

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS.

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Sexual assault can be described as any unpleasant physical or sexual contact carried out without consent against another person. As compared to the developing countries, the ratio of rape is greater in developed countries. Prevalence of sexual assault is much greater than on the records owing to lack of legal support and health care service for the victims. Also in Pakistan the prevalence of sexual assault reported is lower than the actual numbers, especially in rural population. **Objective:** We reviewed all the cases and identified the Socio- demographic characteristics of victims. **Method:** This is a retrospective study conducted in the Peoples Medical University Hospital, Nawabshah. During the time period of August 2017 to December 2019, all cases having female sexual assault victims were analyzed. We reviewed all the cases and identified the Socio- demographic characteristics of victims. **Results:** In the time period of August 2017 to December 2019, there were 112 sexual assault cases having female victims were found on record. The ages of patients were in the range of 15-40 years and mean age was found to be 22.4±3.12 years. Age group 15-25 years female was most commonly reported in cases. Among 112 females, 66.9% victims were unmarried and 65% victims belong to lower socioeconomic class. **Conclusion:** Sexual assault has detrimental effects on every aspect of one's life. Studies on prevalence of sexual assault and factors owing to it must be studied all over the country. Awareness amongst rural population should be done to overcome under reporting of sexual assault cases.

Key word: Social, Demographic, Sexual Assault, Victims

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual assault can be described as any unpleasant physical or sexual contact carried out without consent against another person. Sexual consent has now received a lot of importance from educators and forensic experts but its definition varies widely. Consent is the main determinant that whether an assault has occurred or not. Sexual assault in women and children is a serious social and health concern and it has been violation of basic human rights. It has dreadful and depressing long term effects on the victim¹. As compared to the developing countries, the ratio of rape is greater in developed countries. Lesotho, part of South Africa has the highest prevalence of sexual assault with 91.6 per every 100,000 people each year. Every two minutes a single woman is being raped in the United States of America as per the data recorded by USA, Department of Justice². Sexual assault has always been a very sensitive issue in every society, but not every community has its same definition. In many parts of the world marrying off a child to an aged man is not considered sexual assault while in other parts it has been

labeled as a crime. The major determinant of the sexual assault varies according to the law and social beliefs³. Prevalence of sexual assault is much greater than on the records owing to lack of legal support for the victims. The roots of sexual assault can be correlated to the gender inequality in the society, being used as a tool for suppressing women. For this reason The United Nation had come up with a structure called gender based violence which accounts to any act whether physical, psychological or sexual detrimental to women either in public or private⁴. The eighth Millennium Development Goals (MDG) was made to oppose any kind of violence against women. Pakistan is one of those countries signing the MDG but has always been a non-achiever of MDG⁵. Sexual assault victims in Pakistan have never been given legal, psychological and health care support they should have been given. Also in Pakistan the prevalence of sexual assault reported is lower than the actual numbers, especially in rural population⁶. The national crime data report 2013 documented 8.4% women are raped in Pakistan. During 2008- 2013, 10,073 rape cases have been reported in Pakistan with Punjab

having registered 8,806 cases out of these. In Sindh and KPK 722 cases were reported and 295 cases in Islamabad ⁷. Investigation of sexual assault and identifying the culprit is one of the most difficult parts in sexual assault cases. Forensic medicine plays a very crucial role in securing evidence and analysis of specimens obtained. The most common factor owing to low conviction rate is poor medico legal evidence and inappropriate evidence collection ⁸. Healthcare professionals also need to be trained regarding management of sexual assault cases. Majority of the victims are reported to the hospital firstly ⁹. The objective of our study is to determine the frequency of socio demographic characteristics of victims.

METHOD:

This is a retrospective study conducted in the Peoples Medical University Hospital, Nawabshah. Data was collected through

retrospective analysis of data recorded by the department of forensic medicine. During the time period of August 2017 to December 2019, all cases having female sexual assault victims were analyzed. We reviewed all the cases and identified the Socio- demographic characteristics of victims. Data was collected on a predesigned performa. The frequency of socio demographic characteristics and analysis was done using SPSS version 22.

RESULTS

In the time period of August 2017 to December 2019, there were 112 sexual assault cases having female victims were found on record. The ages of patients were in the range of 15-40 years and mean age was found to be 22.4±3.12 years. Table-1 shows the age distribution among the victims. Age group 15-25 years female were most commonly reported in cases and age 36 or above years had the least number of victims.

Table No.1 Age Distribution of victims (n=112)

Age of victim	No.of Patients(n)	Percentage(%)
• 15-25 years	58	51.78%
• 26-35 years	39	34.82%
• ≥ 36 years	15	13.39%

Table-2 shows the frequency of socioeconomic variables of the victim. Among 112 females, 66.9% victims were unmarried and 65% victims belong to lower socioeconomic class.

Table No.2 Socioeconomic variables of victims (n=112)

Socio-economic Variables	No.of Patients(n)	Percentage(%)
Marital Status		
• Unmarried	75	66.96%
• Married	37	33.03%
Occupation		
• Student	20	17.85%
• Working	43	38.39%
• Not working	49	43.75%
Socioeconomic Status		
• Lower class	73	65.17%
• Middle class	38	33.92%
• Upper class	1	0.89%

DISCUSSION

Sexual assault brings out problems in social, psychological and physical health of the victims. In our study majority of the victims belong to lower socioeconomic class and does not have access to better healthcare services and psychological support. The legal system and health care professionals in Pakistan have not

been managing the cases effectively and carrying out investigations. All this have been leading to detrimental effects on a woman’s spiritual and mental health. In a study conducted at JPMC, 70% women also did not report the cases directly to the police and they were informed by the medico legal officer at emergency department JPMC. After these

victims were assessed by senior medical officers at emergency department, final medical report and analysis confirmed sexual assault in 41% of cases only¹⁰. Management of sexual assault must include psychological support in addition to complete medical examination and evidence collection¹¹. The role of forensic science is inevitable and it strengthens the investigation. 81% of officers from Sindh police confirmed that forensic medicine is the main determinant of successful investigation in sexual assault cases¹². Lack of training, proper laboratory equipment and funds is the key factor for constraints in conviction. A combined study of three institutions from Lahore concluded that majority of victims were unmarried. In contrast developing countries don't have much documentation related to marital status as sexual contact could take place without wedlock in the setup¹³. Approximately every research on sexual assault victims in Pakistan has shown Muslim predominance. Low socioeconomic status and sexual assault has been linked in our study supporting previous evidences¹⁴. Researches in Pakistan, India, Malaysia, South Africa and Portugal showed that more than 50% of the victims have been assaulted by someone they already knew¹⁵. Another finding of our study is that rape incidence by strangers increases with age of victims until the age of 25. Sexual assault in children less than 10 years age was done by someone known by the victims¹⁶. The commonest place of offence was the house of the victim or an isolated place with empty neighbor hoods¹⁷. In Pakistan most of the cases are not even reported to the police or nearby hospital due to social factors and stigma related to rape. Evidence was reported that only 30% of the victims had reported to hospital or had any legal help. Khan et al reported that only 36% victims were examined in the initial 72 hour period which is crucial for specimen and evidence collection. In rural areas reporting of such incidences were delayed due to societal pressure and non-availability of services. While in urban areas reporting of assault cases was done in first 6-24 hour time earlier due to increased awareness and better facilities by government¹⁸.

CONCLUSION

Sexual assault has detrimental effects on every aspect of one's life. Studies on prevalence of sexual assault and factors owing to it must be studied all over the country. Awareness amongst rural population should be done to overcome under reporting of sexual assault cases.

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