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FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO RAPE IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The development of social problems in Malaysia, especially that involving rape and sexual assaults, has seen a serious escalation. This study intended to determine factors that make adolescents vulnerable to rape. The methodology used in this study was the case study method. Nine trainees from the Adolescent and Children Protection Centre were chosen and interviewed as study samples. The NVivo 12 software was used to analyse the findings. This study found that seven factors had influenced the vulnerability of adolescents to rape, such as the victims themselves, parents, internet and technology, family background, education, peer influence as well as society and the government. Hence, this study has provided important information to all interested parties that can be helpful when planning preventive programs and treatments for cases related to rape.

INTRODUCTION

Studies on rape cases and sexual assaults first attracted attention among Western researchers in the 1970s, especially studies that intend to determine the factors that lead to rape cases and sexual assaults as well as effects on the victims. Meanwhile, studies in Malaysia only began in the middle of the 1990s (Salhah, 2012). Generally, numerous studies have tried to determine the effects of rape, such as *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder* (PTSD), physical trauma,

depression, suicidal inclinations, anger or aggressive behaviour and guilt, shame and self-blame, that are experienced by victims.

Generally, rape or molestation refers to violent acts that involve forceful sexual acts. The rape victim is usually a woman, regardless of age, and is either a child, adolescent, adult or an elderly. Rape is one way of degrading, belittling, frightening and trespassing a woman. Sexual assaults, such as rape, cannot be presumed to be one way of expressing intimacy, love or pleasure between those involved. From a historical perspective, rape and molestation is thought to have begun a long time ago when women were presumed to be the possession of men, without given any equal rights from legal, social or human rights perspective. In some societies, the position of women are at the bottom rung and women are presumed to be of no value or use (Saifol Hamree, 2013).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

One of the sexual problems is rape among adolescents or when the victims are adolescent girls. In several cases, the victims were raped forcibly or against their will and there were below-age victims who had consensual sex, as defined according to Section 376 of the Penal Code (Ezarina, Nur Farrah Alya, Norulhuda & Nor Jana, 2017). Besides that, there were cases of females having sex with multiple partners or also known as casual sex (Kamarul Azmi, 2017). According to Mohammad Aziz Shah, (2004), rape cases are not limited to rape and molestations only but includes sodomy, extreme obscenity, torture by force and killing of the victim.

Hence, the rape problem is a social problem involving adolescents because today the statistics for rape cases from 2010 to 2017 in Malaysia involves girls below the age of 16 (the figures do not include incest). The statistics show a worrying number of cases, whereby 2500 to 3000 cases were reported each year, with Selangor recording the highest number of cases. What is more worrying is that children under the age of 12 were some of the rape victims (Ezarina et al., 2017).

In reference to the Malaysian law, sex with a minor (under the age of 16 and also referred to as statutory rape) with or without any consent is assumed to be rape and is an offence under the law. In reference to Section 375 of the Penal Code, there are several instances where a man is presumed to have committed an act of rape when having sex with a woman. Nor Shafrin (2012), Ezarina et al., (2017) and Klein & Cooper (2017) stated that an offence under statutory rape includes any sexual relations with a minor (under the age of 16 years), either it is oral, vaginal or anal sex, with or without the consent of the minor.

This clearly shows the seriousness of this phenomenon, especially when the victims involved in the rape are adolescents. The spread of rape and the increase in rape victims among adolescents is dangerous and has a negative impact on the formation of a healthy community (Danish Yusrie & Mohammad Rahim, 2017). Hence, appropriate measures should be taken to curtail this form

of ‘cancer’ from spreading amongst the Malaysian society (Azizi & Badruzaman, 2013).

However, there are several factors that cause women, especially adolescents, to easily become rape and sexual assault victims. Hence, this study felt that a study of factors that influence adolescents’ vulnerability to rape should be implemented. This study had examined seven factors that were thought to encourage adolescents to become rape victims.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study was to identify factors that contributed to an act of rape in Malaysia

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Framework of the Study

This study had used the qualitative approach and case study design. The case study was descriptive and explanatory in form, whereby it explored the psychological patterns of adolescent rape victims in order to understand the process of how the rape afflicts these victims. According to Yin (2003), a descriptive form of case study provides an overall picture of the phenomenon that is to be studied in its context. Whereas, the explanatory form of case study tries to present data that explains the relations between the cause and effect of a phenomenon, which is to explain what causes a certain effect to be produced (Ahmad Jazimin, 2008).

Study Samples

The samples in this study were chosen using the *purposeful* and *convenience* sampling methods in order to collect qualitative data in stages (Merriam 2001). The participants (n=9) were adolescent rape victims staying in a Protection Centre managed by the Department of Social Welfare (JKM). Therefore, based on participants’ confessions and their registration records, the study managed to ascertain that these participants were actual adolescent rape victims because all these victims had made police reports or were referred by various hospitals.

Study Instrument

As for this study, the researcher played the role of the main instrument; thus, the research tools used to obtain information and qualitative data were interviews, observations and document analysis, which was then analysed using the NVivo 12 software. According to Yin (2003), the three tools for collecting qualitative data were enough to perform data triangulation in this case study. Thus, the study prepared interview questions to be posed to participants and then the researcher obtained as much information possible through observations and document analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

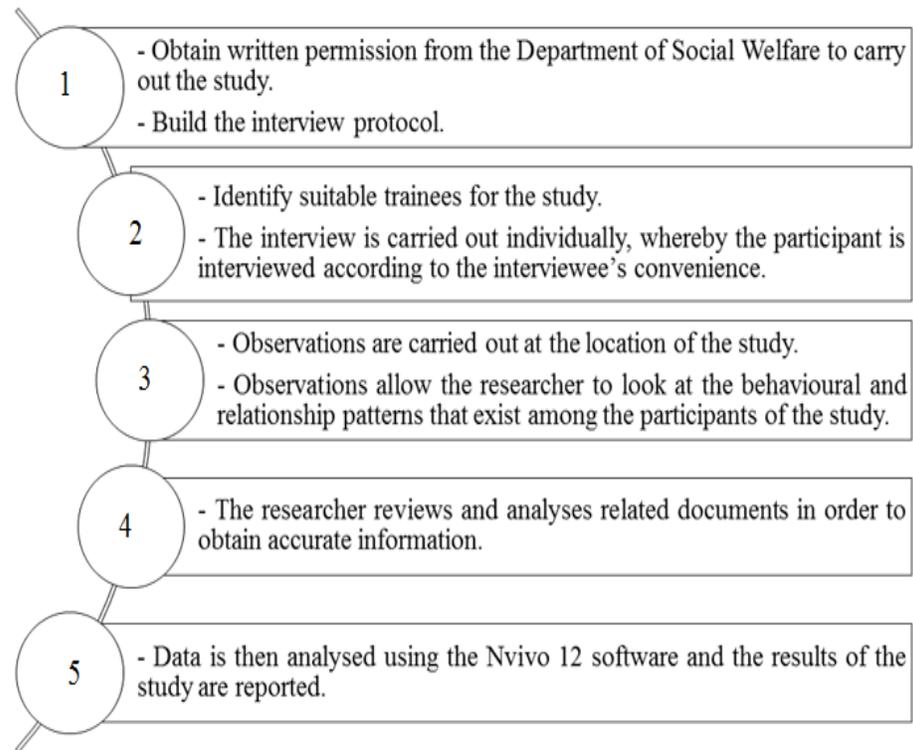


Diagram 1 Steps Involved in the Data Collection Process.

According to Diagram 1, this study was based on the established research procedures to ensure the objectives of the study are achieved. The procedure starts by obtaining written approval from the Department of Social Welfare and then the interview protocols are built to collect data and information from the participants of the study. The interview protocols are important as it acts as a guide to ensure the interview is carried out systematically and in a proper manner.

The second procedure begins when the study identifies suitable participants and the interview sessions are carried out individually. The interview would provide useful information that has a significant impact on the findings of the study.

The third procedure is the observation, which is carried out at the location of the study. The observation allows the study to look at the behavioural and relationship patterns that exist among participants of the study.

The fourth procedure refers to the review and analysis of pertinent documents related to counselling session reports, participant's registration reports, review of police and hospital reports about the participants, which are meant to obtain accurate information. When all the necessary information in

complete, the data was then analysed using the NVivo 12 software and the findings were reported.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study had analysed the qualitative data involving the nine participants in the case study. Seven factors were identified, namely the *victims themselves, parents, internet and technology, family background, education, peer influence as well as society and the government.*

Victim Themselves

The first factor found to influence the vulnerability of adolescents to rape was the victim themselves. The interview sessions and data analysis found that six out of nine participants confessed that they were rape victims due to their own self. The inquisitive nature of wanting to try or know was the main factor that had influenced the involvement in the rape incident in the first place. Besides that, their attitude towards having consensual sex and rebellious nature were contributing factors. Following is the excerpt from the interview that shows the comments of Participants 5 and 6.

Reference 1 - 0.49% Coverage

“He came close to me, after that I.., because I too knew about that thing. I said I did not want to, did not want all that. **Suddenly, I do not know how but my feeling (the desire), not a desire like (I do not care), aha, I do not care**”.

Code: P6/PKL/DS/PIT

Reference 1 - 0.17% Coverage

“Because I **wanted to try something new**”

Code: P5/PKL/DS/PIT

Parents

The second factor that influenced the vulnerability of adolescents to rape was the parental factor. Findings from the data triangulation found two aspects in the parental factor, namely parental knowledge and skills, communication in the family as well as the attitude of the parents. This factor includes the aspect of parental lack of knowledge in up-bringing children, besides the attitude of not being bothered about the children, specially their adolescent daughters who have reached adulthood. The parent’s assumption that their children are adults had resulted in them neglecting their obligatory responsibility. Following is an excerpt from the interview with Participant 7.

Reference 1 - 0.88% Coverage

“To say he is *caring* (no), *caring* if compared to my mother, **she is more caring. Then, sometimes, mother and father, husband and wife as usual, mother has to listen to what**

father says. So, when, sometimes my father likes to get angry for no reason. At that time, I like to frequently stay in my room”

Code: P7/PKL/IB/PSKK

Reference 1 - 0.30% Coverage

V“With Mother it is ok, with Father not so much (**meaning**). **With father, he is working, difficult to be at home”**

Code: P7/PKL/IB/SIB

Internet and technology

The third factor is the use of the internet and technology, which is divided into two, namely the use of the mobile phones and watching pornographic videos. Wide exposure to the internet and technology experienced by the adolescent, especially the rape victim, is a dominant factor. The participants stated that they had under-age sexual relations because they were influenced by watching pornographic videos, making acquaintances with male friends through *WeChat* or *WhatsApp* as well as contacting the perpetrators through the telephone. Following is an excerpt from the interview session with Participant 5 related to the use of the telephone.

Reference 1 - 0.49% Coverage

“Actually, I knew him from school, then a female relative introduced m to my boyfriend. **Got to know him, then she gave my number to my boyfriend. We communicated through WhatsApp, we chatted then when I was 14, we fell in love”**

Reference 1 - 0.08% Coverage

“Knew **him from WeChat”**

Code: P5/PKL/IT/TEL

Following is the excerpt from an interview session with Participants 1, 4 and 7, related to watching pornographic videos.

Reference 1 - 0.50% Coverage

“I felt that thing, **I wanted to know that thing, because my friend had shown that kind of video.** When I was 14 years old. Before that..ehh..after I had my first sexual encounter. My friend showed me. My friend sent me the video through *WeChat*”

Code: P1/PKL/INT/VDO

Reference 1 - 1.10% Coverage

“**My friends, when I was in standard four,** they used to ride the bicycle and all that, so I used to hang-out (*lepak*) with them by the roadside, **they showed me videos and pictures.** I just

glanced through them. The, I wondered what it felt like, crazy thing. **Then in standard six, it was with a friend who persuaded me. So, I like wanted to see just once how it felt to see the video. Then arhhhh.. that is when it happened”**

Code: P4/PKL/INT/VDO

Reference 1 - 1.27% Coverage

“We play the computer, we play the usual game, then I noticed he was different, what was wrong with him I wondered. I was sleepy, I told him that I was sleepy, he was mumbling, he mumbles a lot. **Then he started watching porno videos. Then I said, “why are you watching this, I want to play games only. Other Games ok, ok, ok”. Then he suddenly acted differently. Ehmm, he molested me (he molested me, he hugged, kissed, it was like that)”**

Code: P7/PKL/INT/VDO

Family background

The fourth factor is family background. According to the analysis of the interview and review of documents, it was found that this factor comprised three main aspects, namely the economical status of the family, foster family and parent’s marital status. A low and inconsistent family income status had contributed to rape among the participants of this study.

The findings showed that most adolescent rape victims came from families with low to moderate income. Their families originated and lived in villages or suburbs that were developing. Most of their parents or guardians lived in rented homes, either low-cost houses such as apartments or single-storey terrace houses. Many of the parents were employed in the support service sector, such as security guards, cleaners, self-employed etc. Following is an excerpt from the interview with one of the informants.

Reference 1 - 1.50% Coverage

“Because **90% of their family income is below three thousand, it is less than three thousand** (low income). The family income is less than three thousand. Although less than three thousand, mother and father were working, you can imagine **what kind of work pays three thousand, usually it is jobs like a cleaner, security guard or working in the supermarket and there were many siblings ,usually there are four or more, like that and their houses, if it is not a low-cost house, then its bungalow lot or a flat.** Its like, well like the cheap ones, the double story and single-story ones, only 30% in this group (those who rent it). Aha, they rent it”

Code: I5/PKL/LBK/EK

Besides that, the participants also had problematic family backgrounds, such as divorced parents and the victim being left with foster parents or close relatives.

Reference 1 - 0.22% Coverage

“If I were to ask from the *family* it would be difficult because **my family, my parents are divorced, and my mother works in a restaurant**”

Code: P1/PKL/LBK/STIB

Education

According to the interview and document analyses, education, which is the fifth factor, was separated into three aspects, namely religious education, sexual education and the level of education (school) received by the participants in this study.

Most of the participants received religious education on a moderate scale, however, the implementation of obligatory religious practices was lacking. The examples are as follows:

Reference 1 - 0.52% Coverage

“My mother is worried that I would carry on doing this. But my mother had never admonished me or scolded me, **she just said that I should think of Allah because this is illicit sex.** Then my mother said that I had reached puberty, so I have to burden the sin myself, she was just worried, so she advised me.”

Code: P1/PKL/PDD/PA

The analysis on the level of sexual education and knowledge about sex possessed by the participants showed that they did not possess knowledge about sex. According to several participants, since young they were not exposed to sexual knowledge until, they became victims of rape. Following is an excerpt from the interview with Participants 4 and 7.

Reference 1 - 0.94% Coverage

“**Moreover, from young my mother never exposed me to what is virginity and all that. So, I thought it was not important.** Until I was in Form 2, friends started to talk about virginity. Then, is this thing important? I do not have it, **so I thought at that time, since I do not have it,** let it be then. At that time my thinking was shallow. At that time my thinking was like that, so just take whatever you want”

Code: P4/PKL/PDD/PSEK

Reference 1 - 0.26% Coverage

“When I first had sex, I did not know (did not know anything at all). How I lost my virginity, I do not know”

Code: P7/PKL/PDD/PSEK

The next aspect is the level of education (schooling) received by the adolescent rape victim. All the participants were found to have left school, especially when they were confirmed to be pregnant. For example, there were participants who left school in Form 5 because they were confirmed to be pregnant. Besides that, some participants decided to leave school earlier because they were rape victims and confirmed pregnant. Following are excerpts from the interview with some of the participants.

Reference 1 - 0.11% Coverage

“I am yet to take PT3, I have stopped”

Code: P2/PKL/PDD/TPS

Reference 1 - 0.47% Coverage

“My parents stopped me from going to school because if I were to be expelled from school then it would be difficult to re-register. (Meaning that after Form 1, I just went to school for a while). Yes, for four months”

Code: P4/PKL/PDD/TPS

Reference 1 - 0.21% Coverage

“Only until Form 1. I am not interested in schooling”

Code: P5/PKL/PDD/TPS

Peer Influence

The sixth factor is peer influence. The result of data triangulation indicated that peer influence was the main factor why the participants became rape victims. According to the participants, they were influenced by friends with whom they had together watched pornographic videos besides getting acquainted with male friends introduced by their female friends after which they did not return home for long periods of time. Moreover, most participants had many friends from different age groups. They were easily influenced by the persuasion of these friends ending up in sexual relations because they enjoyed socialising and entertainment. Following are excerpts from the interview with the participants.

Reference 1 - 0.50% Coverage

“I felt that thing, I wanted to know that thing because my friend had showed me a video about all that. When I was 14 years old too. Before I, no no, after I had my first sexual

encounter. My friend showed me. My friend gave me a video through WeChat”

Code: P1/PKL/KWN

Reference 3 - 0.82% Coverage

“My friends, when I was in standard four, they used to ride the bicycle and all that, so I used to hang-out (*lepak*) with them by the roadside, they showed me videos and pictures. I just glanced through them. The, I wondered what it felt like, crazy thing. Then in standard six, it was with a friend who persuaded me.”

Code: P4/PKL/KWN

Society and Government

The seventh factor is related to the role of society and the government. It is well known that the social problem phenomenon among adolescents has become uncontrollable and increasingly widespread lately. The role of society, especially that of neighbours, has become lax. The lacklustre or ‘could not care less’ attitude towards the surrounding situation could very well contribute to the occurrence of rape among adolescents. Following are excerpts from the interview with an informant.

Reference 1 - 3.42% Coverage

“Even that is an interesting case. Because the things that we do not expect. Like we are working like this and the children are at home (we do not know what they are doing), we don’t know. Because even now, we as neighbours lack communication (we don’t care). Aha, there we can organize ourselves; society needs to play an important role to eradicate this thing. Kids sometimes, they cannot foresee potential problems. Like we know but we do not know what they know. So, we are near there, and we show concern although we are being a busy-body but just to remind each other (to take notice of what is happening around us). Aha, because the adolescent kids do not understand. Whether what they are doing is wrong or right, I don’t understand”

Code: I2/PKL/MK

Reference 1 - 1.00% Coverage

“So, for me, from my opinion as a member of society, although it is known that the girl is pregnant, we should accept her as per her condition. Do not condemn her because when society knows about the situation, they will condemn her since they have been involved in similar activities”

Code: I3/PKL/MK

DISCUSSIONS

According to the analysis mentioned in Chapter 4, it was found that the main factor that contributes to participants becoming rape victims is because of themselves. The urge of wanting to try, an immature attitude and shallow thinking were among the reasons why they were easily enticed and went on to becoming vulnerable to rape or committing sexual acts. This was supported by Zainudin and Norazmah (2011), who found that adolescents involved in social problems were those who had a high degree of wanting to try something new.

Besides that, the parent factor, such as lack of parental knowledge and skills, frequent fighting between parents, not possessing good attitudes or exhibiting a good example as well as not caring enough for their children were reasons for these victims to isolate themselves and do their own thing. This finding was consistent with Zainudin and Norazmah (2011), who stated that parents who often exhibited inappropriate behaviour at home such as smoking, swearing, being highly agitated as well as gambling etc. do influence children to become involved in social problems. According to Khadijah *et al.*, (2012), parents should be *role models*, a place of reference and out-pouring of problems for children by giving adequate love and affection so that children do not get involved in sexual misconduct.

The use of the internet and rapid expansion of technology has a negative impact of society, mainly adolescents who are easily exposed to negative behaviour. According to David S.Wall (2005), Mohd Dahlan and Ida Shafinaz (2010), there is a significant relationship between internet usage and the occurrence of crime. The findings were consistent with factors that drove the participants to become rape victims, which were the use of the internet for interacting in the social media, watching pornographic material on the internet and using the latest technology applications such as *WeChat* and *WhatsApp* on their mobile phones. This finding was supported by Ezarina *et al.*, (2017), whereby respondents in her study stated that they met their male friends or the perpetrators through *WeChat* and *WhatsApp* applications and later met up in-person. Khadijah *et al.*, (2012) also found that the internet was the source for respondents to obtain pornographic material as well as seek friends with similar interests, which eventually led to the sexual crime.

Social problems involving adolescents are actually caused by the adolescents living environment, such as a non-conducive family atmosphere and unstable family economics. This finding was consistent with Azizi and Rohaya (2008), whereby many of the respondents involved in disciplinary problems in school were those coming from families that were broken, poor, had many siblings as well as lacked basic household facilities. In addition, Salhah (2012) stated that most of the adolescent rape victims came from families that earned a low-income, had many siblings and their parents had a moderate education level.

Moreover, this study also showed that participants did not possess a good religious' education, had a low level of sexual knowledge and failed to finish their secondary education. This finding was consistent with Khadijah *et al.*, (2012), whereby in relation to out-of-wedlock pregnancies among adolescents, it was found that almost all the respondents did not seriously consider religion as a pillar of life, they lacked information about the risks of random sexual activities and often experimented with sex without considering its impact on their health as well as their future. Besides that, in this context, the level of education aspect was also another factor. Hence, on the average, participants were found to have stopped schooling mainly when they were confirmed to be pregnant. This finding was similar to that of Salhah (2012), which found that most of the adolescent rape victims had a low-level of education and did not successfully finish their secondary school because they were forced to stop schooling when they become pregnant and were placed in a protection centre for women and children.

The peer factor has a major influence on the formation of behaviour and attitudes of adolescents, including their sexual behaviour. The data triangulation results found that four out of nine participants stated that peer influence was a major factor for them becoming victims of rape. This finding was in line with Ezarina *et al.*, (2017), who found that the reason why adolescents became victims of rape was because the victims socialised with friends who were far older than them and the victims lived separately from their parents. Salhah (2012) showed that the adolescent's immoral behaviour developed because they were easily influenced by their peers. According to Azizi (2008), peer influence was strong, and it had an effect on the formation of an adolescent's personality. According to Khadijah *et al.*, (2012), it was found that peer influence was one of the factors that drove adolescents to out-of-wedlock pregnancies, whereby almost all participants stated that they obtained information about sex from their peers.

The social problem phenomenon among adolescents is uncontrollable and increasingly widespread lately. This is evident when the role of the government and society, especially the neighbours, has become lacklustre. This lacklustre attitude towards the surroundings could easily contribute towards the occurrence of rape among adolescents. According to Abd. Hadi (2004), analysts in the field of criminology have explained that the involvement of adolescents in social misconduct is due the absence of social reaction towards anti-social behaviour. This absence of reactions refers to the lacklustre or the apparent permission to members of society to act in a certain manner that deviates from social norms.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the problem of rape that affects contemporary adolescents is influenced by several factors. Seven factors were identified as contributing towards the incidence of rape in Malaysia, such as the victim themselves,

parents, internet and technology, family background, education, peer influence as well as society and the government. Therefore, this matter demands serious attention as adolescent rape victims can be provided assistance in aspects such as guidance and counselling, religious education and moral support if the source of the problem can be identified. Hence, effective measures according to counselling psychology should be initiated, especially in efforts to build a modal program for the rehabilitation and prevention of rape and sexual assaults. In addition, high impact-related studies would certainly contribute to the corpus of existing knowledge by providing a clearer understanding for all concerned, especially adolescents, parents, teachers, government institutions, non-governmental organizations and society.

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