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 RAPE IN OUR SOCIETY AND POSSIBLE PREVENTIONS

Rape is one of the horrible plague the world has come to face with, which continues to happen frequently, and yet many cases are not reported to the law enforcement agency. It now not limited to certain countries or specific people, it can happen to anyone regardless of the race, gender, sexual orientation, age and financial status.

Rape is widely thought to be the most underreported crime. There are many stigmas that go along with rape, so it becomes difficult to come out as a victim. Also, rape cases can be very difficult to prove when there are not physical signs. The victim may also fear being further victimised through the investigative process so the crime is not reported.

There are reasons why rape is one of the most underreported crimes in the society. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, only “31% of all rapes are reported to the authorities”. ( Arrigo, 2006, p. 8). This creates a problem in the criminal justice field because it is difficult to put a stop to rape when most people do not report their victimisation. Another reason according to National Crime Victimisation Survey is that most victims of violent crime (including rape) claimed that it was a private or personal matter and they chose to keep quiet about it. While some have “fear of reprisals, embarrassment, or the belief that the victims may not be believed “( Meadows, 2010, p.10). These issues all contribute to the underreporting of rape cases.

There are many different types of rape. One type is called stranger rape. This is when a complete stranger rapes someone. These rapists often use weapons and threats of violence to gain the victim’s submission (Arrigo, 2006). However, the most common type of rape is called date rape. This occurs when someone is raped by a person they know. They may be on a date with this person, or be socialising with them at a party. This is extremely common, and often happens on college campuses. Date rape can also include when the assailant uses some type of drugs to make the victim powerless against the attack.

Most rapes occur between victims and attackers who are known to each other. In fact, “among victims 18-29 years old, two-thirds had a prior relationship with the rapist” (Meadows, 2010, p. 97). Many rapists attack ex-girlfriends, casual acquaintances, or people they are currently dating. These rapes are especially difficult as the attacker is someone the victim knows and trusts. The victim may even have to see the rapist around town if they decide not to report the rape.

In addition, “studies on college campuses have indicated that date rape is increasing” (Meadows, 2010, p. 98). An alarming survey shows that “more than half of a representative sample of more than 1,000 female students at a large urban university had experienced some form of unwanted sex” (Meadows, 2010, p. 98). Of these reported acts, twelve percent were done by casual dates, while 43 percent were done by steady dating partners (Meadows, 2010, p. 98). One study found that “many women raped by men they know do not think of themselves as rape victims” (Meadows, 2010, p. 98). Perhaps they think the rape was simply a misunderstanding. Still another study shows that date rape primarily occurs when “the date was unplanned or the woman had been picked up in a social setting (Meadows, 2010, p. 98). Further studies have shown that “1 in 4 college women . . . [have] been raped or [have] suffered an attempted rape” (Arrigo, 2006, p.109). These studies show the frequency of date rape occurring on college campuses.

Many researchers have attempted to determine why date rape is so prevalent on college campuses. Mary P. Koss is considered to be “one of the most prolific researchers on rape” (Schmalleger, 2009, p. 403). Koss conducted much research on college campuses, and found that “73% of the rape victims reported that the offender was drinking” (Schmalleger, 2009, p. 403). Some researchers point to the college lifestyle as the reason why date rape is so common. Fraternities can “contribute to the formation of attitudes that and behaviours that objectify women and normalise sexual coercion” (Schmalleger, 2009, p. 403).

Consequences of Rape

Rape is a horrifying and invasive crime. It has the potential to completely change the victim’s life. With some crimes, once the actual crime is over, the victim can move on with their life. This is not the case with rape victims. Once the attack is over, there are many other issues the victim will encounter. Many victims of rape experience long-term consequences of their attack. There may be physical consequences deriving from the attack. There also may be emotional consequences. Many rape victims have difficulties returning to their normal lives after the attack. They may exhibit symptoms of rape trauma syndrome, a type of post-traumatic stress disorder.

There are many physical consequences that can arise from rape. The victim may become pregnant from the attack. This leads to a difficult decision for the victim, made even more difficult if they do not believe abortion is an appropriate option. Some women may have religious or personal views that prevent them from getting an abortion, and thus are forced to go through a pregnancy resulting from a rape. In addition, the adult rape pregnancy rate is actually increasing based on United States Census Reports (Meadows 2010). It is estimated that “there may be 32,100 rape-related pregnancies annually among America women over the age of 18 years” (Meadows, 2010, p. 102). This statistic does not even include all the minors who become pregnant due to a sexual assault.

There are both emotional and psychological issues resulting from rape that are included in rape trauma syndrome. There are two phases of rape trauma syndrome. The first phase is the acute phase. In the acute phase, the victim “experiences a complete disruption of her life, resulting from the violence she experienced” (Meadows, 2010, p. 38). The victim may have a range of emotions during the acute phase, including “crying, shouting, swearing, or laughing inappropriately” (Meadows, 2010, p. 38). The victim may experience severe mood swings, and change emotions very quickly. They may be fearful to even leave their home. If the attack happened in their home, they may not feel safe living there anymore.

The second phase of rape trauma syndrome is the reorganisation phase. In the reorganization phase, victims must reorganise their lives (Meadows, 2010). This is accomplished with help from friends and family members (Meadows, 2010). During this phase, the victims have to learn ways to cope with their daily lives, and the disturbing thoughts that may enter their minds at any time. They may return to work and attempt to move on, but the pain and fear is still present in their minds.

There are many different symptoms of rape trauma syndrome. Some of the symptoms include “fear, helplessness, shock, disbelief, guilt, humiliation, embarrassment, anger, self-blame, flashbacks of the rape, avoidance of previously pleasurable activities, avoidance of the place or circumstances in which the rape occurred, depression, sexual dysfunction, insomnia, and impaired memory” (Meadows, 2010, p. 102). These symptoms greatly inhibit the victim’s ability to heal and move on with their life. They may be happy one moment, and then suddenly be overcome with sadness and not able to understand where the sadness originated. While in the acute phase they may experience a wide range of emotions. When they enter the reorganisation phase, they may not have quite as many mood swings, but may experience flashbacks of the attack. This contributes to their insomnia. Victims are afraid to go to sleep because they may have nightmares of the attack. They also lost their sense of control when they were attacked, and going to sleep leaves them vulnerable yet again.

Rape might not have a solution as it is, but there are preventions to be taken.

The dire need of today is to curb this violent crime. The most important step to be taken in this direction is the strengthening of laws dealing with sexual assaults.

Death penalty should be imposed on a rape accused.

A woman's squad should be formed in every district which would exclusively deal with problems of women.

Fast track courts must be established so that justice is given as early as possible.

Some NGO should start Rape Crisis Centre where victim can approach by calling a toll-free number or physically visiting the local centres. Such centre should play a vital role in supporting rape victims to cope up with the psychological trauma and also guide them to obtain legal remedy.