

# Unraveling Rape Myth Acceptance: A Comparative Study Of Gender And Generational Attitudes

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## Abstract:

**Background:** Sexual violence, particularly rape, remains a pervasive issue in Indian society, deeply influenced by patriarchal structures and harmful rape myths that blame victims and excuse perpetrators. These myths, which perpetuate rape culture, hinder justice and contribute to a lack of accountability. While attitudes towards sexual violence vary across generations and genders, traditional beliefs continue to shape public perceptions. This research aims to examine generational and gender-based differences in rape myth acceptance to better understand and challenge these harmful narratives in the pursuit of justice for survivors.

**Materials and Methods:** The study used a cross-sectional, comparative research design with t-tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to examine differences in rape myth acceptance across gender and generations. The sample consisted of 90 participants: 30 from Generation Z (11-26), 30 from Generation M (27-42), and 30 from Generation X (43-58), comprising of 51 females and 39 males in total. Data was collected using the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA), which includes 22 items across four sub-scales, using a 5-point Likert scale. The tool demonstrated high internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ) and good test-retest reliability.

**Results:** The mean rape myth scores were 68.33 for males and 88.73 for females, showing a significant difference ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) as determined by a t-test. For age groups, Generation Z (11-26 years) had a mean score of 90.97, Generation M (27-42 years) scored 76.23, and Generation X (43-57 years) scored 64.76. A one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences between these groups ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). Post hoc tests showed significant pairwise differences between all groups. The high mean score for Generation Z indicated a stronger rejection of rape myths, while Generation X's lower score suggests higher acceptance of these myths. Also, the high mean score for females indicated a stronger rejection of rape myths as compared to males.

**Conclusion:** There is a significant difference in the rape myth acceptance scores between men and women as well as across three generations. These findings highlight the importance of addressing gender and generational differences when designing interventions to challenge rape myths. It is crucial to tailor educational and awareness programs to reduce myth acceptance and promote a culture of consent and accountability.

**Key Word:** Rape myths; Rape myth acceptance; Victim Blaming; Gender; Generations;

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## I. Introduction

Rape myths are widely held false beliefs and attitudes that trivialize, justify, or normalize sexual violence. These myths often suggest that victims are to blame, perpetrators are justified, or that certain forms of sexual violence do not constitute rape. The acceptance of these myths can vary across genders and generations, influencing societal views on sexual violence. This study aims to assess how rape myth acceptance differs among various age groups, compare it between men and women, and explore how these differences contribute to the perpetuation of rape culture. Understanding these variations is crucial for developing targeted interventions to challenge these harmful beliefs.

## II. Material And Methods

In keeping with the objective of the study, the following design follows a comparative research design. Under the study, it uses Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-test to find out the difference between the groups. To compare the difference in acceptance of rape myths between male and female, t-test is used where gender (male and female) is independent variable and rape myth acceptance score is dependent variable. To compare the difference across generations, ANOVA is used where generation comprising of Generation Z (11-

26 years), Generation M (27-42 years), Generation X (43-58 years) is predictor variable and rape myth acceptance score is criterion variable.

**Study Design:** Cross-sectional comparative study design

**Study Location:** Bhubaneswar, Odisha

**Sample size:** 90 individuals (51 Females, 39 males)

**Subjects & selection method:** A total of 90 participants (51 females and 39 males), 30 from each generation were selected using convenience and snowball sampling methods.

**Inclusion criteria:**

1. People belonging to age group (11-58 years)
2. Males and Females

**Exclusion criteria:**

1. 3<sup>rd</sup> gender
2. Aged <11 and >58 years

**Procedure methodology:**

Convenient along with snowball sampling technique was used to collect the raw data. The questionnaire was circulated among institutions, society, acquaintances. Individuals belonging to different age groups were a part of the study. Only after obtaining their consent, they were presented with the questionnaire. First, they were given a demographic questionnaire to gain some background information and then they were given the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Questionnaire. The participants were given a time period of 10-15 minutes to give their responses. Those responses were then used for the analysis of data.

**Statistical analysis**

Data were first analyzed with descriptive statistics to find out the mean, median and standard deviation. One-way ANOVA was carried out to assess the rape myth acceptance across generations and to determine which pairwise comparison of means contributed to the overall difference, the Tukey Post Hoc test was conducted. Further independent sample t test was carried out to examine the gender difference in rape myth acceptance. For the study, a ( $p < 0.05$ ) was fixed for statistical significance. Statistical analysis was done using the SPSS (Version 20.0) software.

**III. Result**

Table no. 1 shows the demographic representation of the sample. In total there were 90 samples out of which each generation consisted of 30 samples, 51 females and 39 males.

**Table no.1:** Shows demographic representation of the sample.

Demographics	Male	Female	Total
Generation Z (11-26)	12	18	30
Generation X (27-42)	16	14	30
Generation M (43-57)	11	19	30
Total	39	51	90

Table no.2 summaries the descriptive statistics of the sample consisting of 39 males and 51 females

The mean rape myth level score was obtained to be 68.33 in case of males and 88.73 in case of females. This shows a difference in means of the two groups. To know whether the difference was significant between the two groups, t-test was conducted. A statistically significant test result ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) was obtained.

**Table no.2:** Shows descriptive statistics of the sample along with t-value and p-value.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t value	df	p-value
Male	39	68.33	18.54	-5.176*	47.33	0.000
Female	51	88.73	11.06			

**Figure-1 (Bar diagram representing the mean rape myth score of male and female)**

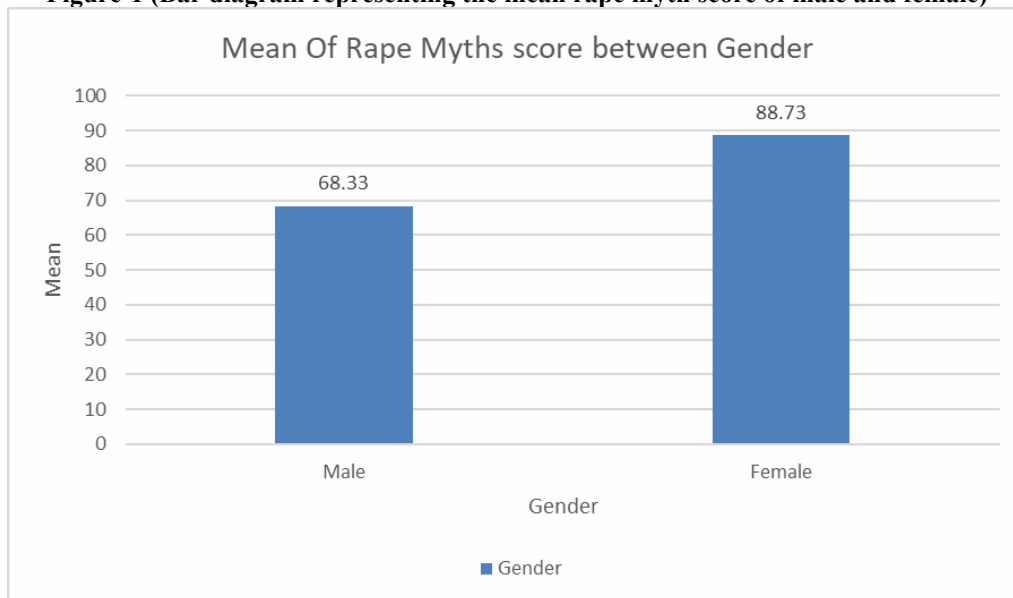


Table no 3 table summarizes the descriptive statistics of the sample consisting of 90 individuals- 30 from each generation. Age group of 11-26 years belong to Generation Z, 27-42 years belong to Generation M and 43-57 years belong to Generation X. The mean rape myth score of Generation Z was found to be 90.97, of Generation M was found to be 76.23 and of Generation X was found to be 64.76.

**Table no 3:** shows the Mean, Standard deviation and Standard error of the variables

Age groups	Sample size	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower bound	Upper bound		
Generation Z (11-26)	30	90.97	11.31	2.06	86.74	95.19	67.00	106.00
Generation M (27-42)	30	76.23	13.94	2.54	71.02	81.44	48.00	96.00
Generation X (43-57)	30	64.76	17.08	3.11	58.38	71.14	35.00	104.00
Total	90	77.32	17.79	1.87	73.59	81.04	35.00	106.00

**Figure-2 (Bar diagram showing the mean rape myth scores of different age groups)**

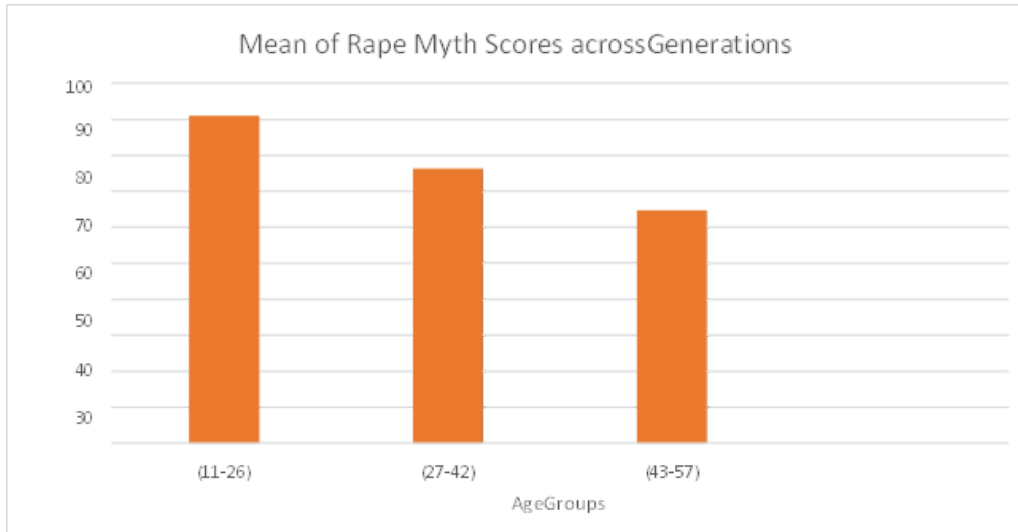


Table no. 4: shows the results of one-way analysis of variance conducted between three different groups. It reveals that there is a significant difference between the rape myth scores of different age groups ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

**Table no 4:** ANOVA on rape myths scores of the subjects

Groups	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig (p value)
Between groups	10349.956	2	5174.978	25.268*	0.000
Within groups	17817.700	87	204.801		
Total	28167.656	89			

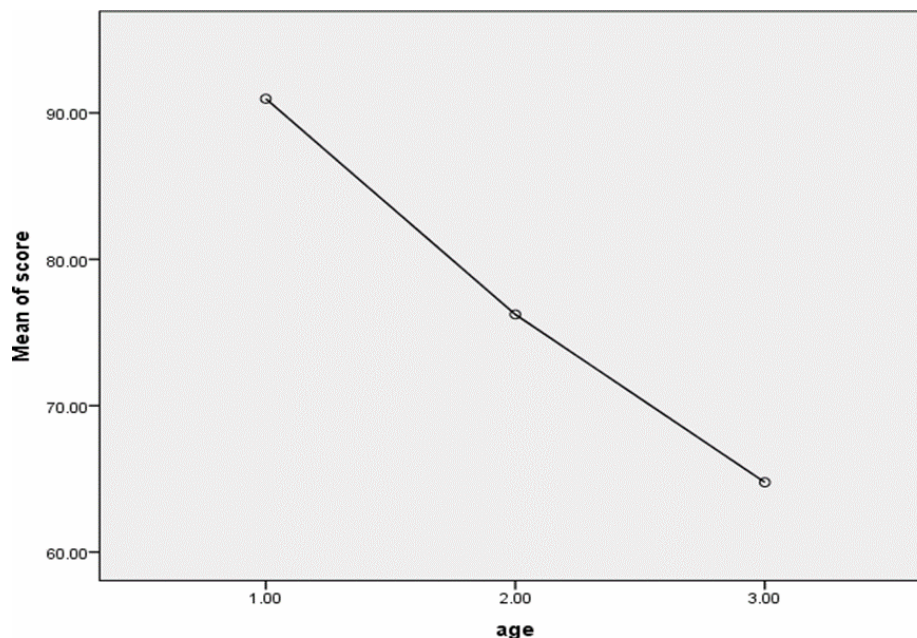
Table no. 5 shows the results of Post hoc test which was conducted to determine which pair-wise comparison of means contributed to the overall significant difference. It was found that there was a significant difference between each of the groups.

**Table no 5:** Post Hoc test.

Age	Age	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
11-26	27-42	14.73*	3.69	0.001
	43-57	26.20*	3.69	0.000
27-42	11-26	-14.73*	3.69	0.001
	43-57	11.46*	3.69	0.010
43-57	11-26	-26.20*	3.69	0.000
	2742	-11.46*	3.69	0.010

In figure 3, it is to be noted that 1.00 corresponds to Generation Z (11-26), 2.00 corresponds to Generation M (27-42), 3.00 corresponds to Generation X (43-57). A high mean score indicates greater rejection of rape myths. Since the mean score is highest for Generation Z, it indicates they strongly believe that there are myths to justify rape and highly reject those myths/excuses. The mean score of generation X was found to be the lowest indicating their lower rejection or higher acceptance of rape myths.

**Figure- 3 (Profile Plot for Age Groups and Mean Rape Myth Level Scores)**



#### **IV. Discussion**

Rape myths play a significant role in perpetuating and reinforcing rape culture. These misconceptions and distorted beliefs about sexual violence contribute to a societal environment that trivializes, dismisses, and even justifies acts of rape. By distorting the understanding of sexual violence and blaming victims, rape myths contribute to victim-blaming attitudes, the under-reporting of incidents, and the overall normalization of rape within society. Rape myth acceptance refers to the degree to which individuals endorse or believe in common misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding rape. It is a measure of how much someone subscribes to these myths and perpetuates them through their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. To assess the rape myth acceptance, updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale was used which was developed by McMahon and Farmer (2011). It consists of four sub-scales: She Asked for It, He Didn't Mean To, Wasn't Really Rape and She Lied. The sub-scale 1 consisted of six items, sub-scale 2 consisted of six items, sub-scale 3 consisted of five items and sub-scale 4 consisted of five items. Hence the questionnaire consisted of 22 items in total. The objective of the study was to assess the rape myth acceptance by people, compare the rape myth acceptance between men and women and across generations. The sample size of this study was 90 where 30 individuals were taken from each generation. The total number of males in the sample were 39 and the total number of females in the sample were 51. From the study it was found that there was a significant difference in the rape myth acceptance between males and females as well as across three generations. We conducted a t-test to compare the difference in mean rape myth score between male and female and to find out if the difference was significant or not. The mean score of males was 68.33 and the mean score of females was 88.73. The mean score is lower in case of males than females which indicates a lower rejection and higher acceptance of rape myths in case of males as compared to females. The t- test yielded a statistically significant result with p-value =0.000 which is less than 0.05. From the descriptive statistics, the mean score of the three generations was found to be 90.97 (Generation Z), 76.23 (Generation M), 64.76 (Generation X). The mean rape myth score is highest for Generation Z indicating that they strongly reject the myths/excuses. The mean score is lowest for Generation X indicating that their acceptance of the rape myths is the highest. One way Analysis of Variance was conducted to determine the significance of the differences in mean scores. The p-value was 0.000 indicating a statistically significant difference among the groups. To determine which pairwise comparison of means contributed to the overall significant difference, the Tukey Post Hoc test was conducted. It was found that there was a significant difference between each group.

#### **V. Conclusion**

This research reveals significant differences in rape myth acceptance between genders and generations. Males showed higher acceptance of rape myths, while females demonstrated stronger rejection, likely due to greater awareness of sexual violence. Generation Z had a stronger rejection of rape myths compared to older generations, reflecting evolving societal attitudes and increased awareness through education and media. These findings highlight the importance of addressing and challenging rape myths across all genders and generations.

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