

Descriptive Analysis of Alleged Rape/Sexual Assault Incidents in Rawalakot, AJK

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To describe the socio-demographic along with the medico-legal characteristics of rape assailants and victims reporting to a police station in Rawalakot, Azad Kashmir.

Study Design: Retrospective study.

Place and Duration of Study: This study was carried out at Forensic Medicine Department, Poonch Medical College, Rawalkot Jan 2007 to April 2015.

Materials and Methods: This was a retrospective cohort study in which a total of 67 cases of alleged rape victims were identified while reviewing all available police files concerning reported rapes and attempted rapes from 2007 to 2015. The data was gathered on preformed questionnaires after conducting the pilot study. All information about victims and alleged offenders were extracted from the police files including socio-demographic profile of the both the accused and victim i.e age of the victim and assailant, marital status of assailant and victim, time of incident, number of accused persons and whether challan was filed or otherwise.

Results: A total of 67 cases were collected from the police records regarding the alleged rape cases. Maximum number of victims belonged to age group of 21 to 30 years and most offenders also belonged to same age group. 70.1% (n=47) of victims and 79.1% (n=53) of assailants were unmarried. In most of the cases, one offender was involved while gang rape constituted 6% (n=4) of cases. Most cases were reported between 1200-1800 Hrs followed by 0600-1200 Hrs. The total no of cases year wise are 4 in 2007, 1 in 2008, 7 in 2009, 5 in 2010, 13 in 2011, 5 in 2012, 11 in 2013, 13 in 2014 and 5 in first 4 months of 2015.

Key Words: Rape, Victims, Assailant, Incidence, Rawalakot

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INTRODUCTION

Rape is a type of unlawful sexual activity and usually sexual intercourse carried out forcibly or under threat of injury against the will usually of a female or with a person who is beneath a certain age or incapable of valid consent. The act may be carried out by physical force, coercion, abuse of authority or against a person who is incapable of valid consent, such as one who is unconscious, incapacitated, or below the legal age of consent.¹ The term rape is sometimes used interchangeably with the term sexual assault.

Rape, the most common sexual assault on women, is not a medical diagnosis as commonly known but a legally well-defined crime and usually occurring un-witnessed with testimony of the victim and assailant carrying more weightage. In spite of stringent measures taken against sexual crime, incidence of rape continuous to rise unabated all over the globe. Fifty one of every 1,00,000 females in America were raped with one woman being raped every nine minutes.² According

to lawyer Asma Jahangir, who is a co-founder of the women's rights group Women's Action Forum, up to seventy-two percent of women in custody in Pakistan are physically or sexually abused³. In 1979, Pakistan passed into law The Hudood Ordinance according to which all the extramarital sexual acts, including the rape, were considered crime against the State. Since 2000, various women and teenage girls have begun to speak out after being sexually assaulted⁴. Going against the tradition that a woman should suffer in silence, they have lobbied news outlets and politicians. WHO in 2003 issued guidelines for medico-legal care for victims of sexual violence, which emphasize the need for physical as well as psychological care for victims of rape.

The rape doesn't only inflict physical trauma on the victim, which is not appreciable in most cases, but it also puts the victim in psychological delirium, which differs in intensity from one victim to another. The social norms and local customs refrain her from unveiling her woes to the law enforcement agencies and legal system. Hence, the reported cases of alleged rape are actually just the tip of the iceberg that is dealt by the Law. As the trend of rape has increased in recent years, there is a dire need of analyzing the social factors and anthropology of rape, and to better comprehend the preventable factors that govern this devastating

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nuisance, in order to hamper its incidence in the days to come.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a retrospective cohort study, conducted at Police Station Rawalakot, AJK. The study of cases included all the alleged rape victims who reported this event in that police station over a period of past eight and a half years from Jan 2007 to April 2015. A retrospective review of all police files was done to collect data regarding rape incidents. All rape cases reported as homicide or suicide were excluded from the study. A preformed Performa was filled while reviewing each case file. All data concerning the socio-demographic and medicolegal profile of both the victim and accused was noted including age of the victim and assailant, marital status of assailant and victim, time of incident, number of accused persons and whether challan was filed or otherwise.

Descriptive statistics were analyzed for frequency distribution of various variables using SPSS version 20. One-tailed and two-tailed tests of significance were applied to find out the statistical association between ages and marital status of victim and accused and P-value was fixed at 0.05 to assess the significance of the results. Rest of the results were given in the form of descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

A total of 67 alleged rape victims were identified during Jan, 2007 to Apr, 2015. The victim's age ranged from 11 years to 40 years. The maximum number (n = 37, 55.2%) of rape cases occurred in 21-30 years of age group followed by 22 victims (32.8%) in the 31-40 years age group. Maximum number of the accused were between 21-30 years constituting 58.2% (n = 39) of the total. Correlation was significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed test of significance using both Pearson and Kendell tau-b correlation coefficient) found between the age groups of victim and accused. Table I shows the age distribution of victim and accused.

Table No.1: Age Distribution of victim and accused

Age group	Victims		Offender	
	Frequency	%age	Frequency	%age
11-20 yrs	8	11.9	-	-
21-30 yrs	37	55.2	39	58.2
31-40 yrs	22	32.8	28	41.8
Total	67	100	67	100

Forty Seven (47) of rape victims were unmarried which constituted (70.1%) of the total and only 20 (29.9%) were married. Similarly 79.1% (n=53) of assailants were unmarried while 20.9%(n=14) were married. This shows that most of the victims and assailants were unmarried.

Table No.2: Marital status of victim and accused

Marital status	Victims		Offender	
	Frequency	%age	Frequency	%age
Unmarried	47	70.1	53	79.1
Married	20	29.9	14	20.9
Total	67	100.0	67	100.0

In 04 cases (6%), number of accused was more than one (gang rape) and in rest of 63 cases (94%), the accused and victim ratio was one to one as shown.

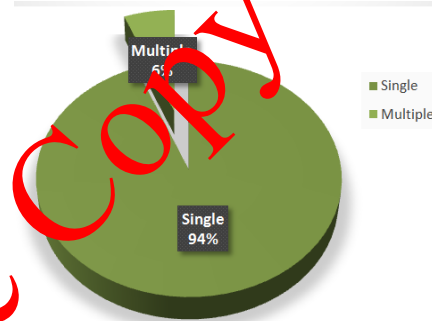
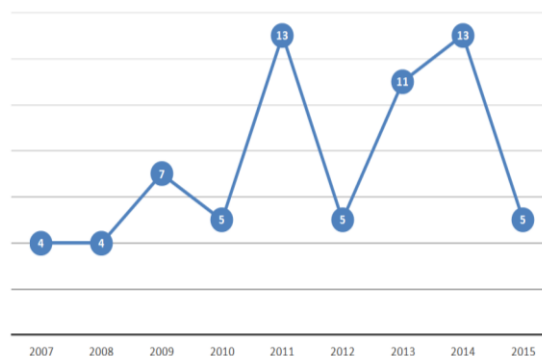


Figure No.1: No. of Offenders

Regarding the timing of reporting of these incidents, maximum no. of cases were reported in between 1201 to 1800 hours (n=30) followed by 0601 to 1200 Hours(n=18).In nine(9)cases, there was no record of time.



Graph: Yearly incidences of cases

The yearly incidence of cases is shown by the following graph. It shows a sudden rise in cases of sexual assault in 2011 with sudden drop in 2012.After this, the incidents rose again and the trend continued (Note: The total no of cases depicted in 2015 are only upto April).

DISCUSSION

The incidence of sexual assault on women is on the rise globally despite of an increase in awareness among masses due to electronic and print media and NGOs; both due to a lack of strict legislature against this crime and even more importantly, lack of proper implementation of such laws. Everyday somewhere in the world, one out of every three women are either beaten or sexually assaulted. According to UN Commission's report on the status of women, in USA, despite the presence of strictly followed legal system, a woman or girl is being raped every three minutes⁵. Similarly, *Forbes women* report on India shows that a woman is being sexually assaulted once every twenty minutes⁶.

Ours was a retrospective study conducted in the town of Rawalakot where the local records from the local police station of Rawalakot were inspected and the cases were sorted out. For the span of 8 and a half years, a total of 67 cases were collected by non-random purposeful sampling, starting from Jan, 2007 to April, 2015. Out of 67 cases, maximum number of victims belonged to age group of 21-30 years i.e. 55.2% (n=37), followed by 31-40 years (32.8% n=22). Rape victims' ages have been reported to range from a minimum of 93 days to a maximum of 86 years with mean age of 17.5 years as indicated in a study published in 2006 in journal of clinical forensic medicine⁷. The same trend was found in the age group of offenders with maximum lying in 21-30 age group bracket followed by 31-40 years. Most of the victims were unmarried i.e. 70.1% (n=47), while 29.9% were married (n=2); which was comparable to the study conducted in Lahore in 2010 where 74.3% of victims were unmarried⁸; this shows that the unmarried group is more prone to sexual assaults than married, more so if they lie in age group of 21-30 years. This is in accordance to previous studies where most of the victims were unmarried; even in one study none of the victim was married⁹. Similarly in our study, most of the offenders were also unmarried constituting 79.1% (n=53) cases, while the rest 20.1% were married. This shows that the sexual frustration that compels these assaults, lie in those who are unmarried and young i.e. 21-30 yrs. Most of the cases were reported between 1201 to 1800 hrs i.e. n=30, followed by 0600 to 1200 hrs i.e. n=12, in rest of the cases, the time of report was not recorded. In this study, 94% (n=63) cases, single offender was involved, while rest of cases were gang rapes. While in France it was noted that a single assailant was involved in the majority of the cases¹⁰. In a survey by United Nations, 14% of Italian women had experienced attempted rape and 2.3% had experienced rape in their lifetimes¹¹.

In our study, the incidence of rape remained low and constant from 2007 to 2010. It suddenly rose in 2011 and this trend continued till the end of our study in April 2015 where 5 cases have already been reported in the first 4 months of the year showing a continuity of rise in the no of cases.

CONCLUSION

Rape victims usually belong to young age group between 21-30 years while offenders belong to 31-40 age group, majority of them being unmarried. Also the number of cases each year are on the rise and the trend needs to be discouraged by strict implementation of rules given in Hudood Ordinance 1979 and women protection bill 2004 by the law enforcement agencies.

Suggestions: There is an urgent need for specialist training for law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, forensic experts and judges to ensure physical and evidentiary examination, including pelvic examination, is warranted in all cases of female sexual assault presenting within 36 hours of the assault, as observed from the lack of available records in the respective fields. The lack of availability of proper sexual education also merits a proper organised inclusion in the curriculum, so that a proper awareness can be given regarding such sensitive issue in an optimistic way, moreover the parents should also be educated in term of how to guide their siblings in this regard. Specialist centres that can provide both treatment for the survivors of sexual assaults and meet criminal justice requirements with respect to the collection of forensic evidence.

Conflict of Interest: The study has no conflict of interest to declare by any author.

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