

SEXUAL ASSAULT ON WOMEN : INDIAN SCENARIO



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Introduction

Sexual assault is a heinous crime. It ranges from molestation to rape and even may follow murder. The trauma resulting from sexual assault has enormous impact on the physical as well as psychological well-being of the individuals and also on the family concerned. Whatever the number of cases of sexual assault reported, are just tip of the ice berg and most cases go unreported or unnoticed [1]. Social stigma, unawareness, fear and many more contextual factors attribute to the under-reporting of rape in India [1]. As per the United Nations statistics (2013), the highest rate of rape was reported in an African country Lesotho (91.6 per 100,000 population) followed by Trinidad and Tobago (58.4 per 100,000 population) and the lowest rate was reported in Egypt (0.1 per 100,000 population [1, 2]. Though, India reports a relatively lower rape rate (<2 per 100,000 population), being a heavily populated country, the total number of rape cases per year in India is quite high [1]. Gradually, the reporting of cases of rape is increasing in India

[1]. This review tries to highlight the sexual crime scene in India.

Sexual assault

Sexual assault is the resultant to deviant sexual behavior. The victim can be any one irrespective of gender, age, race and religion. Many factors increase the vulnerability to sexual assault, which may be broadly categorized as –

- I. Victim specific vulnerability factors
- II. Perpetrator specific vulnerability factors
- III. Context specific vulnerability factors

Victim specific vulnerability factors are – female gender, extreme age groups, psychiatric illness, drug intoxicated state, physical disability etc. The major reason is the male dominant society, where females, population of extremes of ages and people with disability, can be easily overpowered. An individual in intoxicated state can be easily overpowered and can be indulged in sexual activity due to altered mental state. Perpetrator specific factors like – antisocial personality, substance use, psychiatric illness also increases the vulnerability for sexual assault.

Revenge, socio-cultural factors, poverty, loneliness are some of the contextual factors which may increase the vulnerability for sexual assault.

Current scenario in India

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), under the Ministry of Home Affairs of Government of India, records the crime statistics and updates the crime statistics in India every year. As per NCRB records, in the year 2013, a total of 33,707 cases of rape has been reported, with a conviction rate of 27.1% [3]. So far the crimes against women are concerned, in the year 2013, more than 70,000 cases of assault on women with an intention to outrage her modesty has been reported with an conviction

rate of 25.7% [3]. The low conviction rates are quite shocking and raises question against the social security as well as legal protection system of our country. As per the latest statistical data from NCRB, in the year 2013, a total of 4335 cases of rape have been reported in Madhya Pradesh, which is found to be the national highest figure among the states and Union Territories of India [4]. Madhya Pradesh, have also reported highest number of reported cases of assault on women with an intention to outrage her modesty in the year 2013 [4].

In 2013, a total of 12,363 cases of rape in children have been reported in India, with maximum reported cases in Madhya Pradesh followed by Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh [4].

The NRCB-2013 data says that, in more than 94% of cases of rape, the perpetrators were known to the victims [4]. The NRCB-2013 statistics also reports about the highest percentage of filing of charge-sheet for rape (more than 98%) among all registered crimes against children [4]. In India, in every 15 minutes a case of rape is being reported [4]. Between 1971 to 2013, there is 1255.3% increase in incidences of rape in India [4]. Among the victims of rape in the year 2013, 13.1% were below 14 years of age and 26.3% were between 14 to 18 years of age [4]. Among the rape offenders, 33.9% were neighbors of the victims, where as 1.7% were either parents or close family members and 7.3% were relatives of the victims [4]. A study conducted in the Indian national capital, it was found that most victims of rape had peno-vaginal penetration (more than 80%) [1]. In the same study, it was found that 6% survivors of rape were found to be positive in urine pregnancy test [1]. After the brutal gang rape case of Delhi – 2012, there is increased reporting of crime against women. Approximately 25% increase was seen in the statistics of crime against women in 2012 in comparison to the year 2008 [5]. An investigating officer fails to record any information given to him in relation to sexual



assault is punishable with rigorous imprisonment which shall not be less than six months but may extend to two years, and shall also be liable to fine. This may be the possible reason for increased conviction rate [6].

In India, another embarrassing situation is the scarcity of female police personnel (constitutes approximately 6.5% of total police personnel), due to which the victims of sexual assault are forced to give their statements to male police officers breaking the comfort zone of their privacy [5]. Sex-trafficking is common in South Asia, and India is one of the most vulnerable country [7]. Victims of sex-trafficking are victims of sexual abuse as well as physical abuse [7]. In a study, it was found that 45.6% of victims of sex-trafficking had high seroprevalence for HIV [7].

A victim of sexual assault always needs urgent medical attention for treatment of injuries, prevention of sexually transmitted disease and psychological support. Hence a physician, no matter where (private / government) she/ he works should treat the victim immediately in a holistic manner and inform the same to the police. Non-treatment of victims of sexual assault is a

punishable offence with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine or with both [6].

In India, media stands as one of the four pillars of democracy. However, the information disseminated to public through the media sounds very awkward, if we go through the conflicting way of presenting the news of gang-rape case, New Delhi, 2012 [8]. Media's role is to disseminate accurate information, creating awareness, questioning the fallacies of the system as well as to empower the victims. But the dramatizing presentation to get easy popularity points finger towards cheap journalism.

Conclusion

Sexual crimes against women in India are in an increasing trend which indicates the gross social disharmony in the country. It can be prevented through strict enforcement of law and addressing different vulnerability factors adequately. At the same time, increasing awareness, de-stigmatization, empowerment of women and prompt response to the physical as well as mental health needs of the survivors of sexual assault is highly essential.

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CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND TRAUMATIC SEXUALIZATION



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Introduction

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a major problem across the globe [1]. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines CSA as “the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend and is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared, or else that violate the laws or social taboos of society” [2]. The term CSA includes a range of activities like “intercourse, attempted intercourse, oral-genital contact, fondling of genitals directly or through clothing, exhibitionism or exposing children to adult sexual activity or pornography, and the use of the child for prostitution or pornography”[3]. The issue of CSA is intricate and challenging to study. The estimates vary widely depending on the country under study, the definitions used, the type of CSA studied, the extent of coverage, and the quality of data [1, 4, 5, 6]. However, sexual violence is seen to occur in all ages, in all socioeconomic classes, and nearly in all countries with differences in the magnitude [4].