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PREVALENCE OF RAPE MYTHS IN INDIAN SOCIETY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DELHI AND HARYANA.

Rachita Kauldhar

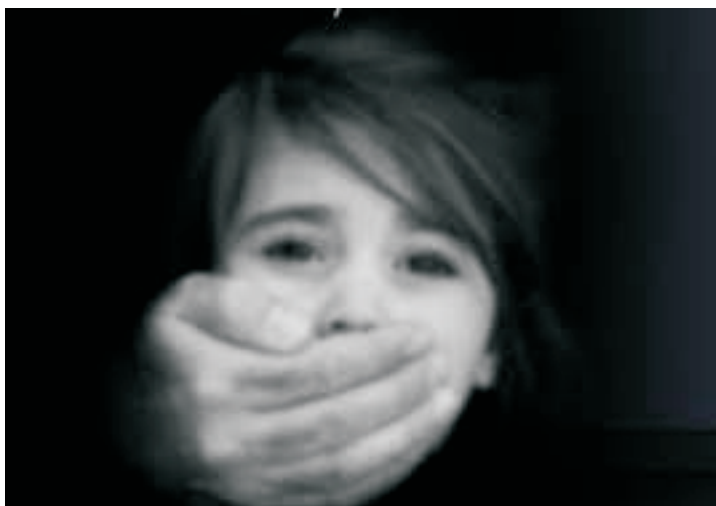
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ABSTRACT

With the increasing number of sexual crimes in India, it is important to understand how society view these survivor's, do they accept them back in society or not and how they define whether or not their circumstances fit the description of rape to further understand at what level rape myths are still embedded in society. This study is conducted to analyze the attitude of the people towards the 'rape survivor' and also how much society have secured or abandoned these rape myths. For this purpose a survey is conducted in Delhi, and Haryana, where in 92 respondent participated. Survey questionnaire included rape myths like provocative clothing is an invitation to rape, women incite men to rape from her gesture, etc., and respondent were asked to rate these statements on a five-point likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The collected data is analysed on the basis of comparative analysis of both the cities and to describe further simple statistics of percentage method is used. The result reveals the false beliefs regarding the circumstances of rape are rejected. However, these beliefs are more prevalent among people in Haryana than respondent of Delhi.

KEYWORDS : *Likert scale, Provocative, Sexual crimes, Rape myths, Rape survivor*



INTRODUCTION :

A sudden rise is witnessed in violent crime against women especially rape, sexual harassment, molestation, and eve-teasing in Indian society. This rise is evident due to certain factors such as increase in police reportage of such crimes, enforcement of new anti-rape law, discussion on public forum, and due to media exposure. In an article published in Times of India on 28th July, 2014, it was reported that according to Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

(CHRI) analysis of reported rape cases between 2001 and 2013 shows that 2,72,844 rapes were reported in 28 states and seven union territories during the 13-year period in India. This analysis of crime data reveals that a little more than 57 rapes are reported on an average per day. It is also worth noticing that in 2001 only 16,075 rape cases were reported, while a steep rise of 52.30 percent is noticed in reported rape cases in 2013 across India. However, Delhi alone stands out for 8,060 reported incidents during this period.

In another published article in Times of India (10th Nov, 2014) it was reported that according to Delhi police data, 16 percent increase is witnessed in complaints of crime against women with 11,683 cases lodged between 1st January 2014 to 20th October 2014. On an average 40 cases of sexual crimes are registered everyday in Delhi with offences of rape, molestation, and sexual harassment.

With increasing number of sexual crimes in society, the numbers of survivor of such crimes also increase in society. It becomes imperative to understand how society view these survivor's, do they accept them back in society or not and how they define whether or not their circumstances fit the description of rape to further understand at what level rape myths are still embedded in society. Rape myths are black and white cultural and societal beliefs that are damaging and false in characteristics, which are embedded in a society particularly, patriarchal society traditionally passing from one generation to another, putting a stronger impact on the existing rape culture. They also serve as a driving force to legitimize sexual violence against women. These myths also alter blame from offender / rapist to victims. Rape culture promotes rape myths and also rape myths somewhere promotes rape culture in society.

According to Martha Burt (1980), rape myths are "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" (p.217). The most common rape myths prevalent in any society are husbands cannot rape their wives, women enjoy rape, women ask to be raped, women lie about being raped and male rapes does not exists. These commonly prevalent rape myths in society promotes false notion in society that any other occurrence that deviates from these myths is not an actual rape. Such rape perceptions represent beliefs that are not practically factual in reality.

These rape scripts communicate two important concepts. One of the concept leads to the more narrow definition of rape than defined in laws. Such rape myths are rape occurs between two or more strangers, rapes leaves victim physically injured and it requires fight back from victim, if not then it's not rape. Second, concept promotes victim blaming for example victims provocative clothing is an invitation to rape, staying out late at night is unsafe, and victim asked to be raped. These concepts lead to unacknowledged rapes among society and to victim themselves (self-blaming), further increasing under-reporting of such crimes.

Recently, Uttar Pradesh (UP) police officers in a reply to an right to information (RTI) query on seeking information on the number of rapes in each district of the state, measures taken, arrest made and possible reasons behind the increase in crime, responded that "mobile phone culture, bad influence of western culture and indecent dressing sense among women" are some of the reasons behind the spurt in rape cases in the state. Also mingling of boys and girls and indecent advertisement on TV and other media are the reasons. By these responses police officials not only straight away blames woman for their rapes but also showcased a formidable biases that exist towards independent women. This exhibits the appallingly backward mindset that men are apparently driven to commit rape through no fault of their own.

In a similar incidence Khap panchayats in Haryana have tried to curb the use of phones among young women in a superficial effort to uphold Indian culture or one can say to sustain their so-called patriarchy society. It is precisely because the mobile phone is a highly empowering technology, giving women the power to communicate, inform and complain, if required against the evils of traditionalists, believing that a woman with her own phone is a threat to society.

In another incident in Haryana, Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha (ABHM) a right-wing Hindu organisation tried to curb freedom of girls from wearing jeans and using mobile phones. The organisation in December, 2014 made a statement that "the attire should cover the body and not be indecent; moreover girls should be banned from wearing tight jeans and tops and to should avoid cell

phones in school and college premises". According to them this should be done in order "to check increasing obscenity eve-teasing and rape incidences in the state as vulgar clothes causes rape and society's mentality is not mature enough to give unrestricted freedom to the youths".

Khap panchayats or police officials were not enough to pass such false beliefs in society; politicians are not far behind to comment. Samajwadi party (SP) supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav publicly in a media frenzy on an issue of rape case in his state declared that "boys will be boys". Janta Dal United's (JDU) Sharad Yadav during a parliamentary debate on rape laws asserted that there is no man who has not pursued a woman.

While politicians at national level, 'khap panchayat' at village level and police officials kept on displaying their ignorant insensitivity towards rape victims and vulnerable section of society women and children repeatedly, it is highly imperative to acknowledge that they are promoting false rape myth in Indian society at large. This tendency of Stone Age mentality, backwardness and no justice attitude towards women needs to be curbed for the betterment of society by giving secure and just environment for women.

SIGNIFICANCE

With such incidences of increasing rape myths occurring repeatedly in society, it becomes crucial to understand the type of rape myths existing in Indian society. This is a one of the unique study as first of its kind. The purpose of this study is to analyze the acceptance and rejection of rape myths in two different states or societies in India i.e. Delhi and Haryana. The importance of this study lies in the comparative analysis of both the state making it easier to understand factors responsible for acceptance or rejection of rape myths.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The scope of this study is to recognise till what extent these rape myths which are falsely promoted by so called opinion leaders from diverse political or religious groups are accepted or rejected by society at large. This will also help in analyzing and comparing two different societies and their cultures, which will further help in recognition of certain factors which is important to remove i.e. stigma and rape myths attached to sexual assault victims. The limitation of the study is that number of respondent surveyed was restricted due to time constraints. So in further researches, area in terms of respondent can be increased to analyse the situation in a better way. And also role of media in propagating or eliminating rape myths from society can be analysed in future researches.

METHODOLOGY

For this purpose a survey was conducted in Delhi and Haryana. Both the societies are very different in its essence and character. Delhi being the capital of the country is being labelled as 'Rape Capital' after Delhi bus gang rape case in 2012. Since then increase in number of incidences of sexual assault cases in the city has been witnessed, so it becomes necessary to judge the attitude of people towards rape survivor and their acceptance level of existing rape myths.

On the other hand, Haryana is the closest neighbouring state of the Capital, where the prevalence of 'khap panchayat' (caste council) and dominance of patriarchy society is quite prevalent. Also the rules and comments passed by 'panchayat' leaders and heads not only promote rape myths in the entire clan but also justify any kind of discrimination against women through their self-made justice system.

In this study, 92 respondents were surveyed, 46 each from both the cities. Survey questionnaire

included rape myths like provocative clothing is an invitation to rape, women incite man to rape from her gesture, etc. Respondent were asked to rate these statements on a five-point 'Likert scale' from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. Other necessary questions for analysis are asked from respondents like what they think rape is and will they voluntarily accept a rape survivor as their spouse, etc. The collected data is analysed on the basis of comparative analysis of both the cities and to describe further simple statistics of percentage method is used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1.State wise distribution with 'what Respondent think rape is' in percentage

	Sexual gratification	Gaining power	Discharging anger	Violent act	Unwanted sex not crime	other	Total
Delhi	13.04	13.04	6.52	60.86	2.17	4.34	46
Haryana	30.43	15.21	13.04	36.95	4.34	0	46
Total	21.73	14.13	9.78	48.91	3.26	2.17	92

In table 1. Respondent's response of what they think rape is according to states is measured. Result shows that a little less than half (49%) of all the respondents think rape is a violent act of crime. While three-fifth (60%) of respondent believes rape is a violent act of crime belongs to Delhi whereas a little more than one-third (37%) respondent believes rape is a violent act belongs to Haryana. While about three-tenth (30%) respondents of Haryana believe that rape is committed to fulfil one's sexual gratification whereas only 13 percent respondents of Delhi believe in the same. This indicates that there is difference in the perception of the respondents of both the cities where Delhi respondent thinks rape is more of a violent sex crime than committed for sexual gratification, whereas for Haryana's respondent thinks its vice-versa. However, it is interesting to note that almost equal percentage of respondent of both the cities Delhi (13%) and Haryana (15%) thinks that rape is committed for gaining power. This may indicate exhibiting male machismo through rape as one of the ways to gain power over women.

2.State wise result on 'provocative clothing is an invitation to rape' in percentage

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Delhi	2.17	6.52	17.39	39.13	52.17	46
Haryana	23.91	41.30	4.34	17.39	13.04	46
Total	13.04	23.91	10.86	19.56	32.60	92

In table 2. State wise respondent's response on provocative clothing is an invitation to rape was measured. Result shows that a little less than one-third (33%) of all the respondents strongly disagree with the statement. While a little more than half (52 %) respondent strongly disagree with the

statement belongs to Delhi whereas 13 % of the respondent strongly disagree with the statement belongs to Haryana. However, 41 percent respondents of Haryana agree and almost 24 percent strongly agrees with the statement where as almost 7 percent respondents of Delhi agree and only 2 percent strongly agrees to the statement. This indicates that 65 percent of respondent of Haryana agrees with the statement whereas only 9 percent from Delhi agrees with it. Thus, showcasing the cultural mindset and objectification of women through her clothing, plays a crucial role for the rape survivor and women in the state of Haryana. This shows that respondent from Haryana are more adamant on the way the woman is dressed and approves provocative clothing is an invitation to rape than the respondent of Delhi.

3.State wise distribution on ‘Women incite men to rape from her gesture’ in percentage

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Delhi	0	2.17	6.52	26.08	65.21	46
Haryana	0	19.56	11.53	32.60	41.30	46
Total	0	10.86	6.52	29.34	53.26	92

In table 3. State wise distribution on response on statement women incite men to rape from her gesture was measured. Result shows that a little more than half (53.26%) of all the respondent strongly disagrees with the statement. While 65 percent respondents strongly disagrees and 26 percent disagree belongs to Delhi whereas 41 percent respondent strongly disagree and 33 percent disagree belongs to Haryana. This indicates that most of the respondent from both the states disagrees with the statement diverting the blame of rape from victim to the rapist. This also showcases that women behaviour is not judged on such grounds and victim blaming in this case has been rejected by respondent of both the states. However, it is interesting to note that none of the respondent from both the states strongly agrees to the statement. Though 20 percent of the respondent of Haryana agrees to the statement, respondent of Delhi agreeing to the statement exists in namesake only.

4.State wise distribution on ‘Staying outside late at night is unsafe for women’ in percentage

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Delhi	4.34	32.60	13.04	30.43	19.56	46
Haryana	30.43	58.69	8.69	2.17	0	46
Total	17.39	45.65	10.86	16.30	9.78	92

In table 4. State wise response to statement staying outside late at night is unsafe for women was measured. Result shows that a little less than half (46%) of all the respondent agrees to the statement. While three-fifth (59%) respondents of Haryana agree, the other three-tenth (30%) strongly

agrees to the statement whereas one-third (33%) respondent of Delhi agrees and only 4 percent strongly agrees to it. This indicates that most of the respondent of Haryana believes staying out late at night is dangerous to women and her chances of getting sexually assaulted may increase. This also shows people attitude that those who stay outside late at night are the goons looking for their object of interest or woman who seek attention from man.

Further it should be noticed that three-tenth (30%) respondent from Delhi disagree and one-fifth (20%) strongly disagree to the statement whereas respondent are in namesake from Haryana who disagree or strongly disagree to the statement. This shows that despite being labelled as the 'rape capital' of the country almost half of the respondent finds it safe for women to stay out late at night. This shows respondents from Haryana concede the unsafe atmosphere for women for staying out late at night more than the respondent of Delhi.

5.State wise distribution on 'Spousal rape is not present in Indian society' in percentage

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Delhi	19.56	45.65	17.39	10.86	6.52	46
Haryana	6.52	28.26	10.86	39.13	15.21	46
Total	13.04	36.95	14.13	25	10.86	92

In table 5. State wise respondent response to the statement spousal rape is not present in Indian society was measured. Result shows that a little more than one-third (37%) of all the respondent agrees to the statement that spousal rape is not present in Indian society. While a little less than half (46%) of the respondent agrees to the statement belongs to Delhi whereas almost 29 percent of the respondent who agrees to the statement belongs to Haryana. Although one-fifth (20%) of the respondent strongly agrees to the statement belongs to Delhi, only 7 percent strongly agrees to the statement are from Haryana. This indicates that almost 66 percent of the respondent agrees to the statement that spousal rape is non- existent in society in comparison to 35 percent respondent of Haryana. This shows the denial state in which sexual domestic violence on women by their husbands in society are ignored.

Further it is interesting to note that almost two-fifth (40%) respondent of Haryana disagree and 15 percent strongly disagree with the statement making the total to 55 percent of respondent of Haryana disagreeing to the statement whereas 11 percent disagree and 7 percent strongly disagree makes the total to 18 percent respondent of Delhi who disagrees to the statement. This indicates that respondent of Haryana recognise the presence of spousal rape in the society more than the respondent of Delhi.

6.State wise distribution on ‘Incest rape is a rare case in India’ in percentage

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Delhi	0	6.52	13.04	43.47	36.95	46
Haryana	0	26.08	10.86	52.17	10.86	46
Total	0	16.30	11.95	47.82	23.91	92

In table 6. State wise respondent response to the statement incest rape is a rare case in India was measured. Result shows that a little less than half (48%) disagree and almost one-fourth (24%) strongly disagree to the statement. While 44 percent of respondent from Delhi disagree the other 37 percent strongly disagree to the statement whereas a little more than half (52%) from Haryana disagree other 11 percent strongly disagree to the statement. This indicates that most of the respondent of both the states believes that incest rape is an existing phenomenon in Indian society and sexual crimes exists in family relations. However, it is important to note that none of the respondent from both the states strongly agrees to the statement. Further a little more than one-fourth (26%) of the respondent from Haryana agrees to the statement whereas only 7 percent respondent from Delhi agrees to it. This shows respondent from Delhi acknowledge existence of incestuous sexual crime in Indian society more than respondent of Haryana.

7.State wise distribution on ‘It wasn’t rape if she knew the offender’ in percentage

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Delhi	0	4.34	6.52	28.26	60.86	46
Haryana	2.17	32.60	23.91	21.73	19.56	46
Total	1.08	18.47	15.21	25	40.21	92

In table 7. State wise respondent response to the statement it wasn’t rape if she knew the offender was measured. Result shows that a little more than three-fifth (61%) of the respondent who strongly disagrees to the statement belongs to Delhi and a little less than three-tenth (29%) disagree to it in comparison to one-fifth (20%) strongly disagree and 22 percent disagrees to the statement belongs to Haryana. This shows almost nine-tenth (89%) respondent from Delhi disagrees to the statement in comparison to almost two-fifth (41%) disagreeing respondent of Haryana. This indicates that respondent from Delhi rejects this rape myth that it wasn’t rape if the offender was acquaintance more than respondent of Haryana. However, it is interesting to note that none of the respondent from Delhi strongly agrees to the statement but 4 percent of them do agree to it whereas from Haryana 2 percent strongly agree and exactly one-third (33%) agrees to the statement. This shows that 35 percent respondent of Haryana believes that it wasn’t rape if she knew the offender, focusing on the trend of victim blaming, if she knew the offender, she must be aware of his intentions and could have avoided the situation.

8.State wise distribution on ‘Male also get raped’ in percentage

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Delhi	11(23.91)	23(50.00)	9(19.56)	3(6.52)	0(00)	46
Haryana	10(21.73)	14(30.43)	5(10.86)	7(15.21)	10(21.73)	46
Total	21(22.82)	37(40.21)	14(15.21)	10(10.86)	10(10.86)	92

In table 8. State wise respondent response to the statement male also get raped was measured. Result shows that half (50%) of the respondent agree and a little less than one-quarter (24%) strongly agrees belongs to Delhi that male also gets raped in comparison to three-tenth (30%) respondent agree and 22 percent strongly agree to it belongs to Haryana. This indicates that a little less than three-fourth (74%) of the respondent agrees to the statement belongs to Delhi and a little more than half (52%) respondent agrees to the statement belongs to Haryana. Also this shows that respondent of Delhi believes more than respondent of Haryana that male also get raped, acknowledges the existence of male to male rape and marginalized population of male rape survivors.

However, it is important to note that none of the respondent from Delhi strongly disagrees to the statement and only 7 percent disagrees to it whereas a little more than one-fifth (22%) strongly disagree and 15 percent disagrees to it belongs to Haryana. This indicates that respondent of Haryana disagree to the statement more than the respondent of Delhi.

9.State wise distribution on ‘Would you accept a rape survivor as your life partner?’ in percentage

	Delhi	Haryana	Total
Yes	69.56	15.21	42.39
May be	0	4.34	2.17
No	17.39	63.04	40.21
No response	13.04	17.39	15.21
Total	46	46	92

In table 9. Respondent response to acceptance of a rape survivor as a life partner was measured. Result shows that 70 percent of the respondent from Delhi said yes they would accept rape survivor as their life partner in comparison to 15 percent respondent from Haryana who said yes to the same. While a little more than three-fifth (63%) respondent from Haryana said No that they won't accept a rape survivor as their spouse whereas only 17 percent respondent from Delhi said No to the same. This indicates that respondent of Delhi are more open-minded, encourages them to start a new life and do accept them back in society as victims of other crime than the respondent from Haryana.

10.State wise analysis on ‘ By what means were you educated about rape or sexual assault?’ (multiple options were allowed)

Sources	Delhi	Haryana
Rape crisis centre	0%	0%
School- elementary education	6.52 %	10.86%
School- secondary education	19.56%	23.91%
Family	21.73%	4.34%
Religious Institution	6.52%	0%
Internet	56.52%	30.43%
Research materials	6.52%	2.17%
Friends or peers	34.78%	8.69%
Television / Newspaper	86.95%	47.82%
Movies	52.17%	45.65%
Other	2.17%	0%

In table 10. State wise respondent's response to by what means they were educated about rape was measured. Result shows that participants from Delhi got more education about rape through media i.e. television and newspaper (87%), internet (56%) and movies (52%) and in comparison to Haryana respondent learned through media is little less than Delhi respondent i.e. television and newspaper is little less than half (48%), movies 45 percent and internet 30 percent. This shows that media plays an important role in society in educating masses about the rape and sexual assault. While other sources also played a vital role in informing participants about rape are friends & peers (35%), family (22%), and one-fifth (20%) respondent got informed at school belongs to Delhi whereas respondent of Haryana learned little less through, friends & peers (9%), family (5%) and at school (secondary education) almost of one-fourth (24%). This indicates that respondent of Delhi discuss about sexual assault with family and friends more than the respondent of Haryana. Also its worthy noticing that respondent of Haryana learned more about rape from school than Delhi respondent, which indeed shows the active role of education and of teacher's in schools of Haryana.

CONCLUSION

Results of this study reveal that respondent of Haryana accept most of the rape myths prevailing in their society and most of the respondent of Delhi rejects most of the myths. This shows there is stark difference in the mindset and culture of both the cities. It also acknowledges the fact that a woman should be careful of not only strangers by avoiding staying out late at night or by avoiding wearing provocative clothes but also of their family members who might exploit them sexually at the place which they considered as the most safe for them i.e., home. This study also indicates that respondent of Delhi are more open-minded, take victim of sexual assault same as the victims of other crimes and do accept them back in society as victims of other crime than the respondent from Haryana.

Researcher recommends an intervention method to change a person's belief to combat such myths in society. For this purpose 'Peer Intervention', 'Standard Intervention' and 'Moral Discussion' method can be used among peer members, with conversations, didactic portion, video and discussion such views can be challenged (Leff, 2004, HillenbrandGunn, & DeBord, 1995).

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