Dating Violence: Date Rape

By

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Introduction

One significant form of violence against women especially in adolescent commonly found in intimate or dating relationships is date rape.
Definition of Date Rape
Sexual assault

: All forms of unwanted sexual activity. It includes rape and other forced sexual experiences involving intercourse, (oral or anal) not involving intercourse, (kissing, fondling, or touching.)
Acquaintance rape

: A rape in which the victim and the assailant know each other, whether they are friends, spouses, lovers, or people who just know each other slightly.
Date rape refers to nonconsensual sex between people who are dating or on a date. Date rape is one form of acquaintance rape.
McIvor and Harting (1990) defined date rape as forced sexual contact within the context of what could be constructed as a date or the preliminaries of what could possibly lead up to a date.
Theoretical Perspectives on Date Rape
1. Feminist perspective

- Power motivated to strengthen a system of male dominance.

- A mechanism for social control of women.

- Power inequality between men and women
From a feminist perspective, either the fact of rape or the fear of rape by women is the means to maintain male dominance, not merely the results of uncontrolled sexual desire, overstated gender role behavior norms, miscommunication, or deceptive intimacy.
Rape is viewed as one form of sexual terrorism, a system by which males frighten and by frightening, control and dominate females (Sheffield, 1989).
The components of sexual terrorism (Sheffield, 1989) included:

(a) patriarchal ideology

(b) propaganda

(c) indiscriminate, unpredictable, destructive, and amoral acts against women
(d) voluntary compliance

(e) society’s perception of the terrorist and victim is distorted and fails
Unlike other crimes, rape victims are expected to resist rape as much as possible, they have to prove resistance or nonconsent, otherwise “consent” is assumed (Sheffield, 1989).
Rape is viewed as a mechanism of social control. The fear of rape enforces a self-concept of passivity, terror, and helplessness in women (Stock, 1991).
Feminist theorists asserted that this feeling affects all women regardless of actual victimization and severely limits the freedom of women and makes women dependent on men’s protection. (Brownmiller, 1975; Stock, 1991)
2. The rape culture

Patriarchal society develops a traditional concept of male and female sexuality that assumes the male is sexually aggressive and the female is sexually passive. Women are expected to avoid or prevent the opportunity for rape to happen.
To end rape, people must be able to envision a relationship between the sexes that involves sharing, warmth, and equality and then develop social systems that foster those concepts.
3. The balance of power in dating relationships

In dating, a man should initiate the date by asking a woman out. He should also plan the activities, provide transportation, and pay the bills (Peplau & Campbell, 1989).
The factors that affect the balance of power in relationships include:

(a) **social norms** that dictated who should be more powerful

(b) the **psychological dependency** of each partner in the couple, and
(c) the personal resources that partners bring to their relationship

Margolin, Moran, and Miller (1989) reported that women involved in long term, intimate relationships are likely to lose power in the relationship.
The more power the men assert in a dating relationship, the more likely that they will take sexual advantage of their dates.
4. Attribution of responsibility and blame in date rape situations

- Can be focused on both victims and assailants.

- Varies according to subjective factors, which include past experience, value, and information available.
Victim-blaming is a rape-supporting attitude that interferes with the mobilization of personal and societal resources to prevent rape, punish rapists, and help victims.
5. Patriarchal ideology

Feminists view patriarchal ideology as the mechanism males use to maintain their advantage, including economic, family structure, socialization practices, and child rearing (Benjamin, 1988).
The means used to retain males’ power of control are violence, coercion, socialization, and cultural beliefs concerning right, good, true, and natural (Parrot & Bechhofer, 1991).
The ideology includes:

(a) The belief that men are better than women.

(b) Acceptance of certain behaviors as the appropriate behaviors exclusively for men.

(c) The beliefs that deny, excuse, or justify extreme forms of male violence against women.
Courtship patriarchy also relates to economic and sexual trades. For instance, if a man asks a woman out on a date, provides the transportation, and pays for the bills, he often expects to have sex with her for his efforts.
Through patriarchal socialization, women internalize powerlessness and submissiveness to men. Control over women in intimate relationships or marriage can occur without their realization that they have been violated.
6. Rape myths

Burt (1991) defined rape myths as "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victim, or rapist".
Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) defined rape myths as “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women”.

Rape myths classification:

1. Nothing happened
2. No harm was done
3. She wanted it
4. She deserved it
Factors contributing to date rape

1. Finkelhor’s model

Finkelhor (1986) believed that date rape can be committed only when the four preconditions of the potential offender are fulfilled.
1. Rapist’s motivation to sexually abuse includes at least five factors:

(a) power and control needs
(b) miscommunication about sex
(c) sexual arousal
(d) emotional incongruence
(e) imbalance in the power differential.
2. The overcoming of internal inhibitions against acting on the motivation. Two factors are

(a) attitudes concerning traditional sex roles, the acceptance of violence, the endorsement of rape myths and the adversarial relationships

(b) prior abusive acts.
3. The overcoming of external impediments to acting on the motivation. Four factors are

(a) date location
(b) mode of transportation
(c) date activity
(d) alcohol or substance use.
4. The resistance of the potential victim is lessened by factors that reduce her ability to resist the sexual abuse. Five factors are

(a) passivity

(b) poor self-defense techniques or strategies

(c) history of sexual abuse

(d) traditional attitudes

(e) poor sexual knowledge
2. Salient factors and analysis in date rape research

- Unfamiliar partners
- Power differentials
- Miscommunication about sex
- Alcohol or drug use
- Dating activities or location
- Rape myth attitudes
- Women’s lack of assertiveness
- Vulnerability creating traumatic experiences

  - sociopsychological characteristics
  - vulnerability-enhancing situation variables
  - history of sexual abuse
  - child sexual abuse experiences
- Other factors:

• Familial factors
• Peer relations
• Feel in control
• Curiosity and sexual arousal
• Influence of the mass media
3. Sex role socialization

Providing sex for their husbands is viewed as the wives’ responsibility. Failure to provide satisfying sex for the husband is considered by many women as placing him at risk for adultery.
In a steady or serious intimate relationship, women have to consent to unwanted sex as a means to prove their affection and fidelity to their lovers upon their requests and under certain pressures.

One of the popular strategies used by the man is making fake commitment or promise to marry a woman who proves her love through sex.
4. Alcohol and drug use

a. Roles of alcohol in sexual situations

- The judgment of date rape victims when alcohol is involved reflects patriarchal social norms.

- Women are subjected to blame and found to be more responsive when the assailant had been drinking.
- Acquaintance rape may not be considered real rape when women are raped after drinking with their dates.

- A woman has to be responsible for both her own and the man’s behavior.
b. Roles of substance abuse in date rape situations

Women are blamed and have to take more responsibility for date rape incidences than men, especially when alcohol and drug use are involved.

Society views alcohol consumption and drug use by women as a sex role violation. Women become double victims when both situations are added together.
5. Perceptions and attitudes about rape

- The attribution of date rape is influenced by the observer’s attitudes.

- Higher rape myth acceptance reduced the probability that a scenario will be acknowledged as rape.

- Sex role stereotypes and attitudes toward women mediate the perception of rape.
6. Communication issues between men and women

The problems of misunderstandings between men and women in dating situations are caused by the misinterpreting of women’s behavior by men and the miscommunication between the couple.
Research indicates that men are inclined to perceive friendly cues received from women as signs of sexual interest.
The tendency to engage in token resistance to sex is related to sexual attitudes and beliefs.

Three reasons are:

(a) fear of appearing promiscuous
(b) moral concern
(c) desire to be in control
D. Date Rape Consequences

1. Physical and psychological health consequence

2. Social impact and stigmatization
E. Date rape victim: Help seeking behaviors

- Rarely seek help or report the incidence

- Blame themselves
89% did not report the rape when the attacker was a boyfriend, and 99% did not report when the rapist was a date.

Koss, Dinero, Seibel, and Cox (1988) asserted that the better acquainted a woman is with her perpetrator, the less likely she is to discuss her experience with anyone.
Date Rape Vignette