern about the information environment also has a counterpart in a study of urban and rural Lahore, where exposure to rape cases on social media was associated with distressed mental states among users (Khalid et al., 2021).

Two sub-themes, perceived influence of clothing and moral decadence, require careful handling. They are perceptions, and they echo rape myths, which are false beliefs that shift responsibility from perpetrators to victims. A meta-analysis of 37 studies found that men endorse rape myths more than women do and that endorsement is strongly associated with hostile attitudes towards women (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Focus-group research in rural Kenya found that about half of participants were likely to blame victims unconditionally (Tavrow et al., 2013). More recent work shows that gender system justification, the tendency to defend existing gender arrangements, is related to blaming victims partly through acceptance of modern rape myths (Murray et al., 2023). Read together, these studies indicate that such items reflect prevailing social attitudes, not evidence of causation. This is why Table 7 reports them as perceptions, why Table 8 places victim blaming at the community and cultural level, and why prevention messages should challenge these attitudes and not repeat them.

Perceived consequences

The consequences listed by respondents were psychological, physical, reproductive and social (Table 6, rows 10–13; Table 7, Theme 2). The psychological items are consistent with pooled clinical evidence: a meta-analysis of 497 effect sizes found that sexual assault survivors reported significantly worse psychopathology than non-assaulted comparisons (average Hedges' $g = 0.61$), with the strongest associations for posttraumatic stress and suicidality (Dworkin et al., 2017). Respondents' concern with stigmatisation and family image points to harm beyond the individual (Table 8, family and community levels). Harm may spread further through the information environment, since the Lahore study linked exposure to rape cases on social media with post-traumatic depressive symptoms among users (Khalid et

al., 2021). Where services are lacking, the burden falls on survivors and families, and the absence of social and psychological support has been identified as an obstacle to justice for rape victims in Ghana (Agboli, 2023). These findings support the implication in Table 7 that responses should include survivor-centred health, psychosocial and social-support services alongside prosecution.

Underreporting and institutional barriers

The barriers to reporting in Theme 3 operate, as Table 8 shows, at individual, family, community and institutional levels, and Nigerian evidence is consistent with this picture. Disclosure of sexual violence among young female survivors is low (Nguyen et al., 2018), and reporting is limited by societal perception and by the prolonged steps involved in pursuing a case to a conclusion (Idoko et al., 2020), which correspond to the stigmatisation and prolonged judicial process sub-themes in Table 7. Victim blaming, also cited by respondents, is well documented in the rape myth literature (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010; Tavrow et al., 2013). The family-pressure and case-withdrawal findings (Table 6, row 6; Table 7, Theme 7) echo the Philippine finding that settlement outside the legal system led to disengagement and case attrition (Pas-iwen & Cawi, 2026).

The links proposed in Table 9 make the cumulative effect explicit. The link from Theme 2 to Theme 3 (stigma reinforcing silence) is consistent with evidence that societal perception and victim blaming limit reporting and disclosure (Idoko et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2018; Tavrow et al., 2013). The link from Theme 3 to Theme 7 (underreporting and late reporting weakening investigations) is consistent with the difficulty of pursuing cases to a conclusion described in Nigerian centre data (Idoko et al., 2020) and with evidence that investigative quality determines case progression (Machisa et al., 2023a, 2023b). The link from Theme 1 to Theme 6 (poverty and illiteracy mapping onto solutions) reflects the ecological logic that prevention must address the same levels at which risk operates (Heise, 1998). The link from Themes 3 and 7 to Theme 8 (institutional barriers justifying an integrated response) is supported by the finding that most referrals to a Lagos centre came through the police (Sodipo et al., 2018) and by the association between a referral centre and better reporting and follow-up in Enugu State (Idoko et al., 2020). The practical consequence is that Tables 1–5 describe documented burden, not prevalence; the true occurrence of rape in the district is likely to exceed what the two agencies recorded.

Towards an integrated response

The solutions proposed by respondents (Table 6, rows 19–22; Table 7, Themes 6 and 8) converge on a coordinated, multi-sectoral response, and experience elsewhere supports several of their elements. In Enugu State, the

establishment of the Tamar Sexual Assault Centre was associated with improved reporting and follow-up (Idoko et al., 2020), and the Lagos authors recommended more referral centres to increase reportage and treatment (Sodipo et al., 2018), which supports the call to strengthen Sexual Assault Referral Centres. Community education, teacher training and reform of rape laws were recommended in rural Kenya to reduce victim blaming and increase prosecutions (Tavrow et al., 2013), corresponding to the public sensitisation and legal action sub-themes. The Ghanaian proposals to have the state cover forensic examination costs, intensify public education and adopt a gender-neutral definition of rape (Agboli, 2023) show how cost and definitional barriers can be addressed in a similar legal and economic context. The request for specialised training is consistent with evidence that investigative practice and the handling of rape stereotypes shape case outcomes (Machisa et al., 2023a, 2023b). Finally, procedural tools such as the Rape Victim Impact Assessment, developed to embed victims' rights and interests in policing policy in England (Friskney et al., 2025), offer a model that could be adapted to inter-agency referral pathways among the Police, NSCDC, health services and courts in Jigawa State. Taken together, the evidence supports the position that rape should be addressed as both a justice issue and a health issue, through coordinated action by police, health, legal and community actors rather than by law enforcement alone (Table 7, Theme 8).

Strengths and limitations

The study draws on ten years of records from two agencies and integrates them with stakeholder accounts organised within a socio-ecological framework, which gives a locally grounded picture of both the documented burden and the system conditions around it. Several limitations should be noted. First, the administrative data cover reported cases only, and without a population denominator no prevalence or incidence rate can be calculated. Second, the data were supplied in aggregated form, so the researcher's confirmation that no cases were duplicated across agencies could not be independently verified here, victim and perpetrator characteristics could not be linked, individual cases could not be followed through the system, and outcome categories could not be treated as equivalent across agencies. Third, the qualitative findings reflect respondents' perceptions, were coded manually, and carry no sub-theme frequencies, so no claim is made about which circumstance or type of rape is most common. Fourth, the age distributions describe the administrative dataset and are not derived from the 386 respondents. Fifth, the comparison studies come from Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Greece, Pakistan, the Philippines and England, with different legal definitions, systems and data sources, and are therefore offered as points of consistency and not as equivalence. Future work should

use case-level tracking, victim-reported data and a population denominator to estimate prevalence and attrition directly.

Conclusion

This study found a substantial and persistent documented burden of reported rape in the Northwest Senatorial District of Jigawa State between 2016 and 2025. The Nigeria Police Force and the NSCDC together recorded 1,894 cases, comprising 1,630 Police records and 264 NSCDC records (Tables 1–3). The Police series varied considerably, with the highest annual count in 2020 and the lowest in 2021 (Table 1). Children and young people were the most affected: victims aged 6–15 years formed the largest group (48.1%), and perpetrators aged 30 years and below formed the largest perpetrator group (41.3%) (Tables 4 and 5). The qualitative analysis of 386 responses showed that respondents perceive rape as a multidimensional problem rooted in economic hardship, family circumstances, social norms and weak institutional systems, and as having psychological, physical, reproductive and social consequences (Tables 6–8). Stigma, fear of retaliation, victim blaming, family pressure, cultural and religious considerations, low confidence in the justice system and prolonged legal processes were identified as barriers to reporting, and these barriers weaken investigation and case progression (Table 9). These perceptions are consistent with the wider literature and should not be read as proven causes. The 1,894 cases must be interpreted as recorded or reported cases, not as population prevalence, because the study had no population denominator and could not estimate unreported cases. The evidence nevertheless points to the need for a coordinated response that treats rape as both a justice and a health issue. Priorities are stronger inter-agency referral and information sharing between security, health, legal and psychosocial services; specialised, survivor-centred training for frontline responders; public sensitisation against stigma and victim blaming; engagement of families, communities and religious leaders to discourage pressure to withdraw cases; and particular attention to the protection of children and adolescents. Future research should track cases individually from complaint to final disposition and collect victim-reported data, so that prevalence and attrition can be estimated directly.

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