

## ABSTRACT

ARGUELLES, MA. CONCEPCION P.; PALAYPAY, DORIS O.; SY, ADELIANA O.  
"THE EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND PRE-RAPE BEHAVIOR ON THE  
ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY", DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY, A PAPER  
ON EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY, 1986.

Forty (40) Genpsyc students were given a pre-tested questionnaire to determine the effects of physical appearance and pre-rape behavior on the attribution of responsibility. Physical appearance was measured by pre-judged pictures taken from university yearbooks. Pictures which got the greatest amount of rating on the very attractive and least attractive scale were chosen to represent the attractive and unattractive pictures respectively in the experiment proper. Pre-rape behaviors were manipulated through the situations so that there were 2 hypothetical rape stories. Thus, the victim's physical appearance and pre-rape behavior were independently varied. The statistical test used was Mann Whitney U-test. The results indicate a significant effect on pre-rape behavior ( $U = 105.5$ ,  $U_{crit} = 138$ ,  $\alpha = .05$ ) and no significant effect on physical appearance ( $U = 155.5$ ,  $U_{crit} = 138$ ,  $\alpha = .05$ ). The insignificant results in physical appearance suggested that people do not give emphasis on one's facial features. Physical appearance is already a given and cannot be controlled. Moreover, it is not the victim's responsibility to be attractive or to be unattractive. On the other hand, provocative victims were blamed significantly more than were non-provocative victims. This can be explained by the fact that it is one's own will to act provocatively or not.

Research has uncovered a number of factors that promote interpersonal attraction, namely: physical appearance, competence, similarity, familiarity and proximity. In particular physical appearance has become a very important determinant of interpersonal attraction. This is due to the formation of stereotypes held by people about physical appearance. The physically attractive individuals are said to possess desirable

unattractive individuals are held more responsible for being victimized than the attractive ones. It is assumed that unattractive individuals have a lesser chance of being raped than attractive ones. Therefore, if an unattractive individual was raped, one tends to assume that she might have behaved provocatively to encourage the rape, or worse, might have initiated it. On the other hand, if an attractive individual was raped, one may conclude that it was her beauty per se that triggered the rape. That is why unattractive individuals are held more responsible in a rape incident than physically attractive individuals on the basis of attribution theory.

This study was conducted in order to: 1. find out if the physical appearance of the victim affects the subject's attribution of responsibility and 2. find out if the pre-rape behavior of the victim affects the subject's attribution of responsibility. Thus, two independent variables were used:

1. physical appearance and 2. pre-rape behavior of the victim.

Physical appearance refers to the facial features alone, thus, excluding the bodily features and other characteristics pertaining to the victim's personality such as voice, manner of speaking and the like. Physical appearance was measured based on the pre-test of 40 pictures by 10 males and 10 female students. This independent variable has the following levels:

1. attractive appearance - this was determined by the photograph that received the greatest amount of rating on the

attractive scale. 2: unattractive appearance - this was determined by the photograph that received the greatest amount of rating on the unattractive scale.

The pre-rape behavior refers to the immediate behavior of the victim prior to the rape incident. The levels of this independent variable are 1. provocative - this was shown through the victim's manner of dressing (V-necked sweater, tightfitting jeans, high-heeled shoes); the way she fixed her hair, that is with the touch of seduction; the faint foundation of make up she had; and the way she glanced at the man and tilted her head, 2. non-provocative - this was shown through the victim's manner of dressing (baggy pants, sneakers); and the way she fixed her hair naturally.

The experiment is designed to test the following hypotheses:

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference in the median attribution of responsibility by subjects between attractive and unattractive victims in rape cases.

$H_{01}$ :  $u_1 = u_2$

$H_{a1}$ : The median attribution of responsibility by subjects is higher in unattractive than attractive victims in rape cases.

$H_{a1}$ :  $u_1 > u_2$

$H_{02}$ : There is no significant difference in the median attribution of responsibility by subjects between provocative

and non-provocative victims in rape cases.

$$H_{02}: u_1 = u_2$$

$H_{a2}$ : The median attribution of responsibility by subjects is higher in provocative than non-provocative victims in rape cases.

$$H_{a2}: u_1 > u_2$$

