

Exploring constructions of sexual violence among professionals

Exploring professionals' understanding and opinions of sexual violence legislation and how it's applied in the real world.

Key details

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Police region	East Midlands
Level of research	PhD
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Research context

Sexual offences have been a common conversation topic in social, political and academic circles. This has been exacerbated by social media, particularly the #MeToo movement.

A range of evidence suggests individuals may construct unique and individualised ideas of what sexual violence is. Police officers, medical professionals and psychologists may also hold these individualised constructions. Offence-supportive beliefs, offence stereotyping and victim blaming support this notion, as they are observed among both public and professional populations.

Little research has gauged understanding and attitudes towards sexual offence legislation or how individuals construct and define sexual offences. Individualised constructions of legislation could be contributing to issues of secondary victimisation, low reporting rates and low prosecution rates. The present research aims to assess the presence and impact of individualised constructions.

Aims

- Explore how well professionals understand laws around non-consensual penetrative sex.
- Explore how well professionals' constructions of non-consensual penetrative sex align with legal definitions.
- Explore which elements of legislation are seen as important to these individuals.
- Explore which psychosocial factors may have influence over understanding, construction and attitudes.

Questions

- Do individuals know and understand laws surrounding non-consensual penetrative sex?
- How do individuals define sexual offences involving non-consensual penetrative sex?
- How do individuals construct these definitions?
- What factors can influence these constructions?

Research methodology

The research consists of a 60 to 90 minute qualitative interview held over Microsoft Teams, Zoom or Discord (participant preference). The interviews are transcribed by hand and then stored on a secure, university-run network drive. The researcher will analyse the interviews through a reflexive thematic analytical lens; looking for trends in the data that are both convergent and divergent within and between the participants.

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Tags

- [Rape and sexual offences](#)