

Rape Issue: The Level of Perception, Knowledge, Attitude And Acceptance of Rape Myth

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ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, although there are laws against the practice of rape, unfortunately there are at least five rape cases reported in daily basis. This problem not only lies in the hand of victim or the assailants but also to the whole society in Malaysia. This study employed the quantitative study approach to identify the level of knowledge about rape, the attitude towards rape issues, the acceptance of rape myth and the perceptions towards the raping issue. There were 300 undergraduate students involved in this study using convenience sampling technique. 71.3% of the respondents were degree students while 28.7% of the respondents were diploma students. An online survey was created in Google Forms and distributed through social media such as Whatsapp, Messenger, Twitter and Instagram. The findings revealed that the respondents have a high-level perception of the rape issue that is happening in Malaysia. They are aware based on the knowledge of the rape issue, the attitude towards the rape issue, the acceptance of rape myth and their perception towards rape issue.

Keywords: Rape Issue, Perception, Undergraduate, UiTM, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Rape is a serious behavioural problem that causes the victim physical and psychological damage as well as pain, fear, and humiliation. (Islam et. al., 2006). Rape remains a major problem in many parts of the world, despite harsh penalties, including the death penalty in some nations. It is very difficult to prove a case of rape in a court of law. In certain countries, sexual intercourse consent becomes the sole factor in determining whether or not rape has occurred. (Kasinathan & Omar, 2002). Rape is thought to be derived from the Latin word "rapere," which means "to grab." Before admitting that rape has occurred, it is widely assumed that there must be some signs of abuse on the victim. The rapist's use of physical force on the victim or the victim's struggle are likely to produce evidence of abuse. (Nadesan, 1999). This sexual assault is a method of humiliating, belittling, terrifying, and disorderly conduct a woman. Sexual attacks, such as rape, cannot be assumed to be a means for those involved to convey affection, passion, or enjoyment. Women's status in certain cultures is at the bottom, and they are assumed to be of little worth or use. Sexual assault victims, unlike victims of other interpersonal crimes such as robberies or muggings, are especially vulnerable to being blamed for their assault (Bieneck & Krahé, 2011; Gordon & Riger, 2011) and as a result, several academic studies have focused on victim blaming in sexual harassment cases.

Rape is more likely to be committed by a man the woman knows an acquaintance, buddy, classmate, employer, or partner. Intimate partner rape is more common than rape by strangers (Bachman & Saltzman, 1995; Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985; Randall and Haskell, 1995; Russell, 1990) and Women who are or have been married are more likely than strangers to be raped by their partner (Russell, 1990). Despite these facts, many people still have misconceptions about the essence of rape, where and to whom it occurs, and how it affects the survivor. Rape myths are prejudicial, stereotyped, or misleading assumptions about rape, rape victims, and rapists. Burt (1980). Rape myths refer to specific views and values that may lead to continued sexual abuse by transferring responsibility for sexual harassment from offenders to victims. Rape theories, according to Lonsway and Fitzgerald, are "attitudes and views that are generally unfounded but are commonly and persistently maintained, and that serve to refute and defend male sexual violence against women." (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994) Sexual myths and attitudes toward sexual myths can persist, particularly among young people. (Jain et. al., 2011) Common rape misconceptions cited over time include the misconception that the way a woman looks or behaves means that "she begged for it," or that rape happens because men cannot restrain their sexual urges.

Rape happens often, and it wasn't a one-on-one encounter in the bushes that caused it. Millions of women were victims of a horrific crime perpetrated by men they knew and trusted. As a result, it's critical to comprehend sexual assault or rape, as well as the victims, so that victims can be detected early and directed to the appropriate resources. The purpose of this study is to use a quantitative inquiry method to investigate Malaysian attitudes of the rape issue. The goal of this research is to look into the public's understanding of rape, their attitudes toward rape issues, and their acceptance of the rape myth in Malaysia.

In Malaysia, although there is law that against the practice of rape, unfortunately to say that at least five rape cases reported in daily basis with the problem not only lies in the hand of

victim or the assailants but also to the whole society in Malaysia. It depends on the society's mindset on approval of the rape myth by taking part in the rape culture. Sadly, in Malaysia, the society accepting the rape myth that leading to the sexual assaults or sexual violence by blaming the victim's choice of clothes and the emotional reactions. The mindset of society playing the biggest role to help with the rape issue that happening for ages.

Acceptance of rape myths serves as a barometer of problematic behaviours, but also as a predictor of sexual assault perpetration (Abbey et. al., 2001; Koss et. al., 1988; McMahon, 2008). Sexual assault perpetrators and a sizable proportion of the general public subscribe to rape stereotypes that condone and excuse sexual violence, indicating a critical need for education and knowledge about the problem in order to shift societal attitudes that ignore and justify sexual violence against women (Aosved & Long, 2006; McMahon, 2008). While the conduct of sexual assault perpetrators is clearly a problem, the values and behaviours of society, contribute to the problem.

According to Syariah perspective, there are three main reason of the statutory rape law is problematic which is the issue of consent and determination of the age of girl, the rape case usually turns into an alleged rape offence when the girl's parent find out about the pregnancy and the rape on pregnancy as the child would be illegitimate with complex problems and consequences. (Nur Aina & Sayed Sikandar, 2017).

The National Crime Victimization Survey shows that one woman in 6 has survived an attempted or completed rape which has been more frequent than left-wing or alcoholism (Schwartz & Leggett, 1999). Despite their high frequency, at least half of these incidents go unreported, and of those that are registered, less than 6% result in an arrest (Bachman, 1998). Due to the extreme disparity in frequency and police reaction, a substantial amount of research has centred on survivors' views of police attitudes toward sexual harassment.

Addressing these problems through this research will give benefits for Malaysia and contribute to a better understanding of Malaysian perceptions towards rape. Hence, this research aims to measure the level of public knowledge about rape, the attitude towards rape issues, the acceptance of rape myth and the perceptions of Malaysian towards the raping issue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge of rape: Accurate information about sexual assault has been found to protect individuals from believing rape myths and perpetuating sexual crime (Aronowitz et. al., 2012; Maxwell et. al., 2003) The more sexual knowledge people have, including understanding of the laws, the fewer rape prosecutions there will be. These young men have studied rape and have seen through the myths and misunderstandings of rape. They are less likely to report sexual assault instances.

One study indicated that some rape survivors were unsure about the concept of rape and that their encounters were not recognised as an abuse. A similar study has shown that women who are forced to sexually interact with friends are less likely than strangers to describe their encounters as rape. Research by Muzdalifat & Abied (2014) found that approximately 58 percent of people are poorly informed about sexual violence and 64 percent are in favour of sexual violence. In general, cases of rape have proven to be enormous for children, women and

even men, and their full impact is difficult to quantify because people seldom want to be linked to their situation, which makes efficient data collection difficult.

Attitude towards rape: Attitudes have an impact on how violence against women is perpetrated, how victims respond to victimisation, and how communities respond to violence against women. Community outreach programs aiming at reducing violence against women have placed a heavy emphasis on attitudes. Attitudes regarding rape are critical for understanding how individuals react or behave toward both victims and perpetrators of rape. These attitudes are also determined by the victim's blame, psychological effect reduction, the perpetrator's rationalization, and the both perpetrator and victim support. The attitude toward rape appears to be linked to old gender-based stereotypes, particularly those about sexual behavior: women are not expected to demonstrate sexual desire and are perceived as a sign of rejection, but males are encouraged to do the same. (Acoc & Ireland, 1983; Anderson et. al., 1997; Burt, 1980; Check & Malamoud, 1983; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995; Willis, 1992). In these instances, women are viewed as sex objects who serve to satisfy men's desires, to the point where in-role sexual coercion is considered natural and appropriate in certain circumstances. (Check & Malamuth, 1983). This tolerance of rape has some very negative effects on the survivor, as she is more likely to blame herself for the attack which then affects her recovery.

Acceptance of rape myth: Rape myths are a collection of false beliefs about rape that blame the victim rather than the perpetrator. Some commonly held myths and misconceptions include the following: some girls encourage rape simply by the way they dress, rape happens of uncontrollable male sex urges, rapists can be easily identified by one 's appearance and personality, and no one should be raped against their own will. There's some myth stating that rape is provoked by a female without they knowing it. The assumption that people regard rape victims and perpetrators differently has made a huge impact on how people see criminal activity. encouraging self-blame as a strategy, as there is no way for them to control the male's behaviour and hence there is no way for them to have avoided provoking it (Carmody, 1984). The existence of this misconception has also affected the criminal justice system's approach.

There are other prevalent rape myths concerning the type of rape that are prominent. The misconceptions that many people believe are associated with male sexuality include the supposed incapacity of males to control themselves when aroused. Because rape is an act of violence that these offenders use as a weapon, this is a non-sexual crime (Carmody,1984). The notion that a victim must show signs of physical resistance in order to be raped is not accurate. This is because in order for a rape to occur, the victim must first fight off the attacker, and regrettably, this myth is accepted by sectors of the criminal justice system.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed the quantitative study approach to identify the level of perception towards rape issue in Malaysia among undergraduate male students. 300 undergraduate students

involved in this study using convenience sampling technique. An online survey was created in Google Forms and distributed through social media such as Whatsapp Messenger, Twitter and Instagram (Ridzuan, Ridzuan and Ridzuan, 2018). A self-developed questionnaire was designed and formulated according to the research objectives. The questionnaire divided into 5 parts, consisting of demographic profile, knowledge of rape, attitude towards rape, acceptance of rape myth and perception towards the rape issue. All questions except for demographic section were developed in Likert scale of 1 to 5 from strongly disagree to strongly agree. All of the data were used and analysed by using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 26.0.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of respondents. Majority of respondents are single (91%) while the rest are married (9%). 71.3 percent of them enrolled for degree program while another 28.7 percent enrolled for diploma program. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of respondents stay in urban area while the rest stay in rural area.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of respondents' demographic profile

Demographic profile	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Marital Status	Single	273	91%
	Married	27	9%
Education Level	Diploma	86	28.7%
	Degree	214	71.3%
Origin	Urban area	224	74.7%
	Rural area	76	25.3%
Total		300	100

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for knowledge, attitude, acceptance, and perception of respondents towards rape issue.

Knowledge of rape

On average, the respondents can differentiate between the sexual consent and sexual assault (M=4.64) and aware with the rape issue that is happening in Malaysia (M=4.56). The respondents aware that a person who is underage have sex with consent also can be charge as rape (M=4.30). Majority of the respondents also know that if the husband force wife to have sex, it is considered as rape (M=4.22). Lastly, they agree that it is only considered rape if there is a penetration involve (M=3.95).

Attitude towards rape

The respondents averagely think that some of rape cases are not reported to police because of the family pride (M=4.52) as they agree some men considered women as sexual objects whose function is to satisfy men's demands (M=4.32). The respondents strongly oppose that most of the victim must wearing something that attract them to get rape (M=2.72) and they disagree

that the rapists only do it to person who show a sexual interest to them. (M=2.64). Lastly, the respondents disagree that victims should not publicize the rapist identity (M=2.10).

Acceptance of rape myth

On average, they disagree that men are incapable of controlling their lust (M=3.43) and that women should not wear revealing clothes (M=3.05). They also agree that victims should have visible injuries that show they were being rape (M=2.70) and agree that rapist are mentally ill, so they are not accountable for their acts (M=2.45). And lastly, respondents disagree that when a woman says "no," she is actually saying "yes" (M=2.34).

Perception toward the rape issue

The respondents averagely believe that people need to acknowledge that rape issues can be a threat to our society (M=4.69) and all related parties need to find best solutions to avoid these cases becoming more serious (M=4.61). They also suggest that society needs to comprehend that rape is never the victims' fault because no one deserve to be rape (M=4.61), everyone should know about sexual education to reduce rape issues (M=4.59) and they believe that rapists are to be blamed for all the rape cases. (M=4.54).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of each item in variables

Variables	Mean	SD
B. Knowledge of Rape		
B1. I am aware with the rape issue that is happening in Malaysia.	4.56	0.64
B2. I can differentiate between the sexual consent and sexual assault.	4.64	0.66
B3. I think it's only considered rape if there is a penetration involve.	3.95	1.27
B4. I know that if the husband force wife to have sex it considered as rape.	4.22	0.98
B5. I know that a person who is underage have sex with consent also can be charge as rape	4.30	0.98
C. Attitude towards rape		
C1. I think some of rape cases are not reported to police because of the family pride.	4.52	0.75
C2. I think most of the victim must wearing something that attract them to get rape.	2.72	1.64
C3. I think some men consider women as sexual objects whose function is to satisfy men's demands.	4.32	0.95
C4. I think the rapist only does it to people who show a sexual interest in them.	2.64	1.59
C5. The victim should not publicize the rapist identity.	2.10	1.55
D. Acceptance of rape myth		
D1. When a woman says "no," she is actually saying "yes".	2.34	1.45
D2. Men are incapable of controlling their lust.	3.43	1.39
D3. Rapists are mentally ill, so they are not accountable for their acts.	2.45	1.6
D4. Women should not wear revealing clothes.	3.05	1.58
D5. Victims should have visible injuries that show they were being rape.	2.70	1.51
E. Perception towards the rape issue		

E1. All related parties need to find best solutions to avoid these cases becoming more serious.	4.61	0.63
E2. Everyone should know about sexual education to reduce rape issues.	4.59	0.73
E3. People need to acknowledge that rape issues can be a threat to our society.	4.69	0.57
E4. I believe that rapists are to be blamed for all the rape cases.	4.54	0.84
E5. Society needs to comprehend that rape is never the victims' fault because no one deserve to be rape.	4.61	0.74

CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that the respondents have a high-level perception of the rape issue that is happening in Malaysia. They are aware based on the knowledge of the rape issue, the attitude towards the rape issue, the acceptance of rape myth and their perception towards rape issue.

In terms of future recommendations, everyone must take the responsibility together to decrease the number of rape issue that is happening in Malaysia, implement the sex education in school level and university level to increase the knowledge about rape or sexual assault and to always be aware with the surrounding so we can be ready in protecting the victims. The knowledge of the rape issue has been found to protect individuals from believing rape myths and perpetuating sexual crime (Aronkowitz et. al., 2012; Maxwell et. al., 2003). There will be fewer rape cases if people have better sexual awareness including an understanding of the implementation of rules and regulations of the sexual assault in Malaysia.

Other than that, the attitude towards the rape issue also will influence how the sexual assault is perpetuated, how sufferers react to the sexual assault and how societies react to sexual assault. The perception of rape seems to be tied with the gender stereotypes, particularly those about sexual behaviour like women are not supposed to express sexual desire whereas men are encouraged to do so. Attitudes have been emphasised heavily in community engagement activities aimed at preventing the increasing of the rape issue. Studying how people respond or act toward both perpetrators and victims of rape requires an understanding of how people feel about rape.

Thus, the acceptance of rape myth or the false belief about the rape issues that has been happening in Malaysia for decades. Some ladies encourage rape merely by the clothes they wear, rape occurs as a result of excessive male sex drives, perpetrators can be easily spotted by one's look and demeanour, and nobody should be assaulted against their will, to name a few prevalent myths and misconceptions. The criminal justice system's stance has been influenced by the presence of this misunderstanding and it needs to be fixed immediately by spreading awareness through various types of campaigns.

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