

INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN RAPE CULTURE AND MASS MEDIA

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The article consists of the definition of the concept Rape Culture as well as types and means of rape culture's expression. Development of the rape culture is considered in this research most notably within feminist's actions. Practical examples of the rape culture in the mass media are given in the course of the work. They based on news about lawsuits, articles in magazines, animated Disney cartoons and researches concerning rape culture. It also provides UN Woman recommendations on how to combat the rape culture.

Key words: rape culture; rape language; violence; mass media; people's objectification; feminism; victim blaming.

Rape culture is defined as a concept used to describe a culture in which rape and sexual violence are perceived to be common and in which prevalent attitudes, norms, practices and media normalize, excuse, tolerate or even condone sexual violence. It is based on the use of misogynistic language, the objectification of women's and men's bodies and the glamorization of sexual violence [1].

Rape culture can be expressed by several means:

- blaming the victim;
- trivializing sexual assault;
- sexually explicit jokes;
- tolerance of sexual harassment;
- publicly scrutinizing how a survivor's dress, mental state, motives and history;
- gratuitous gendered violence in movies and television;
- refusing to take rape accusations seriously;
- defining 'manhood' as dominant and sexually aggressive and 'womanhood' as submissive and sexually passive;
- assuming that men don't get raped or that only 'weak' men get raped;
- teaching potential victims to avoid getting raped;
- rape language and other [1].

In consequence of feminism, this phenomenon has become a public problem that requires a solution and not only a private matter [2]. However, it's important to mention that rape culture is a concept which concerned about suffered people without distinction of their gender.

In accordance with this list, it becomes obvious that the rape culture takes its basis from social norms that are formed by the mass media and illustrated in them. Objectification, violence and sexual abuse are presented in movies and TV-shows, news, magazines, social networks (TikTok, Youtube, Instagram).

One of the examples of rape culture is a study, which was conducted on the presence of elements of this phenomenon in Disney cartoons. Animated Disney princess movies tend to have elements of rape culture. For one, the cartoon 'Beauty and the Beast' 1991 contains the following elements: the objectification of women, male privilege, emotional abuse, isolation, intimidation and coercion. For example, it was shown in relationship between Belle and Beast when the Beast growls at Belle and throws objects around the room [2].

Another example of the romanticization of violence is a photo session published in internet. H&M together with Buro 24/7 Kazakhstan filmed a promotional photo session, in which they played on the theme of violence in the 70s in the United States. In the pictures, the models depict the victims of serial killers. After that, H&M stated that the filming on the BURO Kazakhstan website, in which the H&M Studio A/W 2019 collection was used, is editorial. Following editorial principles of creative independence, the creative concept of the filming was not aligned with the brand [3].

The study of Matthew A. Baum and Dara Kay Cohen from Harvard Kennedy School and Yuri M. Zhukov from the University of Michigan mentioned: «We find that where there is more rape culture in the press, there is more rape. In areas with more prevalent rape culture in the press, police receive more frequent reports of rape, but make fewer arrests in response» [4]. In this regard, news becomes a rather dangerous phenomenon in society, when from day to day they broadcast a large number of violent actions using the wrong vocabulary. For example, they use victim-blaming language (focus on the circumstances of the incident but not on the perpetrator), show empathy for the accused and call them 'player' [4].

For instance, Donald Trump was accused of sexism and misogyny while his speeches often contain elements of the rape culture. As part of his first electioneering, Trump was accused of raping his ex-wife Ivana in 1989, but he publicly replied that violence is impossible within marriage and said that you can't rape your own wife. He also publicly disseminated gender stereotypes and infringed on the honour and dignity of Fox News journalist Magin Kelly, who, according to Trump, asked him tough questions only because she was on her period [5]. Trump, as a state representative and politician, played a large role in shaping social norms, especially in the media space, as he was

quoted by news both on television and on social networks. With his sayings, he objectified women, used rape language and glamourized violence.

Another example of rape culture is the litigation between Amber Heard and Johnny Depp, where in 2016 Heard accused Depp of domestic violence against her, and after in 2019 Depp, in addition to a lawsuit for the protection of honour, dignity and reputation, filed a counterclaim for domestic violence by Heard. The difference in these hearings is that initially the domestic violence lawsuit by a man was taken for granted by society, and the 2019 lawsuit caused a resonance, since it was initially assumed that in most cases only the man acts as the rapist, despite the fact that that Depp, in this case, was the victim. However, the trend in the development of feminism was reflected in the fact that some people supported Heard's illegal actions after accusations against her, explaining this by the fact that women were finally able to show their strength [6].

One more example is former Fox news Channel CEO Roger Ailes, who in the Fox office spread the rape culture in one way or another, including sexual harassment and rape itself. Thus, more than 20 women confirmed his violent attitude towards them. Ailes, as the head of a large media company, influenced not only the internal environment of the company, but also on what was broadcasted and how [7].

Thus, the rape culture, despite its rude name, is a major issue in our society, which encourages discrimination and violence. UN women have developed 16 ways to combat it. These methods include:

- creating a culture of enthusiastic consent where ‘no’ is ‘no’ and ‘yes’ is ‘yes’;
- speaking out against the root causes (gender stereotypes, long-present attitudes);
- having zero tolerance toward sexual harassment and violence;
- stopping victim-blaming by helping the victim instead of condoning the perpetrator;
- broadening understanding of rape culture;
- ending impunity by prosecuting sexual violence cases and not searching for the “scapegoat”;
- educating the next generation [8].

Summing up what has been said, the phenomenon of rape culture has more social significance. Despite this, the rape culture is a global challenge of our time, in spite of the tolerance and liberal approaches. First of all, people must accept the fact that this problem exists, and then start with themselves by changing their vocabulary and attitude, and then only through this the world will change. It is also important to note the fact that the mass media should be especially careful about this issue and the people working there should under-

go special training. Moreover, we consider it appropriate to provide additional legal liability for this kind of indirect violence.

Rape culture is not just about the fact of rape itself. It includes the social norms that govern the interaction of people. Thus, gender stereotypes are often a prerequisite for violent relationships. Men are considered to be the strong sex, which is not characterized by emotions and feelings. The status of a rapist, as a rule, is given to a man. Meanwhile their behaviour can be justified by society through established practice and the unwillingness of law enforcement agencies to do their job. However, there is usually a prejudice against women that it is natural for them to be a victim. Quite often, this status of a victim is not only not defended, but also condemned by the society (victim blaming). Curiously, a woman can suffer from the rape culture by women. This applies in particular to judgments of appearance ('too vulgar') or behaviour ('too open').

Mass media, in turn, is a huge platform for spreading and combating the rape culture. First of all, it is necessary to choose the right words and use them, since often the rape language is the basis of the issue. It is also necessary to fight gender stereotypes, objectification of women and men, as well as the romanticization of violence in TV-shows and films, news and videos on social networks. On the part of the state, it seems reasonable to create a mechanism of responsibility for the spreading the rape culture by different means.

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