Sex Offence: Psychological and Demographic stressors

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***Abstract* - This study explored the extent to which prisoner's sociodemographic variables such as age, formal education, marital status, employment, childhood experiences etc. influenced the commission of sex offence. Total participants consisted of 54 male convicted inmates undergoing imprisonment for either rape or an attempt to rape. Age range of these convicts was 20 to 70 years, but only 18.51 percent subjects were of age 45 and above. Most were in their late adolescence. Sample selection was done on the basis of random sampling. Each interview took around 30-40 minutes. Semi-structured interview method was used to collect the information. It was found that, the involvement in sex offence diminishes with age. Education may help in reducing the crime rate. It was observed that 98 percent of victims of sex offence are known to perpetrators. Stranger rape is very rare. Most of the sex offences are against minor, the reason can be children are passive, dependent, psychologically less threatening than adults and are easy to manipulate. The study indicates being into any long-term relationship has no impact on a person's tendency to commit sexual offence. Childhood family environment had no significant impact on individual committing sex offence.**

INTRODUCTION

In 'Men Who Rape,' Nicholas Groth concludes that rape is not an expression of sexual desire as much as it is an expression of other nonsexual needs. Groth claims that rape is more than the result of sexual arousal that has no other opportunity for gratification. Definitions of deviant sexual behavior are largely culture-bound and vary across religions, nations, and even states. In simple words it can be defined as the unlawful and intentional sexual violation of another person without their consent. These definitions adapt to the prevailing social norms of the time and punishments for sexual offenders depend largely upon the existing political and social ideologies.

Sex offenders constitute a heterogeneous group of individuals. The term sex offender describes one who has committed variety of offences, including rape, child sexual abuse, possession of child pornography, exhibitionism (flashing), and even consensual sex among teenagers. Sex offenders can be adults or juveniles, male or female, and the perpetrators may be strangers, acquaintances or related to their victims.

Child sexual abusers constitute a heterogeneous population of individuals who abuse for a variety of reasons. Many have common characteristics, such as poor social skills, low self-esteem, feelings of inadequacy, a sense of worthlessness and vulnerability, difficulty forming normal adult relationships, or previously frustrating experiences with adult relationships. Many child molesters seek out mutually comforting relationships with children and find comfort with those children who are passive, dependent, psychologically less threatening than adults, and easy to manipulate. Stranger abduction and abuse is rare, most child molesters abuse someone they know, and often a child to whom they are related or with whom they have a nurturing/mentoring relationship. They groom their victims or use various techniques to manipulate potential victims to comply into sexual abuse. Some of these techniques include games, emotional manipulation, verbal coercion, threats, seduction, and enticements (see Pryor, 1996; Terry, 2006).

Another particularly important finding is that most victims of sexual abuse know the person who abuses them. In fact, when we look at the data, only a relatively small percentage of perpetrators are strangers to their victims. In both rape and child sexual abuse cases, most of the offenders are either family members or acquaintances.

Researchers have found that most victims of sexual assaults, about 84 percent do not report their

victimization to law enforcement. There are many reasons that sexual victimization goes unreported. Some victims do not report it to police because they believe nothing can be done or because they worry that there may not be enough proof. They might also choose not to report these crimes out of fear of retaliation by the offender, or because they or their loved ones were threatened. And in some cases, particularly interfamilial child sexual abuse or domestic partner rapes, the victims may have strong attachments to the abusers, may want to protect them, may be emotionally or financially dependent on them, may not want the family to be disrupted, or may not want them to be punished.

Here we are only talking about the number of people who were arrested and convicted for these crimes. We only know what is reported, and even if an incident is reported, not all those reports lead to an arrest. Just as not all reported incidents lead to an arrest, not all arrests result in a criminal conviction. In this context we are considering the sex offenders who are currently in the criminal justice system. We know that we are seeing only a small fraction of the individuals who have committed these offences. In fact, some would suggest that they represent only the tip of the iceberg. Less is known about the relationship between age and sexual crime. Based on data from 179 Canadian police departments, 81 percent of accused sexual offenders were 18 years of age or older (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1999). On average, accused sexual offenders are substantially older than other offenders and slightly older than the general population. The age distribution for sexual offenders is markedly bimodal, however, with the largest peak at age 13, a dip in the early twenties and a second peak in the mid to late thirties (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 1999). The reason for the bimodal distribution is unknown but it does suggest that there may be a qualitative difference between adolescent and adult sexual offenders. The peak at age 13 may be attributed to generally antisocial, aggressive youth becoming sexually active. The peak in the late thirties may be related to increase in opportunities for certain types of sexual offences during these years (e.g., father-daughter incest, child molestation).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In 1979, Nicholas Groth published 'Men Who Rape': The Psychology of the Offender identifying rape as an aggressive act, which constitutes a discharge of anger; it becomes evident that the rape is the way the offender expresses and discharges a mood state of intense anger, frustration, resentment and rage (1979, p. 12). In this text, Groth first presented the idea that rape has three main components: power, anger and sexuality, resulting in three rapist types. In anger rape, sexuality becomes a hostile act. In power rape, sexuality is an expression of conquest. In sadistic rape, there is a fusion between violence and sex wherein anger and power become eroticized (see Groth, 1979).

Empirical studies such as those by Scully (1990) support the assertions that rape is often motivated by power and control, and that the men who commit such acts make justifications and excuses for their behaviors. Though women can also commit the offense of rape, most empirical research today considers only rape committed by men.

In a self-report survey by Krishnakumar P, Satheesan K, Geeta MG, Sureshkumar K (2014) conducted among adolescents in the age group of 15-19 years, studying in the plus one and plus two classes of a selected school. Of the 1614 respondents (688 boys and 926 girls), 36 % of boys and 35 % of girls had experienced sexual abuse at some point during their lifetime. Most instances were sexual advances while using public transport. Feelings of insecurity and isolation at home, of being disliked by parents and of being depressed were significantly more in adolescents who had experienced sexual abuse, compared to those who had not.

Felson, M., & Krohn, M. (1990) developed a socio-sexual model and a punishment model of rape, borrowing from the theoretical literature on other forms of violence. Preliminary tests of these models are performed using victimization data from the National Crime Survey. In support of the socio-sexual model, younger women are more likely to be raped than older women during a robbery, suggesting a preference for younger women even when opportunity is controlled. In addition, nonstrategic violence is less likely during rapes involving younger offenders and victims, suggesting that these crimes are more likely to be sexually motivated. There is also evidence for the punishment model: Injury is more likely when the offender and victim is an estranged couple, suggesting that some men use rape and violence during rape to

punish the victim for some grievance. Further, in contrast to robbery, offenders with weapons are more likely to injure victims, suggesting the nonstrategic use of violence.

Aim of Study:
The study is designed to search the sociodemographic and psychological stressors of Sexual offenders.

Hypotheses:
- Rape is frequently committed by younger criminals.
- Severe crimes are frequently committed by poorly educated criminals.
- Most of the sex offence victims are minor.
- Most of the sex offence victims are known to the offender.
- Being into long-term relationship can prevent an individual from committing sex offence.

METHOD

Participants:
Total participants consisted of 54 convicted criminals undergoing imprisonment for either rape or an attempt to rape. Age range of these convicts was 20 to 70, but only 18.51 percent subjects were of age 45 and above. Most others were in their late adolescence. All the convicted criminals included in the study were males.

Tools used for Data Collection:
Semi structured interview: An interview schedule was constructed to seek information regarding sociodemographic details, family history and environmental factors of the criminals. There was scope to ask questions other than those given in the schedule.

Procedure of Data Collection:
Personal interview technique was used for collecting data. Sample selection was done on the basis of random sampling. Each interview took around 30-40 minutes. Semi-structured interview method was used to collect the information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Indicating age wise distribution of sex offenders

Age	N=54	Percentage	chi-square
18-28	27	50.00	
29-38	10	18.51	
39-48	08	14.82	
49 and above	09	16.67	13.83*
*p<0.01			

The research literature on biological aging (Steffensmeier & Allan 2000; Shock 1984) suggests that peak functioning is typically reached between the ages of twenty-five and thirty for physical factors plausibly assumed to affect one's ability to commit crimes (strength, stamina, aerobic capacity, motor control, sensory perception, and speed of movement). The same is applicable for sex offender. The majority of adult sex offenders are in their teens, 20's or early 30's.The age range for the study was 18 to 70, the population was divided into four age groups as indicated in table. The percentage for the age group 18-28 was 50 percent. For the group 29-38 the percentage was 18.51 percent. For the age group 39-48 the percentage was 14.82 percent. For the last age group that is 48 and above the percentage were 16.67. This clearly indicates the decline in crime rate as age increases. The X^2 obtained was 13.83 df=1;p<.01the score indicates age plays significant role in a person committing sex offence. Hence, proves the hypothesis 1 to be true.

Table number 2: Indicating education level of sex offenders

Education status	N= 54	Percentage	Chi square
Educated	13	25	
Poorly educated	41	75	25
p<.01			

This study probed another important factor that is, educational level of sex offender. The group was divided into two broad categories, educated that is offenders who had obtained formal education till graduation. And second group, poorly educated, this included offenders who either never attended school or studied till 11th grade. It was found that 75percent were poorly educated, that is studied only up to 11^{th} grade. 25 percent of offenders were educated. On treating this data with chi square test, significant results are obtained ($X^2 = 25$, df =1, $p < .01$). It can be concluded that two groups differ significantly from each other, thus proves hypothesis 2. Another

observation made was 20 percent of the sample size never attended school.

Table number 3: Indicating the age of victim of sex offence

Age of victim	N=50	Percentage	Chi square
Adult	16	32	
Minor	34	68	12.96
p<.01			

Out of sample size of 54, 4 did not reveal to the age of the victim. The percentage of minor victim was 68 percent, while percentage of adult victim was 32 percent. On treating the data with chi square the result is significant ($X^2 = 12.96$, df =1,p <.01). Thus, proves hypothesis no. 3

Table number 4: Indicating relation of the victim with offender.

Relation with offender	N= 54	Percentage	Chi square
Known to offender	53	98	
Stranger	1	2	92.16
p<.01			

Stranger abduction and abuse is rare in sex offence. During the interview it was observed out of 54 cases of sex offence 53 were known to victim. In more than 98 percent cases of sex offence, perpetrators are acquaintances, friends, neighbors, or relatives. Many child molesters seek out mutually comforting relationships with children and find comfort with those children who are passive, dependent, psychologically less threatening than adults, and are easy to manipulate. On probing the relationship of the perpetrator with the victim it was observed in 98 % cases it was neighbor, relative or girl friend or friend of friend. On treating the data with chi square significant results are obtained ($X^2 = 92.16$, df =1, p <.01). Thus, proves hypothesis no. 4

Table number 5: Indicating long term relationship status of the inmates:

Relationship status	N= 54	Percentage	Chi square
In relationship	23	43	
Not in relationship	31	57	1.96
p>.01			

Interview in the study included the questions to probe the relationship status of the convicted offenders at the time of committing the crime. It was found that 57 percent of the respondents were not in any long term relationship. Either they were separated, divorced or widowed. 43 percent of offenders were married or were having love affair for more than a year. The chi square results ($X^2 =1.96$, df =1, p >.01) were not significant which means there is statistically no significant difference between two groups. Thus, hypothesis number 5 is rejected. So it can be concluded being in long term relationship has no direct link with person committing sex related offence.

As far as family support is concerned 66 percent offenders had family support. Their family visited them regularly. Family members were in touch via phone calls or letters, as and when permitted by jail authorities. 34 percent of offenders were not in touch with their families. Some offenders told they got divorced or separated after conviction.

Rapists are a heterogeneous group of offenders. They commit sexual offenses for a variety of reasons and have largely varying rates of recidivism, alcohol or substance abuse problems, and an inability to manage aggression; it is not uncommon for rapists to have come from broken homes where punishment was frequent and the parents had alcohol or substance abuse problems (Marshall, Laws, &Barbaree, 1990; Scully, 1990). Early life experiences are believed to have a strong influence on the development of criminality. For example, poverty, lack of education, high crime neighborhood, and unemployment etc. influences the development of criminality. Dysfunctional family can be a cause of criminal behavior at the later age of an individual. The dysfunctional family environment can be due to many reasons, like separation of parent, father being alcoholic or abusive, negligent parenting etc. On probing this aspect during the interview, according to the calculations

Normal or cordial family background:	55.55 %
Dysfunction family background:	44.45 %

The interview was designed to collect information about mental health of the offender. The factors which were taken into consideration for mental health were information, such as, they are working in jail, attending yoga sessions, or dance sessions, are they

interacting with other inmates, how often they feel sad, suicidal ideation, appetite, delusions or hallucinations, outlook for future, personal hygiene, were included. Body movements, eye contact, gait, volume of speech and promptness of answers were observed during interview. Also, they were asked if they were on any medication during incarceration or prior to committing the crime. On the basis of above information, it was observed 27 out of 54 that is 50 percent of the offenders had some or other mental health issues. Some of the issues were depression, disturbed sleep, or on medication for blackouts, hallucinations, disorientation etc. 50 percent inmates were coping with incarceration well and were doing regular work for 8 hours and other activities in the jail.

CONCLUSION

1) Involvement in sex offence diminishes with age.
2) Education may help in reducing the crime rate.
3) 98 percent of victims of sex offence are known to perpetrators. Stranger rape is very rare.
4) Most of the sex offences are against minor, the reason can be children are passive, dependent, psychologically less threatening than adults, and are easy to manipulate.
5) Being into any long-term relationship has no impact on a person's tendency to commit sexual offence.
6) Childhood family environment had no significant impact on individual committing sex offence.

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