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Mental Health, Self-Esteem and Coping Among Rape Victims

Abstract

The present study designed to examine the mental health, self esteem and coping among rape victims. Findings of the study indicated a significant main effect of age on mental health (all dimensions), self esteem (personal self esteem and social self esteem) and coping (approach coping and avoidance coping). Where as main effect of education was found to be significant only on coping of rape victims. The interactional effect of education x age was found to be significant only on coping while a non significant interactional effect was found on mental health and self esteem. Results obtained with the help of t-test showed significance of difference between mental health, self esteem and coping of two age group i.e. 11-20 and 21-30 of educated and uneducated rape victims. Victims within the age bracket of 21- 30 yrs were found to be having higher mean score on mental health, self esteem, approach coping as compared to victims within the age range of 11-20 yrs irrespective of their education.

A positive significant correlation was found between mental health and approach coping and a negative significant relation was observed between mental health and avoidance coping among educated and uneducated rape victims. A positive significant correlation was found between personal self esteem and approach coping among educated rape victims where as a negative significant relationship was also found between social self esteem and avoidance coping among

uneducated rape victims. A positive significant correlation was found between mental health and approach coping among subjects within the age group of 11-20 yrs of age where as a negative significant relationship was also found between mental health and personal self esteem among subjects within the age bracket of 21-30 yrs.

Overall discussion with subjects, welfare officers (after-care officers), counselor and social workers of shelter homes, rehabilitation center and NGOs respectively and parents of the victims revealed the following findings: Majority of the rape victims were illiterate or poorly educated and adolescents. Most of them were unmarried and belongs to the lower socioeconomic background. Absence or unavailability of one or both biological parents and known predator (particularly a close family member) were important factors. Majority were the victim of forcible rape. The residence of the victim was the most commonly noted location of sexual assault. Use of physical force, threats and deception were common assault strategies. Physical, psychological and social outcomes were also examined. In few cases rape related pregnancies and injuries were noted down. Pregnancies and injuries were found to be more in adolescent rape victims. The psychological consequences of rape were shock, vulnerability, anxiety, depression, loss of self-image, neurosis, adjustment problems etc. Social consequences of rape were social rejection, family problems, loss of work and wages. Overall findings of the study indicated that mental health, self esteem and coping of adolescents were found to be more vulnerable as compared to other age groups irrespective of their educational level.

