

A MULTICAUSALITY MODEL OF RAPE

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ABSTRACT

Rape as a frequently reported sex crime is studied from different perspectives. There are analyses that involve considerations from male pathology, socio-cultural elements, situational variables and victim's precipitation. An integrated model of multiple causality that takes into account all the diverse views is presented. The important propositions derived from the model are also considered.

Keywords: Typology of Rape Psycho-physiological Forces Socio-cultural Forces, Victim Precipitation, Rape Space Model of Rape

Introduction

Many consider rape as the most heinous and the most atrocious crime after murder and incidences of rape are reported throughout the history of the world. Social scientists from different disciplines have studied the nature and the etiology of rape from different perspectives and a plethora of interpretations are available which are used in theory and practice. In this paper an attempt is made to present an integrated view of rape that unifies the diverse views. The first part treats the general nature of rape, the second part deals with the available theoretical approaches and in the last part an integrated model with different propositions are given.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Latin term "rapio" which means 'to seize' is the root of the word rape, and rape has witnessed a feverish increase in the recent times especially in the Indian context even though rape is frequently reported in the Western countries. Citing authoritative sources, Snelling (1969) states that rape involves lustful, carnal or sexually aggressive knowledge of woman by force and against her will. Rape which can be likened to a beastly behaviour is

generally defined “as the use of force or threat of force to achieve penile-vaginal penetration of a woman without her consent” (Mc Kibbin, et al., 2011) and where the victim is in a state of helplessness and the perpetrator is in a state of physical dominance. Sexual penetration taking place without the consent or against the will is thus rape.

However recent conceptualisations have broadened the nature of rape that differentiates between a “sex” crime (motivated by sexual desire) and a violent crime (motivated by misogyny) (Jones, 1999). The use of force and non-consensual sex constitute the two most important elements of rape and the disconnect between rape as it is committed and sexual abuse as it is criminalised is most evident in the context of sexual abuse of power occurring in professional and institutional relationships (Buchhandler-Raphel, 2011). The point is that sexual abuse of power results in the subordinate’s acquiescence to sexual demands for fear of economic or professional harm (Buchhandler-Raphel,2011), which in other words can also be fashioned as sexual harassment.

Rape can be differentially understood based upon the relationship that exists between the rapist and the victim (Cowan, 2000). Researchers differentiate between open rapes and “hidden rapes” (Cowan, 2000) such that there exist four types of rape: stranger, acquaintance, date and partner rape (Cowan, 2000). Besides the relationship between the rapist and the victim that characterise different types of rape, a crucial aspect to be considered in understanding the nature and dynamics of rape refer to the causative factors that give importance to the male pathology. Sarason and Sarason (1998) categorise rape into three general categories of power rape, anger rape and sadistic rape. In power rape, the intimidation of the victim with threats of physical harm in an exercise of deviant physical power takes place. In anger rape, the actions are motivated by hostility and revenge on women in general. And in sadistic rape, the offender presents a picture of distorted sexuality, aggression and ensuring of the suffering of the victim. Shanahan (1999) considers the two axes of the level of force and the relationship status to depict the rape scenarios.

In other words a typology of rape can be drawn by the consideration of the relationship status between the rapist and the victim and the pathology of the rapist given the fact that the victim is always a victim forced to undergo the trauma.

Figure 1 depicts the different categories of rape. The typology drawn shows four types of rape: barbaric-murderous rape, violent rape, mating rape and traditional rape. Of the commonly used classification of rape, acquaintance, partner and dating rape fall in the mating category of rape.

Unknown	Traditional Rape	Barbaric- Murderous Rape
Relationship		
Status	Mating Rape	Violent Rape
Known		
	Low	High
	Psychopathology	

Fig.1. A Typology of Rape

The barbaric-murderous rape is so called as it results in inflicting severe physical injury on the victim to the point of murder. In murderous rape the aggressor kills the victim in a rage of hostility and murderous instincts; there is no clear demarcation between rape and murder as the aggressor intends to do both in the unleashing of primitive urges that becomes very much characteristic of the psychopathology.

In violent rape, the aggressor does not intend to murder the victim, short of killing it takes a violent form such that the victim suffers physical injury and deep hurts. In some cases, the victim may even enter into a state of coma that is of short duration. The aggressor leaves the victim in a state of utter physical and mental devastation.

Traditional rape is so called because this form of rape that takes place fits well with the traditional notions of rape which essentially involves sexual assault of woman that takes place against her consent. Circumstances are so favourable to the rapist that there is no one in the vicinity which is further ensured by closed-door facilities. Traditional rapes are characterised by the predominant influence of situations and that may become the villain of the act. Forced by circumstances, the male pathology and male dominance take a vicious turn to the point of violating the sexual sanctity of women.

In mating rape of partner, date and acquaintance form, the primary motive is one of sexual intimacy (of course distorted) with the known victim. In this non-consensual act, the male aggressor shows deviant /criminal expressions of physical attachment and love. Given the same circumstances, the male aggressor may not indulge in such acts in the presence of another person which goes on to show that the intimacy developed between the two takes a deviant and non-civilized form in the hands of the male aggressor.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The theories discussed can be generally divided into two groups of macro-sociological and micro- psychological such that the former goes by general and holistic variables that function at the societal level and the latter goes by the individual processes at the psychological level.

The theory of gender inequality is based on the practice of patriarchal societies. This view vehemently proposed by feminist theorists state that in order to maintain the gender differentiation and to assist the superiority of men over women rape is used as a social control activity (Baron and Straus, 1987) and that male dominance justifies rape in dubious ways (Sanday,1996).

According to the theory of exposure to pornography, exposure to images of explicit sexual acts of violent and non-violent nature are to stimulate the individuals to acting out the same in real-life situations. Researchers have found evidences that high levels of exposure to pornographic materials results in increased aggression toward women (Court, 1984, cited by Whatley, 1993) and that choking the mind with images of sexual acts in more than one ways influence the rape proclivity among men. It can be inferred that the unconscious mind that keeps the pornographic materials determine sexual behaviour as it has been found that

unconscious defence processes can influence the cognitive processes(Helfgott,1997).
Beauregard, et al. (2004) and Bhuller, et al. (2013) found a direct relation between
pornography and sexual offenses.

The theory of cultural spillover is postulated by suggesting the spillover effect of
cultural beliefs and practices that justify violence and the use of negative instruments to
achieve stated goals (Baron and Straus, 1987). The culture that accepts aggression, inordinate
materialism and consumerism and that maintains less intolerance of vulgarities and
immodesty fall into to the trap of eliciting and provoking aggressive sexual behaviours.

In the theory of anomie, Baron and Straus (1987) state that social disorganisation,
lawlessness and the absence of social control mechanisms are background factors that result
in the emergence of this antisocial behaviour. Social control mechanisms are generally of two
types: agencies-initiated hard measures and inculcated soft measures. Glorification of
violence in a society in an indirect way condones rape or that such society does not abhor
rape (Sandy, 1993).

According to the socio-economic theory, low socio-economic status has been found to
be another predictor of rape incidences in a society (Sandy, 1996). Socioeconomic
inequalities, unequal distribution of wealth and varying standards of life account for rape
incidences. The perceived and actual differences in income distribution and rigid social
divisions generate resentment among the less privileged leading to acts of violence including
targeting of women. Economic deprivations and high incidences of divorce rate in the
community have been found to be viable predictors of rape (Smith and Bennett, 1985).
Inclusive social feminist theory explains rape by resorting to the socio-economic status view
suggested by Marxists criminologists and radical feminist hypotheses of gender inequality
(Martin, et al. 2006).

The evolutionary theory states that rape is motivated by a desire for sex in a
reproductive context rather than by a desire for violence. The range of evidences offered to
support this position includes “observations of forced copulation in non-human species, rape
occurrences in all known cultures and contextual variances in rapes frequency” (Zeedyk,
2007). The theory further states that males and females have fundamentally different
characteristics of ‘penetration’ and ‘receptacles’ and although socially unacceptable and

horrendous for victims is evolutionarily adaptive and it is an innate predisposition among males (Peterson, 2004). The theory has attracted much criticism and disdain from researchers.

Micro psychological theories explain rape incidences using the individual level processes of psychological nature.

In an instinct theory of rape, instincts are natural primitive urges that human beings share with animals and sex and aggression are two primary urges that differ among individuals leading to the differentiation rapists and non-rapists. The expression of uncontrolled and unpolished instincts turns human beings into beasts. The predominance of primitive urges is a potent variable of high significance in explaining rape behaviour. Ellis (1991) posits that rape is motivated by the unlearned drives (instincts) of sex and aggression or the drive to control and possess. Lay theories of rape consider aggression as the major cause of rape (Hardbridge and Furnham, 1991).

In the theory of deviant cognitive processing rapists are found to be having criminogenic cognitions (Mandracchia and Morgan, 2012). The fact is that rapists can be differentiated from non-rapists on the basis of their criminal thinking styles. It has also been found that sexual offenders hold offense-supportive implicit theories or schemata. The presence of organised rape cognitions, that is rape schemata, is a valid predictor of rape incidences. Rape supportive or pleasure seeking or rape myth acceptance schemata can further trigger sexually coercive behaviour.

A person's own way of responding and relating with the environment constitute his/her personality and along with the fundamental similarities between individuals, there are also fundamental differences that characterise the personality. In the theory of personality disorganisation, maladaptive and inflexible ways of interpersonal interaction and relation with the environment characterise personality (Sarason and Sarason, 1998). According to Sarason and Sarason (1998), major personality disorders identified and which may result in sexual offences include paranoid (tense, suspicious holds grudges), schizoid (socially isolated with restricted emotional expression), schizotypal (peculiarities of thought, appearance and behaviour that are disconcerting to others; emotionally detached) and antisocial personality.

According to the theory of emotional disorders negative affect characterise the emotional life of rapists (Carvalho and Nobre, 2012). Individuals with depressive disorders,

manic episodes and individuals with substance-induced mood disorders (Sarason and Sarason, 1998) are more vulnerable to committing rape and other sex-related offences.

The theory of substance-related disorders state that recurrent substance use results in the development of disorders that predispose and precipitate sexual crimes. Substance-use disorders stem from the use and abuse of alcohol, cocaine and heroin that result in disordered thinking, feeling and behaviour. Substance-dependence and substance abuse are two sub-groups of substance-disorders that debilitate the cognitive, behavioural and social life of the drug addict. Studies conducted with men incarcerated in prison for sex crimes reveal that they were substance-involved at the time of the crime (Peugh and Belenko, 2001). Individuals who are addicted to drugs or under the influence of drugs/alcohol show greater proclivity to sex crimes.

A biological theory concentrates on analysing the malfunctions of the brain, the glandular system and chromosomal aberrations. Researchers are trying to find out the chromosomal aberrations that increases the probability of committing rape (for e.g. Ellis, 1994). Neurohormonal dysfunctions are also cited to be a major factor predisposing individuals to commit rape (Ellis, 1994).

The different theories diverge considerably in the extent to which they view cultural, social, contextual, developmental, personality and physiological factors as central to an explanation of rape incidences. The different strands of theory suggested can be categorised into two major divisions that emphasise rape as a form of sexual psychopathy (Cowan, 2000) or rape as an expression of socio-cultural factors in which rape is traced to traditional sex roles and misogynous forces within society (Malamuth,1981).

An integrated model is to take into account the comprehensive etiological dynamics of rape incidences across the society .This model must include all the causes of rape which can have independent and interactional influences in the incidences of rape in varying degrees. In an independent relation, the predominant influence of a single factor like the abnormal functioning of certain biological systems can result in increased rape proclivity among men. In its interactional influence, for example, biological factors are activated in a socio-cultural setting that abets rape in seen and unseen ways.

A GENERAL MODEL OF RAPE

In suggesting a general model of rape four groups of causative forces are found to be predisposing and precipitating the act of rape, Fig.2. The four-level analysis is assumed to be

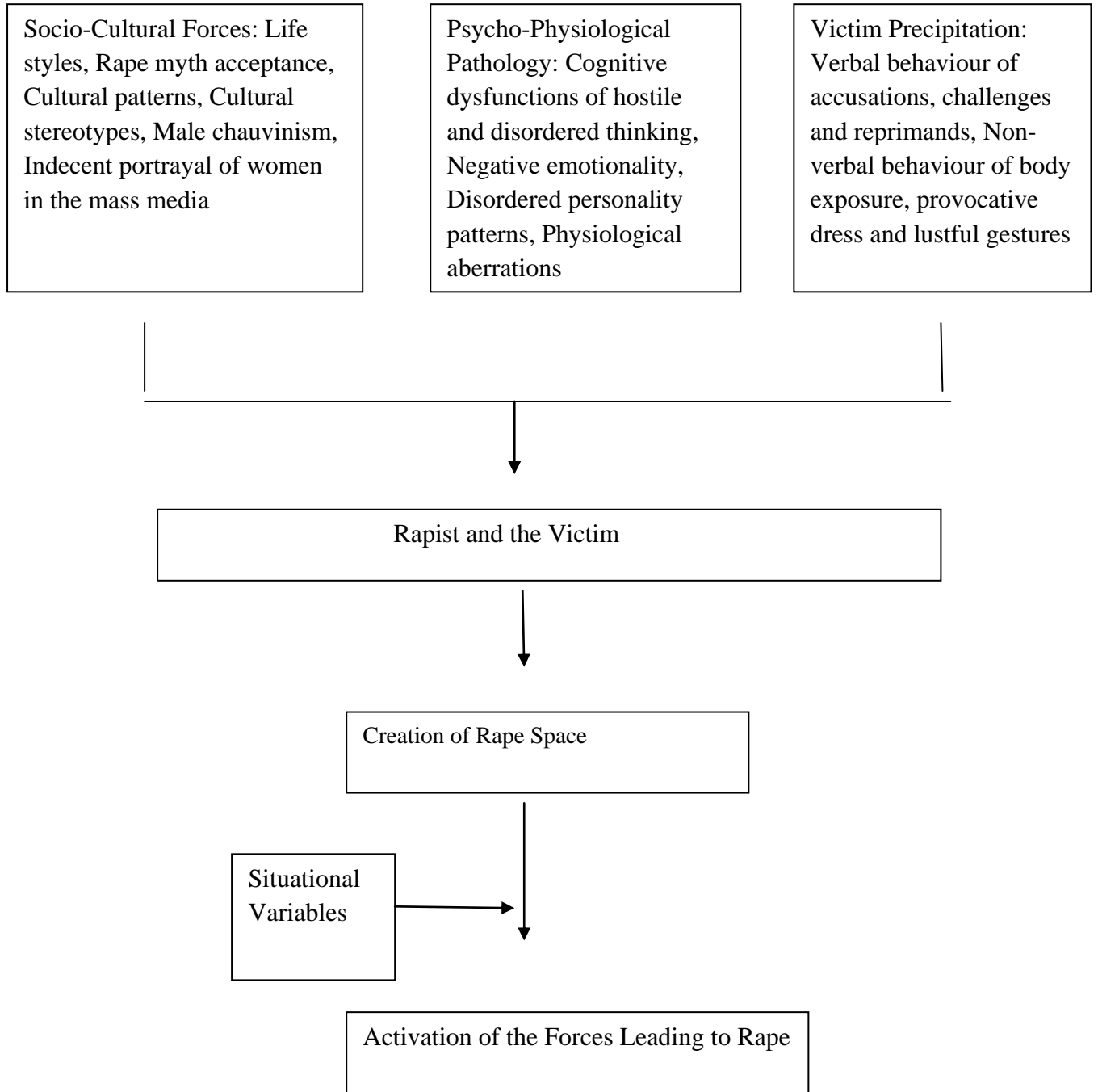


Fig.2. A General Model of Rape permeating the entire dynamics of rape, that it can be characterised from a broad level to a narrow level that pinpoints general and specific causes leading to the occurrence of rape.

Psycho-physiological Pathology

In an analysis of motivation, the predominant and the overwhelming motive has been found to be sexual aggression among rapists (Nunes, et.al.2013). Even though a distinction is made between sexual motivation and aggressive motivation (Heilbrun,1980), in a broader analysis of motivation they can be treated as intertwined and interacting because both are motives of uncontrollable nature in their primitive form. And both feeds on each other resulting in the development of negative tendencies in the individual.

The distorted desire to exert power over women has been found to be a motivating factor among rapists (Chiroo, et al., 2004). In this deviant and negative expression of power, there clearly emerges the attacking offender and the weak victim who is subjugated by strength and macho behaviour (Zaitchik and Mosher). Zaitchik and Mosher (1993) state that macho personality constellation involves acting violently toward men and acting callously toward women and going after dangerous situations.

Psychopathic considerations enter in the etiological analysis of rape (Looman, et al. 2013). It has been found that psychopathy has got much to do with rape (Gretton, et al., 2001) than any other factor in the explanation of rape and rapist behaviour. Porter et al.(2000) have empirically shown a category of sexual psychopaths characterised by psychopathic sexual offences and deviances.

Disintegration of personality expressed in antisocial conduct and callous personality are causative factors of rape (Porter, etal.2007). In a study using Big Five Personality Factors, Voller and Long (2010) found that rape perpetrators show lower levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness, extraversion, tender mindedness, warmth, positive emotions, altruism, competence and dutifulness and higher levels of vulnerability.

Disordered and distorted cognitions largely account for rape incidences. In a study Beauregard et al. (2007) identified different hunting process scripts among serial sex offenders. This included the coercive script of the home-intrusion rape track, and the outdoor

rape track, the manipulative script of the sophisticated rape track and the family infiltrator rape track and the non-persuasive script of direct action rape track. Individuals with disordered criminal thinking (Walters, etal.2009; Ragatz, etal.2012) and criminogenic cognitions (Mandrachia and Morgan, 2012) are likely to commit sexual crimes than individuals with less criminal thinking. In elaborating upon criminogenic cognitions that relates it with distorted scripts, the existence of rape schemata may be postulated. Rape schemata imply the existence of developed cognitive structures among rapist which actually result in the occurrence of rape. These are organised cognitions of committing rape acts.

Socio-Cultural Analysis

Socio-cultural practices and life styles change and establish behavioural patterns of individuals, groups and society at large. Those enduring norms, beliefs and life styles play a role in setting the background for the emergence of new behaviour patterns. Not only positive behaviour patterns but also negative behaviours are influenced by such background factors and rape is not an exception to this. The direct and indirect effect of such factors is a well-established fact.

Patriarchal hegemony (Patton and Snyder-Yuly, 2007) as against equality of sexes is found to be a factor that subjugates women to a lower position resulting in sexual objectification (Beck, etal.2012). Rape is a weapon used by patriarchal and capitalist societies to make women subservient to men (Whatley, 2002). In patriarchal societies it is the writ of the men that is to be observed and women have no say in the running of the family, especially in the way life is to be lived.

According to the feminist theory of rape, gender inequality and patriarchy are major factors responsible for the increased incidences of rape in a society (Boake, 2009). Marxist criminologists on the other hand claim that socio-economic status is a better predictor of rape rather than gender inequality (Martin, et.al, 2006). Moreover rape myth acceptances contribute to the pervasiveness of rape (Suanez and Gadalla, 2010). According to Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) rape myths are defined as false beliefs wrongly grounded on reality which serves to justify and perpetuate male sexual aggressive instincts that portray women in a poor light. It is evident that these myths serve male hegemony and weaknesses and complicity of women are magnified so as to put the blame squarely on women.

The sexism practiced in the society has been found to be determining the rape proclivity among men. Hostile sexism minimises the seriousness of the rape (Yamawaki, 2010).

Portrayal of women in indecent ways in the media and the exposure to violent pornography aggravates the rape proclivity in a society (Davis, et al. 2004). According to the cue theory of aggression cues present in the environment precipitate the aggressive tendencies of individuals. Exposure to pornography and abusive self-exposure made by women in entertainment industries actually cue the individuals to indulge in sexual crimes. Indecent exposure is a form of invitation women extends to men to commit the acts of crime, not consciously intended by the women in the exposure act but which inadvertently cues men with underlying pathology or men bordering on aggressive and violent personality.

The criminality prevalent in the societal living is another precursor of rape. Violence and criminality are associated with rape (Chambers, et al., 2010). Crime rates in the society are a better predictor as the etiology of crime and rape parallels much even though different motives can be attributed to both rape and crime. The similarity between rape and crime starts from the pathological state of the society, characterised by lawlessness and materialism and spread of vulgarities. Healey et al. (2013) report an overlap between crime scene behaviours and sexual sadism such that the variance shared between the two is high leading to the identification of common denominators in the committing of rape and crime. Further, sex offender assessment has been traced to criminal thinking in general and provocative/instrumental thinking in particular (Walters, et al., 2009) resulting in the identification of a relation between criminal records and rapes of different forms (Firestone, et al. 1998).

Lifestyles that reflect voluptuousness and avariciousness sow the seeds of instigating and provoking lustful and aggressive behaviour among men. Patterns of life style like provocative dressing up by women stimulate and reinforce male sexuality and hegemony. Lynch (2007) reports that body revealing dress besides reinforcing patterns of hegemonic male sexuality, results in sexual objectification and commodification of women.

O'Hara (2012) states that news media coverage and portrayal of sexual violence actually serves to perpetuate the myths and stereotypes about rape, rapists and rape victims.

Regardless of the biased or one-sided view given in the media, the fact is that the mass media influences the shaping of the public opinion in either way that may be far from the actual state of affairs.

Victim's Precipitation

The notion that “no means yes” or that victim need not be completely innocent is doing rounds among researchers and investigators and there are “many who target the victim’s actions, dress and conduct as precipitating factors of rape” (Sandy, 1996, cited by Liz Maria, 1998). The hidden role played by the victim in precipitating rape has caught the attention of researchers in an analysis of causative dynamics (Liz-Maria, 1998). Victim’s hidden role is brought forward in an analysis of token resistance shown by the victim and in an analysis of acquaintance rapes (Liz-Maria, 1998).

A Situational Analysis

The well-known behavioural principle, behaviour is a function of the person and the environment holds true here also. A situation can either precipitate or inhibit the rape tendency in an attacker. According to Clay-Warner (2002), the situational variables that precipitate rape are the presence of weapons, the occurrence of attack in a private residence or in a closed-door place, the victim knows the assailant, the absence of a by-stander and the attacker is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. In other words rape takes place in the rape space created by the male pathology, socio-cultural forces and the victim’s precipitation

The major propositions derived from the model are stated below:

P1 Psycho-physiological pathology can be a major cause of rape incidences.

P1a Disoriented cognitive functioning and processing can increase rape incidences

P1b Hostile, disordered and prejudicial thinking can result in rape

P1c Negative emotions of lust, aggression, hostility and revenge lead to rape.

P1d There exists rape-prone personality

P1e Disordered and disorganised personality patterns contribute to rape incidences in a society.

P1f There exist antisocial personality that contributes to rape incidences

P1g There exists psychopathic personality that is rape-prone

P1h Physiological aberrations of brain or glands or nervous system and chromosome can be clearly markers of rapists.

P1i An interaction between psycho-physiological forces are also postulated.

P2 There exist socio-cultural elements in each society that results in increased rape proclivity among men.

P2a Rape myth acceptance increases the chances of rape rate in society.

P2b Voluptuous and ostentatious life styles increase the rape rate in society.

P2c Certain obvious cultural patterns increase the rape rate in society.

P2d Male chauvinism and macho personality tend to increase the rape rate in a society.

P2e Indecent portrayal and objectification of women in entertainment industry tend to result in increased incidences.

P2f Pornography and sexual literature are the seeds of rape.

P2g Weak and turbulent families promote rape in society.

P3 There exist victim precipitation variables that actually result in rape.

P3a Provocative behaviour like dress and body exposure can result in rape.

P3b There exist verbal and non-verbal behaviour on the part of the victim that precipitate rape.

P4 There are situational variables that facilitate or inhibit rape.

P5 There exist interactions among the postulated variables.

CONCLUSIONS

Rape is an antisocial disorder experienced traumatically by certain unfortunate girls/women and committed by individuals with a history of psycho-physiological disorder. It is difficult to find a single cause of rape as the incidences or increased incidences are to be traced to multiple causality. A multiple causality model is to explain the general nature of rape that involves the prediction, the control of rape and the treatment of sex offenders and rape victims.

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