The purpose of the Rape Supportive Attitude Scale is to measure attitudes that are hostile to rape victims, including false beliefs about rape and rapists. Seven beliefs measured by this scale are (a) women enjoy sexual violence, (b) women are responsible for rape prevention, (c) sex rather than power is the primary motivation for rape, (d) rape happens only to certain kinds of women, (e) a woman is less desirable after she has been raped, (f) women falsely report many rape claims, and (g) rape is justified in some situations. Researchers (Burt, 1980; Marolla & Scully, 1982; Russell, 1975; Williams & Holmes, 1981) have found support for the views that these beliefs not only promote rape but also hinder and prolong the recuperative process for survivors of a rape.

Description

The Rape Supportive Attitude Scale was developed from a pool of 40 items from the rape attitude measures of Barnett and Feild (1977), Burt (1980), Koss (1981), and Wheeler and Utigard (1984). The 20 items selected for the scale meet two criteria: (a) the items have content validity (i.e., they assess one of the seven victim-callous beliefs listed above), and (b) the items have high item-total scale correlations and high factor loadings on the same factor. The response options for each item are one of the five Likert scale choices: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), undecided (3), agree (4), or strongly agree (5).

The Rape Supportive Attitude Scale was administered to two college student samples in the northeastern United States (Lottes, 1991). Students completed the scale in their regularly scheduled classes. For both samples, the 20 scale items were randomly distributed in a questionnaire containing 70 other items requiring similar Likert-type responses. The first sample consisted of 98 males and 148 females from education, health, and sociology classes at two universities. The second sample consisted of 195 males and 195 females from business, engineering, English, education, history, mathematics, physics, political science, and sociology classes at three universities. The majority of the students in both samples were single and in the 19 to 22 age range. The Rape Supportive Attitude Scale is appropriate to administer to adults.

Response Mode and Timing

Two response modes are possible. If a machine-scoreable sheet is used, respondents should shade in the circle of the number indicating their agreement/disagreement with each item. The 20-item scale takes about 10 minutes to complete.

Scoring

All of the items are scored in the same direction. To break up any response set, the 20 items of this scale can be randomly placed among Likert-type items assessing other characteristics. To determine each respondent’s score for the scale, add the responses (coded 1 through 5) to the 20 items. The higher the score, the more rape supportive or victim-callous attitudes are supported by a respondent.

Reliability

For the first sample of 246 college students, the Cronbach alpha was .91. For the second sample of 390 students, the Cronbach alpha also was .91.

Validity

For both college student samples (n = 246 and n = 390, respectively), scores for the Rape Supportive Attitude Scale were significantly correlated (p < .001) in the predicted direction with (a) nonegalitarian gender role beliefs (r = .58, p = .64), (b) traditional attitudes toward female sexuality (r = .50, p = .42), (c) adversarial sexual beliefs (r = .65, p = .70), (d) arousal to sexual violence (r = .32, p = .37), and (e) non-acceptance of homosexuality (r = .25, p = .34). For males in both samples, the Rape Supportive Attitude Scale was significantly correlated (p < .001) in the predicted direction with the Hypermasculinity Inventory of Mosher and Sirkin (1984; r = .44, p = .52). Finally, for both samples, the correlations of sex with the scale (r = .36, p = .35) were significant (p < .001) and in the predicted direction. Males indicated more victim-callous attitudes than females.

A principal components analysis of the data from both samples revealed that a single, dominant factor emerged, accounting for 37% of the variance in each case. In both analyses, all items loaded on this factor at .39 or greater.

Other Information

Bell et al. (1992) found that a 12-item subset (containing items numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, and 19) of the Rape Supportive Attitude Scale produced an alpha of .77 for a sample of 521 first-year university students. As seniors, 300 of the original first-year student sample completed a questionnaire containing the 12-item subset.
Test-retest reliability was .53 and the Cronbach alpha for the senior sample was .76 (Bell, Lottes, & Kuriloff, 1995).

Construct validity of this shortened Rape Supportive Attitude Scale was supported by significant correlations in the predicted directions between this scale and measures of feminist attitudes, male dominant attitudes, liberalism, and social conscience for both the first-year student and senior samples (Bell et al., 1992, 1995). For both samples, men reported significantly higher ($p < .001$) scores on the Rape Supportive Attitude Scale than did women (Bell et al., 1992, 1995).

References

Exhibit

Rape Supportive Attitude Scale

Directions: Write all your responses on the computer answer sheet. Use a No. 2 lead pencil. To indicate your opinion about each statement, shade in the number corresponding to one of the five circles. Indicate whether you strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), are undecided or have no opinion (3), agree (4), or strongly agree (5).

Remember: Be sure that the statement you are reading corresponds to the statement number you are marking on the answer sheet. Mark only one response for each statement.

1. Being roughed up is sexually stimulating to many women.
2. A man has some justification in forcing a female to have sex with him when she led him to believe she would go to bed with him.
3. The degree of a woman’s resistance should be the major factor in determining if a rape has occurred.
4. The reason most rapists commit rape is for sex.
5. If a girl engages in necking or petting and she lets things get out of hand, it is her fault if her partner forces sex on her.
6. Many women falsely report that they have been raped because they are pregnant and want to protect their reputation.
7. A man has some justification in forcing a woman to have sex with him if she allowed herself to be picked up.
8. Sometimes the only way a man can get a cold woman turned on is to use force.
9. A charge of rape two days after the act has occurred is probably not rape.
10. A raped woman is a less desirable woman.
11. A man is somewhat justified in forcing a woman to have sex with him if he has had sex with her in the past.
12. In order to protect the male, it should be difficult to prove that a rape has occurred.
13. Many times a woman will pretend she doesn’t want to have intercourse because she doesn’t want to seem loose, but she’s really hoping the man will force her.
14. A woman who is stuck-up and thinks she is too good to talk to guys deserves to be taught a lesson.
15. One reason that women falsely report rape is that they frequently have a need to call attention to themselves.
16. In a majority of rapes the victim is promiscuous or had a bad reputation.
17. Many women have an unconscious wish to be raped, and may then unconsciously set up a situation in which they are likely to be attacked.
18. Rape is the expression of an uncontrollable desire for sex.
19. A man is somewhat justified in forcing a woman to have sex with him if they have dated for a long time.
20. Rape of a woman by a man she knows can be defined as a “woman who changed her mind afterwards.”