
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Sex Crimes and Victim Blaming: How to Stop It

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| ABSTRACT

This article addresses the issue of victim blaming in sex crimes. It examines the causes that lead people to blame rape victims and the consequences of victim blaming, including its impact on the mental health and well-being of survivors. The findings of the study revealed that to prevent rape and sexual assault, it is imperative to educate men on the prevention of rape and to challenge traditional gender roles. Parents should be made aware of the potential dangers of gender socialization. Women and girls should never be instructed to alter their behavior or attire. This approach may inadvertently convey the notion that their actions are a cause of rape or sexual assault. In the event of rape or sexual assault, it is crucial to provide support to the victim. It is also essential to cease the practice of blaming victims. The perpetrator is solely responsible and should be held accountable. To eradicate rape, it is essential that individuals recognize the potential for men and women to coexist as equals. Finally, the article suggests some strategies to challenge victim blaming.

| KEYWORDS

Victim blaming, causes, consequences, counter strategies

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 03 May 2024

PUBLISHED: 25 May 2024

DOI: 10.32996/jgcs.2024.4.1.8

1. Introduction

People often blame victims of sexual crimes for a variety of reasons, including misconceptions about the victim, perpetrator, and the act of violence. These reasons can be individual, such as gender role attitudes, belief in a just world, and acceptance of rape myths, or situational, such as the victim's appearance, clothing, sexual history, use of drugs or alcohol, and resistance. Victim blaming is never justified and only serves to perpetuate harmful attitudes and behaviors. Finally, societal factors include socialization and the media's objectification of women.

In patriarchal societies, such as those found in North Africa, particularly Morocco, men are often granted sexual power over women. This power dynamic is supported and perpetuated by patriarchal institutions, including family, school, religion, and media. Both sexes are socialized to adhere to restrictive gender roles, with aggressive behavior being normalized for masculinity and submissiveness being normalized for femininity.

The patriarchal structure of society operates at all levels to position women in lower status than men. Patriarchal ideology and systematic gender biases have denied women not only equal (...) treatment before the law (Skalli, 2001, 76).

Patriarchal structures normalize sexual violence against women. Men hold the power to escape punishment for their crimes. The causes of such violence find their roots in men's view of their privileged position towards women. Custom and law protect men against any abuse exerted on women, regardless of its severity (Laryssa, 2002, 75). Patriarchy discriminates against women. It

privileges a dominant normative form of masculinity, which is the hegemonic and sexually aggressive type of masculinity. This type of masculinity was described by Uggen and Blackstone in 2004 (66). In patriarchal societies, men hold the power to dominate women in all fields, including politics, religion, societal privilege, law, and property. Even within the family, male figures have control and authority over women and children. The family's hierarchical structure unconsciously teaches sons and future generations to hold power over women and view them as inferior.

Socialization is the process by which society and institutions shape individuals (Anderson & Doherty, 1997, 303). From an early age, boys and girls are assigned specific gender roles that impact how they perceive themselves and others. This process of gender role socialization affects various types of human behavior, including sexual behavior. For example, a casual conversation within a Moroccan family might proceed as follows: "Where is Meriem and Ahmed? It is becoming dark outside. Please inform Meriem to return home. Ahmed is a boy, so he is not at risk."

Such conversations are common in Moroccan families as night approaches. Girls are more at risk than boys when on the streets at night, so it is important to ensure their safety. However, it is important to remember that girls should not be blamed for being sexually abused. We must work towards a society where everyone can feel respected, regardless of their gender. Socialization puts women like Meriem at risk of being victimized by men like Ahmed. Girls who do not abide by the rules and leave the protection of their male relatives and the safety of their homes are often blamed if they are sexually abused. This blame should not be placed on the victim, but on the perpetrator. Teaching girls self-protection measures and encouraging them to stay at home can promote a culture that blames the victim rather than the perpetrator in cases of sexual crimes. This places the burden of preventing assault on the woman and justifies the attacker's irresponsible actions.

Cultural norms teach us that men are superior and should dominate women. Male aggression is often seen as acceptable to achieve goals, while women are expected to be submissive and treated as sexual objects. Men are socialized to initiate sexual encounters, which turns sexual relations into a challenge where women are objectified. Socialization into gender roles increases women's vulnerability to sexual assault and often results in victim-blaming. Gender roles can excuse men's sexual behavior towards women and blame the victim instead of the perpetrator. According to Gravelin (2019) and Warshaw (1994), men may be taught to dissociate themselves from responsibility for their sexual actions, reinforcing the myth that once a man is sexually aroused, he cannot stop himself. The 'boys will be boys' mentality portrays male sexuality as uncontrollable and naturally aggressive. Men are often trained to use their bodies aggressively and to fight, while women are not taught to fight back or resist men's misconduct. This is due to the belief that it is not 'ladylike' for women to use force. Instead, women are often encouraged to find a male protector and remain under his guardianship for security. Unfortunately, when women leave the protection of their male guardians, they are often blamed for any harm that comes to them, especially in cases of sexual assault.

Women are often socialized from a young age to adopt a 'victim mentality' and view themselves as potential victims of rape (Brownmiller, 1975, 309). Cartoons and fairy tales often depict girls as helpless and in need of rescue by a man, rather than encouraging them to be self-sufficient. Agency is not in line with traditional femininity standards, which define female sexuality as passive. Males, who may become perpetrators of rape, are often socialized to unconsciously perform aggressive acts due to false notions of masculinity. These notions suggest that being male means having unlimited access to a woman's body. This connection between sexuality and violence is due to the aggressive-passive, dominant-submissive nature of the relationship between the sexes in our culture (Herman, 1979, 45). Stereotypes about male sexuality being uncontrollable and women being property without sexual immunity cause a fear of rape among women, which functions as social control.

"The belief that sexual encounters follow a predictable sequence ending inevitably in sexual intercourse, coupled with the idea that men should initiate sexual activity and should overcome women's reluctance, has been used to account for why some men may feel justified in using verbal coercion and physical force to obtain sex" (Frith, 101).

Blame and traditional gender roles are significantly related, as the latter often lead to victim blaming in cases of sexual assault. Victim blaming is used to maintain the hierarchical power difference between men and women. Judgments of violence against women are influenced by gender and sexuality norms. For instance, people's acceptance of men's violence towards their partners is based on the belief that men should be dominant in relationships and have the right to use physical punishment to enforce their dominance. This belief is also supported by the idea that men have uncontrollable sexual desires, women are malicious, and marriage implies sexual consent (Flood & Pease, 2009, 128).

Attitudes towards rape are often linked to traditional gender role stereotypes. These stereotypes suggest that men are naturally dominant, and aggressive, while women are weak, obedient, and passive. As a result, men and women may develop expectations of gender role behaviors during sexual interaction. Traditional gender roles can lead to the acceptance of prejudicial attitudes

towards rape victims. These rape myths come from deeply ingrained gender roles about how men and women should behave, and victims of rape are blamed for breaking societal expectations of their gender. Thus, a woman who goes out alone at night may face criticism, as may a woman who is shamed for having had previous sexual relationships.

People often associate conservative values with traditional gender roles that place women in stereotypical positions. For example, the belief according to which women should remain in the private sphere, protected by the home, while men dominate both the public and private spheres could lead to blaming rape survivors. For Grubb & Turner (2012), individuals with more traditional gender role attitudes or who endorse benevolent sexism are more likely to engage in victim blaming, recommend lower sentences for perpetrators, and minimize the seriousness and aftermath of rape. However, these results apply more to acquaintance or date rape than to stranger rape cases. This is because survivors of acquaintance or date rape are often considered to have transgressed already-assigned gender norms or to have gone beyond what is allowed in a relationship or friendship between the two sexes. People with traditional gender roles assign less or no blame to stranger rape survivors as long as they are not considered to have challenged the normative roles prescribed to both sexes. This includes going out late at night, taking drugs or drinking alcohol, dressing provocatively, or being sexually expressive.

Men tend to hold more stereotypical beliefs about gender roles than women, which can lead to blaming rape victims and having harsh attitudes towards them (Anderson & Lyons, 2005; Grubb & Turner, 2012). Nevertheless, recent studies suggest that attitudes towards gender roles are a better indicator of victim-blaming than the gender of the research subject. Men tend to blame more because they are more likely to accept stereotypical views of gender and sexuality, not because they are more vulnerable to misogyny. Survivor-denigration resulting from 'hostile sexism,' which refers to the belittlement of a rape survivor that challenges gender norms, is a valid concern. Both men and women, however, are similarly inclined to 'benevolent sexism' by showing respect towards victims who conform to gender norms.

Rape myths are beliefs that sustain male sexual violence against women and perpetuate victim blaming. They trivialize and justify sexual aggression, demonize the victim, express disbelief in claims of rape, exonerate the perpetrator, and suggest that only certain types of women are raped (Bohner et al., 1998; Burt, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, 1995):

[Rape myths] affect subjective definitions of what constitutes a 'typical rape', contain problematic assumptions about the likely behavior of perpetrators and victims, and paint a distorted picture of the antecedents and consequences of rape. (Bohner et al, 2009, 18)

Rape myths contribute to victim blaming by assigning accountability to the most vulnerable (Ward, 1995). Those who hold stronger beliefs in rape myths tend to blame victims more than those who do not. Additionally, high scores in Rape Myth Acceptance predict victim blaming, with individuals more likely to blame the victim and less likely to blame the perpetrator. Additionally, individuals with high levels of Rape Myth Acceptance minimize the severity of rape, believe that the rape could have been prevented, and are less likely to acknowledge that a rape has occurred. Negative attitudes towards women are associated with Rape Myth Acceptance, which is more common in men than in women. This is because men are more likely to endorse rape myths than women, according to Suarez and Gadalla (2010).

Rape myths perpetuate the false belief that the victim is responsible for the rape and justify the actions of the rapist. These myths can be used as a dangerous tool for potential rapists to naturalize their violent tendencies. Besides, rape myths can impact how the criminal justice system handles rape survivors who choose to report the incident, which discourages many victims from filing a legal complaint.

Rape myths often shape people's perceptions of perpetrators as strangers who attack victims in public spaces. However, the reality is that the majority of rapes are committed by someone known to the victim, such as a family member, friend, or colleague. This means that fear of the unknown is replaced by fear of the known, the familiar, and the trusted. Leslie (2002) notes that this is a common misconception that needs to be addressed. Recent research indicates that victims of acquaintance or date rape are more likely to be blamed than those who are raped by a stranger (Bell et al., 1994; Kelly, 2009; Sleath & Bull, 2010; While & Yamawaki, 2009). Trivialization of the act of rape is more common in cases of acquaintance, date, or marital rape than in cases of stranger rape (Edwoldt et al., 2000). If the victim and perpetrator are previously acquainted, it is often assumed that the rapist may have misinterpreted signals from the victim, leading to higher blame attributions against the victim and the belief that they had actually consented to the sexual encounter, which they later regretted. Research shows that when a victim has a close relationship with their rapist, they are more likely to be assigned shared responsibility and blamed for the rape (Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). In Morocco, if the rapist and victim are acquainted, the criminal justice system may not punish the perpetrator severely. In these situations, the victim is often doubted and accused of falsely claiming rape after initially consenting to sexual intercourse (Lamrani, 2013).

Observers often blame the victim in sexual crimes based on their appearance, sexual history, previous experiences, physical attractiveness, and style of dress, rather than holding the perpetrator accountable. This is because of the common myth that rape is driven by men's sexual desire. As a result, women who are sexually abused are often blamed for 'asking for it' through their revealing, provocative, and suggestive clothing or behavior. This myth leads to victimized women receiving more blame instead of empathy, while women who dress conservatively are held less responsible. Research has shown that women who dress less provocatively are more likely to be blamed for being victimized (Viki & Abrams, 2002; Whatley, 2005). Unfortunately, fashion, social norms, and camaraderie are often used to justify a woman's culpability in her own violation. Yet, just as a man does not wear an expensive watch because he wants it stolen, a woman does not wear attractive clothing because she wants to be raped. Society demands that women dress decently by covering their bodies, despite the fact that women of all appearances, including those wearing traditional Islamic attire, have been victims of sexual assault.

In a rape-supportive culture, sexually active women are often unfairly labeled as promiscuous. This entails the belief that these women may have enjoyed the assault and falsely claimed rape afterwards, as if they had experienced a pleasurable rape they would have provoked. Society should not place the burden of sexual purity solely on women, but rather promote a culture of mutual respect and responsibility. Females who express their sexuality are considered delinquent, unlike males who are thought to have excessive hormones or biological sexual urges.

Additionally, in cases involving drugs or alcohol, the perpetrator's actions or behaviors are often excused while the victim is held accountable for the entire event. Victims who are sober receive more blame, as they are believed to be fully capable of resisting the attack and stopping it. However, if the victim consumed drugs voluntarily and of their own free will, they may be considered more responsible than a sober victim. Conversely, if the victim was unknowingly given drugs, such as in a spiked drink, they would be held less responsible. Victims who become intoxicated by alcohol are often blamed more and their perpetrators' actions are excused. Although much of the violence occurs under the influence of drugs or alcohol, its root causes lie in men's belief in their privileged position over women. They are assured that both custom and law will protect them against any abuse exerted on women, regardless of its severity. In patriarchal societies, women are often considered second-class citizens, and their abuse is often disregarded (Chomiak, 2002, 75).

Victims are perceived as less responsible when they physically resist, rather than verbally, and when their resistance is portrayed as strong, especially in the early stages of the interaction. In addition, victim blaming decreases when victims resist, and they are less likely to be criticized when attackers use physical force to harm or threaten them. People may suggest longer prison sentences for rapists who physically abuse their victims, leaving them with serious injuries. It is a fallacy to believe that women can always prevent rape if they truly want to. Some people believe that a woman is inviting rape if she does not resist enough, sustain enough bruises, or scream enough (Leslie, 2002, 120). Society views women who do not defend themselves as 'asking for it,' while those who do are criticized for not being feminine enough and needing to be regulated. Leslie (2002, 121) argues that women are blamed for sexual assault, regardless of whether they defend themselves or not.

Media content often portrays the female body as a passive sex object, perpetuating male aggressiveness and domination over women. Brownmiller (1975, 389) argues that this reinforces male hegemony. Viewing sexually abusive material on media, such as pornography, can enhance acceptance of rape myths. This may increase the likelihood of viewers becoming potential rapists and considering rape as normal. Wood's *Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on Views of Gender* raises this issue. Repetitive exposure to pornographic materials can lead to negative attitudes towards women and female rape victims. Viewers may trivialize rape and have a higher likelihood of committing such acts themselves. Studies suggest that men consume more pornographic and sexually violent material than women (Hald, 2006), which may lead to victim-blaming and excusing the perpetrators' actions.

Rape culture perpetuates the false belief that victims are responsible for their own victimization. Those who subscribe to these myths about rape often blame the victim, assuming that only women with 'loose morals' are raped. This leads to the harmful idea that victims of rape somehow deserved it because they were misbehaving, 'triggering it,' or did not protect themselves enough. The category of 'Other' is used to exclude certain women, which disregards the fact that anyone, including men and children, can be vulnerable to rape or sexual assault. Rape culture has a harmful impact on survivors, as it often silences those who wish to seek justice. This shame is unjust. Victims of sexual assault often blame themselves due to societal and familial pressure. Married victims are shamed for committing adultery, while unmarried victims are shamed for not protecting their virginity, which is considered a source of family honor. Victims of rape often hide out of shame and to avoid bringing dishonor to their families. Meanwhile, rapists, who should be ashamed of their heinous acts, continue their lives without being reported. Rape culture also imposes strict rules on women and girls, blaming them if any are broken.

Those who subscribe to the Just World Belief mentality believe that the world is fair, and that individuals are rewarded according to their actions. They may believe that victims of sexual crimes are at fault or deserved the violence they experienced. This implies

that if something bad happens to someone, it is because they did something to deserve it. This is a way for people to reassure themselves and restore their faith in their safety in the world. People with these beliefs try to protect themselves against the fear of victimization by creating an illusory image of the world as just. This contributes to a psychological phenomenon known as the 'just world hypothesis'. People who hold the Just World Belief tend to blame and shame victims of assault as being responsible for the attack. They may also believe that the victim deserved the attack. This belief system allows people to comfort themselves by thinking that such an incident would never happen to them unless they acted like the victim did before the attack. They may demand more lenient punishment for rapists.

Victim blaming can result from various factors. Therefore, addressing this issue requires serious attention to all of them. In fact, victim-blaming can cause psychological harm that is more severe than the initial crime. Rape is a highly traumatic experience that affects victims physically, mentally, psychologically, and sociologically. However, the worst part of the crime is for the victim to be blamed for what happened to them. Victims of assault often feel guilty, both for being assaulted and for unconsciously provoking the act. This guilt can persist throughout the process of reporting the traumatic event, during which they may face harsh criticism.

Victims of rape can suffer serious physical injuries, including gynecological problems such as vaginal infections and chronic health issues. They may also contract sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, if the perpetrator is infected. In some cases, rape can result in pregnancy. Victims in Morocco are not legally allowed to undergo abortion if they cannot provide sufficient evidence of rape. Additionally, they must go through a long and tiring process to prove that the rape occurred before they can undergo the procedure. This means they may be required to care for a child that reminds them of the traumatic experience they had to endure, as well as the rapist who destroyed their lives. Children, who cannot legally have the name of their rapist fathers, will be stigmatized as the offspring of zina. They will not be able to enjoy any legal rights and will be labeled as the progeny of criminals.

Psychological trauma can cause severe mental health issues, including anxiety, fear, nervousness, panic attacks, avoidance behavior, loss of trust, depression, and suicidal thoughts. Victims of rape often suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This is a mental health condition that can cause intrusive memories, flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, and obsessive thoughts about the traumatic event. It can also lead to avoidance, negative changes in thinking and mood, and changes in physical and emotional reactions. These symptoms cause significant problems in social or work situations, as well as relationships. They also interfere with the victim's ability to manage daily tasks. Survivors might lose their self-confidence by doubting their abilities to succeed in their jobs or studies and develop low self-esteem in dealing with friends or partners because of feelings of being unworthy and dirty. However, these symptoms vary from person to person.

Intrusive memories' symptoms may include unwanted memories of the event, reenacting the traumatic event through flashbacks, having continuous nightmares about the rape, experiencing severe emotional distress or physical reactions to something that reminds them of the rape. Additionally, avoidance symptoms may include refraining from thinking or talking about what happened and staying away from places, activities, or people that remind them of the rape experience. Victims of abuse may undergo negative mood swings, leading to negative thoughts about themselves, others, or the world in general. This can result in feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in forming or maintaining relationships. Acquaintance rape survivors may suffer more psychological damage than survivors of stranger rape. This is because they tend to receive more shaming from others and engage in more self-blame. Acquaintance rape violates and devastates any future or possible relationship and can end existing ones. Unfortunately, the criminal justice system and society in general often take acquaintance rape less seriously than stranger rape, as mentioned. Survivors may feel detached from friends and family and lose interest in previously enjoyed activities. Physical and emotional reactions may include being easily frightened, constantly being on guard for danger, and having trouble sleeping and concentrating. They may experience difficulty feeling positive emotions. Survivors may also become aggressive and display anger for no reason.

Immediate physical injuries, as well as long-term physical and psychological trauma, can affect the well-being of sexual assault victims. Survivors may contract sexually transmitted diseases, become pregnant, experience chronic pain, gynecological disorders, sexual problems, and digestive conditions resulting from rape (Basile & Smith, 2011; Black et al., 2011). Victims of assault may experience a range of negative emotions, including guilt, shame, anxiety, depression, and terror. They may also develop post-traumatic stress disorder, which can interfere with daily life. In addition, there is a risk of developing unhealthy habits such as alcohol and drug abuse, which can have harmful effects on physical and psychological health (Basile & Smith, 2011). Rape can significantly impact social relationships. Victims of rape may struggle to trust intimate partners, family members, and friends. Negative responses to a victim's admission of abuse from those close to them can also lead to a breakdown in relationships and hinder the victim's healing process (Kelner, 2013).

When victims seek help, they trust legal, medical, and mental health services. They risk disbelief, criticism, and rejection of help. The way these encounters unfold can affect victims' healing. If victims receive empathic, supportive treatment, social systems can

promote healing. However, if survivors are treated insensitively, system workers may exacerbate victims' feelings of helplessness and humiliation. During this process, victims undergo numerous interviews, investigations, and medical examinations. Survivors of sexual assault risk having their private lives exposed in court and their credibility questioned. They are asked about their clothing, behavior, and sexual history, while the rapist is not subjected to the same scrutiny. Survivors may also face cyberbullying, which can worsen their fragile psychological state.

Post-assault aid can be a form of secondary victimization, compounding the trauma of the initial assault (Campbell & Raja, 1999; Campbell et al., 2001). Victims of rape often turn to their communities for support, but this can also put them at risk of further harm. The effects of abuse extend far beyond the initial attack, and proper post-assault care is crucial for the mental wellbeing of survivors. Many victims report that they are repeatedly questioned about the details of the rape, including their sexual history and their reactions to the attack (Campbell, 2005, 2006; Campbell & Raja, 2005; Campbell et al., 2001). This persistent interrogation can be traumatic and should be avoided. Victims found these issues particularly stressful. According to Campbell and Raja (2005), they described their interaction with the justice system as dehumanizing. Many women stated that they would not have reported the crime if they had known what the process would entail (Logan et al., 2005). Even those who went to court found the experience distressing. Victims of sexual assault often experience negative impacts on their mental health after consulting with the justice system. They may feel stuck due to the 'echoes of victimization' (Campbell, 2005; Campbell & Raja, 2005). Seeking assistance from the legal, medical, and mental health systems can be challenging for sexual assault victims, and the support they receive can make them feel re-victimized. Survivors of rape experience post-traumatic stress due to the abuse and the lack of support from social institutions.

Victim blaming silences survivors. Many choose not to report rape out of fear that family and friends will question and criticize their dress and behavior prior to the attack. They also fear future restrictions on their freedom. Thus, women tolerate abuse in silence:

Silence, in turn, has the consequences of 'normalizing' daily acts of violence and making women anticipate them as the inevitable price for entering the public space. As Laila Lalami states, women's silence 'is what binds all these men together. Silence is what they count on, what allows them to continue'. (Skalli, 254)

Victim blaming discourages reports of rape or sexual abuse. It increases the chances that victims will not face their rapists. Victim blaming encourages people to socially accept violence against women. It also helps rapists escape punishment and accountability for their actions. Rapists use victim blaming to distance themselves from the crime. Blaming the victim can also affect witnesses' willingness to testify, as well as the criminal justice system's willingness to imprison rapists.

Victim blaming can increase crime instead of preventing it. This is because it reduces the likelihood of perpetrators being held accountable for their actions. When the focus is solely on the victim's behavior, the accused may not see their actions as wrong, and may continue to commit sexual crimes. Victim blaming prevents victims from speaking out. It recreates the sense of shame experienced by the victims. Therefore, victims do not seek help or support and are less likely to report future assaults to avoid being further judged. This generates 'echoes of victimization.'

Rape victims may also experience stigma, which is defined as the negative perception of a survivor's reputation. This stigma can take three forms: self-stigma, family-stigma, and social-stigma. Self-stigma involves self-blame and can result in a radical change in the victim's life, self-esteem, and relationships. Family stigma occurs when the victim's family doubts their behavior and blames them for not protecting their 'virginity' or family's 'honor' at any cost, or for behaving recklessly prior to the assault. Social stigma is the reproach on the victim's reputation conveyed in the general feeling that their behavior contributed to the incident (D. Smith, 2004, 243). Stigma can cause harm by leading victims to lose faith in the justice system and not report the crime, which allows perpetrators to evade accountability.

Self-blame occurs when a victim's disclosure of rape is not believed, particularly when it is made by a legal professional or someone close to the victim (Parcher, 2017; Hayes et al., 2013, 207). Rape victims may also experience agent-regret, which emphasizes the victim's self-blame as she feels regret for her own past actions in which she regards herself as participating. Agent-regret is the process of identifying ways in which the agent could have acted differently. According to E. Snow (1994), the agent begins to recall their actions and appearance to identify any potential missteps and ways in which their actions could have been modified to prevent the assault. While the rape was not the agent's fault, they continue to blame themselves, considering a multitude of alternative scenarios.

Self-blame is a common response to trauma. The victim is never responsible for the actions of the perpetrator. This is a fundamental principle of Islamic teachings, as outlined in the Quran: "And no bearer will bear the burden of any other" (Verse 17:15). The victim's mind is flooded with a series of "if only" thoughts. If only I had done this, or not said that, or not worn that skirt, or not walked down that street, or not been so trusting, the rape would not have happened. The woman who blames herself owns her agency fully. In order for self-blame to be credible, the individual must acknowledge their agency and believe that their agency caused the incident in question. This belief compels them to assume responsibility for the incident. (E. Snow, 1994)

Victims of assault often feel that they have dishonored themselves, their husbands, relatives, or friends. This belief causes them to feel shame and the urge to compensate those who think they have dishonored. Victims are not responsible for the actions of their attackers:

These beliefs prevent her from blaming the truly responsible person or persons and keep her from recognizing her own moral status and emotional needs. Her attempts at restoration or restitution are deeply misdirected. She, the innocent victim, deserves restitution and needs restoration to wholeness. Family and friends, though hurt themselves, should support her. Further, self-restoration, a complex healing process, will not be gained through misguided attempts to prove sexual chastity or moral virtue. (Snow, 1994)

Not all victims exhibit extreme emotional responses after being assaulted. Some may appear calm (Burgess & Holmstrom, 1978). Unfortunately, this can lead to indifference from others who expect victims to display more emotion (Buddie & Miller, 2001, 45). As Buddie & Miller (2001) note, perceivers may be less inclined to believe that the victim was raped or may minimize the extent of their trauma (45). Furthermore, research has shown that a rape victim's credibility is often judged based on their emotional response immediately following the attack. In such cases, extreme emotional reactions are viewed as more credible than emotionally stable ones (Calhoun et al., 1981). Sexuality is considered a taboo in Morocco, even in cases of rape. As a result, victims often face social stigmatization, which can lead to isolation and difficulty in finding a spouse and starting a family. In Moroccan culture, marriage is highly valued and seen as a sacred duty for every Muslim person. For women, the primary objective is to start a family. In many Arab communities, including Morocco, victims of sexual assault are punished and even outcast by their families. Some are forced to marry their rapists to restore honor to their families.

To challenge victim-blaming in sexual crimes, prevention strategies should focus on addressing the cultural attitudes, values, beliefs, and norms surrounding masculinity and femininity, sexuality, gender, and violence. This includes identifying the different factors that contribute to rape and victim-blaming and taking action to prevent them before they occur. Focusing on building the knowledge and skills of individuals can achieve this goal. Change can be brought about through campaigns, art projects, and educational programs in schools and universities. These programs should challenge cultural myths or values about rape. Strategies should be directed at changing the socio-structural causes of sexual violence, including policies, laws, the educational system, and the community as a whole, rather than solely focusing on women's behavior. The statement implies that women are responsible for their own rape because they did not take enough precautions and should have restricted their freedom to avoid victimization. This reinforces the idea that rape is a problem caused by women and that they should solve it. As Mardorossian (2002) argues, this approach only perpetuates the dominant culture's tendency to view rape as a women's issue. It is important to shift the focus from women's behavior and identity to the perpetrators of rape. The behavior of rapists is what needs to be criticized and changed. These self-protection and rape avoidance techniques are problematic.

This model of victimization is flawed. It suggests that even women who follow safety guidelines may still become victims. This is not an accurate representation of reality. The list of behaviors and activities that women are instructed to avoid is extensive. In some cases, these instructions are so extreme that they are misleading. For instance, the suggestion that women should avoid taking their vaginas out with them is not a realistic approach (Lawson & Olle, 2006, 50). Feminist writers believe that rape culture will persist until women have equal legal, cultural, and social rights and privileges as men. Additionally, addressing and eradicating aspects of rape culture is necessary to find a radical solution for victim blaming and rape itself (D. Smith, 2004, 175). Sexual violence prevention should promote gender equality and confront societal norms that lead to misogyny and abuse of women (WHO, 2008). It is imperative that men acknowledge and work to change the existing inequality to stop violence. Eradicating rape is a cooperative process that requires the goodwill of both men and women (Brownmiller, 1975, 404). However, the main focus should not only be on men as potential assailants but also on men and women as witnesses, defenders, and transmitters of a culture of sexual violence.

While shifting the focus to engaging men and problematizing hegemonic masculinity is fundamental to the deconstruction of cultural beliefs and attitudes around normative femininity, masculinity, and sexuality, it is important to view prevention not simply as the responsibility of individual men but more importantly as a shared, community, or societal responsibility (Powell & Henry,

2014). Increasing rape victims' access to safety and support is crucial. Victim blaming impedes their recovery and subjects them to significant risk.

It is crucial to help survivors regain hope and trust in those they confide in. This can be achieved by eliminating victim-blaming attitudes. Survivors will then be encouraged to seek medical and legal assistance without fear of further victimization. Rape is never the victim's fault, and blaming them does not prevent future victimization. The belief in a just world, where people get what they deserve, should not be applied to sexual assault cases. This reaction is counterproductive and can have a detrimental impact on the lives of victims, while also misleading others into believing that they will never be raped if they do not engage in certain behaviors.

It is imperative to challenge statements that place the blame on victims and not on the abuser. It is crucial to refrain from empathizing with criminals. Survivors must be made aware that they are not at fault. It is essential to avoid victim-blaming on social media and to report such acts. It is of the utmost importance to refrain from justifying or minimizing the severity of rape. When victims disclose their experiences, it is of the greatest importance to listen carefully to them. It is of significant consequence to avoid asking accusatory questions such as "What were you wearing?" or "Why did you go out so late?" The impact of trauma is individualistic, rendering a singular, optimal response to it untenable. Challenging victim blaming is of paramount importance, even in language use. Empirical evidence indicates that language can exacerbate victim-blaming attitudes, particularly when the passive voice is employed in reporting sexual assault cases. In such instances, the victim's name is often mentioned first, while the perpetrator's name is omitted. This practice has the effect of directing criticism towards the victim instead of the perpetrator.

When listening to a survivor, it is of the utmost importance to limit questions about details and to actively acknowledge their feelings, confusions, and pain. It is crucial to use clear language to name the violence and to avoid euphemisms. It is essential to repeatedly affirm that it was not the survivor's fault, as survivors may blame themselves. It is important to accept the accounts of survivors at face value and refrain from judging their behaviors before, during, or after the rape. If the survivor feels judged, she may be dissuaded from seeking help. It is imperative to reassure the survivor that all information will be kept confidential. It is crucial to affirm that the survivor's feelings are a normal response to a traumatic situation. It is essential to empower the survivor to make her own decisions, while respecting her autonomy. Finally, if the survivor has not yet spoken to a rape crisis counselor or someone trained in matters of sexual violence, it is recommended that they do so (Leslie, 2002, 126-127). The survivor's healing process is significantly influenced by the response of their family and friends. The severity and duration of the trauma are largely dependent on the reactions of those around the victim. If the survivor feels comfortable sharing what happened with those around them and receives a sensitive and caring response, the recovery process can proceed smoothly. It is common for victims of rape to seek assistance from family and friends. It is crucial for these trusted individuals to convey that they care about the survivor and not just the incident. It is advisable for those close to the victim to invite them to discuss the experience and offer support, while also respecting their desire for privacy. It is not uncommon for some women to avoid disclosing their traumas to their families due to concerns about negative consequences. Those who are close to the survivor may send mixed messages and express anger in a way that blames the victim.

The Moroccan movement "Women Shoufouch" was inspired by the Canadian "Slutwalk." Its objective is to initiate a discourse and to eradicate the taboo surrounding rape and sexual assault, as well as to raise awareness about these issues throughout Morocco. Initially, the movement was designated as "SlutWalk Morocco," but it was subsequently renamed "Women Shoufouch" due to concerns that the controversial name and criticism would deter women from participating. The new name includes the literal question of "What's up" and "Look here," which some argue explicitly suggests an invitation to engage in a sexual act (Skalli, 2013, 251). The founders reformulated the question in Arabic to highlight the importance of addressing sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape against women. They asked, "Shouldn't we be looking for a solution?"

In an interview, co-founder Majdouline Lyazidi expressed her confusion regarding the societal focus on teaching individuals to avoid being raped rather than teaching individuals not to rape. This perpetuates a victim-blaming mentality where individuals are blamed for their own assault. It is time to change this mentality. We must provide the next generation with the opportunity to walk the streets of Morocco feeling safe and respected. This is a feeling that Moroccan women currently lack. The quote from Skalli (2014) on pages 251-252 provides further support for this idea. During another interview, Majdouline stated, 'I never understood how men are allowed to treat women as objects in public. Men enjoy freedom while women are blamed.' The movement's founders also argue that parents should educate their sons instead of controlling their daughters (Skalli, 2013, 255). Atifaa Timjerdine, the Anaruz network coordinator, commented on the movement, stating that women are often blamed for their own victimization due to their clothing and way of speaking.

Since the late 1990s, Morocco has set up centers for abused women to help victims of all types of abuse, including sexual abuse. These centers recruit volunteers to help women back into society. The centers offer support and have shown that women can seek

justice through civil society and feminist groups. They provide a range of services to victims of gender- and sexually-based violence. Such services include legal, medical, psychological, social, and financial assistance (Chomiak, 2002, 63). Annajda ('SOS') was founded in March 1996 by the Union de l'Action Feminine (UAF). Its objective is to provide legal, medical, psychological, and social assistance to female victims of violence. The organization also tries to get Moroccan society to think about violence against women. In 1997, the ADFM started the Centre de Formation, d'Information et d'Assistance Juridique (CEFIAJ), which helps female victims, including rape victims. In 2002, the center was renamed Centre Nejma ('Star'). The centers for abused women help women who are in danger. Unlike other places, these centers help women who are poor, illiterate, or from a marginalized group. As Chomiak (2002) says, these centers are very important (75).

In conclusion, to prevent rape and sexual assault, it is imperative to educate men on the prevention of rape and to challenge traditional gender roles. Parents should be made aware of the potential dangers of gender socialization. Women and girls should never be instructed to alter their behavior or attire. This approach may inadvertently convey the notion that their actions are a cause of rape or sexual assault. In the event of rape or sexual assault, it is crucial to provide support to the victim. It is also essential to cease the practice of blaming victims. The perpetrator is solely responsible and should be held accountable. To eradicate rape, it is essential that individuals recognize the potential for men and women to coexist as equals.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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