

Myths and Effects of Rape on Male Victims

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Abstract

Female rape attracts a lot of attention in the social sciences, but male rape is greatly overlooked, because most researches highlight the female nature of rape. As a result, there is lack of adequate numerical evidence on male rape, although it is necessary to address this problem. The international instruments that contain the most comprehensive and meaningful definitions of sexual violence exclude men. There are many ways the term “gender violence” has been fashioned by the United Nations resolutions, treaties, general comments, and consensus documents to favor women. No human rights instruments explicitly and comprehensively address “sexual violence against men”. This may be an assumption that sexual violence is a phenomenon prevalent only to women and girls. This paper has the intension to enlighten us that men are equally victims of rape. It explains the myths on male rape and the effects on the victims. The recommendations to ‘tackle’ the problem of male rape are discussed at the end of this paper.

Keywords

Rape, Consent, Sexual Assault, Victim

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1. Introduction

Men and boys are often victims of the crimes of sexual assault. The term ‘sexual assault’ refers to a number of different crimes, ranging from unwanted sexual touching of any part of the body to forced penetration (Khan, 2008). The term rape originates in the Latin word ‘rapere’ (supine stem raptum), “to snatch, to grab, to carry off” (Saunders, 2001). Since the 14th century, the term has come to mean “to seize and take away by force”. In Roman law, the carrying off of a woman by force, with or without intercourse, constituted “raptus” (Burgess-Jackson 1999). In Medieval English law, the same term could refer to either kidnapping or rape in the sense of “sexual violation” (Burgess-Jackson 1999).

Rape has been viewed differently by sexual violence researchers as “the act of forcing, or coercing, that is, through the use of force, of a non-consenting woman, to have sexual

intercourse” (Palmer, 1989), “sexual relationship without the consent of the woman involved” (Minturn et.al, 1969) and “lack of female choice in genital contact” (Rozée, 1993). World Health Organization defines rape as “physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration even if slight of the vulva, using a penis, other body part, or an object” (Ellis, 2006). Rape look at the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim or the situation in which the rape occurs, such as child sexual abuse, prison rape, acquaintance rape, war rape etc.

The law on the offence of rape in Southern Nigeria is provided for under Section 357 of the Criminal Code which states that: “Any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl, without her consent or with her consent, if the consent is obtained by force or by means of threats or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or by means of false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or in the case of a married woman, by personating her husband, is guilty of an offence which is called rape.”

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In the Northern part of Nigeria, the definition of rape as contained under Section 282(1) of the Penal Code provides that: "A man is said to commit rape when he has sexual intercourse with a woman in any of the following circumstances:- (a) against her will; (b) without her consent; (c) with her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her in fear of death or of hurt; (d) with her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband and that her consent is given because she believes that he is the man to whom she is or believes herself to be lawfully married; (e) with or without her consent when she is under fourteen years of age or of unsound mind."

2. Conceptualization of Rape

For the purpose of this paper, rape is defined as any non-consensual sex act that involves contact between the genitals, anal region, or mouth etc., of one person and the genitals, mouth, hands, of another person, regardless of any pre-existing relationship, friendship, or acquaintanceship the victim and rapist may have. Any objects that may be used by a rapist to assault a victim should be considered as an extension of the body of the rapist. Rape may involve penetration, while not necessary, nonetheless typically occurs in some forms. Penetration may be slight, but includes, the woman's genitals touching the man's sex organs, or she uses other object(s) as the case may be. Non-penetrative assaults that would be included in this definition of rape includes, but are not limited to, nonconsensual touching of the victim's body parts such as his stomach, chest etc. This definition of rape is based on the definitions given above, but has been expanded to include additional sex acts that may be identified by a victim as rape. Non-consent includes forced acts against conscious or unconscious individuals, consent obtained under force or under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Non-consent is not necessarily signaled by explicit verbal communication; it can be expressed legitimately through situational implication or body language. Consent could mean if the victim agrees by choice or has the freedom or capacity to make that choice.

Hoyle and Young (2002) argue that male rape victims still continue to be marginalized and alienated in the 21st century. Therefore, males are still dealt with in a gender-neutral way, masculinity is still problematic and societies still culturally expect males to be the offenders but never the victims.

3. Forms of Male Rape

Anyone, regardless of gender or gender identity, can sexually assault a man. It's important not to jump to the conclusion that man-against-man sexual assault only happens between

men who are gays. Rape is not only about sexual desire or sexual orientation; it's about violence, control, and humiliation.

3.1. Male and Male Rape

Male and male rape has been heavily stigmatized. Male and male rape victims are left to suffer in silence, stressing that about 1 in 10 male rapes are reported. As a group, male rape victims reported a lack of services and support, and legal systems are often ill-equipped to deal with this type of crime (Wikipedia,2015).

3.2. Male Rape Among Prisoners

Several studies argue that male by male prisoner rape is a common type of rape which goes unreported, even more frequently than rape in the general population (Edgar and O'Donnell, 1998).

3.3. Male Rape in War Times

The rape of men by men has been documented as a weapon of terror in warfare (Will, 2011). In the case of the Syrian Civil War (2011–Present), the male detainees experienced sexual abuse like being forced to sit on a broken glass bottle, getting their genitals tied to a heavy bag of water, or being forced to watch the rape of another detainee by the officials. The 1949 Geneva Conventions represented a major step in the protection against rape and sexual assault under the international laws governing war (Amnesty International, 2012).

3.4. Male Rape by Female

Caryn (2012) found that 1 in 20 men reported that they had been forced to penetrate someone else, and usually a woman had been the master mind of an attempt to force penetration. Male victims of sexual abuse by females often face social, political, and legal double standards (Krahé et.al, 2003). Some cases in the United States have received increased attention and sparked awareness within the population sometimes referred to as "made to penetrate" cases. Male rape victims are forced to engage in penetration of the female without proper consent. Many atimes, the male victims are under the influence of drugs or alcohol or being held in life-threatening positions. The case of Cierra Ross sexual assault of a man in Chicago gained national headlines and Ross was convicted of aggravated criminal sexual abuse and armed robbery with a bail set at \$75,000. In the case of a female being a victim of sexual assault, the male criminal could face up to a life sentence in prison, whereas the punishment for a female rapist is far less severe(Denov, 2004).

Several widely publicized cases of female-on-male rape in the United States involved school teachers raping their

underage students. Federal law states that the age of consent in the United States is 18 years nationally, but may range from 16-18 years within differing states. Under federal law, any sexual encounters between adults and minors under the age of consent is considered sexual assault. The case of Mary Kay Letourneau who sexually assaulted her 12-year-old student, Vili Fualaau was a celebrated case in this regard (Wilson, 1999).

4. Myths Against Male Rape Victims

4.1. Males are not Vulnerable

Man, by socialization, is thought of as incapable of being a victim of rape, or even vulnerable. It is shameful and unmanly if a male child cries out for help before or during rape; they are believed to be strong and can protect themselves. But people seem to forget that young boys are weaker and vulnerable to their perpetrators, who are stronger and have more knowledge. The perpetrators can use whatever they have to abuse the child, including money or other bribes. An adult male may also be helpless to fight back, or fearful of doing so.

4.2. Males Always Want Sex

People often think that a male must be aroused if he gets an erection or has an orgasm, and so that means that they are willing and enjoying any sexual activity. Levin and Berlo (2004) argued that slight genital stimulation or stress can create erections even though no specific sexual stimulation is present. An erection does not mean that the man consented to sex. Males can get erections even in traumatic or painful sexual situations, and this does not indicate consent.

Much like female erectile response, male erectile response is involuntary, meaning that a man need not be aroused for his penis to become erected; mechanical stimulation is all that is necessary. Arousal and stimulation is not the same thing. Stimulation is a physical response to a stimulus. Men can be physically stimulated without feeling aroused and thus causing an erection. Men can be scared and intimidated into an erection, especially if the perpetrator is older or an authority.

4.3. Males are Less Traumatized

It is believed that males are less traumatized by the abuse experience than females. Some studies have found males less negatively affected, but more studies show that the long-term effects are quite damaging for either sex, especially for males. They may be more damaged by social stigma and disbelief of their victimization (Roosa, 1997). It was noted by Condon (2014) that male victims tend to feel more intense

anger than female victims, while both go through similar feelings of distress after the rape. Frazier (1993) studied 74 male and 1,380 female rape victims. She found that the depression and hostility are more profound on male victims' immediately post-rape situation than female victims. Carpenter (2009) finds that the male coping strategy characterized by denial and control renders them more prone to later psychiatric problems and reduces the likelihood of seeking help.

4.4. Sexual Orientation

Male rape, just like female rape, has more to do with power than sexuality, and does not only happen inside the homosexual community. It is a complex issue, and the majority of male perpetrators who seek out boys are not necessarily homosexual. Male sexual assault victims often fear being seen as gay or weak, or believe that their assault may be due to their appearance being effeminate or homosexual so as to attract other males. Experts do not believe that premature sexual experiences play a significant role in later sexual orientation that is, while many perpetrators may have experienced sexual abuse of their own, most sexual assault victims will not go on to become adolescent perpetrators.

4.5. Male Victims must be Lucky

Melhado (2010) stated that male victims face hurdles like the myth that sexual violence is something the male victim wants when the perpetrator is a female. In this case, people may say that the victim is lucky, characterizing the experience as a positive thing when it really was not.

A male survivor may experience some of the feelings.

5. Effects of Rape on Male Victims

Male survivors may experience the following:

Guilt: as though he is somehow at fault for not preventing the assault because our society promotes the misconception that men should be able to protect them at all times.

Shame: as though being assaulted makes him "dirty," "weak," or less of a "real man."

Fear: that he may be blamed, judged, laughed at, or not believed.

Denial: because it is upsetting, he may try not to think about it or talk about it; he may try to hide from his feelings behind alcohol, drugs, and other self-destructive habits.

Anger: about what happened; this anger may sometimes be misdirected and generalized to target people who remind him of the perpetrator.

Sadness: feeling depressed, worthless, powerless; withdrawing from friends, family, and usual activities; some victims even consider suicide.

6. Recommendations

1. Underage children should not be left unsupervised or with friends, relatives and guardians that are not trusted. As a matter of fact, parents should strive to actively monitor their children and ensure they are kept under close watch.
2. Routine examination of private parts of children should be carried out surreptitiously to check for sources of any pain or untoward signs that may show any form of sexual abuse.
3. The Legislature should ensure that anyone found to have abetted the commission of rape or is an accomplice of a sex offender should be adjudged guilty of the act itself. Same gesture should be extended to anyone that procures the rape of another.
4. Medical evidence must be encouraged once a victim reports at a hospital or police station. Forensic examination resources and personnel such as rape kits, voice analysis, facial recognition systems, and handwriting analysis and fingerprints impression should be made readily available and immediate response should be given to individual cases. Traces of DNA from blood, hair, skin, saliva, semen, teeth bite can be quickly obtained to aid corroborative evidence.
5. The length of trial of rape cases should be abridged so that the victims will still be able to recount the assault experience with very slight or no variation while giving evidence.
6. There must be procedural tests carried out to diagnose infections that may have been contracted. Apart from quickly resolving any life-threatening infection, it may also lend credible evidence to pointing out the perpetrators.
7. The identity of rape victims, if they so wish, should be shrouded in secrecy through giving recorded evidence or taking evidence away from the open court. This reduces incidences of social stigma.
8. Educational institutions should have appropriate sanitary facilities. There have been instances where persons were brutally sexually assaulted while trying to answer the call of nature in bushes or deserted areas.
9. We advise victims to resist, fight, tooth and nail; scream to call for help against sex offenders especially when excessive violence cannot be used on them due to proximity to people or in situations that are not life-threatening.
10. Local rape crisis centers should be established to provide necessary first aid, help and psychological relief to victims of rape, and properly advise them on possible and appropriate

action to be taken.

11. Enlightenment campaign to discourage sex offences, letting people understand when they are being sexually assaulted. Myths such as having sex with a child or virgin to cure diseases should be made known to people as false.
12. Blaming Victims for being the reason why they were raped should be jettisoned. Such ideas as dressing provocatively or flirtatious acts as reasons why victims were raped should be frowned upon. Victim should not be blamed for an offender's weakness.
13. The law on rape in Nigeria need to be amended to apply to current day situations as was done in England, where the government reviewed the law in this area with a view to making it appropriate for this 21st century. The applicable law to the offence of rape in England is the Sexual Offences Act 2003. While the rape law in England is gender neutral and non-discriminatory so that both men and women are equally protected, the law in Nigeria makes no provision for such.
14. There is a call for more researches on male rape. There are undue emphases on female rape than male rape. Trends in rape researches should include investigations on male rape to ensure gender neutrality.

7. Conclusion

It is worth noting that in this article, we argue that the attention on the rape of men is as important as that of women. A female-specific approach, which explicitly excludes all male victims from efforts to remedy sexual violence, should no longer continue. Rather, as the International Human Rights movement moves forward in its attention to female issues, health, human rights, and sexual rights, they must be vigilant in their efforts to address sexual violence inclusively and accurately. Assumptions should no longer be made in human rights advocacy, instruments, and other texts that rape pertains only to women. Attention to gender based violence must include violence to which men are vulnerable on account of their sex. Definitions of rape and other forms of sexual abuse must always leave room for male victims.

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