

Systematic Review of Association Between Rape Myth Acceptance and Media

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Abstract

Background: Rape myths are false beliefs of an individual with regards to rape, rapists and the victims which can be categorized as prejudicial and stereotyped; rape myth acceptance refers the level or extend to which an individual believes in them. **Aim:** The purpose of this study was to review researches on the impact of media: cinema, internet, web media, print media etc. on prevalence of rape myth acceptance in individuals. **Method:** Total of 23 out of 48 researches were considered from over a period of 10 years. **Conclusion:** There is significant impact of various modes of media on increasing level of rape myth acceptance in individuals. **Recommendation:** Further researches can focus on influence of social media on rape myth acceptance.

Keywords: rape culture, rape myth acceptance, rape myths, media

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I. INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence is one of the most common crimes committed in the modern times. It is a wider term inclusive of rape, sexual harassment, sex trafficking, unwanted touch, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy etc. It is a gender neutral crime. Rape can be defined as unwanted and non-consensual penetration of vagina, anus or mouth of an individual.

Rape culture refers to a surrounding where act of rape and sexual assault are normalized in the society and media. There are various beliefs regarding the act of rape, the rape victim and the perpetrator. Rape myths are false beliefs that an individual has with regards to rape, which are usually prejudicial, stereotyped, misinformed and based on lack of knowledge as well as awareness. Rape myth acceptance is a term which represents the level to which an individual agrees with these rape myths. Common rape myths include "she wanted it", "she lied", "she asked for it", "it wasn't really rape", "rape is a trivial event", "rape is deviant", "he didn't mean to".

Many Indian political leaders and well known celebrities have been quoted in print media and news reports stating that the victims are to be blamed for getting raped because of their outfit or because they were outside the safety of their homes at night. The statements where the words normalise, ignore and encourage the presence of rape culture include "She was asking for it" and "Boys will be boys, they commit mistakes", where the female victims are blamed and shamed for getting friendly with males and men are protected and revered for the act. Rape culture is prominent in university environment as well where individuals are referred to as "desirable objects".

According to Burdick(2014), media plays a significant role in shaping attitude of public. Media is a communication tool used to deliver information to the masses. There are various types of media outlets such as print media (newspapers,

magazines), news media, cinema, radio, television and the internet(social media). Social media is the fastest and most used media platform in today's times. Media holds the power over individual mindsets and the viewpoint of the masses.

Over decades, Rape myths have been popularised and normalised as "a fantasy" in the media. Various magazines like The Playboy, cinematic movies in Bollywood and Hollywood, Social media platforms like Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram encourage objectification of women as an advertisement and marketing stint. These type of communication tools have been used all across globe to normalise rape myths and sell rape as fun, enjoyable and even as a form of romantic love rather than a gruesome crime. This glorification of rape have increased prevalence of rape myths acceptance in people. Elmore et. Al(2020) studied perceptions of media portrayals and rape myth acceptance. They found that students who perceived greater similarity between the individuals they know in their lives to the ones in the media report high rape myth acceptance of victim blaming and exoneration of the accused.

Print media and news depict rape culture with publishing of advertisements objectifying women. According to Kettrey(2013), Globally, Playboy magazine is likely to endorse rape myths. In a country like India, cinema(Bollywood, Tollywood) has a wider range of audience in terms of age and gender. Over decades, the world has seen cinema evolve in terms of creativity yet it continues to showcase rape culture with extensive use of derogatory words, item numbers, violence against women and sexist content as a marketing and advertising tactic in order to appeal to the masses. Ramasubramanian S. (2003) found that approximately 70% Hindi movies portray sexual violence as fun. "Stalking and eve teasing" are glorified in movies like

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Ranjhana, Rehna Hai Tere dil me; real life depiction of prevalence of rape myths like “she wanted it”, “she lied”, “she asked for it” have been depicted in movies like Pink, Section 375; Sex trafficking and prostitution are shown in movies like Mardaani; Objectification of women is shown in movies like Grand Masti, Raaz and other adult comedies.

Rape culture has been prominent in social media. May 2020, Instagram scandal involving a group chat namely Bois Locker Room where obscene picture of underaged girls were shared. Instagram handle #boyslockerroom went viral and official police action was taken against the members. Willows E. (2018) explained that social media provides a platform for individuals to come forward and share their experience. Rape culture and rape myth acceptance has increased with help of social media in the recent years as people get a sense of safety and freedom that comes along with anonymity provided by social media. Rape myths prevent victims from coming out and protects perpetrators from realizing their crime and facing the consequences. Various hashtags over the years which have taken over the internet platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in support of the victims such as #metoo, #yesallwomen, #whenIWas, #beenrapedneverreported which stand against rape, a heinous crime. Similarly, there are various hashtags which encouraged the widespread of rape myths as a reality for cover up of the crime and increased rape myth acceptance such as #ShePersisted, #NastyWomen, #Notallmen and #HimToo.

The following paper is a systematic review of researches in order to establish a relationship between rape myth acceptance and media.

II. METHODS

Data identification: Key words focused for the search were “rape myth acceptance in media”, “rape myths in media”, “rape myths in Indian media”.

Data collection: The literature consisted of researches, articles and dissertation thesis published in various peer-reviewed journals from electronic databases of sources like PubMed, Sage Publications, Taylor and Francis Publications, Scopus, Index Copernicus International, APA Psych, Shodhganga, SpringerLink. The researches from over a period of 10 years (2010 to 2020) were collected.

Data analysis: Duplicates, review studies and studies without systematic data were not included. The abstracts and full researches relevant to this paper were analyzed. The data in the present study is from previous researches which analyze primary data, collected via quantitative and/or qualitative techniques. Out of a total of 48 researches, only 23 researches fit the inclusion criteria.

Sources of 23 researches included in this study:

- Sage Publications- 9 studies
- Taylor and Francis Publications- 7 studies
- SpringerLink- 1 study
- Elsevier- 2 studies
- PsychAPA- 3 studies
- Shodhganga- 1 study

The researches taken into account were categorized on the basis of sample data they considered during conduction of the study:

- Print media such as newspaper articles and magazines;
- Entertainment sources such as TV shows and cinema;
- Internet sources such as pornography and video games
- Social media such as Facebook, Twitter etc.

III. RESULTS

Preferred Reporting for Systematic Review and Meta Analyses (PRISMA) was applied during the identification process of the literature. A total of 111 studies from past 10 years i.e. 2010-2020 on “Rape myths”, “rape myth acceptance”, “sexual assault”, “rape culture and media” from various peer-reviewed journals from electronic databases of PubMed, Sage Publications, Taylor and Francis Publications, Scopus, APA PsychNet, Shodhganga, were collected. After removing the duplicates and review papers, a total of 48 studies were found on “rape myth acceptance in media”, “rape myths in media”, “rape myths in Indian media”. Out of these, only 23 studies were included in the present study as they assessed the impact of media on rape myth acceptance in individuals.

Table no.1 Characteristics of various researches included in the study

S.No.	Authors	Variables	Media	Results
1.	Elmore, K. C., Scull, T. M., Malik, C. V., & Kuipersmidt, J. B. (2020)	media; rape myths; sexual assault.	Entertainment	The study found that students who perceived similarity between their <u>knowns</u> and celebrities report high rape myth acceptance with regards to victim-blaming
2.	Merken, S., & James, V. (2020)	Media Accounts, Rape Myths, “Women’s” Networks	Entertainment	The study identified 6 rape myths in the shows which distorted social construct of “real” rape.
3.	Vangel, L., Eggermont, S., & Vandenbosch, L. (2020).	Adolescence; Gender roles; Music television; Online pornography; Rape myths	Entertainment, Internet	The study found that adolescents with increased indulgence in Music videos of sexual nature and pornography were more like to conform to sexist gender roles and more accepting of rape myths
4.	Hust, S. J., Rodgers, K. B., Ebreo, S., & Stefani, W. (2019)	intervention; media and violence; sexual assault; sexual coercion	Print media	Study found that rape myth acceptance was positively associated with intention to sexually coerce, wherein, exposure to men’s magazines with scripts connecting sexual prowess to masculinity, was associated with intention to sexually coerce as well.
5.	Maes, C., Schreurs, L., van Oosten, J., & Vandenbosch, L. (2019)	=Metoo; Adolescence; Objectification; Rape Myth Acceptance; Sexually Explicit Internet Material; Social Media	Internet	Study found that exposure to sexually explicit internet material in adolescents led to development of sexist beliefs and acceptance of rape myths which created a resistance towards #metoo movement.
6.	Seabrook, R. C., Ward, L. M., & Giaccardi, S. (2019).	Reality TV, Sports TV, Porn, rape myth acceptance	Entertainment, Internet	Consumption of reality TV, sports programming, and pornography was each associated with greater acceptance of objectification of women, which in turn was associated with greater rape myth acceptance and more frequent acts of sexual deception.
7.	Beck, V., & Rose, C. (2018).	media and violence; sexual assault; violence exposure.	Internet	Findings indicated decrease in rape myth acceptance for experimental group i.e. the group exposed to sexual objectification and violence against females, over time

8.	Stubbs-Richardson, M., Rader, N. E., & Cosby, A. G. (2018).	rape myths, sexual assault, social media, victim blame, feminism, digital activism, rape culture, rape	Social media	The research demonstrates that rape culture is an aspect of social media and that data about rape culture can be readily accessed and studied
9.	Custers & McNallie (2017)	rape; rape myths; sexism; sexual objectification; sexual violence; sports; television.	Entertainment	TV sports was indirectly and positively associated with rape myth acceptance. These results suggest that sports programming contributes to the perpetuation of rape myths in society.
10.	Li, J. Y., Kim, S. H., & O'Boyle, J. (2017).	Media, rape myth acceptance	Print media	Results indicated that reading newspaper stories about campus sexual assault might contribute to college students' victim blaming. Among other media channels examined, social media were found to be highly correlated with students' engagement with the issue.
11.	Romero-Sánchez, M., Toro-García, V., Horvath, M., & Megías, J. L. (2017).	lads' mags; rape myths; rape provicity; sexualization of the media.	Print media	The present study found high rape myth acceptance in the group exposed to sexualized lad's magazines as opposed to the group exposed to neutral magazine
12.	Sacks, M., Ackerman, A. R., & Shlosberg, A. (2018).	Rape myths, content analysis, news media, sexual assault	Entertainment	Analysis revealed that local media's reporting on sexual assault might indirectly reinforce some of the commonly known rape myths
13.	Fox, J., & Potocki, B. (2016).	ambivalent sexism; cultivation; interpersonal aggression; rape myth acceptance; video games.	Internet	Finding suggested presence of relationship between rape myth acceptance and media consumption (video games) through interpersonal aggression and hostile sexism
14.	Zaleski, K. L., Gundersen, K. K., Baes, J., Estupinian, E., & Vergara, A. (2016).	Gender Social media Discrimination Rape Culture Sexual assault	Print media	Notable findings were found in the amount of victim blaming statements made in the comments responding to articles (25.8 percent) and perpetrator support comments were found responding to every article collected, except for one.
15.	Hust, S. J., Marrett, E. G., Lei, M., Ren, C., & Ren, W. (2015).	Law and Order franchise, CSI, NCIS, rape myth acceptance, sexual consent and negotiation, college students	Entertainment	Finding indicated exposure to different content of these programs may result in different beliefs regarding rape myths, sexual consent and negotiation in college students
16.	Vance, K., Sutter, M., Perrin, P. B., & Heesacker, M. (2015).	advertisements, assault, gender, undergraduate students	Entertainment	Results indicated that although viewing sexually objectified women in advertising did not increase any of the dependent variables for individuals in the experimental conditions compared to the control condition, there was a main effect of sex for several dependent measures, as well as a full mediation of moral disengagement and rape likelihood by rape myth acceptance in male participants.
17.	Kettrey H. H. (2013).	Playboy; male gaze; rape myths.	Print media	Results indicate that Playboy (a) portrays rape as a gender-neutral issue, ignoring patriarchal roots of sexual violence against women, and (b) promulgates ambiguous discourse, which is equally likely to endorse and refute rape myths.
18.	Beck, V. S., Boys, S., Rose, C., & Beck, E. (2012).	Rape myth acceptance, video games, negative attitude towards women, violence against women	Internet	Results indicated that video games which sexually objectified women significantly increased rape myth acceptance in males
19.	Burgess, M. C. R., & Burpo, S. (2012).	Sexualized music video, rape myths	Entertainment	The high sexualized/ objectified music video had a greater effect on males' perceptions, decreasing their judgments of guilt and empathy for the victim. Additionally, the females in the high sexualized/ objectified condition were more likely to rate the female as responsible for the date rape.

20.	Sprinkle, E. L., End, C. M., & Bretz, M. N. (2012).	Sexually degrading music videos, male aggression, endorsement of rape myths, sexual stereotype	Internet	The null findings challenge the many corporate and governmental restrictions placed on sexual content in the media over concern for harmful effects
21.	Kahlor, L., & Eastin, M. S. (2011).	TV, rape myth acceptance	Entertainment	The results suggest that general television consumption is related significantly to first- and second-order rape myth beliefs among men and women. Gender was a significant predictor of rape beliefs above and beyond the contributions of television viewing and other individual- and micro-level variables.
22.	Foubert, J. D., Brosi, M. W., & Bannion, R. S. (2011).	Pornography, rape myth acceptance, bystander intervention, sexual assault	Internet	Results showed that men who view pornography are more likely to believe rape myths.
23.	Pandey, S. C. (2010)	Sex, violence, rape myths, hindi films	Entertainment	The findings suggest that only rape and eroticized murder might be considered crimes by the audiences, but that eve-teasing, sexual harassment, and domestic violence may be socially acceptable sexual behaviors

IV. DISCUSSION

Rape Culture refers to an environment where rape is prevalent and sexual violence is normalised in society and media. Rape culture is fuelled by media in terms of misogynist songs, objectification of women in pop culture, glamorisation of assault through movies. Comical intake on rape for laughs trivialises the trauma and normalises rape culture.

The findings of the study are discussed on the basis of results:

1.) Print media such as newspaper articles and magazines:

Print media is one of the oldest methods of communicating to the masses. It includes newspapers, magazines, books, grimoires, pamphlets, advertisement boards etc. Print media and news depict rape culture with publishing of advertisements objectifying women. According to Kettrey (2013), Globally, Playboy magazines are more likely to endorse rape myths than neutral magazines.

Li, J. Y. et. Al. (2017), Romero-Sánchez, M. et. Al. (2017), Schwark S. (2017), Zaleski, K. L. et. Al. (2016), Kettrey H. H. (2013), studied the impact of print media on rape myth acceptance. The results indicate that sexually depicted content of ads and pictures endorses and normalizes sexual objectification of women. Therefore, encouraging acceptance of rape myths in wide range of population.

2.) Entertainment sources such as TV shows and cinema:

Ramasubramanian S. (2003) found that approximately 70% Hindi movies portray sexual violence as fun. "Stalking and eve teasing" are glorified, depiction of prevalence of rape myths like "she wanted it", "she lied", "she asked for it" in movies is extremely common in order to sell/appeal to a wider audience. In a country like India, cinema (Bollywood, Tollywood) has a wider range of audience in terms of age and gender.

Elmore, K. C. et. Al. (2020), Merken, S., & James, V. (2020), Vangeel, L., Eggermont, S., & Vandenbosch, L. (2020), Seabrook, R. C., Ward, L. M., & Giaccardi,

S. (2019), Custers & McNallie (2017), Sacks, M. (2017), Hust, S. J. et. Al. (2015), Vance, K., et. Al. (2015), Burgess, M. C. R., & Burpo, S. (2012), Kahlor, L., & Eastin, M. S. (2011), Pandey, S.C. (2010), studies impact of TV shows, news channels, sports TV and movies on rape myth acceptance in an individual. The results indicate that these mediums normalize rape to a point where eve-teasing, stalking, objectifying women, cat-calling etc. do not feel like a heinous crime. Therefore, increasing acceptance of rape myths in individuals.

3.) Internet sources such as pornography and video games:

Vangeel, L., Eggermont, S., & Vandenbosch, L. (2020), Maes, C., et. Al.(2019), Seabrook, R. C., Ward, L. M., & Giaccardi, S. (2019), Fox, J., & Potocki, B. (2016).

Beck, V. S. et. Al. (2012), Sprinkle, E. L., End, C. M., & Bretz, M. N. (2012), Foubert, J. D., Brosi, M. W., & Bannon, R. S. (2011), studied impact of pornography/video games on acceptance of rape myths. The results indicate that increased hours of watching pornography increases objectification of women, increase in victim blaming, thus, endorsing rape myths. On the other hand, video games are a conflicted territory, some studies suggest that video games reduce rape myths and acceptance of rape myths, meanwhile, others disagree and suggest that video games display high sexual objectification of women in their depiction of women through their fighting avatars.

4.) Social media such as Facebook, Twitter etc.:

Rape culture has been prominent in social media. May 2020, Instagram scandal involving a group chat namely Bois Locker Room where obscene picture of underage girls were shared. Instagram handle #boyslockerroom went viral and official police action was taken against the members. Willows E. (2018) explained that social media provides a platform for individuals to come forward and share their experience. Stubbs-Richardson, et. Al. (2018) studied impact of social media platforms on rape myth acceptance. The result showed that rape culture is an aspect of social media and that data about rape culture can be readily accessed and studied.

V. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Further study should be conducted to develop a better understanding of the impact of social media on rape myth acceptance to explore the impact of media on implications of acceptance of rape myths in various cultures and various methods which can be implemented in order to reduce rape myth acceptance.

With increase in rape cases reported in India, further research regarding rape myths, rape myth acceptance, their legal implications and ways to decrease rape myth acceptance need to be conducted In India.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that there is significant impact of various modes of media on increasing level of rape myth

acceptance in individuals. Further study should be conducted in order to develop a better understanding of impact of social media on rape myth acceptance and explore the effect of media on implications of acceptance of rape myths in various cultures and various methods which can be implemented in order to reduce rape myth acceptance

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