

University of Belize

Belize City, Belize

RESEARCH PROPOSAL:

CASE STUDY OF SEXUAL ASSAULT ON WOMEN.

Submitted to: Ms. Nicole Haylock

Introduction to Research Method

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ABSTRACT

This research proposal will be focusing on a study concerning the effects that sexual assault has on victims. However, sexual assault is known to be a very serious public health issue. In addition to that, this research will involve two methodologies; the first is focus group while the second is participant observation. The focus group discussion will consist of ten individuals between the ages of 12-19 years old while the participant observation will involve six individual between the ages of 20-25 years old. These methods were used to gather data so as to ascertain the occurrence of the effects that victims of sexual assault possess. Furthermore the study will likely exhibit depressive symptoms from victims of sexual assault. In conclusion, women are at a high risk of adjusting back to society after their trauma. However, an overall social change in outlook and perception towards women are needed in modern society to curb the sexual assault on women today.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual assault is defined by law as sexualized contact with another person without consent and by force. Victims, both men and women, of sexual assault can be compelled or forced to participate through fear, physical force, deception, other forms of coercion, or the use of intoxicants such as alcohol and drugs. Some forms of sexual assault do not require the use of force but are still considered criminal. Sexual assault has taken place if sexual contact has happened that has not been consented to in a conscious and voluntary way. Sexual assault can take many forms. However, every victim should get counseling, and the incident should be discussed, since, sexual assault is an awful experience. The goal for all victims is to recover and put the bad event behind them.

Statement of Problem

Sexual assault has been in existence since the dawn of civilization. Since then efforts have been made to curb this crime against women by adopting deterrent, preventive, and punitive measures; yet it is still unabated. Like any other offences, sexual assault leaves a deep-rooted effect or stigma in the body and mind of a woman who has to live the rest of her life in society with the unpleasant shadow of the incident. The scenes of such act can be seen and heard on news from every part of the region in the world. However, the aim should be to bring forth the consequences of sexual assault on women with a view to abate this crime against women.

Purpose of Study

Sexual assault on women has been a consistent everyday act against the will of a woman. Nonetheless, the main purpose of the research is to address the problematic situation that victims of sexual assault undergo. However, it should be a must that every victim of sexual assault should involve a sort of medical attention due to the fact of their traumatic experience. Hence, developed organization should strengthen there support for victims overtime. This study ^{will be} was also conducted to give the audience a view of what the victims has to overcome due to the experience they had. Throughout the proposal the readers will be able to interpret the outcome of the experiences of victims.

Significance of Study

This study is conducted for the readers to have a view of what it takes to be a victim of sexual assault. In this case the audience will then determine whether or not perpetrators of sexual assault should be given another chance in the community. Furthermore, readers will have a clear insight and a good knowledge of the experiences that victims of sexual assault undergo. Hence, when victims know that society is knowledgeable about the experiences they possess they will slowly but surely adjust back to society again. In addition to that, the revelation of knowledge and understanding about the women's physical, psychological and social being would awake the consciousness of communities and would bring about social change in the outlook and perception toward women, who also deserve dignity and respect in society.

HYPOTHESIS

Sexual assault victims are more likely to experience anxiety, panic attacks and nightmare as a result of their traumatic experience.

Conceptualization

Variables:

Independent: Traumatic experience

Dependent: Anxiety, panic attacks and nightmare

*Traumatic experience: a disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury.

*Anxiety: is a physiological state characterized by cognitive, somatic, emotional, and behavioral components. These components combine to create the feelings that we typically recognize as anger and known as fear, apprehension, or worry.

*Panic attacks: are sudden, discrete periods of intense anxiety, mounting physiological arousal, fear, stomach problems (spastic colon) and discomfort that are associated with a variety of somatic and cognitive symptoms.

*Nightmares: is a dream which causes a strong unpleasant emotional response from the sleeper, typically fear or horror, or the sensations of pain, falling, drowning or death. Such dreams can be related to physical causes such as a high fever, or psychological ones such as psychological trauma or stress in the sleeper's life

○ Citations?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual Assault on Women

Sexual Assault is happening throughout the globe, without a define person whom to attack. This is a very rigid problem in the society and it has drawn many attention and social problem which needs a more in depth focus. This issue has plagued our society in different aspects and we need to find a solution to this problem. In the present paper, investigation would be conducted on how victims of sexual assault adjust to society after such trauma. It is hypothesized that sexual assault victims are more likely to experience anxiety, panic attacks and nightmares as a result of their traumatic experience. The following eight literature review will attempt to reveal issues concerning victims of sexual assault.

In a research articles by McMullin et al.(2007), they conducted a Longitudinal Study of Gendered Attributes which was measured by the Extended Personal Attributes Questionnaire. The focus of the investigation was to gain better understanding of gendered attributes. To do this they had to examine the stability of gendered attributes, specifically agencies and communion, as well as the impact that sexual victimization has on the expression of these attributes. The sample included attributes of college female non-victims (N=158) and victims (N=158) of sexual aggression. The results in this study revealed that victims will have a lasting effect on their ability to focus on the nurturing and the trusting aspects of relationships; rather they have a preoccupation with their own needs and goals that appears to strengthen with time. The results also indicated that the impacts of

victimization among adolescent girls and women would more likely result in depression, anxiety, fear, behavioral problems, poor self-esteem and sexual behavior. It was also mentioned that of forced sexual relation can have immediate and long-lasting psychological and physical health consequences.

Another study that focused on sexual assault on women was conducted by using a structural equation modeling. Ullman et al. (2007) conducted a research to find out how many survivors of sexual assault are likely to develop the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). They conducted their research by surveying a diverse sample of community-residing women (N= 636). They used the structural equation modeling to examine the relationships between assault severity, global support, negative social reactions, avoidance coping, self-blame, traumatic life experiences, and PTSD symptoms. The results revealed that negative social reactions and avoidance coping are the strongest issues of PTSD symptoms and that the association typically observed between victim self-blame and PTSD symptoms may be partially due to the effect of negative social reactions from others. These reactions in a whole may contribute to both self-blame and PTSD syndrome. They also included a national probability sample which revealed that 31% of female rape victims have developed PTSD. Studies also revealed that more sexual severe assault has been related to the increase of PTSD symptoms in victims.

Similarly, another topic of sexual assault on women is addressed using a computerized Medline system. In a research article by Sankar and Sankar (2005) they carried out an investigation of the consequences of sexual assault on women. It is predicted

that women assaulted in their childhood years are twice likely to be sexually assaulted in adulthood. The results indicated that women suffer post-traumatic mental problem, acute stress disorders, depression and other psychological problems. The current study indicated that 26% of sexually assaulted women age fifteen years or above had major psychiatric problem. The study continued to unfold that sexual assault survivors reported greater anxiety, depression, and symptoms of borderline personality. In regards to these findings, it is predicted that the factors that influence recovery are emotional support from friends, relations, and social and community supports.

Also another topic of sexual assault on women is addressed using a cross-sectional telephone survey, detailed screening and DSM-IV diagnostic criteria. In a research a research article by Masho and Ahmed (2007) they carried out an investigation about the age of sexual assault and the level of posttraumatic stress disorder among women. The focus of the investigation was to distinguish the association between history of sexual assault and PTSD. The sample consisted of 1,769 adult females residents in Virginia. The current study's percentage of the prevalence of PTSD among women was 17%. It prevalence of PTSD among women who was assaulted for the first time before the age of eighteen which was 35.3%, followed by those assaulted at the age of eighteen which was 30.2% and those who were never sexually victimized was 8.1%. The results revealed that the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder is slightly higher among those assaulted before the age of eighteen compared to those who were assaulted at age eighteen. The study also found out that those who reported the incident to the police were less likely to have post-traumatic stress disorder.

Furthermore another topic of sexual assault on women is addressed using a variety of testing factors. In a research article by Grubaugh and Resick (2007) they carried out an investigation about the post-traumatic growth in treatment-seeking female assault victims. The purpose of the study was to explore the interrelationships among growth outcomes and measures of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder among 100 female treatment seeking physical and sexual assault victims. The sample was conducted using a Beck depression inventory, clinician-administered posttraumatic stress disorder scale, a structured clinical interview for DSM-IV patients, and a post traumatic growth inventory. Based on the responses the degree of changes of growth scores was as follows: 22% endorsing a very small, 32% endorsing a small, 24% endorsing a moderate, 11% endorsing a great and 10% endorsing a very great chance. From this it was revealed that 45% of the sample participants reported at least a moderate degree of growth from their experiences. The sample result predicts that although the majority of women reported some degree of growth, measures of depression and post traumatic stress disorder were not significantly related to growth scores.

In addition to that, another topic of sexual assault on women is addressed using the sexual experience survey questions. In a research by Gyls & McNamara, (1996), they carried out an investigation to identify victims of sexual assault. It is hypothesized that three items there was experiences of penetration in which the offenders purposely compels the victims to submit force or threat of force. The sample consisted originally of 87 prosecutors and 233 assistant prosecutors. The results in this finding revealed the validity

in which victims of felonious sex offenses were identified. The rating could not be accounted for by demographic, work experience or rape myth acceptance variables. The data from the survey indicated that some questions from the sexual experience survey which was intended to interpret the context of the legal definitions for sex offences. In this finding the description of rape, attempted rape and felonious penetration as a result of force or threat of force captured the legal definition of the acts.

Another study that focused on the topic of sexual assault on women is addresses using the apperceptive personality test/Brief adult, draw-a-person questionnaire and also personal questionnaire. In a research article by Karp et al. (1995) investigated the concerns of only rape and its attempts to overcome possible sampling problem of prior studies by obtaining control and abused subject from the same sources, a wide pool of volunteer subjects not selected on the basis of prior sexual experiences. The sample consisted of 600 female volunteers whereas 122 were of that 122, 61 reported having been rape and the other 61 reported no instance of sexual assault. The others who failed to fill the questions where excluded from the group. The survivors ranged from age 16 to 48 and the age at the time of the rape was from ages 4 to 35. The results revealed that survivors frequently reported problems and differed on personality scales characters. It was also revealed that those raped by relatives, dates or acquaintance were more negative than those raped by strangers. The results also indicated that rape survivors, as a group, reported more weight problem, alcohol/drug problems and more frequent participation in therapy. The APT/BA survivors were hostile and the DAPQ were rated higher in mastery and basic trust than those other survivors.

Finally the last topic of sexual assault on women is being addressed using demographic questions and the social readjustment rating scale. In a research article by Rynd (1988), they conducted an investigation to replicate and extend the research concerning the effects of rape, with an emphasis on somatic disorders. It was hypothesized that the frequency and severity of somatic complaints suffered by rape victims is correlated significantly with the victim's perception of rape. The sample consisted originally at 20 women's center in San Francisco and Philadelphia. The results indicated that the victims who had received counseling report greater anxiety of somatic complaints. It further indicated that lowered levels of sexual satisfaction following rape are correlated with a higher reported frequency and severity of psychosomatic symptoms in victims was expected. It also revealed that a number of these victims experience dissatisfaction with their sexual activities prior to the rape. It was apparently revealed that rape and lowered sexual satisfaction are related to frequency and severity of somatic complaints in women who are victims of sexual assault.

Taken together, all the results indicated that sexual assault on women plays a significant depression in the lives of victims. Women that are sexually assaulted had a low self-esteem and symptoms of depression that can lead to the destruction of their future. It can be assumed that the eight literature review that sexual assault on women can lead to severe posttraumatic stress disorder, mental problem and other psychological problem. It is important to address sexual assault because these cruel actions against women are destroying their lives. Also, the organization that fully support victims should be included more in the findings because these organizations can make changes in the

victim's of sexual assault. This would help in adjusting the victims into society once more.

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory research will constitute of qualitative data about the long-term effects that victim of sexual assault experiences overtime. Primarily, the research will constitute of two forms of data collection.

Focus Group

Focus group involves unstructured group interviews in which the focus group leaders actively encourage discussion among participants on the topic of interest. This research methodology is widely used because there is an emphasis on discovering unanticipated findings and exploring hidden meanings. In addition to that it also provides easily analyzed information by using video tape, etc. and for quickly assessing the range of opinions about an issue. Furthermore, focus group is considered to be a very flexible data collection when using the interview guide. This process takes one to two hours to be completed. This methodology is essentially appropriate for this research because the focused discussion mimics the natural process of forming and expressing opinions and may then give some sense of validity. In addition to that the focus group constitutes of individuals who have the time to participate, who have some knowledge pertinent to the focus group topic and lastly who share key characteristics with the target population.

Sample

- Focus groups of a sample of 10 victims of sexual assault between the ages of 12-19 years old were used to gather the data about the research topic.

will be

- The main purpose was to become familiar with the experiences the victims had after their terrible trauma, hence, their views and perceptions were very useful in carrying out the investigation and analysis of the topic.
- The sample included: students from primary, secondary and tertiary level schools and homeless child.
- The interviewees were all encouraged to feel comfortable and secure while sharing their views and experiences about the topic.
- The goal was to have a clear vision of some of the feelings shared by these victims about the long-term effects of being a victim of sexual assault.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is a method for gathering data that involves developing a sustained relationship with people while they go about their normal activities. Participant observation is also termed as “field work”. However, this methodology is widely used because of its flexibility, the quality and depth of information the method provides, information is provided to researchers that is previously unknown and can be crucial for project design, data collection and interpretation of other data and lastly because this methodology facilitates the development of new research questions or hypothesis. This data collection is appropriate for this research proposal because it enables researchers to learn about the activities and attitudes about the people that are under study within their natural setting rather than in the laboratory.

Sample

- Participant observation of a sample of six females between the ages of 20-25 years olds were used to gather the data, they are presently victims of sexual assault. The main aim was to gather all data about the life of a victim and those factors that influence them to have a hard time adjusting back to society.
- The participants were all encouraged to freely say what they wanted to say.
- The sample included: housewives, teachers and other members of the community.
- The goal was to build a relationship with victims so as to have a helping hand with the facilitation of the data collection.

o More details on what the participant observation experience will entail?
— variables for observation?
— what settings/environment?
— how long?

DATA ANALYSIS

In this section the primary concern of the researcher will be to spontaneously present and explain the findings gathered during the process of data collection. The analysis will be divided into two separate components. The first section will present the focus group discussion of the effects of being a victim of sexual assault. The goal will be to present a brief story and important facts of each victim selected for the sample. The primary aim in this section for the focused discussion will be to use informative and descriptive language. The views and perception of these victims will be important to this research because the best information about the long-term effects of being a victim of sexual assault comes from them, who have actually experienced it. This section will also include an overview of what it takes a victim to adjust back to their normal life routine based on the interpretation of the focus group leader, as well as other information gathered by the researcher. The second dimension of the data analysis will include the participant observation where discussion will be held about how organizational supports have responded to the increase of sexual assault within the Belizean society. This section will also include an extensive discussion and explanation of what it takes a victim to overcome the experiences. Furthermore, it will include findings about the views of victims of sexual assault in respect to the organizational effective or ineffective support. In addition to that, this section will also present an overview of the recommendations made by victims in respect of what should be done to help combat the escalating issue of sexual assault; hence, the aftermath trauma on victims will then see a decrease in this country.

CONCLUSION

Sexual assault is a major public health concern and there should be primary prevention strategies in place. This would be essential to detect sexual assault victims and prevent the long-term effects. Prevention programs should target those victims who are not in a marital relationship, who are less educated and those who did not report the incident to police because they perceive a greater threat to life during the assault. In addition to that it would be worthwhile to examine the relationship after these women have completed treatment. Despite the present of significant effects of sexual assault on victims it may be of sufficient interest to see that growth may occur and might just allow them to adjust back to society.

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APPENDIX

WVU Sexual Assault Survey Form

Instructions: This form is intended to collect survey information needed to assist in prevention training programs, victim assistance, and response training. All efforts must be made to maintain the victim's anonymity on this survey. No information should be included which might identify the victim. Complete as much of the survey as possible. The shaded areas are essential. Please return this form to the Sexual Response Coordinator within 24 hours. Discuss the limits to confidentiality prior to discussing the details of a sexual assault. Explain to the victim that basic information about the incident will be shared with the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator. The Coordinator will share the information with those individuals who are on a "need to know basis" only, including the campus police. Individuals should discuss the type of information to be released and should obtain a signature regarding the release information and /or have the person sign the bottom of the protocol checklist. Press/media inquiries should be referred to the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator or Vice President of Student Affairs. When the incident occurred on campus, the incident must be reported to the campus police who will investigate.

Reference # _____ (birth month and day) Date of Report _____ Date of
Incident _____

Reporter's Name _____ Position/Dept. _____

Phone # _____

Victim's age _____

Victim's Gender _____

Victim's Academic Year _____

Time or Incident _____ Occurred on
campus? Yes No

Describe Location (building name, street, etc.)

Describe Assault (Check one)

☐ sexual contact (fondling, kissing, petting but not penetration) without consent

☐ attempted intercourse without consent (penetration did not occur)

☐ intercourse (oral, anal, or vaginal penetration by penis or other object) without
consent

☐ other (describe)

Was the absence of consent due to the victim being incapacitated by: Alcohol? Yes No
Drugs? Yes No

Describe the kind of pressure or force used by the assailant:

- ☐ none ☐ verbal pressure or arguments ☐ position of authority (boss,
teacher, supervisor)
☐ threat of physical force (threatened to hit, hold, or otherwise injure)
☐ actual use of physical force. (Hit, held victim down, twisted arm etc...)
☐ gave victim alcohol or drugs so that victim was significantly incapacitated

Was a weapon involved in the assault? Yes No (If yes, type of weapon:

_____)

Number of Assailants _____ Describe: gender _____ race _____ age _____ height
_____ weight _____

Role of Assailant on Campus: Student _____ Faculty _____ Staff _____ Other _____ None

Nature of relationship with victim prior to incident (check one)

stranger _____ spontaneous date _____ planned first date _____ relative _____
spouse/partner _____

friend or nonromantic acquaintance ____ romantic acquaintance or ongoing date

Name of Alleged Assailant(s): _____ (see reporting responsibilities in "Role...")

Other contact points the victim reported this assault to:

Sexual Response Coordinator ____ Student Health Service ____ Campus

Ministries ____

Residential Education ____

Dept of Public Safety ____

Morgantown Police ____

Carruth Counseling Center ____

Student Life ____

Social

Justice office ____

RDVIC Crisis Shelter ____

Other _____

Name of Victim:

(optional) _____

Complete the checklist? Yes No