

Empowerment to Sexual Assault Survivors: The Role of Family and Trustworthy Person

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ABSTRACT

The purposed of the research are (i) to explore effects of sexual assault (ii) to investigate the ability of family and trustworthy person to empower the sexual assault survivor. This study is a documentary and qualitative research, that used in-depth interview techniques in collecting data from 1 sexual assault survivor and 3 family and trustworthy persons with consent from the survivor.

The result showed that there are numerous effects of sexual assault survivor: shame, guilt, sleep disturbances, depression, fear, distrust, sadness, continuing anxiety, flashbacks, panic attacks, phobias, dissociation, relationship difficulties, withdrawal/isolation, paranoia and lack of control. However, the sexual assault impacts not only the survivor, but also the family and trustworthy persons.

The empowerment to survivors has a wide range of action approaches, including non-aggravating admissions and reflection survivors, secrecy, setting a safe place, observing the survivors' physical and mental state, opening the survivor make decisions by themselves, and the self-management of the family and trustworthy person not to be affected by their empowerment. However, the family and trustworthy person is often inexperienced, they do not know how to empower survivors.

Therefore, a non-formal education program should be developed to strengthen the competence of family and trustworthy persons in empowerment to sexual assault survivors. They should include an understanding of sexual assault survivors, skills in empowerment to sexual assault survivors, and social action guidelines and cases against sexual assault cases.

Keywords

Sexual assault survivors, Empowerment, Family and trustworthy person, Rape

Article Received: 10 August 2020, Revised: 25 October 2020, Accepted: 18 November 2020

Introduction

Sexual assault is a situation of violence that can occur with people of all ages. The World Health Organization (2003) defines "sexual assault as 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." According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2012), sexual assault in the United States found that one-fifth sexual assault survivors were females, or 18.3%, while about one-seventh were males, or 1.4%. In these number, more than half (51.1%) occurred with female sexual assault survivors. Forcible rape situations in Thailand were found that in 2019, there were 1,965 reports of rape cases, or an average of 5.28 cases per day (Royal Thai Police, 2020).

After the resulting sexual assault incidents, it was found that sexual assault survivors were affected both emotionally, such as feeling of stigma, shame, self-blame, embarrassment, fear, distrust, sadness, loneliness, and loss of self-control power. It also has physical and psychological effects such as nightmares, violence. incidents keep coming back in thought, social isolation, depression, mood swings, stress disorder after violence incidents, thoughts of being dangerous, and suicidal thoughts (Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR), 2013). When sexual assault incidents have occurred, sexual assault survivors are often afraid to

tell the story of what happened to others, even by reporting to the police or the authorities involved. Sexual assault survivors have chosen to share incidents with people they trust who are close and valued (Forensics for Survivors Healing. Justice, n.d.). However, family and trustworthy persons who listen to the resulting sexual assault incidents often try to take over the situations by escorting them to report, taking them to the doctor, or finding a safe place for sexual assault survivors instead of determine the lifestyle, interests, or priorities of sexual assault survivors. It should begin with giving space to empowerment, such as helping sexual assault survivors to recover their self-control (Orange County Rape Crisis Center, 2016).

This article focuses on presenting the sexual assault situation, as well as its impact on sexual assault survivors, and the role of family and trustworthy person in empowerment to sexual assault survivors so that survivors can regain their own potential and take action on the problem.

Methodology

This study is a documentary and qualitative research utilized semi-structure in-depth interview techniques in collecting data from 1 sexual assault survivor and 3 family and trustworthy persons with consent from the survivor.

Sexual assault

Sexual assault means 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. Similar to Krittaya Archavanitkul (2009) said that sexual violence refers to any sexual act which is done on a person for someone without that person's consent. This is often forced by armed, superior force, exertion or coercion by exerting superior authority or status, including illness, disability, intoxication of survivors making it impossible to protect themselves. In addition, Boonserm Hutabhetta et al. (2009) added that the sexual assault was disturbing, causing trouble, irritation, boredom and annoyance. Even if the action does not show power, it is an act that causes annoyance by speaking, foreplay, creating an environment that causes lust or trouble which are sexual assault.

Sexual assault has many forms, whether it is divided from the nature of the offenders, such as one-to-one sexual assault, sexual assault by more than one person, and in a group manner (World Health Organization, 2003), or a classification based on the level of violence (Kritaya Archavanitkul, 2009): 1) the use of verbal abuse without exposure, 2) sexual assault by touch, 3) attempted molestation or attack, and 4) rape.

This article focuses on providing sexual assault in the form of rape which is the most violent. In this regard, the Criminal Code, Section 276, paragraph two, legislates that forcible rape is an act to satisfy the offender's libido by using the offender's genitals to the genitals, rectum, or oral cavity of other, or using anything else on genitals or anus of other. So, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2012) showed that sexual assault in the United States found that one-fifth sexual assault survivors were females, or 18.3%, while about one-seventh were males, or 1.4%. In these number, more than half (51.1%) occurred with female sexual assault survivors. It was also reported that 12.5% were rape by their spouse, 40.8% by acquaintances, and 13.8% by strangers. Sexual assault that occurred with males was found that 52.4% were rape by acquaintances and 15.1% by strangers. However, in the number of male sexual assault survivors, the additional report said that they used to act sexual assault to other person, 44.8% were spouse, 44.7% were acquaintances, and 8.2% were strangers. In Thailand, the Royal Thai Police (2020) showed that in 2019 there were 1,965 cases of rape were recorded, among the above reports, 1,704 offenders can be arrested (Royal Thai Police, 2020). From these numbers, it could be said that there are approximately 5.38 sexual assault survivors on a daily basis, not including sexual assault that were not reported to the authorities which may cause some legal information to be missing (known as the dark figure) (Tevin Indarachamnong, 2015). In the fiscal year 2012, the Office of Justice Affairs, in collaboration with the National Statistical Office, conducted a survey of the victims of crime across the country under the Criminal Statistics Survey 2012. It was found that there were reports of victims of the third category of crime, there were sexually assaulted 2.1%, which had no reports of any incident to the police. Fisher, Cullen, and Turner (2000) reported that more than 90% of

the sexual assault survivors in schools did not report violence incidents that happened. The reason why sexual assault survivors do not report the violence incidents to police officers (Planty, Langton L., Krebs, Berzofsky M., & Smiley-McDonald H., 2013) were found that 20% were afraid of retaliation, 13% believed the police would not take any action, 13% believed the incident was private, 8% reported violence to other agencies, 8% did not see it as important to report, 7% do not want the perpetrators to be prosecuted, and 2% believe that the police cannot help them. As C. Spohn, K. Tellis, and E.N. O'Neal (2015) found that the survivor did not reporting to the police because of feeling shame and embarrassment.

Effects to sexual assault survivors

After incidents, sexual assault survivors affected in various fields, the study revealed that the effects include: firstly, physical effects such as constant crying, insomnia, vision disorders, depression, thoughts of wanting to hurt the offender, and risk of sexually transmitted infections.

"I keep crying but when I got home, I had to keep my symptoms. So that the husband and children do not know." (Survivor, 2020)

Secondly, psychological and emotional effects as distrust, sadness, guilt, fear, anxiety, shame.

"I don't dare to report because I was worried what to say and fear of others knowing what happened." (Survivor, 2020)

Thirdly, impacts on the daily life: changing the style of dressing, suspicion, distrust, and stop using social media.

"One day I have to meet a male colleague, so I dress politely by wearing a dress with a jacket. Even though he invited me to drink water, but I don't because of fear of being poisoned." (Survivor, 2020)

Finally, social impacts such as vexed, unfriend.

"Someone called for asking my husband's information. And an appointment to talk about the sexual harassment that happened." (Survivor, 2020)

Similar to Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) (2013) showed that the effects include: first, Emotional effects such as guilt from incidents, feeling of stigma, self-blame, fear, distrust, loneliness, sadness, loss of self-control, anger, dizziness, confusion, rejection of incidents that arise, etc. Second, Psychological impact as survivors have nightmares, violence incidents always come to mind, discouraged, mood swings, anxiety, low self-esteem, stress disorder after violence incidents, thoughts of being dangerous, and suicidal thoughts. Third, in terms of physical effects, it was found that some of the effects were manifested by the same symptoms as psychological effects, namely nightmares, mood swings, difficulty concentrating on a particular subject, using substances, addictive, fearful, stressful. In addition, Phutthawan Chucherd's study (2000), which examines the psychological effects and the desired assistance of rape women, classified the effects of sexual assault survivors were no different. The survivors suffer physical effects such as bodily injury, urinary and reproductive irritation, oral, or throat, oral, nausea, and long-term exposure. Infection of the reproductive organs, menstrual disorders, including possible pregnancy. For

psychological effects, survivors had nightmares of violence incidents that arise, are afraid for no such reason as being in a community or being alone. It is also affected by the social effects of being unable to return to life as usual, such as being unable to return to work, unable to study, or do other activities normally because of fear of others, fear of Staring until some people have to remain in the house. In some cases, it is also affected sexually, for example if they have never had previous sexual experience, this may result in the thought that sex is unsatisfactory or others have a fear of having sex even with their own husband.

It appears that the effects of sexual assault were negative effects. Similar to McMullin, D. and White, J.W. (2006) showed that the sexual assault survivor were also affected by negative effects, such as more psychological distress.

Myth about sexual assault

Myths are ideas and beliefs about a subject that are not true. In regards to the illusion of sexual assault has always been seen, as Chalidaporn Sendrel (1996) mentions the myths about rape in Thai society. 1) Believe that rapists have a mental disorder, which drives rape as a personal problem, is an irreversible nature, but ignores the structural, power and belief systems that view women as sex objects, or Men's treasure. Therefore, when a man has a sexual desire it must be drained, either through the purchase of sex services or by rape. 2) Rape occurs because women dress up provoking mood for men or going home late. This links rape to sex. Although, in many cases, it is not sexual but expressing anger and hatred or a show of power. 3) The rape must be accompanied by violence, ie there must be signs of injury. However, one of the most important things that survivors are happy with is that survival from rape incidents cannot be persisted which resulted in unclear signs of injury, or in some cases where the performer is the dominant person which may result in survivors being unable to refuse coercion. 4) rapists must be strangers, never known or related to each other.

Meanwhile, the Friends of Women Foundation (1999) introduces the myth of sexual assault.

Table 1: myths and facts about sexual assault.

Myth	Reality
Sexual assault is an offense caused by a man's lust.	Sexual assault is an offense to commit violence using sexual assault as a weapon
Sexual assault happens to someone else, not them.	If we cannot eliminate sexual assault away from our society, it cannot be said that sexual assault incidents will not happen to themselves
Sexual assault will happen only with beautiful young girls.	Women who have been sexually abused are of all ages.
The view that those who have been sexually assaulted are likely to "make trouble for themselves"	No one likes to be sexually assaulted.
Men who act sexual assault is because of the inability to	Several studies suggest that offenders are planning ahead

Myth	Reality
control himself.	and able to control their own sexual desires.
People who act sexual assault has mental or other disorders	Most offenders are normal people in the eyes of friends and colleagues.
Sexual assault is often caused by strangers.	Most offenders are someone known to one another, such as a neighbor or even a relative.
Sexual assault usually occurs at night in a secluded alley or park.	Sexual assault can occur at home, school, hospital, work, etc.
The sexually abused without signs of being beaten or repeated were not actually raped.	The threat of violence often made the survivors afraid to fight so there was no trace.
Survivors who were not immediately reported because they were not raped.	Shame, fear of revenge causing survivors not daring to report the incident immediately.
Survivors often claim rape in order to get revenge or want to blackmail money from the offenders.	Claims of sexual assault are the same as other legal offenses which are not different but does not mean that not everyone has been acted.
Survivors are happy and content with being done.	Sexual assault is forced which leaves the survivors injured physically and mentally, and everyone has fear.

Similar to the Whitchuta Itsaranuwat's study (2009) shows meaning to women rape victims, both from the perspective of rape victims and male inquiry official, in line with the aforementioned social myths. It can be seen that the meaning of rape victim women is the same as being bad, defiled, and worthless. The investigators gave additional meanings in the tempting clothes which it was interesting to note that the male investigators meant that incidents, victims of rape claiming for damages / blackmailing, having had sex with the offenders before and unable to agree so they have to fight, resist, cry for help, have wounds, traces Injury, embarrassing, and should not be recognized by others. So, E. Rachel and C.W. Janet (2011) reported that the rape victims did not report to the police because of rape myth acceptance. In addition, the Friends of Women group (1990) say that the rape cases are often assumed by the police that they may have been blackmailed because they had previously had a relationship but were unable to agree or that the men were not supported, so they must report that they were raped.

Family and trustworthy person of sexual assault survivors

Family and trustworthy persons whose sexual assault survivor disclosed her experience in this study were the survivor's husband, male colleague, female best friends, her

aunty, social worker, and the foundation volunteer. As Forensics for Survivors Healing. Justice (n.d.) meant that family and friends is a person whose sexual assault survivors reveal sexual assault incidents that occur, often the person whom the sexual assault survivors trust, are close, and caring. These can be family members, friends, colleague, or anyone else the survivors trust so they can share their sexual assault incidents.

When family and trustworthy person was listening to the sexual assault incidents, they are affected like the sexual assault survivors. The study showed that they also feel angry, fear, worry, shame, shock, unreasonable, stress.

"I get angry all the time. Whenever rape is mentioned I immediately became angry." (Survivor's husband, 2020)

"I was shocked because I heard the incident from the offender's wife." (Survivor's friend, 2020)

So, Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC) (n.d.-b) reported that they will also feel a loss of uncontrollable power and also feel frustrated, fearful, anxious, angered, or confused. In addition, they may feel that what happened is unusual. Meanwhile RAINN (n.d.) indicated family and trustworthy people who were listening to violence. incidents will have a reaction that may occur, including 1) Anger, either an anger against the survivors unable to protect the survivors, anger towards the survivors because they felt that what was being heard was very difficult to understand, or because the survivors told a delayed story, and anger towards the offenders. 2) Properly perceived incidents concern, or family relationship concerns. 3) The confusion of knowing what the incidents are, how they happen. 4) The disbelief of sexual assault incidents is when family and trustworthy people are aware of the violence. The incidents that happened were surprised, shocked, and skeptical of the violence. The incidents heard were real. 5) Guilt not able to protect survivors from violence incidents that arise or feel guilty that survivors do not feel safe to tell the story to themselves. 6). Sadness is a feeling that occurs just like survivors. Because it happened to loved ones, it is natural for family and trustworthy people to experience feelings of sadness, despair, worry, and powerlessness.

Empowerment to sexual assault survivors

Empowerment to sexual assault survivors (Orange County Rape Crisis Center, 2016) refers to helping sexual assault survivors to restore their self-control and well-being. Person who will serve to empowerment to sexual assault survivors must be a person whose sexual assault survivors disclose sexual assault incidents that arise as a trusted person, may be an immediate survivor, or has been a significant contributor to the survivors. (Forensics for Survivors Healing. Justice, nd)

The empowerment method has been proposed by various methods (Orange County Rape Crisis Center, 2016; Forensics for Survivors Healing. Justice, n.d.; Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC), n.d.-a) (The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR), 2013) as follows:

1) Listening, it is one of the most important things that can support sexual assault survivors by letting sexual assault survivors know that we are ready to hear what they have to say.

2) Check the physical and mental condition of sexual assault survivors to be in a safe state to assess whether injury reliefs are required or are there any thoughts of suicide or hurting someone else?

3) Have to be patient. Although hearing violence the incidents that occur can be shocking or angry, expressing the emotions can make survivors confused or uncomfortable

4) Provide a private space and not share incidents with anyone unless sexual assault survivors want them to be told. This requires sexual assault survivors to decide who to tell the story to, when to tell, and how much to tell.

5) Demonstrate belief in what sexual assault survivors tell about the incidents that happened

6) Let sexual assault survivors take control of their lives by allowing them to decide which path to move forward and try not to tell them what to do.

7) Stand beside sexual assault survivors to be able to express a variety of feelings.

8) Sexual assault survivors want to know that no matter what happens, the relationship between family and trustworthy person and survivors remains the same.

9) Avoid engaging in violent suspects as this will result in sexual assault survivors concerned about the safety of family and trustworthy person and arrest.

10) Confidentiality by having sexual assault survivors decide who will tell the story and how deep it is in detail.

11) Advising the assistance agency by allowing sexual assault survivors to decide when contact will the agency by themselves. (The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR), 2013; Orange County Rape Crisis Center, 2016)

12) Ask sexual assault survivors before any physical expression, such as hugging, to restore self-control.

13) Only say words that can be guaranteed, do not promise things that cannot be done, such as survivors will not be hurt again, or the offenders will definitely face jail, etc.

14) Allow appropriate authorities or bodies to deal with violence incidents that arise in order to prevent danger from confrontation with offenders that could interfere with the work of the authorities.

15) Realize that survivors' remedies require a long period of time which can either succeed or fail.

16) Family and trustworthy people must also take care of their health.

From the above empowerment methods, it can be concluded that family and trustworthy persons can empowerment to sexual assault survivors by:

1) Listen to sexual assault survivors by showing that family and trustworthy person believes in what the survivors reveal about the assault and keep them confidential.

2) Reflect to the survivors that a family and trustworthy person can stand firm, allowing survivors to express a wide variety of feelings. In addition, the survivors' physical behaviors should be expressed, such as hugs (but voluntarily asked by survivors), not to blame the incidents for the survivors. Only say words that can vouch for the possibility. Do not speak or promise things that are beyond your control, such as survivors will not be hurt again, or the offender will definitely face jail.

3) Make a private chat location and environment. There are various devices That is ready for situations that may arise such as crying, venting etc.

4) Observe the survivors both physically, mental, and expressions both during conversation and self-management of survivors after incidents of harassment in order to be able to deal with the disorder that may arise.

5) Encourage decision-making in dealing with problems that arise to regain power to survivors by working together to find ways to deal with the problem but the power to decide how to choose or any approach belongs to survivors.

6) Manage yourself from the awareness of problems that arise and do not become affected by empowerment.

Therefore, family and trustworthy persons were significant person who empowering the survivor. However, they do not know how to do that.

"I tried to stand by her. But I don't know how to support and help her."

(Survivor's husband, 2020)

"I encourage her and listen to her. But I don't know how to help her." *(Survivor's friend, 2020)*

Conclusion

Sexual assault, especially sexual assault as a rape affects both the survivor and the family and trustworthy persons. The effects that occur include physical impact psychological impact, Social impact, and daily life. Family and trustworthy persons are the significant person who can help the sexual assault survivors by empowerment.

The approach that family and trustworthy persons can empower the sexual assault survivors by: 1) Listen to sexual assault survivors, believes and keep them confidential. 2) Reflect to the survivors that a family and trustworthy person can stand for them 3) Make a private chat location and environment 4) Observe the survivors both physically, mental, and expressions. 5) Encourage decision-making 6) Manage yourself from the awareness of problems.

However, most of the family and trustworthy person of sexual assault survivors have never experienced before, so they do not know how the above empowerment to survivors can be performed. Therefore, a non-formal education program should be developed for enhancing the ability of family and trustworthy persons to empower the sexual assault survivors, which should include a comprehensive understanding of sexual assault survivors, skills in empowerment to sexual assault survivors, and social action guidelines and cases against sexual assault cases.

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