

## **The Attitudes of Social Work Trainees to Victim Blaming with Special Reference to Rape Cases**

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### ***Abstract***

Simply because she is a female the average Indian woman is likely to be variously a victim of feticide, infanticide, malnourishment, dowry, child marriage, maternal mortality, domestic servitude, prostitution, rape, honor killings and/or domestic violence. The stereo types of perception for the rape victims which are highly prevalent in a society like India prevent the rehabilitation of the victim back into society. Social workers are a part of the multi-disciplinary team which works in a scenario both to prevent instances of rape and at the same time is responsible for the effective rehabilitation of the victims back into society. However, the prejudiced mindset of the social worker will affect the rehab services which are being provided to the victims and also to the perpetrators. It hence becomes mandatory to analyse social life to understand the prevalence of rape myth acceptance and victim blaming attitudes which are prevalent among social workers. This study compares the prevalence of rape myth acceptance and victim-blaming attitudes among male and female social work trainees. It was revealed that the female respondents have a slightly more negative attitude towards the victims as compared to the male respondents. The fact however remains that both male and female respondents were victim blaming and had rape myth acceptance attitudes. This in turn points to the prevalence of poor quality professional social services which adversely affect the rehabilitation of the rape victims.

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**Keywords**

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**Introduction**

Womens' rights in India had earned the spotlight following the 2012 gang rape of a woman in Delhi. The event was reignited with the BBC documentary, 'The Indian Daughter,' by Lesslee Udwin. The documentary drew a great deal of attention to the international debate that gave a glimpse of the misogynistic act which was predominantly expressive of Indian culture and tradition (Krishnan, 2015). The Delhi rape case is a stain on Indian history. The masochist statement on the documentary by the Defense Lawyer at the Supreme Court of the Delhi Rape Case, A.K. Singh, suggested the deteriorative attitudes and practices which are prevalent even among the educated classes that were highly perpetrator supportive in nature. On the other hand, Ram Singh, the chief rapist of the Delhi gang-rape victim, told his rape-colleagues as they cleaned the bus, "Not to worry, nothing will happen." Ram Singh and his five fellow rapists did not go really wrong with this perception as the conviction rate for rape cases in India, between 2001 and 2010, was only 26 per cent (NCRB, 2001, 2011). A survey by Thomson Reuters' Trust Law Women (Gupta, 2013) in Delhi in the same period reveals that only one in four culprits of reported rape was punished. These incidences show that India has a long groomed detrimental misogynistic attitude which can be a reason for the hindrances in providing proper rehabilitation for the rape victims. On the other hand, we too have higher pieces of evidence of rape aftermaths such as mental insanity and suicide, which can be curbed only with the advent of changes in the attitudes of the people. An average Indian female could likely be a victim of feticide, infanticide, malnourishment, dowry, child marriage, maternal mortality, domestic servitude, prostitution, rape, honor killings and/or domestic violence simply because she is female. The National Crime Records Bureau's annual report of crime statistics also reports disturbing findings: A woman is raped some where in India every 20 minutes, and the number of children raped has increased by 33.6 per cent in the past 10 years (Gupta, 2013). There is a need to reform the images of women in the society that have been created over centuries by history, mythology and social customs. Women must be considered as individuals who are equal to men in their own right. Parents should not impose crippling restrictions on their

daughters, which prevent them from thinking and acting independently. Women also have to be assertive and develop a self-identity for themselves so that they can lead a life of security and dignity. They must be made economically independent to achieve this aim.

These changes should be first incorporated in the system that is in direct contact with these circumstances. Social workers are the emerging promise of transformation of society into better thresholds. These become complicated when social workers themselves develop attitudes of rape myth acceptance and victim blaming which can impact the bridging of the interface between the society and the rape survivor.

### **The Study**

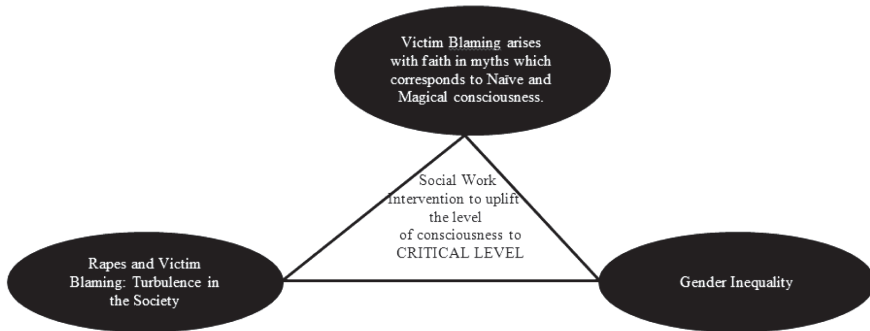
The study aims to generate a broader understanding of the prevalence of victim-blaming attitude and rape myth acceptance among social work trainees. Rape has become a common form of violence all around in India. The statistics do not show any leniency with a state like Kerala, where the literacy rate is the highest and the sex ratio also does not show much disparity. Various estimates show that this is a matter of serious concern which must be paid immediate attention by envisaging various intervention techniques. The intervention can come about at individual, familial, and community levels. This is, in fact, a dual-based approach wherein the two phases of the society must be dealt with in order to transform the attitudinal framework of the common people in the society. Initially, the patriarchal culture must be neutralised in order to provide equal concern to the gender, and on the other hand, the victim-blaming attitude of the people must be effectively reduced so that the effective rehabilitation of the rape victims into the society can be made possible.

Although each and every individual in a society has equal responsibility, including the Government, to disseminate adequate preventive and rehabilitative services with respect to the issue of concern, the role of a social worker is indispensable to assure the quality of the service provided. On the one hand, social workers can directly provide such services through direct intervention through NGOs or the voluntary approach. On the other hand, social workers can influence the attitudes and beliefs of the people through research findings, awareness generation, campaigns, and various other techniques so as to bring about a change in the social behaviour. Social workers must hence be free from the victim-blaming attitudes and

it, therefore, becomes important to research on the variance of such attitudes which must be effectively intervened in case of its prevalence. The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance (IRMA) scale can be used to test the prevalence of Rape-Myth acceptance among the respondents.

The social workers are a part of the multidisciplinary team which works in a scenario both to prevent instances of rape and at the same time are responsible for the rehabilitation of the victims back into the society. However, the prejudiced mindset of social workers will affect the rehabilitation services which are being provided to the victims and also to the perpetrators. The study is hence social work research which would help in improving social work practice and the quality of service rendered.

Figure 1. Social workers' role in eliminating rape and victim blaming attitudes of social work trainees



The general objective of the study is to examine the victim blaming and rape myth acceptance attitudes among social work trainees in Kerala. Specifically, the sub-objectives are:

- To understand the socio-demographic profile of the respondents.
- To understand the victim-blaming attitude and rape myth acceptance prevalent among the male respondents.
- To understand the victim-blaming attitude and rape myth acceptance prevalent among the female respondents.
- To compare the data collected among the male and female respondents.

The research design used in the study was a descriptive one, The researchers collected the sample from 60 respondents of whom 30 were

males and the remaining 30 were females. Primary data was collected directly from the respondents through a self-structured interview schedule administered to test the victim-blaming attitude among the respondents. The IRMA scale was also used for the assessment of the rape myth acceptance among the respondents.

### **The Rape Victim Blaming Attitudes of Social Work Trainees**

There has recently been a steady increase in rape instances, indicating the lack of security among the population of women in particular. This is a problem which requires prior focus but which is not possible without unawareness that this is the fact. Kerala is a state with the highest literacy rate in India and a growing concern of the increase in rape in Kerala is a situation which has to be immediately thought over. According to the National Crime Records Bureau in India (NCRB), there has been a startling increase of 873.3 per cent in the number of rape cases registered in India from 1971 to 2011 (Mittal, 2012). Rape remains as one of the highest underreported crimes of the world due to various reasons such as fear of retribution from their abusers, lack of remedies for the victims' situation, fear of skepticism and societal stigmatisation (Smith, 2004).

The study among female respondents indicates that 60 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed and 20 per cent of the respondents agreed that the rapes statistics in Kerala are increasing while 17 per cent of the respondents strongly disagreed and 3 per cent of the respondents disagreed to it. Data indicate that about 80 per cent of the respondents agreed that the incidences of rape are increasing in Kerala, which supports the various reports which are being disseminated through newspapers and records. The agreement of the social work trainees to this scenario indicates the good awareness which is prevalent among the respondents.

It is observed that the woman is often blamed for provoking rape through her appearance, gestures or behaviour and thereby stimulates the man. This reinforces the view that men rape due to their sexual desire and arousal. These arguments often deduce that the rape victim is not innocent. The study among the male respondents indicates that 6.67 per cent of the respondents strongly disagreed that the rape victims are innocent and about 30 per cent of the respondents disagreed to it while about 13.33 per cent of the respondents strongly agreed that rape victims are innocent and about 20 per cent of the respondents agreed to it. About 30 per cent of

respondents held a neutral opinion. The data suggest that a majority of 11 respondents disagreed that the rape victims were innocent which suggested a slight victim-blaming approach from the respondents. About 10 respondents were in favour of the victim and agreed that it was not the victim who was to blame for being raped. The result of about 11 respondents who responded neutrally indicates that the statement is mostly circumstantial.

The Indian government fails to protect women especially when the authorities, in the name of interrogation, sexually exploit women and subject them to the most degrading treatment. It is important to understand the efficacy of the present legal system and its implementation so as to make sure that effective interventions and policing can be understood. However, there appears to be a gap as to whether the legal framework or the implementation of it has to be effectively monitored and mentored. Rape is said to be so readily committed due to weak political structures, including the narrow focus of the legal definition of rape, the insufficiency of the crime penalties, low conviction rates as seen with the 2012 rates, and the lag time between the sentencing and its implementation (Baxi, 2012; Narrain, 2013; Simon-Kumar, 2014).

The role of a social worker is to understand that current problems which are being expressed in the field and to act accordingly. The field of work can never be isolated from the legislation since it applies to all citizens. It hence requires effective means to make the population understand their rights; fight for them, or to generate new policies for the welfare of the people concerned. A positive attitude and response are seen wherein the social work trainees can be moulded and developed into being better individuals to take up various roles for the development of the society. Stringent legal measures can be useful in controlling erratic behaviour by enforcing the legal measures that are supplemented by a wide range of extralegal preventive programmes (Madan and Sinha, 2013).

More than 85 per cent gave an indication of the role of the social workers in the social legislation. This suggests an increased self-evaluation by social work trainees regarding their need and potential to recover from the present scenario of the deprived status of various aspects relating to the conditions of rape victims.

Male dominance is an age-old practice in India and it increased after the colonial period with the influence of British rule. Masochism is celebrated in India and is glorified even in the media. This makes it an

acceptable rule in India which makes even rape being considered normal. The respondents are hence likely to possess such attitudes. A good percentage of the respondents agreed that masochism in India is responsible for the increase in crime in India. In India, expectations that women must defer to male authority support practices such as early marriage and coercive sexual relations. Pressure from peers and adults often encourages men to engage in risky sexual behaviour, such as having multiple sexual partners. This is often seen as a sign of male virility, and those who do not fulfill these expectations are ridiculed (Vermaand Lhungdim, 2003). A number of respondents agreed with the statement that masochism is responsible for rape which suggests that did not support patriarchy and tend to believe that it is abnormal.

It is not a new fact that women are often imposed upon by men as sex objects. Although education lifted such naïve thoughts among the men, it is observed that even education is limited in its effects. A striking majority of more than 60 per cent of the respondents believed that the women can effectively avoid rape by expressing their sexuality minimally. This suggests that these respondents tend to believe in decreased sex rights among women and that sex rights are mainly a male concern. When men unleash their sexuality and engage in sexual violence, then the women who are victims are blamed for provoking these attacks, especially because of their clothing (Ignatius, 2013). In India, the societal role of women is to reproduce the nation. In the Indian community, women are often referred to as men's sexual property and are not conceived of as being independent (Dobhal, 2011).

East and Adams (2002) purport that too many adolescent girls and young women report that they believe they do not have adequate sexual rights. Even though they are giving birth to citizens, including the men who are considered as their protectors, women's vulnerability to sexual violence and its prevalence prove that they are not provided with the same rights and privileges as men. The data clearly states an ambiguity which is prevalent among the male respondents. This indicates that the knowledge which has been gained does not make them believe that sex rights should be different for men and women.

The Indian Penal Code provides equal rights for men and women, however, when put into effect there is large scale discrimination and prejudices which exist between both the male and female respondents. The data shows that even the respondents adhere to such unwritten norms.

India is a nation which can never be separated from its culture and tradition which have been ingrained for centuries. This vision and attitude towards others by the social work trainees are tested through this interrogation. The percentage of agreement and disagreement reveals that the respondents have an equally divided stand, having nearly 50 per cent of respondents either agreeing or disagreeing with the statement. This shows the social workers in India still have a long way to go to escape from the stigma being instilled by the dominant value system and the traditions. Violence rooted in unequal power relations between men and women may also include the frequent infliction of harm that is justified or exonerated by custom, tradition and religion. Many cultures condone or at least tolerate a certain amount of violence against women. The Devdasi system and female genital mutilation are amongst the various examples of violence encouraged and perpetuated by cultural and religious practices (Menon, 2011).

India is a multicultural nation and most of these arise out of the multiple religions which are practised in different part of the nation. There is a huge array of faiths amongst religions in India. These faiths are involved in the moulding of the individual personality and character. These teachings affect the outlook for the individuals. The responses are against the studies which reveal a relation between the naïve religious beliefs and acceptance of the rape myth. The evolution of a patriarchy has well-defined roots in the dynamic interaction between the various religious faiths. Religion and religious beliefs are important in India and it follows that attitudes towards women's equality would be influenced by ones' religious affiliation. All world religions today maintain male social dominance within societal structures (Young, 1987).

There is a disproportionately greater gap between the escalating number of incidences of rape and the rehabilitation services which are being provided to the victims. Only a realisation of this as an issue in the current situation can help in improving the present conditions. The data reveals that nearly 50 per cent of the respondents agree that the current rehabilitation services which are being provided to the people are sufficient. This indicates that the social work trainees are unaware of the circumstances of poor treatment which is provided to the rape victims by the various rehabilitation services. During the advent of any rape cases, the first point of contact for the appropriate rehabilitation and justice to the rape-victim is the respective health centre and legal institutions. Most of the time it is reported that the



health centres do not support the evidence put forth by the victim thereby ignoring the basic health services which are provided by the centres. The victims do not even receive proper legal aid, and are often treated very badly by the police officers (Protest et al., 1992).

There is a wide gap between the reported and unreported crimes in India, specifically in rape. Awareness generation is the major tool in case of any problem. In order to foster this change, it is important to make sure that such critical thinking exists amongst the initiators so as to recognise it as a problem. This can potentially be utilised by the Master of Social Work (MSW) respondents to make sure that legal security is ensured to the people to help them evade the problem.

Data reveals that more than 65 per cent of respondents believe that a poor legal awareness among the victims of rape is responsible for them not reporting the cases to the respective legal systems. But the agonising fact remains that the legal institutions were not even able to deal with the reported cases properly.

It is often observed that the uneducated and poor are often victimised in cases of rape. Most rapes go unreported in India as the victims fear humiliation and isolation, and the situation is no different when compared to the world (Shanmugham, 2013). Most of the Indian parliamentarians have stated that this problem is being underestimated in India because large numbers happen (Anonymous, 2013).

The rate of recovery of any victim depends on how well the individual is placed in the society after the incident. If the society proves supportive, the rehabilitation becomes faster but on the other hand, if the society becomes too authoritative and finds fault with the victim it may result in drastic consequences. It is hence important to understand common misconceptions. A higher percentage of the respondents—nearly 60 per cent—agreed that the prevalence of the victim-blaming attitude may be due to widespread ignorance. This makes it clear that a change in the common attitude is necessary to ensure an efficient rehabilitation of the victims back into society and that the major factor of the hindrance is always society itself.

The current media is lacking in ethics and all the details of the victims are disclosed. In the case of the rape victim Ms. Jordan who passed away in 2015, she was stereotyped as a rape victim who invited rape and was often referred as the Park Street victim. These factors, which are highly contributory for the victim-blaming behaviour, should be analysed. To this

end, this report works to understand both how the press covers stories of rape and also asks whether the press provides a corridor to discuss gender justice (Drache and Velagic, 2013). The name disclosure of the victims even by indirect means results in a mental re-rape. The study among female respondents indicates that 17 per cent disagreed with the statement of whether name-disclosure leads to the victim-blaming attitude.

The quality of any social worker primarily depends on the ability to understand the needs and the problems which are faced by the client system by understanding their part. The poor empathising attitude among ordinary people results in the victim-blaming attitude which makes it difficult for the effective rehabilitation of the victims back into the society. The gap between the increased instances of rape cases and the frequent suicide and loss of mental stability reminds us of the high prevalence of the victim-blaming attitude within the society. Sunitha Krishnan, a rape victim herself and running an NGO (Prajwala) for providing rehabilitation services to rape victims states that people had to shed *na'dve* patriarchy and think broadly to evade the issue of victim-blaming.

The victim is often blamed as the individual is attached to certain stigmas concerning the rape myth. According to Sunitha Krishnan, the term 'rape victim' should be replaced with 'rape survivor.' The Westernisation of women is one of the most discussed topics in the recent times. The growing concern over the adoption of western styles has been criticised widely. Many often blame the women who were overtly westernised as inviting rape. This attitude among social workers becomes relevant as it can result in stigmas and prejudices against the victims.

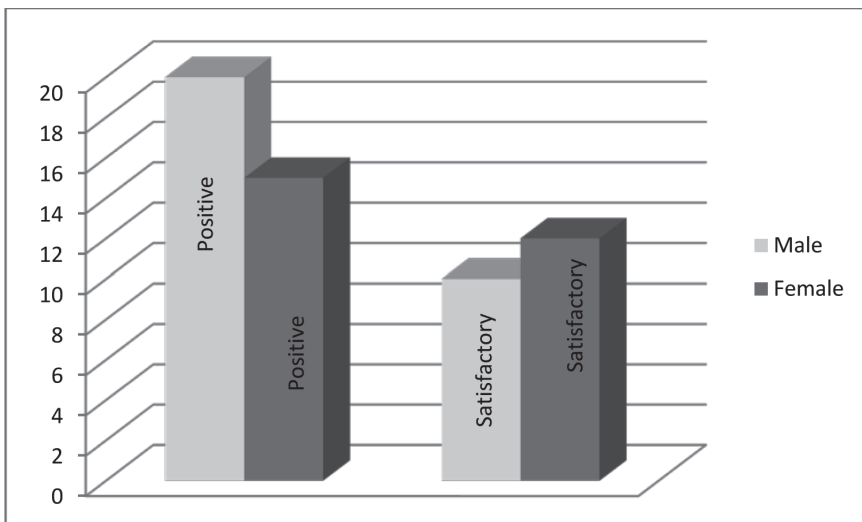
Social workers should avoid perceptions involving blaming the victim based on unwritten social norms and should make sure that support is provided instead of blame. Most of the respondents supported the statement that the victim should avoid circumstances where the victim gets raped and that corrective measures should be taken by the respondents in order to avoid rape. This is a traumatising instance of victim blame where the victim is blamed for the circumstances of being raped and that the perpetrator is given the grace of being the individual who was forced to rape women under the circumstances which the victim had generated.

A clear majority of 50 per cent agreed to the statement that women should take corrective measures to avoid rape. This indicates that the respondents identify 'getting raped' as a problem which needs to be corrected to avoid rape the next time. The crimes are repeated again and

again since the issues are not properly addressed. These issues require a solution which is sustainable and where the individuals understand the problems faced. It is important to understand the current status of the problems which are occurring, the means by which these are addressed and what is the probability for it to happen again in the society. It suggests that social workers understand that the problems which are being faced today have to be emphasised in a different novel means in order to avoid the chances for them happening again.

The scale for measuring levels of Victim-Blaming Attitude is a 23-item Likert type scale. It has statements such as “I feel that the incidences of rape cases are increasing in Kerala.” For each statement, scores range from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). It measures how much Victim-Blaming is the respondents. Scores may be totaled for a cumulative score. Total scores range from 22 to 115. Higher scores indicate greater the victim-blaming attitude. The scores were divided into 3 levels, namely; Positive (51-80), Satisfactory (81-90), and Negative (90-115). Hence, Positive is indicative of a lower victim-blaming attitude, ‘Satisfactory’ is indicative of moderate levels of Victim-Blaming Attitude and ‘Negative’ is indicative of a higher level of victim-blaming attitude.

Figure 2. Prevalence of victim-blaming attitude among respondents



The above data indicates that 18 respondents had 'Satisfactory' and the remaining 12 respondents had 'Negative' Victim-blaming attitude while none of the respondents had a 'Positive' Victim-Blame attitude. On the other-hand, 14 respondents had 'Satisfactory' victim-blaming attitude while 16 respondents had 'Negative' Victim-Blaming attitude.

### **Rape Myth Attitude: Victim Invites Rape**

Alcohol consumption has long been considered as being likely to increase vulnerability to sexual victimisation, with numerous studies documenting a positive association between women's alcohol use and their experiences of sexual victimisation, at both the global and the event level. However, it is not true that women who drink alcohol are responsible for their victimisation. It has been an issue of controversy regarding the clothes worn by females which attract men to rape. This is a long drawn misconception that is still fostered even today. Do the social work trainees also believe in such a notion that the clothing women wear invites men to rape women? To a certain extent both the male and the female respondents shared this view.

India is a nation which has very well demarcated patriarchal norms. It is often said that it is not safe for women to be out at night. But the truth remains that when there occurs a need, it may become essential for a woman to go out at night. The statement tests the prevalence of such acceptance of prejudices. Dekeseredy et al. (2000) mention the role of masculinity in rape culture. Men experience stress when women do not permit them to easily assert their masculinity through sex and women who resist sex will more likely become targets for violence. Sometimes it is often said that women who initiate affectionate behaviour are indicating their sexual desire, thus igniting the men to rape. The responses to this statement can help to identify the acceptance of this myth by the respondents.

### **Unintentional Behaviour of Perpetrator**

Men are often put into a frame of support by stating that the rape instance had happened unintentionally and that it was due to the strong sex drives which lead him to do it. During instances of rape, it is often said that the rape attempt has commenced due to the strong sexual desire of the men which they tried to unleash. In case of such instances, the victimised individual is often undermined under the status by which men claim the innocence. Rape is not a result of an uncontrolled desire for sex. It comes about from

the wrong notions which are being learned throughout their life and of dominance against gender disparity. Over-consumption of alcohol leads the individual to loss of consciousness. Alcohol was responsible for the rape cases in many instances, and this has resulted to some extent of compromise from the law for the perpetrators. Being drunk does not provide a lenient side for men to find them innocent. The culture has given men certain rights which are unwritten to claim themselves innocent in such circumstances.

At least one-half of all violent crimes involve alcohol consumption by the perpetrators, the victim, or both (Collins and Messerschmidt, 1993). Sexual assault fits this pattern. Thus, across the disparate populations studied, researchers consistently have found that approximately one-half of all sexual assaults are committed by men who have been drinking alcohol. Forced rape always involves resistance and at the same time submission. Sometimes it also happens that power dominance can result in submission due to fear. In either case, it can be referred to as rape since it involves the submission of a person before another against their will. Rape is the unleashing of sexual desire over the weak by the perpetrator by the use of force. In various circumstances, it can also result from fear or compulsion where the victim is often threatened in case of disclosure. Hence, it is rape when the victim is sexually assaulted even in the absence of resistance if it is against the will of the victim. The bruises and wounds on the victims depend on the extent of harm which was being inflicted by the perpetrator on the victim during the instance of rape. It is, however, not a precursor to identifying whether the victim has been raped or not. The most infamous sexual assault is rape by imparting pain or harm to the victim by the use of various weapons. It can be with or without the use of weapons. A stigma, however, prevails in the society which estimates that if a weapon is not used during a sexual assault, it cannot be called rape. It is often said that girls who resist can escape rape incidences. But if a rape happens without mutual consent, it is always that the initiator who is the culprit and there is no significance in saying 'No' and resisting rape. The statement is to understand the level of acceptance of the statement by the respondents.

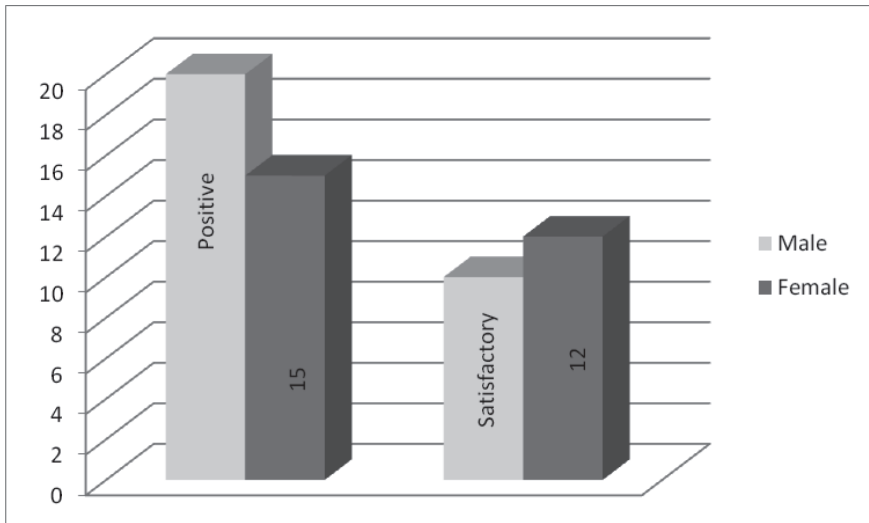
### **False Rape Claims by Victims**

After rape cases are reported, there is always a cross-examination and debate as to whether the rape accusations had occurred due to the underlying factor that the victims agreed to the rape and then regretted it. There are various

circumstantial factors which influence such incidences and claims cannot be made blindly. The statement measures the prevalence of such blind faith in statements by the respondents. In the recent scenario, although there have been many different instances where the men are fought by women by claiming rape, it is highly insufficient to generalise these facts which are very minimal.

The Eve in the Garden of Eden myth has projected the image of woman as a lying temptress - the Seductress, who destroys man's innocence. Such identification of women reflects a cultural suspiciousness towards women as "provocateurs" in any sexual encounter with men. The statement is to understand the prevalence of such attitudes among the respondents. Rape incidences complicate the life of the victims in the future with related health concerns and emotional deprivation. There may be certain situations where the victim is emotionally unstable which has to be prioritised in such a way that they have to be scientifically proven. In other cases it is just a myth which is blindly followed. The lack of commitment in relationships and the dynamics which exist within the society today make it sometimes convenient for girls who are caught cheating on their boyfriends to claim it was rape. The statement was to understand the acceptance of the claims among the respondents.

Figure 3. Percentile distribution of the rape myth acceptance among the male and female using the IRMA scale



About 10 per cent of the female respondents had a negative rape myth score and no male respondents had a negative rape myth score. About 40 per cent of female respondents had responses categorised under satisfactory. Data reveals that 50 per cent of the female respondents had a positive rape myth score while about 66.67 per cent of male respondents had a positive rape myth score. The data clearly indicates that there is an acceptance of the rape myth which was slightly more in the case of the female respondents. The data also indicates more positive rape myth acceptance among the male respondents when compared to the females.

### **Discussion**

The study shows that the male respondents had a more positive rape myth acceptance (statistically significant at 0.05 level) though they did not differ in their attitude age, monthly income, and educational status. It can also be noted that none of the respondents had a positive victim blaming attitude, both the male and female respondents had a high probability of victim blaming attitude. The study of a victim blaming attitude among police officer trainees also reveals that the female respondents had a slightly more acceptance of the rape myth when compared to the male respondents (Thomas, 2016). The rape myth acceptance was also found to be statistically significant when considering religion as a factor. However, the extent of influence exerted by the different religious faiths on the attitude of the respondents is outside the scope of study. It can be pointed out from the observations of this study that religious faiths can induce the rape myth acceptance behaviour patterns of the individuals.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistics reveal a hike in the rape incidences in Kerala state (NCRB, 2011,2015). The social work trainees also expressed the view that the instances of rape in Kerala are at its peak. This suggests that the social work trainees are well aware of the facts pertaining to the occurrences of rape cases in Kerala. The Hindustan Times also reported that God's own country, Kerala, is unsafe for women, with a three-fold increase in rapes in nine years (Babu, 2017). This requires the better reinforcement of the multidisciplinary team involving the social work fraternity to ensure quality and professional social services to the rape survivors and also to the general population. Effective social work

services promote independence and resilience contributes not only towards the goal of delivering excellent public services, but towards developing the economy, helping people to become self-reliant once more. Knowledge deficit, competency deficit, professional deficit, governance deficit, and ideological deficit (Prasad, 2014) may be the reasons for such acceptance of victim blaming and rape myth acceptance attitude of social work trainees. Because during their training period, especially in the current scenario in India, the trainees lack orientation in academic work ethic and scholarship, and a lack of ability to use a social work lens to examine social issues. These are two important aspects under knowledge deficit which can hamper the attainment of a “desirable society” that the social work profession envisaged.

### **Implications for Social Work**

Social work is a practice-based profession which initiates close working with the client system. In such a scenario, it necessitates the need to have an unprejudiced attitude towards the respective clients so that the problems faced by them are effectively resolved and their rehabilitation is enhanced. There are different methods of social work, namely, primary and secondary methods which involve six social work methods. These involve casework, group work, community organisation, social action, social welfare administration, and social work research.

Casework is a potential social work method which can be effectively used for the rehabilitation of the rape victim. A rape victim is usually in a state of having an utterly shattered mind, facing consequences emotionally, mentally and physically. An effective session of case working without prior prejudices will help the client to overcome the issue which is faced. This will help the client to fit back into the society with ease. The same also holds true for group work methods. When people belonging to the same crisis situation speak together, it will help them to overcome the trouble faced by them, there by making them realise that there are still a lot more of people who face the same situation. This helps to take efficient strategies to rehabilitate the rape victims. But it is important to realise that one must adhere to the old phrase ‘prevention is better than cure.’ Therefore, steps must be taken to prevent instances of rape. This can be achieved by making effective use of the other social work methods such as community



organisation and social action. These can help to draw in a movement where a rehabilitation of not only the victims but also the criminals occurs so that the society no longer grooms such instincts. The perpetrator is not the prime culprit and rehabilitation should be provided at individual, family and community level. In order to take appropriate steps to tackle such situations, an efficient knowledge base through social work research and effective social welfare administration is needed.

Even when the services provided to the victims are highly inadequate and insufficient in a vast nation like India, the existing conditions and quality of the type of services provided have to be questioned significantly. The social workers are those professionals who bridge the gap between the victims and the rehabilitation of them smoothly into the society. In order to understand the Indian socio-cultural and economic front of the increasing instances of rape in India, effective social work intervention has to be cultivated in India. However, the prevalence of the victim-blaming attitude can hinder the quality of services which can be provided to the victims. The gap between the increased instances of rape cases and the frequent suicide and loss of mental stability is a reminder of the high prevalence of victim-blaming attitudes within the society. In such a scenario when there are false beliefs and myths it is necessary to bring about a change in rape culture, especially in a patriarchal society like India. Moreover, since social workers are the highest potential stakeholders who can effectively intervene in such a situation, it is necessary to understand the prevalence of the victim-blaming attitude and the rape myth belief among social workers. It is our culture that leads women to some degree to collaborate in their own rape, an aspect of the matter that men seem determined to claim which absolves them from responsibility. Perhaps this is implicit in the assumptions about male power they are heir to. But every woman also inherits assumptions about female submission.

### **Conclusion**

A positive worldview allows for positive choices. A negative worldview leads to negative choices. People with skewed negative worldviews often do not see what others see as possible choices because of the nature of how the human brain works. Our brains work on schemata which allow us

to easily navigate our world without having to relearn everything we encounter, providing us with the ability to build a knowledge base. Information is stored in our brain based on experiences. Choices are made based on that information.

People actively seek support for previously learned associations confirming their worldview and ignore, generally not on a conscious level, information that differs from previous information. Changing maladaptive schema wired in early childhood is no easy thing. Yet all too often society expects a person to just make better or different choices. To see the world through a victim-blaming mindset a person either does not understand the way the human brain operates or justifies a skewed opinion based on their self-supportive schema. In this, knowledge truly is power.

To paraphrase Holmes (1857), a mind stretched can never resume its previous form, and that is our goal as clinical social workers, to stretch minds; to allow maladaptive schemata to mutate by generating new ideas and experiences in a way that helps a person overwrite previously stored information, building bridges to new ways of thinking, seeing, and experiencing the world. In this manner, we are agents of change.

In the end, what social workers can do is provide a set of tools to help people help themselves. But, as any good craftsman knows, we must use the correct tools to do the job.

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