

Rape and Victim Blaming in India

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ABSTRACT

Rape is a type of sexual assault usually involving sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual penetration perpetrated against a person without that person's consent. This occurs when the victim of a crime or any wrongful act is held entirely or partially responsible for the harm that befell them. The investigation aims to study the mentality of men towards Rape victims. The study of Cohen et.al (2001) and Mckenna (2012) are in line with the above investigation with states that the largest age group among rapist was 23 but the largest age group was 15-19 years old ones. It was also found that the older the rapist the younger the victim. The present study was conducted on 50 men (literate, illiterate and different religious backgrounds) to check whether they really do support the rape culture consciously or unconsciously. A self made projective questionnaire which consisted of questions which were answered according to the wishes of the subject.

Key words: *Rape, Victims, Blaming, Sex, Sexual assault, Crime*

Rape is a crime that is a highly underreported crime not only in India but all over the world. According to researches 4 out of 5 women don't report rape to save themselves from being held accountable for the crime somehow. According to researches rape is the fourth most common crime against women in India. According to the National Crime Records Bureau 2013 annual report, 24,923 rape cases were reported across India in 2012. Out of these, 24,470 were committed by someone known to the victim

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(98% of the cases). Some research indicates that only 5-6% of rape cases in India are reported to the police. According to researches Rape victims are blamed more when they resist the attack later in the rape encounter rather than earlier (Kopper, 1996), which seems to suggest the stereotype that these women are engaging in token resistance (Malamuth & Brown, 1994; Muehlenhard & Rogers, 1998) or leading the man on because they have gone along with the sexual experience thus far. Finally, rape victims are blamed more when they are raped by an acquaintance or a date rather than by a stranger (e.g., Bell, Kuriloff, & Lottes, 1994; Bridges, 1991; Bridges & McGrail, 1989; Check & Malamuth, 1983; Kanekar, Shaherwalla, Franco, Kunju, & Pinto, 1991; L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982; Tetreault & Barnett, 1987), which seems to evoke the stereotype that victims really want to have sex because they know their attacker and perhaps even went out on a date with him. The underlying message of this research seems to be that when certain stereotypical elements of rape are in place, rape victims are prone to being blamed.

Research by Amir in the 60's and 70's indicates that rapists are not the psychopathic, antisocial men one would think them to be.² There are of course the extreme individuals, but most rapists blend well into their own communities. In fact, there may be more similarities between rapists and ourselves than there are differences. However, research on the rapist is subject to serious questions. The samplings of subjects are often full of bias. Most rape arrests still do not result in conviction. Therefore the men who are interviewed represent a very small percentage of the entire rapist population. Since the sampling pool is so limited, the conclusions drawn from such studies must be viewed cautiously. With that in mind, the findings of research by Dr. Menachiam Amir, an Israeli criminologist, and the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice will be presented.

Amir studied rape and rapists in Philadelphia between 1958 and 1960. He found the median age of the Philadelphia rapist was 23 but the largest age group among rapists was the 15-19 year olds. Amir found most rapists were unmarried, however that could be due to their young age. He also found that the older the rapist the younger the victim. According to Amir most rapists were at the lower end of the economic scale and about half had previous arrest records. However, few of their prior arrests were for sex offenses. Amir also found that more than half the rapes took place on the weekends with Saturday being the peak day. Again almost half were committed between 8:00 P.M. and 2:00 A.M. Further, approximately 71% of the rapes were planned. The choice of victim was often left to chance and circumstance, but the rapist set out to rape someone. Planning is even more prevalent in pair or gang rapes.

The National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice examined the characteristics and behaviors of rapists in 5 cities during the mid 1980s: Seattle, Detroit, Kansas City, New Orleans and Phoenix. There were several similarities between their findings and Amir's. Both found minority males were overrepresented; that most victims tended to be under 30 years old; and most rapists did some planning before the rape occurred, Amir however found 43% of the rapes involved more than one offender. The Institute found an overwhelming majority of rapes were committed by a single individual. The use of weapons varied from city to city but were used in approximately half the assaults.⁵

Offenders interviewed by members of the Institute at a maximum security state mental hospital believed that the prevention or avoidance of rape was the responsibility of the women. Their advice, perhaps sexist, nonetheless advised women not to go out alone, not to hitchhike, not to drink alone and to learn self defense.

Problem Statement:

The present investigation attempts to study about “*Rape and Victim Blaming in India*”.

Objectives:

Multiple objectives were taken:

1. To find out the lack of awareness and knowledge of Indian youth towards rape and victim blaming.
2. To find out the new age rape culture as individuals don't show their ideas supporting rape culture in public to look more socially desirable.

Significance of Problem:

Rape is one of the most horrific crimes that occur in India. But what makes rape horrific in true sense is the problem of victim blaming. Rape cases in India go highly unreported because the victims of rape find it easier to remain silent and suffer rather than report their problem. This happens because once the rape victims in India report their rape they start facing discrimination in the very society they live in. They are slut shamed by many people in the society and are somewhere held responsible for their own rape. Everything from the clothes to the victim to the place where victim was when they are raped is questioned. Sadly, victim blaming works as a defence for the rapist and the society thus starts to question the victim. To point out this evil in the society this problem is reasonable.

Operational Definitions:

Rape: A man is said to commit "rape" if he:— (a) penetrates his penis, to any extent, into the vagina, mouth, urethra or anus of a woman or makes her to do so with him or any other person; or (b) inserts, to any extent, any object or a part of the body, not being the penis, into the vagina, the urethra or anus of a woman or makes her to do so with him or any other person; or (c)

manipulates any part of the body of a woman so as to cause penetration into the vagina, urethra, anus or any part of body of such woman or makes her to do so with him or any other person.

Hypothesis:

- There will be lack of awareness and knowledge among Indian youth towards rape and victim blaming.

Research Design:

The present study is not possible experimentally because of nature of the investigation. The researcher adopted the quantitative descriptive research for gaining the objectives of the study. It is the survey quantitative research in which the event has already occurred and the effects of the variables were studied by qualitative analysis.

Sample:

A sample of 50 men was taken of age group in between 18-27 through random sampling technique. This sample was taken from a mix of religious and cultural backgrounds. While taking the samples it was made sure that none of the subjects were known to the experimenter or his stand on rape and victim blaming.

Tool:

To study the basic awareness among Indian men towards rape and victim blaming, the researcher used a self prepared projective questionnaire and to check whether the answers were given to suite the social desirability of the time the subjects were prodded and asked to give further explanations for their answers or justify their answers. This was done only to check whether they stick to their original answers or change them when asked for further justifications for their answers. The questionnaire consisted of two set of pictures named “Set a” and “Set b” respectively. The set “a” consisted of two pictures of a girl. In the first picture a girl is

shown wearing a “short dress”. In the second picture in set “a”, it was shown that the girl is at a nightclub dancing with a drink in one hand.

Similarly in set “b”, in the first picture a girl is shown wearing a traditional *salwar kurta* and her head is covered with a scarf. In the second picture a lady is shown sitting with her husband at her home. On the basis of the pictures, subject was asked three questions. The answers were noted for each questions respectively. On the basis of the answers and the justifications for the subject the subject’s thoughts and intent were concluded.

Procedure:

For this research investigator used a self prepared open ended questionnaire. The subjects were free to give whatever answers they pleased on the basis of the questions in the questionnaire. After the subjects answer all the questions, they were prodded on the basis of answers they gave to see whether they stick to them or change them completely. The answers were then noted.

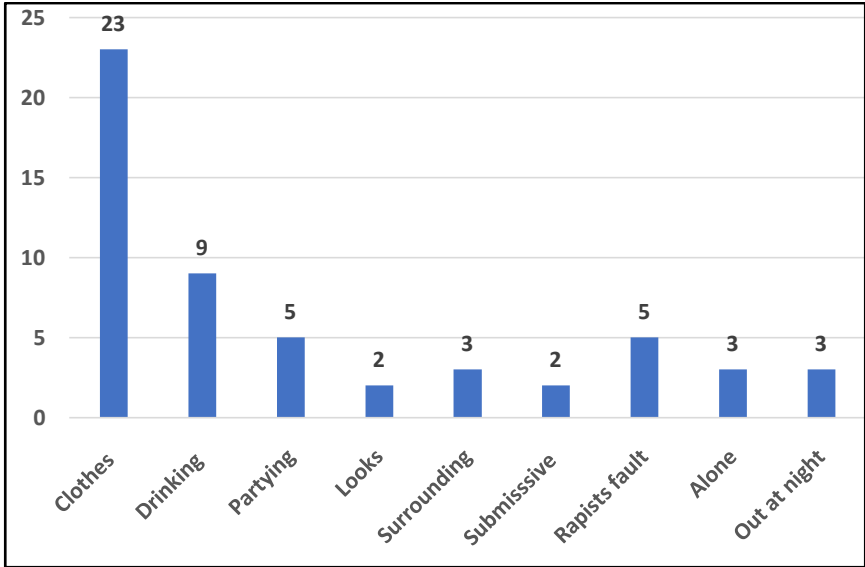
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Answers to Questions

Q1. In the above set of pictures a and b, women in which set is more likely to get sexually assaulted? And why?

<i>Answers</i>	<i>No. of persons</i>
Pictures set a	35
Pictures set b	3
Both	12
Changed their opinion (who answered both)	12

Reasons given for sexual assault:



Q2. If you could've saved only one of these women, which one would you have saved and why?

<i>Answers</i>	<i>No. of persons</i>
Pics set a	10
Pics set b	20
Not willing to make a choice	20

The reasons given by the subjects for saving the girls in “set a” were somewhat like these:

- They look immature
- Unsafe
- Less aware
- Alone
- Drunk

Reasons given by the subject to save the girls shown in “pic b” were:

- They look normal and seem as a good person

- They are within the limits of the society
- They won't be able to handle rape unlike girls in pic a
- They look like a family person
- They seem oppressed

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the answers of the first question we came to understand a rather unknown problem, though victim blaming was prominent as we saw from the answers. The subjects who didn't resort to victim blaming actually changed their answers when prodded a little. Even though they wanted to give a liberal response, they still couldn't hold on to their opinion as they themselves were completely unaware and uneducated of the facts about rape and their opinions were not backed by appropriate logic. The reason for this might be because many are still not getting educated enough on this topic or try giving answers only to look more socially desirable. Thus most of us think of rape as a sexual crime. Most of us still don't know that major motive of rape is power not sex. The rapists use sex as weapon to inflict pain, violence and humiliation on their victims.

There are many myths surrounding rape that are still believed by the majority. Some of these myths that we came across in this research were.

- *Myth 1:* If women were more cautious in avoiding strangers, they would not be raped. As most rapists are from poor rural back ground.
- *Myth 2:* The primary motive for rape is impulsive sexual desire.
- *Myth 3:* Women ask for rape by their manner of dress or flirtatious behavior. As she is exposing sexually attractive parts of her body
- *Myth 4:* All women should learn self defense as that's the best way to stop rapists.

- *Myth 5:* A person cannot be sexually assaulted by his or her partner or spouse.

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