

“Every in the morning when I wake up it’s the first thing that comes to my mind” Sexual Assault Survivor women’s experience in Hosanna, Ethiopia.

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Abstract

Background: sexual assault is physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration even if slight of the vulva or anus, using a penis, other body parts or an object. Global prevalence figure indicates that 1 in 3 (35 %) of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. There are limited researches conducted on the area of lived experiences of women with sexual violence. This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of sexual assault survivor women in Hosanna, Ethiopia.

Method: Phenomenological study design was carried out among purposively selected six sexual assault survivor women's and three key informants. In-depth interviews were conducted using local language, Amharic by using a semi structured interview guide. The interviews were transcribed and translated into English, and the data were analyzed thematically by qualitative data management software (Atlas ti version 7.0.15).

Result: Not only the community who victimizes the survivors; the survivors themselves isolate from the community. All the survivors' quest for revenge besides seeking justice. Coping of the survivors affected with a feeling of justice is done or not done, social reaction. They have also strong intention to disclose the issue for their close family and community member. The participants live with fear and distrust; afraid of being raped again, they don't dare daring to trust people easily.

Conclusion: The current study showed that sexual assault was a lifetime journey to recover. Some community members also blamed by the survivors for failing to help during their bad times.

Therefore, community based awareness campaign should be implemented. In parallel, health policy makers and health professionals should give due emphasis on build post-rape care units or integrated service with other units.

Background

sexual assault is physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration even if slight of the vulva or anus, using a penis, other body parts or an object(1). Some study reported that long established practice and assumption about men's dominance over women, contribute highly to the ever increasing number of rape cases(2).

Sexual violence is persisted to be serious public health problem affecting millions of people each year throughout the world and has been acknowledged worldwide as a violation of basic human rights. The ratification of 1993 the UN general assembly declaration on the elimination of violence against women for universal application(2,3).But After 20 years later Globally 35.6%(1in 3) have experienced sexual violence 30.0% by an intimate partner and 7.2% of by a non-partner also Some women have experienced both(4).

A survey from ten sub-Saharan African countries, showed that about 40% of women report having been exposed to some form of intimate partner violence and 12% experienced other form of sexual violence, Sadly the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is about 16% in the women who report sexual violence (5). According to Ethiopian demographic survey(EDHS 2016) report 10% of women experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives, 5%by age of 18 and 2% by age of 15 (6).

Most sexually assaulted Women experience psychological trauma and emotional instability which has many consequences like feeling of shame, loss of honor, negative self-appraisal of blame influenced by the societal script perpetuated by rape myths. They also became lonely and socially isolated individual(7).

Ethiopia has ratified international conventions and agreements including the UN Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),convention for right of child (CRC), the Beijing Platform for action stresses on equality of gender and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, revised its family law in 2000E.C, its criminal law and constitution in 2005 E.C, to protect and guarantee the right of women and children, Law criminalizes rape and conviction provides for a penalty of 5 to 20 years', establish necessary institutional mechanisms at federal and regional levels, including the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Children and Youth Affairs Offices (MOWCYA) for child and women Protection (8).

Up to date, limited researches conducted on the area of lived experiences of women with sexual violence by compromising the depth nature of its context. Women with sexual assault often overlooked by the researchers which can contribute to the less emphasis of policymakers and governments officials, It's important to understand these common experiences in order to develop

policies and strategies that helps for tackling this gigantic public health problem. Furthermore, there is limited research done particularly in the study area, experience of woman following sexual assault.

Methods

Study Setting and Period

This study was conducted in Hadiya Zone Hosanna town which is located 232 km south west of Addis Ababa the capital city of Ethiopia. According to 2014 census report as projected in 2019 the town has a total population of 178,382 of these 87,407(49.56 %) men and 90,947 (50.44%) women. Majority of the population 65.74%, are Protestants, 24.6% Ethiopian orthodox Christianity 6.57% were Muslims and 1.99%were Catholic. There is one Referral Hospital, two Police station one for the town and the other for districts. Study was conducted from March to April 2019 among sexual assault survivor women in Hosanna town.

Study Approach

A qualitative approach, phenomenological study design was carried out. Phenomenology is rooted in early 20th-century European philosophy as a philosophical movement it was founded by Edmund Husserl later with another phenomenologist. Phenomenological study is to understand the meaning of “lived human experience” which is constructed through exploration of individuals with experience of the phenomena being investigated by using the methods of the Epoch and the reduction(9).

Phenomenological methods are above all effective at bringing the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives. This research explores lived experience of sexual assault survivors to reveal the shared essence of the experience. Phenomenology is the best suited approach for this study to gain a deeper understanding of what it seems like to live with the trauma of rape by reducing individual experiences and describing what all participants have in common as a sexual assault survivor.

Participant Recruitment

The recruitment of participants was employed by using criterion sampling, the criterion in recruiting participants was woman age ranged from 15–24-year-old, have been confirmed to be sexually assaulted with medical and legal investigations. Participants were purposively recruited from the town

Police station and Hospital records, Public prosecutor office. Study subjects were reached by a phone call via town Police station and Hospital, Public prosecutor office heads to confirm whether they are interested to be contact by the third party (researcher),

Those who meet a set of criteria's and able to provide written consent Interviewed as a study subject.

Six sexual assault survivors and three key informants were interviewed for this study. In

Phenomenological study, small sample size is used to access a rich and detailed of the experience.

Key informants were included in this study, since it is not their life used as complementary to

understand experience. To gain enough information semi structured interview technique using

probing questions, new data repeat what was expressed in previous data with this replication data

saturation has been reached furthermore there is no conflicting information in the data.

Data collection technique and Analysis

The data were collected using in-depth interview technique with a semi-structured interview guide in

local language Amharic; the interview guide includes socio-demographic characteristic, views on

sexual assault, the experience of the assault, coping strategies and effect of the experience. In-depth

Interview was conducted by the Principal investigator they were audio recorded, the length of the

interviews ranges between 47 and 60minutes and took place at a private location with a choice of the

participants also field notes are taken to capture verbal and nonverbal expressions. Emerging ideas

were included in the next data collection. For data analysis, the audio-recorded interviews and field

notes were transcribed into Amharic and translated into English. Initial analysis of the interviews

began during the fieldwork. To capture the concept of the text coding was carried out using

qualitative data management software Atlas.ti version7.0.15. The data were analyzed through

thematic analysis similar codes or concepts are grouped into the same category and related

categories form themes. Finally, themes were explained and quotes are combines into themes to

describe an overall essence of the experience.

Trustworthiness

The Consistency of the research process was checked throughout study also detail methodological

descriptions are made. Participants interviewed with open ended questions using semi structured

interview guide, the principal investigator listen repeatedly all of the recorded interviews and read and reread the transcripts to become familiar with participants and understand the experience in its pre-reflective sense. Key informants are used as additional data sources to verify survivor's viewpoints and to understand the experience as complementary. Due to the sensitive nature of the issue researcher build a trusting relationship by interacting the participant's, the principal investigator is familiar to the study setting. Field notes are taken during the research process to provide a thick description.

Results

Six sexual assault survivors from Hosanna interviewed for this study. The age participants at the time of the assault rage from 15 to 20. Three of the participants are attending their education two are not attending currently (see table 1).

Description of Participants' Response

The analysis directed to the development of the following five major themes and fourteen categories.

Theme 1: Living with Trauma

Living with trauma describes the aftermath experience of sexual assault survivors and clarified with: (Living with a broken heart, betrayed, unwanted and feel so hopeless), (fear, distrust and isolation) and regret.

Living with a Broken Heart, Betrayed, Unwanted, and Feel so Hopeless

Two of the participants were raped with the support of their girlfriends, moreover one of the survivor raped with her own friend. They felt they are betrayed with their friends, incident happened in an unexpected way. They don't think they can live a normal life in the future, they consider no one loves and want them any longer, felt so hopeless living with a broken heart.

An 18-year-old woman married and divorced at the age of 17 after rape incident by a stranger mentioned that she felt like she is not important:

"I never knew to think about my life ... but now I feel like I am not important even if I'm attending my school ... I feel like it's not important to dress well but before I was happy, I dress well and go out and with everything now there nothing that makes me happy."

A 15-year-old woman and raped at the age of 15 by stranger for the second time said that:

...Every in the morning when I wake up it's the first thing that comes to my mind. I say I don't want to worry about it but after some time I think of it again and I became worried... I was happy before but I am anxious now ... I feel so sad because this thing happened to me at this age.... (trying not to cry) it was the second time to happen on me and when I think of this thing I want to kill myself."

Fear, Distrust and Isolation

Six of the participants explain differently but they all fear. They are afraid of being raped again, to go out far, due to not trusting people, became challenged to trust people, things around them also rebelled to accept things easily because they all have black mark that remind them they are insecure even in instants these thing are unexpected to happen which affects their relationship with people. Also stated; fear of rejection and blame due to all this they choose to hidden their situation for long also they recognize these thing was happened only on them; they consider themselves as unique and prefer to isolate themselves from people particularly male, including family, the community even from their girlfriends and they live with the trauma of fear inside.

A 21-year-old woman raped by someone she knows in the way of her night school and cease her college after the incident reported that she has fear inside to get close with people:

"... I had a fear that the thing could happen again... I felt as if this thing was happened only on me.... just it's been so hard for me to get close with people after that and I have a fear inside anyone can do this thing on me it became hard for me to forget and move on...after that thing happened I go home as early as I can."

A 75-year-old Traditional elder which is a member of arbitration and religious forum member also describe that:

"No one wants to marry a woman like her, she may be diseased. she lost her virginity and no one wants to marry her when this thing happens to her she may run away of the country."

Regret

Besides defending the blame of other people, at the same time they deal with blaming oneself, they made themselves faulty, responsible and regretted. They all have something to regret about; trusting

people or the moment that brings the assault.

A 21-year-old woman; raped by stranger after kidnapping her with support of her girlfriend stated that she felt she made mistake and regretted about trusting her friend:

"I don't think it's my fault but I made mistake by going out with my friend. I shouldn't have trusted her but I did because we were close... at that time, I feel like I made mistake and all this thing happened to me by going out with her ... I really regret about that day that I went with her really regret about that day ... I always regret about trusting her."

Theme 2: Social Effect

Deeply-rooted practice and assumptions which is unwritten but accepted and shared by the society determine the survivor's experience. The participants 'raises different issues and it's categorized under major theme social effect as: losing the pride of virginity, rape as marriage proposal, traditional negotiation, and social status and reaction.

Losing the Pride of Virginity

The concept of losing everything, shame and feeling inferior explain what losing the pride of virginity means. The feeling of losing everything is not about losing all thing; they go out, talk, laugh and live like normal person but considered as disloyal, they felt they are not important anymore, it takes the excitement of "my own life" because they lost their virginity that the community they grew up consider it as beauty, taught them to be pried.

An 18-year-old woman; married and divorced at the age of 17 after rape incident by a stranger stated that:

"I would be happy if I got married to my virginity and now I lost everything, he ruined my life.... All of my things are destroyed. Now life is so horrible to me there is nothing that makes me happy. I feel so bad and broken... I feel like I am not important...I don't think I am an important person anymore"

A 75-years-old traditional elder who is a member of arbitration and religious forum describe that woman considered as disloyal and no one wants to marry her:

"If she loses her virginity, she loses her beauty and other things will happen on her she will be considered as disloyal no one wants to marry a woman...when this thing happens to her... she wants

to go outside the country because she lost her life ...rape is a bad thing for the women it breaks her heart."

The participant stated that: they felt ashamed for being raped and inferior to their friends due to losing their virginity that the community values the most, as well as losing it the way they don't want it to lose, with this they felt they are undervalued with peoples, ashamed of what people talk about them and they lost their confidence because there is something people can pick and talk about them. All these things work together to put the survivors deeply ashamed.

A 17-year-old woman raped by her own friend mentioned that she felt ashamed by suspecting people know and talk about her situation even if she did not disclose her assault except for her girlfriend *"I feel ashamed when I see his friends I feel like he told them about it and they talk about me ... when I see them and I feel bored... I feel so shameful and stressed."*

A 21-year-old woman raped by a stranger after kidnapping her with the support of her girlfriend stated that she felt like she is inferior to peoples:

"Before the assault, I, feel like I'm equal with anyone but now I see that I am not because of this thing happen to me.... I felt inferior I am not happy inside I always think of it why this thing happened to me."

Rape as Marriage Proposal

After the accident once happen when the women start to accuse, the rapist send elders to negotiate for marriage because they don't want to be punished or during the negotiation time if they can't afford to pay moral compensation for a woman.

Two of the participants reject the marriage proposal after rape incident and one of the participants married her rapist even if she is divorced within a month. Accepted crime is one of the obvious reason which led us to understand rape as marriage proposal, including negotiation and another social effect.

A 15-year-old women raped at the age of 15 by stranger for the second time stated that she refuses her marriage proposal by her rapist:

"He said I will marry her to them and they refuse him by saying she is too young for this kind of

thing... I also said I don't want to marry him."

A 45- years-old Lawyer stated that peoples encourage the woman to marry the rapist

"The society can see as good influence if a woman was raped because of marriage ... if rape follows marriage she got a husband! (Laughing)...They encourage her to marry her rapist not to be suffered from discrimination in the society."

Traditional Negotiation

This sub-theme gives an insight for two main phenomenal concerns associated with traditional negotiation these are: valuing the victim and covering the crime. The concept of valuing the victim is when the elders stands in favor of the survivor either they force the rapist to marry her because they believe that no one wants to marry raped women anymore, by considering consequence that comes after the incident, also they stated that being punished will never benefit her; even they assume like what if the rapist will win the charge by giving money to the judges.

A 75-year-old Traditional elder who is a member of arbitration and religious forum stated that:

"... She doesn't have to lose everything, sometimes the accused person gives money to judges; they make the punishment less by changing the words of the witness, either they punish the criminal three years or four years and this can't save the life of the victim.... Even if they punished him, he will get out of the jail with petition and the woman will lose everything... instead, we ask for the moral compensation from the rapist so she will work something and she will change her life ...because she doesn't have to be hurt in a different way ... It may be a lesson for others but she will never benefit from it."

The second view was covering the crime elders stands for the rapist by covering the crime to save him from punishment and they negotiate in favor of him either they ask the woman to marry him or to receive her moral compensation and let go of accusing him.

A 45-year-old Lawyer stated that covering the crime encourages others to do the same thing:

"The traditional elders take out the witness not to speak before judges then the lawyer can't do anything if the witness is not available then they close the case with the influence of traditional elders, the rapist will pay compensation for the victim...also influence man to marry the women and

some of them will be divorced after they stay for one or two years...It encourages crime."

Social Status and Reaction

The passed down social status of men and woman in the community was one of the social effects. As stated by the participants "in favor of men", assumption of male supremacy, undermining and considering woman as weak under all this cover they use their social status to rape without her consent. Even if the community knows that men are dominant and do this thing but they stated that they are in favor of men; accept their violent status of men.

21-year-old women raped by someone, she knows in the way of her night school and cease her college after the incident mentioned that men can do anything on women because the woman's are taken as weak.

"The women are taken as weak ...They think they can do anything on woman Because she can't protect herself men think that they have the power to raise their hands on a woman."

Besides the agreed social status; the men favored community is challenged to accept as true when woman said "I am raped", they want to understand her condition standing on other woman's character or from things that make the woman vulnerable. They assume this thing happened with her own will and choose to judge, blame and abuse her with their words. With all these tragedies, they blame themselves for what the rapist did, they hidden their accident for long or till the end due to fear of acceptance, judgment.

A 75-years-old traditional elder who is a member of arbitration and religious forum member stated that:

"Let me tell you one thing on rape if the woman didn't approach him well the men do not dare to do this thing to her.... we also take our assumption men first see the reaction of the woman we also know that what kind of woman will be raped...Men do not dare to do this thing to her if he does not make her frighten ...otherwise we can't dare to speak its rape."

A 21-year-old woman raped by a stranger after kidnapping her with the support of her girlfriend stated that people blame her for the incident:

"... These peoples are pushing me to hell... I cry so much even more than the day I was kidnapped,

how people can judge like this, how they judge me because I am woman I didn't do this intentionally ... They insult me when I go out and peoples talk about it she is kidnapped and raped also they point their fingers on me with things I feel so worst."

Theme 3: Coping Mechanism

Religious practice

The participants spoke about going to church, prayer and listening to gospel music help them to get relief from their stress and to handle their situation. Trusting on God support and hearing the word of God help them to get back to their sense from thought of killing oneself. They try to forget the incident with religious practice.

A 21-year-old woman raped by stranger after kidnapping her with support of her girlfriend stated that going to church and listing to the word of God help her to get back to her sense:

"When I want to get out of this feeling going to church is the only thing it helps me, I forget all my worries when I am there, I feel good when I go to church and hear the word of God it helped me to feel good and to be back to my sense hearing the word of God comforts my heart."

Social Support

Participants stated that support from family, friends, and other people around them help them to cope. More than anything else they want people to accept their situation. Those who fear rejection have hidden the accident even from their own family. Support from health and legal institution make them to feel comfortable help them to progress when they know they are healthy and when the rapist was punished.

A 21-year-old woman raped by someone she knows in the way of her night school stated that support from her mother help her to stay strong, to get courage to live:

"...But more than anything else I pass this time with my mom; she was there for me in everything, she tries to make me strong and it's because of her I can go out and start working it will be so difficult if she was not there for me I even kill myself it's her thing that makes me strong and encourage me to continue my work."

Ignoring Reminders

Participants mentioned things that help them to cope; some of the participants mention that: far away from things that reminds them the assault , not talking about it and ignoring what people talk about them help them to cope, while others stated that talking to people and distracting themselves by being busy on work, also not disclosing the assault were another coping mechanism that relief them to felt comfortable, in addition to this ceasing school ,watching movie ,crying and sleeping where on their lists not to remind their assault

A 15- year-old woman raped at the age of 15 by stranger for the second time stated that talking to people make her to feel good.

"...I don't remember it when I talk to people... I make myself busy doing home staff and ask them to give me to do something I wash too many cloths."

In addition to this 21-year-old woman raped by someone she knows in the way of her night school, cease college after the incident stated she survive by not talking about her assault she stated that it works.

"I don't want to think about it I wish if this thing was just a dream At that time even I thought quitting school could help me to get over... it keeps reminding me of the accident that's why I did which am not proud of it... I don't want to talk about it for anyone because it reminds me all over again which hurts bad."

Theme 4: Quest for Justice

This major theme describes what survivor's quest for after the incident using the sub theme revenge and justice.

Revenge

The subtheme revenge stated with all of the participants whether the rapist got punished or not; they felt so unfair, the blame, the value and relationship they lose, for the accident they felt they don't deserve it, for all these feelings they want to pay back and want to make their own form of justice. They want to see him persecuted and show him how pain full it is.

An 18-year-old woman married and divorced at the age of 17 after rape accident by a stranger stated that

"They force me; they fool me to marry him then I got married ... rather than Suffering with him I divorced. He also accused me and finally I stayed at prison for two days. I would be happy if I could kill him because he ruined my life" irritated face." (an annoyed expression)

Punishment

Even if there is perception "if rape follows marriages" and considered as accepted crime, the survivors want the rapist to be punished it is not only for their pain but they want other people's know he is criminal, they want to show for the people who judge them it's not the thing they want rather than defending only with their words. Three of the participant's rapist are punished legally they got relief from their pain they felt it compensate for their hurts:

"Most of the time when a woman truly raped she will be happy when he is punished and she get relief ...feeling was not the same if the accusation meets its target or if the woman lose relatively their internal emotion will be good if the rapist was punished ..." (45 -year -old Lawyer)

Coping of the participants also determine with the feeling of justice is done. But one of the survivor rapists is not found yet while another survivor secreted her assault and the survivor who married her rapist; even if she shared her condition to her family and police she stated that she didn't get justice other than comforting her for that time.

An 18-year-old woman married and divorced at the age of 17 after rape incident by stranger describe how feeling justice is not done affects her progress:

"I lost everything I couldn't let it go ...I never forget it forever... I feel so bad till now its unforgettable thing... even my father after he saw the character of my rapist he said I don't want to accuse him at that time I was alone...I want if he gets in to jail or if he stands in front of the judges and spoke the truth why he rapes me, how we get married and everything if he spoke the truth I would be happy."

Theme 5: Change in Personality

The major theme change in personality explained with negative self-concept, value to life.

Negative Self-Concept

The survivors' stated that their life was changed following the assault and they use this common word "it changes me" and "I am not like before" they mention that it changes their behavior, it changes

their mind and the way they perceive about men, the way they see themselves and speak show they filled with hate and learned to be rude. More over all of the participants agreed that they can't forget the assault that put the black mark on their life stated as "unforgettable thing".

An 18-year-old woman married and divorced at the age of 17 after rape incident by stranger describe how the assault changes her explained how she learn to be rude and filled with hate.

"When I see bad things happen on people I feel sad for them before but now I learn to be rude they were rude on me and I can also be rude on them ... I can say I am changed than before."

Values to Life

The participants spoke that the trauma doesn't bring any good influence on them but they stated that the trauma make them to do things consciously, wisely than before their views for life is changed; became aware of their environment, people and they feel like they got lesson.

A 17-year-old woman raped by her own friend stated that:

"I take care and think wisely ... what if this thing happens to me again I try to see things in different way than before ...make me to think about things wisely and I take care of myself."

Beside the negative feeling, the trauma brings opportunity out of misery the survivors became the one who understand others pain and wants to support, aware woman who experience the same thing like them, also they want to awake woman to protect from the assault. The experience changes their outlook, values in life.

A 21-year-old woman raped by stranger after kidnapping her with support of her girlfriend stated that the she wants to support and protect others.

"Now this thing happened to me and passed I have to stop this thing not to happen on others I want this...I want to support them we have to support this kind of women; they feel so bad, they lose their hope and they don't know how they live, how they get close with others, they worry so much if I meet them I want to support and help this kind of women."

Discussion

The major themes which emerged from the interviews are; living with trauma, social effect, coping mechanism, quest for justice, and change in personality.

The current study revealed, the trauma experience makes them to live with fear of being rape again, lack courage to trust people and to fear the blame and rejection on things that happen on themselves. Study conducted in Brazil reported that the daily life was modified by fear that resulted from the assault invading the emotional and causing psychological suffering(7). Also social values like losing the pride of virginity was among the consequence of sexual assault there by community raise negative social reaction (blaming and victimizing) for the loss. Study conducted in South Africa reported that virginity was another example of an invisible stigma, where a woman was no longer has a value after losing her virginity(10).This implies that sexual assault touches everyone's life in one or another therefore communities have to change the way they perceive and approach sexual assault survivors.

In addition to this almost all of the participants feel regret, isolated and living with trauma due to the negative reaction of family and the community. Study conducted in United States reported that difficulty with participating in certain intimate acts, difficulty trusting the intimate partner, and inability or hesitancy to share sexual assault(s) with family and acquaintances. Relationships being affected in these ways led many to experience isolation and loneliness(11).These findings have positive implication for post rape care service at Referral hospital for the survivors regularly than treating them at OPD and emergency like any other patients.

The finding of this study shows that the trauma bring change in personality; they became awake and care for themselves, do things wisely, consciously up to not accepting things easily due not trusting people and they want to help other survivors and protect others woman. Study conducted on post traumatic growth in female sexual assault survivors stated that increasing knowledge and speaking out and sense of responsibility to help others, want to prevent others from having to go through something similar to what they have gone through, desire to share their own story in order to help others, increased awareness of surroundings and/or being more watchful ,develop a more positive outlook on life and able to look towards the future(12).

On this study all of the participants' quest for justice they want to revenge because they feel so unfair and want to show how painful it is and they needed justice not only for being raped but they want

their family and community know about the truth this helped them to overcome the negative reaction of the people around them. Other study on the impact of sexual assault in United states mentioned that that survivors lost former family and friends after negative reactions they “all supports the perpetrator to the sexual assault “and sought out new supportive relations(13).

The survivors progress from thought and attempts of killing one’s self to not remembering the assault like before, this might be due to religious practice and support from family and people around them. Participants also stated that “its unforgettable thing”. Study in London also reported that fighting to maintain control over their lives, and felt they were the only one responsible for managing the consequences of events they did not have any control over themselves and experience a continuous and permanent battle that extended long after their experiences of rape(14).

In current study, the participants used different coping mechanism mainly seeking social support and religious practices. These practices help the victims not to commute suicide. Other study conducted in south Africa stated that religious activity and relationship with the God was played a role in the participant’s healing process(10).In this study all of the participants were Christians and these similarities would be due to similarity in religious view. They were also reported social support and acceptance from family and people around them help them to cope positively .Study conducted on posttraumatic growth in female sexual assault survivors reported that social support in general, was a helpful way of coping with their assault that they gradually opened up to others and gained awareness of the benefits of talking to others and reaching out for help(12).

Limitations

Phenomenology is more liable for imposing personal bias; researchers may not fully avoid imposing personal bias on the description or analysis of the experiences.

Implication of the result

The finding of this study suggested that the violent status of men, the role of traditional elders on covering the crime and acceptance of marriage following rape including acceptance of the rape crime by itself are raised as root cause for rape so that this study recommends health office, health and legal institution in Hosanna town; to plan different health education sensations and raise awareness

of community to free the community from violence; to improve the understanding of the society on survivors experience. To bring behavioral change in the community.

The findings of this study shows that sexual assault was life time journey to recover they all stated that its “unforgettable” even if they are on trial to move on, survivors needs continued support of those nearby the survivor to support life time journey of recovery. In health institution mainly at Referral Hospital where rape cases are managed post rape care unit or integrated service are recommended to support life time journey of surviving.

Scarce research is done on this area. Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative research should be conducted on this study area to identify the problem and intervene on it. Some findings need more search for further explanation; areas need additional explanation include: the role of traditional negotiation on sexual assault survivors and how religious practices helped raped women to cope, by including the experience of the rapists.

Conclusion

In conclusion, five major themes are emerged from the participants’ interviews. This study adds understanding of what seems like living with the trauma of rape.

On this study sexual assault survivor perceive that social effect; violent social status of men, acceptance of marriage following rape, roles of traditional negotiation on covering the crime are raised as cause for rape. The value of virginity in the community; losing that pride or social response traumatize the survivors again. The participants were living with trauma of rape with feeling of living with broken heart, betrayed, unwanted and hopeless. Fear and distrust brings isolation which affects their relationships. They find themselves coping through religious practices, social support and ignoring the reminders, moreover some participants have positive change following the trauma; get motivation to support other rape survivors and protect women. On the other hand, due to unjustified justice, lack of social support, due to being raped, survivors develop negative self-concept. They all quest for revenge and justice. The current study showed that sexual assault was a lifetime journey to recover. Some community members also blamed by the survivors for failing to help during their bad times. Therefore, community based awareness creation campaign should be implemented. In parallel,

health policy makers and health professionals should give due emphasis on build post-rape care units or integrated service with other units.

Abbreviation

CRC: Convention for Right of Child; CEDAW: Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women; EDHS: Ethiopian Demographic Health Survey; IDI: In-Depth Interview; MOWCYA: Ministry of Women's Children and Youth Affairs; OPD: Out Patient Department

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Ethical clearance was obtained from Jimma University Institute of Health (JUIH) Ethical review committee (Reference no. 200/2019). The purpose of the study was explained to all participants, informed consent was taken. To ensure confidentiality, during data collection and processing the name of participants have been changed. The collected data was used only for the purpose agreed with the participant and not shared with others also audio and transcripts were kept safe.

Consent for publication

Written consent was taken from Study Participants to publish findings during the consent process for only research purpose.

Availability of data and materials the selected datasets supporting the conclusion of this manuscript are Included in the manuscript. However, the datasets generated and analyzed the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Competing interests

The authors declare that no competing interests.

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Authors' contributions

BA contributed to the conceptualization, conduct the literature review, Design, conducting interviews, analysis, writing of the paper and the manuscript. AM, ZB, SA contributed in on, research design, analysis and writing the paper. All authors read and approved the final submitted paper.

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Table

Table 1. Participant characteristic and demographics of sexual assault survivor's in Hossana, Ethiopia 2019.

Participant	Current Age	Level of education	Ethnicity	Religion	Marital status	Age of assault	Accident	Experience
P1	21	6 th grade	Hadiya	Protestant	Unmarried	20	Once	Stranger
P2	21	College	Hadiya	protestant	Unmarried	20	Once	Acquaintance rape
P3	15	6 th grade	Gammo Goffa	Orthodox	Unmarried	15	Second	Stranger
P4	17	10 th grade	Hadiya	Protestant	Unmarried	16	Once	Acquaintance rape
P5	18	College	Hadiya	Protestant	Divorced	17	Once	Stranger
P6	19	10 th grade	Hadiya	Protestant	Unmarried	18	Once	Stranger