

## Rape Myths: An Overview of Perceptions and Beliefs

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### ABSTRACT

*Rape or sexual assault present in every society and culture. Rape or sexual assault is common in Pakistan and rape myths are also present in our society. Rape or rape myth are not harmless attitude but these are destructive forces. Through rape myths the sexual violence has been sustained and justified. This research focuses on attitude and perception about sexual assault on women by men. The researcher focus on specific rape myths (Women lies about rape, women enjoy rape and women willingness in rape). This is an explanatory research through secondary sources.*

**Keywords:** Rape, Rape Myths, Pakistan

### INTRODUCTION

Due to existence of female the universe is colorful<sup>1</sup>. Sexual assault is the wrongdoing and sex is a weapon. It is debasing, degrading and mortifying for the exploited person. No way to overlook the criminal's conduct. All social orders and society encounter the wrongdoing of sexual assault, a savagery against women, in all times they pass through. Every religions of the entire world have discussed the rape in depth but the Islamic point of views on crime of rape is different. In Islam sexual assault is the savagery against women as well as against entire society. Unluckily, Women are always remained victims of sexual assault. The incidents of sexual violence and rape are increasing globally<sup>2</sup>. According to merriam-webster dictionary "A sexual assault or sexual intercourse or sexual penetration against any one or more individual without her consent<sup>3</sup>. The term of rape may be used interchangeably with term of sexual assault.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Tjaden (2000)<sup>4</sup> argued that 18-25% of US women reported the experiencing either an attempt or complete rape in their life time. Many studies suggests that several dynamics are related with rape tendency and its occurrence. Acceptance and myth is one of them (Loh et al. 2005)<sup>5</sup>. Payne et al. (1994)<sup>6</sup> described that in 1970s social scientists presented the perception of rape myths to explain false cultural beliefs which included, victim blame elements, offender absolution and rationalization of sexual valance against women. Desai et al. (2008)<sup>7</sup> argued that research recognized men's involvement in sexual assault is predicted by rape myth acceptance.

## OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this paper is to give an inside on sexual assault myths and current appearances of these myths in the public eye.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on explanatory research. Therefore the available material as secondary source of research is being utilized.

### Rape in context of Pakistan

HRCP (1997)<sup>8</sup> report shows that media commonly don't highlight the much cases of rape. Due to close social bindings in culture only 1/3 rape cases are reported. Commonly not only in a cosmopolitan city but also in whole country, women rape survivors always forced to keep secret the rape incident due to social taboos of Ghairat & Izat of family. Unfortunately this taboo is not only available in rural areas but also in urban areas. Even high educated people of Pakistan try to show that rape is not the issue of country and it is only a try to become rich. A study shows that 158 out of 247 men believe that women attracts a men to rape her with her behavior or with help of her dressings<sup>9</sup>.

### In Pakistani law Rape defined under Zina Ordinance

Rape is a sexual intercourse with a woman or a girl to whom the offender is not validly married. In Pakistani law<sup>10</sup> rape includes the following aspects in its definition.

1. Sexual intercourse with a woman or girl forcibly against her will or her consent.
2. With her consent being obtained due to fear of death or hurt.
3. With the consent of the victim, where the offender knows, that he is not validly married to her, but has obtained her consent because the victim believes herself to be validly married to the offender in short obtaining consent through fraud or false pretenses.

Zina- *is an offence under section 4 of the Zina ordinance.*

Zina- *is a consensual sexual intercourse between two persons who are not married.*

Zina-bil-Jabr- *is a Sexual intercourse forcibly against the will of the woman, not married to the rapist.*

### A Global Perception of Rape

Social scientists are keen observer and discussed rape as violence against women. They not only work on making law on violence against women but also share prevent methods in systematic ways.

### Assessment of Rape Myths

Usually social scientists use two scales 1. Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS, Burt, 1980)<sup>11</sup> & 2. Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMAS, Payne et al. 1994)<sup>12</sup>. Edwards et al. (2000)<sup>13</sup> shared that RAMAS was the first widely used measurement techniques. It was centered on explanation of rape myths (prejudice, stereotype, false belief, rape victims & rapists). A definition regarding rape myth "Beliefs and attitudes are usually wrong but are

widely used. They helped to reject and justify sexual violence of male against women” (Lonsway, 1994)<sup>14</sup>. With help of this definition IRMAS was created by Payne et al. Other methods to find out rape myths are “Attitude towards Rape Scale (Feild, 1978)<sup>15</sup> & (Ward, 1988)<sup>16</sup> on “Attitude towards Rape Victims Scale. While close or open ended questions, beside content analysis are also being employed by researchers (Edwards et al. 2011)<sup>17</sup>.

### **Evidences of Rape Myths**

It was noted that usually individuals don't directly blame a women rape victim but 53% respondents were agreed that action of women (Dressings, drinking etc) may lead her to assault (McMahon, 2010)<sup>18</sup>. Kamal (2010)<sup>19</sup> documented in a study in Quaid e Azam University, Pakistan that 158 out of 247 male respondents believe that women attracts a man to rape her through their behavior and way of dressing. In a study on Asian and Caucasian college students regarding compared belief about rape myths, it was found that mostly Asian students believe that female rape survivors are responsible for assault and perpetrator are strangers (Lee et al. 2005)<sup>20</sup>.

### **Women Enjoy Rape**

In a study on university students in Pakistan, regarding attitude and perception about rape, it was noted that as compare to 03% female respondents, 34% male respondents believed that rape victim women get pleasure during assault (Kamal, 2010)<sup>21</sup>.

### **Willingness of victim to be Raped**

In a speech on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2005, Mr. Pervez Musharaf, president of Pakistan said “Try to understand the environment of Pakistan. Rape is money making concern. People think that if you want to become rich or want to settle outside likewise Canada or any civilized country get yourself raped<sup>22</sup>.

Willingness of women to be raped is a big umbrella, under which more myths such as “she was in sexy dress to attract me” can be categorized (Carmody, 2001)<sup>23</sup>. Walklate (2008)<sup>24</sup> recoded the belief of 26% respondents that women are self-responsible of sexual assault if she was wearing sexy dress. Similarly in Pakistan 23% male university students & 1% female students believe that victim's willingness to be raped is present in assault (Kamal, 2010)<sup>25</sup>.

### **Does Women lie about Rape**

Patton (2007)<sup>26</sup> noted that false rape allegations are very rare. Lonsway et al. (2007)<sup>27</sup> calculated that only 02-08% reported rape cases were false.

## **CONCLUSION**

Rape myths are common in our society. Not only in common but also in educated people and mostly male believe that rape is fault of women. People believe that rape is shortcut to become rich or get nationality of western countries. People belief that rape cannot attempt without consent of victim. These myths are not harmless but destructive for society. Due to these beliefs people cannot feel density of severity. Highly need of community awareness programmes to be launched by civil society or NGOs to educate people.

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