
UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF RAPE: PREVALENCE, CAUSES, AND CONSEQUENCES

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Background

Rape is not merely a personal crime; but it is a major issue in society. Rape cases in India are usually a subject of outrage, but do not create a systematic impact in India, where conservative culture prevails¹. Victim stigma, slow justice, and the rise of male culture are some of the factors that lead to minimal advancements. This research will go out to make an in-depth examination of rape as a means of patriarchy, control, and violence. Through examining the legal development, the case law, and the societal feelings, we aim to determine the causes of the problem and to come up with feasible solutions that can be put in place to reform. One of the most atrocious crimes against the body integrity and dignity of a person is rape. Most often, it is a sign of power, domination, and control, and not just sexual satisfaction. Its psychological repercussions on the survivor are usually lifelong, not only to the individual but families and the whole community. The legal reforms do not ensure that many cases are reported because of fear, shame, and the stigma attached to sexual assault in society.

The 2021 data of NCRB states that 31,000 plus rape were reported in India². The top states in terms of the number of cases are Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. These numbers are, however, the tip of the iceberg as a result of underreporting. Research has indicated that out of the reported rape cases, there are many more that are not reported because of fear, shame, or pressure from family.

The WHO has documented that one out of every three women is sexually or physically abused at some point in her life³. Rape is commonly employed as a means of war in war-torn

¹ Bedi, S., 2023. The Indian rape law: Vocabulary of protest, reactionary legislations and quality of equality culture. *Udayana Journal of Law and Culture*, 7(1), pp.1-24.

² Dandona, R., Gupta, A., George, S., Kishan, S. and Kumar, G.A., 2022. Administrative data deficiencies plague understanding of the magnitude of rape-related crimes in Indian women and girls. *BMC public health*, 22(1), p.788.

³ Potter, L.C., Morris, R., Hegarty, K., García-Moreno, C. and Feder, G., 2021. Categories and health impacts of intimate partner violence in the World Health Organization multi-country study on women's health and domestic

areas. Even in developed countries, the high-profile sexual assaults have shown that institutional accountability problems are ingrained.

The IPC, which was written in 1860, originally had a very limited and retrogressive definition of rape⁴. As time went on, society became more vocal, and feminist activism brought about changes, particularly in the wake of such high-profile cases as the Mathura rape case and the Nirbhaya case. The 1983, 2013, and 2018 amendments of the Criminal Law on rape have gradually expanded the legal definition of rape, established more severe punishment, and provided the possibility of rapid courts and protection of the victims.

Causes of Rape:

1. Patriarchy and Gender Norms:

The causes of rape in India are multi-dimensional; they reside in the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors that are embedded in the society and tend to favor the spread of sexual violence⁵. One of the reasons is patriarchy and strict gender conventions, as they still have an impact on the attitude of society to the independence and integrity of women. Most societies consider women to be inferior to men, and masculinity is synonymous with control and dominance. Such an attitude is what has prompted the misogynist culture and reinforced an ideology of men having the right to dictate about the bodies of women, in relation to marriage or intimate affairs, or domination and subjection. Rape is, therefore, normally the instrument of power, humiliation, or even punishment and not necessarily the crime which arises due to sexual desire.

2. Lack of Comprehensive Sex Education:

The lack of a thorough sex education is another important reason. Much of Indian youth culture is raised without being exposed to the informed debate on consent, healthy relationships, boundaries, and respect⁶. There is a lack of awareness regarding the issues of sexuality and consent, and the harmful tendencies are not questioned. The consequent lack of knowledge

violence. *International journal of epidemiology*, 50(2), pp.652-662.

⁴ Sharma, A., Rape Laws in India: An Analytical Analysis.

⁵ JHARKHAND, U.A.R.I. and KUJUR, D.A.S., 2023. SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, ISSUES AND REHABILITATION.

⁶ Pitre, A. and Lingam, L., 2022. Age of consent: challenges and contradictions of sexual violence laws in India. *Sexual and reproductive health matters*, 29(2), p.1878656.

leads to coercive moods and risky actions, which may culminate in sexual violence.

3. Impunity and Ineffective Law Enforcement:

In addition, deterrence is undermined by impunity and ineffective enforcement of the law. Denial by Police is the refusal by police to submit FIRs and the raw treatment of victims and the delay in the process of trials, which makes the survivors reluctant to pursue justice⁷. There is also a likelihood of offenders going free, and this creates a perception that rape will not be taken seriously. Such irresponsibility encourages aggressors and oppresses victims.

4. Socioeconomic Inequality:

Exacerbated by socioeconomic inequality, this affects primarily the marginalized groups and includes the Dalit and Adivasi women, where they experience both gendered and caste-based oppression⁸. They also have limited access to legal redress, and the crimes committed against them are either underreported or not taken seriously at all due to the social power dynamics and institutional discrimination.

5. Rape Culture and Media:

Sexual aggression is normalized by the rape culture disseminated by the media⁹. Objectification of women in films, advertisements, and popular culture diminishes women into being sexual commodities, and the casually taken jokes about rape and the insignificance of attitude to harassment diminish the gravity of the offense. This is a climate that encourages the toleration of violence and discourages the generation of condemnation as a community to condemn the perpetrators.

Consequences of Rape:

Medical and Physical Effects:

Rape has terribly devastating and, in most cases, protracted physical impacts on victims. Some of them suffer internal and external wounds, particularly when the assault is coupled with

⁷ Kanwel, S. and Ayub, N., 2023. FIR Denial by Police: A Legal and Ethical Dilemma. *PAKISTAN ISLAMICUS (An International Journal of Islamic & Social Sciences)*, 3(2), pp.335-343.

⁸ Mitra, D.P., Caste, Class and Gender: Intersecting Oppressions in Subaltern Communities of Rural India.

⁹ Seng, S., 2024. Rape Culture in Media Coverage: An Analysis of the "Nth Room" Scandal.

violence. The results are bruises, fractures, genital trauma, and chronic pelvic pain. There is also the subsequent risk of STIs and, in particular, HIV infection among the survivors, especially when the perpetrator is infected or when the perpetrator is more than just one¹⁰. There is the chance of unwanted pregnancies, and this puts the survivors in emotionally and medically complex conditions. Although immediate injuries can be healed, the survivor could have long-term reproductive health problems and have long-term somatic symptoms, including headaches, fatigue, and gastrointestinal problems. These physical consequences become constant reminders of the trauma undergone.

Mental and Emotional Trauma:

Injuries to the psyche are usually more lasting than bodily damage. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is often developed by survivors, and it manifests itself through flashbacks, nightmares, panic attacks, and numbness¹¹. It is common with anxiety, depression, self-blame, and shame, especially in the cultural settings where victim-blaming is the norm. This may also result in insomnia, social withdrawal, and, in most instances, even suicidal thoughts because of the trauma. Trust, relationship, and self-worth are seriously affected. Most survivors are not able to feel safe and in control of their lives, which results in long-term mental health issues in the case of insufficient therapeutic assistance.

Social Rejection and Stigma:

Rape survivors have to suffer severe social impacts in most societies, such as being ostracized and discriminated against by their families and society¹². It is more likely that the victim will be blamed instead of the perpetrator. There is a chance of the survivor being labeled as dishonored, and this can greatly impact his/her chances of getting married and being socially accepted. This stigma deters reporting and drives the survivors into isolation, aggravating trauma. Harassment or humiliation can make victims move to escape this life-threatening social state, which would otherwise be a social support in life.

¹⁰ Gonzalez-Guarda, R.M., Williams, J.R., Williams, W., Lorenzo, D. and Carrington, C., 2021. Determinants of HIV and sexually transmitted infection testing and acquisition among female victims of intimate partner violence. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 36(13-14), pp.NP7547-NP7566.

¹¹ Omopo, O.E., 2024. Exploring post-traumatic stress disorder: Causes, diagnostic criteria, and treatment options. *International Journal of Academic Information Systems Research*, 8(7), pp.35-44.

¹² Ankita, G.K., 2021. A REVIEW ON THE DIFFERENT PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS AND PROBLEMS FACED BY RAPE SURVIVORS. *Int J Med Lab Res*, 6(2), pp.46-54.

Loss of Education and Employment Opportunities:

The consequences of rape may interfere with the educational and working lives of the survivors. Trauma, or bullying, and their possible safety concerns may make students drop out of school¹³. Working women can either lose their employment or resign afterward because of psychological trauma, being harassed at work, or time wastage during court proceedings. These setbacks cause long-term economic dependency and fewer opportunities for financial independence, and increase vulnerability and social insecurity.

Legal Fatigue and Secondary Victimization:

The process of judicial intervention is supposed to bring justice, but the survivors may be re-traumatized by the judicial process. They are put through tests of long-lasting duration, a repetition of their stories, and a cross-examination of their character, which puts their credibility to the test. Delays in the process of justice cause mental exhaustion, referred to as legal fatigue. The second type of victimization is the secondary victimization, whereby institutions like the police and the courts treat the survivors insensitively, such that they become victims, blaming themselves for the crime. This would deter most victims, who would seek justice, and it promotes impunity.

Role of Judiciary and Landmark Judgements:

The Indian courts have been a critical influence on redefining legal reactions to rape. Cases of progressive verdicts have focused on the dignity of the survivor, mental trauma, and the sensitivity of such cases. Nevertheless, bias in the courts is still present in the lower courts. It has been pointed out by the Supreme Court that the testimony of the victim may be enough to get a conviction as long as it is credible.

Case Laws:**1. Nirbhaya Case (Mukesh & Anr. v. State for NCT of Delhi)**

Nirbhaya Case (Mukesh and Anr. vs State of NCT of Delhi) can be discussed as one of the most dramatic and shocking offenses in the history of Indian law¹⁴. On 16th December, 2012,

¹³ Varlık, S., Does Maltreatment of High School Students Lead to Dropout? A Case Study. *A Case Study*.

¹⁴Mukesh & Anr. v. State for NCT of Delhi, 2017 SCC OnLine SC 1210

a 23-year-old paramedical student and her friend were assaulted on a moving bus in Delhi in an area where six rapists, including a juvenile, gang-raped her and beat her with an iron rod, which severely damaged her internal organs. The victim succumbed to her injuries later, which resulted in protests in the whole country and an urgent call to change the criminal law concerning sexual violence. One of the significant jurisprudential matters was whether the death penalty was the appropriate response to the severity and inhumanity of the crime in the doctrine of rarest of rare and the sufficiency of the current laws on rape. The adult convicts were finally seen to have had their death sentences upheld, as it is a heinous offence according to the Supreme Court. High-profile legal changes, such as the establishment of the Justice Verma Committee and the passage of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, which enhanced the protection of women, resulted from this case.

2. Mathura Rape Case (Tuka Ram and Anr. v. State of Maharashtra)

The Mathura Rape Case (Tuka Ram and Anr. v. State of Maharashtra) is a historic custodial rape case that brought to light the lack of interest in sexual violence in an institution¹⁵. Mathura was a small tribal girl who was said to have been raped at a police station by two police officers who took her in custody, purportedly to settle a personal dispute. Although she alleged otherwise, the accused was found not guilty by the Sessions Court and the Bombay High Court, and the Supreme Court affirmed the decision on the basis that she did not put up a physical fight and therefore was consenting. The outstanding legal question was whether or not consent could be implied by simply not resisting violently, especially in the context of an ongoing environment where the victim is in authority and coercive presence. This ruling caused a clash of protests among the feminists, legal experts, and the general populace as the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983 amendment resulted in the enactment of more stringent clauses on custodial rape and the reversal of the burden of proof in these instances to the accused.

3. State of Punjab v. Gurmit Singh,

In the *State of Punjab v. The Supreme Court case of Gurmit Singh* considered the issue of the credibility of the prosecutrix when it comes to rape trials, particularly in cases of minors¹⁶. The case was about the kidnapping and rape of a 16-year-old girl. The accused was

¹⁵ Tuka Ram and Anr. v. State of Maharashtra, AIR 1979 SC 185

¹⁶ State of Punjab v. Gurmit Singh, (1996) 2 SCC 384

acquitted by the High Court, overruling the trial court, which found him guilty, in which the credibility of the testimony of the victim was doubtful despite corroborative medical evidence. The law question was whether the conviction of rape had to be based on corroboration or could it be based on the testimony of the victim. The Supreme Court reversed the acquittal and observed that the reliability of a victim statement is sufficient to convict, and advised the judicial process to treat the victim statement more seriously rather than relying on stereotypes and social prejudices. The case upheld a victim-focused criterion when adjudicating sexual assault.

4. **Mahmood Farooqui v. State (Govt. of NCT of Delhi),**

The *Mahmood Farooqui v. The case of State (Govt. of NCT of Delhi)* was an acquaintance rape and the problem of the concept of consent in non-violent intimate relations¹⁷. An American scholar of research alleged that the filmmaker Mahmood Farooqui raped her during a visit to her on a personal basis. Although the trial court found him guilty, the Delhi High Court overturned the conviction and stated that the victim might have misread the non-verbal communication of the victim and that the accused deserved the benefit of the doubt. The most important legal question connected with it is whether passive or nonverbal action or nonverbal action or non-explicit refusal may constitute consent, especially in a familiar or social setting. The case caused much public discussion regarding the limits of affirmative consent and brought up issues regarding the evidence required of the survivor in situations of acquaintance rape.

Recent Judgements:

- **X v. State of Maharashtra (2022):** Bombay High Court highlighted the importance of dignity and privacy for minor rape survivors, ordering state authorities to provide rehabilitation¹⁸.
- **Kajal v. Jagdish Chand (2020):** The Supreme Court awarded significant compensation to a minor rape survivor, recognizing that rape impacts a person's entire life¹⁹.

¹⁷ Mahmood Farooqui v. State (Govt. of NCT of Delhi), 2017 SCC OnLine Del 8209

¹⁸ X v. State of Maharashtra, (2022) 2 SCC 151

¹⁹ Kajal v. Jagdish Chand, 2020 INSC 135

- **State of Himachal Pradesh v. Sanjay Kumar (2017):** The apex court clarified that consent must be unequivocal, free from coercion or manipulation²⁰.

Impact on Families and Communities:

Rape doesn't just affect the individual; it has ripple effects across families and communities. Families often disown victims due to fear of dishonor. In rural areas, survivors may be forced to marry the rapist as a means to 'resolve' the issue. This contributes to deep-rooted cycles of trauma and injustice.

Challenges in Law Enforcement and Judiciary:

- **Low Conviction Rates:** NCRB reports suggest that conviction rates for rape hover around 30%.
- **Judicial Delays:** Despite fast-track courts, many cases take years for resolution.
- **Victim Harassment:** Police often subject survivors to invasive questioning and pressure them to compromise.
- **Lack of Legal Awareness:** Many survivors, especially from rural areas, are unaware of their legal rights.

Role of NGOs and Civil Society:

Rape Crisis Centre, Jagori, and Sayfty are organisations that have a crucial role in the rehabilitation of survivors, sensitizing society, and advocating²¹. They fill the gap of state machinery and victims in their work in rural and urban areas.

Recommendations for Policy and Legal Reform:

Mandatory Sensitization Training for police, lawyers, and judges:

A comprehensive legal reform and policy are required to enhance the justice system in

²⁰ State of Himachal Pradesh v. Sanjay Kumar, AIR 2017 SC 835

²¹ Wegrzyn, A., Tull, P., Greeson, M.R., Pierre-Louis, C., Patton, E. and Shaw, J., 2023. Rape crisis victim advocacy: a systematic review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 24(3), pp.1966-1985.

handling sexual violence²². Firstly, police, lawyers, and judges are recommended to undergo mandatory sensitivity training to ensure that these officials who might be receiving rape cases are made to treat the victims empathetically and professionally. This entails understanding how to operate in a trauma-informed way, eliminating the attitudes of victim-blaming, and the overall improved process of reporting and investigation.

Inclusion of Consent Education in school curricula:

A culture of respect and equality can be developed at a tender age by introducing consent education in schools²³. Sexual violence among adolescents can be prevented by teaching them about autonomy, boundaries, and healthy relationships with their bodies; this will assist in minimizing the social stigma of victims.

Increase in Budgetary Allocations for shelters, legal aid, and victim counseling:

Budgetary allocation towards shelters, legal aid services, and psychological counselors has to be increased²⁴. The survivors may also encounter severe emotional, financial, and social issues, and the proper state funding will cover them with the necessary protection, rehabilitation, and legal defense. Enhancement of these support systems will also help increase the survivor participation in the justice process.

Expedited Trials and Witness Protection Schemes:

Expedited trials and witness protection programs should be present²⁵. It is possible to ensure safety by reducing the delays in fast-track courts, which re-traumatize the survivors, in most instances, and is a potent mechanism against intimidation and retaliation. A good criminal justice system brings trust in judicial systems.

Community-Based Awareness Campaigns to challenge rape myths and stereotypes:

Rape myths, negative stereotypes, and cultural norms that lead to gender-based violence are

²² Eddyono, S.W., 2021. Restorative Justice for Victim's Rights on Sexual Violence: Tension in Law and Policy Reform in Indonesia. *Jseahr*, 5, p.176.

²³ Bragg, S., Ponsford, R., Meiksin, R., Emerson, L., & Bonell, C. (2021). Dilemmas of school-based relationships and sexuality education for and about consent. *Sex Education*, 21(3), 269-283.

²⁴ Albers, W.M., van Weeghel, J. and Roeg, D.P., 2025. Understanding financial hardship and financial recovery among clients in supported accommodation services. *PLoS One*, 20(10), p.e0334211.

²⁵ Sharma, R., 2024. Navigating the Complexities of Evidence Law: An In-depth Analysis of Strategic Hostility, Witness Protection Programs, and the Role of Psychological Trauma. *Witness Protection Programs, and the Role of Psychological Trauma* (February 10, 2024).

essential characteristics of local awareness that are necessary during the community-based awareness campaigns²⁶. It can support a shift in the views of the population and make the world a safer place when local leaders, educators, and the media are involved.

Conclusion:

To develop effective legal and social measures against rape, it is necessary to understand rape in terms of a multidimensional approach. It is not just a lust crime but a crime of power, control, and entitlement. Although landmark judgments and social movements have advanced the legal discourse, change in society is also essential. A future can be brought in which survivors are listened to, respected, and empowered, and where sexual violence is not accepted anymore through education, empathy, and structural reform.

²⁶ Ogunbambi, T., 2025. Traditional Institutions as Change Agents: Understanding Cultural Norms and Practices Promoting Gender-Based Violence in Nigerian Communities.