

THE PATTERN OF RAPE IN SINGAPORE

By Allan Y. H. Ng

Rape or having carnal knowledge of a woman without her consent has both serious mental and physical sequelae. A study was made of the alleged rape cases referred by the police to the University Unit of Kandang Kerbau Hospital from 1969 to 1971 in order to assess the nature of the injuries sustained, the incidence of venereal disease, the proportion of young victims (under 16) and the incidence of offending relatives.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

All traceable case records of rape victims who were referred to the University Unit of Kandang Kerbau Hospital from 1969 to 1971 were analysed. In view of the legal nature of these cases, the Unit regime has been for a thorough history and physical examination including vaginal examination to be undertaken. Blood Tests for VDRL and GCFT were done and vaginal and urethral swabs taken for microscopic examination for gonococci and sperms. Vaginal and urethral swabs were cultured for gonococci. Where indicated, urine pregnancy tests were performed.

A total of 132 cases were analysed from 1969 to 1971.

RESULTS

	1969	1970	1971	Total 1969-71
No injuries	29	26	43	98
Vaginal Injuries only	5	2	5	12
Body Injuries only	4	4	8	16
Vaginal and Body Injuries	3	2	1	6
	41	34	57	132

Of 132 cases of alleged rape, only 34 had evidence of injury. 18 cases sustained vaginal trauma.

9 cases sustained introital bruises only; 5 cases had fresh hymenal tears which did not require any treatment. Of the 4 cases who sustained lacerations,

VAGINAL TRAUMA

	1969	1970	1971	1969-71
Introital Bruises only	1	3	5	9
Hymenal Tears only	3	1	1	5
Vaginal Lacerations	4	0	0	4
Lacerations involving Rectum	0	0	0	0
	8	4	6	18

all required suturing as the lacerations were large and extended from the hymen into the posterior vaginal wall. In 2, the tear extended into the perineal body but the rectum was intact. Both these cases required blood transfusion. All 4 who sustained vaginal lacerations were below 12 years of age. 3 of the latter cases had only digital interference but all 3 were under 5 years of age.

There were no cases where the lacerations extended into the rectum.

BODY INJURIES

	1969	1970	1971	1969-71
Bruises and Scratches	7	6	8	21
Cuts	0	0	1	1
Bites	0	0	0	0
Others	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	7	6	9	22

Body injuries consisted mainly of bruises and scratches on the chest, breasts, neck, buttocks and thighs. 1 case sustained cuts on her finger as she was raped at knife-point.

There were no cases of severe injury or deaths.

VENEREAL DISEASE

None of the 132 cases had any evidence of venereal disease at the time of examination i.e. the vaginal and urethral smears and cultures were negative for gonococci and the VDRL and GCFT were both negative.

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AGE	
	No. of Cases
5 and under	6
6—10 years	14
11—15 years	81
16—20 years	21
21—25 years	5
26—30 years	4
31—35 years	1
More than 35 years	0

The majority of cases of rape occurred within the 11—15 year age group. Of the 101 cases under 16 years of age, 23 cases willingly consented to intercourse and were brought in by relatives (parents in most cases). In these 23 cases the offenders were known to the "victims" and in 21 of the cases, were their boyfriends.

INCIDENCE OF OFFENDING RELATIVES

	No. of Cases
Father (natural)	11
Step-father	2
Cousin	2
Brother-in-law	2
	17

Of the 132 cases, the offenders in 17 cases were relatives; amongst these, the natural father was the most frequent offender (11 cases).

DISCUSSION

Of the 132 cases, only about 1/3 (34 cases) had evidence of physical injury. It thus appears that the majority of cases did not actively resist the assaults, (otherwise there would be evidence of trauma) possibly because of fear. Of those who sustained physical injury, 22 cases were traumatised in the body (bruises, scratches or cuts—none of these were serious) and 18 sustained vaginal injury. Of these 18, 4 were seriously injured—all 4 were under 12 years of age and all 4 had large vaginal lacerations which required suturing. 2 cases had to be transfused with blood. It is significant that only digital interference occurred in 3 of the 4 cases. All three were under the age of 5. It can thus be seen that digital interference in very young girls can be quite harmful and dangerous.

Surprisingly there was no case of venereal disease. The majority of the victims were young (under 20) and the age group 11—15 accounted for the highest number of cases (81 out of 134). Relatives were offenders in 17 cases and amongst these, surprisingly, the natural father was the most frequent offender (11 cases).