A STUDY TO UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RAPE MYTH, SEXISM, AND GENDER

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Abstract

Every year, approximately 30,000 rape cases are reported in India, and the number of unreported cases is even higher. The aim of the present study is to analyze the relationship between rape myth and sexism and also to observe the difference between males and females around these two aspects. A sample of 99 individuals including 71 females and 28 males completed the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale and Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. Findings suggested that there is a significant and positive relationship between sexism and rape myth but the difference among genders isn't substantial.

Keywords: Sexism, Rape Myth, Gender Differences

Introduction

No place, country, or its bits are free from any social evil. Everything is comprised of its own pros and cons. In the Indian aspect, rape culture is considered as a one-sided story and the other side is often left unheard or partially acknowledged. Here the ones having dominance and power are those who escape from the big system which we call democracy. India, recorded a daily average of 89 rape cases in 2019, with a 7% increase in 2020.

Women are considered both the accused and victim of the deed they go through,i.e., if a woman is raped it is never seen as wrong to her it is seen as an outcome of any casual deed or we can say the outcome of following her heart actions which caused her this situation. Her thinking, character, clothing which in altogether are blamed for the thing that happened to her. It is believed that she has gone through it because she is assumed to have lured or broken the norms which are unsaid and unspoken in society but are embedded in every women's mind that how she has to be among this disastrous society to survive in the long run. Society is burdened so much with religion and hostility to victims that most people are initially judged based on their religion and thus have to go through the wrongs.

According to Aronowitz et.al (2012) when students are educated about sex education, they are less likely to be influenced by the negative social norms of their peers and the less likely would the student would be to accept rape myths.

Greater acceptance of rape myths has also been linked to greater intolerance toward sexism, classism, homophobia, and religious tolerance. (Aosved and Long, 2006)

Rape is the non-consensual act of penetration, including the penetration of the vagina, mouth, anus with finger, penis, tongue, and other objects.

"Rape myths are attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1994)

According to Swim et.al (2009), "sexism can be understood as beliefs that maintain and promote inequality between men and women." Sexism is an ambivalent concept. Sexist behavior can either be conscious or unconscious. It is a ubiquitous and far-reaching concept.

A study suggested that men and women who scored lower on Rape myth acceptance were less likely to blame the victim and the situation but blamed the perpetrator. They were less likely to believe that the act could've been avoided. Yet another study claims that men have more negative stereotypical attitudes than women.

According to Thomas (2021), "Women were more empathetic towards victims who had more feminine qualities regardless of gender; indicating that women used gender role stereotypes as a basis for who need protection. Whereas males had more empathy for individuals who maintained stereotype consistent qualities."

Literature Review-

A recent study revealed that men and women are stereotypically driven in perceiving the prospective causes of sexual assault. Women tend to be more empathetic towards individuals with feminine characteristics irrespective of their gender while men on the other hand were empathetic towards individuals who were stereotypically consistent.

In a study conducted by Suzanne and Tara in 2018, they differentiated between the rape myth beliefs and hostile sexism in two polar opposite cultures like India and Britain. It was stated that in a country like India with such a vast array of cultures and a huge population, the accepting myths was greater than in a country like Britain with a more egalitarian culture.

Individuals from both the countries also differed significantly in their attitude towards women, hostile and benevolent sexism.

Gilmartin (1988) in his study assessed the gender differences among students' attitudes towards rape myths, the findings of which suggest that gender differences are comprehensible among college students' attitudes towards rape myths. Women usually tend to reject these rape myths. In another study conducted by Tanishka (2015) 100 individuals were asked if they would want to be friends with someone who has been raped and if they would become a case witness for someone who has been raped. Out of 100, 46% said that they wouldn't want to be friends with someone who has been raped, while 56% said that they don't mind being friends with rape victims.

Next, Francesca and Julie in their 2019 research mentioned that religiosity is directly related to rape myth acceptance and religious practices promote these myths. Religiosity was not only a strong predictor of Rape myth acceptance but also sexism. Further, they elaborated that education also had a slight effect on rape myth acceptance but not as much as religiosity. It was also reported that people who had more educated parents reported less acceptance of rape myths (Nadeem and Sahed, 2017).

Furthermore, a study conducted in 2003 by Kassing and Leslee to assess the relationship between homophobia, gender role conflict, and rape myth acceptance found that older men with less education are more likely to endorse male rape myths, whereas younger and more educated individuals reported less stereotypical attitudes. Hudson and Ricketts (1980) and Herek and Glunt (1991,1993a, 1993b) found that "better-educated people are more tolerant of alternate lifestyles and are less homophobic, and express less hostile attitudes toward gay men, respectively." The result findings also suggested that negative attitudes towards homosexuals, power, competition are the roles related to traditional masculine roles and are very strong predictors of rape myth acceptance.

Methodology –
- o   Sample and Sampling Technique -

The sample was selected based on the purposive random sampling method. This consists of 100 individuals between the age ranges of 22-35 years. The age and gender of the participants were asked.

o   Tool Used –

- **Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale** – The revised IRMAS scale with 19 items was used. This scale is used in society to understand prominent rape myth endorsements. The internal consistency of the IRMA scale was high, with a Cronbach's alpha of .87.

- **Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) –** This is a 22-item self-report scale designed to assess hostile and benign sexism toward women. Over time, this scale has demonstrated both reported and empirical reliability.

o Procedure –

The web-based instrument Google Forms was utilized through internet informing stages and email, permitting a quick and proficient circulation of the Psychological Assessment Protocol to a wide range of people who met the consideration measures. The method ensured the heterogeneity of the sample.

o Hypothesis –

1. H_0 – There will be no difference between males and females on the rape myth scale.

   Ha – There will be a significant difference between males and females on the rape myth scale.

2. H_0 – There will be no significant difference between males and females on the sexism scale

   Ha – There will be a significant difference between males and females on the sexism scale.

3. H_0 – There is no significant relationship between rape myth and sexism.

   Ha – There is a significant and positive relationship between rape myth and sexism.

Results and Discussion–

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics –

	Rape Myth Scale	Sexism Scale
Male	29	29
Female	71	71
N	100	100

Table 1 represents the demographic data of the paper. There were n=29 males and n=71 females that is N=100 for both the scales that took part in the study.

Table 2 Results of Independent Sample t-test

	Male		Female		t	p	df
	M	SD	M	SD			
Rape Myth Scale	37.25	11.48	33.49	14.02	-1.260	0.211	97
Sexism Scale	51.96	13.89	44.13	15.27	-2.358	0.020	97

*p<0.05

Hypothesis 1 and 2 assume that there will be a significant difference between males and females on the rape myth scale and sexism scale respectively. On average males (M=37.25, SD=11.48) scored higher on the rape myth scale than females (M=33.49, SD=14.02). Males (M=51.96, SD=13.89) also scored higher on the sexism scale than females (M=44.13, SD=44.13). However, this difference was not significant t = -1.260 for the rape myth scale and t = -2.36 for the sexism scale, p>.05, and thus these hypotheses were rejected. However, it should be noted that even though the number of males was far less than females, they still had a larger mean and standard deviation on both scales. Since the data is not significant, the null hypothesis is accepted. The difference in variance is zero and the assumption is tenable. Different researches have had different results for gender differences in these two aspects. Maybe the culture and ethnicity also have an effect on these variables and so the discrepancy in the difference in gender is observed.

Table 3 Results of Bi- Variate Correlation

Variable	1	2
1. Rape Myth Scale	-	0.69**
2. Sexism Scale	0.69**	-

P<0.05*, p<0.01**

Hypothesis 3 states the assumption that there will be a significant and positive relationship between rape myth and sexism. Table 3 presents the data that rape myth and sexism are positively correlated (r = 0.69, p <0.01), and the relation between them are significant and hence hypothesis 3 is proven to be correct. This means that as the level of sexism increases in an individual, the level of rape myth is substantially increased as well and vice versa.

In a study by Aosved et al. (2006), similar to the present findings, a sample of 492 males and 506 females, it was discovered that there is a significant relationship between sexism and rape myth. It was also found in this study that there is a significant relationship between rape myth, sexism, racism, homophobia, ageism, and classism and also these findings were consistent in both males and females. There was no significant difference between males and females as opposed to other previous studies.

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