

Psychosocial perspectives of sexual violence by men on women and social work implications: A review.

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Abstract:

Background: Sexual violence (SV) is considered by researchers of social sciences under gender violence and a severe form of gender oppression. Psychosocial researches in the field of SV found numerous reasons on why men commit SV on women. Method: The present study explored the available literature on SV by using the search engines PubMed, Google Scholar and Google for empirical evidence of SV. A snowball referencing of the significant studies helped to identify further relevant articles/reports/web pages/books. Results: A total of 24 related materials found suitable for the study based on the themes of social, cultural, psychological aspects, misconceptions related to sex, personality aspects, inclusive of the influences of media, drugs, and peers. Social workers can address this serious issue with the micro, mezzo and macro level interventions. The intervention found from the studies also differs based on the nature of the problem. Conclusion: The present research guides psychosocial researchers and mental health professionals to understand the causes of SV and subsequently help to refine the existing strategies and solution through research.

Keywords: Sexual violence, psychosocial perspective, social work intervention.

Introduction

Sexual violence (SV) considered a serious offence in most of the countries, and it invokes public attention. Media's report that a woman raped every 20

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minutes in India and sexual violence (SV) on women is common (Browne, 1993), (Agnes, 1990). SV always does not necessarily be forced genital sexual intercourse in which the perpetrator uses physical force or verbal or physical threat to the victim. SV can be completed or aggravated sexual battery with or without the influence of drug/alcohol, but it can be forced to do fellatio or anal sex. Inappropriate touching/physical contact at private parts or parts of the body with the sexual intention (unwanted sexual contact), sexual, verbal comments/threats, lewd singing or gestures and jeering at women, using graffiti of sexual contents. Also, using electronic Media i.e. sexually explicit mobile phone text/media messages, smileys, email with sexual content, video or voice over the phone, using other social media's like for SV. Voyeurism, exhibitionism (non-contact) sexual antagonism and hostile towards women by sexual means (Basile, 2014), (Fibert, 2001). Sexual coercion and rape are commonly seen SV by men on women in most of the societies and in particular, the common victims are young females.

Understanding the roots of sexual violence by men on women can help researchers, policy makers and social workers in framing the policies/strategies for the empowerment of women and girl children to stay away from exploitation and for the victims to avert similar incidents and hold the perpetrators legally answerable. When the awareness spread against exploitation by sexual means and make the perpetrators answerable then it is convinced that no more victims continue to be silent. This article explores the reasons of sexual violence to understand why men engage in sexual violence on women in the social work perspectives and how to minimize it with social work interventions.

Methods

The reviewer made an extensive search on PubMed, Google Scholar and recent five years media reports on the incidents of SV and online media reports based on developing countries of South Asia. The keywords used in this search were "sexual violence" "sexual aggression" "gender violence", "psycho-social." and "South Asian developing countries." A snowball reference also followed. *Educere-BCM Journal of Social Work*

lowed from the identified relevant articles/reports/webpages/books.

A total number of 24 related materials found on the search. The themes the authors searched in the concerned publication were social, cultural factors, psychological aspects, misconceptions related to sex, personality aspects, influence of media, drugs, and peers.

Results

Social and Cultural Factors

Socially constructed individual factors cause inequalities and later into any form of violence's particularly vulnerable sections of the society (Barrow, 2016). Anthropologists define SV, not on the grounds of the biological traits or a common factor that universally seen. Whereas, it is a social phenomenon seen in every culture with variations (Sanday, 1981). The person representing a lower socio-economic status and a slum dweller in the developing countries used to see women with envy and a source to satiate their sexual desires for the cause of revenge for their economic, social backward conditions. Their possibility for easy to move, stay and work unchecked anywhere in a country without valid job cards by interstate migrants or criminals are giving a known platform for sexual offenders to perform SV against women (Haywood, 2003). SV's underreported in the developing countries due to the dire negative consequences related to the personal and social life of the victims. SV varies in culture-to-culture, these cultural factors also contributing to sexual violence. SV is more common in cultures where a woman considered as less important than a man and lives under their protection, dominance, and power also, a disproportionate male to female ratio can lead to jealousy and frustration and into a contest between men for their desired women (Haywood, 2003).

Childhood Experiences

Social learning theory explains that observed sexual violence may lead to imitation to similar acts by men. Social learning theory also supports with evidence that childhood family atmosphere has a major role in the development of transmission, exposure, and expression of different kinds of violence.

Male parental role models/adult patterns of interpersonal aggression are few reasons. The battered/abused mother by father in front of their male child can lead to the development of a sexual aggressor in the future due to the failure of the self (Malamuth, Linz, Heavey, Barnes, & Acker, 1995), (Malamuth,1991). Childhood maltreatments also can impose the development of sexual violence in the future (Debowska, Boduszek, Dhingra, Kola, & Meller-Prunsk, 2015), (Duke, Pettingell, McMorris, & Borowsky, 2010).

Sexual Myths

Sexual myths and stereotypes of attitudes and false beliefs by men can also cause sexual violence (Bull, 2014). It includes the men's attitude towards women especially being dominant attitudes towards the opposite sex and believes this will help in serving their sexual intentions with women, being hostile and antagonistic attitude will favour in sexual submissiveness by the opposite sex.

The common beliefs reported by research studies are 1. Women gets pleasure from men during forced sex, 2. Women have equal responsibility in forced sex, 3. The important motive for the perpetrator in sexual violence is sex than overpowering a woman. 4. Men sexually assault certain types of women, 5. A rape victim will be less sexually attractive to men, 6. Women create chances for SV, 7. SV can be justified in some situations, once a victim of SV will be consenting for another 8. Sexual drive is higher among men than women 9. A strong woman can prevent rape if she wanted 10. Women with provocative dressing or wearing a scanty dress will invite rape 11. Women used to lie by reporting rape to revenge Men 12. Women report the rape to get attention by others on them (Grubb, 2012), (Cueto, 2015), (Lottes, 2008), (Payne, 1999), (Sapiro, 2003).

Overt Sexism

Sexism contains negative and positive factors, but overt sexism contains aggression towards the opposite sex. Overt sexism means hostility towards women by men (Glick,1997). It denotes that men treat women with discrimination, which includes verbal and physical harassment, also considers wom-

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en as less important (viewing women as less competent) to men in different areas such as in physique, at work, study, based on religion, leadership, and politics (Benokraitis, 1995). Men who pass frequent sexual jokes on women have more tendency to indulge in rape on acquaintance whereas SV, not on a stranger (Viki, 2007).

Personality Aspects

Theories of personality explain possible causes of sexual aggression. The major personality theory talks about sexual aggression is the Five-factor theory-it explains factors related to extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism and openness to experience (Digman, 1990). Apart from these five factors the low self-esteem also found evidence in sexual aggression (Leary, 1995).

Extroverts have more opportunity to attend more social gatherings. Hence, more chances to indulge in sexual aggression. There are single, or more of these dimensions produce aggression in men. Sexual attackers found with the following characteristics of affective, behavioural, interpersonal, lifestyle features. They are with the lack of empathy, less remorse/guilt, social deviance, criminality deceitful, manipulative traits stubbornness, impulsive, irritable and irresponsible in nature are more aggressive in the role of a sexual perpetrator (Malamuth, 1991), (Hare, 2003), (Hare, 2008).

Psychopaths found to have indulged more in SV against women than those non-psychopaths. Psychopath's characteristics like arrogance and lack of empathy give the explanation that women wish to be raped secretly (Debowska, Boduszek, Dhingra, Kola, & Meller-Pruncka, 2015). Also, Persons with sensation seeking tendency seemed to have found more aggressive sexually (Seto, Lalumière, M.L., Quinsey V.L., 1995).

Gang/Peer Influences

SV's committed by a group of people commonly seen the crime. Peers or gangs always have a role in creating an attitude towards women in their mem-

bers (Elias, 1969). They usually persuade its members to achieve sexual benefits by forcing women into sexual means (Gross, 1978). Hence, as the member of the group, one tries to prove his masculinity by confronting non-consenting woman sexually. This kind of gang behaviour occurs in common places where men dominate (Ignatius, 2013). The SV by a group of men accepted in some societies as a punishment to the woman using retribution with rape that made on local rules and ipso facto the victims often fears to report it to the official authority (Smith, 2004).

Long Term Memory

Empirical studies found that long-term memory or stored information of maladaptive attitudes and beliefs about sex can lead to SV by men on women (Hines, 2007). Sexual aggressors, often fail to identify the cues from women. Men with a history of maladaptive behaviour have more chances of involving in SV towards women.

Narcissism and Aggression

Narcissism defined as self-inflated psychological interest to the self. 'Kohut 1972' observed in the study findings that there is an association between narcissism and aggression. The aggression arises out of the narcissist's or the objects failure to satisfy the expected outcomes can lead to SV (Kohut, 1972), (Talmon & Ginzburg, 2018), (Mosse, 1998).

People with Masculine Identity

Physical strength is the factor of men's masculinity and to one step ahead of violence (Talmon & Ginzburg, 2018), (Mosse, 1998). Masculinity associated with the experiment with sexuality, (Hirsch, Munoz-Laboy, Nyhus, Yount, & Bauermeister, 2009) which can lead a person to experience the sexual risks (Lowe, 2005), (Holmes, 2008). Persons with masculine identity found to have more chances to coerce sex on women than others (Poppen, 1988). In human society, men exhibit more aggression than women, and his tendency to do physical harm to others is found to be more (Glick & Roose, 1993).

Feminist Perspective

Feminist perspective describes the inequality between men and women who are rooted in the patriarchal concept are the root causes of sexual aggression by men (Dixon-Mueller, 1993). In such society men always want to have dominance in the physical, political, economic and legal areas over women. In that way, they believe women will be passive and submissive towards men this gives the belief that showing dominance by men with authority will help to overcome women using forced sex. Acceptance of rape by others increases the violence by perpetrators (Morry, 2001).

Influence of Alcohol

Research supports with evidence that the abuse of drugs or alcohol can lead to unprovoked SV towards women by men (Seto,1995), (Testa, 2004). Alcohol expectancy theory describes the beliefs about the effects of alcohol on thinking, memory, conation and behaviour and the sexual expectancies activated with the consumption of alcohol (Reich, Goldman, & Noll, 2004), (Christiansen, Goldman, & Inn, 1982), (Friedman, McCarthy, Pedersen, & Hicks, 2009). Also, sexual violators also have poor control over the impulses, (Shively, 2001) and least awareness about the serious consequences (Starfelt, 2015).

Pornography and Media

Watching pornography with sexually violent explicit material and women as submissive participants can lead men into SV, (Donnerstein & Berkowitz, 1981), (Malamuth, Addison, & Koss, 2000) conditioning theories explain that watching pornography can be reinforced via reaching orgasm from masturbatory activities. This conditioning can be further lead to a desire and an attempt for more satisfying sexual victims (Ward, 2014).

Another theory is 'excitation transfer theory' it explains that watching pornography can arouse a person physiologically and emotionally and can lead to excitation and later into anger and this anger possibly released into a female

target (Allen, 1995). Feminist theory also depicts pornography to degrade female body and promotes hatred towards women. Watching pornography does direct harm to women, and it demoralizes men's attitude towards women (Allen, 1995). Hence, more men watch pornography than higher the SV on women; It changes male perceptions of women (Baron, 1984).

Albert Bandura's 'social learning theory' confirms the role of media in spreading SV by providing reward and punishment to the viewer by being self-aware that enacting the viewed content will give them reinforcement for repeating the same action (Bandura, 1977). Movies also have a high impact on sexual violence by men towards women. The movie depicted sex scenes and so-called item numbers with sexually provocative dance scenes of movie industries in developing countries stir up desires for SV (BBC, 2014). Strip dances or erotic dances by female performers in the pubs and dance bars also can be a potential factor for sexual violence on the targeted female victims.

Discussion

This review focused on psychosocial factors behind SV by men on women outside the family system or romantic relationships. The present review findings also point those internal and external factors influencing men to have sexual violence towards the opposite sex. When understanding the social and cultural factors behind SV it gives the least importance to the inherent biological aspects.

The cultural factor from the literature explains to the readers that problems are within the social phenomenon. When the problems exist in the social context then the betterment in the social ladder and status can improve the attitudes of potential men who may likely to involve in the sexual exploitation of women. It is difficult to change or modify cultural factors may make an impact on the perception of men who shall involve in the act, however the social workers working in the field of the community development and program planning can make an impact through imparting knowledge via education, empowerment, and helping them out to locate the resources. The efforts in-

vested in the potential for growth since childhood can make changes in the perception and attitude of the men who may get involved in the act of SV.

Social learning theory has explained the impact of role models since every person's childhood. The childhood experiences and role models can influence a child's view towards the opposite sex and may lead into SV. The importance of positive role models during the childhood of boys draws special attention. Social workers can intervene at the mezzo level to be the family life educators to draw the attention of parents to be sensitive in modifying the faulty representations. The social workers in involved the family practice should sensitize the parents to be their children not to make erroneous role models.

Myths are not based on facts and these stereotypes can develop as a result of faulty learning practices from the beginning of men's informal education. Literature of SV finds that the faulty understanding would be a reason for SV of men (Bull, 2014). The myth of hearsay's guiding men to a faulty attitude that women are submissive to any of their sexual needs. In addition, the present reviews findings assert that during the men's sexual intrusions on women have equal responsibility in the act and men are not responsible.

Attitude towards opposite gender intertwined with aggression is another factor for SV from men towards women. The finding of this literature review reveals that overt sexism is a tendency of dominance from men to demean women by SV. Apart from that, the empirical findings suggest that the violence practised by men with the sexual means are not used on a stranger but on a known person. Here the social work implication is that, planning and conducting gender sensitization programmes for removing the negative attitudes of men leading to SV at various places. The programmes of gender sensitization will help in modifying the views and reducing the hostility towards women (Srivastava, 2013).

The personality of men also has a major role for indulging in the SV. Personality can be shaped by providing more inputs into the moral life of the person. Hence, Personality development programmes initiated by social workers

for adolescences are most important in contributing to the healthy aspects of personality than creating pathology. The literature findings support that men with personality dimensions of low self-esteem and sensation seekers found to be more indulged in SV. Peer influences also contributing to the SV in men. When alone a man does not always enter into the SV. Whereas, the collective behaviour and decision of gangs can influence its member to release his sexual urges by entering via sexual means. This, in turn, may help the particular person in getting the approval of the group. Societies practising punishment by sexual means towards a woman is reinforcing it as sanctions to men. Here the social work role is to work on policy levels to make the change also, social actions can also be practised to implement changes.

Stored memories of maladaptive attitudes can also create grounds for SV. Here, the finding of the review states that memories of violence related to sex may also gush out for SV in men. The long term memory and misinterpretation of cues from women are dual factors related to SV. Psychodynamic theories assert that narcissism is the result of lost self-esteem during childhood. It is the attempt to cover up the self-esteem through engaging in aggression sexually. In this scenario, a social worker can enter into therapies (e.g., Psycho-dynamic therapy) which can identify the repressed memories and by re-enacting the drives, impulses, fantasies can reframe the maladaptive attitudes also restrain the self of the person from such acts.

Masculinity is a reason for sexual aggression and persons involved in sexual violence. This study found that physical energy associated with SV. Social workers can plan for programmes that can increase the positive values and morals among men. There can also be educational programmes to be conducted on how to divert the energy positively. Feminist perspective speaks about the patriarchal nature of society and as a result, men wanted dominance over women. Men wanted women to be submissive and not to be resisting in any. This dominance can be seen primarily in all the areas including indulging in forced sex. The problems of dominance and violence can be tackled and overcome through gender equality programs and conducting training

by social workers. The use of substances like alcohol can really influence the behaviours. When a person under alcohol intoxication then, his memories, thinking and sexual fantasies may be distorted and can take a risky advance toward a woman. Alcohol is known to be a depressant by nature and result in disinhibition and risk-taking sexual aggression. Those who have a history of risky behaviour after intoxicated can be identified by social workers and provided necessary interventions (eg. therapies based on cognitive principles).

Pornography is also a contributing factor to commit SV by men. Theories on drive states, excitation transfer theory and learning theory also support the notion that the habit of watching pornography indirectly lead a man to aggression by sexual means. The first theory of the section explains how the conditioning process reinforces the sexual urges into aggression. The excitation theory depicts that frequent exposure to sexually explicit contents may arise the person physiologically and emotionally and target a female. Developing positive habits and revising an individual's faulty coping mechanisms leading to SV is the social workers' responsibility.

Conclusion

This article explored factors behind the sexual violence by men towards women. Knowing the factors of sexual violence will help psycho-social researchers and mental health professionals to understand better about the factors behind SV by men on women. Hence, understanding the factors of psychosocial and individual perspectives behind SV by men on women will also help the researchers to make a foundation for further strategies and solutions via research.

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