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EDRM 505
Methods of Research in Education and Psychology
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Assignment #5

Critical Analysis

The article read for this critical analysis is entitled "The Effect of Rape Type and Information Admissibility on Perceptions of Rape Victims" by James D. Johnson of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington found in Educational & Psychological Research, 2nd Edition by Mildred L. Patten.

Relevance of the Study

This study was extremely relevant as it discussed a current and prevalent social issue and its legal implications. Indeed, in the last decades or so famous persons such as Mike Tyson have brought to the front the prevalence of acquaintance rape and how jurors decide on a case based on the information provided about the defendant's or plaintiff's previous sexual history.

The study is also significant because the results can be used as a basis for improving legal practices so that less unbiased verdicts might be rendered from jurors.

Strengths of the Study

1. The literature review clearly established the context of the study and provided meaningful insights about the weaknesses and strengths of previous studies. For example, Johnson states in Section 2 that "one shortcoming of the research presented above involves the fact that it only assesses the judgmental consequences of exposure to inadmissible evidence regarding the defendant. . . ."

2. The study had two purposes which were clearly established. The first purpose was to assess whether exposure to inadmissible evidence affects perceptions of a rape victim, while the second purpose was to assess how the effect inadmissible evidence will vary as a function of type of rape. The two hypotheses were also clearly stated.

3. The researcher randomly assigned subjects to the conditions. This meant that males and females had an equal chance of being assigned to any of the conditions. The results, therefore, would be more credible.

4. All the subjects read two irrelevant passages before reading the experimental passage. This was done in order to reduce the probability of demand bias. This was clever, because the subjects did not know what was the experimental passage. I believe this also had the effect of reducing the subjects' subjectivity in answering questions on the experimental passage.

5. Although the researcher could not use a real jury, he chose rape scenarios that were real and that would evoke a variability of responses from the subjects.

6. Subjects were debriefed after the study to ensure that there would be no negative consequences from participation in the study.

7. The sample size was significant—35 males and 49 females. Also the proportion of males to females was also representative of the population. Thus more accurate and credible responses were derived from the study as far as gender is concerned.

8. The statistical method for examining effects on the dependent variables were appropriate and the analysis was appropriate for testing the hypotheses. He used both descriptive (the mean) and inferential statistics (univariate one-way analysis of variance.). The results clearly show the effect of gender, information admissibility, and rape type on enjoyment of rape and attribution of responsibility.

9. In the discussion, he clearly interpreted the results of his findings. He was able, based on previous theory, account for expected results and gave plausible explanations for unexpected ones. He clearly stated the legal implications of the study in Section 20 and in Section 21 made recommendations as to how to improve the study.

10. Subjects were instructed to disregard information regarding the plaintiff's sexual history after they would have read it. This was done in order to see the effect of information inadmissibility on their perceptions of the victim.

Weaknesses

1. The researcher used first-year college students in an introductory psychology class. This sample was thus not truly representative of the population. Also, psychology students might be more perceptive about the effect of admissibility of the information. First-year male college students might also be more prone to the stereotypes of females "wanting and enjoying" the rape experience, especially in the case of acquaintance rape. Mature men might have had a different viewpoint. The subjects knew that they were engaged in an experiment since they were doing it to fulfill a course requirement. These factors might have resulted in biased responses.

2. Although, the study says that first-year students were used, it says nothing about the age of the students. Therefore, readers must assume the age bracket to which they belonged.

3. The researcher did not provide complete information about the conditions (such as duration, setting, etc.) under which the experiment was conducted, nor did he state explicitly which statistical method he used to test the hypotheses and explore between group-differences on the variables. This is a serious flaw since it is an experimental research.

4. The researcher had to deceive the subjects, at least withhold the full information, about the purpose of the study.

5. The researcher used single subjects instead of groups to discuss the questions. This also might have biased the results obtained, since groups tend to produce different outcomes than single subjects.

6. The dependent variables (enjoyment of rape and attribution of responsibility) were clearly stated, but not the independent variables (gender, information admissibility, and rape type).