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Non-Reporting of Sexual Victimization Among Female Students of Higher Education Institutions of Rajasthan: A Thematic

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Article History	Abstract
	Sexual victimization of female students of Higher Education Institutions is a significant problem that affects many females, although actual numbers may be higher than those reported. Due to dread, shame, or other factors, some victims may choose not to report their experiences. Female students may choose not to report sexual victimization for various reasons, including: fear of retaliation, shame and self-blame, lack of trust in the justice system, lack of awareness of available resources, pressure from family or friends, the desire for privacy etc. It is essential for higher education institutions to provide victims of sexual victimization with support and resources and to foster a culture of safety and accountability. The study was conducted among 160 female students of four Higher Education Institutions chosen from two districts of Rajasthan. The study analyzed the reasons for the non-reporting of sexual victimization among the female victims of Higher Education Institutions and will conclude with suggestions regarding reporting sexual victimization incidences.

1. Introduction

The sexual victimization of female students is a significant problem that has received increased attention in recent years. The form of sexual victimization experienced varies, and its effect on the victim also varies. Sexual victimization is alarmingly prevalent on campuses of higher education institutions, according to different research studies. Sexual victimization on campus can affect victims' mental and physical health, academic performance, and prospective employment opportunities. Consequently, institutions of higher education must take proactive measures to prevent sexual victimization and provide support for victims. In addition to identification, reporting sexual victimization is an essential component. Unreported victimizations may have negative consequences for the victims. Unidentified and unreported incidents may have various negative consequences for the victims. It may harm their physical, emotional, social, and academic well- being. The failure to disclose sexual victimization may also create a nexus of disturbances in the victim's mind and present an unhelpful image of the surrounding people. There are numerous reasons, female students may choose not to report sexual victimization. Among the primary considerations are the following: Fear of retaliation or harm: Victims may dread that reporting their victimization will result in additional harm or retaliation from the offender or their associates. This dread can be heightened on college campuses, where victims may share classes or living quarters with their attackers. Shame or stigma: Sexual victimization can be a profoundly personal and traumatic experience involving feelings of embarrassment or shame. The victims may experience shame or embarrassment, making them hesitant to disclose the victimization. There is also a cultural Atigma surrounding sexual victimization, which can make victims feel as though they will be judged or chastised if they report the incident. Self Blame: the victims may think themselves partially responsible for their victimization and hence may blame themselves for their sexual victimization. Lack of trust for authorities: Victims of sexual victimization may be concerned that their claims will not be taken seriously by the authorities or that they will be held responsible for their   sexual victimization. Lack of faith in the justice system:

Victims may lack confidence in its ability to hold their perpetrators accountable. They may have heard accounts of other victims being re-traumatized during criminal justice system proceedings or may believe the justice system is biased against them. Cultural or Societal norms :In some cultures or civilizations, a stigma may be associated with reporting sexual victimization or believing such incidents should be addressed privately rather than through official channels. Some individuals may view the reporting process cynically and believe they need more to resolve their complaints. Some victims may not be aware of their reporting options or available resources due to a lack of knowledge or comprehension. They may also be unaware of the gravity of what transpired to them or its potential impact on their mental well-being. Victims may not wish to undergo the emotional strain of reporting and reliving the victimization. It is essential to note that each individual's experience is unique and that many other factors can influence a victim's decision to report the victimization. Higher Education Institutions must provide resources and support to all victims of sexual victimization, regardless of whether they choose to disclose the sexual victimization.

Need of the study: Sexual victimization of female students on campus must be identified and reported for multiple reasons. Support for the Victim: Reporting sexual victimizations enables the victim to receive emotional and legal support. Frequently, victims of sexual victimization experience a spectrum of emotions, including shame, guilt, and dread. Reporting the incident can facilitate the victim's access to recovery-critical support services. Future Prevention: Reporting sexual victimization can also aid in preventing future occurrences. Higher education institutions can increase campus safety by implementing additional security measures, enhancing campus policies and procedures, and raising awareness of such crimes when they are reported. Perpetrator's Accountability: Reporting sexual victimizations can also assist in holding perpetrators accountable. Sexual victimization perpetrators are frequently not punished, but reporting the offense can help bring them to justice. This may also serve as a deterrent for those contemplating committing similar offenses. Data: Reporting sexual victimization can also yield valuable data that can be used to monitor trends and develop effective policies and prevention strategies. Such data can help in bring out the real magnitude of the sexual victimization of female students in higher education; otherwise those will remain as hidden victimization. To Create a Safer Community: Reporting sexual victimization can also contribute to a safer community. When sexual victimization is reported and addressed, it sends a message that the community takes the crime seriously and is devoted to preventing it. To Seek Justice: Reporting sexual victimization is essential to seeking justice for the victim. By reporting the crime, the victim can hold the perpetrator accountable and prevent further harm. Also, if other silent victims realize that many victims like them do not hide their sexual victimization because of social stigma, they will also come forward to fight against the perpetrator.

Review of Literature
Turchik & Hassija (2014) Examined the relationship between female college students' sexual victimization experiences, health risk behaviors, and sexual functioning. Sexual victimization among female students was associated with increased drug use, problematic drinking behaviors, sexual risk-taking, sexual dysfunction, and dyadic sexual desire. Women exposed to more severe forms of sexual victimization were most likely to report these risk-taking behaviors and sexual functioning issues, according to the findings . Blanco, Lopez, Otero, Torres, Ferraces, & Vazquez (2021) analyzed sexual victimization among female students of universities, the risk factors associated with sexual victimization, the relationship between sexual victimization and mental health problems, and the differential risk of more severe forms of sexual victimization. A random sample of 871 students participated in a cross-sectional study. The study evaluated various forms of sexual violence and the prevalence of depression, anxiety, stress, eating disorders, substance misuse, suicide risk, and suicide attempts .

It is well-documented that sexual victimization on college campuses is a pervasive problem, with female college students at the most significant risk. The study examined the relationship between the disability of female students and sexual victimization. The analysis reveals that disability status increases the likelihood of sexual victimization substantially more than other commonly cited risk factors, such as binge drinking and drug use. Female students with disabilities are more likely to be sexually victimized than those without disabilities (Campe, 2019).

Reasons for Non- Reporting of Sexual Victimization
Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher (2006) mentioned about the reasons of non-reporting of sexual victimizations as Shame, remorse, embarrassment, not wanting friends and family to know, concerns about confidentiality, and apprehension of not being believed are common barriers to disclosure . Additionally, Orchowski, Grocott, Bogen, Ilegbusi, Amstadter, & Nugent (2022) identified labeling

of the experience, age, fear, privacy concerns, self-blame, betrayal/shock, the relation/power of the perpetrator, adverse reactions to disclosure, and the belief—or personal experience—that reporting would not result in justice and societal norms as common barriers to reporting . Considering the cyber sexual victimizations ,lack of awareness regarding reporting of sexual victimization , fear about the repercussions, difficulty in proving, daunting appellate process, lack of privacy with family members around, and patriarchal culture were some of the hindrances in reporting (Ahuja, & Padhy, 2021).

Confusion about what constitutes sexual victimizations and uncertainty of available resources were also recognized as contributing factors in underreporting (Schwarz, Gibson, & Lewis-Arévalo, 2017). Ssali, Namaganda, & Bisaso (2021) indicated that institutional and social-cultural barriers, power asymmetries, and financial inadequacy play a role in female university students' failure to report sexual harassment .In their study among female students of two districts of Rajasthan, the researchers Choudhary & Rufus (2019) found that 72.5 percent respondents had experienced at least one form of eve-teasing after joining in higher education institution . Fear ,Stigma, shame, peer pressure, the confusions of dealing with criminal justice systems and the ignorance and denial on the victimization are some of the reasons for non-reporting of sexual victimizations (Bashir & Khurshid, 2013)

Objectives

To evaluate the volume of victims who reported and not-reported their sexual victimization to any of the social institutions. To understand the reasons for non-reporting of sexual victimization among female students of Higher Education Institutions under different social institutions.

2. Materials And Methods

Locale of the Study : The location for the study were two districts from Rajasthan namely, Nagaur and Udaipur. Sample for the Study: Female students of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) were chosen as samples by the systematic sampling. Sample Size: 160 samples from two districts namely, Nagaur and Udaipur of Rajasthan state were chosen to understand their responses in the context of the study's objectives A total of 160 samples were selected for the study.

The samples were chosen from 2 different districts of Rajasthan by Simple Random Sampling. From a single district, two Colleges were chosen randomly. From one College, 40 samples were chosen by systematic sampling. Hence, the total sample size from 1 districts is 80. Since two districts were chosen, the total sample size became 80*2=160. Sampling Procedure: The Higher Education Institutions were chosen by Simple random sampling and the samples for the study from each Higher Education Institutions were chosen by systematic sampling for doctoral research of this article's first author under the second author's supervision. Research Tool used for the Data Collection : The tool used for data collection was a semi-structured interview schedule eliciting victims' responses. The interview schedule comprised of the questions related to reporting of sexual victimization under different social institutions and the reasons behind non-reporting of the victimizations.
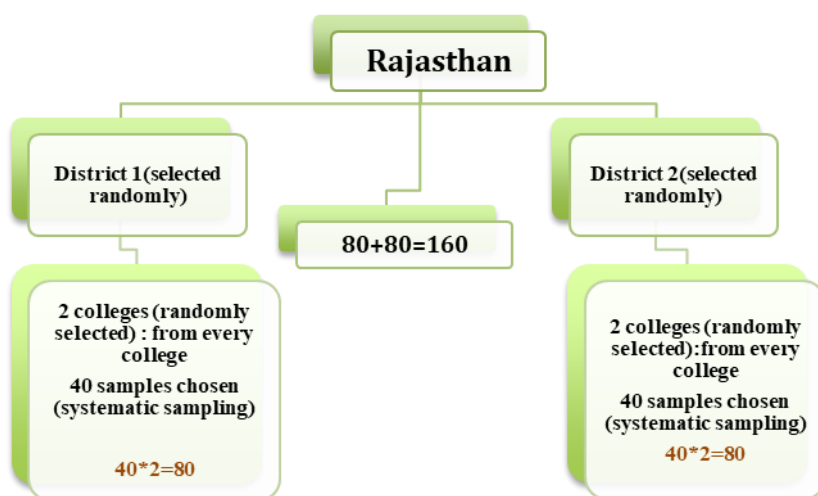

Figure 1

Operational Definitions

Female students: For the study, the term "Female Students" means female students pursuing their education from the Colleges of Rajasthan. Higher Education Institution: The term "Higher Education Institutions" means Colleges from different districts of Rajasthan. Victim: For this study, "victim" means female students of the HEI who have experienced any form of sexual victimization on higher

education institution campus. Sexual victimization: The term 'sexual victimization' used in this study includes different forms of sexual crimes mentioned in the Indian Laws. For the study the IPC (Indian Penal Code) sections included are: Section (294 ,354, 354A, 354B, 354C, 354D, 375,509,509A,509B,) Social Institutions: For this study, the term social institutions refers to the different social groups that may be generally preferred by a victim to inform and seek help such as Police, Family, Authorities of Higher Education Institutions, Friends circle and other relatives. Presentation & Analysis of data: The analysis of the quantitative data i.e. the number of sexual victimization incidences reported to different social institutions was done by simple frequency analysis and is presented in cross tabular form. Ethical Issues: At every stage of the study, the ethics of the social research were maintained. Informed consent from the participants and confidentiality was maintained by considering the privacy, anonymity, and proper explanation of the study to the victim. All these concerns contributed to building rapport with the participants. The participants were informed to withdraw at any point if they assumed an element of harm was present during the study.

Limitation of Study

The study is being conducted among 160 female college participants from Higher Education Institutions of two districts of Rajasthan . The findings of the study cannot be generalized to all the female participants studying in different Colleges of Rajasthan. The study covered the on-campus sexual victimization of female students. Therefore the forms of sexual victimization cannot be generalized to different life spaces apart from College.

3. Results and Discussion

A total of 160 participants were chosen for the study. Out of the 160 participants, 116 respondents have experienced at least one form of sexual victimization on campus. Out of the 116 participants, 94 have reported victimization to either or to more than one of the social institutions.

Table 1: Victims 'Reporting of their Victimization to any of the Social Institutions'

Social Institutions	Number of Victims Reported their Sexual Victimization	Total Number of Victims of Sexual victimization (94) - Number of Reporting done to each of Social Institutions	Number of Victims not reported their Sexual Victimization (with percentage)
Reported to Police	4	94 - 4	90 (95.7%)
Reported to Higher Education Institution Authorities	28	94 - 28	66 (70.2%)
Reported to Family or parents	53	94 - 53	41 (43.6%)
Reported to Friends	82	94 - 82	12 (12.7%)
Reported to any other person	9	94 - 9	85(90.4%)

Findings: The table above clearly indicates that most (82) of the victims reported their sexual victimizations to friends, followed by family or parents (53). Information in 28 incidents was reported to higher education institutions, and the victimizations were reported to anyone else in nine incidents. It is noteworthy that in 94 of the total sexual victimizations reported, some victimizations were reported to more than one social institution. It is important to note, only four victims reported the sexual victimization incidents to the Police. It is essential to report sexual victimization to the Police as unreported victimization will add to dark figures of crimes.

Table 2: Reasons for non-reporting sexual victimizations under different social institutions

Reasons for Non-Reporting of sexual victimization	Not Reported to Police (N=90)	Not Reported to Higher Education Institution Authorities (N=66)	Not Reported to Family or parents (N=41)	Not Reported to Friends (N=12)	Not Reported to any other person (N=85)
Inadequate support systems	52	4	3	0	2
Fear or risk of retaliation	1	15	0	4	1
Victim didn't expected response from anyone[1]	14	2	8	2	9
Fear of being punished	0	6	6	0	2
Fear or risk of not being believed	16	3	12	0	21
Victim felt that she was partially responsible for her victimization	0	5	4	3	9
Victim did not want her family to know about sexual victimization	0	14	2	1	5
Victim did not want to break connection with perpetrator	0	4	1	1	0
Fear or risk of being mistreated by society	0	0	2	0	23
Fear or risk of being blamed[1]	7	12	3	1	13
The perpetrator made apology	0	1	0	0	0

Analysis: The table below explains, in the context of reported cases (94), the different reasons for the non-reporting of sexual victimization under five different reporting settings. Considering the reasons for the non-reporting of victimizations to police, it was found that victims thought there were inadequate support systems for reporting(52) victimizations, followed by fear of not being believed(16), victim also did not expect any response from any person. In seven cases, victims also had a fear of being blamed. Considering the reasons for non-reporting victimizations to higher education institutions, in most cases (15), the victims developed fear/risk of retaliation. It was also found that the victim did want to reveal her victimization to her family (14). The victim also developed the risk of being blamed. In one case, the perpetrator made an apology. Hence, sexual victimization was not reported. The primary reason behind the non-reporting of victimizations to family or parents was fear or risk of being not believed. The victim, in a few cases, also had a fear of being punished. In four cases, the victim felt partially responsible for her own victimization; hence, the idea of reporting the victimization to family and parents was dropped out. The reason behind the non-reporting of sexual victimization to friends was that the victim feared retaliation and blamed her for sexual victimization. In one case, the victim did not want to break the connection with the perpetrator, so she did not report the victimization. Fear of being mistreated by the societal members was a primary reason (23) that stopped the victim from reporting sexual victimization to any other person. Victims also had a fear of being blamed by societal members.

4. Conclusion

The non-reporting of on-campus sexual victimization of female students is a complex issue that requires a multi-faceted approach to address. Our research findings have shown that various factors contribute to underreporting sexual victimization, including fear of retaliation, lack of trust in the reporting process, and societal stigma surrounding sexual victimization. Creating safe and supportive

reporting mechanisms is essential, empowering victims to speak out about their experiences and collaborating with law enforcement to ensure that reports are adequately identified and addressed. Additionally, identifying patterns and trends in sexual victimization and developing targeted prevention strategies can help promote reducing the incidence of sexual victimization on college campuses. In conclusion, addressing the non-reporting of on-campus sexual victimization of female students requires a comprehensive approach that involves prevention, support, collaboration, and a culture of accountability. By implementing these strategies, colleges can create safer, more supportive environments for victims of sexual victimization and work towards eradicating on - campus sexual victimization.

Suggestions

The following measures are suggested to improve the reporting of sexual victimization of female college students: Programs emphasizing healthy relationships, consent, and bystander intervention can help reduce sexual victimization on college campuses through education and prevention. These programs can be offered to students, faculty, and staff to raise awareness and comprehension of sexual violence and its effects on victims. Every institution of higher education should report sexual victimization to the institution's Internal Complaint Committee. The Internal Complaint Committee should actively acknowledge and consider seriously any form of the sexual victimization. It is essential to establish secure, supportive reporting mechanisms that encourage victims to come forward and seek assistance. This can include anonymous reporting options, confidential reporting through campus counseling services, and online reporting systems that enable victims to report incidents from any location. It is vital to empower victims to speak out about their experiences and provide them with the resources they need to recover. This can include offering counseling services, support groups, and advocacy services to assist survivors in navigating the reporting process and gaining access to resources. Collaboration with law enforcement can help ensure that the reports of victims are taken thoughtfully and thoroughly investigated. This may involve establishing partnerships with local law enforcement agencies to enhance communication and coordination between campus security and law enforcement. Data Collection and Analysis, The collection and analysis of data can assist higher education institutions in identifying patterns and trends in sexual victimizations and developing targeted prevention strategies. This can include campus-wide surveys to assess the prevalence of sexual victimizations and data collection on reported incidents to identify areas of concern. Creating a Culture of Accountability: It is crucial to establish a culture of accountability that conveys the message that sexual violence will not be tolerated on campus. This can include developing and enforcing policies that prohibit sexual violence, providing staff and faculty with training on how to respond to incidents of sexual violence, and enforcing consequences for those who commit sexual violence. Enhancing the reporting of sexual victimization of female college students necessitates a comprehensive strategy incorporating prevention, support, and collaboration. Colleges can create safer, more supportive environments for all female students by implementing these strategies.

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