

To what extent do different communities give detrimental treatment to victims of sexual violence?

Authors: Shahbano Shahbano¹

Abstract

Sexual assault and harassment (Justice, 2010) have happened globally and is a very frequent incident that happens to everyone despite gender. Sexual assault is very regular, with women, a lot of people face it but deny and don't realize it later on. Communities also treat sexual violence victims (RAINN, 2020) differently and sometimes even blame the victim, this is very unjust and the harassers are not even shamed so the victims have so much trauma that they don't even talk about it. Once victims open up, they are looked at differently. People don't know how to handle the situation which leads to the victims feeling as if they should keep quiet and is the purpose of my individual report, to educate oneself and others..

Keywords: *Sexual Violence, mental effects and different perspective, community treatment, victims.*

Methodology

For primary research, I made a survey. Some questions included: if their community, religion, etc shame sexual violence victims if they know anyone who has experienced sexual violence in their lifetime and what their gender was. The number of responses was also tracked and transferred as analytics. For secondary research, I evaluated articles and websites regarding my topic (Bibliography) before starting my report to get an idea of what my topic's future would look like.

Causes

There are many theories explaining the causes of sexual violence. (Lisak, 2003) An overall evaluation of the causes includes anger, power, ethical standards, and socioeconomics. Most of the time, the perpetrators have some power over the victim and use it against them for their gains and commit acts of sexual violence. This can be done in a workplace environment which is the most frequent place women are groped (Taylor, 2022) , men back in the day used to slap women's backsides and tell them to get them a cup of coffee. This has also been interpreted in media as a joke. Young boys are taught to be aggressive and violent. This makes them think it's normal, hence they turn to their community for comfort, but are told to keep quiet and that it isn't a big deal which makes them think that maybe it was my fault? Maybe I was the trigger? It was my clothes, it was how I was acting, it was how I was talking, etc.

Consequences

The consequences of a survivor of sexual violence are both emotionally, mentally, and physiologically induced which can include depression. People who go through sexual violence, obtain poor quality of sleep and this is four times more than the rate of women who have not experienced sexual violence. Eating disorders have also been very popular because it makes them feel as if they're in control which they didn't have when going through sexual violence. Dissociation (Webster, 2023) is also a mechanism that is used by victims as it defends the brain from the trauma. Substance abuse is also used as they feel that they aren't the same person, they were before the attack. Some also lost self-consciousness cause of the experience and on top of that lack of support systems and care from their community (Dockray, 2019) can cause these factors to get worse, potentially suicide.

Local Perspective

¹ Learning Alliance; shahbanoshaan@gmail.com.

I surveyed to get an accurate result on the local perspective; I sent it to everyone I knew generally and in total it equaled 34 respondents. Some of the questions I asked included: if u have ever been scared that sexual violence could occur to you? Do you know anyone who has experienced sexual violence in their lifetime? If yes, what was their gender? Some of the answers included were for “Do you know someone who has experienced sexual violence in their lifetime?” where 65% said yes. Another question is “Do you think your community, ethnicity, religion shamed sexual violence victims in a way?” 6% of the respondents said no, and 68% said yes while 26% picked “in some cases”. This tells us that one’s community has shamed sexual violence victims and that it’s known that this shaming has taken place. If their communities have shamed sexual violence victims (Andersson, 2019) it is more likely that they have taken part in it too, without even realizing. Another question asked if they know someone who had experienced sexual violence and if so, what was their sex? 0% had said boys while 62% had said girls while 38% said they did not know anyone who experienced sexual violence, this implies that females are targeted for sexual violence.

I interviewed my peer who is a female who lives in the UK. She was a little girl that was taken advantage of by a relative. Her parents found out what was happening, and handled it in a way she was thankful for. They kept the matter private, since she was just a child and didn't want anyone to use it against her. They obviously cut all ties with him, but she mentioned that she is grateful for how her parents handled the situation. She said that if she had stayed in Pakistan, and her parents were conservative, she feels it could have ended differently. She also talked about how sometimes she has triggers, so she doesn't like to be touched to a certain extent. I also raised a question asking whether she has a community, where she lives now, and if they knew about the issue, would she know what their feedback would be? She replied saying she has a brown community and that she hopes they go about it the right way if they knew she added on with how a similar incident to hers took place and gossip was spread fast which made her overall ensure.

National Perspective

Women in Pakistan are bashed by their communities for expressing their experience with sexual violence. In healthcare scenes women are imposed to sexual violence this includes: threatened or forced abortions, genital mutation, virginity inspections, testing, (miss, 2018) and forced gynecological procedures. Due to these forced acts, the victim's healing process is painfully slow.

The motorway incident (Correspondant, 2020) was a national outcry that took place in Lahore; where a mother was robbed and gang raped in front of her children when her vehicle ran out of fuel. But, Sheikhs questioned why she didn't check her fuel beforehand and why she went out without the company of a man while others argued that she shouldn't fear to go out alone and shouldn't have to have a presence of a male with her to feel protected. Prime minister Imran Khan also made a commentary on this issue stating “Such brutality must not be allowed in any civilized society” and demanded that rapists be “Chemically and surgically castrated” and “Publicly hanged”.

Global Perspective

Sexual violence globally, is known to be a public health concern that surpasses boundaries. Overall global data tells us that sexual violence unreasonably affects the female gender. Sexual violence is a human rights violation that has not been taken into account in being removed or handled in any way. The costs for sexual violence (MCASA, 2019) are substantial but this shouldn't be something a human should have to handle, along with pay for its aftermath, some deal with heavy trauma and this results in communication being need to be made. This leads to needed therapy sessions which is expensive. Some communities shame women in their family if they have been sexually abused and see them as impure and don't do anything regarding their existence this includes family members not giving financial support.

In countries abroad, up to one-third of females report unwilling engaged in sexual acts. Forced sexual activity in schools is also at a high proportions. In schools in Canada, 23 percent of girls experience sexual harassment, as well as sex trafficking, which is also very usual in many countries, thousands of women are sex trafficked and put into the prostitution industry. Mass rape of females was also done during wars to show a sign of dominance to the enemy and was exercised as a upper hand. In the Bosnia and Herzegovina war (1992 -1995) 10,000 to 60,000 women were raped. There has been growing global education on sexual

violence and how to help the victims but this is because of the increase of bodies that have sexual violence all around the world. An example of this growth can include the World Health Organization who released a report in 2002 on violence and health, this report inspects sexual violence and its health consequences.

Course of Action

Some solutions I feel are effective include (Families, 2015):

To educate others, that silence does not mean consent. What we can do is inform people about this violence and educate young ones in institution; as some girls could be going through this horrendous act and not even know about it, as she isn't well educated on this topic because it is an awkward topic within her family and community.

It is never too young to be educated on sexual violence (NIJ, 2010) and for young ones it can be in a simple, tone, and overall matter so the youth can also be brought up in a way that sexual violence is a taboo topic. Hotline for sexual assault and harassment victims should be available globally and should be a pre-downloaded app on gadgets as a way to ensure that everyone has helped, this can also improve safety rates. Sex education should be a topic covered all around schools and more schools can perform this lesson in a private matter by e.g. spreading females and males into two separate rooms. With sex education, sexual violence can also be a topic talked about as well as inform and teach people what to do in these type of situations.

Evaluation of Resources

I have taken advantage of sources like a survey I conducted, an article to enlighten me on news that occurred in my homeland that is related to my study, and an interview:

The survey contributed a lot to my report as it gave a real-life construction and helped me understand, what people felt about sexual violence, and thus evolved my opinion.

The article on gang rape in Lahore was first introduced in 2020 and was posted by the Express Tribune. It pained me to see that this was still an issue that has been so drilled down into this world yet no action was taken to take care of this situation and I had no way to express my inspiration on this issue until this report came along. The article was detailed about what occurred and how the police were taking major precautions for this, but what made me mad was that it took this woman to be raped in front of her children for people to think that maybe sexual violence is a problem.

The interview I performed helped me collect in-depth information to get a better explanation of my report as I saw it from a victim's eyes. It gave me unique and unavailable information to put in my report which gave it exclusivity.

Personal Reflection

This advanced my views it expanded and progressed my knowledge of sexual violence. It taught me to speak my word and be conscious in this world as a young female. This report made me realize what can work and what can't, as well as helping me make decision skills in what to incorporate in my report. Individually writing this report helped me be independent, grew my academic personality, and gave me a work ethic that I needed to learn.

Conclusion

My overall argument was “To what extent do different communities give detrimental treatment to victims of sexual violence?” Yes, detrimental treatment is given to sexual violence victims, but to a certain extent. In my opinion, they don’t deserve a bad reputation thrown at them by their community. As they’re the victims, this is the last thing they need, but a positive environment; some go to the extent to disown the victim while some are rational and sympathetic in the first way which is the right route.

References

- Andersson, F. (2019, July 14). COMMUNITIES URGED TO SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE RATHER THAN BLAMING AND SHAMING THEM. From UNMISS: <https://unmiss.unmissions.org/communities-urged-support-survivors-sexual-violence-rather-blaming-and-shaming-them>
- Correspondant. (2020, september 10). Motorway gang rape shocks nation. From Tribune: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2263375/motorway-gang-rape-shocks-nation>
- Dockray, H. (2019, may 24). Mashable. From Self-care isn't enough. We need community care to thrive.: <https://mashable.com/article/community-care-versus-self-care>
- Families, W. (2015, October 19). 10 Ways to Prevent Sexual Violence. From WFC: <https://womenfamilies.org/sexual-assault-center/10-ways-to-prevent-sexual-violence/>
- Justice, N. I. (2010, October 25). Overview of Rape and Sexual Violence. Retrieved October 27, 2022 from National Institute of Justice: <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/overview-rape-and-sexual-violence>
- Lisak. (2003, December 15). Rutgers. From Why does sexual violence occur?: <http://vpva.rutgers.edu/sexual-violence/why-does-sexual-violence-occur/>
- MCASA. (2019, April 16). Economic Costs of Sexual . From MCASA: <https://mcasa.org/assets/files/Economic-Costs-of-Sexual-Violence-with-Long-Term-Costs-Updated.pdf>
- miss, U. (2018, october 17). 'Virginity testing': a human rights violation, with no scientific basis - UN. From UN News: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/10/1023401>
- NIJ. (2010, October 25). Overview of Rape and Sexual Violence. From NIJ: <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/overview-rape-and-sexual-violence>
- RAINN. (2020, February 13). Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics. From RAINN: <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/victims-sexual-violence>
- Taylor, B. (2022, march 15). Woman groped while walking her dog in broad daylight in EaDo has a warning for neighbors. From Eyewitness news: <https://abc13.com/woman-groped-in-east-downtown-eado-man-assaults-walking-dog-surveillance-video-shows-attack-groping-women/11652210/>
- Webster, M. (2023, January 11). Merriam Webster. From Dissociation: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dissociation>.