

**The effect of participation in restorative justice conferences on
the neighbours of domestic burglary victims**

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Abstract

Following a burglary, the burglary victims' neighbours experience similar negative effects, specifically fear and anger, as the burglary victims themselves. Burglary victims experience significantly increased levels of anger and fear following the burglary. However, previous research shows that victims of a burglary show a decrease in their feeling of fear and anger after participating in restorative justice conferencing. While neighbours often participate in restorative justice conferences, it was not yet researched if their participation also reduces their level of fear and anger. This study aimed at answering the following research question: What factors affect the burglary victims' neighbours' willingness to participate in a restorative justice conference and what are the effects of their participation? It was expected that the higher the neighbours' of the domestic burglary victim's need for information is, the higher the likelihood that they are willing to participate in restorative justice conferencing. It was also expected that the higher the neighbours' of the domestic burglary victim's fear, the lower the likelihood that they are willing to participate in restorative justice conferencing. Additionally, it was expected that after participating in a restorative justice conference neighbours of domestic burglary victims have lower feelings of anger and fear compared to before the participation.. To sum up, it was found that the higher the need for information, the fear and the anger of the neighbours are, the higher their willingness to participate in the restorative justice conference. Furthermore, it was found that the higher the fear and the anger that neighbours experience before they participate in the restorative justice conference is, the more they experience a need for information. Additionally, the burglary victims' neighbours experience a decrease in their levels of anger and fear after participation in the restorative justice conference in comparison to before the conference. It was also found that the participants' need for information significantly mediates the relationship between their fear and their willingness to participate as well as the relationship between their anger and their willingness to participate. Further, participants who have prior experience with burglary did not differentiate themselves significantly from the participants who have no prior experience with burglary.

Keywords: burglary, restorative justice conference, neighbours of burglary victims, need for information, willingness to participate, fear, anger

Introduction

There are two different responses to crime, comparative justice and restorative justice. According to Zehr (1985), restorative justice is “a compass that invites community dialogue regarding a continuum of offenses, including the most severe [...] [in order to] foster healing and peace” (Zehr, 1985, p. 13). For this Zehr formulates three principles: restoration, accountability and engagement. Specifically, the participation in restorative justice aims at restoring trust between the different parties, such as victims, offenders and community members, after a crime. Further it aims at solving the existing conflict in order to reduce the negative impact of the crime by providing them with support in effective communication (Lodi et al, 2021; Restorative justice organization UK, n.d.). Even though the procedure of restorative justice varies between different legal systems, restorative justice generally aims at “rehabilitating offenders within the community” (Lloyd & Borrill, 2020, p.78). While restorative justice is not replacing the legal consequences of crime, it can be added to the process. While the legal system would portray crime as “a violation of the law and the State” (Lodi et al, 2021, p.2), restorative justice would have a holistic view on crime that includes individuals, harm and social crisis as well as emphasizing the individuality of the offenders and victims and their behaviour (Lodi et al, 2021).

Restorative justice is not only used to decrease the impact of harm that has occurred from conflicts but it is also used in order to prevent conflict and harm. Therefore, restorative practice is not only used in the context of crime and the criminal justice system, but also in the context of schools, children services, work environments and other communities (Restorative justice organization UK, n.d.). Additionally, based on the individual needs and social, economic and cultural background of the participants of restorative justice, restorative justice can be modified. Different types of restorative justice can be used to fit the needs of different participants and contexts. Examples are restorative justice conferences, family group conferences, circles of peace, victim-offender mediation and community building circles (Lodi et al, 2021).

Restorative justice conferences

A relevant restorative justice method is called restorative justice conferencing. Contrary to some other restorative justice methods, not only the victim and the offender, but also community members who have been affected by the crime participate in this procedure (Angel et al, 2014; Sherman & Strang, 2013). Angel et al. (2014) and Sherman and Strang (2013) state that during restorative justice conferences trained facilitators, the victim, the offender and

respective community members who have been affected by the crime, such as friends and family are present to talk about the offence. Here, the participants discuss the matter of how the offender could make amends for their crime. Additionally, the victims can also express their feelings caused by the crime and thus experience a decrease in symptoms related to the crime afterwards (Angel et al, 2014).

The duration of a restorative justice conference typically lasts between 60 and 180 minutes. Strang et al (2013) describe the procedure of a restorative justice conference as follows: First, the facilitator talks to the victim and the offender in a one-on-one conversation during which they explain what a restorative justice conference entails, what the restorative justice conference's procedure is and asks if the victim and the offender consent to participating in such a conference. After the participants consent, a meeting is scheduled at a time and place that is convenient for the victim. During the meeting, all participants gather in a private space, such as police stations, prisons, community centres or schools. Here, all participants are seated in a circle. Firstly, all participants as well as their emotional connection to the crime are introduced. Afterwards, the offender is asked to recount their crime. Hereafter, victims and further participants are asked to express the negative consequences they have experienced due to the crime. Following this, all participants including the offender discuss how the offender may repair the harm they have caused due to their crime and how the offender may make amends for their crime. Usually, the participants tend to agree on a solution. The facilitator will then document this decision in writing and the offenders sign the document while the participants take a break. Following this, the decision document is officially filed with an institute that are involved in the restorative justice conference process, like the court, police or other non-legal institutes (Strang et al, 2013).

Benefits of restorative justice

Restorative justice can be beneficial to both victims and offenders as well as the society they are living in. For example, Zebel (2012) found that victims and offenders report feeling satisfied with the meeting after having participated in the restorative justice method victim-offender mediation (VOM). Victims who participated in restorative justice conferences are also more content with the processing of their case in comparison to victims who have not participated in restorative justice conferences (Angel et al, 2014). Further, restorative justice has been found to be beneficial for reducing and eventually healing from psychological consequences victims experience after crimes (Angel et al, 2014; Dickey, 1998). For example, it has been found that victims who have participated in restorative justice experience a decrease

in their post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS) symptoms that they have developed in relation to their victimization (Nascimento et al., 2023; Sherman et al., 2007). These PTSS symptoms are also related to high levels of fear, anxiety and distress. Victims participating in restorative justice experience this decrease statistically significantly more than victims who participated in a conventional criminal justice process (Nascimento et al, 2023). The decrease of PTSS symptoms victims experience due to restorative justice consequently decreases their risk of developing coronary disease which can be caused by PTSS (Sherman et al, 2007).

Another benefit of restorative justice, specifically found in research about restorative justice conferences and victim-offender- mediation, is that it reduces level of anger in victims (Nascimento et al, 2023; Zebel, 2012). During restorative justice conferences, offenders can apologize and make amends to their victims which can lead to a reduction of the victim's anger towards the justice system and the offender (Angel et al, 2014; Nascimento et al, 2023). Angel et al (2014) and Nascimento et al (2023) explain that due to victims' decreased level of anger towards the offender after their participation in restorative justice conferences, their previously increased desire for revenge towards the offender also decreases. However, victims must perceive the offender's apology for their crime during the restorative justice conference as sincere and the offender must take accountability for the harm that their crime has caused in order for this effect to occur (Nascimento et al, 2023).

Participation in restorative justice also yields different positive outcomes for offenders. For example, participating in restorative programs like VOM and restorative justice conferences is related to a lower risk to reoffend (Dickey, 1998; Sherman et al, 2015;). This effect was found for both adult and adolescent offenders (Lloyd & Borrill, 2020), and for different types of crimes, such as burglaries. This could be due to multiple reasons. Offenders report that they developed more empathy for the victim and the harm they have caused them after a VOM meeting, which indicates that they might understand the harm they have caused due to their crime more and therefore feel an increase in their remorse for their crime (Zebel, 2012). Furthermore, Lloyd and Borrill (2020) expect that, due to their participation in restorative justice, the offender internalizes the importance of abiding to the law and therefore will not exert criminal behaviour following the restorative justice conference.

Further, restorative justice also has positive effects for the society that the victims and offenders live in. An example for this are that the healthcare costs related to PTSS symptoms caused by the victimization and the resulting risk of developing coronary disease will be decreased if these symptoms are decreased due to restorative justice conferences (Sherman et

al, 2007). Further, restorative justice also reduces the financial impact of court costs and imprisonment costs (Sherman et al, 2007).

Negative impacts of restorative justice

Even though restorative justice has many benefits, restorative justice may also have negative impacts in certain circumstances. If victims do not perceive the offenders' apology as sincere, the positive effects on the victims' wellbeing described above do not occur. Further, these positive effects also do not occur if the offender does not take accountability for the harm their crime has caused (Nascimento et al, 2023). Additionally, if the facilitators are not correctly trained, it could lead to miscommunication or to the revictimization of the victim during the restorative justice conference. This could decrease the victims' wellbeing further (Nascimento et al, 2023). Moreover, participants may experience a lack of confidentiality and difficulties while working with their community members during the restorative justice process, which may lead to the victims experiencing feelings of embarrassment and discomfort (Umbreit et al, 2002).

Restorative justice and burglary

A crime for which the benefits of restorative justice conferencing are especially prominent is burglary. According to the European commission (2018), burglary is defined as “[...] breaking in and stealing. To be precise, getting unauthorized access to a building or other premises for theft or intent of theft — with or without forcing locks, doors, windows, etc.” (European Commission, 2018). Burglary is a significant issue worldwide (European Commission, n.d.). In the Netherlands, the amount of burglaries has decreased over the last few years, but is still significant (NLTimes, 2024; Statista, 2024). According to Statista (2024), ca 24.400 burglaries were recorded in the Netherlands in the year 2022, which indicates a significant decrease since 2012, when 91.600 burglaries were recorded. However, between the years 2021 and 2022 the amount of recorded burglaries in the Netherlands has slightly increased (Statista, 2024; NLTimes, 2024).

These burglaries cause significant financial consequences (CBS, 2023). According to CBS (2023) the total value of the items stolen during burglaries in the Netherlands in 2021 is over 160 million euros, from which only 70 million euros are covered by insurances. Due to this, 17% of the burglary victims have experienced or are currently experiencing financial difficulties (CBS, 2023).

Victims of burglary often experience not only financial consequences, but also negative psychological consequences, for example, general fear, feeling less safe in their own house, and general psychological distress (Maguire, 1980; CBS, 2023; Kunst & Hoek, 2024). Another prominent psychological consequence is that victims of burglary experience feelings of anger after the crime (van Sintemaartensdijk, 2022; Kunst & Hoek, 2024). Further, Orth and Maercker (2009) found that the anger that individuals feel after having been victimized is often directed at the offender and at the self. This anger is also called post-traumatic anger and is strongly associated with PTSD (Orth & Maercker, 2009). Some victims even develop PTSD as well as mood and anxiety disorders as a consequence of the crime (CBS, 2023; Kunst & Hoek, 2024; Maguire, 1980). This is because homes are often seen as an extension of the self and therefore burglaries, as violations of the self, are potentially traumatic (Kunst & Hoek, 2024). Due to these psychological consequences, burglary victims also are at an increased risk of developing physical health problems and suffering from social problems (Kunst & Hoek, 2024). Restorative justice conferences are applied in cases of burglary (Angel et al, 2014; Sherman et al., 2015; Young, R., 2019) and leads to positive effects for burglary victims (Sherman et al., 2015). It has been found that restorative justice also leads to a decrease of PTTS symptoms in burglary victims. Therefore it can be concluded that the participation of burglary victims in restorative justice conferences decreases the impact of harm that their victimization has caused.

However, burglary victims are not the only individuals who experience negative consequences of the burglary, the victims' neighbours are also negatively impacted. Baranyi et al. (2021) state that living in high crime neighbourhoods has a negative effect on residents' mental health. Furthermore, Pak and Gannon (2023) found that residents of neighbourhood with frequent property crime, such as burglary, experience a decrease in their mental health. Therefore, it is assumed that neighbours of domestic burglary victims experience similar negative psychological effects as the victims themselves, such as fear and anger. Because the participation in restorative justice conferences leads to a decrease of these consequences for the victims of burglary (Sherman, 2007), it is expected that participating in restorative justice conferences might also decrease the consequences that burglary victims' neighbours are experiencing. This would also lead to less costs, for example, health care costs for the society these individuals live in (Sherman, 2007). Therefore including burglary victims' neighbours in restorative justice conferences seems to be of societal relevance.

A body of literature on the decreasing effect of the participation in restorative justice on the symptoms of victims of burglary exists (Sherman, 2007; Sherman et al, 2015). However, to this study's researcher's knowledge, there is a lack of literature on the issues what factors affect

the neighbours' willingness to participate and if there is a decreasing effect of the participation in restorative justice on the symptoms of the neighbours of victims of burglary. If this effect is existent, participation in restorative justice conferences might be recommended by the police or municipalities because it could increase the feeling of safety and wellbeing of the individuals living in the burgled neighbourhood. Burglary victims' neighbours might then also feel like their negative consequences following the burglary are taken seriously. This could lead to an increased level of trust in the justice system. Because of this potential aspects, a relevant question to research is the following:

RQ: What factors affect the neighbours' of the domestic burglary victims' willingness to participate in a restorative justice conference and what are the effects of their participation?

After victimization, victims experience a multitude of needs in order to cope with the impact of the crime. Ten and Kuijpers (2012) as well as Van Dijk (2016) states that victims have a need for information about the offender, their crime and their motives for this crime. Further, van Dijk (2016) found that the victims' need for information is a predictor for their willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation. Since research shows that both victims and neighbours of domestic burglary experience a decrease in their mental health (Barayi et al, 2021; Pak & Gannon, 2023), it can be argued that they might also have similar needs. Therefore it is expected that neighbours of victims of burglary also experience a need for information. Just like in the research of Van Dijk (2016), this need for information might be a predictor for the willingness to participate in conferencing. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: The higher the neighbours' of the domestic burglary victim's need for information is, the higher the likelihood that they are willing to participate in restorative justice conferencing.

Another factor that influences individuals' willingness to participate in restorative justice conferences is fear (Banwell-Moore, 2023; Bolivar, 2013; Bonnensteffen et al., 2022). Victims who are scared to be victimized further and victims who have developed a fear of the offender and also a general fear following the victimization, are less likely to be willing to participate in restorative justice. Explanations for this are that victims do not trust the sincerity of the offender who requested to participate in restorative justice and that victims anticipate to feel uncomfortable during the restorative justice conference due to their fear (Bolivar, 2013). Therefore it is assumed that the higher the fear of neighbours of the domestic burglary victim is, the lower the likelihood that they are willing to participate in restorative justice conferencing.

H2: The higher the neighbours' of the domestic burglary victim's fear, the lower the likelihood that they are willing to participate in restorative justice conferencing.

In addition, it is assumed that these neighbours of burglary victims, similar to burglary victims, also experience an increase in their level of anger and fear after a burglary. Previous research found that victims' participation in restorative justice has a reducing effect on their level of anger and fear (Nascimento et al, 2023; Zebel, 2012). Because according to the present study's researcher's knowledge, there is no literature on this issue, a relevant research question in this case is, if the participation in restorative justice conferencing also has a decreasing effect on the feelings of fear and anger of neighbours of domestic burglary victims. Because victims of burglary and their neighbours experience similar negative consequences (van Sintemaartensdijk, 2022; Kunst & Hoek, 2024; Maguire, 1980; CBS, 2023; Baranyi et al, 2021; Pak & Gannon, 2023) and participation in restorative justice conferences decreases feelings of anger and fear in burglary victims (Nascimento et al, 2023; Zebel, 2012), it is assumed that the participation in restorative justice conferences, will not only reduce the feelings of anger and fear of burglary victims but also have this effect on neighbours of domestic burglary victims.

H3: After participating in a restorative justice conference neighbours of domestic burglary victims have lower feelings of anger compared to before participation

H4: After participating in a restorative justice conference neighbours of domestic burglary victims have lower feelings of fear compared to before participation.

Current study

The current quantitative study aimed at answering the following research question: What factors affect the neighbours' of the domestic burglary victims' willingness to participate in a restorative justice conference and what are the effects of their participation? In the current study the research question was tested in this way: The participants filled in a Qualtrics questionnaire. Here, they read a case vignette that describes a burglary in the participants' neighbour's house. Then, they filled in a survey measuring their level of fear, anger and need for information. Further, the participants read an invitation to a restorative justice conference that also stated the benefits of their participation. Afterwards, the participants filled in a survey measuring their willingness to participate and watched a video of a restorative justice conference. Lastly, the participants filled in a survey measuring their level of fear and anger after their participation in the restorative justice conference.

Method

Participants and design

Design

The current study had a quasi-experimental design because the participants were not randomly assigned to conditions and there was no control group. Further, this study used a within subjects design. All participants watched the same video and read the same case vignette and the same invitation to the restorative justice conference. A survey was used as the data collection method. The independent variables were need for information, fear and participation in the restorative justice conference. Fear was also a dependent variable because it was hypothesized that participants would have lower levels of fear after their participation in the restorative justice conference. It is also an independent variable because it was predicted that the higher the level of the participants' fear would be, the higher their willingness to participate would be. Additionally, the willingness to participate was a dependent variable because it was expected that the higher the need for information would be, the higher the willingness to participate would be and that the higher the burglary victim's neighbours' fear would be, the lower the willingness to participate would be. The participants' willingness to participate was measured after they read the invitation to the restorative justice conference. Further, the participation in the restorative justice conference was an independent variable. The dependent variables fear and anger were measured before and after the participants participated in the restorative justice conference, which means before and after they watched the video. The variables fear and anger were first measured after the participants read the case vignette.

Participants

The sample with a sample size of 122, included 63.93% of women participants, 33.61% of men participants and 1.64% of nonbinary participants. The majority of the participants was German (46.72%). Furthermore the sample consisted of Dutch participants (27.9%) and participants of other nationalities (24.6%). The participants' ages ranged from the ages of 18 to 74, with an average age of 25.79 years old. Most participants were students (68.85%) in comparison to participants who were not university students at the time of study (31.15%). In this research most participants indicated that they had not been victims of burglary before (79.51%). However, the majority of the participants knew a victim of a burglary (77.87%) or

have experienced a burglary in their close neighbourhood while they were living there, so they have been the neighbours of a burglary victim (63.11%).

The researcher received an ethical approval from the University of Twente BMS ethical committee before recruiting the sample. In order to be included in this sample, participants needed to be at least 18 years old and be able to speak English. It was decided to not limit the participation criteria to University of Twente students in order to guarantee for a more diverse sample that represents the general population, who may be effected by domestic burglary. The current study was advertised through the University of Twente Sona system, a system to which all University of Twente Psychology and Communication students have access to and are able to upload their studies and participate in other studies in order to receive mandatory participation points, called Sona points. Further, convenience sampling and snowball sampling were used. Participants self-selected themselves. Participants who participated over the Sona system were rewarded with 0.25 Sona points. Other participants were not rewarded for their participation.

A priori power analysis was conducted with the statistical program G*Power (Faul et al, 2009). In order to ensure sufficient statistical power (actual power = 0.95), the sample size needed to be a minimum of 74 participants for the analysis of the first and second hypotheses and a minimum of 45 participants for the analysis of the third and fourth hypotheses. The sample of this study fulfilled this.

From the original 187 recorded responses, 65 participants needed to be excluded because they did not answer to all required items, did not consent to their participation or were not at least 18 years old. This means that the analysis of the hypothesis 1 and 2 was conducted with a sample of 122 participants. From this sample, an additional 71 participants needed to be excluded because the timing of the survey indicated that they did not watch the video of the restorative justice conference, they did not answer all required questions or they did not answer the control question correctly. Therefore 51 participants were included in the analysis required for the testing of hypotheses 3 and 4.

Materials

In order to participate, participants needed to have access to a technical device, like a smart phone or a computer as well as an internet connection, in order to fill in the Qualtrics survey and watch a video presented in the Qualtrics survey. The scales used in the Qualtrics

survey can be found in the Appendix A. Other materials like the case vignette, the invitation to the restorative justice conference and the video script can be found in Appendix B, C and D.

Case vignette

The participants had to read a case vignette. Here, the participants were asked to imagine that they would be coming home and would see that their neighbour had been burgled. Further, the case vignette described that the neighbour was distressed, how the burgled home looked like, for example that a window was broken, and a conversation between the neighbour, the police officers and the participant (Appendix B). The case vignette included detailed descriptions in order to increase the participants' immersion in the situation.

Invitation to the restorative justice conference

Additionally, the participants read an invitation to the restorative justice conference. It states that one month after the burglary, the participant had received an invitation to the restorative justice conference from the victim support service. In this letter, it is acknowledged that the participant might also experience negative affect after the burglary and they are invited to the restorative justice conference. Further, it is explained how a restorative justice conference works and what the benefits of their restorative justice conference are. Lastly, they are reminded that their participation would be voluntarily, and are encouraged to participate (see Appendix C).

Video

The participants also had to watch a video. This video showed three actors acting as the neighbour and the burglar from the case vignette as well as a facilitator participating in a restorative justice conference. The participants were asked to imagine that they were also participating in the restorative justice conference as the burglary victim's neighbours and were directly addressed by the actors multiple times. Further, the actors looked directly in the camera. For example, at the end of the video, the facilitator looked directly in the camera and asked the participants how they were feeling and what they needed from the offender and the community in order to cope with the crime. This was done to increase the immersion of the participants in the situation. During the video, the victim described how the crime has affected her, the burglar explained why he has broken into the home and together they talked about which amends the burglar could make for his crime (see Appendix D). These portrayed aspects were chosen because they represent the essential components of restorative justice conferences (Strang et al, 2013). This ensures that the participants gain a comprehensive understanding of restorative

justice conferences and thus they receive the maximum impact of this intervention within the short duration of the video.

Questionnaires

Scale to measure need for information. The variable “need for information” was measured with three items that were developed by Van Dijk (2016). These items were measured with a 7-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). For this study, the items were translated from Dutch to English. Further, the items were adapted to the context of this study. Here, the focus was burglary and van Dijk focused on robbery. An example of an adaptation is the following: “To what extent would you need information about the offender’s background after the robbery?” was changed into “To what extent would you need information about the offender’s background after the burglary?”. In order to test the validity of the variable “need for information”, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted which showed that the variable has excellent validity, with the factor loadings ranging from 0.61 to 0.87 and being significant ($p < .001$). The scale “need for information” had excellent reliability which is shown by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90, and an Omega coefficient of $\omega = 0.81$.

Scale for measuring willingness to participate in a restorative justice conference. The participants’ “willingness to participate” in the restorative justice conference was measured by three items on a 7-point Likert scale, scaling from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” that were developed by the researcher. It was decided to ask the participants about their willingness to participate with multiple question items instead of asking them to answer “yes” or “no” to the question “I am willing to participate in a restorative justice conference with my neighbour who was the burglary victim and the offender” to increase the reliability of the variable. An example for an item is “I would like to talk to the offender in a restorative justice conference”. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in order to test the validity of the variable “willingness to participate”, and this analysis showed high validity of the variable, with the factor loadings ranging from 0.82 to 0.89, and the factor loadings being statistically significant ($p < .001$). The scale “willingness to participate” has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.95 and a Omega coefficient of $\omega = 0.90$ which indicates excellent reliability.

Scale to measure level of fear. To measure the participants’ “fear” of the offender and the burglary, five items developed by Van Dijk (2016) were used. They were measured on a 7 point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. These items were translated from Dutch to English and the items were adapted to fit the context of the study. So, the original item “If, as a victim, I were to think back to the perpetrator two weeks later, I would

feel...” was adapted to “ If, as a neighbour of the burglary victim I were to think back to the burglary and the burglar two weeks later, I would feel...”. An example for an item is “ If, as a neighbour of the burglary victim were to think back to the burglary and the burglar two weeks later, I would feel nervous.”. The confirmatory factor analysis of the variable “fear pre-test” showed a good validity; the factor loadings ranged from 0.60 to 0.83, and were statistically significant ($p < .001$). The scale “fear pre-test” had high reliability which is shown by the Cronbach's alpha of 0.92. The confirmatory factor analysis of the scale “fear post-test” suggested a high validity and a strong model fit. Here, the factor loadings ranged from 0.709 to 0.928 and were statistically significant ($p < .001$). Additionally, the variable had excellent reliability, Cronbach's Alpha of =0.90.

Scale to measure level of anger. To measure the participants' “anger” towards the offender and the burglary, five items developed by Van Dijk (2016) were used. They were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. These items were translated from Dutch to English and the items were adapted to fit the context of the study. So the original item “If I, as a victim, were to think back to the perpetrator two weeks later, I would feel...” was adapted to “If I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim were to think back to the burglary and the burglar two weeks later, I would feel...”. An example for an item is “ If I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim were to think back to the burglary and the burglar two weeks later, I would feel angry”. In order to test the validity of the scale “anger pre-test” a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted and it indicated that “anger pre-test” had a good validity and a good model fit. The factor loadings ranged from 0.412 to 0.930 and the factor loadings were statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Further, “Anger pre-test” showed good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of = 0.82. The confirmatory factor analysis of “anger post-test” showed a mixed validity with and acceptable internal consistency, a consistent construct but a low model fit. The factor loadings ranged from 0.521 to 0.940 and were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). “Anger post-test” had high reliability which is indicated by a Cronbach's alpha of = 0.88.

Procedure

First, participants followed the link to the Qualtrics questionnaire. Here, they first read a description of the study and an informed consent form. The informed consent form states that the study would take about 30 minutes, and that the participation is voluntarily and that the participants could withdraw at any time, without experiencing any consequences. Further, they were informed that the data will be treated confidentially, so that the participants cannot be

identified and that the data will be used in this research, as well as stored for future research. After having signed this consent form, they answered the demographic questions. Afterwards, the participants read a vignette about a burglary of their neighbour's house. Further they filled in the scales about the level of fear and the level of anger as well as the scale about need for information. Next, participants read an invitation to the restorative justice conference, including a description of process of restorative justice conferences and its benefits. Afterwards, they filled in the scale about willingness to participate in a restorative justice conference. Furthermore, Qualtrics displays an explanation that a video of a restorative justice conference would be shown next. It stated that if they did not feel comfortable watching the video, they could end the survey, but they were encouraged to continue. This was done in order to gather as much information as possible and too prevent drop-outs to measure the impact of participation. It was also stated that if participants felt uncomfortable with this, they could decide to not continue with the survey. Next, a video of a restorative justice conference for the case of the burglary in the participant's neighbour's home was shown. This video was of short duration and included the most important and relevant steps of a restorative justice conference, such as the offender's explanation of why they burgled the house, the offender's apology for their crime as well as a solution to the crime, for example which amends the offender would make. After watching this video, the participants filled in the scales about the level of fear and the level of anger again. Lastly, the survey ended and a message thanking the participants for their participation was displayed.

Analytical strategies

The statistical analysis were conducted with the statistical program RStudio 2024.04.1+748. Here, the R Studio packages "tidyverse", "broom", "emmeans", "car", "lme4", "lmerTest", "rstatix", "lavaan" and "dyplr" were used. For hypothesis 1 a regression analyses was used, in which the need for information was the independent and the willingness to participate was the dependent variable. Additionally, a regression analysis was also used for hypothesis 2. Here, the fear was the independent variable and the willingness to participate was the dependent variable. For hypotheses 3 and 4, paired t-tests was used because the data was normally distributed. With this statistical analysis, the means of the pre- and post-test scores were compared in order to test for a significant statistical difference between the scores. For hypothesis 3, the participation in the restorative justice conference is the independent variable and the anger is the dependent variable. For hypothesis 4, the participation in the restorative justice conference also is the independent variable, but fear is the dependent variable.

Basic psychometric assumptions

In order to test if these analyses would be reliable, the basic psychometric assumptions were tested. While testing for the basic psychometric assumptions of the model needed for hypothesis 1, so the model consisting of the variables “need for information” and “willingness to participate”, it was found that the assumption of linearity, the assumption of independence of errors and the assumption of homoscedasticity were met. The assumption of normality was not met. For the model needed for hypothesis 2, so the model consisting of the variables “willingness to participate” and “fear pre-test”, the assumption of linearity and the assumption of homoscedasticity were met. However, the assumption of normality and the assumption of independence of errors were not met. Due to the large sample size used for the analysis of these hypotheses (N=122), it may not have been critical for the analysis that some of these assumptions were violated (Lumley et al, 2002). Because of this, the analyses were conducted. The model needed for hypothesis 3, consisting of “anger pre-test” and “anger post-test” met the assumption of normality and did not meet the assumption of no outliers. The model consisting of the variables “fear pre-test” and “fear post-test”, so the model needed for hypothesis 4, met the assumption of normality and did not meet the assumption of no outliers, as this model contained one outlier. The following analyses were conducted with and without outliers and got the same results. Therefore, it seems to not be critical for the analyses that the assumption of no outliers is not met and the analyses were conducted.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics showed that participants experienced moderate levels of need for information, willingness to participate, fear pre-test, fear post-test, anger pre-test, and anger post-test (see Table 1). All independent variables were significantly correlated with the dependent variable, willingness to participate. It was found that the need for information was significantly correlated with the willingness to participate. Additionally, the willingness to participate and fear pre-test were moderately correlated, and the relationship between the willingness to participate and anger pre-test also indicated a moderate correlation (see Table 1). Moreover, the variable need for information was significantly correlated with fear pre-test, and anger pre-test (see Table 1).

Additionally, the relationship between the variables anger and fear was examined. The variable anger pre-test was moderately correlated with the variables fear pre-test and fear post-test. Further, the variable anger post-test was moderately correlated with fear post-test. This suggested that participants that experienced higher levels of anger before participating in the restorative justice conference also experienced higher levels of fear levels before and after the restorative justice conference. Further, it seems like the relationship between these variables, anger and fear, maintains even though the levels of these variables decrease over the course of the study (see Table 1).

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation, Reliability and Intercorrelations of the variables

Variable	M	SE	1.	2.	3.1.	3.2.	4.1.	4.2.
1. Need for information	4.69	1.44	-					
2. Willingness to participate	3.14	1.17	0.50***	-				
3. 1. Fear pre-test	4.52	1.32	0.52**	0.30***	-			
3.2. Fear post-test	3.37	1.2			0.37**	-		
4.1. Anger pre-test	4.18	1.17	0.27**	0.24**	0.46***	0.29**	-	
4.2. Anger post-test	3.30	1.31			0.18	0.58**	0.52***	-

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. The diagonal (—) represents self-correlation. Due to the need to exclude participants for the analysis of Hypothesis 3 and 4, the variables had different amounts of observations. Therefore, the empty fields represent that no correlation could be calculated between these variables. The correlations for the pre-test were conducted with the full sample ($N = 122$), and the correlation for the post-test was conducted $N = 53$.

Hypothesis testing

In order to test the first hypothesis, the higher the burglary victim's neighbour's need for information is, the higher the likelihood that they are willing to participate in restorative justice conferencing, a linear regression was conducted. The results of this linear regression indicated that there was a significant positive relationship between the need for information and the willingness to participate, $B = 0.41$, $SE = 0.06$, $t(120) = 6.33$, $p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.25$, $F(1, 120) = 40.06$. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was accepted.

To test the second hypothesis, the higher the neighbour's of the domestic burglary victim's fear, the lower the likelihood that they are willing to participate in restorative justice conferencing, a linear regression model was created. Contrary to expectations, this linear model showed a significant positive relationship between the variables "fear pre-test" and "willingness to participate", $B = 0.27$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(120) = 3.50$, $p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.09$, $F(1, 120) = 12.28$. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was rejected.

In order to test the third hypothesis, after participating in a restorative justice conference neighbours of domestic burglary victims have lower feelings of anger compared to before participation, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare anger scores before and after the intervention. These results indicated a significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test scores, $t(50) = 5.17$, $p = 0.000$ with a mean difference of 0.88 and a 95% confidence interval [0.54, 1.23]. Hence, hypothesis 3 was accepted.

In order to test the fourth hypothesis, after participating in a restorative justice conference neighbours of domestic burglary victims have lower feelings of fear compared to before participation, and to compare the fear pre-test and fear post-test score, a paired-samples t-test was conducted. This t-test indicated a statistically significant decrease in the fear scores, $t(50) = 7.06$, $p = 0.000$ with a mean difference of 1.23 and a 95% confidence interval [0.88, 1.58]. Thus, hypothesis 4 was accepted.

Exploratory analyses

Experience with burglary vs no experience with burglary

Interestingly, the majority of the participants had prior experience with being the neighbour of a burglary victim, in total of 63.11% have experienced this. Therefore, it was tested if having experience with a burglary in comparison with having no experience with a burglary might have had an effect on the relationships between the variables that this present study examined. In order to test if the study results of the participants who have prior experience

with burglary differentiate themselves significantly from the participants who have no prior experience with burglary, multiple exploratory analyses were conducted.

In order to compare the willingness to participate between the participants who have prior experience with burglary experience with those participants who have no prior experience, and independent-sample t-test was conducted. The mean of the willingness to participate of the participants who have prior experience with burglary ($M = 5.55$) was lower than the mean of the participants who have no prior experience ($M = 5.71$). Nevertheless, this difference was found to be not statistically significant, $t(119) = -0.73$, $p = 0.468$, 95% CI $[-0.62, 0.29]$. This indicated that the two groups did not differ significantly in their willingness to participate.

In order to test if there was an interaction effect of having experience in comparison with having no experience with a burglary, on the relationship between the “need for information” and the “willingness to participate”, a regression analysis was conducted. Here, the interaction effect was tested because it was relevant to test if the effect of the “need for information” on the “willingness to participate” was significant and had a stronger effect for participants who have experience with a burglary in comparison with those participants who have no experience with a burglary. The main effects of the “need for information” on the “willingness to participate”, $B = 0.03$, $t(117) = 0.31$, $p = 0.756$, and the main effect of group status, in this case having experience with or having no experience with a burglary, $B = 0.5$, $t(117) = 0.56$, $p = 0.576$, were not significant. It was found that the interaction effect of having experience with and no experience with a burglary on the participants’ “willingness to participate” when controlling for their “need for information” was not statistically significant, $B = -0.06$, $t(117) = -0.38$, $p = 0.703$ (see Table 4). Participants who are burglary victims’ neighbours in their personal life and participants who are not do not experience different levels of need for information that also do not result in different levels of willingness to participate in restorative justice conferences.

Furthermore, a regression analysis was performed to test for the interaction effect of having experience in comparison with having no experience with a burglary, on the relationship between the “fear pre-test” and the “willingness to participate”. This test of the interaction effect was conducted because it is relevant to test if the effect of the “fear pre-test” on the “willingness to participate” was more significant for participants who have experience with a burglary in comparison with those participants who have no experience with a burglary. The main effect of the “fear pre-test” and “willingness to participate” was not significant, $B = 0.026$, $t(117) = 0.311$,

$p = 0.756$. Additionally, the main effect of group status was also not significant, $B = 0.502$, $t(117) = 0.560$, $p = 0.576$. Further, the interaction effect between group status and “fear pre-test” was not significant, $B = 0.057$, $t(117) = -0.382$, $p = 0.703$. To conclude, participants who have experience with a burglary do not experience a stronger effect of “fear pre-test” on their “willingness to participate” than participants who have no experience with a burglary.

Mediation effect of need for information on the relationship between fear pre-test and willingness to participate and the relationship between anger pre-test and willingness to participate

Interestingly, it was found that the need for information is related to higher willingness to participate. In order to test if the need for information mediates the relationships between the fear pre-test and the willingness to participate as well as if the need for information mediates the relationship between the fear pre-test and the willingness to participate, mediation analyses were performed. Firstly, a mediation analysis was conducted to examine whether the need for information mediated the relationship between fear pre-test and the willingness to participate. The results indicated that the fear pre-test significantly predicted the need for information, $B=0.57, SE = 0.08$, $t(120) = 6.68$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.27$, $F(1,120) = 44.57$. The higher the fear pre-test is, the higher the need for information. Further, as stated for the hypothesis testing of hypothesis 1, it was found that the relationship between the need for information and the willingness to participate is positive and significant, $B = 0.41$, $SE = 0.06$, $t(120) = 6.33$, $p = 0.000$, $R^2 = 0.25$, $F(1, 120) = 40.06$. The higher the need for information, the higher the willingness to participate. The mediation analysis revealed a significant indirect effect ($ACME: B = 0.22$, 95% CI $[0.11, 0.36]$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that fear pre-test significantly influenced the willingness to participate through the need for information. The direct effect of fear pre-test on the willingness to participate ($ADE: B = 0.05$, 95% CI $[-0.13, 0.21]$, $p = 0.59$) was not significant. The total effect of fear pre-test on the willingness to participate was significant ($Total Effect: B = 0.27$, 95% CI $[0.11, 0.41]$, $p = 0.002$). Moreover, 80% of the total effect was mediated through the need for information ($Prop. Mediated: B = 0.80$, 95% CI $[0.40, 1.96]$, $p = 0.002$). The participants’ need for information significantly mediates the relationship between their fear pre-test and their willingness to participate.

Further, a mediation analysis was performed to examine whether the need for information mediated the relationship between the anger pre-test and the willingness to participate. It was found that the relationship between the anger pre-test and the need for

information is significantly positive, $B = 0.31$, $SE = 0.10$, $t(120) = 3.06$, $p = 0.003$, $R^2 = 0.072$, $F(1,120) = 9.37$. This means that the higher the anger pre-test, the higher the need for information. Additionally, the relationship between the anger pre-test and the willingness to participate is significantly positive, $B = 0.23$, $SE = 0.08$, $t(120) = 2.75$, $p = 0.007$, $R^2 = 0.59$, $F(1,120) = 7.58$. This means that the higher the anger pre-test, the higher the willingness to participate. Furthermore, the mediation analysis found a significant indirect effect ($ACME$: $B = 0.12$, 95% $CI [0.02, 0.23]$, $p = 0.015$). This suggests that the need for information significantly mediates the relationship between the anger pre-test and the willingness to participate. The direct effect of the anger pre-test on the willingness to participate was not significant (ADE : $B = 0.11$, 95% $CI [-0.05, 0.26]$, $p = 0.180$). This means that the direct relationship between the anger pre-test and the willingness is not significant after accounting for the mediator need for information. The total effect of anger pre-test on willingness to participate was significant ($Total\ effect$: $B = 0.23$, 95% $CI [0.05, 0.38]$, $p = 0.011$). 52% of the total effect was mediated by through the need for information ($B = 0.52$, 95% $CI [0.11, 1.54]$, $p = 0.022$). The participants' need for information significantly mediates the relationship between their anger pre-test and their willingness to participate.

Discussion

Neighbours of burglary victims experience similar negative affect, specifically fear and anger, following the burglary as the burglary victims themselves (Barayi et al, 2021, CBS, 2023; Kunst & Hoek, 2024; Maguire, 1980; Pak & Gannon, 2023, van Sintemaartensdijk, 2022). Previous research found that the participation in restorative justice conference's significantly decreases the level of anger and fear that individuals experience due to the victimization of a burglary (Nascimento et al, 2023; Zebel, 2012). While neighbours often participate in restorative justice conferences, it was not yet researched if their participation also reduces their level of fear and anger. The present study aimed to test which factors affect the neighbours of the domestic burglary victims' willingness to participate in a restorative justice conference and what the effects of their participation are. The present study is relevant because based on the results it can be decided if it is beneficial for neighbours of burglary victims' wellbeing to participate in restorative justice conferences. Beyond that, this study focused on gathering information about what might increase their willingness to participate in these conferences.

It was found that when neighbours of a burglarized victim have a higher need for information and higher levels of fear, they are more willing to participate in restorative justice

conferencing. Further, after participating in a restorative justice conference, neighbours of domestic burglary victims have lower feelings of anger and fear compared to before participation. Due to the exploratory analysis it was found that the higher the fear that participants experience before they participate in the restorative justice conference, the more they experience a need for information. The same effect was found for anger. Moreover, it was found that this is a mediated relation. The burglary victim's neighbours' need for information significantly mediates the relationship between their anger pre-test and their willingness to participate, as well as their fear pre-test and their willingness to participate. Additionally, the feelings of anger and fear in the context of burglary and restorative justice conferences are significantly related. Further, contrary to expectations, no difference between participants who were neighbours of burglary victims in their personal lives and participants who were not neighbours of burglary victims in their personal lives was found.

The effect of the need for information on the willingness to participate in restorative justice conferences

The analysis does support the first hypothesis. The higher the neighbour's of the domestic burglary victim's need for information is, the higher the likelihood that they are willing to participate in restorative justice conferencing. The finding of the present research is in line with the findings of Ten Boom and Kuijpers (2012) and Van Dijk (2016) who found that victims experience a need for information about the crime and the offender. Further Van Dijk (2016) found that this need represents a predictor for victims' willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation. In light of the results and in relation to previous literature, it can be said that the neighbours of burglary victims have a need for information, similar to the direct victims. Further, like the direct victims, neighbours want to participate in restorative justice.

This finding is consistent with previous research. If people perceive themselves to be at higher risk of a threat, they are more likely to seek information about this threat to protect themselves against it (Williams & Joinson, 2020). The burglary victims' neighbours might feel at risk of being burglarized in the future after having experienced the burglary in their neighbourhood and are therefore seeking out information about the crime and the burglar to protect themselves from a burglary in their home. The burglary victims' neighbours might not be able to receive this information they are searching for because they cannot participate in restorative justice conferences, for example due to logistical reasons or privacy concerns and other concerns of feeling embarrassed and uncomfortable of the victims and offenders (Umbreit et al, 2002). . If this is the case, they could be provided with information about how to protect

themselves from burglaries by the police or other institutions, in order to fulfil this need for information and experience a sense of self efficacy to protect themselves from the threat of future burglaries (Williams & Joinson, 2020).

The effect of emotions on the willingness to participate in restorative justice conferences

Contrary to expectations, it was found that the higher the neighbour's of the domestic burglary victim's fear, the higher the likelihood that they are willing to participate in restorative justice conferencing. This finding is inconsistent with previous literature that states that individuals' fear negatively influences their willingness to participate in restorative justice conferences (Banwell-Moore, 2023; Bolivar, 2013; Bonnensteffen et al., 2022). Bolivar (2013) states that individuals who are experiencing a fear of further victimization, fear of the offender and general fear after the crime are less willing to participate in restorative justice. This is because these individuals fear that they may feel uncomfortable during the conference or they do not trust that the offender is sincere in their participation and in the conversation (Bolivar, 2013).

What might explain this outcome is a possible cut-off score for the impact of fear on the willingness to participate. Batchlor (2023) found that the more the offence impacted the victim, they were more likely to participate in restorative justice. Many participants stated that their reason for participation was that they wanted to inform the offender about the impact of their crime. Additionally, Batchlor (2023) found that fear has a positive impact on the willingness to participate because victims experience a need to mitigate the negative consequences resulting from the crime, here fear. The victims might expect to decrease these negative consequences due to the participation in restorative justice. However, Batchlor (2023) also states that if the victim experiences the crime as serious, their fear levels might be too high and they might not perceive the benefits of restorative justice as beneficial. Therefore they might not be willing to participate in restorative justice conferences. Additionally, Zebel et al (2017) states that if victims experience an offence to be of too little importance, they are also less likely to be willing to participate. So it seems that if the crime is experienced as too serious and therefore neighbours experience high levels of fear, they are not willing to participate. Similarly, if the crime is seen as too trivial and the neighbours therefore experience low levels of fear, they are also not willing to participate. Future research could investigate which level of fear leads to the highest willingness to participate to participate in restorative justice.

Another explanation for the positive relation between fear and willingness to participate is the need to belong. Humans experience a need to belong to other individuals and fear the

social exclusion and rejection that might be the consequences of not portraying socially wished for behaviour (Baumeister et al, 2007). Therefore, they might be willing to participate in a restorative justice conference to support their neighbour and show that they are acting in a socially responsible manner. If they are experiencing high levels of fear, they might also expect that their neighbour, the burglary victim, experiences high levels of fear and therefore feel more inclined to support them during this potentially emotionally demanding situation, here the restorative justice conference. Future research could test the impact of the burglary victims' neighbours' participation in the restorative justice conference on the burglary victims' feelings.

Another explanation for this result could be that fearful individuals seek information in order to reduce the uncertainty caused by the fear inducing situation, as well as increase the ability to adapt to this new situation (Charpentier et al., 2022). The exploratory analysis found that the higher the fear that participants experience before they participate in the restorative justice conference is, the more they experience a need for information. The same effect was found for anger. Moreover, the exploratory results show that the higher the anger before the restorative justice conference, the higher the participants' willingness to participate in the restorative justice conference. Further, the exploratory analyses also found that the participants' need for information significantly mediates the relationship between their anger pre-test and their willingness to participate. Additionally, the results showed that the participants' need for information significantly mediates the relationship between their fear pre-test and their willingness to participate.

Participants knew that they may receive the information they experience a need for during the restorative justice conference. In the invitation to the restorative justice conference, they were informed that during this conference, one may ask questions about the crime and the burglar as well as listen in to the conversation between the victim, here their neighbour and the burglar. Because the participants knew that they were going to receive more information during this restorative justice, they therefore might have been more willing to participate in it.

In the case of this present study, the participants were fearful because of the burglary and potentially experienced a need for information because receiving this information could decrease the uncertainty they were experiencing due to the burglary. They did know that they might receive this information needed to decrease their uncertainty during the restorative justice conference and may therefore have been more willing to participate in these conferences. Further, the burglary victims' neighbours may have had this need for information because it may increase their potential of adapting to the change, for example feeling unsafe in their

neighbourhood. Further, Restrepo-Costro et al (2022) found that individuals seek information in order to “gain control over negative affects”, for example fear and anger and decrease these affects. Individuals behave in this manner if they are not able to “avoid or escape these aversive events”, here the burglary at the participants’ neighbours’ house. The participants of the current study could not avoid or escape experiencing the burglary because they had to read a case vignette describing it. So they may have experienced this need for information because they wanted to control their fear and anger caused by the burglary and consequently decrease those emotions. As stated above, they were aware that this information might be provided to them during the restorative justice conference, which might have therefore increased their willingness to participate.

Decreased levels of fear and anger after the participation in restorative justice conferences

The results also show that the burglary victims’ neighbours have lower levels of fear and anger after participating in a restorative justice conference. This supports the findings of previous literature. Neighbours of burglary victims experience similar negative feelings, such as anger and fear, to the burglary victims (CBS, 2023; Baranyi et al, 2021; Kunst & Hoek, 2024; Maguire, 1980; Pak & Gannon, 2023; van Sintemaartensdijk, 2022). Further, Nascimento et al (2023) and Zebel (2012) found that burglary victims experience a decrease in their feelings of anger and fear due to their participation in restorative justice conferences. These effects of decreased feelings of anger and fear due to the participation in restorative justice conferences were now also found for the neighbours of burglary victims. Therefore, it seems like the participation in restorative justice conferences would increase the wellbeing of burglary victims’ neighbours. In the current study, the participants were only being shown a short excerpt of a restorative justice conference, that included the victim’s description of how the crime affected her, the burglar’s explanation of why he broke into this house and the participants’ conversation about the amends the burglar could make for his crime (see Appendix D). The decreasing effect on the study participants’ fear and anger of watching this video suggests that these components of the restorative justice conference are essential for improving the wellbeing of the conference’s participants.

Hearing the burglary victim express their emotions regarding the burglary will likely enhance their neighbours’ ability to process their own emotions (Rimé, 2007). . This is because this encourages emotional expression and therefore, it encourages empathy and emotional communion. By processing their emotions, the burglary victim’s neighbours are likely to experience a decrease in their fear and anger levels. Additionally, as stated above, people seek

information about threats in order to protect themselves from them (Williams & Joinson, 2020). If the burglary victim's neighbours receive information about the crime and the offender during the restorative justice conference, they are likely to feel more able to protect themselves from future burglaries and therefore they will likely experience less fear. The participants' conversation about the amends the burglar will make might have decreased the burglary victim's neighbour's levels of fear and anger because if victims perceive the offenders to be sincere and to take responsibility for the harm their crime has caused, such as by apologizing and promising to make amends, the victims' wellbeing increases (Nascimento et al, 2023).

Exploratory outcomes

Because the majority of the participants had prior experience with being a burglary victim's neighbour, it was tested if the test results of these participants with prior experience differentiated themselves significantly from those participants who did not have prior experience with burglary. Here, no difference between participants who were neighbours of burglary victims in their personal lives and participants who were not neighbours of burglary victims in their personal lives was found: Participants who are neighbours of victims in their personal lives do not experience a higher need for information that results in a higher likelihood to be willing to participate in a restorative justice conference than participants who are not neighbours of burglary victims in their personal lives. Additionally, participants who are neighbours of burglary victims in their personal lives and participants who are not neighbours of burglary victims in their personal life did not differ significantly in their willingness to participate in restorative justice conferencing and how the participation in this restorative justice conference affected their levels of fear and anger.

This is contrary to previous literature. Pearson et al. (2015) found that mental imagery and perception share common neural representations. Therefore it is likely that if an individual imagines a fictive situation that is similar to their experiences, similar, overlapping cognitive processes are activated. Due to their personal opinions, it is therefore assumed that the participants who are burglary victim's neighbours would be likely to be able to imagine themselves vividly in the situation described in the case vignette and in the video. However, the participants of this study might not have any experience with participating in restorative justice conferences in their personal life, prior to this study and therefore their previous experience with burglary might not have affected the study significantly. Additionally, in this study, none of the participants were the real neighbours of the burglary victims, because this is a fictional burglary case and therefore participants read a text vignette and watched a case vignette. Dawtry

et al (2020) found that watching video vignettes rather than only reading text vignettes leads to higher immersion in the case as well as higher levels of emotions due to the vividness of this medium. Because the participants in the current study not only read a text vignette but also watched a video vignette, they might have been highly likely to immerse themselves in the situation regardless of whether they were the neighbour of a burglary victim in their personal life or not. Therefore, these two groups might have not shown significant differences.

Strengths and limitations

The present study has multiple strengths. First of all, this study is the first to focus on the neighbours of burglary victims and the effect of their participation in restorative justice conferences on their wellbeing as well as the factors that are impacting their willingness to participate in these conferences. Another strong suit of this research is that it did not only make use of written scenarios, but also included a video. The use of videos in research increases the immersion of the participants significantly, which in turn also increases the validity of the research (Dawtry et al, 2020).

However, it is important to interpret the outcomes of this study with some limitations in mind. The participants were not the real neighbours of a real burglary victim in this study, but rather this case was fictional and acted out by actors. Even though the video was likely to lead to high levels of immersion (Dawtry et al, 2020), individuals experience an increased level of negative emotions as well as a need to reduce those emotions when presented with a real-life event in comparison with a fictionalized event (Iosifyan & Wolfe, 2024). Therefore it is likely the participants of this present study have experienced a lower level of negative emotions than they would have if presented with a recording of a real restorative justice conference. Due to this, further research is suggested. Because, in this case, the participants were not the real neighbours and because this is a fictional case, it is advised to recruit a sample of participants that have been neighbours of victims in their personal lives. During the research, they could be asked to first recall and describe their feelings while reimagining their case. Furthermore, they could watch the restorative justice video, so that the effect of their participation in restorative justice conferences can be measured. If participants are participating in this study within a short time frame after their case took place, the potential for recall bias could be decreased (Colombo et al., 2020; Evans and Leighton, 1995). Additionally, another recommendation for future research is to include real cases into the research. Here, neighbours of burglary victims could be interviewed or asked to fill out questionnaires before and after participating in a restorative justice conference in their personal life. This is recommended because individuals experience

a significantly higher level of negative emotions and desire to reduce these emotions when presented with a real event in comparison with a fictionalized event (Iosifyan & Wolfe, 2024). Thus, interviewing individuals who have participated in a real restorative justice conference might increase the reliability and validity of the study results.

Additionally, the video of the restorative justice conference was about five minutes long, which is significantly shorter than an actual restorative justice conference. The video length was decided on because of the short time scope of the study and included the relevant aspects of a restorative justice conference. However, within the length of a real conference, the conference participants have more time to ask questions, and potentially fulfil their need for information, develop empathy for the burglar and decrease their uncertainty about the situation (Strang et al, 2013). Thus members of real restorative justice conferences potentially have a more significant decrease in their anger and fear than participants of this study.

Moreover, another limitation of this study is that the participants' opportunity for interaction during the restorative justice conference was limited because the video was recorded. They could only communicate their personal opinions and questions after watching the video, by typing in a text box. Because this is different from a restorative justice conference, during which the participating neighbours have the opportunity to speak up (Strang et al, 2013), this might have mitigated the effect of the conference. As stated earlier, future research should include neighbours of burglary victims, who could be interviewed or asked to fill out questionnaires before and after participating in an actual restorative justice conference. These individuals have experienced and participated in full-length restorative justice conferences. Further, these participants would not be limited in their opportunity to interact during the restorative justice conference, like the participants who watched a short video were. Therefore the issues described above could be evaded. If future studies would include participants who are not the real neighbours of real burglary victims, these studies could include a recording of a real restorative justice conference instead of a fictional conference. Iosifyan and Wolfe (2024) found that participants presented with a fictional event had fewer negative feelings and less motivation to reduce these feelings in comparison to the participants presented with an actual event. Therefore, participants might experience a recording of a restorative justice conference as more authentic than a fictionalized video, like the one used in this study, and might feel increased negative emotions towards it. Moreover, the participants could first be presented with a description of the real case as well as the real burglary victim's neighbour's account of the case and their emotions related to it. This way the neighbours' perspective is integrated in the

study design and the participants are more likely to immerse themselves into the case and understand the neighbours' emotions regarding the burglary (Rimé, 2007).

Recommendations for future research

Due to the scope of the present study, only a limited number of variables were included in this research, even though other factors might also influence the participants' willingness to participate in the restorative justice conferences. Thus, future studies are advised to include a wider variety of variables in their research that might impact the neighbours of burglary victims' willingness to participate. Examples of such factors are the need to mentally cope with the crime as well as the need for agency. Van Dijk (2016) found that these needs predict crime victims' willingness to participate in victim-offender mediation. Therefore, it is expected that these needs may also predict the neighbours of burglary victims' willingness to participate in restorative justice conferences.

Another recommendation is to investigate the potential fear cut-off score regarding individuals' willingness to participate. As stated during the discussion, it seems like at a certain level of fear participants might experience the highest level of willingness to participate. However, if participants experience lower or higher levels of fear, their willingness to participate might decrease significantly (Batchlor, 2023; Zebel et al, 2017). Future research should investigate which level of fear leads to the highest willingness to participate to participate in restorative justice. This could be done by dividing participants into multiple conditions during which they are presented with events that, on average, elicit different levels of fear as well as controlling for individual factors that may lead to different levels of fear experienced due to the same stimuli.

In some cases it might not be possible for burglary victims' neighbours to participate in restorative justice conferences or to watch videos of actual restorative justice conferences. Examples for this are if their participation cannot be financed or the victims do not feel comfortable with their neighbours attending or watching a video of the restorative justice conference (Umbreit et al, 2002). In this case, future studies could use virtual reality programs to research the effect of the burglary victims' neighbours' participation in restorative justice conferences on their wellbeing as well as their needs and their willingness to participate further. These programs could allow participants to interact with the fictional victim, offender and facilitator as well as other fictional restorative justice participants during the fictionalized restorative justice conference. Here, participants could watch the video of the restorative justice conference and simultaneously, for example, speak up and write text messages and the

programs could react to it, so that the fictionalized scenario adapts to the interactions of the participants. Due to the increased level of interactivity in virtual reality, the participants are likely to experience higher immersion in the restorative justice conference (Mütterlein, 2018). Thus, their level of anger and fear might decrease more significantly in comparison to if they were watching a video of a fictional conference.

Additionally, future studies should research if providing burglary victims' neighbours with information about how to protect themselves from burglaries could also fulfil their need for information (Williams & Joinson, 2020) therefore increase their wellbeing similarly to how their need would be fulfilled and their wellbeing would be increased during their participation in restorative justice conferences. This could be a useful strategy in cases that burglary victims' neighbours cannot participate in the restorative justice conference (Umbreit et al., 2002).

Because it is expected that the neighbours feel inclined to support the burglary victim throughout the emotionally demanding restorative justice conference (Baumeister et al, 2007), future research is advised to test if the victims do feel supported by their neighbours. Further future research is advised to test if this support also effects the burglary victims' levels of fear and anger as well as their willingness to participate in the restorative justice conference.

Practical implications of the current study

Based on the outcomes of the current study, practitioners and professionals within the field of restorative justice are advised to include the burglary victims' neighbours in the restorative justice conferences if possible. Burglary victims' neighbours also experience a decrease in their wellbeing after the crime (Nascimento et al., 2023; Zebel, 2021) and the participation in restorative justice conferences will decrease their levels of fear and anger and therefore increase their wellbeing. It may not be possible for the neighbours to participate in these conferences in all cases, for example because it cannot be financed or the victims or offenders do not want them to attend (Umbreit et al., 2002). In these cases, the burglary victims' neighbours should be provided with information on how to protect themselves from future burglaries. Burglary victims' neighbours experience a need for information, potentially because they are seeking information on how to protect themselves from the threat of burglaries (Williams & Joinson, 2020). Thus, the neighbours may want to participate in the restorative justice conferences in order to receive this information. If this is not possible, they could be provided with this information in other ways, for example by the police or restorative justice practitioners. Due to this, their wellbeing might also increase.

Conclusion

Neighbours of burglary victims experience similar negative affects as burglary victims following the crime. Previous literature found that the participation in restorative justice conferences significantly reduces the level of negative affect that burglary victims experience. However, it has not been researched before if this effect is also present for neighbours of burglary victims. The present study aimed to investigate what factors affect the neighbours' of the domestic burglary victims' willingness to participate in a restorative justice conference and what the effects of their participation in these conferences are. Based on the quantitative research conducted, it can be concluded that the neighbours' need for information, their fear, as well as their anger prior to the restorative justice conference positively affect their willingness to participate, meaning that higher levels of these factors are associated with greater willingness to participate. Furthermore, it can be concluded that the higher the fear and the anger that neighbours experience before they participate in the restorative justice conference, the more they experience a need for information, which in turn leads to their greater willingness to participate. To answer the second part of the research question, it can be concluded that the effects of the participation in the restorative justice conference are that the neighbours of the burglary victims experience a decrease in their levels of anger and fear afterwards in comparison to before the conference. Due to this, the participation in restorative justice conferences can be recommended to neighbours of burglary victims that may suffer significantly emotionally, for example, due to feeling unsafe in their neighbourhood, experiencing generalized fear and high levels of anger, in order to reduce the impact of this crime.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Survey

1. *Research information:* “Dear participant, with this study we want to extend our understanding of the consequences of burglary and the needs of indirect victims of burglaries. We kindly ask you to only fill in this survey if you are at least 18 years old. We appreciate your time and effort to participate in our study, Ann Ottl ”
2. *Informed consent:* “Before you continue, we would like you to carefully read the following consent form and answer according to your preference. You have read and understood the study information and understand the study involves completing several questionnaires and watching a short video. This will take you approximately 30 min. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences or giving any reason. Further, it is clear to you that:
 - Your data will be used for the Master thesis of the student named above.
 - All the data that is generated when you complete this survey (e.g., demographics and scale answers) will be treated confidential, stored adequately, and will not be used to try to identify you.
 - Should you withdraw from the study, your data will be permanently deleted.
 - Your data that was generated through this survey can be archived and used for future research.

If you have any questions or concern or decide to cancel your participation after you completed the questionnaire, the researcher can be contacted via the following email address:

a.ottl@student.utwente.nl

Have you understood the provided information and consent to take part in this study? Please tick the appropriate box.“

- a. Yes
 - b. No
3. *Demographic information:* “First, please answer these demographic questions.”
 - a. How old are you?

- b. What is your gender?
 - c. What is your nationality?
 - d. Are you currently a university student?
 - e. Have you ever been a victim of a burglary before?
 - f. Has there ever been a burglary in your close neighbourhood while you were living there?
 - g. Do you know someone who has ever been a victim of a burglary?
4. Participants read the case vignette (see Appendix B).
 5. Scale to measure level of fear pre-test → This is measured on a 7 point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.
 - a. When I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim think back to the burglary and the offender, I feel nervous.
 - b. When I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim think back to the burglary and the offender, I feel restless.
 - c. When I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim think back to the burglary and the offender, I feel panicky.
 - d. When I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim think back to the burglary and the offender, I feel Insecure/ uncertain / unsure
 - e. When I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim think back to the burglary and the offender, I feel tense.
 6. Scale to measure level of anger pre-test → This is measured on 7 point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.
 - a. When I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim think back to the burglary and the offender, I feel angry.
 - b. When I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim think back to the burglary and the offender, I feel furious.
 - c. When I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim think back to the burglary and the offender, I feel irritated.
 - d. When I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim think back to the burglary and the offender, I feel enraged/ infuriated.
 - e. When I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim think back to the burglary and the offender, I feel frustrated.
 7. Scale to measure “need for information” → This is measured on 7 point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”

- a. To what extent would you need information about the offender's background after the burglary?
 - b. To what extent would you need information from the offender about the crime after the burglary?
 - c. To what extent would you need information from the offender about their motive behind the crime after the burglary?
- 8. Participants read the invitation to the restorative justice conference (see Appendix C).
- 9. Scale to measure willingness to participate → This is measured on a 5 point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".
 - a. I would like to talk to the offender in a restorative justice conference.
 - b. I would like to participate in a restorative justice conference together with my neighbour who is the victim of the domestic burglary and the offender.
 - c. I would like to meet the offender from the burglary in a restorative justice conference.
- 10. *Disclaimer*: "Next, you will be asked to watch a video of how a restorative justice conference could look like. If you do not feel comfortable watching this video, you can end the survey. However, we would like to remind you that your insight on the following questions is important and would like to encourage you to continue."
- 11. Participants watch the restorative justice conference video (see Appendix D).
- 12. Participants fill in answer for open ended question of the facilitator: "I would also like to know from the neighbours how the burglary affected them. Would you be willing to explain the impact of the burglary and what you would need from the burglar and within the community"
- 13. *Control question*: How many people can you see in the restorative justice video?
 - a. 2
 - b. 3
 - c. 4
- 14. Scale to measure fear post-test → This is measured on a 7 point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".
 - a. If I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim, were to think back to the burglary and the burglar after the restorative justice conference, I would feel nervous.
 - b. If I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim, were to think back to the burglary and the burglar after the restorative justice conference, I would feel restless.

- c. If I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim, were to think back to the burglary and the burglar after the restorative justice conference, I would feel panicky.
- d. If I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim, were to think back to the burglary and the burglar after the restorative justice conference, I would feel insecure .
- e. If I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim, were to think back to the burglary and the burglar after the restorative justice conference, I would feel tense.

15. Scale to measure anger post-test → This is measured on a 7 point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

- a. If I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim, were to think back to the burglary and the burglar after the restorative justice conference, I would feel angry.
- b. If I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim, were to think back to the burglary and the burglar after the restorative justice conference, I would feel furious.
- c. If I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim, were to think back to the burglary and the burglar after the restorative justice conference, I would feel irritated.
- d. If I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim, were to think back to the burglary and the burglar after the restorative justice conference, I would feel infuriated.
- e. If I, as a neighbour of the burglary victim, were to think back to the burglary and the burglar after the restorative justice conference, I would feel frustrated.

16. *End of survey and debrief*: “Thank you for participating in this survey! With this study, we want to extend our understanding of the effect of restorative justice conferencing on wellbeing. Restorative justice aims at restoring trust between different parties, such as victims, offenders and community members, after a crime and solve the existing conflict in order to reduce the negative impact of the crime by providing them with support in effective communication. During restorative justice conferences trained facilitators, the victim, the offender and respective community members who have been affected by the crime, such as friends and family, are present to talk about the offence. Here, the participants discuss the matter of how the offender could make amends for their crime. Victims and community members can also express their feelings caused by the crime. Previous research has found that victims' participation in restorative justice conferences increases their wellbeing that was previously decreased due to their victimization. Because residents of areas with high-crime rates, such as burglaries, also report a decrease in wellbeing, we are studying if their participation in restorative justice conferences may also lead to an increase in wellbeing. “

Appendix B

Case vignette

Please read the following case vignette and imagine yourself in the situation:

After a long day, you are on your way home. As you enter your street on your bike, you already see it from afar. Two police cars have parked by your neighbour's, Ms. Smit's, house. You have known Ms. Smit for about 3 years, since you moved into your house and she has welcomed you into the neighbourhood. Over the years, you have grown closer with your neighbours and feel closely connected to the community living in your street.

You are curious and come closer. As you enter Ms. Smit's driveway, you see that her door seems to be broken open and someone seems to have thrown something through the window, since the window is broken.

Two police officers are talking to Ms. Smit. Ms. Smit seems upset, you can tell by her shaky voice and the tears on her face. Ms. Smit says "They must have broken in while I was at work, I just saw this and the chaos inside when I came back home 15 minutes ago."

The police officer says to her. "Good that you called us. We will do everything possible to find the burglar. What is missing from your house?"

"I am not sure yet, I called you directly before I looked through everything. There is such a chaos in the house! It looks like the person opened all drawers, and threw everything on the floor on the search for something valuable. But I saw directly that my laptop that was lying in the living room, is gone."

"Okay, thank you for telling us. We will now secure the traces, here outside where the person broke the window and the door and then will go inside with you to secure traces there and get an overview of the situation. Also, do you remember seeing or hearing anything unusual earlier today?"

"No, I left for work in the morning and then everything seemed normal, like it always does here, in this neighbourhood."

Ms. Smit notices you and calls you over. "Hi! Could you please come over?"

You walk over to Ms. Smit and the police. "What has happened here?" you ask.

"Someone broke in.", Ms. Smit answers, still looking distressed. Now you notice that her face seems red from crying. "Did you see anything suspicious earlier today?"

“No”, you answer , “ I left my house early in the morning, it was still dark outside and I did not notice anything weird.”

Because Ms. Smit is standing in the open door, you get a look inside. The otherwise always tidy apartment seems chaotic. There is glass splitters next to the window and muddy foot prints on the floor. All drawers and closet doors are open and a lot of its content is laying on the floor. Someone seems to have tried to brutally open a safe that is build inside the wall but it is not open.

The police men ask to record your name and contact details in case of future questions for the neighbours and in case of future justice case.

Appendix C

Invitation to the restorative justice conference

A month after the burglary at Ms. Smit's house, you receive an official letter from the victim support service. It is an invitation to a restorative justice conference. Please read the letter carefully:

Invitation to Participate in a Restorative Justice Conference

Dear neighbour of Ms. Smit,

We hope this message finds you well. As you may have heard, a recent incident in your community impacted one of your neighbour's, Ms. Smit, whose house was broken into. We recognize that situations like this affect not only those who are directly involved. You, as a neighbour, may have felt that this incident has had an impact on your sense of safety and community as well.

With this letter, we are inviting you to participate in a restorative justice conference.

This conference offers the opportunity for everyone affected to come together in a safe, guided setting to talk about the harm caused by this burglary. With the support of a facilitator, the participants, including you, the neighbour of the burglary victim, Ms. Smit, will be able to share their experiences, express their feelings, and collaboratively explore ways to rebuild trust and restore a sense of security in the neighbourhood. This could also lead to you, as a person living in this neighbourhood, to feel safer after the burglary again.

Your presence would be of importance to this conversation. As a neighbour of Ms. Smit, your insights, concerns, and ideas can help contribute to a constructive outcome for all participants involved. This conference also provides an opportunity for the person responsible for the burglary at Ms. Smit's house to better understand the effects of their actions, fostering accountability and paving a path toward reconciliation. If you are open to attending or have any questions about the process, please feel free to reach out. You can decide to participate entirely voluntarily, but we believe that your perspective can make a significant difference.

Thank you for considering this invitation to join us in rebuilding a stronger, more connected community.

Kind regards,

Mr. Bakker [Facilitator]

Victim support service

Appendix D

Script of the restorative justice conference video and a screenshot of the restorative justice conference video

Script of the restorative justice conference video

Who is present?

- Burglar: Mr Jansen
- Victim: Ms Smit
- Facilitator: Mr Bakker

Setting: a private room in a community centre (neutral looking room)

Please watch the following video that shows an exert of a restorative justice conference and imagine that you are present in this restorative justice conference. Please also imagine that other neighbours and community members are present and listening in on the conversation between the victim, Ms Smit, the burglar, Mr Jansen and the facilitator, Mr Bakker.

Facilitator: Good afternoon! Thank you for joining this restorative justice conference. It takes courage to sit here across from each other and discuss what happened. I am here today to facilitate this conversation so that all of you can express how you feel and work towards how Mr Janssen could restore the damage done. Is that okay for you?

Victim: Yes, I think so. I am a bit nervous, but I hope to understand what happened and also to feel safe in my home again.

Burglar: Well, I am here. I know that I have done something wrong and I want to make it right if that is possible.

Facilitator: Thank you for being here. Let's start by introducing ourselves and how we are connected to the burglary. Ms Smit, would you like to start?

Victim: Okay. My name is Ms Smit and my house was broken into a few weeks ago. It was a big shock for me and I still feel unsafe.

Facilitator: Thank you Ms Smit. Mr Janssen, would you introduce yourself next, please?

Burglar: Hello, my name is Mr Smit. I was the one who broke into the house. I should not have done it. It was not personal or anything, I just needed money.

Facilitator: Thank you for sharing this Mr Jansen. Could you please tell us in your own words, what happened that day and why you did what you did?

Burglar: I will try my best to explain it. I lost my job a few months ago and I was broke. I really needed some money to pay my rent and some other bills. My landlord was already threatening to kick me out because I had not paid the rent for last month. Sometimes I see that people leave valuable things in plain sight, so I thought that if I took something and sold it, I would get some money. I know that it does not excuse what I did, I just want to explain why I did it. I broke into the house and looked around for something that I could sell. So I took the laptop from the living room and left quickly.

Facilitator: Thank you for being honest with us, Mr Jansen. Ms Smit, would you share with us how this break in in your home has affected you?

Victim: It was horrible. I was so scared when I came home and my window was broken and the door was wide open. I always felt so safe in my home and now I am scared to be home alone. For example, if I hear noises at night, I am scared that someone has come into the house and cannot sleep anymore. Whenever I walk into my living room, I have to think about what happened. I also do not feel safe in my neighbourhood anymore, I am often scared that something else will happen around here, like more break ins or maybe that I will get attacked if I surprise a burglar around here. My neighbours also mentioned that they are nervous about this. Our neighbourhood used to feel very secure and now that is not the case anymore...I had to replace the window. And I also had to buy a new laptop for work, that was really expensive and set me back financially.

Burglar: I am really sorry, Ms Smit. Hearing this,.. I had not thought about how you might feel after I broke in, I just thought about my own problem. But that does not make it okay, of course. I really regret what I did. I am sorry. What can I do to help you?

Victim: I thought about this a lot. I want to feel safe in my neighbourhood again. Maybe you, Mr Jansen, could do something to make the neighbourhood community a little safer again, like volunteer in some neighbourhood programs. It would show us all that you care about being a part of the neighbourhood in a positive way. And I would like some financial help from you, for the window and laptop I had to replace.

Burglar: I can do that. I do not have much money now, but I could set up, like a payment plan, for the financial part. And I am willing to volunteer for the neighbourhood: I want you and also the other community members to feel safe again and if this will help, I will do it.

Facilitator: It sounds like you are both working towards a solution. Before we go to a solution, I would also like to know from the neighbours how the burglary affected them. Would you be willing to explain the impact of the burglary and what you would need from the burglar and within the community?

(facilitator looks at the camera as if he was looking directly at the participant)

Video ends!

Screenshot of the restorative justice conference video

