



Rape Myth Acceptance among University Students

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Purpose

- To examine the acceptance of rape myths among university students
- Rape myths are false beliefs about sexual assault
 - May justify the act of rape (Field, 1978)
 - Examples:
 - Rape happens to only certain kinds of women
 - Forcing a woman to have sex is justified if they have been dating for a long time

Literature Review

- University females are most likely to be raped in their first two years of college (Carey et al., 2015; Sinozich & Langton, 2014)
- Those with higher RMA include: (McMahon, 2010)
 - Males
 - Greek Life
 - Athletes
- Knowing someone who has been raped decreases one's RMA; Personally being raped does not change RMA (McMahon, 2010; Carmody & Washington, 2001)

Research Questions

- Does RMA vary by **sex, age, major, religiosity, academic rank, relationship status, student athlete status, Greek status, or race?**
- Does **personal experience** with rape influence RMA?
- Does the amount of participation in **rape educational programming** influence RMA?

Methods

- IRB Approved
- Online survey
- Convenience Sample
- Survey was open for about 12 weeks
- Last page of survey provided sexual assault support resources



Instrumentation

- Rape Supportive Attitude scale (Lottes, 2011)
 - 20 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree ($\alpha = .952$)
 - Scores ranged from 20-66 ($M = 33.38$; $SD = 9.99$)
- Demographics
- Religiosity – 3 items
- Educational programming related to sexual assault – 2 items
- Personal experience with rape – 2 items

Sample

- N = 526
 - 71% White; 16.4% Black
 - 79% females
 - Mean age = 21 years ($SD = 5.2$)
 - Variety of academic rank and majors
 - 50% in a relationship
 - 9% identified as LGBTQI
 - 17% - Greek Life
 - 3% - student athletes

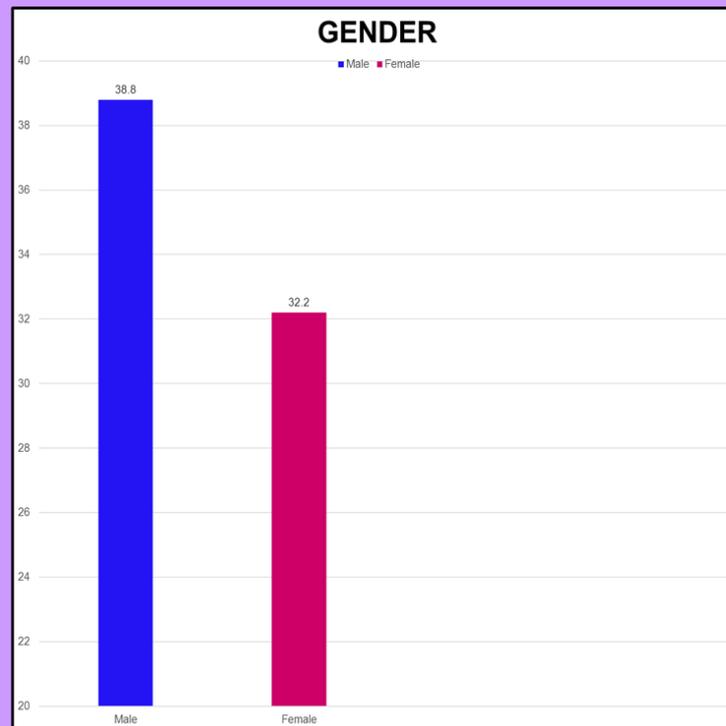


Results

- **62% (n = 326) reported knowing someone who has been raped**
- 10% (n = 51) had been raped
 - 5% weren't sure
- 44% (n = 232) reported that religion was very or extremely important
 - 18.5% of students attend a religious service at least once a week
- 23.6% had not attended any programs on sexual assault
 - 45.7% had attended one or two programs

Gender

- Females had lower RMA when compared to males ($p = .000$)



Age & Academic Rank

- As age increased, RMA decreased
 - Students ages 18-19 ($p = .014$) had higher RMA than those over 23
- Seniors had significantly lower RMA than freshman ($p = .021$)



Relationship Status & Personal Experience with Rape

- No difference in RMA based on relationship status ($p = .10$) or race ($p = .48$)
- Those who knew someone who has been raped ($n = 326$; $p = .00$) or who had been raped ($n = 51$; $p = .00$) had lower RMA than those who didn't



Religiosity

- Higher Religiosity = Higher RMA
 - Spearman correlation - All 3 religiosity items were positively correlated with each other and positively correlated with the RMA scale.
- Religious participants had significantly higher RMA than non-religious participants ($p = .000$)

Results

- Student athletes ($p = .02$) and those in a Greek life organization ($p = .00$) had higher RMA compared to non-athlete/Greek
- No difference in RMA based on attendance at sexual assault programs ($p = .12$)
- HDFS, Social Science, and Social Work majors had significantly lower RMA ($p = .00$) compared to other majors

Most Accepted Rape Myths

- The reason most rapists commit rape is for sex ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.22$)
- Being roughed up is sexually stimulating to many women ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.02$)
- Many women falsely report that they have been raped because they are pregnant and want to protect their reputation ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 1.03$)
- The degree of a woman's resistance should be the major factor in determining if a rape has occurred ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.34$)

Limitations

- Cannot be generalized
- More females than males in sample
- Relationship & “hookup” culture not defined
- Programming quality, length, & topics covered not measured

Implications

- Sexual assault programs should focus on **preventing** males from raping instead of females avoiding rape which can result in a “victim blaming” approach to programming
- Greek Life, student athletes, younger students, and men are all groups that might benefit from targeted sexual assault programming
- Religiosity and rape myth acceptance warrants further study.

Conclusion

This study provided insight into the campus climate regarding sexual assault and can assist with

- Planning and implementing sexual assault programming
- Strengthening campus policy and procedures regarding sexual assault
- Further research on rape myth acceptance

References

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Questions for Discussion

- What additional insight do you have regarding the result that as Religiosity increased, RMA increased?
- What are initiatives that you have on your university campus that address RMA?