Rape culture, myths and it’s impacts

Rape Culture
• Common social beliefs, attitudes and morals normalise sexual violence, encourage people to associate sex with violence, and minimise the seriousness of sexual violence (Wright, 2015).
• Harmful sexual behaviour is accepted, justified and not challenged enough by society (Field, 2004).

Rape Myths
• Rape myths are assumptions about harmful sexual behaviour, and people who experience harmful sexual behaviour.
• Rape myths reduce empathy for and even shift blame to the victim/survivor.
• Although these are myths and not facts, they are widely believed and accepted.

Impacts
• Women especially are made to feel as though it is their responsibility to avoid being sexually assaulted and police their behaviour.
• Enforce the false belief that men cannot be victims of sexual violence, among other harmful beliefs.

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Rape myth examples

Myth: Harmful sexual behaviour is only committed by strangers.
Fact: Three-quarters of people who experience sexual violence know the offender(s) before the incident occurs. Strangers are the offender(s) in only a quarter of sexual assaults (Morris, Reilly, Berry, & Ransom, 2003).

Myth: It is common for people to lie about harmful sexual behaviour happening to them.
Fact: Only 8% of sexual violence cases reported to police in NZ are false complaints - this is lower than many other crimes (Triggs, Mossman, Jordan, & Kingi, 2009).

Myth: If someone gets sexually assaulted while intoxicated; walking alone at night; or wearing ‘revealing clothing’, it’s their fault.
Fact: It is NEVER the fault of the person who experiences sexual violence, it is always the fault of the person who has committed sexual violence and who has therefore done the harm.

Myth: Alcohol causes harmful sexual behaviour.
Fact: Harmful sexual behaviour is not caused by alcohol, but it does increase the likelihood of it happening. Alcohol and other drugs affect the brain in a way that reduces inhibitions, but this does not mean the responsibility of someone committing harmful sexual behaviour disappears.

Myth: Harmful sexual behaviour cannot occur in a marriage/long term relationship.
Fact: Harmful sexual behaviour can occur within marriage and/or relationships, no matter what age, gender or sexuality the people are in the relationship.

Myth: Anyone who experienced child sexual abuse, will become a perpetrator of harmful sexual behaviour.
Fact: The majority (99%) of child sexual abuse survivors do not have a sexual offence charge (Cutajar, Ogloff, Mullen, & Mann, 2012).