

Adolescents' Perceptions of Rape in South Africa

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ABSTRACT In order to study adolescents' perception of rape, relevant literature pertaining to rape and adolescence as a stage in the development of an individual was reviewed. The descriptive method of research was used to collect data with regard to adolescents' perception of rape. Data was analysed using inferential statistics. From the information gathered the following are the most important findings of the research regarding adolescents' perception of rape: adolescents are aware that rape is unlawful, they believe that effective law enforcement can curb rape. Adolescents do not believe that a culture of violence contributes to rape and that women are reluctant to report being raped. Adolescents' perception is that rape victims have difficulty in coping with relationships with other people. The study reveals that it is vital for rape victims to talk about the rape. Adolescents perceive rape as a crime of aggression that decreases the self-esteem of women. They do not believe that there is any relationship between rape and family violence. The study also revealed that there is a significant difference statistically between the responses of males and females regarding responses to question that deal with rape whereas there is no significant difference between the responses of males and females regarding questions based on adolescence as a developmental stage. Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations: adolescents must lobby support to ensure more effective law enforcement, speak out against rape and must not be put under pressure by peers to engage in sex. Parents need to communicate more effectively with adolescents. Law enforcement must be stepped up in order to curb rape. Programmes must be put in place to educate adolescents regarding rape.