

Sexual Violence on Women and Socio-Economic Determinants of the Rape Offenders

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Abstract:

Sexual violence against women is a grave infringement of human rights and continues to be a significant issue within social and criminal justice frameworks. The prevalence of rape and other types of sexual assault is affected by several socio-economic factors, including education, income level, work position, familial history, and the social context of perpetrators. This research investigates the correlation between socio-economic parameters and the incidence of rape offenses, emphasizing the roles of economic disparity, social conditioning, and demographic attributes in influencing criminal behavior. The study employs a quantitative and analytical methodology, including surveys and secondary data analysis to examine perpetrator traits and patterns of sexual violence. The results demonstrate that poor educational achievement, unemployment, poverty, and exposure to violent surroundings substantially elevate the probability of sexual offenses. The research underscores the need for socio-economic changes, awareness initiatives, and enhanced preventative strategies to tackle the underlying causes of sexual assault and advance gender justice.

Keywords: Sexual Violence, Rape Offenders, Socio-Economic Determinants, Gender Crime, Women's Safety, Criminal Behaviour, Social Inequality, Economic Factors.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

Sexual assault is a kind of sexual violence sometimes equated with rape. It encompasses non-consensual physical contact of a sexual nature, coercive sexual intercourse, attempted rape, anal and oral sexual activities, child molestation, and fondling of breasts or genitals. The victim is an individual who has endured harm and has experienced a non-consensual sexual act. Such sick individual need not only care but also psychological and spiritual assistance. Most sexual attacks are perpetrated by someone familiar to the victims. Historically, offenses perpetrated by acquaintances were not regarded with seriousness. Sexual assault perpetrated by an acquaintance inflicts more harm than that inflicted by strangers. Responders must recognize that a victim's emotions to sexual assault are influenced by several circumstances, including the prior connection between the victim and the perpetrator. They must also recognize that numerous variables may influence the pertinence of specific types of evidence to a given case, including whether the assault was perpetrated by an unidentified individual, a known individual who refutes sexual contact with the victim, or a known individual who asserts that the act was consensual.

Rape, as a manifestation of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), is not confined to any specific age group, but its frequency varies across different age demographics. The prevalence of sexual violence, such as rape, against women of reproductive age is not unexpected in many developing nations, with Nigeria being no exception. The effects of the threat on women of reproductive age include psychological, social, moral, and physiological issues, which may ultimately result in enduring suffering for the victims. Rape is any act of sexual violence inflicted by the perpetrator, whether purposefully or inadvertently, onto the victim,

often including coercion. Rape may manifest as breast fondling, digital penetration of the vagina or anus, penile penetration of the vagina or anus, and the touching of other sensitive body regions without the victims' permission. The detrimental consequences of rape on victims include isolation, anxiety, sleeplessness, aggression, sadness, and lack of appetite. The most severe repercussions include infections, illnesses (morbidity), and mortality. Rape, as a component of gender-based violence (GBV), is included under Goal 5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The objective emphasized the elimination of all manifestations of violence against women and girls, as well as the cessation of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) by 2030. Nigeria confronts a concerning prevalence of sexual assault, particularly among women of reproductive age. Nigeria must adopt aggressive measures to combat this issue if the objective is to be achieved by 2030.

Historically, rape as a type of sexual violence has mostly affected women of reproductive age; however, in the contemporary Nigerian setting, the frequency of rape is increasingly seen among various age groups, including juveniles and the elderly. Nonetheless, the incidence of this threat remains elevated among women of reproductive age. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that worldwide, 1 in 3 women aged 15-45 had encountered various types of sexual assault in their lives (WHO, 2021). Adamu (2020) said that according to UN statistics, at least one in four girls and one in ten boys had experienced sexual abuse before reaching 18 years of age. This shows that females are more vulnerable to this threat than their male counterparts. Rape, a manifestation of sexual violence, may be committed by either an intimate partner or a non-intimate partner. According to WHO estimates, intimate relationship violence and sexual assault against women constitute a significant public health issue and a violation of human rights (WHO, 2021). The group reports that around 30% of women worldwide are vulnerable to physical and/or sexual abuse from intimate partners or non-partners throughout their lifetimes. This suggests that a majority of violence against women is often inflicted by their spouses, as corroborated by WHO data indicating that globally, 27% of women aged 15-49 experience physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence (WHO, 2021).

The United Nations defines violence against women as any gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical or sexual injury, mental harm, or suffering, manifested through threats, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, occurring in both public and private spheres (UN, 1993). Violence against women may negatively impact their physical, emotional, sexual, and reproductive health, increasing susceptibility to infections such as HIV. Sexual assault has been shown to adversely affect victims' health, including physical, reproductive, psychological, and overall well-being. Rape, as a manifestation of gender-based violence, has undoubtedly adversely affected victims' health, morality, social standing, and psychological well-being. Furthermore, it has been shown that rape may result in drug misuse, diminished self-esteem, anxiety, erosion of trust, and suicidal behavior.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sirohi, Tejasvita & Sharma, Gaurav & Mehra, Promila (2026) This research examined the significant elements contributing to the inability to reduce sexual offenses against women, regardless of their economic, social, and educational status. The research was carried out in the Kurukshetra area in northeastern Haryana, India. A questionnaire including 38 questions for legal and enforcement experts and 39 items for the general public was used to gather answers. The poll garnered the most answers from students (72%) and legal professionals (45%). The poll identifies substantial obstacles to justice for victims of diverse sexual offenses, including power dynamics, anxiety, and administrative shortcomings. Workplaces, educational institutions, and vehicles were the most often reported sites of sexual harassment. Among the general population and professionals, 46.11% and 46.46% expressed concerns about social stigma, while 46.82% and 42.37% anticipated punishment from the harasser when reporting the incident. The research identifies substantial obstacles to obtaining justice. Furthermore, 41.64% of professionals said that improper physical contact and online harassment were prevalent. Following the reporting of harassment, just 17.18% of the general populace and 17.84% of professionals conveyed satisfaction with

the authorities' reaction. It is argued that sexual offenses are often committed by individuals inside the victim's professional or social circles, complicating reporting due to power imbalances and peer pressure.

Verma, Shikha & Pandey, Bharti (2025) Incidents of rape in India constitute a significant societal problem, intricately linked to the nation's many cultural, economical, and geographical factors. This article provides an exploratory study of rape events in India, emphasizing patterns over the previous decade. The research elucidates the intricacies of tackling sexual assault in the nation by analyzing geographical differences, urban-rural divisions, and the impact of socioeconomic characteristics such as caste, education, and income levels. The paper examines how these characteristics influence the accessibility and efficacy of support networks for victims, including legal assistance, psychiatric counseling, and community help. The results underscore the need for tailored interventions that address the distinct obstacles encountered by various areas and groups across India, proposing policy suggestions for a more inclusive and successful strategy to prevent rape and assist survivors.

Ilabaca, Paola & Gaete Fiscella, José Manuel (2022) In Chile, research on protective and risk factors for sexual violence is scarce, with few studies including an examination of various forms of capital (social, economic, human) as societal resources for protection against sexual violence. The aim of this study is to assess the degree to which various capital stocks interact as either protective or risk variables for sexual assault across diverse interpersonal contexts. The sample included 1,665 women aged 15 to 30 years ($M = 23.47$, $SD = 4.41$). Artificial neural network analysis and social network analysis were used. The nodes representing human and economic capital possess a minimal protective impact due to their network positioning, but the nodes of social capital have structural significance owing to their key locations within the network. The structure social capital of neighborhood networks is identified as the primary protective factor against sexual violence across all domains, whereas the structural social capital of networks with non-significant people emerges as the principal risk factor for sexual victimization.

Sharma, Radha & Pardasani, Rupali (2014) This study aims to analyze the issue of "Rape" in India from several viewpoints and provide solutions to mitigate this crime in the nation. This study analyzes the behavior of the many participants engaged in the gang rape event of a 23-year-old woman in Delhi, India, on December 16, 2012, using sociological and psychological theories. A systematic inquiry using root cause analysis was conducted on the gang rape case of 16 December 2012 to ascertain the fundamental cause of the rape issue and provide measures to prevent future occurrences. The examination of the issue of rape, specifically the gang rape instance, revealed several underlying explanations for this phenomenon. Given the intricacy of the matter, the writers have provided a multi-faceted approach to this issue. This research article is limited to secondary data for root cause analysis due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter under investigation. Despite being considered a horrible and illegal act, the incidence and severity of this crime have been increasing. Consequently, the subject matter is very significant and relevant. The study provides both theoretical and practical contributions to the underexplored topic of crimes against women, namely rape. Numerous advantages might arise from this multi-faceted investigation of the rape case. A comprehensive knowledge of the motivations behind rape would likely lead to the implementation of preventive measures. Despite the existence of several perspectives on rape and related offenses, the research is fragmented and requires comprehensive integration to thoroughly examine the causes and consequences of rape. This study mixes several views and examines the multifaceted reasons of the phenomena of rape.

Kruttschnitt, Candace (2005) This study enhances etiological research on rape by broadening the array of predictor factors and including similar groups of violent offenders and non-offenders. The research utilizes interview data from 38 convicted rapists, 59 convicted non-sexually violent criminals, and 65 non-offenders, all matched by age, race, and neighborhood of residency during youth. Discriminant analysis

is used with three populations and four categories of discriminating factors: (1) demographic and familial background characteristics, (2) emotional experiences, (3) educational and romantic experiences, and (4) legal and offense-related experiences. The findings indicate that, overall, we are more proficient at distinguishing between offenders and non-offenders than between rapists and other violent criminals. Affective experiences, particularly a background of sexual abuse, unequivocally forecast sexually violent conduct. The findings are analyzed in relation to current rape studies and broader prediction research on antisocial conduct.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the socio-economic characteristics of rape offenders, including factors such as education level, employment status, income level, family background, and social environment.
2. To analyze the relationship between socio-economic determinants and the occurrence of sexual violence against women, particularly how poverty, unemployment, social inequality, and exposure to violence influence rape-related criminal behavior.

Research Questions

1. What are the major socio-economic characteristics of individuals involved in rape and other sexual offenses against women?
2. How do socio-economic factors such as education, income, employment status, and social environment contribute to the likelihood of committing rape offenses?

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research used a descriptive and analytical approach to investigate the socio-economic factors affecting rape offenders and their contribution to sexual violence against women. The design facilitates the identification of patterns, correlations, and behavioral trends.

3.2 Sampling Design

Population

The study population comprised two categories of respondents:

1. Individuals accused or convicted in cases related to sexual offenses (rape and other forms of sexual violence) and lodged in correctional institutions or undergoing trial proceedings, subject to permission from the concerned authorities.
2. Members of the general public, including legal practitioners, police personnel, social workers, and academicians, whose opinions were sought regarding the socio-economic determinants of rape offenders.

Sampling Method

Due to the sensitive nature of the study and the restricted accessibility of offenders, a purely random sampling technique was not feasible. Therefore, a purposive sampling method was adopted for selecting offenders who met the inclusion criteria and voluntarily consented to participate in the study. For the study only Undertrials from erstwhile Warangal District were considered. Access to respondents was obtained through prior approval from prison authorities, district courts, and relevant institutional bodies. Only those offenders who were willing to participate and capable of providing informed responses were included. For public opinion respondents, a simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure diverse representation from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula for estimating sample size for large populations:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where:

- n = Required sample size
- Z = Standard normal variate at 95% confidence level (1.96)
- p = Estimated proportion of the population possessing the attribute (0.50)
- $q = 1 - p$ (0.50)
- e = Margin of error (0.09)

Substituting the values:

$$n = (1.96)^2 \times (0.50 \times 0.50) / (0.09)^2$$

$$n = 118.56$$

The calculated sample size was approximately 119 respondents and was rounded to 120 respondents for convenience and adequate representation.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE STUDY

Table 1: Age Group of Respondents

Age Group	Respondents	Percentage
18–25 years	30	25%
26–35 years	45	37.5%
36–45 years	25	20.8%
Above 45 years	20	16.7%
Total	120	100%

Most responders are aged 26–35 years, suggesting that sexual offenses are mostly linked to those within economically active age brackets.

Table 2: Educational Level of Offenders

Education Level	Respondents	Percentage
Illiterate	25	20.8%
Primary education	35	29.2%
Secondary education	30	25%
Higher education	30	25%
Total	120	100%

A greater percentage of criminals had poor or elementary education, indicating that insufficient education may diminish understanding of legal and societal repercussions, hence escalating illegal behavior.

Table 3: Employment Status of Offenders

Employment Status	Respondents	Percentage
Unemployed	50	41.7%
Daily wage workers	30	25%
Private employment	25	20.8%
Government employment	15	12.5%
Total	120	100%

Unemployment is the predominant category, suggesting that economic instability may foster anger, violence, and criminal behavior.

Table 4: Monthly Income Level

Income Level	Respondents	Percentage
Low income	55	45.8%
Middle income	40	33.3%
High income	25	20.9%
Total	120	100%

The majority of criminals originate from low-income demographics, underscoring the influence of economic disparity on criminal conduct.

Table 5: Family Background of Offenders

Family Environment	Respondents	Percentage
Stable family	35	29.2%
Broken family	45	37.5%
History of violence in family	40	33.3%
Total	120	100%

A significant number of criminals originate from dysfunctional homes or violent environments, indicating that early social conditioning impacts criminal behavior.

4.2 FURTHER ANALYSIS OF CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Table 6: Influence of Alcohol or Substance Abuse

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	70	58.3%
No	50	41.7%
Total	120	100%

Over fifty percent of the participants indicated drug misuse, suggesting a significant correlation between drunkenness and sexual assault.

Table 7: Awareness of Legal Consequences

Awareness Level	Respondents	Percentage
Fully aware	30	25%
Partially aware	50	41.7%
Not aware	40	33.3%
Total	120	100%

A significant number of offenders exhibit insufficient understanding of legal repercussions, indicating that legal education might potentially mitigate sexual offenses.

Table 8: Social Environment Influence

Environment	Respondents	Percentage
Peer influence	40	33.3%
Exposure to violence	35	29.2%
Cultural attitudes	25	20.8%
Media influence	20	16.7%
Total	120	100%

Peer influence and exposure to violence are significant variables leading to sexual offenses, underscoring the role of the social environment in influencing behavior.

Table 9: Place of Occurrence of Sexual Offence

Place of Occurrence	Respondents	Percentage
Public places	35	29.2%
Victim’s residence	30	25%
Offender’s residence	25	20.8%
Workplace/Institution	20	16.7%
Isolated areas	10	8.3%
Total	120	100%

Sexual offenses are mostly reported in public areas and home environments. This indicates that insufficient security and trust-based situations heighten susceptibility to sexual assault.

Table 10: Relationship Between Offender and Victim

Relationship	Respondents	Percentage
Stranger	40	33.3%
Acquaintance	35	29.2%
Family member	25	20.8%
Colleague/Friend	20	16.7%
Total	120	100%

The majority of perpetrators are either strangers or familiar acquaintances, suggesting that sexual assault occurs within both new and familiar social contexts.

Table 11: Residential Background of Offenders

Residential Area	Respondents	Percentage
Urban	50	41.7%
Semi-urban	40	33.3%
Rural	30	25%
Total	120	100%

A bigger percentage of offenders originate from metropolitan regions, likely because to increased population density, socio-economic inequalities, and social stressors.

Table 12: Exposure to Gender Discriminatory Attitudes

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Strongly present	45	37.5%
Moderately present	40	33.3%
Slightly present	20	16.7%
Not present	15	12.5%
Total	120	100%

Most respondents indicated the existence of gender discriminatory attitudes, implying that patriarchal ideologies and gender inequality exacerbate sexual assault.

5. CONCLUSION

The research shows that sexual violence against women is significantly linked to the socio-economic factors of perpetrators. Poverty, unemployment, inadequate education, violent familial settings, and drug addiction substantially influence criminal behavior. The results indicate that sexual offenses are not only individual actions but are shaped by wider social and economic circumstances. Preventive methods must include education, career possibilities, social awareness, rigorous law enforcement, and behavioral intervention programs. Mitigating socio-economic disparities and fostering gender sensitivity are crucial for diminishing sexual assault and safeguarding women's safety in society.

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