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THE EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF RAPE

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ABSTRACT: Rape and sexual violence are sad facts of life across cultures with an incidence of 0.1 to 4.9 per 100,000 couples internationally, the rates in India being even higher. According to the National Crime Records Bureau more than 24, 000 cases of rape were registered in India in 2011 with latest estimates reporting a new case of rape every 22 minutes. Sexual violation is traumatizing physically, emotionally and morally. It therefore demands greater attention because the most common and lasting effects of rape involve mental health concerns. Not only is it important to know the impact rape has on its victim, but equally and perhaps more important is to understand the psychology of the offender which may help prevent such crimes against the female gender.

KEYWORDS: Emotional, psychological, rape, crime, violation.

INTRODUCTION: Rape is defined as the use of coercion or force or the threat of coercion or force to achieve penile-vaginal contact including penile penetration of a woman without her consent or if the girl is a minor, even with her consent.^{1,2}

Rape is a sad fact of life across cultures. Internationally, the incidence of rape recorded by police varies between 0.1 to 4.9 per 100,000 couples. Researchers estimate that 67-80 % of rapes are not reported.^{1,3}

Accordingly, to Indian Medical Association (IMA) 1995, sexual violence and rape are in particular considered to be the most under-reported violent crimes. It is recognized as an element of the crime of genocide when committed with the intent to destroy, in whole, or in part, a targeted ethnic group.

Rape Statistics in India: According to National crime Records Bureau, 24, 206 rape cases were registered in India in 2011. Statistics show a doubling of rape statistics from 1990 to 2008. A new case of rape is reported every 20 minutes, although the latest estimate shows a new case every 22 minutes.

Year	Number of cases
2010	586
2011	636
2012	621

Table 1: Rape statistics in India

Source⁴

The recently released National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report notes a 902% rise in cases of rape across India between 1971 to 2012.

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The NCRB statistics for 2011 says Bangalore ranks fourth among cities of the country in recorded rape. The city accounts for 3.8% of reported cases in the country. NCRB in 2012 recorded 75 rape cases of which at least 46 cases were rape by incentives like promise of jobs, marriage and so on.

TYPES OF RAPE:

Several types of rape are described by Nicholas Groth:

1. **Anger rape/ corrective rape:** The aim of the rapist is to humiliate, debase and hurt their victim. This type of rape involves using much more physical force than is necessary to overcome the victim and achieve penetration.
2. **Power Rape:** Rape becomes a way to compensate for their underlying feelings of inadequacy, feeds their issues of mastery, control, dominance, strength and authority.

The rapist believes that the victims enjoy what was done to them and they will even ask the victims to meet for a date later. Rapist feels reassured only for a short period, but in due course of time, the rapist must find another victim.

3. **Sadistic Rape:** Such rapists glamorize violence and aggression and they tend to attach sexual associations with violence, infliction of pain, anger and power. They tend to associate violence and aggression with sex by force.

The offender takes pleasure in the victim's torment, pain, anguish, distress and helplessness and finds it to be an erotic experience. Such men are highly sexually aroused by violent sexual stimuli. Victims may not even survive the attack.

Psychology of rape: Why do men actually rape: Various aspects of rape have been discussed thoroughly all around the world. But very little has been discussed about the "why" of rape. Why do men rape?

1. **Disadvantaged men:** includes men who are motivated to rape if they have no other means of securing copulation. This is also called the Disadvantaged Male theory or the Mate Deprivation theory. Data indicates that rapes are committed disproportionately by men with low socioeconomic status.
2. **Opportunistic rapist:** Such men generally seek out receptive women. But they may shift to sexual coercion and rape if women are not receptive or if associated factors like the chances of retaliation by the victim, by the victim's family, by society are particularly low.^{2,5}
3. **High-mating effort rapist:** Such rapists are more sexually experienced, aggressive and dominant. They deploy mating strategies according to environmental context and often pursue many partners with little investment. They often use coercion and rape when non-coercive tactics fail. In this aspect they are similar to opportunistic rapists.
4. **Partner rapist:** Men are motivated to rape their partners under conditions of increased "Sperm competition risk". Sperm competition is the competition that can occur between the sperms of different males to a female's eggs.⁶ Between 10-20% of women report experiencing rape in marriage.⁷⁻⁹ Such rapes occur when the male suspects his partner's fidelity.

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Risk Factors for Committing Rape:

1. Alcohol and drug consumption: Reduces inhibition, impairs judgement and the ability to interpret cues.
2. Individual psychological factors:
 - a. Impulsivity.
 - b. Anti-social traits in men.
 - c. Holding victim responsible for rape.
 - d. Less knowledgeable about impact of rape on victims.
 - e. Anger at women and need to control and dominate women.

Research on Convicted Rapists: Apart from the factors listed above, other factors include^{10, 11}

1. An exaggerated sense of masculinity which is often gratified/ satisfied only through coercive sex/ forced sex.
2. Having a low opinion of women.
3. Having sexually aggressive friends.
4. Being a member of a criminal gang.
5. History of the rapist having been sexually abused in childhood – one in five continue to molest children themselves later in life.
6. Having been raised in a strongly patriarchal family.

Peer and Family Factors Regarding Rapists:

1. Early childhood environment: Sexual violence, including rape is a learnt behavior in adults because of a childhood history of sexual abuse. Such experiences lead to a pattern of behavior when men regularly justify being violent, deny doing any wrong, have false and unhealthy notions about sexuality.
2. Family honor and sexual purity: Sometimes the family response to sexual violence is such that it blames women without punishing men. The concentration is not on punishing the rapist but instead on restoring the lost family honour. This creates an environment in which rape can occur with increasing impunity. While family members often try to protect their women from rape, should it occur, there is rarely much social pressure to control young men or persuade them that rape or forced sex is wrong. However society often encourages family members to do whatever is “necessary” including murder, or so called “honour killing” to alleviate the shame associated with rape or sexual transgression.

Societal Factors:

1. Poverty: It is strongly linked to both the committing of sexual violence and the risk of being a victim of sexual violence being mediated through forms of crises of masculine identity. Poverty stricken men are trapped in their slums with little or no available employment. Hence they are unable to attain the model of successful masculinity or masculine success. Men turn their aggression against women whom they can no longer control patriarchally or support economically.
2. Physical and social environment: Although a great majority of sexual violence occurs in the home of the victim or the abuser, abduction by a stranger followed by rape is also very common

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particularly in rural settings. The community beliefs in male superiority and male entitlement to sex may be deeply entrenched which will affect the likelihood of rape taking place. In some places rape can even occur in public with passersby remaining indifferent or out-rightly refusing to intervene. Complaints of rape are treated leniently by police, particularly if the assault is committed during a date or if it is “Marital Rape”. In such communities or even countries, the ideology of male superiority is strong, emphasizing dominance, physical strength, male virility and male honour. Also countries with a culture of violence or when violent conflict is taking place experience an increase in almost all forms of violence including sexual violence and rape.

Pattern of bringing up Boys or Male Socialization and Sexual Scripts: The way males are socialized in regard to sexuality is a causative theory for rape. Boys are brought up to be sexually aggressive, dominant and conquering.

This may also include rape as a form of sexual conquest.¹² Men are taught to take initiative and persist in sexual encounters while women are supposed to set the limits. In all such countries or societies, the implied message is that men should persist beyond a woman’s protest of saying “No” and the women should say “No” even if they desire sex.¹³

This is the so called “Sexual Script”. For this reason many men do not believe that the woman means “No” when she says “No” and they, by virtue of the sexual script, feel entitled to continue to pressurise the woman and ultimately coerce her into sex. In many societies, men, even if they do not approve of ‘rape’, participate in gang/individual rape for fear that they will be ostracized by their peers and maybe even considered effeminate.¹⁴⁻¹⁶

Studies from South Africa, Peru, Cambodia, and Mexico have proven that young males have participated in gang rapes under peer pressure and fear that they would be rejected if they did not participate in the rape. They are “forced” to participate in “forced sex” as a way of proving their masculinity to their friends.

Dynamics of Gang Rape: Gang rape is defined as the rape of a single victim by two or more than two violators at the same time. It occurs when a group of people participate in the rape of a single victim.¹⁷ A 2013 study based on crime data has found that 10-20% of all rapes are gang rapes. Less than one in three gang rapes are reported.

Causes and characteristics: Gang rapists tend to be younger and serial in their crimes. Their mean age is 23 years.¹⁸ Gang rapes also involve more alcohol and drug use, evening or night attacks, using more violence and meeting with less resistance from the victims than individual rapes. Recent studies have found that gang rapes are more violent and the sexual as well as non-sexual injuries to the victims are often more severe.¹⁹

There are several motivations underlying gang rapes. One reward of gang rape is described as camaraderie among the men involved. Other so-called benefits include rapport, fellowship and co-operation. For group leaders, another primary motive is to maintain an authoritative image within the group. The other members of the group participate in gang rape because of their “indebtedness” to and “emotional dependency” on the leader.¹⁸

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Social psychologists have researched that individuals are known to be more aggressive in groups than they would alone. There are three factors which may explain why groups are easily spurred into sexual aggression and rape.

1. Diffusions of responsibility.
2. De- individualization.
3. Modelling.

Diffusion of responsibility refers to the situations in which the presence of others acting in a similar manner simultaneously, diminishes the feeling of responsibility that any one person may feel.

Thus, no single individual in a gang rape “needs” to feel that he is solely responsible for the victim’s condition.

De-individualization refers to loss of self-awareness, including one’s beliefs, morals, standards, ideals, within a group setting. The basis is that the loss of self may even be encouraged to promote a group spirit or to prompt behavior that is viewed as unacceptable by the person individually.

Strong cohesion within a group can produce de-individualization by substituting one’s individual beliefs with group beliefs and group histories. It would stand to reason if one’s group identity is stronger than one’s personal identity, then acceptance of gang rape by the group would outweigh one’s individual objections.

The last group dynamic that can be applied to gang rape is modelling. When diffusion of responsibility and de-individualization has taken place, group-identity can produce conformity within the group. Thus, not only would watching the rape of a victim by other members of the group, demonstrate the so-called “appropriateness” of the act, but it would also show how it is done.¹⁸

Gang Rapes during civil Wars and Ethnic Riots: Gang rapes occurring during civil wars or ethnic riots take on an added notoriety of becoming a means of revenge, sending a message to the victim’s community, inducing fear in the community and creating a sense of oneness and camaraderie among soldiers or militants of the violent group.

Effects of Rape on the Victim: They include both the initial physical trauma and deep psychological trauma. However, rape does not always involve physical force. The most common and lasting effects of rape involve mental health concerns.

Physical effects of Rape: Acute effects: Can include visible bruising or bleeding, or both, in and around the vaginal or anal areas. Bruises may also be present on other parts of the body like breasts and inner thighs from coercive violence.

Delayed effects: Both “forced” rape as well as “date-rape” can have many other physical consequences like:

1. Painful intercourse with significant other.
2. Urinary tract infection.
3. Unwanted Pregnancy
4. STDs like HIV, genital warts, syphilis, gonorrhoea, Chlamydia.

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Psychological effects of Rape: Victims can experience both short term and long term psychological effects of rape like:

1. Post-traumatic stress disorder.
2. Depression.
3. Flashbacks- memories of rape as if it was taking place again.
4. Personality problems.
5. Suicide attempts and intentional self-harm (ISH).
6. Sleep Disorder.
7. Eating Disorder.
8. Anger and Guilt.
9. Hypoactive sexual desire disorder.

Rape trauma syndrome (RTS): RTS was identified by Ann Wolbert Burgess and Lynda Lytle Holmstrom. It is identified as a cluster of emotional and behavioural responses to the extreme stress experienced by the victim during the rape or a response to the profound fear of death that almost all victims experience during the sexual assault.

RTS occurs in two Phases:

1. Acute/ initial phase: It lasts for a few days to a few weeks.
2. The reorganization phase: It lasts anywhere from several weeks to several months or even years after the rape.

Main features of RTS:

1. Self-blame: It is among the most common of both short and long term effects and functions as an avoidance coping skill that inhibits the healing process. Two main types are known- Behavioural and characterological self-blame. Behavioural self-blame is defined as undeserved blame based on actions. Victims feel that they should have done something differently, and therefore feel at fault. Characterological self-blame is defined as undeserved blame based on character. Victims feel that there is something inherently wrong with them, which caused them to deserve to be assaulted. Each and every victim who indulges in one or both categories of this "Self-blame" needs a good support system. Unfortunately, the victim's support system is not always the best place for the victim to seek consolation. Sometimes a supporter needs to shield himself from believing that such a thing could happen to their loved one for no fault of hers. Hence, the supporter will make excuses for why the event occurred. Some supporters will decide that the victim put themselves in a bad situation, even though they did not deserve to be raped. This attitude of the supporter does not help the victim in his or her recovery. They may blame the victim directly or indirectly which may reinforce the victim's behavioural or characterological self-blame. Victims need to be reassured what happened to them is "not their fault". They need a good social support to fight through their shame and feel safe and secure.
2. Feeling of guilt and shame: The shame which the victim feels in the aftermath of rape can be very destructive and impair the healing process.²⁰ Shame is detrimental to recovery due to
 - A. Lack of motivation to seek care.
 - B. Lack of empathy.

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- C. Social withdrawal.
- D. Anger, aggression.
- E. Revengefulness.
- F. Eating Disorder.
- G. Substance abuse.
- H. Problematic moral behaviour.

Shame prone women, in a recent study over several years, are prone to substance abuse, earlier sexual activity, less safe sexual activity, juvenile delinquency and early involvement with the criminal justice system.

Sociological Impact: Rape is especially stigmatizing in cultures with strong customs and taboos regarding sex and sexuality. Hence a rape victim who was previously a virgin may be viewed as “Damaged” by society. Such a victim may suffer isolation, be disowned by family and friends, be prohibited from marrying, be divorced if already married or even killed.

This is called as secondary victimization. Hence secondary victimization is defined as the re-traumatization of the rape or sexual assault victim through un-empathetic responses of individuals, society or institutions. It is especially common in cases of date-rape, acquaintance rape and statutory rape.

Victim blaming refers to holding the victim of the crime, in this case, rape, to be responsible for the crime in whole or in part. For example it may refer to the attitude that the victim’s certain behaviour like flirting, wearing sexually provocative clothing or going out unprotected may have encouraged the assault. Rapists use “victim-blaming” as a defence mechanism to disconnect themselves psychologically from the crime of rape.²¹

Why secondary victimization and victim-blaming:

- a. Just world theory: People believe that the world is intrinsically fair and may find it difficult/impossible to accept the situation in which a person is badly hurt through no fault of theirs.
- b. Intrinsic fear theory: This theory inspires people to believe that rape can only happen to those who provoke the assault. Believers use it as a way to feel safer.

CONCLUSION: No person exposed to severe trauma is immune to suffering and the signs of that suffering are referred to as symptoms. When these symptoms can be grouped together as a pattern over time, they are referred to as a syndrome. Once the pattern becomes entrenched or unlikely to change and is affecting the person’s functioning or is causing personal distress, it is regarded as a mental illness. The violation of the person being raped is physical, emotional, moral and is associated with the closest human intimacy of sexual contact.

There is a deliberate malice in the very nature of rape, malice difficult or impossible for the victim to understand. The act of rape succeeds in terrorizing, dominating and humiliating their victims. Thus, rape is perhaps worse than a deadly disease which needs to be totally eradicated. Laws should be such that women feel comfortable to approach the legal system without fear of being humiliated or made to feel guilty for being victims of rape. Only then can we form a society where every woman feels safe and can go about her life with dignity and respect.

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