



# 2 Samuel 13:1–22 and the psychological effects of rape in Enugu State, Nigeria



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This article examines the Amnon–Tamar narrative in 2 Samuel 13:1–22 in the light of the psychological effects of rape in Enugu State, Nigeria. 2 Samuel 13:1–22 is an exposition on the tragic assault meted out on Tamar by his half-brother Amnon. Sexual violence, especially, rape is one of the social problems that is ravaging the people of Enugu state. The pericope of the Amnon–Tamar narrative in 2 Samuel 13:1–22 has been studied by so many Old Testament researchers; however, none has studied the narrative in the context of rape and its psychological effects in Enugu State. The article employs the synchronic aspect of narrative analysis in the study of 2 Samuel 13:1–22 and phenomenological design in the contextual framework. The data were mainly collected from secondary sources, which were then thematically analysed. Emergent themes from the pericope revealed loneliness, rejection, frustration, helplessness and depression. The findings of this study further showed that rape carries psychological effects such as identification, mistrust, withdrawal, suicidal tendency, the shame of stigmatisation, negative impact fixation, post-traumatic disorder, depression, fear and anger. It is obvious that David's insensitivity towards Amnon's sexual urge on Tamar aided his son to take advantage of his father's parental flaw to rape Tamar, his half-sister.

**Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications:** This article is a contribution to theology and ethics. It investigated the psychological effects that Tamar suffered during and after her rape experience and used it to interrogate the psychological effects that rape victims in Enugu State suffer. Therefore, the article provides a lucid response to the problem of rape and its psychological effects.

**Keywords:** rape; psychological effects; rape culture; shame; masculinity; depression.

## Introduction

The Amnon–Tamar narrative in 2 Samuel 13:1–22 is studied in the light of the psychological effects of rape in Enugu State, Nigeria because of its exposition of the tragic assault meted out on Tamar by his half-brother Amnon. Sexual violence against women is one of the most dangerous social problems all over the world. This social problem called rape, has no consideration of age, as even children and grandmothers are not spared from the assault by rapists (Ademiluka 2021; Ajah et al. 2022; Idoko, Nwobodo & Idoko 2020; Kibet 2019; Obibuba 2021:Online; Oniyangi, Ijaodola & James 2017; Sabia & Rees 2010; Woodbridge & Joubert 2018). Tamar's experiences exposed her to be lonely, rejected, frustrated, helpless, depressed, ostracised, forfeiting her inheritance and shame. The article employs the synchronic aspect of narrative analysis in the study of 2 Samuel 13:1–22. The synchronic analysis focusses on the interpretation of a biblical text as it appears in its final shape (Gorman 2005:13; Mbonu 2013:107; Mundele 2012:11; Murphy 1981:83–96; Obiorah 2015:90; Steck 1995:21). This article also made use of phenomenological approach to examine the societal ill of rape in Enugu state.

The pericope of the Amnon–Tamar narrative in 2 Samuel 13:1–22 has been studied by so many Old Testament researchers from different perspectives such as Birch et al. (eds. 2013), Brouer (2014), Smith (1990), Miller (2019) and Peters et al. (2021). However, none has studied the narrative in the context of rape and its psychological effects in Enugu State, Nigeria. This article therefore aims to examine the literary unit of 2 Samuel 13:1–22 in the light of rape and its psychological effects in Enugu State, Nigeria.

## The structure of the text

The introductory part of 2 Samuel 13:1–22 states that Absalom the son of King David had a beautiful sister called Tamar and David's son Amnon fell in love with her but could not do

anything to her because she was a virgin. Verses 1–2 describe Amnon's lust for his half-sister, orchestrated by her beauty and virginity. The only characters were Amnon and Tamar, and the theme is the expression of Amnon's feelings for his sister, Tamar. The location is David's house in Jerusalem. These two verses could be titled 'the description of Amnon's immoral feelings for his half-sister, Tamar'.

Amnon was disturbed daily, and he had a friend called Jonadab, the son of Shimeah and David's brother who was described in the text as a wise man. In v. 3, Jonadab came to Amnon's help and gave misleading advice to Amnon to achieve his evil intention through violence and deceit. Therefore, in vv. 3–5, Jonadab advised Amnon to lie down on his bed pretending to be sick so that his father (King David) could send Tamar his victim to him. In v. 3, a new character was introduced, Jonadab, while Tamar remained their subject of discussion. Therefore, this verse could be titled 'Jonadab's misleading advice to his friend Amnon'.

The introduction of King David and the exit of Jonadab signal a new scene and theme. However, Eze (2017:41) observes that it was 'the curiosity of Amnon to achieve his selfish desire that made him apply Jonadab's evil advice without considering the consequences'. Hence, verses 6–14 present how Amnon faked being sick to persuade his father, King David, to come immediately to see him and to help him decoy Tamar to a secret place in his separate room where he could carry out his evil plan. Apparently, Jonadab's advice was preferred because the situation got worse each day thus limiting his options. Tamar was invited by King David to bake a cake for his sick brother Amnon at his separate house. That was a clever plan to get Tamar to a secret place. Tamar made a few cakes that Amnon declined to eat until everyone was fired out of the room, and then he used his power to force Tamar to sleep with him. In vv.6–14, Amnon was able to gain his vile through violence, which could be referred to as 'Amnon's execution of Jonadab's evil counsel' (Eze 2017):

Amnon has successfully executed his evil as planned by his friend Jonadab, but the immediate consequence is his hatred for Tamar whom he once so desperately loved. The juxtaposition of the words *וִישָׁנָהּ* [hatred] in v. 15 and *וַיֵּצֵר* which in its hiphil form means to be distressed because of the weight of his love for Tamar in v. 2 is used in a comparative sense to show the degree of his love for Tamar in v. 2 and the level of his hatred for Tamar in v. 15. (p. 41)

The contents of vv.15–18 could be considered 'the consequences of the sexual act'. Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long robe that she was wearing to demonstrate that what had happened to her was a repercussion and a moral repercussion to the Israeli nation. The law is taken into custody in Leviticus 18, 20; 19–21 and Deuteronomy 27, 20–22. This could be referred to as 'Tamar's suffering from psychological issues of sexual abuse'. Tamar held her hand on her forehead and returned to her brother, Absalom.

Absalom saw Tamar and informed her that she was irritated and inquired if Amnon had been with her. Tamar was silent, which suggested that Absalom's question was accepted. Absalom advised her to remain quiet (v.20).

The structure of 2 Samuel 13:1–22 could be summarised thus: 2 Samuel 13 vv. 1–2 is a description of Amnon's immoral feelings for his half-sister, Tamar. Verses 3–5 are Jonadab's misleading advice to his friend Amnon. Verses 6–14 are Amnon's execution of Jonadab's evil counsel against Tamar. Verses 15–22 are the consequences of immoral and the shame of the sexual abuse.

## Close reading of the text

### Description of Amnon's immoral feelings for his half-sister, Tamar (vv. 1–2)

Careful observation of the first Hebrew word *וַיְהִי* that begins the pericope shows that it is in waw consecutive. 'Waw consecutive is explained in Hebrew as an inverted future' (Lambdin 2003:108). In this regard, therefore, the word *וַיְהִי* is regarded as a Qal perfect verb rendered here as 'it happened' in the past because its status in the imperfect has been inverted to the past. Placing the words *וַיְהִי אֶתְרִי-לִּי וַיְהִי* at the inception of the sentence in verse 1, before disclosing that Absalom has a beautiful sister, Tamar and Amnon loved her, the narrator intends to transmit across to the reader that an undisclosed event or time had happened or occurred before Amnon immoral sexual desire towards Tamar started. The name Amnon connotes mental psychological certainty or faithfulness (Holladay 1972:104). However, Amnon acted contrary to what his name implies. He neither endured the lust nor stood firm for his integrity and moral values.

### Jonadab misleading advice to his friend Amnon (vv. 3–5)

The fact that (Eze et al. 2021):

Amnon was so troubled and could not do anything to Tamar explains the introduction of Jonadab the son of David's brother Shimeah in verse 3. In this segment of the pericope, Jonadab is introduced as a wise man. (p. 41)

In this segment of the pericope, Jonadab is introduced as a wise man. An analysis of the Hebrew words *אִישׁ חָכָם מְאֹד* [a very wise man] substantiates this claim. However, Jonadab's use of his gift here did not mirror him as a wise man because he employed it to achieve an evil end. Before Jonadab gave his advice, he needed to understand the situation before he could proffer his suggestion, therefore, he asked Amnon *מָדָעֶיךָ*, which means 'why' 'what is wrong or matter with you or for what reason is the matter with you'. After ascertaining the problem with Amnon through his countenance, he then moved to advise him. Apart from wisdom, Jonadab has a good mastery of the Law of Moses. This is because his advice deliberately avoided culpability; thus, he framed his advice outside the laws in Leviticus 18:7–18, 20:19–21

and Deuteronomy 27:20–22, which prohibits Amnon from marrying or possessing any knowledge of his sister. He, therefore, suggested the use of violence. He advised Amnon to lie down on his bed so that when the king arrives to see him, he will demand Tamar to come and bake a cake for him. Eze (2017) collaborates with this line of thought when he notes that:

Jonadab pretended to be a good friend but failed because instead of using his intricacy to dissuade Amnon from this callous wickedness, by recommending some other person to him, whom he might lawfully marry he instead helped and provided how this evil would be apprehended. (p. 41)

### Amnon's execution of Jonadab's evil counsel against Tamar (vv. 6–14)

David was employed to summon Tamar to Amnon's service. Tamar was instructed by the king to make a cake for Amnon. Tamar was likely famous for her skilful cooking, [וּתְלֹשׁ (וּתְלוֹשׁ)] which means knead, were repeated to create emphasis (Lambdin 2003) and וּתְבַשֵּׁל 'to boil', were created together to explain how to make אֶת־הַלֶּבְבָהּ and most likely to explain Tamar's intelligence in cooking. Amnon's refusal to eat must have caused the impression that he was very sick. In verse 9, Amnon ordered that all other persons in the room should go out. This, perhaps, was to enable him to execute his evil intention against Tamar without any hindrance from anyone. Tamar rejected his sexual proposal and stated that both she and Amnon would suffer shame. Shame could cause trauma thus it is one of the psychological effects of rape. Kyle and Carter (1984) assert that she stated this to keep him away. But employing his masculinity, Amnon forced himself on Tamar and lay with her. According to Susan (1987:89), 'rape is when a man engages in intercourse with a woman, not his wife, by force or by the threat of force against her will and without her consent'. The Hebrew piel verb used for the English word rape in this unit is וַיַּעֲדָהּ from the root word נָדַע, which is traditionally rendered as 'humble' or violated or forced her to sleep or lie with her. Susan (1987) further argued that 'there is no Hebrew word that corresponds to the modern English word rape אַל־תְּעַנֵּי, which is translated as "do not humiliate me" points to the incident as rape' Estrich (1987) points out to the:

Hebrew clause vayye hēzaqmim mennā hvaye 'anne hāva yyiškab 'ōtāh [but he was stronger than her and he forcefully lay with her] explicitly makes it rape because of the inclusion of Amnon's use of his superior strength חזק. (p. 67; cf. Guptas & Gupta 2009; Sandie 2004)

According to Frymer-Kensky (1998) who compares this:

[S]tory to that of Dinah in Genesis 34, writes; the keyword, 'innā, does not mean rape...the basic meaning is to treat someone improperly in a way that degrades or disgraces them by disregarding the proper treatment due for people in each status. (p. 14)

In the story of Amnon and Tamar, where Amnon raped Tamar, the narrator states that he overpowered her, abused her and lay with her. The use of the verb 'overpower' and the

word order are significant in Amnon's case, where the text tells us that the rape was by force, 'innā' comes before the word 'lay with'. Gravett (2004) posits that:

[T]he combination of a verb for humiliation with her explicit refusal and his physically coercing her into sex makes it not only possible but necessary, to define the act as rape. (p. 281)

### Tamar suffers the psychological effects of rape (vv.15–22)

#### The Hebrew word

וַיִּשְׂנְאָהּ [hatred] is mentioned twice in verbal form (hate). So also, מֵאֲהָבָה love (a verb) has a related phrase מֵאֲהָבָה [he had loved] in the past participle. These two words וַיִּשְׂנְאָהּ [hatred] and מֵאֲהָבָה [love] are used in a relative sense to show the degree of Amnon's love for Tamar in v.2 and the level of his hatred for Tamar in v.15. The structural arrangement found in vv. 15–18 collaborates with what Obiorah (2014:9) calls chiasmic parallelism. According to her, chiasmic parallelism is 'the inversion in the second of two parallel lines of the order followed in the first'. In chiasmic parallelism, 'a sequence of ideas is presented and then repeated in reverse order' (Okwueze 2001) and this is demonstrated by:

Then Amnon **hated** her with very great **hatred**: so that the **hatred** with which he **hated** her was greater than the love with which he loved her. (p. 249)

The functional result of the chiasmic device is that it shows the inward and outward state of characters. Okwueze (2001:249) observes that 'in a chiasmic device there must always be an inward and outward state'. Eze (2017:42), notices that 'both hate and hatred are used to explain Amnon's inward and outward state' and marks the beginning of his contrasting behaviour against Tamar. Ehrlich (2010:58) asserts that 'šī'nah [hatred] expresses the condition of ill-will and aversion towards the object of hatred'. In Verse 15, Amnon's psychological experience is exacerbated after he gets the sexual desire that he needs. The sudden change in Amnon's behaviour towards Tamar has been a topic of debate by scholars. Hans (1976) addresses the issue psychologically and argues that the:

[S]udden change from passionate love to passionate hate is certainly not a characteristic of the spoiled sensuality or the girl's furious struggles but it is a sexual psychological factor (sexual hatred). (p. 52)

Eze (2017) argues that:

Amnon's sudden alteration of attitude and decision to send her away could be attributed to the sexual truth of human behavior that at sexual satisfaction the goal is achieved, and both the instrument and the object are no longer useful and should be discarded. The sudden change of behaviour after the sexual satisfaction could be explained also by his realization of the moral consequences or implications that Tamar wanted to draw his attention to inverse 13. (p. 42)

In consonance with the moral consequences of the narrative, Kyle and Carter (1984:323) argue that 'having committed nāblā "a sacrilege" in Israel, he would be nābāl "an outcast,"

having forfeited his place in the endangered'. *nābāl* is commonly referred to as 'fool', but it implies someone who has been a victim of socially destructive behaviour and has become an outcast. *nedālā* is a violation of the sacred taboos that define and maintain the social structure and as such, it is a serious threat to the society itself. Kyle and Carter (1984:323) also observe that the verb implies 'anyone who committed a sacrilege that is based on behaviour that is not in conformity with the societal legislations and that person is considered an outcast'. 'Tamar made an audacious attempt to draw Amnon's attention to this effect for the second time, but he could not comprehend her'.

Tamar's rejection of Amnon's decision to send her away could be explained legally by Exodus 22:5, 22 and 16 'If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed and lies with her, he must make her his wife by paying the bride price'. Also, in Deut. 22:28:

If a man meets a virgin who is not betrothed and seizes her and lies with her then when they are found, the man who laid with her will pay the young woman's father 50 pieces of silver. She will become his wife because he forced her.

Arguing this further, Eze (2017) states that:

Amnon cannot send her away [*šallēhāh*] as long as he lives'. Tamar also was protesting that sending her away [*lešilehenī*] was a greater wrong than raping her. It should be noted here that Tamar was humiliated beyond her imagination and is trying to appeal to Amnon's conscience to pity her by not sending her away without fair treatment by either marrying her or paying her bride price. (p. 63)

Kyle and Carter (1984:323) assert that 'sending away [*šīilah*] is a technical term for the dismissal of a divorced wife'. This agrees with Tamar's legal claims of Exodus 22:15, 22:16 and Deuteronomy 22:28. Amnon and Tamar cannot marry, but Tamar stated that they must now become married in view of what has transpired and that Amnon has forfeited his right to send her away. Tamar remained desolated in his brother's (Absalom) house. The verb *ישׁוּבָה* that means 'to be desolate' refers most often to a land that is abandoned and neglected (Is 99:8) but when it is used with respect to a woman, it refers to unmarried (Hans 1976):

Tamar's humiliation at the hands of her half-brother, Amnon, caused her to lose her social status, thus the verb *ישׁוּבָה* was used to describe her as someone who is abandoned just like a neglected farmland. Tragically, Tamar was described as a neglected woman. (p. 52)

[A] woman who was abandoned to her fate, and who is now rejected by others. Amnon for the second time refused to listen and employed his young servant to send her away and to bolt the door after she was left. The Hebrew word *me'alay* implies that the person to be removed is a burden to the speaker. (p. 52)

The Hebrew word *כתנת* means a sleeves gown (2 Sm 13:18). This word occurred only here and in Genesis 37, which indicates a coat of many colours, and it is only worn by the king's daughters who are virgins. She *קָרָעָה* *qārā'āh* [tears]

the long robe to demonstrate that she is no longer a virgin and to mourn the loss of her pride (Obiorah & Uroko 2018:9). Obiorah and Uroko (2018:9) observe that 'the ritual of tearing clothes in the Old Testament occurs mostly in the Narrative section of the OT'. They opine that the tearing of clothes is an external manifestation of personal or communal dolorous experience. In the event of Tamar, she tore her robe out of grief for the violence she suffered from her half-brother, Amnon. Amnon sexually violated and repudiated her (2 Sm 13:15–17), despite all her pleadings (Obiorah & Uroko 2018). Hans (1976:52) argues that 'the gesture of tearing her garment can be explained sufficiently as an expression of grief'.

Therefore, she runs home with ashes on her head and her garment of many colours, torn with her hands on her head embodies the psychological effects she suffered after she was raped. 'The loss of *כתנת* which was a symbol of *בְּזוּת* especially for a female member of the royal house, would have severe consequences' (Eze 2017:57). Hence, she put her hands on her head. Putting her hands on her head meant that the 'bōš' [shame] would be on her head. The fact that Tamar remained desolate, rejected in her brother's house and unable to talk to anyone could explain that she suffered anal negative impact fixation (NIF). Anal NIF according to Chery (2022:par. 2) 'occurs when an issue or conflict in a psychosexual stage remains unresolved, leaving the individual focussed on that stage and unable to move onto the next stage'. When this happens, the victim is more likely to avoid the opposite sex because she will see or associate all of them with the perpetrator.

The exegesis of 2 Samuel 13:1–22 in line with the psychological effects of rape reveals that rape has a plethora of psychological effects such as loneliness, rejection, frustration, helplessness, depression, ostracisation and shame. It also discovered that rape carries psychological effects such as identification, mistrust, withdrawal, suicidal tendency, NIF, post-traumatic disorder, fear and anger.

## The phenomenon of rape in Enugu State

The phenomenon of rape, which occurs daily, is a global societal ill that unleashes pain on the victims. The truth of the fact is that it has a long-lasting psychological and social effect on the survivors. Ugwuanyi (2021:27) expresses that rape is a universal problem and it is regarded as the most disheartening type of trauma with negative consequences for the victims and families. The incidence of rape poses a great psychological burden on the victim. This ugly social ill could be explained according to Idoko et al. (2020:668) as 'an unlawful sexual activity carried out forcibly or under threat of injury against the will of the person who is incapable of defending oneself from the perpetrator'. 'Sexual violence with its resultant emotional and psychological morbidity is more common among female than male individuals' (Ohayi et al. 2015:10). Rape is frequently reported in Enugu State (Ajogwu et al. 2015). It is on record that about 25 cases of rape were recorded

in Enugu State from January to March 2021. These include the rape of an 88-year-old woman by a 22-year-old boy at Nsukka, a 47-year-old woman who was raped while she was returning home from a church programme, a 33-year-old girl who was gang raped and a 14-year-old girl who was raped on her way to the stream (Ugwuanyi 2021:28). Sahara reporters disclosed that Tamar Sexual Assault Referral Centre (Tamar SARC) situated in Enugu revealed that it has received and handled 450 cases of violence against women and girls between January and June 2022. This report explained that most female victims suffered suicidal tendencies, the shame of stigmatisation, NIF, post-traumatic disorder, depression, fear and anger (Sahara Reporters 2022:1).

In addition, Enebelo (2021:1) reports that a middle-aged woman was raped by one Mr Obinna Ogianya under Trans-Ekulu Bridge Enugu when she was going to work around 5:30 am. He articulates the woman's ordeal: 'I struggled with him and sustained an injury on my third finger, but he overpowered me'. He pulled down the leggings I was wearing and threatened to stab me if I shouted and finally forced himself on me (Enebelo 2021:1). It could be deduced from the aforementioned lamentation of the woman that she has been psychologically tormented and depressed. Nseyen (2022:1) reports that Mr Daniel Eze raped a 17-year-old girl, Nnenna Nworie, and defrauded her of N80000 naira. Also, Ede (2023:1) discloses that Enugu Police Command has arrested a 21-year-old man Mr Augustine Akor for raping and killing a 16-year-old girl, Faith Akudi, his relative. He explains that Mr Akor raped the girl on 08 June 2023 and strangled her to death in a bush to cover up his crime. The decomposing body of the victim was found in the bush following the arrest of the suspect who confessed to having dragged the girl into the bush and forcefully had a carnal knowledge of her until she fainted and died in the process (Ede 2023:2). It is an evil act that some of the men employed their masculinities to rape women. This is barbaric and a demonstration of wickedness.

## 2 Samuel 13:1–22 and insights into rape in Enugu State

A survey of the incidences of rape in Enugu State has identified that rape causes great psychological trauma, the shame of stigmatisation, depression, fear and anger in the victims. In the exegetical exploration of 2 Samuel 13:1–22, it is found out that Tamar suffered shame, fear and anger amid losing her virginity and she became helpless. Supportably, 'The loss of her virginity makes her guilty that she has committed sacrilege' (Kyle & Carter 1984:323). As, we noticed in the cases of rape in Enugu State, most rape victims suffer depression and express anger, especially towards the rapist. This implies that survivors would not want to associate with anybody who bears the name of the perpetrator ever in life. This experience underscores NIF. According to Eze (2017):

Negative Impact Fixation creates a permanent alteration in the person's attitude and relationship with the opposite sex. She will

begin to observe every male as the rapist, and as such would avoid anything that could bring them together. (p. 57)

This is evident in Tamar's case because she avoided going back to Amnon's house and took refuge in Absalom's part of the house. This will affect her even in marriage because she will see her husband as a rapist. From Tamar's experience, *śi'nah* [hatred], which expresses Amnon's immediate feelings towards Tamar collaborates with the problem of identification. Ehrlich (2010:14) asserts that '*śi'nah* [hatred] expresses the condition of ill-will and aversion towards the object of hatred'. In the exegesis, it is found out that the writer employs the device of chiasmic parallelism to indicate the outward and inward feelings of a character, and *śi'nah* [hatred] falls within Tamar's feelings immediately after the ugly experience of her defilement by Amnon. Therefore, *śi'nah* [hatred] functions in this context to indicate that Tamar suffered both problems of identification and NIF. It is unarguable that the lack of follow-up through investigations and a poor culture of administering severe punishment against the perpetrators, help in encouraging the prevalence of rape in society. It is discovered in our study of rape cases in Enugu State that most of the victims were overpowered by their perpetrators who employed their masculinities and forcibly abused them sexually. David's silence and inability to scold or punish Amnon for violating his sister must have helped to inflame the psychological malady and depression that engulfed Tamar. It is well within reason that Tamar's grief and wailing could have been pacified to an extent if David had melted severe punishment on Amnon when he got wind of the sad news.

## Conclusion

2 Samuel 13:1–22 is an exposition of Amnon's sexual violence and defilement against his half-sister, Tamar. This text tells of one of the most dehumanising and incestuous acts in the Old Testament. Sexual violence against women is a widely acclaimed global social ill that is ruining society at a fast pace. This text was studied in the psychological context of rape in Enugu State. The study uncovered that rape is one of the most endemic crimes committed by men and it is prevalent in Enugu State. This societal ill causes shame of stigmatisation, NIF, post-traumatic disorder, depression, fear and anger on the victims.

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## Authors' contributions

V.U.E. contributed to the conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, and the writing of the original

draft as well as to the data curation, resources, the writing, review and editing of this research article. C.I.U. contributed to the formal analysis for this article.

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