

Abstract

Rape is a crime that is always being under-reported. Evidence from past research showed that the public's negative attitudes toward rape victims may be one of the possible reasons that hinder victims from reporting. Studies of rape intervention program also revealed that negative attitudes toward rape victims could be altered. The aim of the present study was to examine specifically the effects of sympathy enhancement in college students on attitudes toward rape victims. 105 subjects participated in the present study and sympathy enhancement session was provided to the experimental group. The relationship between attitudes toward rape victims and other related attitudes such as attitudes toward women was also examined. Subjects who held more traditional attitudes toward women generally revealed less favorable attitudes toward rape victims and higher level of responsibility was assigned to the victims in rape cases. It was hypothesized that the experimental group subjects would reveal less unfavorable attitudes after participating in the sympathy enhancement session. Results showed that the attitudes toward rape victims were not changed in the desired direction while correlational relationship existed in sympathy and attitudes toward rape victims and level of responsibility assigned. Regardless of gender and group status, all assigned higher level of responsibility to victims in both pretest and posttest conditions suggesting that stereotypical attitudes toward victims in non-typical cases were prevalent.