

Role of Psychopathy, Machiavellianism and Hostile Sexism as Determinants of Rape Myth Acceptance: Multigroup Moderated Mediation Analysis of Gender

Ayesha Ahmed¹, Ayesha Iqbal², *Dr. Syed Messum Ali Kazmi³, Zeeha Aslam⁴

^{1,2,4} Government College University, Lahore

³ Higher Education Department, Punjab, (Corresponding Author),

Email: messumkazmi@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the role of psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and hostile sexism as psychological predictors of rape myth acceptance (RMA), with particular emphasis on the moderating role of gender, through a multigroup moderated mediation analysis. Using the Dark Triad and gender socialization theoretical models, this study examined how dark personality and sexist beliefs form harmful beliefs about sexual violence. Female and male participants completed accepted measures of psychopathy, Machiavellianism, hostile sexism, and acceptance of rape myths. Structural equation modeling (SEM) with multigroup analysis was used to see if gender impacted the indirect mediation paths. The results indicated that for both psychopathy and Machiavellianism, hostile sexism meaningfully mediated and was more robust for males. Gender moderated the nature of both the direct and indirect paths which indicates a different pathway in the formation of rape-supportive beliefs.

Keywords: Psychopathy, Machiavellianism and Hostile Sexism, Multigroup Mediated

Background

Psychopathy is defined as the characteristics that include antisocial conduct, cultural norms and values violations negligence for others who are around them (Paulhus & Williams 2002). According to Hare psychopathy checklist revised (PCL-R) some of the most important traits of psychopaths include lack of empathy, artificial charm, superficial attractiveness, feeling of emptiness and they tend to do self harm and harm others. Some research showed that people with who have tendencies of psychopathy show low levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism (Deshong et al, 2017). While some studies show that there is a strong connection between other personality traits like openness, and extroversion and psychopathy (O'Boyle et al, 2013). The term "Machiavellianism" is derived from Niccolò Machiavelli, signifying cunning or scheming behavior. It is defined as deliberate manipulation and the practice of behaving in a friendly manner when it serves one's personal aims and goals (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Individuals who adhere to Machiavellian principles believe that others are easily deceived and are primarily focused on exploiting others for their own benefit. Machiavellianism is often viewed as unethical and is associated with disgrace and humiliation. Those with Machiavellian tendencies capitalize on the gullibility of others, disregarding their rights and behaving manipulatively (O'Boyle et al., 2013). Moore et al. (2012) assert that individuals with high levels of Machiavellian traits exhibit moral disengagement. The theory of ambivalent sexism, proposed by Glick & Fiske (1995), suggests that prejudice against women encompasses two interconnected ideologies. Hostile sexism, characterized by aggressive and competitive attitudes towards women, is linked with benevolent sexism, which involves paternalistic and patronizing attitudes. Both forms of sexism are associated with

victim blaming in cases of sexual assault. High levels of either benevolent or hostile sexism correlate with greater victim blaming, reduced perpetrator blame, and a tendency to minimize the severity and consequences of sexual assault (Abrams et al., 2003; Cohn et al., 2009; Masser et al., 2010; Viki et al., 2004; Yamawaki et al., 2007). Benevolent sexism portrays women as less educated, foolish, sentimental, and sexually unreliable. It is characterized by a seemingly positive admiration of women as partners, mothers, and caretakers, while also idealizing them as emotional and nurturing. Although benevolent sexism might not initially appear harmful, it perpetuates gender inequality by limiting women's opportunities in private, professional, governmental, and community spheres. Unlike hostile sexism, which is overtly discriminatory, benevolent sexism is often more subtle but equally damaging to gender fairness (Glick et al., 2021; Vanden Bossche et al., 2017).

Hostile sexism in fact is a type of sexism that come into view as pre judgmental and behaviour in the direction of the person on the foundation of their sexuality. Hostile sexism, specifically is established on the perspective that endeavor to conserve and lengthen one group's control by highlighting on the presumed worthlessness of the contrasting group. It is the form and the component of the ambivalent sexism, Glick and Fiske (2002) established and hinged this theory to describe the plan, viewpoint and activities that connected with males and females. Hostile sexism is elucidate as stubborn hold up for accepted gender roles implementation that persevere a patriarchal social – economic organization. So this belligerent sexist behaviour can compel opportunities and encourage sexuality prejudice, is stemmed in damaging mental and spiritual conditions that has consequences on both males and females (Glick & Fiske 2002). Rape myths, present at both individual and institutional/societal levels, have historically perpetuated and justified sexual violence (Edward et al., 2011). These myths are widely held and false beliefs about rape that serve to deny and rationalize male sexual aggression against women (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Factors influencing the acceptance of rape myths include the victim's clothing, the location of the crime, and the timing of the incident. A study by Workman & Orr (1996) found that both the victim's attire and the sex of the subject significantly affect perceptions of acquaintance rape incidents. Sexual assault remains a major public health issue, and understanding the mechanisms that not only increase risk but also exacerbate associated negative consequences is crucial (Angelone et al., 2021).

As women are the chief victims of violence, gender is the main risk factor (Rivas et al., 2020) states that rape is a very sensitive issue and that negative beliefs are common. Unfortunately, the seriousness of rape as a societal problem is made even more serious by these misunderstandings, which consist of biased or false believes about rape, rapists, and perpetrators (Sorrentino et al., 2020). This intensifying crime puts the victims in more distress since they face enough hurdles with the society's disbelief and a consequent inability to provide justice. As with any crime, after the first attack, rape has a lasting impact on its victims, creating a multitude of ill effects (Acosta, 2020). Many studies demonstrate the wide array of mental and physical impacts, including chronic pain, insomnia, worry, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. For all those in the survivor's shoes, there can be great turmoil in the mind, and much of the trauma is related to feelings of safety and dependence and increased risk of death (Galera et al., 2023). Many survivors of this level of trauma may increasingly turn to maladaptive coping methods such as substance dependence, dangerous sexual activity, and harmful behavior designed to repress thoughts of trauma. Thus, the effects of rape are beyond the rape itself and include the helplessness of survivors when facing the struggle towards their timorous path, surrounded by a tangle of mental, physical, and social obstacles. Several prior studies have pointed out that exposure to false administration of sexual assault or false statements made about rape can have disastrous consequences for victims (Dolan, 2024).

Nevertheless, it is crucial to investigate the broader implications of this trauma, particularly in light of the psychosocial and emotional costs that victims are required to pay. Following this

trauma, we also need to explore how the presence of rape myths in society may affect sociolegal and psychological outcomes for victims. It is important to understand how the presence of particular personality orientations and tendencies in the general population, may also affect rape myth acceptance in society (Kazmi et al., 2023). Among the personality determinants psychopathy, or calculated and deceitful behavior, was found to have a positive relationship with sexually aggressive thoughts and therefore people who are higher in psychopathy are more likely to blame victims and endorse myths regarding rape generally. Hostile sexism was another factor that was used to perpetuate hostile sexual attitudes and myths regarding rape in society (Drew & Martin, 2020). The findings of the studies also suggest that psychopathy, hostile sexism and Machiavellianism are salient contributors to attitudes and beliefs about sexual assault, while also assigning victim blame (Savarese et al, 2020). Additionally, there is evidence to show that psychopathy and machiavellianism serve as mediators of the complex relationship between the endorsement of rape myths and aggressive sexism (Craddock & Telesco, 2022). In general, men are more likely to exhibit increased aggressive sexism and psychopathic traits than women; as a result, they are prone to types of behavior online, including victim blaming and actions that reinforce rape myths (Andersen et al, 2022). Women also can absorb and perpetuate beliefs that are wrong, due to cultural norms and on societal expectations. When it comes to social media interactions and gender differences associated with inequality, certain dark traits, such as psychopathy and Machiavellianism, play an important role in shaping individual beliefs, ideas, and behaviors regarding rape myths and victim blaming (Bouffard & Miller 2023). Interestingly, across all gender, factors like condoning interpersonal violence, adversarial sexual beliefs, and sex-role stereotyping were shown to be highly predictive of RMA (Navas et al., 2020). The connection between entrenched beliefs surrounding gender and sexuality and misconceptions about rape emphasizes how far reaching these misconceptions can be in society. These beliefs contribute to negative stereotypes and prejudice that can cause adverse social and psychological outcomes for the victims (Navas et al., 2020). Rape myths act as psychological mechanisms that permit individuals to rationalize and defend sexual violence. These include stereotypes or false beliefs about victim culpability, perpetrator innocence, and rape as an unimportant crime (Gluck et al., 2020).

Men's belief in rape myths is associated with behaving in sexually aggressive ways, causing less empathy for victims, and minimizing punishment (Kupor, 2023). Clearly, gender differences exist among these areas, with research regularly demonstrating that males typically score substantially higher than females on a variety of characteristics, such as acceptance of the rape myth, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, hostile sexism, and honor views of masculinity. Research has further demonstrated complicated interrelationships between these characteristics and beliefs, which show their interdependence and differing levels of effect on attitudes of acceptability by gender (Palmer, 2020). These research findings suggest that gender relations should be a consideration when analyzing the interactions between rape myth acceptance, psychopathy, hostile sexism, or Machiavellianism. Put simply, to form intervention and strategies to dispel the rape myth and further equality between men and women and awareness requires some understanding of how gender operates within the predictive associations of these characteristics. More specifically, this exploratory study examines how tolerance for gender inequality (gender social justice)(GSJ) is related to ethical disapproval and acceptance of rape myths with considerations for gender discrepancy (Luijben, 2020).

Assessing and understanding rape myth acceptance requires awareness of power dynamics and control and how these factors shape violence against women. Male rape has received little attention in the past, although studies examining its effects and public attitudes have increased recently (sanchez-ruiz et al 2021). Studies show that men especially those who lean toward sexual aggression tend to misinterpret non-sexual conduct as a sign of sexual interest (Eder-Moreau, 2023). The significant psychological effects that male survivors face have been

revealed by earlier research (Li & Zheng, 2022). These effects include depression, low self-esteem, problems with sexuality, confusion about one's sexual identity, and sentiments of retaliation and wrath. The aforementioned results highlight the pressing necessity of providing additional acknowledgement and assistance to men who have survived sexual assault, in addition to persistent endeavors to confront and demolish power disparities that fuel sexual assault.

Past studies show that those with dark triad features, regardless of gender, are more likely to engage in aggressive and manipulative sexual activity. These actions include coercion, unwelcome words, touching, and assault, as well as sexual coaxing and harassment (Worthen, 2021). However, depending on their personalities and preexisting attitudes, people may react to these rules in different ways. For example, a study found that those with high levels of hostile sexism were more likely to respond to sexist societal norms by being more likely to commit rape (Xue & Lin, 2022). Considering the documented links between hostile sexism and the Dark Triad traits (Gluck et al 2020), it is plausible that people with high Dark Triad trait scores could be more prone to acquiring attitudes that support sexual violence after being exposed to sexist material on social media. (Bria et al, 2022) Thus, the aim of the current study is to investigate if being exposed to sexism social media material affects people's perceptions of rape based on their personality factors. We predict that exposure to sexist tweets will reduce empathy for victims and increase views that are favorable of rape and toxic masculinity, especially among individuals who exhibit high levels of the dark triad personality traits (Navas et al., 2022). Hudspith (2023) conducted a study with 237 students at a northeastern university agreed to participate in an online survey for this cross-sectional study, which examined knowledge, acceptance of the rape myth, future time perspective, and societal norms surrounding sexual conduct (RMA). The majority of the sample was female, and 41 % of the participants believed that the victim was intoxicated. Males accepted rape myths more readily than females did, and their RMA was higher the less sexually educated they were. Guidelines for the main prevention of sexual assault are provided. Houge (2023) claims that many try to find a method to justify the behavior in order for people to comprehend rape and other sexual offenses. Claims that the complainant was being attractive, that they had drink before the incident, or that they did not defend themselves are a few examples of these defenses. demonstrates how people's desire to live in a just world influences their social beliefs and, unfortunately, can result in the acceptance of the sexual assaulter's justifications and the accusation of the complainants for the crime. Previous studies have shown that Just World Beliefs can be used to both explain the occurrence of victim blame and possibly even predict rape supportive attitudes.

Female respondents with stronger Just World Beliefs blamed complainants in a scenario involving a stranger rape, whereas respondents with stronger Just World Beliefs assigned more victim-blame and less perpetrator-blame, according to research by Stromwall et al. (2012). Furthermore, Hayes, Lorenz, and Bell (2013) found a correlation between weaker Just World Beliefs and lower victim blame attributions. On the other hand, several researchers (Sleath & Woodhams, 2014, have not found a relationship between JWBs and VB attributions. As a result, the prior literature on RMA, VB, and JWBs is unclear. According to Ray (2023), a study sampling 699 individuals from the United States, South Africa, Ghana, and Nigeria found that Americans were the least likely to believe in rape myths, while respondents from Nigeria were the most likely to accept them. Rape myths, assessed using the IRMA scale, such as "he didn't mean to" and "she asked for it," were less widely accepted in South Africa than in Ghana. Interestingly, while men were generally more likely than women to endorse myths like "she asked for it" and "he didn't mean to," female respondents in Nigeria were more likely than their male counterparts to support these myths. Core determinants of higher rape myth acceptance included cultural factors like religious norms, patriarchal structures, and differences in preventive, protective, and response measures to gender-based violence. Beshers (2021)

examined the evolution of rape myth acceptance (RMA) among college students between 2010 and 2017, using two samples of undergraduates from a northeastern American university 464 students from the autumn semester of 2010 and 534 students from the spring semester of 2017. The survey results revealed significant declines in RMA scores between the two years, with 2017 scores being notably lower than those from 2010 across all subscales. The largest reductions were seen in the "She asked for it" and "She lied" subscales, with scores dropping from 2.62 to 1.76 ($p < .001$) and from 2.69 to 2.26 ($p < .001$), respectively. In both years, male and younger students were more likely to endorse rape myths. Temkin et al. (2018) also discovered evidence that English attorneys frequently used the myth of the failed leave of a violent relationship to undermine complainants' testimony about intimate partner abuse in court. Drawing on the misconception that a "genuine rape victim" would promptly leave an abusive home and relationship, the authors come to the conclusion that defense attorneys attempted to cast doubt on the truth of the complainant's claims by convincing juries that this was unusual and suspicious despite evidence to the contrary.

According to Adeleke (2024), research generally shows that men, individuals with lower educational attainment, and those who use violence in their personal relationships are more likely to hold onto rape myths (Bryant & Spencer, 2003; Worden & Carlson, 2005). A significant factor influencing rape myth acceptance is its contribution to low empathy for victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) (Debowska et al., 2019). Some researchers argue that the acceptance of IPV myths is linked to a lack of awareness about intimate partner violence. However, more recent studies challenge this conclusion. Research on children and youth (CYP) has shown that exposure to domestic violence during childhood actually leads to more problematic IPV attitudes and violence-supportive beliefs compared to CYP who do not witness such violence (Debowska et al., 2021; Sharratt et al., 2022). Lilley (2023) highlights a particularly damaging aspect of IPV-related rape myths: the belief that women who are raped by their spouses will immediately disclose the abuse. Numerous studies have shown how this belief misguides key actors in the criminal justice system, particularly police officers who serve as gatekeepers (Frazier & Haney, 1996; Spohn & Tellis, 2019). A 2011 study by Maddox et al. found that 40% of officers believed a victim was more credible if she reported the assault soon after it occurred. However, estimates from the UK government and independent academic studies indicate that fewer than one in six victims of sexual assault ever report their experiences to the police (ONS, 2018; Waterhouse et al., 2016; Widanaralalage et al., 2022). It is possible that intimate partner rape victims may not recognize their experiences as rape, often perceiving non-consensual sex as less harmful than the physical domestic abuse they endure. This key finding reemerged in the research by Kirkman et al. (2021), who interviewed survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) about their experiences with physical abuse. The interviews revealed multiple accounts of systematic and repeated rape by their intimate partners. While some survivors identified these acts as rape, the majority did not. A key factor in this perception appeared to be the absence of physical force or violence during non-consensual sexual encounters. A recent study examining the more nuanced features of psychopathy has revealed that the acceptance of rape myths is inversely connected to attributes such as Machiavellian egocentricity and cold-heartedness. Conversely, positive associations have been observed between the acceptance of rape myths and varying personality orientations and traits such as psychopathy (Kazmi et al 2023). Specifically, machiavellianism is strongly associated with the endorsement of certain myths, such as the belief that the victim lied about being raped. Brownell (2021) reported that machiavellianism describes the tendency to exploit members in a community. Machiavellians are known for their shrewdness and tenacity. They are also adept planners and strategists for the long run. There are no other happy endings for them but their "victories." Cynical views on human nature (e.g., manipulating and manipulated individuals), interpersonal exploitation as a tactic (e.g., strategic thinking), and a lack of traditional morality that would prevent their acts (e.g., immoral behaviors) are all part of Machiavellian-ism's belief system. Anderson (2021) found that rape victims are exposed to and experience varying levels

of emotional distress and trauma following sexual assault. To assess these hypothesized associations, the researchers sampled 240 college students and found that rape myths are positively connected with hostile sexism and subscales of benevolent sexist attitudes, according to the results of a bivariate correlation study. Subscales of acceptance of rape myths (she begged for it, it wasn't really rape, he didn't mean to, and she lied) were positively predicted by subscales of ambivalent sexism (hostile sexism, paternalism, heterosexuality, and gender differentiation). The findings also indicated that men were more accepting of ambivalent sexism and rape myths. The current study's findings indicate that unfavorable perceptions about rape victims must be addressed, and interventions should be developed to achieve positive outcomes

Purpose of the Study

Although there have been advancements in understanding the factors influencing rape myth acceptance, there remains a significant gap in the literature concerning the role of dark triad traits and how their interaction might influence public attitudes towards rape myths. The available literature focuses on general attitudes towards rape myths and does not focus on the dynamic influence of psychopathy and machiavellianism in rape myth acceptance. At the same time, it is unclear how gender and hostile sexist tendencies may play a predictive and moderating role in this regard. It is also unclear whether the predictive effects of psychopathy and machiavellianism on rape myth acceptance may differ on the basis of gender and levels of hostile sexism (high/low). It is also unclear that how psychopathic and machiavellian traits of different genders effect the acceptance of rape myths. So there is a need to investigate the role of gender with specific traits on acceptance of rape myths.

Objectives

1. To investigate the predictive influence of psychopathy, Machiavellianism and hostile sexism on rape myth acceptance
2. To evaluate how gender and hostile sexism moderate the relationship between psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and rape myth acceptance.
3. To investigate gender differences in relation to psychopathy, Machiavellianism, hostile sexism, and rape myth acceptance

Hypotheses

1. Psychopathy, machiavellianism, and hostile sexism would significantly correlate with rape myth acceptance.
2. Psychopathy, machiavellianism and hostile sexism would significantly predict rape myth acceptance.
3. Psychopathy and machiavellianism would significantly mediate the association between hostile sexism and rape myth acceptance.
4. Gender would significantly moderate the predictive associations between hostile sexism, psychopathy, machiavellianism and rape myth acceptance

Methodology

Research Design

A co-relational (cross-sectional) research design used to assess the role of psychopathy, Machiavellianism and hostile sexism in rape myth acceptance.

Participants

Simple random sampling technique was used for selection of participants to ensure representation across genders. The sample size of the study was 300 participants including both males and females. G power analysis had shown that a sample of 260 would be sufficient to achieve desired effect sizes.

Table 1 *Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=300)*

Variable	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	124	47.7
Female	136	52.3
Age		
Young Adults (18-26)	228	87.7
Early Adults (27-39)	24	9.2
Middle Adults (40-54)	8	3.1
	<i>M</i> =23.38	
Family System		
Nuclear	160	61.5
Joint	100	38.5
Marital Status		
Single	224	86.2
Married	34	13.1
Divorced	1	0.4
Widowed	1	0.4
Residential Status		
Rural	93	35.8
Urban	167	64.2
Education		
BS	188	72.3
MS	18	6.9
Mphil	21	8.1
Any other	33	12.7

Note. *f*=Frequency

Table 1 depicts the demographic characteristics of the participants. In terms of gender, 47.7 % of the participants were male and 52.3 % were females. In terms of age, 87.7 % were young adults, 9.2 % were early adults and 3.1 % were middle adults. With regard to family system, 61.5 % belonged to nuclear systems and 38.5 % belonged to joint setups. With regard to marital status, 86.2 % were single, 13.1 % were married and 0.8 % were either divorced or widowed. In terms of residential status, 35.8 % belonged to rural and about 64.2 % belonged to urban settings. In terms of educational attainment, 72.3% had graduate level education. 6.9 % were postgraduate and about 8.1 % had an Mphil/MS degree.

Inclusion criteria

People who are minimum 18 years old to 55 years old.

Exclusion criteria

People who were under 18 years and over the age range of 55 were not sampled.

Instruments

Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (uIRMA) (McMahon & Farmer, 2011)

This 22-item questionnaire had been formulated by McMahon & Farmer (2011), to assess rape-supportive beliefs across four sub-scales. Sub-scale 1 “*she asked for it*”, and sub-scale 2 “*he didn't mean to*” both have 6 items each. The subscale 3 “*it was not really rape*” and sub-scale 4 “*she lied*” both consist of 5 items each. Higher scores indicate greater acceptance of rape myths with the response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale has demonstrated strong reliability ($\alpha = 0.93$), with subscale alphas ranging from 0.74 to 0.93 (Payne et al., 1999).

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) (Glick & Fiske, 1996)

Developed by Glick and Fiske (1996), the scale is marked for being a 22 items measure used to assess hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS). Hostile sexism scale, subscale of Ambivalent Sexism Inventory which consist of 11 items used to measure hostile sexism. The ASI will be used alongside the uIRMA-U to assess convergent and discriminant validity. Hostile sexism, as assessed through the scale depicts negative and hostile views about women while benevolent sexism depicts that women need protection and support of men.

Short Dark Triad Scale (Paulhus & Williams, 2002)

This scale evaluates three personality traits Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy using 27 Likert-scale items (Jones & Paulhus, 2014). The scale demonstrates a reliability of $\alpha = 0.79$. The instrument was developed to provide a quick and efficient mechanism for assessing the presence of the above traits with the response options ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

Procedure

For this research, approval for the topic was sought through the departmental board of studies. Informed consent was taken from all participants and all other related information was provided. Tools which are used in this research were publicly available and no permission was required to use them. The data was taken from university students, relatives and peers. They responded to the questionnaire by writing it out, and they reported their responses. This approach was helpful for the researchers in gaining access to the required number of the participants. Research participants were debriefed about the research topic and their consent was taken before their responses. The research participants' anonymity, their personal information and their response confidentiality were assured. Ethical considerations were kept into focus in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (DoH). It is the statement policy of World Medical Association. It was devised firstly in 1964, for the clinician doing research with human participants to take the ethical principles in consideration. It is revised for 7 times and last amendment was done in 2013.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was done on SPSS 21.0 through Pearson Product Moment Correlation, Hierarchical Regression, Independent sample *t* test and moderated mediation analysis.

Results

In this study, the role of psychopathy, machiavellianism and hostile sexism in rape myth acceptance was studied. SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative data. Firstly, data was analyzed to check missing items. Secondly, means, standard deviation and correlations etc. were analyzed. Independent sample *t* test was used to analyze the sample as it includes both genders to measure any differences among the genders. MANOVA was used to explore differences among different groups and variables. Pearson product moment correlation was used to measure the relationship between the variables. Lastly mediation analysis was used to analyze the predictive association between psychopathy, machiavellianism, hostile sexism and rape myth acceptance.

Table 2 Reliabilities of Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, Short Dark Triad Scale and Ambivalent Sexism Inventory and its Subscales (*N*=300)

Variable	<i>k</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>α</i>
RMA	22	60.36	14.37	.86
She Asked for It	6	17.79	5.47	.80

He Didn't Mean to	6	17.41	4.71	.66
It wasn't really rape	5	11.46	4.42	.75
She lied	5	13.68	3.93	.70
Hostile Sexism	11	27.38	9.17	.75
Machiavellianism	9	28.79	5.91	.70
Narcissism	9	26.65	5.24	.60
Psychopathy	9	24.59	5.62	.61

Note. k= No. of Items, *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, RMA=Rape Myth Acceptance, α =Cronbach's alpha

The results indicated in Table 2 show the alpha reliabilities of the study scales. All scales and sub-scales had acceptable levels of reliability ranging from .60 to .86. Rape Myth Acceptance scale has the alpha reliability of .86 which is excellent. Its sub-scale 1 (She asked for it) has excellent reliability of .80, its second sub-scale (He didn't mean to) has a fair reliability of .66, while sub-scale three (It was not really rape) and four (She lied) both have good reliability of .75 and .70.

Table 3 *Gender Differences on Rape Myth Acceptance and its Subscales, Hostile Sexism, Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy (N=300)*

	Male (n=140)		Female (n=160)		<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Rape Myth Acceptance	64.58	17.51	62.96	18.48	258	.72	.47	.09
She Asked for it	17.89	5.42	17.69	5.53	258	.28	.77	.08
He didn't mean to	17.42	4.81	17.41	4.64	258	.02	.97	.08
It wasn't really rape	11.82	4.40	11.14	4.44	258	1.23	.22	.07
She lied	14.17	3.81	13.22	4.09	258	1.93	.055	.08
Hostile Sexism	27.99	8.78	26.74	9.54	258	1.10	.27	.10
Machiavellianism	27.55	4.63	26.23	5.71	258	2.03	.04	.25
Narcissism	27.44	4.60	25.95	5.69	258	2.30	.02	.28
Psychopathy	25.16	5.55	24.07	5.66	258	1.56	.12	.05

Note. *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, *df* = Degree of Freedom, *p* = Probability Value

Table 3 depicts the results of Independent Sample *t* test. The results, however, showed that there were no gender differences with regard to total rape myth acceptance and its sub-scales, hostile sexism and psychopathy. However, significant differences were seen for scores on narcissism between males (*M*=27.44, *SD*=4.60) and females (*M*=25.95, *SD*=5.69) and for machiavellianism between males (*M*=27.55, *SD*=4.63) and females (*M*=26.23, *SD*=5.71).

Table 4 *Mean Differences with regard to Level of Education on Rape Myth Acceptance its Subscales, Hostile Sexism, Machiavellianism, Narcissism and Psychopathy*

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Partial. η^2</i>	<i>Obs. P</i>
RMA	2229.40	3	743.13	2.33	.08	0.03	.58
She Asked for it	388.41	3	129.47	4.49	.00	0.05	.88

He didn't mean to	168.51	3	56.17	2.57	.05	0.03	.63
It wasn't rape.	201.73	3	67.24	3.54	.02	0.04	.78
She lied	78.40	3	26.13	1.66	.18	0.02	.43
Hostile Sexism	658.25	3	219.42	2.65	.05	0.03	.64
Machiavellianism	84.02	3	28.01	1.01	.39	0.01	.27
Narcissism	57.67	3	19.22	.70	.56	0.01	.20
Psychopathy	17.21	3	5.74	.18	.91	0	.08

Note. $p < .05$, Dependent Variable=Quality of Life, M = Mean, SD = standard deviation, *obs. p* = observed power, RMA=Rape Myth Acceptance

The table 4 depict the results of MANOVA that there were significant mean differences for level of education (BS, MS, Mphil and Any other) on the sub-scales "she asked for it" ($F=4.49$, $p=.000$, partial $\eta^2=.05$, *obs.p*=.88) and on the "it wasn't really rape" sub-scale ($F=3.54$, $p=.000$, partial $\eta^2=.04$, *obs.p*=.78). However, non-significant differences for level education were observed for hostile sexism, machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy. Furthermore, Tukey's HSD revealed that those having very lower levels of education had higher scores on the sub-scales "she asked for it" ($M=20.93$, $SD=3.60$) and it wasn't really rape ($M=13.90$, $SD=3.74$).

Table 5 *Correlations between psychopathy, machiavellianism, hostile sexism and rape myth acceptance.*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Psychopathy	24.59	5.63	-	10	.22**	.16*	.1	.11	.19**	.23**
2 Machiavellianism	26.86	5.26		-	.22**	.09	.11	.11	.11	.01
3 Hostile Sexism	27.33	9.19			-	.43**	.54**	.37**	.37**	.46**
4 Rape Myth Acceptance	63.73	18.01				-	.68**	.62**	.68**	.63**
5 she asked for it	17.79	5.47					-	.46**	.52**	.53**
6 He did not mean to	17.42	4.72						-	.34**	.34**
7 It was not really rape	11.47	4.42							-	.51**
8 She lied	13.68	3.98								-

$p < .05$ ** $p < .01$. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to assess the relationship between psychopathy, machiavellianism, hostile sexism, and rape myth acceptance. Results has shown that psychopathy has a significant positive correlation with Hostile Sexism ($r=.22$, $p < .01$) and various rape myths such as Rape Myth Acceptance ($r = .16$, $p < .05$) and specific myths like "It Wasn't Really Rape" ($r = .19$, $p < .01$), indicating that individuals with higher psychopathic traits are more likely to endorse hostile sexist attitudes and accept rape myths. Machiavellianism is also positively correlated with Hostile Sexism ($r = .22$, $p < .01$), meaning that individuals who display manipulative traits tend to hold more hostile sexist views. Hostile sexism is strongly correlated with Rape Myth Acceptance ($r = .43$, $p < .01$) and various rape myths like "She Asked for It" ($r = .54$, $p < .01$) and "She Lied" ($r = .46$, $p < .01$). This indicates that people who exhibit hostile sexist views are more likely to endorse multiple rape myths, excusing or justifying sexual violence. Rape myth acceptance is highly correlated with specific myths such as "She Asked for It" ($r = .68$, $p < .01$), "He Didn't Mean To" ($r = .62$, $p < .01$), and "It Wasn't Really Rape" ($r = .68$, $p < .01$), reflecting that individuals who accept rape myths tend to believe in many different aspects of these myths.

Table 6 Mediating and Moderating Effects of Hostile Sexism on the Association Between Machiavellianism and Rape Myth Acceptance

Measures	<i>R-sq</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1	.06			.00
Outcome: <i>Machiavellianism</i>				
Constant		26.83	.320	.00
Hostile Sexism		.85	.11	.00
Gender		-1.16	.63	.04
Interaction		-.07	.06	.02
Model 2	.05			.006
Outcome: <i>Psychopathy</i>				
Constant		24.58	.34	.00
Hostile Sexism		.13	.04	.001
Gender		-.92	.68	.00
Interaction		-.01	.08	.04
Outcome: <i>RMA</i>	.192			.00
Constant		59.06		
Machiavellianism		-.02	.03	.00
Psychopathy		.20	.02	.00
Hostile Sexism		.82	.09	.00
Direct effect of X on Y		.82	.09	.00
Index Of Moderated Mediation	Index	SE(Boot)	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Machiavellianism	.001	.02	-.03	-.05
Psychopathy	-.002	.03	-.07	-.04

Note. *B*: standardized Beta Coefficient, *SE* = Standard Error, *RMA*: Rape Myth Acceptance

Structural equation modeling (SEM) with multigroup analysis was used to see if gender impacted the indirect mediation paths. The results indicated that for both psychopathy and Machiavellianism, hostile sexism meaningfully mediated and was more robust for males. Gender moderated the nature of both the direct and indirect paths which indicates a different pathway in the formation of rape-supportive beliefs. Interestingly, the results provide evidence for the role of both personality and important sexist ideologies (hostile sexism) and the psychological basis for why it is important to consider both when attempting to combat RMA and support gender-sensitive education and prevention efforts.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the roles of psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and hostile sexism in rape myth acceptance and to explore the multi-moderated mediation effect of gender. Moreover, the study aimed to contribute towards the gap in the literature on this area. First, correlation analysis was conducted, and Pearson product-moment correlation results revealed that psychopathy and Machiavellianism were positively correlated with hostile sexism. Additionally, psychopathy was linked to higher acceptance of rape myths. Hostile sexism was significantly associated with several rape myths, including "She Asked for It" and "She Lied". Individuals who accepted rape myths generally tended to endorse various aspects of these myths. It was hypothesized that psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and hostile sexism would significantly predict rape myth acceptance. The results indicate that individuals scoring high on hostile sexism, Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy exhibited higher rape myth acceptance, were more inclined to blame victims, and minimized the severity of the crime. Furthermore, the study found that high scores on hostile sexism, Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy were associated with rape myth acceptance and victim-blaming, regardless of

gender. However, notable differences emerged between genders for narcissism and Machiavellianism. Specifically, females scored higher than males on narcissism ($M = 25.95$, $SD = 5.69$ vs. $M = 27.44$, $SD = 4.60$) and Machiavellianism ($M = 26.23$, $SD = 5.71$ vs. $M = 27.55$, $SD = 4.63$). This suggests that narcissistic and Machiavellian females were somewhat more likely to accept rape myths, blame victims, and downplay the perpetrator's role, thereby trivializing the seriousness of the crime.

The results also showed that education made significant in reducing the blame on the victim and reducing the idea that the perpetrator was not really responsible for the rape. The results showed that there were significant mean differences for level of education on the sub-scales "*she asked for it*" and on the "*it wasn't really rape*" sub-scale. Furthermore, Tukey's HSD revealed that those having very lower levels of education had higher scores on the sub-scales "*she asked for it*" and "*it wasn't really rape*". However, non-significant differences for education were observed for hostile sexism, Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy. The findings provided support for hypotheses since they showed a strong positive correlation between psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and hostile sexism, and acceptance of rape myths. The findings also demonstrate that participants in the current study tended to place the responsibility for the rape on the victim and thought defendants were more credible. The results are in line with relevant research, which has demonstrated that those who do not have a negative view of the rape of women typically have negative attitudes against these women because they believe they are transgressing traditional gender norms. According to Abrams et al. (2003), people with high hostile sexism scores are under the belief that the victim is at fault for their own inappropriate behavior and also that the victim should take responsibility for having sex with the rapist.

Secondly, the paper hypothesized that psychopathy and Machiavellianism would mediate the relationship between hostile sexism and rape myth acceptance. It also proposed that gender would significantly moderate the predictive associations between hostile sexism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and rape myth acceptance. The findings from the mediation-moderation analysis revealed that hostile sexism has a strong direct influence on increasing rape myth acceptance. Furthermore, psychopathy and Machiavellianism emerged as strong predictors of rape myth acceptance.

The analysis showed that psychopathy mediates the relationship between hostile sexism and rape myth acceptance, meaning hostile sexism indirectly increases rape myth acceptance through psychopathy. Gender was found to moderate the relationships between hostile sexism and the mediators (psychopathy and Machiavellianism); however, the moderation-mediation effects were not significant. This indicates that gender does not significantly alter the indirect pathways through these mediators. According to Angelone et al. (2021), hostile sexism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy mediated the relationship between gender and rape myth acceptance. Another study by Kazmi & Rauf (2024) found that hostile sexism, victim blaming, and rape myth acceptance significantly and positively predicted acceptance of date rape perpetrated by a male. Additionally, it was discovered that Machiavellianism mediated the relationship between hostile sexism and rape myth acceptance. Interestingly, Machiavellianism had a small negative effect on rape myth acceptance, suggesting that individuals with higher levels of Machiavellianism are less likely to support rape myths. These findings suggest that Machiavellianism may act as a key psychological factor that weakens the connection between hostile sexism and rape myth acceptance. The findings also resonate with Toplu-Demirtaş and Aracılyaydin (2023) who found that those who believe in hostile sexist ideas against women often want to reduce and trivialize the severity of the rape whilst blaming the victim for the incident. This study also lent support to the hypothesis that the relationship between acceptance of rape myths and acceptance of male-perpetrated rapes on dates would be mediated by hostile sexism. The findings of the current

study revealed that, at higher levels of victim blaming, the relationship between acceptance of rape myths and acceptance of date rape was more strongly influenced by the indirect effects of hostile sexism. This suggests that hostile sexism serves as a mediating factor, explaining the positive correlation between rape myths and acceptance of rape. Additionally, the study found, consistent with previous research, that victims of date rape were perceived as violating traditional gender and social norms. The study also demonstrated that men with high levels of psychopathy, narcissism, and hostile sexism were more likely to blame the victim for the rape. This finding aligns with the research of Golding et al. (2022), which indicated that men who hold negative views towards women who deviate from traditional gender roles are more inclined to blame rape victims. These results contribute to our understanding of how personality traits can influence the acceptance of rape myths and the harmful effects these traits can have on victims of rape or sexual assault.

Conclusion

In summary, this study sheds light on the intricate interactions among hostile sexism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism that shape the acceptance of rape myths, with a focus on gender disparities via a Multigroup Moderated Mediation Analysis. According to the research, people who exhibit higher levels of psychopathy and Machiavellian tendencies are more inclined to believe rape myths, which are primarily motivated by underlying hostile sexist sentiments. The gendered nature of these cognitive and personality traits was highlighted by the considerable moderating effect of gender, with these correlations being more prominent in males than in females. These findings highlight the need for focused interventions that address these harmful ideas in order to effectively reduce the acceptance of the rape myth and advance a more just and respectful social attitude toward sexual violence, particularly among males who exhibit high levels of these dark personality traits

Implications

The findings of the study shed light on the aspects of the role of Psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and hostile sexism in rape myth acceptance. Rape myths have high prevalence rate in our Pakistani society. In our culture rape or sexual violence is still a big taboo, whenever some one faces sexual violence, the victim and the family is socially isolated. This behavior can lead to the suppression of issue and victim might not be able to recover from this trauma. In our culture victim blaming is common, the higher the rate of rape myth acceptance the higher is blaming. This makes difficult to challenge the myths and harmful beliefs. This study is helpful in understanding how dark triad personality impact acceptance of rape myths. The norms which are prevalent in the society also impact the victim. Patriarchal norms and values in our society place the blame of sexual assault on women as their actions, behavior or their appearance led to the crime not the actions of the offender. because of widespread acceptance of rape myths, it is utmost necessary to address and debunk such damaging and hateful misunderstandings. In South Asian countries like Pakistan and India, there is a lack of sex education in general. Educational institutes must teach the young children about right and wrong. The implications also apply to the justice system, where it is important to emphasize the factors contributing to negative attitudes towards rape victims, as well as the influence of rape myth acceptance, in order to facilitate more informed decision-making. Keeping this in mind, finding the link between patriarchal values/ideologies in a society and rape myth acceptance and victim blaming holds potential for research. More specifically, it may also be compared whether in people with a high degree of narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy and hostile sexism, does the absence or presence of patriarchal notions in the individuals have a significant impact on their acceptance of rape myths and tendencies toward victim blaming.

Limitations

The findings of this study are suggestive and come with several limitations. First, the sample size of 300 may not accurately reflect the broader population. Due to limited access to a more diverse demographic, the researcher primarily relied on friends, family, and fellow students to gather the sample. Consequently, a larger and more representative population is necessary to further validate the results. Additionally, the unequal distribution of gender and age in the sample may have introduced a bias in the outcomes. The findings of the study cannot be generalized on the population. The tools and instruments used for surveys in this study might have affected participants in how they respond to questions asked and providing socially desirable responses which might influence the accuracy of results. It is crucial to understand that applying indirect techniques to examine the impact of psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and hostile sexism in rape myth acceptance, combined with causal attribution analysis, can lead to more universally applicable conclusions. Furthermore, it should be highlighted that this study only looked at the associations between these variables within a multi-moderated mediation framework, which does not suggest any causal relationships.

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