Why does sexual violence occur?

There are many factors that contribute to the occurrence of sexual violence. It is important to understand that perpetrators, not victims are responsible for sexual violence happening. Perpetrators have a strong sense of entitlement and use power and control to commit acts of sexual violence. Most perpetrators adhere to rigid “traditional” gender roles that focus on the inequality of women. This allows them to treat women and the targeted victim with no regard or respect.

It is also important to look at other factors that contribute to sexual violence occurring such as those that are used to justify or excuse sexual violence. Gender-based stereotypes reinforce inequality between genders.

For example, in a society where men are portrayed as being aggressive and women are seen as passive, a man who pressures a woman for sex is often perceived as behaving acceptably. Gender-based stereotypes are reinforced throughout society and can be seen in pop culture and media.

Research indicates that alcohol and other drugs are often used by the perpetrator to incapacitate victims. That means that alcohol and other drugs, while they do not cause sexual violence are contributing factors to the occurrence of sexual violence.

Finally, victim blaming behavior and beliefs create a culture where we disregard sexual violence by blaming a victim. While this is not a cause of sexual violence, it is a factor that contributes to a society where we do not hold perpetrators accountable for their behavior and therefore encourage and support further acts of sexual violence. Victim blaming happens in many ways and can be defined as any assumption that a victim is responsible for the crime committed against them based on the way they behave, dress or live. Such beliefs add to the prevalence of sexual violence.