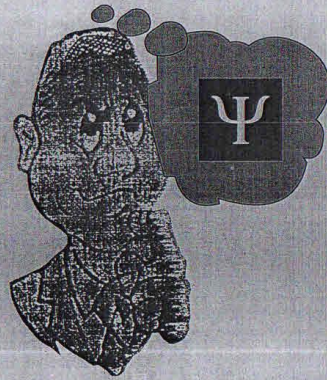


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Incest: A Threat to Family Security

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Abstract

Throughout history, societies have classified certain forms of sexual intimacy as unlawful in the family setting. These are punishable under religious rules and government status. Incest is sexual intercourse between close relatives. It is social taboo and can be illegal or in some cases legal depending on the jurisdiction. Genetic Sexual Attraction (GSA) is one of the causes of incestuous behaviour especially between adults. It can also be caused accidentally, where by the two partners will not be aware of their biological relationship. Incest effect is an increase in sexualized behaviour and also Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A prevention of incest is the separation of bed of the children between the ages of 5-7 years and above, and teaching children about different kinds of touches which could lead to incestuous behaviours early in life. By implication sufficient information should be provided for children to prevent incest and counsellors should provide adequate guidance to victims to reduce its threat to family security.

Keywords: Incestuous Behaviour, Threat, Family, Security.

Introduction

Incest is as old as time itself. The Holy Bible in Genesis 19:30-38 records incest between Lot and his daughter. Lot's two daughters' conspired to inebriate and seduce their father due to the lack of available partners. In ancient times, tribal nations preferred endogamous marriage, that is, marriage with the relatives, and it was often forbidden for an oldest daughter to even marry outside the family. Marriage to half-sister, for example, is considered incest by most nations today, but was common behaviour for Egyptian Pharaohs. The book of genesis portrays Sarah as marrying Abraham, her half-brother without criticizing the close genetic relationships between them. Incest is different from childhood sexual abuse. A child can be sexually abused by a stranger which does not qualify to be incest (Osundeke, 2002). However, when a child is sexually abused by a member of the same family it is referred to as incest. Incest is more broad and wider in scope than child assault. Incest is a sexual contact between closely related people. In spite of effort of religious rules and government law, incest in the world is on the increase as people continue to commit this social reprehensible acts. One may pause to ponder on the following questions (1) are human beings animals? (2) Why do people engage in this act? (3) Why are people so

wicked? (4) What can be done to reduce this act? Incest is a general problem that has destroyed many families and relations in the past, there is need to tackle this abomination to reduce the threat it poses to family security.

Definition

Incest (from the Latin word "impure" or soiled) refers to sexual activities between a person and close relative such as a parent, a brother or sister, a grandparent, an uncle or aunt (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1988). Although brothers – sisters incest is probably most common, it is on record that most cases of incest reported to the authorities involves an adult-child interaction. The exact definition including the nature, the relationship between people and the types of sexual activity vary by country and by even individual status or state within a country. The laws can also extend to marriages between said individuals.

Research on incest has discovered the father-daughter incest as the most common frequent pattern. In reality, father-daughter incest seems to be less common than brothers-sister incest, but sexual activity between siblings in most cases are reported or brought into treatment. The playboy surely (Hunt, 1975) found that about four percent men and women had ever had sexual contact with a sibling, but only 0.5 percent of the women had sexual contact with their fathers and an even smaller percent of the men described participation in parent child sex. Also many survey and research such as Kinsey (1948, 1953), Renshaw (1983), Sex therapy clinics, found that brother-sisters incest is far more common than parent-child sexual relations (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1980). Several myths about incest continue to be widely believed such as; "incest occurs primarily in poor, uneducated families," "incest is usually committed by a father who is a sexual degeneration." "Claims of incest by a child are usually made up." The fact is, a child does not make up stories about incest, incest does not only occur among poor or uneducated family but also anybody in any society regardless of their status. Recent evidence has begun to show that incest is particularly common in reconstituted families, these are families in which remarriage occur, due to divorce or the death of a spouse (Sage et al, 1983, Renshaw, 1983). Statistics gathered by researcher (Russell, 1983) also support the view.

Types of Incest

Adult-Child Incest

Father –daughter and step father –step daughter incest is the most commonly reported form of adult-child incest. The children are forced to have sex with them. The father may be drunk or may have argument with his wife and decided to use sex to punish his daughter. The child is likely to fight back and may be physically injured. When a man engages in sexual activity with his underage daughter, he is engaging in incest as well as "interfamilial child sexual abuse". Dian Russell's researched on 30 women found that only one out of 40 was sexually abused by her biological father.

but 1 out of 6 reared in reconstituted families had been sexually abused by a step-father. In fact it appears that in at least some instances men have married divorced women primarily so that they could gain sexual access to their children (Schwarz, 1983).

In many cases, fathers sexually abuse their children are common but one of the recent incest that happened between father and daughter was reported on Wednesday, 27th June, 2012. A 45 year old woman accused her husband of having sex with their only daughter of 15 years. The man 51, resides with his wife and their daughter at Ayobo, Ipaja, Lagos, South-West, Nigeria. A reliable source revealed that the girl's mother, who is a trader at Oshodi, on the fateful day, went to Festac Town but had to return home because she was not feeling well. According to the source, the woman, on getting home, met her husband and their daughter and the man sucking her breast. The woman was said to have raised an alarm which attracted neighbours and passersby. Report by (Hazeem Balogun, a mobile journalist).

Mother-son incest is rare. In one sample in 203 cases of incest in the nuclear family, only 2 cases of mother-son sexual activity were described (Weinberg, 1955). In cases of mother-son initiated incest, the mother is usually psychologically disturbed. Mother-son incest typically involves genital fondling without intercourse if the child is young, but with boys over age ten, coitus is the most typical activity. In Japan, it is not uncommon for mothers to sexually stimulate their children to soothe them so they will sleep. According to Hideo Tokioka, when Americans think of incest, they think of fathers and daughters; in Japan one thinks of mothers and sons' due to the extensive media coverage of mother-son incest there.

Mother–daughter incest seems to be the rare form of incest in a nuclear family set. An undergraduate student approaches a counsellor sometimes in 2011. She claimed she is a Lesbian and she was introduced to it by her mother when she is around age twelve, she said her father live and works in the Northern part of Nigeria while her mother and her together with other children lives in the western part of the country. She added that her mother do watch pornography very late at night when they are far asleep but most of the time she use to wake up, as the eldest child she stays in the sitting room with her mother when others are sent to bed and also slept off while watching T.V. On the fateful night when she was already developing her woman-hood, her mother got aroused while watching pornography without realizing her daughter was watching her, she was touching herself to the extent of stripping out of cloth. She was out of control when she takes note of her daughter watching her. She bounces on her (with no physical force) make her feel comfortable and the whole scene begins. She also added that she joined a boarding house school in SSI and she met other Lesbian students and together they initiated others. According to her it all begins with my own biological mother."

Co-Sibling Incest

Children siblings-sibling incest is considered to be widespread, but rarely, reported it is believed to be the most common form of interfamilial abuse. Siblings-siblings incest becomes child sexual abuse when it occurs without consent, without equality, or as a result of coercion. There is relatively little systematic or comprehensive research information available on brother-sister incest. Reported cases usually involve an older brother and considerably younger sister (Gehard et al; 1965) but most cases probably involve siblings who are close in age (Finkelhor, 1980). The brother is usually the dominant partner in sibling's incest (Meiselman, 1978), but there have been almost dozen cases where sibling-siblings involve mutual consent (Master, Johnson & Kolodny, 1988), while there are others who use to over power or blackmail the other into providing sexual gratifications. A case reported to Master, Johnson and Kolodny (1988) of 26 years old woman who narrated her experience "when I was 14 my elder brother (who was 16) found out that I was doing drugs. Apparently he sucked around for a while and got a whole set of "evidence" together and then he confronted me with it one night when our folks were at a movie. He told me I had two choices: either give him a blow-job or he 'd tell my parents what I was doing" (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny; 1988).

Consenting Adults-Incest

Sexual activity between adult closed relative may arise from Genetics Sexual Attractions (G.S.A). This form of incest has not been widely reported in the past, but recent evidence has indicated that this behaviour does take place, possible more often than people realize. Proponents of incest between consenting adults draw clear boundaries between the behaviour of consenting adults and rape child, molestation and abusive incest. According to one participant who was interviewed for an article in the Guardian "you can't help who you fall in love with, it just happens. I fell in love with my sisters I'm not ashamed..... I only feel sorry for my mom and dad; I wish they could be happy for us. We love each other. It's nothing like some old man who tries to fuck his three-year old that's evil disgusting....of course we are consenting that most important thing, we're not fucking perverts what we have is the most beautiful things in the world".

At this juncture, we should note that father-daughter incest and mother-son incest could also be consensus. A recent case in May 2012 of a woman Penny Lawrence who claims to be in love with her dad and she is proud she is. The pair was pictured smiling and hugging each other under the headline, "I'm pregnant with my dad's baby and we are so in love" Penny is 28 and her father Garry is 46, and they live as a couple. She was also quoted saying "I'm in love with Garry and desperately want his baby. But we have agreed that if my three-month old son shows a birth defect, we will terminate

the pregnancy." Another case was a Zimbabwean widow Betty Mberko from Mwenezi in Masvingo and her son Feran who both admitted having sexual relationship and decided to marry after they noticed that Betty was pregnant for Feran Mbreko (23). She said she has decided to marry her son because she does not want to marry her late husband young brothers, whom she says are coveting her. Feran also said he was more than prepared to marry his mother and would pay off the ILOBOLA (bride price) balance his father had left unpaid to his grandparents. We should understand that incest is different from child sexual abuses; it can also be consensus as it is explained above.

Adult Siblings-Incest

Incest between adult siblings is consensus and the most recent and public case of adult siblings is the case of a brother and sister in Germany Patrick Stuebing and Susan Karolewski. Patrick was taken at the age of 3 by foster parents, who adopted him later. After 20 years, when he was 23 he learnt about his biological parents, contacted his mother and met her and his then 16 years old sister for the first time. He later moved in with them shortly thereafter. Their mother died 6 months later; the couple became intimately close and had their first child, Eric, together in 2001. By 2004, they had four children altogether Eric, Sarah, Nancy and Sofia. Patrick was imprisoning for two years when he was found guilty of incestuous behaviour. An article about them in Der Spiegel states that the couples are happy together, according to court records, the first three children have mental and physical disabilities, and have been placed in foster care. However, Susan herself is mentally slow, which may explain the disabilities but there is still debate on whether or not their disabilities are form of incest or their genetics. The couple still lives together in Germany with their last child, Sofia. In April 2012 at the European Court of Human Rights, Patrick Stuebing lost his case that the conviction violated his right to a private and family life.

Causes of Incest

The causes of incestuous behaviour can be categorized into three: family causes, social causes and personal causes. The typical family in which incest occurs most regularly is three: the dysfunctional family, the reconstituted family and the superficially "normal" family. The *dysfunctional family* is characterized by problems spanning generations, relatively low socio economic status, marginal functioning of individual family members and a family history of drug abuse. Children in dysfunctional families are basically left to raise themselves and without adult supervision, they are vulnerable to all forms of abuse inside and outside of the family. While some becomes caretakers, other becomes rebels. The *reconstituted families* are family that divorce, separation or death of parent has occurred. The children in

this family are put under supervisions of uncles, aunts, grandparents, step-fathers or step-mothers or single parent, and they are liable to be abuse by any of those relatives. Sibling-sibling incest is common in this type of family. *The superficially normal family* appears to be solid and well-functioning but internally they suffer from emotional instability, emotional capacity of nurture one another much less their children. Parent in this family become more estranged from one another not only emotionally but sexually. The mother turns to her mother for help in running the household and the father turns to his daughter for emotional and sexual substances. Even, in this family, when incest is discovered by a mother, in more than two-third of cases she does not try to help or protect her child (Stoenner, 1972; Herman & Hirschman, 1977). Other family problems that constitute breeding ground for incest are when one of the parents of the family has abusive upbringing or a victim of incest themselves.

Social causes are watching of pornography films, reading erotic magazine and watching nude pictures which aroused predator and approach or force the prey into the social taboo. Alcohol or drug abuses are also causes of incest because the predators when on drugs tends to lose their senses and thus capable of doing any act that they may not have engaged in if they are in their right senses.

Personality causes are due to lack of self-control, lack of self-respect, lack of respect for others, lack of decency and lack of internal control; others are emotional instability and attraction e.g. Genetic Sexual Attraction (GSA), which is a disease caused by psychological condition. Incest can also be caused accidentally which is called accidental incest. This incest is committed by two partners who do not know they are biologically related. It can occur when two people who are unaware of their biological relationship become sexually intimate, or between siblings who share a room and partake in sexual exploration. Accidental incest is commonly believed to be caused by artificial insemination with donated sperm. Other causes may include: family member separated at birth, sexual exploration, child abandonment and alcohol abuse. A case of accidental incest occurs in 2008 where a British brother and sister who were twins separated at birth married without knowing of their relationship. According to the relationship, it was discovered soon after their wedding and the marriage was annulled. Concerns have been raised however about whether the story is in fact true.

Law Regarding Incest

Incest definition, including the nature of the relationship between people and the types of sexual activity vary by country and by even individual states or provinces in a country. These laws can also be extended to marriage between said individuals. In some countries it is illegal, only when it involves

minors, some countries legalize it, while in others it is prohibited and the punishment vary by country and by individual states. Consensus incest is Legal in China, France, Israel, the Ivory Coast, the Netherlands, Russian, Spain and Turkey, according to 2007 report from the Max Planck Institute in Germany. Incest is punishable in Switzerland, Germany and Canada with up to 14 years imprisonment. Poland, Denmark, England, Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, United State and Vietnam also punish incest criminal with imprisonment between 3 months to 20 years. The punishment in Australia varies from State while Republic of Island punish female criminal for 7 years imprisonment and life imprisonment for male.

Argentina, Finland, Brazil, and India punish incest criminals only when it involves minor age or the prey was force. In South Africa incest is illegal but applied only to vaginal intercourse, while in Sweden full siblings is prohibited but half siblings can marry by government approval. With the social taboo that almost every individuals regards incest to be, countries like Israel, France, Belgium and Turkey legalize it while in Portugal incest is not specifically prohibited under Portuguese law. However in Nigeria, the offence of incest has no clear definition in the Nigerian laws but falls under the offences against morality in the criminal code Act cap 77, laws of the Federation of Nigeria (1990) Section 214 of the criminal code defines offences against morality as a) Any person who has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature or b) Has carnal knowledge of animal or c) Permit a male person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature is guilty of felony and his liable to imprisonment for fourteen (14) years. The term "against order of nature" therefore refers to either father having sex with his daughter, a mother having sex with her son; a sister with her brother etc. provided this is done to the extent of incongruity of the order of nature.

Effect of Incest on Victims

Just last year in the United States, former child actress Mackenzie Philips claimed that she had engaged on a decade long consensual relationship with her father, the late rock star John Philips. She described in her book "High Arrival", how incest fuelled her drugs use and mental health problems. She said "No matter what kind of incest, it is an abuse of power, a betrayal of trust" with these and many other stories about victims, researchers have discovered that effect of incest is not only to those who are forced in to but it also affects even consensus incest.

The effect of incest has been identified to be obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Perfectionism, Delinquency Anxiety – Regressive Behaviour, Nightmares, Drug abuse, prostitution, resentment and residual feelings of guilt. Others include cruelty and self-injury, withdraw from normal

activity, internalizing and externalizing, poor or slow self-esteem Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), General Behaviour Problems, Addictions, panic attack, eating disorder, depression, perverting, promiscuity phobias, isolation and even suicide.

A review of forty-five studies indicated two common pattern of effect of psychological response to incest (Williams and Finkehar, 1993). The first are those associated with posttraumatic stress symptomatology. The second is an increase in sexualized behaviour, including sexualized play with dolls, putting objects into anuses or virginals, excessive or public masturbation, seductive behaviour and age inappropriate sexual knowledge and behaviour. A victim once said "The real damage comes not from the sex but it comes from the aspect of rape, involuntary acts, pain, shame and guilt.

Prevention of Incest

"Prevention is better than cure" they say. The best approach to health concern is prevention. That is, not allowing the occurrence of the abuse. The problem of incest is not an exception. All children should be taught that they have the right to say "no" to adults who ask them to do something they do not want to do. They should also know that any form of genital contact with adults is strictly of limit (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1988). Neddermeyer (2006) also added that children should be taught 1) good body image 2) respecting the child's sacred body boundaries, thus, avoiding learning by them vulnerable to perpetrators 3) setting appropriate boundaries 4) fostering their self-esteem, and 5) not keeping secrets for others; this can prevent abuse or prevent the same person from repeating the abuse. Children should be taught that everybody has the right to decide who touches them and how they want to be touched. Awareness should be created in children about what incest is, why it is a serious family problem and who to tell or how to handle it, when it occurs. They should learn how predators use "special promises" and threats. They should also be informed that anybody can be a predator including their parents, siblings, and their lovely relations.

When children are growing, their bed should be separated according to their sex to distance the intimacy among them. Parent should also watched out (especially mothers) for the children, they should check them from time to time in the night to know if they are still in their appropriate positions and what they are doing. Parent should monitor the person in charge of their children and what they do in their absence. Another important step to prevent incest is the level of intimacy between parent and children. Parent should spend more time listening to their children and not dispute whatever they say. This will make them feel free to say whatever happens in their absence and whatever anybody is doing to them. Parents should also know the kind of movie their children watch, the channel they tuned to and if they are the

kind who fancy pornography movie and erotic magazine, they should keep it out of the reach of the children, and they should not read nor watch them in their presence. Fathers should keep away from watching their daughter while bathing, dressing up, when they are naked or refrain from touching them in an incestuous way. Lastly, adult should know that they may have certain right over the children but they should understand the pain, sorrow, sadness, hatred and the effect in general, these children will pass through when they realize what they have done to them when they are innocent children.

Counselling Implication

Some people feel completely comfortable with "forgive and forget" attitude and have no desire to talk about this with anyone. Others feel they were consensual, non-exploitive incest relationships may not even see a need to forgive forget, since they view the entire experience as positive one (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1988). Masters et al (1988) identify two approaches in carrying incest burden especially for those who cannot seek for professional help or those who feel the activity was not consensual.

1. Incest victims will feel tremendous relief in confronting the person who initiated the incest behaviour years later in adulthood to explain how they felt and to obtain an apology. This approach can help them to feel more control and less a victim.
2. It can also be helpful to confide in someone else-a spouse, sibling, parent, lover, best friend or member of the clergy, for example- so that victims are not forced to bottle up their feelings and carry around this burden some "secret" for the rest of their life.

These two approaches can backfire if the person the victim confront denies the accusations or insist that the victim is in actual fact, even that one who initiate the sexual contact or the person you confide to expose it or give negative responses. Thus, many researchers and victims have ascertained that the best approach in dealing with incest issues is to seek for professional help. Consulting a Psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker or sex therapist can help victims determine whether counseling can help. In fact in these circumstances many people discover that the opportunity to bring the incest experience and their long-range reactions to it out in the open is a key step in gaining more control over their lives.

In general, early treatment should be designed to protect society from the offender and the offender from a recurrence of the abuse during the beginning of treatment (Conte, 1990). Treatment should include careful assessment and well-informed treatment plans that directive, cautious, comprehensive, and full measurable and attainable goals and objectives (Gill, 1996). No treatment is superior to others. Gill (1996) notes that clinical

interventions focused on the offender were unsuccessful because they did not take into account the interactions between parents and children. She states that treatment carries with it the responsibility to alter harmful behaviours while making an effort to preserve the family without compromising the child's safety. Treatment often includes individual, family, couple, or group therapy for the offender, the victim, the non-offending parent and other family members. Finally, the perpetrator and their family members need to be evaluated for co-existing problems such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and psychiatric disorders. This is in accordance that an incestuous act in a family will not only affect the prey but the predator and other family members. Thus, incest is a threat to family security.

Recommendations and Conclusion

It must be admitted that incest exist and is a threat to family security. The effect still affects the victims till adulthood, the feeling been brought up again and the individual may withdraw from normal activities. Parent should close intimacy with the children to make them 'feel free' of saying and discussing anything with them they should also not ignore whatever they say. They should be able to decode what their children say as children won't have a vocabulary to describe just what happened (Masters, et al, 1988).

Today's adolescent is living in ICT world surrounded by all benefits and problems of e-era (Oniye, 2012). We are in the era of e-mail, e-transact, e-friendship, net surfing, cyber-crime digital technology and cultural infiltration (Oniye, 2012). All these have negative effect on the children as they get inappropriate sexual knowledge which becomes their behaviour. Parent should be aware and be able to control the level their children get exposed to all these.

Government should enforce and make sure that proper punishment is given to offenders without considering their status. This will discourage others engaging in the act. Counsellors should strive hard in helping victims in overcoming the effects and challenges.

In conclusion, look around you! That child you see on the street every day, withdraw child from Sunday school class or Arabic school, that promiscuous girl in your area may be a victim of incest or survivor. That 'nice' father in your neighborhood, that responsible woman in your office may be a perpetrator. By becoming more aware of one's environment and asking question, neighbors, nurses, teachers and everyday folks may help rescue victims of incest from an unbearable situation. Providing education on sex, treatment for victims and focusing on preventive measures, incest may be minimized and reduce its threat to family security.

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