

RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE AND HYPERMASCULINITY AS PREDICTORS OF RAPE PROCLIVITY AMONG ESUT MALE UNDERGRADUATES

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Abstract

The rising number of cases of sexual violence in Nigeria has become so worrisome and mindboggling that, despite several widespread condemnation and punitive measures, bringing an end to it seems farfetched. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between hypermasculinity, rape myth acceptance, and rape proclivity in a sample of male undergraduate students. Numerous studies have shown interests in our variables of study but this study limits itself to three theories namely social role theory, sexual scripting theory and cognitive distortion theory. The instruments used to gather data on this study includes: the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, Short Hypermasculine Values Questionnaire, and the likelihood to Rape Scale. One hundred (150) undergraduate male students participated in this study. These students were between ages of 16-25 years, with a mean age of 21.19 and a standard deviation of 2.02. The summary of findings summarized the results. However, all hands must be on desk to criticize and eliminate the rape culture.

Keywords: rape myth acceptance, hypermasculinity, predictors, rape proclivity.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a country with no substantial data on the prevalence of sexual violence and aggression. On the other hand, one can come across certain reports of rape or sexual assault either from one ministry or non-governmental organizations. For instance, “between March and June 2020, the National Human Rights Commission in Nigeria received more than 232 reports on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), while the Nigerian Police Force reportedly received about 799 cases of rape from across the 36 States of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory. These reports and the numbers recorded indicate that there is no one state that is immune from the global violence against women and girls. Most forms of violence experienced by women and girls include rape, sexual assault, etc” (Ojukwu & Agu, 2020, 9).

“The phenomenon rape has been existing among human for a very long time. It is as old as human kind. It is a criminal and social vice that has been causing great and continual trouble

to the Nigerian State years back” (Osewa et al., 2020, 108). “In Nigeria as in many other countries there are limited researches on rape. However, more of such studies are needed for further insight into this grave societal vice as rape typifies” (Idoko et al., 2020, 668). “The rising number of cases of sexual violence in Nigeria has become so worrisome and mindboggling that, despite several widespread condemnation and punitive measures, bringing an end to it seems farfetched” (Ariche et al., 2023, 103).

At this point we need to ask a fundamental question. What is rape? Rape is legally defined as any form of sexual conduct (behaviour) carried out upon a person against the person’s will. Rape can occur under many circumstances like the assailant uses force or the threat of force to overpower or control the victim, the victim is too young to give legal consent (agreement) for sex, the victim is not able to rationally decide whether he or she is willing to have sex because he or she is intoxicated or has a mental disorder (Coppin, 2020).

Another definition states that “a man is said to commit rape if he (a) penetrates his penis, to an extent, in to the vagina, mouth, urethra or anus of a woman or makes her to do so with him or any other person; or (b) inserts, to an extent, any object or part of the body, not being the penis, into the vagina, the urethra or anus of a woman, or makes her do so with him or any other person; or (c) manipulate any part of the body of the woman so as to cause penetration into the vagina, urethra, anus or any part of the body of such woman or makes her do so with him or any other person; or (d) applies his mouth to the vagina, anus, urethra of a woman or makes her do so with him, or any other person” (Aggrawal, 2016, 346).

Burt (1980), describes rape myth as prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapist. “Examples of rape myths are look at how she was dressed, she was asking for it, or he could not help himself, he is a guy just following his sexual urges; what do you expect?” (O’Donohue & Schewe, 2019, 734). Furthermore, rape myth acceptance is seen as the amount of stereotypic ideas that individuals possess in respect of rape such as women often falsely accuse men of rape. A person who accepts or believes in rape myth is also more likely to draw upon general stereotypes of gender appropriate behaviour when asked to evaluate a rape victim (Montada et al., 1992, 485). These points draw our attention to hypermasculinity.

“Hypermasculinity is a psychological term for the exaggeration of male stereotypical behaviour such as an emphasis on physical strength, aggression and sexuality while exhibiting emotional self-control as a sign of toughness as well as composure and impassiveness in times of great stress” (Iddhanta & Singh, 2015, 1). In addition, “hypermasculinity emphasizes on men’s personal power and how fear and anger are associated with interpersonal violence. Therefore, hypermasculinity is seen as exhibiting exaggerated traditional male gender roles that include super valuation of competitive and aggressive activities and the devaluation of cooperative, care-taking behaviour” (Altmaier & Hansen, 2012, 380).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between hypermasculinity, rape myth acceptance, and rape proclivity in a sample of male undergraduate students. The study seeks to explore how these variables are related to each other and to identify potential factors that may influence or moderate these relationships. Furthermore, the study intends to provide

a comprehensive understanding of the behavioral manifestations resulting from hypermasculinity, rape myth acceptance, and rape proclivity. By addressing these gaps, the research aims to contribute valuable insights that can inform interventions and support mechanisms to mitigate the negative effects of hypermasculinity and promote the psychological well-being of the male undergraduate students.

Literature Review

Numerous studies have shown interests in our variables of study but we would like to limit ourselves to three theories namely social role theory, sexual scripting theory and cognitive distortion theory.

Alice H. Eagly first developed social role theory in the 1980s. According to Grappendorf and Burton (2017, as cited in Management Association, Information Resources, 2021, 19) “the theory asserts expectation regarding social gender roles effect both the roles society perceives men and women should occupy (prescriptive roles) and the qualities and behavioural tendencies stereotypically demonstrated by each gender (descriptive roles)”. When we take a closer look in our society, we will find out that homemaker roles are assigned almost exclusively to women while powerful, higher status work roles are occupied disproportionately by men. People form their gender role expectations from observing men and women around them. Besides creating stereotypic gender role expectations, society’s gender division of labour creates gender typed-skills and beliefs by providing men and women with different experiences (Chafetz, 2006, 251).

In the hypermasculinity context, exaggerated masculine traits can be seen as a consequence of social roles that value and reward traditional masculine behaviors. It is important to remember that the heavily patriarchal nature of Nigerian society contributes to this problem. This manifest in attitudes that women should be confined in their various homes and kitchens. Women are expected to become caregivers, cook, raise children and become helpers. While men are expected to be primary family providers and to assume full-time roles in the paid economy. The men often are associated with physical strength, assertiveness, or leadership skills (Ortenblad et al., 2017).

In 1973, sexual scripting theory was introduced by John H. Gagnon and William Simon. “They developed scripting theory in response to the dominant biological model of sexuality. In this biological model sexual behaviour is determined through innate biological drives. Gagnon and Simon found exclusively biological explanations of sex lacking and argued that sexuality is a social product. Sex takes place within a particular social context that determines what is considered sexual and how sex is enacted” (Beres, 2013, 4). In addition, “script theory rest on the assumption that people follow internalized script when constructing meaning out of behaviour”. According to Michael Wiederman (2005, as cited in Walby, 2012), this theory helps in understanding rape myth acceptance and how social factors can influence sexual interactions and decision making.

Next is cognitive distortion theory. “The term cognitive distortion was first used by Beck in 1963 to describe thoughts and beliefs that may distort reality for individuals with depression and anxiety. Subsequently, many other authors applied the term to individuals who commit child sexual offences, suggesting that targeting distorted thoughts and beliefs about sexual

offending formed the basis of cognitive behaviour therapy for individuals who have committed sexual offence" (Winters & Jeglic, 2022, 90). In this way, cognitive distortions may be used by offenders to support their maladaptive coping strategies. Therefore, attitudes and beliefs emerge that support the deviant practices in turn reinforce the use of deviant sexual practices as a coping strategy (Gannon et al., 2007). Cognitive distortion can play a role in rape proclivity. In fact, cognitive distortions may indeed contribute to rape-proneness and be held by the majority of males (Devon et al., 2022, 386).

Hypothesis

1. Hypermasculinity will significantly correlate with rape proclivity among undergraduate males.
2. Rape myth acceptance will significantly correlate with rape proclivity among undergraduate males.

Participants

One hundred (150) undergraduate male students participated in this study. These students were between ages of 16-25 years, with a mean age of 21.19 and a standard deviation of 2.02. They were selected by convenience sample from different faculties. 25 from the faculty of engineering, 27 from faculty of social sciences, 25 from faculty of law, 30 from the faculty of applied and natural sciences, 19 from faculty of pharmacy and 24 from faculty of management sciences, in Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu State. Demographic variables such as gender, age and class were explored.

Instruments

The instruments used to gather data on this study includes: the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, Short Hypermasculine Values Questionnaire, and the likelihood to Rape Scale.

Procedure

A pilot study was conducted to validate the instruments in the present context. Voluntary participants similar to the sample for the main study from the University of Nigeria Enugu Campus (UNEC), were used for the pilot study. The Illinois rape myth acceptance scale had a mean of 70.7, a standard deviation of 14.3 and a cronbach alpha of .84. In the Hypermasculine Values Questionnaire, words in three items were changed for better understanding in the present context. In item 4, "macho" was changed to manly, in item 6, "passive" was changed to "submissive" and in item 8, "Nuke the bastards" was replaced with "destroy everyone". The HVQ had a mean of 60.7, a standard deviation of 8.3 and a cronbach alpha of .75. The items that measured likelihood to rape had a mean of 4.6, a standard deviation of 2.4 and a cronbach alpha of .75.

Participation in the main study was voluntary and the aim and nature of the study were explained to the participants while being assured of confidentiality of their responses. A convenience sample was used and the questionnaires were shared to the available students. A Lecturer assisted with the distribution of the questionnaire and assistance was offered to the participants when required. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately after they were filled by the participants. 180 questionnaires were distributed, 169 were returned while 150 were properly filled after a recheck and were used for data analysis.

Design Statistics

The design adopted for the study was a cross-sectional survey design. Regression analysis was employed for the data analysis in addition to Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS).

Results

Table 1: Correlations of demographic variables (age and level of study), hypermasculinity, rape myth acceptance and rape proclivity.

SN	Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Age	21.19	2.02	-				
2	Level of Study	2.74	1.23	.72***	-			
3	Hypermasculinity	61.02	9.04	-.02	-.15**	-		
4	Rape Myth Acceptance	72.39	15.04	-.12	-.20**	.18**	-	
5	Rape Proclivity	4.79	2.57	-.003	-.011	.242***	.450***	-

***p < .001; **p < .01, *p < .05

Result of table one above showed that the demographic variables age ($r = .003$) and level of study ($r = -.011$) were not significantly related to rape proclivity. Hypermasculinity ($r = .24$, $p < .001$) was significantly positively related to rape proclivity among the participants. Rape myth acceptance equally have positive significant relationship with rape proclivity among the participants ($r = .45$, $p < .001$). Age was positively significantly related to level of study ($r = .72$, $p < .001$), and none significantly related to hypermasculinity ($r = -.02$, $p > .05$) and rape myth acceptance ($r = -.12$, $p > .05$). Level of study was significantly related to hypermasculinity ($r = -.15$, $p < .01$) and rape myth acceptance ($r = -.20$, $p < .05$). Hypermasculinity was significantly related to rape myth acceptance ($r = .18$, $p < .01$).

Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression predicting rape proclivity from hypermasculinity and rape myth acceptance.

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	.01	.04	.04
Level of Study-	.02	-.05	-.05
Hypermasculinity		.25**	.18**
Rape Myth Acceptance			.44**
R	.01	.24**	.49**
R ²	.01	.06**	.24**
R ² change	.01	.06**	.18**
F value	F(2, 147) = .01	F(3, 146) = .03	F(4, 145) = 3.09

Note: *= $p < .05$

The results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression in table 2 above indicated that the demographics, age ($\beta = -.01$, $p > .05$) and level of study ($\beta = -.02$, $p > .05$) were not significant predictors of rape proclivity among participant. The demographic variables accounted for none significant 1% impact as predictors of rape proclivity ($R^2 = .01$). Hypermasculinity ($\beta = .25$, $p < .01$) entered in model 2 of the equation is a significant predictor of rape proclivity among participants. It accounted for significant 6% variance in predicting rape proclivity

among participants ($\Delta R^2 = .06, p < .01$). Rape myth acceptance entered in model 3 significantly predicted rape proclivity among participants. It accounted for significant 44% variance in predicting rape proclivity among participants ($\Delta R^2 = .44, p < .05$). Therefore, increase in hypermasculinity and rape myth acceptances increases rape proclivity among participants.

Summary of Findings

1. Age and level of study were not significantly related to rape proclivity.
2. Hypermasculinity was significantly positively related to rape proclivity among participants.
3. Rape myth acceptance was significantly positively related to rape proclivity among participants.
4. Demographics, age and level of study were not significant predictors of rape proclivity among participants.
5. Hypermasculinity is a significant predicted rape proclivity among participants.
6. Rape myth acceptance significantly predicted rape proclivity among participants.

Implication of the study

The findings of the study have many practical implications. In the findings of the relationship between hypermasculinity and rape proclivity, it revealed a significant positive relationship between hypermasculinity and rape proclivity. The practical implication of this is that undergraduate males' rape proclivity is heightened by hypermasculine values. The second study also revealed a significant positive relationship between rape myth acceptance and rape proclivity.

As previously stated, these values are learned and therefore can be unlearned. Universities can educate students on the consequences of sexual violence and reduce the likelihood of occurrence and prevalence by providing resources to unlearn the values found to be associated with rape proclivity. Furthermore, educational programs that address traditional beliefs systems and have negative values should be applied. The sexual scripting theory argues that sexual scripts can be formed, changed, or reinforced by various social contexts, such as family, education, and the media (Gagnon & Simon, 2003). Therefore, the family and media have an important role to play in reconfiguration of these values.

Limitations of the study

One limitation of this study is the use of participants from only one university, this makes it difficult to generalize to other populations besides from the University used. Students from other universities may have different attitudes towards the variables that were studied. A cross-sectional study by Stephens et al., (2016), found that rape myth acceptance varies by country, this variation may also be evident in universities in different states and locations.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data from the participants, who could likely confound the result by providing false information. Providing false information may also be due to the nature of the research which might have made participants uncomfortable in giving their answers that are not socially desirable.

Suggestions for Further Studies

For further studies, researchers may consider using a larger sample drawn from multiple universities in various geographical locations for better generalization of findings. In addition, researchers should consider studying other variables that may relate to rape proclivity such as personality, ethnicity, token resistance, exposure to violent media and religion.

Summary and Conclusion

The issue of rape is of major concern to both the government and non-governmental organizations. The news of rape is always worrisome. The more individuals and groups try to quench the ugly phenomenon, the more some individuals justify their actions through myths about rape. Most often the abusers are made. Therefore, “hypermasculinity could be described as pseudo-masculinity, as men who display extreme, exaggerated masculine behaviours at the conscious level in order compensate for or defend against an insecure male identity at the unconscious level. The behaviours closely associated with hypermasculinity include violence and repressive social attitudes and is described as one’s source of men’s negative attitude and conduct towards women” (Marle, 2006, 28). However, the university environment and every responsible society must pay special attention to the very vulnerable. All hands must be on desk to criticize and eliminate the rape culture. Rape causes long-term psychological and physical damage, including sexually transmitted disease, etc.

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