

# Exploring the Impact of Suffering from Sexual Assault on Women Victims

Jiajunqi Zhang<sup>(⊠)</sup>

Beijing Jingshan School Caofeidian Branch, Tangshan 063000, China 18409254@masu.edu.cn

**Abstract.** Women have a lot of unresolved psychological issues after being sexually assaulted. These issues are often the easiest to be ignored. These problems also hurt their soul and dignity. In Our country, this issue has also aroused the attention of the country and all walks of life in this field. This paper used a literature search to analyze the impact of sexual assault on women. This paper hopes to broaden the academic community's understanding of this issue and provide a theoretical basis for future research. Ten papers were selected from Google. Women who are sexually assaulted will experience the following: they will make the victim feel stronger about themselves; low mental ability or loss of self-esteem or self-confidence; The distorted attitude towards men and sex, the fundamental denial of its existence value, and other reasons lead to the serious and irreversible impact of sexual assault.

Keywords: Sexual assault · Women · Psychological impact · Physical impact

## 1 Introduction

Nearly 300,000 sexual assaults have been recorded in China, but fewer than 10 percent of victims choose to report them to the police. China has prosecuted 43,400 adults for sexual assault of minor adults... Research by the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), America's largest anti-sexual violence organization, which founded and runs the National Sexual Assault Hotline, finds that a woman is sexually assaulted every 98 s in America. A report jointly released by the National Center for Injury Prevention and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States shows that 44.6% of women have experienced sexual violence (including sexual organ touching, genital exposure, kissing, touching, etc., the same below) in their lifetime [1]. The impact of sexual assault on women is multifaceted and multi-angle. They have been physically harmed by sexual assault, but there are also multiple factors that traumatize the victims. Women will undergo certain psychological and physiological changes after being sexually assaulted, which are victim-centered. Studies have shown that if the abuser is not punished, he or she is emotionally distressed. Therefore, people should attach great importance to this problem. Break the myth of victim guilt and create a welcoming environment for wounded hearts.

This paper will study the impact of sexual assault on women. The impact of sexual assault on women may be caused by many factors, but people should not ignore these problems. After the female is sexually assaulted, its physiology, psychology, and other aspects will have a certain impact. Although China has always been a male-dominated society, the concept of male superiority and female superiority formed in the process of social development and progress is deeply rooted in the moral concept and thinking mode of traditional Chinese culture; Women do not fight back after being sexually assaulted, and their inner voice is restricted, which leads to women being unable to get effective protection after being sexually assaulted. Therefore, it is necessary for us to study it. People can look at it from a psychological point of view. Through the investigation and research on what happens to women after they are sexually assaulted. At the same time, the reasons for these problems should also be explained from the outside world, sexual offenders and individuals.

The impact of sexual assault on women is too great to ignore. Through the content and methods of this paper, the relevant issues are discussed. Expand the academic circle's understanding and understanding of this issue, and provide the relevant foundation for future research. From a practical point of view, there are few research results on the impact of sexual assault in China, which are not detailed and comprehensive enough to form a system, and the impact of sexual assault on women is not comprehensive and thorough enough.

Female sexual assault will not only have a certain impact on their physiology and psychology, but also play a significant role in the treatment of the perpetrators. (1) Domestic literature research There have been relevant regulations on how to deal with the problem of female abuse in China. However, it is still not perfect and concrete enough to form a complete system to deal with this phenomenon. In this respect, foreign scholars mainly put forward some solutions and suggestions for a certain type of cases and carried out analysis and comment on them. At present, there is still a lack of research on the victims, their family situation and psychological state in China, especially the research on the impact of sexual assault on women. (2) Foreign literatures mainly analyze the causes of female abuse from the perspective of men in terms of physiology and psychology, but there are not many research results in this aspect in China. This paper will sum up the existing problems of this issue in China and put forward their own opinions by comparing relevant theories at home and abroad. At the same time, this issue can also be improved from the perspective of the influence of other countries on the victims of sexual assault.

This paper collected domestic and foreign works, journals and monographs on the impact of sexual assault. At the same time on the Internet to find some relevant cases for analysis and discussion, in order to achieve the purpose of combining theory with practice. Select some representative papers for analysis, and in-depth analysis of these papers, so as to draw relevant conclusions. After collecting a large number of information and examples, select the more valuable content as the reference object to study the problems and solutions behind it. In this study, 20 sexually assault papers are searched on Google Scholar for the keywords "impact of sexually assault".

### 2 The Impact of Sexual Assault

#### 2.1 The Psychological Impact of the Outside World

The victims themselves suffered great psychological damage, and bear the pressure of some public opinion, which is undoubtedly a double blow to the victims, and finally bear a flirtatious word. Being reviled can lead to serious mental illness in the victim.

In people's lives, many things will cause people great pressure and thus great emotional fluctuations. Such traumatic events cause great psychological damage. Even if people just see the process of the event, our hearts will be traumatized to some extent. These incidents can cause people to fear and even threaten their own safety and the safety of others. For women who have experienced sexual assault, the harm caused by it is undoubtedly very great, so the stress disorder will always accompany them, and it will take a long time to get rid of this psychology. When rape victims are exposed to behaviors or attitudes which censure the victim, the experience can feel like a "second" or" second rape, "a phenomenon known as" secondary victimization" [2–5].

Women who have been victimized avoid talking about it or remembering what happened and reject everything and anyone connected to the assault. But in the process of forgetting, the traumatized woman will bury her feelings, deliberately remaining in denial and unwilling to participate in any social activities. It's an avoidance attitude, and it's also because they can't control themselves, because it's painful, and it makes them feel lonely, but even so, it keeps coming back to them, and the more they do that, the more they close themselves up to avoid it. The convincing reason is those female victims of gender receive less social support. In addition, in a society that continues to blame victims of sexual assault for their actions, it is no wonder that so many women are unwilling to disclose or report it. Victims are often very ashamed, which can interfere with efforts to get support and can increase negative responses such as rejection and blame [6].

#### 2.2 The Psychological Impact of Sexual Predators

The sexualized character of sexual assault adds a particular traumatic aspect to the experience. Indeed, sexual violence or rape can be one of the most traumatic experiences a woman can go through. According to the survey, only 8 percent of all rapes are rapes in which the perpetrator and the victim do not know each other at all, and the remaining 90 percent is rapes committed by acquaintances who have a certain relationship. Being raped by a stranger seems to inspire more sympathy for the victim than being raped by an acquaintance, because it sounds more innocent and is something the victim has experienced. Acquaintance rape, on the other hand, usually takes place in what are supposed to be social situations and is perpetrated by someone the victim knows well, a "coincidence" that sometimes makes the victim wonder if she is really being assaulted. When the victim knows the offender especially someone whom the woman thinks should be trustworthy and safe, and who she never trusts to assault her, her sense of betrayal is a profound element of the hurt and trauma she experiences. It only exacerbated her sense of shame and remorse, and her reluctance to reveal what had happened, while worsening the trauma [7]. When that happens, many victims may have no idea, and their

acquaintances will hurt them. Seeing the sudden change of acquaintances, they become less trusting of anyone, even their relatives and friends. If the crime is committed by a stranger, the harm to the victim is also huge. They will lose confidence in the whole society and even begin to doubt life. They thought society was full of hope, but because of the sexual assault, they lost trust in the outside world.

Some studies have shown that victims of sexual assault often fear that they will be seriously physically harmed or even killed while being assaulted. This fear of death or serious posttraumatic injury is associated with similar or more severe post-traumatic injuries, such as in protracted military battles [8].

#### 2.3 The Psychological Trauma that Women Have on Themselves

When sexual assault takes place, women are often in a state of weakness or ignorance, and the entire process is completely out of hand. Then there is a great feeling of humiliation, rage and hatred. The great wrath was obviously directed against the perpetrator. But for all kinds of reasons, this paper will not choose to report to the police. Such great anger tends to be directed at oneself. As said, if you can't direct your enormous inner energy of anger to the perpetrator, then the energy of your anger will often be reversed to the victim himself. The most common is painfully self-attacks, such as remorse about why they went somewhere that day or why they listened to someone. If he did not go, it would not have happened and so on... From the psychological point of view, the attack on oneself is the most fundamental cause of the party into great psychological pain. Psychologically, when a person constantly attacks himself, there are two conditions: depression, numbness and self-destruction. Therefore, many sexually assaulted women tend to stay in a state of depression for a long time, or in a state of numbness and indifference, and their way of self-destruction may be that they never value "sex".

For women who have suffered sexual assault, many of them do not have much "feeling" during sex with their husbands after marriage. They find it difficult to fully relax into their relationship. At the same time, they are often defensive and hostile to men. Because there is always a voice in their heart that reminds them that the world is dangerous, and they need to keep alert at all times, otherwise they will be hurt and attacked by others. Strictly speaking, such a state is some of the color of obsessive-compulsive disorder and anxiety, is not healthy psychology. A lot of women who have been sexually assaulted feel as though their lives have been destroyed and that they have been destroyed. It's all over. This paper has been thinking about why that is. This paper thinks it has something to do with Chinese attitudes towards sex. Because there is always an emphasis on chastity, virginity, etc. That is, in Chinese culture, the value of a woman's existence is directly related to her body. If a woman is sexually assaulted and physically insulted, then the value of that woman is gone. Think about it, that's a scary thought. However, in the minds of many Chinese women, they are influenced by such ideas.

Some women, who were young and ignorant when they were assaulted, and others, concerned about their social relationships, chose to digest the painful memories on their own. But it has happened, and the psychological trauma has been indelible.

#### 2.4 Physical Health Impact

From April 1, 1985, to May 30, 1986, 335 girls and women who had experienced sex were evaluated, of whom 204 (61%) agreed to take part in the study. The average age of the study population was 24.8 years (12-67 years). White 67%, black 21%, Asian 4%, Native American 3.4%, and Hispanic 4.4%. Thirty-eight patients (19%) reported being attacked by more than one attacker. Spermatozoa were detected on cervical smears or vaginal saline wet load in 135 sufferers (66 percent). Eighty-two percent (23 out of 28) of patients diagnosed with a new sexually transmitted disease (excluding cytomegalovirus) at follow-up had sperm detected in samples collected on the first visit. Ten sufferers (5%) were injured and needed to be monitored or hospitalized. Ninety-four (46%) sustained minor non-pelvic injuries, such as abrasions or bruises, and 35 (17%) sustained minor injuries to the pelvic region. Fifty-nine (29%) received prophylactic antibiotics. Forty-seven patients (23%) were treated for pre-existing chronic conditions such as hypertension, asthma, nephritis, and sarcoidosis. Three (1.5%) were pregnant when the crisis occurred. Seventy-three (36 percent) had received treatment at the Harborview Medical Center, mostly for mental illnesses such as depression or personality disorder, or substance abuse. 109 girls and women (53%) took part in the first monitoring evaluation. The average duration of monitoring was 2.6 weeks (range from 1 to 20 weeks). Fifty-two patients (25.5% of the initial group) returned for a second follow-up serological study averaging 8 weeks (range, 2 to 40) after the initial visit [9].

It can be provided estimates of the risk of developing a sexually transmitted disease following sexual assault. These estimates were derived by determining the number of new infections present at follow-up among the subjects who were not treated prophylactically with antibiotics and who were not found to be infected at the initial visit. The risk of contracting a vaginal infection seemed to be significantly higher than the risk of contracting a cervical infection [9].

In addition to psychological symptoms, there are health effects. Consider, for example, the impact of physical injury, sexually transmitted infections (STI) including HIV and unwanted pregnancy on the partner or family. Physical injuries can be severe and sometimes even deadly, but they are rare and most physical injuries disappear within a few days. Fear of being pregnant is the two most frequently cited reasons for asking for help. Different medical settings immediately after rape [10].

### **3** Conclusion

This article demonstrates the impact of sexual assault on women and makes corresponding analysis. After being sexually assaulted, women will cause physical and psychological harm to a certain extent, but this is not inevitable. After sexual assault, the victim's psychology will change a lot. Often, the victim will start to blame themselves and feel that everything is their fault. In addition, they are afraid of marriage and refuse to have physical contact with the opposite sex. Because, the first occurrence of sexual behavior is in their own panic, under coercion, produced a serious psychological shadow. Once physical contact occurs, the nerves become sensitive, and the images of the sexual assault begin to come to mind. This is always the victim mentality of the barrier, this life is difficult to overcome. There are obvious differences between men and women. The impact of female sexual assault is very large and future scholars should study how to do this and how to have a more accurate understanding of these factors. Future scholars could look at mental and physical health and the effects of interacting with people.

# References

- M.C. Black, K.C. Basile, M.J. Breiding, S.G. Smith, M.L. Walters, M.T. Merrick, R.J. Chen, M.R. Stevens, The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011. pp. 1–114. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevent ion/pdf/NISVS\_Report2010-a.pdf.
- R. Campbell, The community response to rape: Victims' experiences with the legal, medical, and mental health systems. American Journal of Community Psychology. vol. 26, 1998, pp.355–379, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022155003633.
- 3. L. Madigan, N. Gamble, The second rape: Society's continued betrayal of the victim. New York: Lexington Books, 1991.
- 4. P. Martin, R. Powell, Accounting for the "second assault": Legal organizations framing of rape victims. Law and Social Inquiry. vol. 19, 1994, pp. 853–890.
- 5. J. Williams, Secondary victimization: Confronting public attitudes about rape. Victimology. vol 9, 1984, pp.66–81.
- C. Brewin, B. Andrews, J. Valentine, Meta-analysis of risk factors for posttraumatic stress disorder in trauma-exposed adults. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, vol. 68, 2000, pp. 748–766.
- 7. S. Conroy, A. Cotter, Self-Reported Sexual Assault in Canada, 2014. Statistics Canada. Ottawa, ON. 2017.
- 8. E. Dunmore, D.M. Clark, A. Ehlers, A Prospective Investigation of the Role of Cognitive Factors in Persistent Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after Physical or Sexual Assault. Behaviour Research and Therapy, vol 39, 2001, pp. 1063-1084.
- Carole Jenny, M Thomas, Hooton, BA Ann Bowers, K Michael, Copass, N John, MD Krieger, L Sharon, Ph D Hillier, Nancy Kiviat, Lawrence Corey, E Walter, Stamm, and K King, Holmes, Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Victims of Rape, The New England Journal of Medicine, vol 322, 1990, pp. 713-716, DOI:https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJM199003153221101
- B. Cybulska, Sexual assault: key issues, Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, vol. 100, 2007, pp. 321–324. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1258/jrsm.100.7.321

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

