

Attitudes of police officers toward victims of crime

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The attribution of guilt to a victim of sexual violence has several negative effects, including secondary victimization. Feelings of repeat victimization already emerge at the first victim's contacts with a police officer and reduce the victim's readiness to cooperate with law enforcement or criminal justice agencies. In order to investigate this phenomenon, researchers decided to establish to what extent policemen or police women attribute guilt to a fictitious woman, presented as a victim of three different criminal offences. Researchers analyzed the responses of 1000 police officers of both genders, in which they attributed to a victim different personality characteristics. The victim was set in three different victimisation situations (victim of a stranger rape, husband rape and a victim of burglary) and in a situation in which he/she had not been victimized at all. By the use of factor analysis, three factors were discerned: factor of empathy, attribution of guilt to a victim and denial of victim's guilt. It was established that police officers attributed the highest degree of guilt to a victim who had been raped by a husband. It was also observed that police women manifest less empathy, but at the same time they tend to be more protective than their male colleagues towards a fictitious victim.

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