

Sexual Violence: A Psycho-Social Perspective

Ameya Nath, Tanya Dixit, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya

Law student, 3rd year.

Asst. Professor, Department of Psychology

National Law University, Lucknow.

Corresponding Author: Ameya Nath

ABSTRACT: Sexual Violence and exploitation is a huge concern in the society, and is not just peculiar or discrete to one country, but is a major cause of concern across the globe. The main objective of the paper is to find out the causal factors that encourage men to sexually abuse women, to analyse the psychological and sociological aspect of the happening of such an offence by studying how these affect the behavioural traits of humans, and men specifically and to explore effective strategies for implementation. Factors like power imbalance, objectification of women and poverty, pornography, cultural values were found actively increasing the sexual abuse. Psychological factors like resentment against women, impetuous offenders, attitude towards sex and companionship and women, high level of violence and aggression, perspective towards the world, sadists, lack of impulse control, behavioural disorders were obtained that reinforce the sexual violence and exploitation. Conclusively, it was found that there is an urgent need for a public questioning and for open and honest and public debates about male sexuality in schools, community organizations, homes, and religious institutions and for broader understandings of the circumstances and factors that lead to the usage of sexual exploitation and sexual violence. There is a pressing required for policies to balance their approaches on the lines of preventive and punitive measures.

KEYWORDS: Sexual Violence, Coercive sex, Rape, Implementation

Date of Submission: 12-11-2018

Date of acceptance: 26-11-2018

Rationale Of The Study: Sexual Violence, Sexual exploitation and Coercive Sex are certain global issues that are universal in nature and are present in almost every country of the world. Although in most countries there has been little research conducted on the problem, available data suggest that in some countries nearly one in four women may experience sexual violence such as ‘Rape’ by an intimate partner, and up to one-third of adolescent girls report their first sexual experience as being force. Thus, it seems important to research on this sensitive issue.

Objectives: The main objective of the paper is to find out the causal factors that encourage men to sexually abuse women. However certain sub-objectives are as follows: To study the role of various social and psychological factors as reinforcing agent of sexual violence, sexual exploitation and coercive sex. To find out the psychological disorders, the behavioural traits that causes men to indulge into this act sexual coercion and harm a women’s dignity, kill her with their monstrosity. To study the role of ‘Pornography’ which can contribute to men’s indulgence in sexual violence? To find out effective strategies for implementation.

I. INTRODUCTION

As per World Health Organisation Report, 2011, Sexual violence is: “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.” The word Rape emanates from the Latin word ‘Rapere’ (Raptum) which means to snatch, to carry off or to grab off. In Roman law, it is called Raptus (Raptio), which means kidnapping or abduction. Sexual coercion was not a part of the definition and was a tangential concern. Under the English law, Rape was usually expressed as Stuprum, a sexual transgression perpetrated through violence, force and coercion. Raptus Ad Stuprum, which means kidnapping, abducting or capturing someone with the grail to effect a sexual offense, came up as a distinction in the Late Roman Republic. In India, Rape is not a new offense and has been present since the ancient times. Under the present Indian law, the term Rape is defined in the Indian Penal Code, 1860 under the section 375. Section 375 lays down conditions as to when the sexual intercourse will amount to rape. Sexual violence and others sexual crimes are enshrined under Section 354, 354A, 354B, 354C and 354D under IPC.

Sexual Violence is a huge concern in the society, and is not just peculiar or discrete to one country, but is a major cause of concern across the globe. No country has been able to decipher the exact root cause of the issue, and the main reason behind it that there are number of factors that cause the rapist to rape a woman or indulge in any sort of coercive sexual behaviour with her. It is because of these concealed and latent reasons why there is a lack of proper laws for rape that can effectively prevent it.

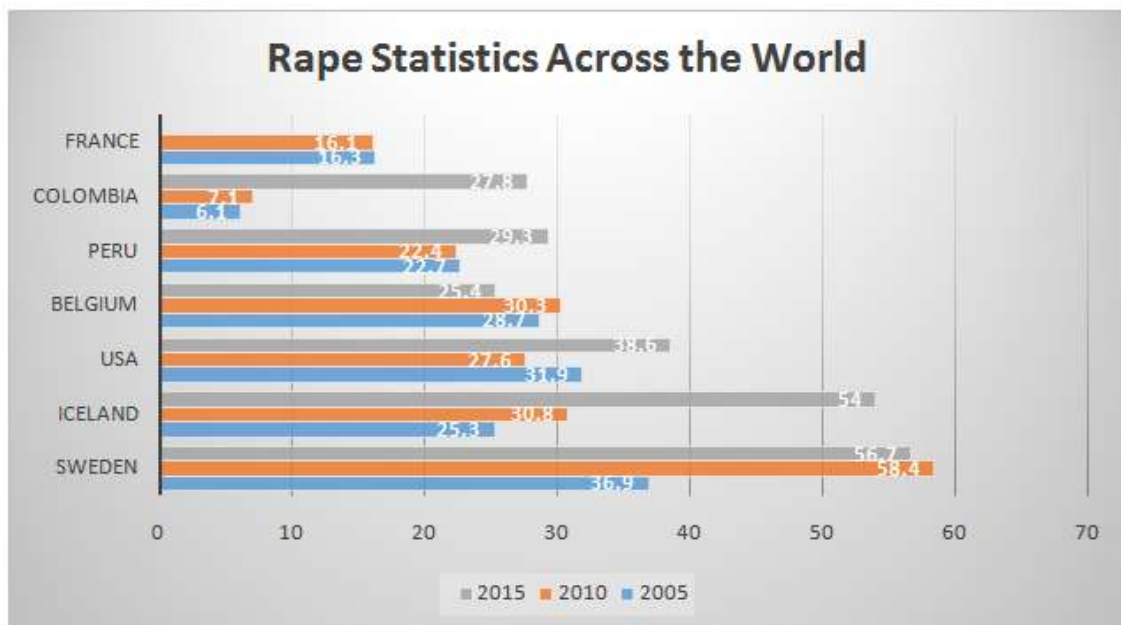
Rape Statistic in Global Perspective:

“Worldwide, around 15 million adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 have experienced forced sex in their lifetime. Boys are also at risk, although a global estimate is unavailable.”¹

The rape statistics are chilling to look at. In the United States of America, 1 out of 6 women have been victim of either attempted or accomplished rape in which 14.8% have been victims of completely accomplished rape, and 2.8% have been victims of attempted rapes.² There are 321,500 victims each year (of or above the age of 12 years) who have been victims of sexual assaults.

In Canada, 1 in 3 women experience and are victims of sexual assault, and only a negligible proportion of 6% of it has been reported to the Police. According to the Justice Institute of British Columbia, 1 out of 17 women is raped.

14.5 % Sri Lankan men have perpetrated rape at some point in their lives, 4.9% in the past year, 2.7% have raped another man, and 1.6% have been a part of some or the other gang rape. 96.5% have faced no legal ramification for their act and 65.8% did not repent it. Here, the researcher graphically presented the rape statistics of other countries.



Rape Statistics in Indian Perspective: Looking back at the latest data available, of 2016, India face 106 rape incidents per day and four out of ten victims were minors. And the data of the National Crimes Record Bureau of 2016 reflects that in 94.6 cases, the victim knew the culprit and they were their relatives including brothers, grandfathers etc. The report shows that 38,947 rape cases were reported in India under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) as well as other related relations under the Indian Penal Code, 1860. Below is the graph that represents the NCRB data³ across years in a state-wise manner to get a clearer picture of the rape incidents within the country.

¹Sexual violence. (2017, November). Retrieved from <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/violence/sexual-violence/>.

²Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/victims-sexual-violence>.

³ Crime Statistics. Retrieved from <http://ncrb.gov.in/StatPublications/CII/CII2016/pdfs/Crime%20Statistics%20-%202016.pdf>.



Theoretical Explanation of Sexual Violence and Coercive Sexual Behaviour: When looking at sexual violence as a learned behaviour, the underlying theory is that “social conditions, such as cultural norms, rules, and prevailing attitudes about sex, and structure the behavior of the rapists within the context of the broader social system, fostering rape-prone environments and, in effect, teaching men to rape.”⁴

A study, for example, found that sexual violence was associated to greater designs of violence within a society, an ideology that encourages male aggressiveness (especially when males are encouraged and boosted to be sexually aggressive), and male dominance (such as low levels of female political, social and economic empowerment and high levels of sexual separation and segregation).⁵

AnandSoondas, blogging on Times of India newspaper’s site, makes the following argument in his Why Indian Men Rape that “Strange theories are floated to explain the depravity of Indian men... but the truth is that at the root of it all lies a culture built around hierarchies, gender, faith, colour, caste, region. We are, quite simply, not used to people being equal.”⁶

In accepting Soondas’s argument that **rape is an outcome of societal transformation**, the focus is on the movement from the traditional to the contemporary and on the tense social relations that emanate from this transition. Here, he reflects on the transition from a hierarchical to an egalitarian system—facilitated, no doubt, by socio-economic development—that has had an effect on the emancipation of Indian women (their ‘westernisation’, as conservatives note) which in turn has led to a crisis in the male identity and a rupture in gender relations precipitating violence (Doron and Broom, 2013).

Factors Related To Sexual Violence And Coercive Sex:

To cure a problem we must first need to understand and recognise the underlying factors and causes of that problem, only then, will we be able to find a solution. There are lot offactors that need to be observed and analysed in order to understand the issue of sexual violence and sexual exploitation. Therefore, this paper seeks to study how the societal norms regarding gender, the various policies at national and international level, power imbalance, objectification of women, poverty, pornography and psychological forces influence such incidents of sexual violence in a society.

Social factors:

- Power Imbalance: Societal norms such as male cachet, sexual entitlement of men and masculinity, all enrich and strengthen the acceptance of sexual violence. Around the globe, males are made to believe that in order to be a “real man”, they need to be stronger, both physically and mentally, and to be in control in their

⁴ Owen, J. (1999). *Sex, Culture, and the Biology of Rape: Towards Explanation and Prevention*. *California Law Review*, 87 (4), 827-849.

⁵ Sanday. (1981). *The Socio-Cultural Context of Rape: A Cross-Cultural Study*. *Journal of Social Issues*.

⁶ Soondas, A. (2012, December 19). *Why Indian men rape*. [The Times of India blog post]. Retrieved from http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/one_fortheroad/entry/why-indian-men-rape (accessed 12 August 2018).

intimate and sexual relationships. Where the doctrine of male superiority is accepted, then physical dominance, strength and male cachet come along with it and tend to weigh down the concerns and positions of the females. This is now a cultural practise across the globe that seems to have a major bias in favour of men.

- **Objectification of Women:** On a different footing, the sexual behaviour of women and their desires are usually repressed. One of the reasons for this is the tendency of the family to keep and affix its entire honour on to the virginity of the females. The kind of position that women hold in the society, the way they are oppressed and the way they are considered to be the property of their husbands and the male supremacy, has led to the concept of objectification of women. Therefore, incidents of sexual violence, aggression and exploitation against women owes its roots to this adverse positioning of females in the society creating great power imbalances between the two genders.
- **Poverty:** Some research indicates that men with lower income who are unemployed or underemployed and denied the chance to gain a “successful” masculinity – may be more prone to recompense for this perceived loss of manhood by having higher number of sexual partners, or by using force and violence, including sexual violence (Silber Schmidt, 2001)⁷ whereas here is also research (limited) to indicate that more socially benefitted men are more prone to use sexual violence and force against females. There are more or less similar findings from India in which men with greater education and higher socio-economic conditions were also more likely to have coerced sex on close partners (Duvvury et al. 2002 in Jewkes et al. 2006)⁸. These examples of links between higher socioeconomic status and use of force and sexual violence, although not decisive, are consistent with an analysis of rape as a masculine proclamation of power and entitlement over females, in that men who are more “advantaged” may have a feeling of being both more powerful and more entitled to sexual intercourse. While the research is uncertain on the effect of poverty on a male’s use of sexual violence, it is certain that poverty increases girls’ and women’s receptiveness to trafficking and sexual exploitation (Jewkes et al. 2005). Young and adult women living in poverty may be forced to indulge in transactional sex as a survival strategy and families living in poverty may be forced to sell their children into particular forms of work, such as housekeeping, which may leave the children more receptive to sexual exploitation and sexual violence and force.

Pornography: Pornography also has many types, from licit to illicit. Licit pornographic content includes partial nudity or nude consenting adults involved in posing or genuine sex acts. The sex acts can range between gentle and kind and mutual sex to rough acts including slavery, sadism and masochism, bestiality etc. Unlawful pornography generally involves minors posing naked or actually engaging in any kind of sex act. Impact of pornography Osanka & Johann (1989) discovered that pornography played a noteworthy role in physical and sexual violence for both, the physical abuser and sexual offender.⁹ Hazelwood & Warren (1995) suggest that sexual imaginations are a crucial part of sexual crime.¹⁰ Zillman & Bryant (1986) found that after huge subjection to pornographic content, males find pornography less offensive and objectionable. They discovered that great exposure to pornography significantly increases a male’s sexual insensitivity towards women.¹¹ When they are intoxicated, males find extreme and violent pornography more acceptable (Johnson, 2014b).¹² Cramer & McFarlane (1994) found that 40% of 87 battered women who filed charges reported that their partner used one

⁷ Silberschmidt M. (2001). *Disempowerment of men in rural and urban East Africa: implications for male identity and sexual behaviour. World Development*, 29(4).

⁸ Jewkes R, Dunkle K, Koss M, Levin J, Nduma M, Jama N, Sikweyiya Y (2006). *Rape perpetration by young, rural South African men: Prevalence, patterns and risk factors. Social Science & Medicine*, 63, 2949-2961.

⁹ Osanka, F.M., & Johann, S.L. (1989). *Sourcebook on Pornography. Lexington Books.*

¹⁰ Hazelwood, R.R., & Warren, J.L. (1995). *The Relevance of Fantasy in Serial Sexual Crime Investigations. . Practical aspects of rape investigation: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, 2, 127-137. Boca Rotan, FL: CRC Press

¹¹ Zillmann, D. & Bryant, J. (1986). *Pornography, Sexual Callousness, and the Trivialization of Rape. Journal of Communication*, 32, 4.

¹² Johnson, S.A. (2014b). *Understanding the Role of Alcohol during Rape: The Perfect Storm of Attention, Emotion, & Expectancies. International Journal of Emergency Mental Health & Human Resilience*, 30-39.

or more pornographic materials. Use of the pornographic content was significantly linked with the female being asked or forced to get involved in violent sexual acts, including rape.¹³

Watching pornography and then copying what is shown in the content have played an important role in the sexual victimization of females as well as to the physical abuse of females (Bergen & Bogle's, 2000; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; Gager & Schurr, 1976; Hald, Malamuth, & Yuen, 2010; Russell, 1993; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997).¹⁴ When pornography was used just before an abusive incident, the pornography appeared to have a tempering or lessening effect on the amount of violence in that episode of violence (Mancini, Reckdenwald, & Beaugard, 2012)¹⁵.

Cultural Values: The amalgamation of cultural values that focus male dominance with economic transition may be specifically problematic, "as men turn their aggression against women they can no longer control or support them economically."

Female sexuality is regulated through slut shaming. Many males would still be uneasy being with a woman who has had sexual intercourse with more people than him – and many men still feel secure referring to women as “slags” or “sluts” for indulging and getting involved in behaviour that would make a man a “stud” or a “lad”.

It is tacitly believed that females must help male to regulate their sexual desire and aggression. They can do this in different ways like by dressing modestly or subserviently, and not being too coquettish with men. These norms are too extreme, and are not supported by everyone. They are also being slowly abraded. But they still do exist – and it is not too improbable to say that they have a place in fabricating a society in which males, much more than women, feel that they want to and are able to indulge in sexual harassment.

II. PSYCHOLOGICAL FORCES THAT DRIVE SEXUAL VIOLENCE

It is not an ingenuous and natural behaviour/ when penile erection succour in the face of coercive or violent sexual intercourse. No human being is born with such proclivity. What propels them to such situation could be an amalgamation of surrounding environment and nurture. There are a range of varied reasons why someone would perpetrate or commit sexual violence. Below are a few of them:

- **Resentment against women:**

Whether it is a specific female or females in general, if there is intense anger against females, there is a potential probability of non-consenting coercive sexual intercourse that could take place. In such cases, the perpetrators could be feeling ignominious or worthless, despondent or intensely angry for a prolonged period and any event that triggers that anger or aggression could end up in a desire for power-trip, thus leading to sexual violence.

- **Impetuous Offenders:**

This type of perpetrators are usually impulsive and opportunistic about their sexual desires and there is mostly no anger or disdain to overpower the victim that is linked unless resisted.

Attitude towards Sex and Companionship: Another distinct class could be of the kind who believe that women like to be coerced upon and would be the perpetrators afterward. These are the offenders who cannot understand a "NO" for a NO.

- **Attitude towards Women:**

These are the hungry for power kind who believe in having hostile relationships with females and choose to be in control and power even in normal communication phases. When they feel their power is threatened, they tend to act in accordance to regain that lost control.

¹³ Cramer, E., & McFarlane, J. (1994). *Pornography and Abuse of Women*. *Public Health Nursing*, 11(4), 268-272.

¹⁴ Bergen, R.K., & Bogle, K.A. (2000). *Exploring the connection between pornography and sexual violence*. *Violence and Victims*, 15, 227–234.

¹⁵ Mancini, C., Reckdenwald, A., & Beaugard E. (2012). *Pornographic Exposure over the Life Course and the Severity of Sexual Offenses: Imitation and Cathartic Effects*. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 40(2012), 21–30.

- **Extremely Violent and Aggressive:**

These are violent ones who will not just sexually violate but also resort to other forms of brutal physical abuse. They are pure female haters and could also have a history of violence and sexual abuse and unhealthy sexual encounters previously in their lives.

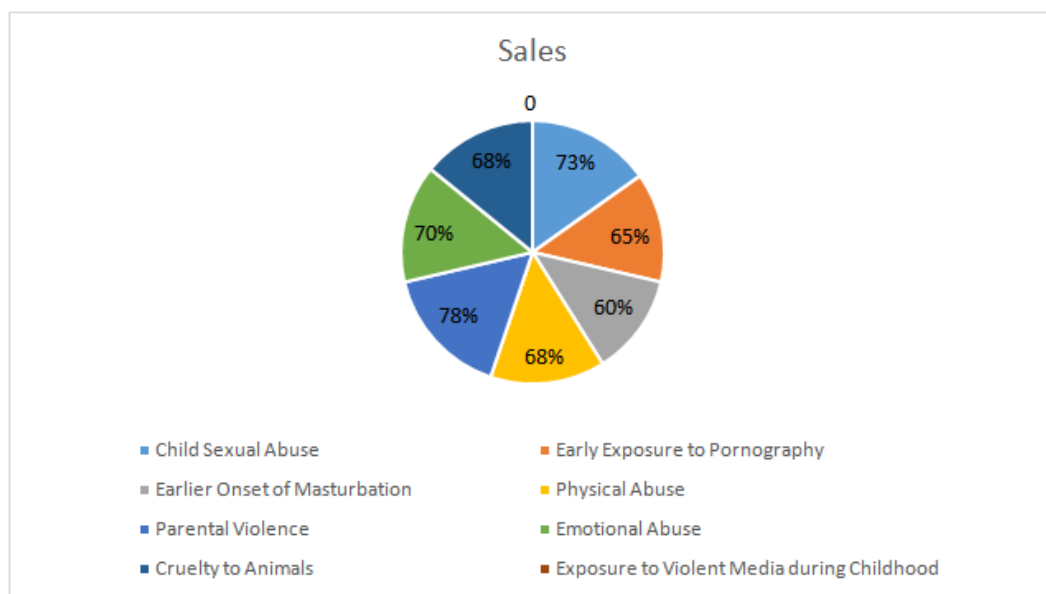
- **Outlook towards the World:**

Yet another category is where the perpetrator has issues connecting himself with the world at large. They commit crimes against both males and females in their anger and hostility. It is mostly physical force and fights against men and rapes against women.

- **Sadists:** This category of rapists gains sexual pleasure out of the fear and pain of the victim.

- **Lack of Impulse Control:** These kind of sexually deviated behaviours may be result of lack of impulse controllable behaviour. Many a times, men are praised for their sexual prowess and their sexual desire is considered to be uncontrollable. Therefore, this ever prevalent norms about manhood and sense of masculinity are major reasons behind such occasions of sexual violence and exploitation. The problem being that they do not consider coercion or coercive sex as a wrong that needs to be corrected, they look at it with a sense of entitlement. They look at it as if the females owe them the sexual pleasure.

- **Behavioural Disorders:** Statistics as to what causes people to become Perpetrators of Sexual Violence



From Research To Action: This paper has discussed and analysed a range of topics related to the complex interaction between social constructions of male honour and men's attitudes and traits and practices related to sexual misuse and exploitation and violence, as well as individual factors linked with a male's use of sexual violence and purchasing of sex in the form of pornography. This literature reviewed for some insights for action: There are individual factors (sometimes individual psychopathologies) linked with men's use of particular kind of sexual violence, men's use of sexual violence is certainly tied to broader and wider social norms related to manhood. This indicates that any efforts to seriously regress men's buying of sex and sexual violence or pornography requires not just reaching out to a few men, but changes in the mind-set as to how societies and cultures view men's roles and responsibilities. Males who adhere or have faith in attitudes that give male dominance, or believe that females should be subservient to them, are often more prone to buy sex. Objectification and commodification of females and sex normalizes a larger spectrum of sexual behaviours, including more violent, forceful and coercive ones. Perhaps, one in ten men worldwide purchases sex annually, with huge variation worldwide, indicating that while not a universal behaviour, it is sanctioned by a sizeable minority of males. The tremendous variations across the cultures and settings means that we need to understand and realise more about factors that are context specific, factors that can explain this variation. Comparatively less research has indicated or examined differences between males who buy sex from adult women, or under-age girls. Existing research indicates that some males who purchase sex may like girls or younger women because of their subservient nature rather than a strict preference for younger women and girls. Many males who purchase sex are younger and go with some groups of friends, as a public performance of a particular form of masculinity. By getting involved in these behaviours, these males may be trying to live up to the expected social and cultural norms of manhood. A male's patterns of usage of sex work and sexual violence often begin when these males

are young, precisely when they may be most prone to want to live up to these expected societal norms of manhood to “fit in” with their peer group.

Pornography seems to be becoming greatly available, and is increasingly a major part of the socialization of boys (and girls). Whether pornography causes sexual violence or causes males to seek paid sex is uncertain, but we can conclude that some types of pornography contribute to and play a role in societal beliefs about women being submissive and sexually available, and also to rape myths that further lead to victim shaming.

III. IMPLEMENTATION

There is a pressing need for policies to balance their approaches on the lines of preventive and punitive measures. This amalgamation of punitive measures with efforts to “rehabilitate and reintegrate” perpetrators and offenders or prevent future use of sexual exploitation and sexual violence is essential for long-term changes in the rates of sexual exploitation and sexual violence. There also continues to be a need for policies to acknowledge the various forms and contexts in which sexual exploitation and sexual violence take place. The

South African Criminal Law Amendment Bill of 2003 expanded the legal understanding of rape to incorporate “non-consensual behaviours that are not strictly penile vaginal... that are committed by means other than the use of actual force like by threats and abuse of authority... and that includes both males and female as victims” (Ngwenya 2005 in Jeejeebhoy et al 2005)¹⁶. These are principal dimensions to sexual exploitation and sexual violence which have been frequently overlooked in policies (as well as programmes). It is also only lately and in a restricted number of countries that rape within the marriage has been considered as an offense (Altman 2001).¹⁷

One region of policy related to sexual exploitation and sexual violence which remains contentious, is how to address sex work. The controversy is, on broad lines, whether policies should be based on decriminalization or penalization. In 1999, Sweden adopted a law which recognized sex work as a form of male violence against females and minors. The law has kindled much debate between those who view sex work as an invariable expression of a male’s sexual exploitation and violence against females and identify the law as a major development and those who argue that such a law shrinks the agency of those females who may choose to be involved and participate in sex work (Altman 2001; Mansson et al).¹⁸

At the platform of international law, on June 19th, 2008, the United Nations Security Council undisputedly adopted Resolution 1820 which acknowledges that “rape and other forms of sexual violence can include war crimes, crimes against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide” and that females are in particular targeted by the usage of sexual violence, including in some cases as “a strategy of war to humiliate, mortify, dominate, instil fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group”. Among the various measures asked for are appropriate military training and efforts to quash myths that fuel sexual violence.

IV. CONCLUSION

There is an urgent need for a public questioning and for open and honest and public debates about male sexuality in schools, community organizations, homes, and religious institutions and for broader understandings of the circumstances and factors that lead to the usage of sexual exploitation and sexual violence. Moreover, in programmes as well as preventive policies, there is a need for males who do not condone sexual violence and sexual exploitation to question other males and to take a public stand against these actions. The White Ribbon Campaign now active in some sixty countries worldwide is an example of males (in still too small numbers) speaking out about violence against females.

Therefore, with this paper we find out that societal, cultural and psychological factors play a very important role in causing Rape and controlling the sexual drive of the males.

Ameya Nath "Sexual Violence: A Psycho-Social Perspective "International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention(IJHSSI), vol. 07, no. 11, 2018, pp. 06-12

¹⁶Ngwenya C. (2005). *Synchronizing traditional legal responses to non-consensual sexual experiences with contemporary human rights jurisprudence*. Jeejeebhoy S, Shah I, Thapa S, eds. *Sex without Consent: Young people in Developing Countries*. London and New York, Zed Books, 227-235.

¹⁷Altman D. (2001). *Global Sex*. Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press.

¹⁸Mansson, SA. (2004). *Men’s Practices in Prostitution and Their Implications for Social Work in S.A*. Mansson and C. Proveyer (editors) *Social Work in Cuba and Sweden: Achievements and Prospects*.