

Sexual Assault Basic Information
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Nature and Prevalence

- 80 to 90% of all cases are non-stranger (acquaintance) assaults
- Most common age of victim is between 16 and 24
- Most common age of perpetrator is between 16 and 24
- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 8 men will be sexually assaulted while in college
- Only 5% of all campus sexual assaults are reported to police
- False reports are equal to most other crimes (between 2 and 8%, according to the FBI)
- 1 in 12 male college students committed acts that met the legal definition of rape
- Factoring in unreported rapes, only about 3% of rapists will spend a day in jail
- In the USA, there is a sexual assault every 2 minutes.
- 9 out of 10 college campus perpetrators are in the same social group as the victim
- Perpetrators often use alcohol to facilitate sexual assault; violent force is rarely used
- About 1 in 5 sexual assault victims received assistance from a victim services agency

Terms

- Sexual assault is a continuum- harassment/sexual battery/attempted rape/rape/sodomy
- Consent – can be withheld at any point, must be given for each act along the path
- Victim/Survivor – word choice is often based on one's profession or experience
- Alcohol/Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault – when alcohol or drugs are used to create a more vulnerable victim, one who is easier to attack/assault

Barriers to Reporting

- Not sure if it was a sexual assault – myths may influence thought process
- Fear – of perpetrator, of loss of privacy, of retaliation, of being blamed
- Belief that it will not do any good
- Culture and socialization – incident may be minimized or trivialized
- Potential consequences
- Fear of the justice system

Context of the Victim

- The offender – relationship, acquaintance, colleague – how could it be???
- The culture – barriers, disclosure, access to service, etc.

The self – blame, prior history, and the experience

The audience – Were others present? Did it seem expected? Was it a game?

Common Reactions

Resistance level – may not scream or yell, not shout ‘no’, not fight back

--fear, fright, frozen, terror, the unexpected just happened

Confusion about what happened – ‘wasn’t he a friend?’ ‘was it really forced?’

Guilt, shame, self-blame result from beliefs expressed in society and the family

Vulnerability, isolation, lack of control, and numbness result

Delayed or piecemeal reporting – memory lapses, concerns about disclosures

Continued contact with offender – by phone, text, in person.... To normalize

Subsequent sexual activity with others – either more or less than usual

Impact and Effects

Changes in eating or sleeping patterns – either more or less

Concerns about physical safety; may become less social

Having flashbacks – seeing things that bring back memories of the assault

Feeling angry – at the perpetrator, at friends/family who do not understand and self

Lacking concentration in class or at job, skipping class, afraid of seeing perpetrator

Victims often quit their jobs or school; productivity and income is lost

Victims are 3 times more likely than non-victims to experience depression

Victims are 4 times more likely to contemplate suicide

Eating disorders are strongly associated with repeated assaults and completed assaults

Nearly 1/3 of all rape victims develop rape-related Post Traumatic Stress (PTSD)

Daily functioning may be impacted, whether assault was completed or attempted

Some victims may disclose right away; others may wait weeks, months or years

Some victims express their emotions; others tend to keep them inside

Low self-esteem as a result of the assault influences/impacts other effects

References

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