

The rape trauma and its role in the post-trauma disorder for the adolescent female victim

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Abstract:

We shall try in this paper to reveal the level of the post-trauma disorder for the adolescent female victim of rape (Incest) and the effect of the traumatic event on the case through the various manifestations of the trauma. We used the clinical method through taking a female adolescent who has been a victim of rape as a case study. Furthermore, we used the semi-structured clinical interview with the application of Davidson Trauma Scale (DTS). Findings of the study show that the rape the victim had been subject to made her live a sharp psychological trauma and a narcissistic wound that made her lose self-confidence and in the others. Furthermore, she suffers loneliness, inferiority complex, and the loss of the feeling of love due to the traumatic event. Moreover, the victim clearly avoids all the milestones of the event through escaping all what reminds her of the traumatic event.

.Keywords: post-trauma disorder, sexual aggression, female adolescent, traumatic event.
rape trauma

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Introduction:

Sexual crimes have spread lately and brought about big echoes amid the experts and the common people. Rape has become on the top of such crimes that are the most cruel and brutal for the victim because this uncommon practice imposed violently and under threats gives pleasure for the raper and destroys the raped. In this context, incest is considered one of the most dangerous and cruel sorts of violence against the women and one of the sexual crimes as it is a sexual aggression that aims at sexual intercourse and gratification. Moreover, it is an explosive expression of the sexual desire by a man who cannot control himself. Thus, it causes physical or psychological harm, or both, for the woman (Othman et al 2002 : p 22).

This triggered the interest of many experts in psychology, sociology, and criminology and pushed them to carry out many studies mainly in the last twenty years since it is a psychological disorder that requires therapy and punishment. The sexual aggression is one of the most disgusting human behaviors practiced on the individual because it touches his dignity and identity. It includes different types that differ according to the severity, frequency, and most importantly the kinship because the event breaks the familial relationships and ethics mainly if it happens during childhood or adolescence.

The sexual aggression is an unexpected severe traumatic event that the female adolescent may be subject to. It leaves a psychological trauma characterized with anxiety and restlessness that may be overcome based on the determinants of the severity of the trauma, the personal history of the female adolescent, and her coping. In the same line, incest is one of the criminal phenomena that emerge from various factors in general. It takes place inside the one family either directly, i.e., between the parents and the children, or in an extended manner that includes the grandparents and the descendents. Among the main factors that cause this crime we find religious, ethical, economic, social, media, and psychological factors (MakhluF 2013 : pp 16-17).

In the same vein, the head of documentation of children and women rights, Mrs. Ait Zai, revealed 100 cases of incest where female adolescents whose ages do not exceed 15 have been victims in 15 Wilayas; most of them are in the internal Wilayas (<https://www.echoroukonline.com>). On the other hand, experts agree that the governmental statistics are very far from the reality because the Algerian society conceals such events that bring “shame” for the family. Therefore, the spread of incest in the Algerian society is among the consequences of concealing such crimes (<https://www.ennaharonline.com>)

We cannot consider the numbers issued as real because not all the victims report the crimes fearing shame and remorse since rape is a taboo in the Algerian society in particular, and the Arabic in general. This fact makes the real numbers unknown and causes psychological traumas, troubles, and loneliness for the victim. The absence of the psychological therapy and physical healthcare may cause the Post-Trauma Stress Disorder (PTSD) that has been classified by the American Psychotherapy Association (1980, 1994, and 1987) as a psychological disease that happens when the individual witnesses a painful event that exceeds the limits of the common human experience. It causes later many physical and psychological effects such as avoidance, insensitivity, intruding thoughts and images, insomnia, sweating, fear, low memory and concentration...etc (Yakub 1999 : p 38). This has been confirmed by the study of Radia Wiss in 2006 where she studied the effects of the rape trauma on the woman through approaching the victims in order to understand the

psychological, social, relational, and behavioral effects they suffer and the extent of the impact of the trauma on the life of the raped woman and her self-image (Zahaf 2015 : p 15).

Based on what has been said, this study aims at knowing the main causes and circumstances that made the case study undergo this event and the symptoms caused by the psychological trauma. Hence, the study problem revolves around the following question: What is the extent of the post-trauma disorder of the female adolescent victim of rape (incest)?

Sub-questions:

- What is the level of the symptoms of re-experiencing the traumatic experience of the female adolescent victim of rape (incest)?
- What is the level of the symptoms of avoiding the traumatic experience of the female adolescent victim of rape (incest)?
- What is the level of the hyperarousal symptoms of the female adolescent victim of rape (incest)?

Hypothesis:

The female adolescent victim of rape (incest) suffers a high level of post-trauma disorder.

Sub-hypotheses:

- The female adolescent victim of rape (incest) suffers a high level of the symptoms of re-experiencing the traumatic experience.
- The female adolescent victim of rape (incest) suffers a high level of symptoms of avoiding the traumatic experience.
- The female adolescent victim of rape (incest) suffers a high level of hyperarousal symptoms.

1-Importance of the study:

- The importance of the study lies within the fact that the topic tackles the post-trauma disorder which is one of the most important topics currently due to its spread.
- It sheds light on the sexual aggression against the adolescents and the psychological, physical, and social effects.
- It shows the size of the problem of incest and its danger on the individual and the society.
- It shows the danger caused by the inappropriate care and the loose verdicts against the criminals.

2.Aims of the study:

- Revealing the level of the post-trauma disorder for the female adolescent victim of rape (incest).
- Revealing the level of the symptoms of re-experiencing and the symptoms of avoiding the traumatic experience, and the hyperarousal symptoms for the female adolescent victim of rape (incest).

3.The procedural definition of the study terms:

3.1.Post-trauma disorder: is the reaction by the female adolescent victim of rape to the scale of the trauma disorder used in the study.

3-2-Sexual aggression: is a sexual intercourse between an adolescent and an adult for the sexual gratification of the aggressor using force and domination.

3.3.Incest: a relationship of a sexual nature between members of the same family (uncle) where there is a sexual penetration for the body of the girl (niece) through violence and coercion leading to a psychological state of panic and fear, and to physical and psychological symptoms.

4.Literature review:

1st study: “ Zina al maharim... ashaitan fi buyutina” (Incest... Satan inside our homes) by Ahmed al Madjdub, 2003:

It is the first Egyptian study that shows the history of this crime in the ancient civilizations and how religions forbid it and confirmed the belief that the Arabic laws do not punish the perpetrators of this ugly crime. The study had been carried out on 200 cases who had been subject of these crimes overcoming the difficulties that face any objective researcher studying such social problems surrounded by silence and secrecy in our Arabic societies. He relied on the research made by UNICRI about the victims of the crime that covered 36 countries including Arab ones. The abstract has been published in the international report issued by the Institute in 1991. Moreover, he conducted interviews with females from different families whose answers showed that 10 out of the whole sample were subject of incest; the number may be higher because many do not want to reveal (Majdub 2003).

2nd study: “Al ightissab howa al akthar waqaan baina kol anwaa attaadhib” (Rape is the most affective form of torture) by Maghres al Hamdani, 2008:

it aimed at finding the extent of sufferance of the victims. It was carried out on 200 cases who were subject of this crime. Findings showed that the torture faced by the victims of rape is physical and psychological. The victims are characterized with severity and excessive, continual, and frequent aggressiveness in time because it causes dissolution of the unity of the personality and the psychological and cognitive structure.

3rd study: “Assadma annafsia wa tassawur al issab” (The psychological trauma and the imagination of the neurosis) by Mohamed Ahmed Nablsi, 1991: it aimed at finding the types of trauma and the circumstances of the emergence of neurosis. The sample included 100 individuals. Findings showed that neurosis of the trauma causes anger for the individual because of the feeling of helplessness while the event leads to psychological and physical relapse that manifests in some physical and psychological symptoms. As for the long-term reactions, they include the characteristics and potentials of the individual of coping with the events. The psychological trauma comes from taking the human away of his milieu, family, and social environment. Moreover, the reaction of the traumatized person is related to the violence of the event, the inattention, and particularly the pre-trauma psychological state.

4.1. Comments on the previous studies:

Most of the previous studies found that the rape trauma leaves physical and psychological effects. In this line, the study of Ahmed (2003) showed that 10, and maybe more, out the whole sample underwent incest. Moreover, the study of Maghras al Hamdani (2008) showed that the torture faced by the victims of rape is physical and psychological. The victims are characterized with severity and excessive, continual, and frequent aggressiveness in time because it causes dissolution of the unity of the personality and the psychological and cognitive structure. Besides, the study of Mohamed Ahmed Nablsi (1991) found that the reaction of the traumatized person is related to the violence of the event, the inattention, and particularly the pre-trauma psychological state.

5-Procedures of the field study:

5-1-Method and tools:

5-1-1-Method: We used the **clinical method** that relies on the exact scientific study that enables us to approach the case and study individual cases, the characteristic under study, and the factors that affect it.

5-1-2-Tools: We used the semi-structured interview where the author is in advance aware about the topic and wants to find more details. The interviewee is expected to answer comprehensively with his words and style to the topic of the research. The researcher asks a clarifying question to the interviewee so that the latter can give a speech about the topic (Abrash 2008 : p 268).

5.1.3. Davidson trauma scale DTS (1987): We used the scale translated by Dr Abdul Aziz Thabet and applied it on the study cases in order to measure the degree of post-trauma disorder. The scale of Davidson for measuring the effect of the traumatic experiences is made up of 17 statements as stated by the 4th diagnosing formula of the American psychotherapy. The statements of the scale are divided into 3 clusters that are:

- 1- Re-experiencing the traumatic experience in statements 1, 2, 3, 4, and 17.
2. Avoiding the traumatic experience in statements 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11.
- 3- Hyperarousal in statements 12, 13, 14, and 15.

The subjects of post-trauma disorder are diagnosed through:

- One of the symptoms of re-experiencing the traumatic experience.
- Three symptoms of avoidance.
- One symptom of hyperarousal.

6.Presentation of the case:

Personal details:

Age: 17

Educational level: 2nd year at the secondary school.

Familial position among the siblings: the eldest.

Number of siblings: 2 (male and female).

Information about the family:

The father:

Age: 55.

Educational level: illiterate.

Profession: farmer.

The mother:

Age: 50

Educational level: primary education.

Profession: housewife.

Economic status: average.

Other information: relation with the mother is characterized with hatred and contempt due to concealing what her husband's brother did.

6.1. Summary of the interview:

the case "N" is an 18 years old female adolescent studying 2nd year at the secondary school. She lives in a nuclear family made up of the father, the mother, the siblings, the grandmother, the grandfather, the uncle, and cousins. They live in a big house managed by the uncle. The brothers work in agriculture. The sufferance started on the day when the victim came back from school and found nobody at home because they were all working in the field except her uncle. He dragged her to his room and committed sexual aggression and menaced her that if she told the family members, they would not believe her. However, she told her mother who concealed the issue fearing scandal and familial problems. This made the victim abhor her mother and uncle.

The victim spoke about the sexual aggression and the terror she lives whenever she recalls the event or sees something that reminds her of it. She was trembling and weeping when she was telling the story with big sorrow. Her speech was discontinuous. She said later that he had left her and said that he would kill her if she told anyone. Nevertheless, she told her mother who traumatized her with her negative reaction when she asked her to keep it secret lest the father would kill her or his brother (the uncle).

6.2. Analysis of the results of the semi-structured interview:

Table 01: Results of the semi-structured interview

Categories	Units	Units frequencies	Percentage
Traumatic experience	Causes (social and psychological)	19	29.23%
Re-experiencing the traumatic experience	The recurring involuntary painful memories about the traumatic event	19	23.23%
Avoidance of the traumatic experience	Avoiding or trying to avoid the memories, thoughts, and stress feelings related to the trauma	12	46.18%
Hyperarousal	Remarkable discontinuous reaction related to the event of the trauma	15	07.23%

Source: Prepared by the author relying on the results of the semi-structured interview

6.3. Comments on the content of the table

Findings of the semi-structured interview accompanied with the observation show that the case “N” lives a psychological trauma and an emotional and social instability due to the sexual aggression she underwent. She explained the causes that made her go through this state as proven by the units, which indicate this, estimated at 19 units out of 65, i.e., 29.23%. This is enough to indicate the post-trauma psychological state of the victim. The mother was the main factor who imposed silence about what had happened making the victim feel oppression, inferiority, avenging, and attempt to suicide.

Moreover, the findings of the table reveal that the case lives with the recurring painful memories about the traumatic event. This manifests in the units, that indicate that, estimated at 19 units out of 65, i.e., 29.23%. This is enough to indicate that the victim lives with the effect of the traumatic experience that manifests in the recurring involuntary painful memories about the traumatic event.

On the other hand, the findings indicate that the victim attempts to avoid the memories, thoughts, and stress feelings related to the trauma. This is seen in the number of units, which indicate this, estimated at 12 out of 65, i.e., 18.46%. In addition, the interview shows that the case has fast emotional reactions and hyperarousal which manifest in the number of the units, which indicate this, estimated at 15 out of 65, i.e., 07.23%. This is sufficient to indicate the extent of the narcissistic wound and pain felt by the case towards her mother and uncle. Therefore, she has got fast emotional reactions in a conspicuous discontinuous manner due to the experience. We can conclude from the semi-structured interview that the case lives a tri-dimensional psychological state.

6.4. The quantitative analysis of the interview:

The problem that imposes itself is that the case experiences an acute psychological trauma due to the rape by her uncle and her mother's silence fearing shame and familial problems. The mother confirmed that she feared that her husband would commit a crime against his brother or daughter. Hence, the victim got a psychological trauma and did not accept her mother's reaction qualifying her with egoism. The case confirmed that she suffers the recurrence of the involuntary painful memories and nightmares related to the event. She declared that she feels hatred and avenging against her mother and uncle. Besides, she feels pain and suffocated whenever she recalls the event and has physiological reactions. The experience made her suffer recurring diseases through the abrupt feelings, emotions, and the painful memories. Furthermore, she has hyperarousal symptoms that manifest in the severe terror and recurring nightmares that are a defense mechanism to relive the event. The narcissistic wound the victim suffers is because of the psychological pain when she sees the victim free and because of losing her virginity. This increased her psychological sufferance, made her attempt to suicide, feel so lost, and live such breakdown and sadness that she avoids the feelings and thoughts related to the places and people related to the event because this causes her pain. She repels her mother and lost trust in her surroundings. These avoidance behaviors are defense mechanisms through which she tries to escape the painful trauma. In addition, she suffers disorders such as attention and concentration deficit and insomnia as she confessed during the interview.

Based on what has been said, we see that the case lives a psychological pain and a narcissistic wound due to the psychological trauma she went through. Hence, she lost love and trust in others and focused her thoughts on revenge from those who caused her pain. The rape trauma affected her psychological state with a kind of the physical hyperarousal when she recalls the traumatic event. Thus, she tries to avoid this through weeping to escape the memory of the event that affected her and caused low self-esteem and inferiority.

6.5. Presentation and analysis of the scale of trauma disorder:

Table 05: shows the scale of trauma disorder applied on the 1st case:

Scale	Degree	Statements	Decision
Re-experiencing symptoms	20	1-2-3-4-17	High
Avoidance and numbing symptoms	17	5-6-7-8-9-10-11	High
Hyperarousal symptoms	17	12-13-14-15-16	High
Total	54	From 1 to 17	Sharp

Through the application of the scale, we see that the total of the degrees got is 54 out of 68 which falls in the range between 51 and 68 degrees. This is a result that expresses a severe psychological trauma which manifests in 04 symptoms of the re-experiencing symptoms, 5 symptoms of the avoidance and numbing symptoms, and 04 symptoms of the hyperarousal symptoms.

6.6 General analysis of the case:

Through the interview, observation, and TDS, we see that the case experienced a severe trauma which is a sexual aggression from her uncle (incest). Ballier (1993) confirms that the sexual aggression includes all what is rape (female or male) and incest because the action is exercised on the victim without consent or awareness about the action. Moreover, it includes pedophilia even if it is not by force because of the age of the child (Jaaduni 2010 : pp 84-85).

The rape trauma experienced by the victim broke the limits between her and the others mainly because it is an incest which caused a big trauma that brought about an internal disequilibrium which made it difficult to overcome the trauma and build a coherent self-image. According to Lussier, minor victims of rape face a double challenge: the first is about determining their identities while the second is about trying to cope with a context of a life characterized with negativity (2017, p.27).

In her definition of psychological trauma, Milanie Klein noted that it is any event that attacks the human, penetrates his defensive system, and shatters his life quickly and in an efficient manner that leads to the emergence of deep fear, helplessness, or terror (Kurghuli 2010 : p 42). The traumatic event resulting from rape left a severe trauma for the case whose life has been impacted as she feels insecure and lost trust due to being raped by her uncle making her feel severe aggressiveness towards her uncle and mother in order to revenge for her honor and narcissistic wound that will live with her. In this regard, James defines the traumatic event as any emotional trauma that leads to a core damage that can be seen in the psychological growth of the individual. It is so strong and severe that it cannot be controlled. These traumatic experiences have bad psychological effects on the traumatized and cause feelings of helplessness, insecurity, loss of control, and surrendering (Abbas 2016 : pp10-11).

These feelings lead to the appearance of behaviors that seem to be pathological. Sometimes, the victim insults the others and verbally assaults them. In this regard, Freud says that all the psychological diseases result from childhood traumas because all what happens in the childhood may cause traumatic or psychological neurosis that can be sometimes painful for the individual himself such as rape, sexual aggressions, and the abrupt death of one of the relatives (Taha n.d : pp 58-59).

We see that the crime the victim experienced made her feel that something has been broken and robbed of her. This had bad effects, made her lose trust in the others, fear all what surrounds her mainly men, pushed her to avoid speaking to them, and even made her fear the painful memories that remind her of that painful event. This is what Foa et al., (1989) pointed to through setting an epistemological theory to interpret the trauma disorder. The theory says that the traumatic events threaten our ordinary assumptions about the concept of security. The woman that had been raped does not feel secure and at ease when a strange man is in the surroundings. This builds fear in the long-term memory and makes the victim experience a low ability of prediction and control of her life which leads to high levels of anxiety as the memory recalls the events in a clear or distorted manner that manifests in nightmares (Medjahdi 2020 : p.64).

This leads to breaking and changing the image of her uncle whom she had considered to be a second father into a source of fear and anxiety. All this negatively impacted her life and behavior. Re-experiencing the event in the form of dreams and thoughts continually increases the hyperarousal, vigilance, and insomnia because of the accumulation of information about

the event. This information is strange for the cognitive schema as explained by Miller who states that the individuals takes the traumatic event as new and strange information for the cognitive schema. Thus, he does not know how to deal with it and takes it as a threat that results in psychological troubles and anxiety as witnessed in the cases who show anxiety due to the difficulty of coping with their new realities (Medjahdi 2020 : p.94).

7. Discussion of the hypotheses:

General hypothesis: Findings of the study confirm the general hypothesis that states that the victim feels a high level of trauma disorder with its three clusters (Re-experiencing symptoms, avoidance symptoms, and hyperarousal symptoms). The case showed a high score on the scale estimated at 54 degrees. We interpret this result saying that the sexual aggression she underwent is a traumatic event characterized with abrupt force that caused changes at the socio-psychological level that manifested in the form of the psychological trauma symptoms through nightmares and repetitive dreams that cause unstable sleep, and in avoiding any memory or place that reminds her of the event. Moreover, she prefers loneliness, withdrawal, and depression due to the feeling of inferiority and low self-esteem. Findings of our study are in accordance with the study of al Hamdani (2008) that found that torture exercised on the victims of rape is physical and psychological and that the victims are characterized with hyper, repetitive, and continual aggressiveness because it dissolves the unity of the personality and the cognitive and psychological structure.

As for the 1st sub-hypothesis that says that the female adolescent victim of rape suffers a high level of the symptoms of re-experiencing the traumatic experience, we can say that it is confirmed as the victim showed symptoms of re-experiencing in the form of memories and nightmares, images, and thoughts. This is due to the abrupt event, its force, its unexpectedness, unacceptability by the victim, and the feeling of fear when remembering the event. This is what the study of Si Mussa Ouezgar (2002) confirmed saying that the event is re-experienced in the form of dreams and nightmares. The re-experiencing symptoms are a mechanism that responds to an internal need that aims at alleviating the severity of the anxieties through offloading in little amounts (Si Mussa Ouezgar 2002:p.86).

As for the 2nd sub-hypothesis that says that the female adolescent victim of rape suffers a high level of symptoms of avoiding the traumatic experience, it is confirmed because the case showed avoidance symptoms that manifested in severe fear from the places related to the event, her feeling of insecurity, and loneliness due to avoiding the indications and stimuli that make her re-experience the event. This is what behaviorism points to saying that the traumatized individual attempts to escape (avoid) the stimuli that remind him of the trauma. These stimuli are painful for him because they are related to the traumatic event (Yaakub 1999: p 75).

As for the 3rd sub-hypothesis that says that the female adolescent victim of rape suffers a high level of hyperarousal symptoms, it is confirmed. This can be interpreted saying that the traumatic event made the victim feel severe fear and threat and re-experience the event in the form of dreams, nightmares, insomnia, feeling of loneliness, hyperarousal, rage, and aggressiveness. The rape trauma made the victim feel anxiety, fatigue, exhaustion, inability to concentrate, stress, remorse, anger, and excessive vigilance due to the accumulation of the new information related to the tra .

8. CONCLUSION

Sexual aggression is one of the worst and most dangerous crimes mainly against the female adolescent because its effect is everlasting. It causes future anxiety mainly if it is concealed due to the culture of the society that considers it an honor issue that must be concealed fearing the scandal regardless the psychological state and trauma experienced by the victim; mainly if it is incest. The female adolescent victim of rape experiences a severe psychological trauma that causes feelings of sadness, pain, and depression. Therefore, measures must be taken as this phenomenon increases. Efforts must be intensified to root it out, punish the criminals, and take the medical and psychological care of the victims.

Suggestions:

- It is necessary to apply the maximum punishments against the rapers.
- It is necessary to start sexual education in the educational curricula.
- It is necessary to appoint psychological experts in the schools from primary to secondary.
- It is necessary to take psychological care and monitor the female adolescent victims of rape.

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