Myths and Misconceptions Surrounding Sexual Violence

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**Sexual Assault Myths and Misconceptions**

Sexual abuse is a sensitive topic that several people avoid discussing because it is not only scary but also uncomfortable. While this topic is being circumvented every day, most people perceive sexual violence as less real due to failure to acknowledge sexual abuse, understand what constitutes to sexual abuse, and how it occurs (“Sexual Violence Myths,” n.d). As a result, insufficient knowledge about sexual violence has led to detrimental effects exacerbated by misconceptions and myths. Although all sexual abuse myths are harmful, some myths are more harmful than others.

Firstly, there is a myth that rape emanates from the culprit’s irrepressible sexual urge. The fact is that rape is rooted in the desire to control the victim rather than sexual desire. This myth is harmful because it incorrectly identifies rape with sexual urge rather than premeditated violence (DeKeseredy, 2011). Another myth states that sexual assaults are often perpetrated by strangers. The fact is that sexual assaults are usually perpetrated by someone familiar to the victim (“Sexual Violence Myths,” n.d). This myth is harmful because a victim of sexual abuse may fail to recognize sexual assault if it was committed by a familiar culprit. For instance, a female child may fail to recognize sexual abuse committed by her father, hindering and derailing efforts in seeking justice.

Furthermore, there is a myth that when a woman says no she means yes (“Sexual Violence Myths,” n.d). However, the fact is that when women say yes, they indeed mean yes while saying no really means no. This myth is harmful because the culprit commits sexual violence without consent from the victim, resulting in unwanted pregnancies. Also, there is a harmful myth that sexual abuse is usually triggered by the behaviors, actions, and improper dressing of the victim (DeKeseredy, 2011). Worth mentioning, sexual abuse is never the fault of a victim but a violent attack intended to degrade and humiliate. Lastly, there is a myth that sexual abuse only happens in isolated areas and dark alleys (Paludi & Denmark, 2010). The fact is that sexual abuse can take place at any time and anywhere, making this myth more harmful than others because it implies no place is safe including offices and homes.

In conclusion, the most harmful myth and misconception is one that states that sexual violence only occurs to females. According to Paludi and Denmark (2010), sexual assaults do not happen exclusively to women but both men and women. Regretfully, this myth is more harmful than others because it overlooks horrible sexual experiences faced by transgender and male victims. DeKeseredy (2011) argues that male victims are not taken seriously when they report sexual violence perpetrated against them, which add trauma and psychological problems to bodily mutilations.

References

DeKeseredy, W. S. (2011). *Violence against women: Myths, facts, controversies*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Paludi, M. A., & Denmark, F. (2010). *Victims of sexual assault and abuse: Resources and responses for individuals and families*. Santa Barbara, Calif. [u.a.]: Praeger.

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