Citation for published version


DOI

https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.13243.64805

Link to record in KAR

https://kar.kent.ac.uk/82927/

Document Version

Presentation

Copyright & reuse

Content in the Kent Academic Repository is made available for research purposes. Unless otherwise stated all content is protected by copyright and in the absence of an open licence (eg Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher, author or other copyright holder.

Versions of research

The version in the Kent Academic Repository may differ from the final published version. Users are advised to check http://kar.kent.ac.uk for the status of the paper. Users should always cite the published version of record.

Enquiries

For any further enquiries regarding the licence status of this document, please contact: researchsupport@kent.ac.uk

If you believe this document infringes copyright then please contact the KAR admin team with the take-down information provided at http://kar.kent.ac.uk/contact.html
UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL AGGRESSION IN UK MALE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Samuel T. Hales / Professor Theresa A. Gannon
Centre of Research & Education in Forensic Psychology
University of Kent, Canterbury
OVERVIEW

- My PhD Journey
- Background & Rationale
- Overview of Studies
- Discussion & Implications
- Looking Forward

Sexual aggression noun

“Any sexual interaction, from petting to oral/genital contact to intercourse, which is gained against one's will through use of physical force, threats of force, continual arguments/pressure, use of alcohol/drugs and/or position of authority”

(Koss & Gaines, 1993, p.96)
Background

- Sexual aggression victimization is common on UK university campuses\(^1-3\).
- Perpetrators often known heterosexual male students\(^1-2\).
- There’s a lack of empirical research assessing sexual aggression perpetration at UK universities.
  - Why are male students at increased risk of perpetration during their studies?
  - Are perpetrators a specialist clinical/forensic population?
  - What about current interventions?

70% of female students & recent graduates report having experienced sexual violence at university.

8% of female students & recent graduates report having been raped.

3.4% of females in the community are victims of sexual violence every year.

\(^1\) The Student Room / Revolt (2018)
(Sample. 4,491 students across 153 UK HEIs)

\(^2\) Office for National Statistics (2018)
(Figures extrapolated from Crime Survey)
Overview of our Studies

- First attempt to empirically assess and classify male sexual aggression amongst UK male university students
- Three empirical studies that extend past research
  - Study 1 & 2: What are the risk factors for perpetration?
  - Study 3: Do perpetrators comprise a homogenous clinical population?
- Guided by US work into campus sexual assault (CSA) and the established knowledge base on sexual offending
Study 1: “Local study”

- Assessed the psychological profiles of sexually aggressive male students at our university
- Participants ($N = 259$)
  - Mostly young, educated White British students
  - Descriptive similarities between our sample and the male student body
- Completed a cross-sectional online survey comprising a battery of validated (short-form) psychological measures
  - All relevant to CSA in the US or sexual aggression amongst incarcerated males
  - Included the SES-SFP (IV) and BIDR-6-IM (CV)\textsuperscript{17-18}

Demographic information

- Inappropriate Sexual Interests
  - Assertiveness\textsuperscript{6}
  - Inappropriate sexual fantasies\textsuperscript{7}

Intimacy & social functioning

- Loneliness\textsuperscript{8}
- Self-efficacy in relationships\textsuperscript{9}
- Self-esteem (negative & positive)\textsuperscript{10}

Offence Supportive Cognition

- Hostility toward women\textsuperscript{11}
- Rape myth acceptance\textsuperscript{12}

Self/Emotional Regulation

- Aggression\textsuperscript{13}
- Alcohol consumption (excluded)\textsuperscript{14}
- Emotion regulation\textsuperscript{15}

Additional Measure(s)

- Sports participation\textsuperscript{16}
Study 1: Findings

- 33 participants (12.7% of the sample; termed ‘SAs’) self-reported having perpetrated 106 sexually aggressive acts over the past 24 months
  - Sexual coercion most common category (41.5% of acts)
  - 14 participants committed rape or attempted rape (23.6% of acts)
  - SAs often committed 2 offences (39.4%), mostly against females (81.8%)

- SAs scored higher on average than their non-offending peers (termed ‘NSAs’) on most measured variables
  - Groups differed on hostility toward women ($p = .003$, $d = 0.51$), inappropriate sexual fantasies ($p < .001$, $d = 0.52$), & rape myth acceptance ($p = .003$, $d = 0.66$)
  - Slight differences with regards to ethnicity ($p = .048$)

- Four significant variables force-entered into a binomial logistic regression model to see if they could ‘predict’ past sexual aggression
Study 1: Logistic regression

- The model was significant overall, $\chi^2(4) = 25.82, p < .001$
- Explained 9.7% (Cox & Snell $R^2$) to 19.3% (Nagelkerke $R^2$) of variance in sexual aggression, with a high rate of correct classifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>95% CI for OR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>UL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTW</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRMA-R</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>8.48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFQ-R-SV</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-6.32</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>34.73</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HL goodness of fit: $\chi^2(8) = 2.54, p = .96$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The model discriminated between groups at better-than-chance level, (AUC = .77, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.68, .85], $d \approx 1.04$)

Rape myth acceptance & inappropriate sexual fantasies predicted past sexual aggression
Study 2: “National study”

- Replication of Study 1 across a national sample
  - How generalizable are our earlier findings?
  - What are the psychological profiles of SAs nationally?

- Participants \((N = 295)\) recruited through Prolific
  - Larger \(N\) to aid analysis and for Study 3
  - Descriptively like our earlier group and the UK male student body

- Two new survey items asking for university affiliation and SA’s relationship to their victim(s)
Study 2: Findings

- 30 participants (10.1% of the sample) self-reported having perpetrated 145 sexually aggressive acts over the past 24 months
  - Sexual coercion again the most common category (37.9% of acts)
  - 16 participants committed rape or attempted rape (35.9% of acts)
  - SAs typically committed 3+ offences (40.0%), mostly against females (86.7%) known to the participant (66.7%)

- SAs scored higher than NSAs on all measured variables
  - Groups differed on hostility toward women ($p < .001$, $d = 0.94$), inappropriate sexual fantasies ($p < .001$, $d = 0.70$), & rape myth acceptance ($p < .001$, $d = 0.70$)
  - They also differed on aggression ($p < .001$, $d = 0.69$), self-efficacy in relationships ($p = .04$, $d = 0.38$), and emotion regulation ($p = .04$, $d = 0.33$)

- Three main variables entered into a binomial logistic regression model
Study 2: Logistic regression

- The model was significant overall, $\chi^2(3) = 57.63$, $p < .001$
- Explained 18.1% (Cox & Snell $R^2$) to 42.5% (Nagelkerke $R^2$) of variance in sexual aggression, with a high rate of correct classifications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>95% CI for OR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPAQ</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>10.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.05 – 1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTW</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>18.51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.08 – 1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFQ-R-SV</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>13.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>1.06 – 1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-12.51</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>35.09</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aggression, hostility toward women, & inappropriate sexual fantasies predicted past sexual aggression.

- The model discriminated between groups at better-than-chance level, (AUC = .93, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.89, .96], $d \approx 2.09$)
Study 3: Homogeneity testing

- Research suggests that sexually aggressive males comprise a heterogenous group who can be classified by their psychological profiles. What about sexually aggressive university males? Are current ‘one-size-fits-all’ interventions effective?

- Participants: Self-reported SAs from Study 1 & 2 ($N = 59$ after cleaning)
  - Sufficient size to avoid dimensionality issues

- Agglomerative hierarchical cluster analysis run
  - Main analysis conducted on standardised z-scores from psychological measures that differentiated between groups in Study 1 & 2
  - Determined clusters were validated on variables that differentiated between groups in Study 1 or 2 but which were not used in the clustering process
  - Stability testing confirmed final cluster profiles
Our cluster analysis derived five meaningful subgroups of SAs, which we tentatively defined based on their psychological characteristics:

- **Cluster One:** “Hostile excusers”
- **Cluster Two:** “Unremarkable aggressors”
- **Cluster Three:** “Hostile aggressors”
- **Cluster Four:** “Non-hostile fantasists”
- **Cluster Five:** “Sexual fantasists”
General Discussion

- Sexual aggression occurs at **alarming rates** on UK university campuses
  - 11.4% prevalence across our studies (vs. ≈7.3% amongst non-university males\(^{20}\))
- Sexually aggressive male university students (SAs) in the UK comprise a **specialist forensic population** with distinct psychological profiles
  - Offending behaviours are likely driven by SAs’ atypical sexual fantasies, hostile views towards women, rape myth acceptance, and aggression
- SAs are a **heterogenous** population deserving of tailored intervention
- Results can be used to facilitate **effective clinical decision making** with male students at risk of sexual aggression
Looking Forward

- More work needs doing to validate our findings and further understand UK male students’ proclivity toward sexual aggression.
- Would treatment initiatives that consistently demonstrate success in changing ‘faulty cognitions’ amongst incarcerated SAs be effective at reducing risk of perpetration amongst university males?

   - **Next set of studies:** Can a low-intensity CBT-based self-help intervention, tailored to our identified treatment needs, reduce (the risk of) sexual aggression amongst UK male students?
   - COVID contingencies necessary due to the changing landscape of HE in the UK and the effect on research.
Overview of Findings

Study 1: “Local study”
- 12.7% of participants self-reported recent sexual aggression (106 acts overall)
- SAs and NSAs differed on their levels of hostility toward women, inappropriate sexual fantasies, and rape myth acceptance, as well as their ethnicity
- Rape myth acceptance and inappropriate sexual fantasies could reliably predict past sexual aggression

Study 2: “National study”
- 10.1% of participants self-reported recent sexual aggression (145 acts overall)
- SAs and NSAs differed on the same variables as earlier, as well as their levels of aggression, self-efficacy in romantic relationships, and emotion regulation
- Aggression, hostility toward women, and inappropriate sexual fantasies could reliably predict past sexual aggression

Study 3: Homogeneity testing
- A cluster analysis derived five meaningful subgroups of SAs based on their hostility toward women, inappropriate sexual fantasies, and rape myth acceptance
- We tentatively defined these groups based on their descriptive characteristics: “hostile excusers,” “unremarkable aggressors,” “hostile aggressors,” “non-hostile fantasists,” and “sexual fantasists”
## References

References


Indicative Bibliography