

**UNIVERSITY
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Bachelor Thesis

Conflict, Risk, and Safety

The Influence of Positive and Negative Information About Restorative Justice on People's Justice Orientations

By

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Abstract

Introduction: Research shows that people in many parts of the world demand more severe punishments for offenders although crime rates are dropping. However, research suggests that the focus on punishment is not always the most effective. Instead, there is a large demand for more measures aimed at the restoration of the injustice caused by a crime. The main goal of this research is to investigate to what extent providing people with positive and negative information about restorative justice influences their orientations towards retributive and restorative justice. The hypothesis studied in this paper is that the retributive orientation of retributive-oriented participants becomes stronger and their restorative orientation weaker. In contrast, the restorative orientation of restorative-oriented participants is expected to become stronger and their retributive orientation weaker after reading the positive and negative information about restorative justice. The insights of this research may help policymakers to be aware of confirmation bias when trying to educate people about justice approaches. Consequently, they may be better able to inform the public about restorative justice and implement restorative justice programmes.

Method: A pre-post research design assessed the justice orientation in a convenience sample of 70 participants. An article with positive and negative information about restorative justice served as a mean to influence the post-measured justice orientation (dependent variable).

Results: Paired sample t-tests showed that there is a significant difference between the pre- and post-measures of people's retributive justice orientation. More precisely, the retributive justice orientation of retributive-oriented people became weaker after reading the positive and negative information about restorative justice, which can be explained by the acquisition of knowledge about restorative justice. In contrast, the retributive justice orientation of restorative-oriented people became weaker after reading the positive and negative information, which can be explained by the confirmation bias. However, there were no significant differences found with respect to people's restorative justice orientation. In other words, the restorative justice orientation of retributive- and restorative-oriented participants remained the same. Therefore, the hypothesis concerning retributive-oriented participants was rejected and the one concerning restorative-oriented participants was only partially accepted.

Discussion: The future goal should be to help policymakers to implement restorative justice programmes by finding a way to convince the public of the usefulness of these programmes. This research suggested that informing the public about restorative justice is a good start but it is not sufficient to make people more restorative in their demands. Therefore, the results of this research serve as a starting point for further research.

Introduction

In many parts of the world, such as the Netherlands and the US, a trend is visible in which the public demands more severe punishments for offenders although crime rates are dropping (Gelder et al., 2011; Unnever & Cullen, 2010). This trend can be explained by people having strong punitive attitudes towards committed crimes (Gelder et al., 2011). These punitive attitudes may derive from a general lack of familiarity with the justice system and an associated mistrust in the effectivity of current sanctioning policies (Gelder et al., 2011). However, research shows that the traditional approach of focusing on the punishments of the offenders is not necessarily effective as it leads to a number of societal problems such as higher risks of re-offence and the exclusion of victims from their own justice processes (Darley & Gromet, 2009). One approach which seeks to reduce these issues is restorative justice. It is an alternative approach to criminal justice that focuses on the restoration of injustice through an open conversation between all parties affected by a crime (Okimoto et al., 2011). Thereby, the offender and victim get the opportunity to take an active role in the process in order to repair the harm that was caused (Wenzel et al., 2008). Since the public asks for higher punishments, restorative justice is still hard to implement (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). Therefore, this research tries to investigate if and how people's orientations towards justice can be influenced to make them less punitive and more restorative in their demands.

Retributive and restorative justice

Retributive justice is the traditional Western system of criminal justice (Okimoto et al., 2011). Its focus lays on the retribution and punishment of the offender (Okimoto et al., 2011). The severity of the punishment is supposed to be proportional to the perceived harm done to the victim and society. This "just deserts" approach is the main idea behind retributive justice (Bastian et al., 2013). The perceived harm to the victim is determined by the victim's concerns over his/ her status and power that have been weakened by the offence (Wenzel et al., 2008). The punishment is a response to the caused harm that attempts to empower the victim and to return the taken status and power (Wenzel et al., 2008). However, research of Bastian et al. (2013) has shown that the moral outrage and the dehumanization of the offender are also factors that enhance the perceived harm for the offender. Furthermore, it has been criticized that retributive justice ignores the needs and rights of the victim for those who conceptualize justice as restorative (Okimoto et al., 2011). Overall, the use of punitive measures such as prison sentencing through unilateral processes (e.g. a judge determining the penalty) causes several societal problems such as overcrowded prisons, higher risks for recidivism through the solidifying of prison inmates' criminal identities, and the exclusion of victims from their own trials (Darley & Gromet, 2009). One option for victim participation is victim impact statements which allow them to speak during the sentencing of the offender (Davis & Smith, 1994). However, research shows that victims were not more satisfied when

delivering a statement but instead, experienced higher levels of emotional distress compared to victims who did not deliver a statement (Davis & Smith, 1994; Lens et al., 2013). Taking the potential drawbacks of retributive justice into consideration, there is a demand for more resolution of the injustice by giving all parties involved in the crime a voice (Wenzel et al., 2008).

This demand for resolution can be met by the alternatives offered by restorative justice (Okimoto et al., 2011). This alternative justice approach requires addressing the victim's harms and needs and holding offenders accountable to put right those harms through an open dialogue between the offender, the victim, and the wider community (Zehr, 2016). Thereby, the goal is to achieve a renewed consensus about the shared values violated by the offence with a strong focus on healing relationships (Okimoto et al., 2011). Instead of restoring the power balance between offender and victim by punishing the offender, such as done with retributive justice, a restorative understanding of justice aims at the offenders to take responsibility for their actions, to make them understand the harm they have caused, to give them the chance to redeem themselves, and to discourage them from reoffending (Wenzel et al., 2008). Victims, on the other side, have the opportunity to take an active role in the process, to reduce feelings of anxiety and powerlessness, and increase in hope and self-esteem (Peterson & Umbreit, 2006). In the end, the offender, the victim, and the community members decide which reparative sanctions must be completed by the offender. For example, the offender may apologize to the victim or fulfil community services (Darley & Gromet, 2009).

Descriptive evidence has found that both victims and offenders are more satisfied with restorative justice programmes than with usual justice processes (Okimoto et al., 2011). However, there is a large variability in their willingness to participate in these interventions and not much is known about what factors make victims and offenders prefer them over traditional proceedings (Okimoto et al., 2011). Furthermore, it has been found that support for restorative sanctions declines as the crime increases in seriousness (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). Besides, even though the public is supportive of compensatory sentencing options in cases of low crime severity, knowledge of these options tends to be rather poor (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). This unawareness of the public makes it harder to implement restorative sanctions as first, the public and victim are expected to take an active role in the sentencing process. Second, policymakers frequently consider the need for policies that are consistent with public opinions in order to gain public confidence in the justice system (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). It is, therefore, necessary to gain a deeper understanding of why people demand restorative or retributive justice punishments.

Okimoto et al. (2011) showed with three studies that a relationship exists between the orientation towards restorative justice or retributive justice and predicted preferences for "*concrete restorative justice interventions, judicial processes, and abstract justice restoration goals*". The first study assessed respondents' retributive and restorative justice orientations. The sample consisted of 531 students at an Australian university. Through a series of regressions, it was found that a retributive orientation predicts support for greater punishments and the humiliation of the offender. On the other hand, a restorative orientation predicts the preference for a bilateral decision-making process and

reduced punishments (Okitmoto et al., 2011). In other words, it was found that there is a relation between the justice orientation and the attitude towards the severity of punishments. In this research, it is tried to replicate these findings. It is, therefore, expected that people with a stronger retributive justice orientation demand more severe punishments. This relation is expected to be the other way around for people with a stronger restorative justice orientation. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H1: A stronger retributive justice orientation positively predicts people's attitudes towards the severity of punishment.

H2: A stronger restorative justice orientation negatively predicts people's attitudes towards the severity of punishment.

Confirmation bias and retributive and restorative justice

In the context of criminal investigations, confirmation bias is a common phenomenon (Rassin et al., 2010). It refers to the interpretation of evidence in a way that is corresponding to the prior personal beliefs, expectations, or a hypothesis at hand (Nickerson, 1998). As a consequence, people gather and remember information selectively by giving more attention to what supports what one already believes while neglecting and rejecting evidence that supports a different position (Nickerson, 1998). For example, a study by Rassin et al. (2010) about confirmation bias in the context of criminal investigations showed that people with prior beliefs in the innocence or guilt in a suspect looked for information and evidence confirming their beliefs. Based on the confirmation bias, it is expected that people pay more attention to information that confirms their justice orientations and ignore information that disconfirms them when they are provided with information about the justice system. The study of Prooijen (2009) supports this expectation. In this study, it was investigated whether independent observers of criminal offences have a relative preference for either retributive justice or compensatory justice. The study consisted of three sub-studies of which one was a simple paper-and-pencil task and two were experiments with a convenience sample of 27 to 106 university students. Indeed, results of the first study indicated that people with a preference for retributive justice selected more information about punishments than about victim compensations, while people with a preference for restorative justice selected more information about victim compensations than about punishments (Prooijen, 2009). The key difference between punishments and victim compensations is that in case of the latter, the focus is set on the justice restoration while in case of punishments, the focus is set on the retribution of the offender (Prooijen, 2009).

An empirical examination on public opinion and restorative sentencing, on the other hand, has shown that the public is mostly not familiar with the recent restorative justice programmes such as conferences and sentences circling (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). This lack of familiarity may hinder public acceptance of restorative sentencing options. In contrast, when people are made aware of alternative sentencing options, such as community service, compensation, and restitution, their confidence in the

justice system grows. In return, their support for imprisonments declines and their support for victim compensations increases (Roberts & Stalans, 2004).

This research

The goal of this research is to investigate to what extent providing people with positive and negative information about restorative justice influences their orientation towards retributive and restorative justice. Thereby, it will be examined whether people tend to change their justice orientations or be even more convinced of them when receiving positive and negative information about restorative justice. Expectations will be based on the confirmation bias.

The investigation of the influence of positive and negative information about restorative justice on people's justice orientations has not been conducted like that yet, which means that a gap concerning this effect exists in scientific knowledge. The current study, therefore, contributes to the existing scientific literature. Next to scientific relevance, this research may show whether people tend to change their orientations or stick to them when receiving information about the positive and negative points of restorative justice. These insights may help policymakers to be aware of confirmation bias when trying to educate people about criminal justice approaches. When people tend to stick to their retributive justice orientation, for example, providing information about restorative justice is not sufficient and other types of persuasion should be considered. This way, policymakers may be better able to inform the public about restorative justice and implement restorative justice programmes more frequently. Furthermore, this study will investigate to what extent the two different orientations are related to people's attitude towards the severity of punishments in order to learn more about the impact the orientations have on the justice system (see H1 and H2).

Based on the confirmation bias, it is expected that people who have a stronger retributive justice orientation will focus more on the negative points of information about restorative justice while neglecting and rejecting the positive points of information. Consequently, their retributive justice orientation becomes even stronger and their restorative justice orientation becomes weaker. Correspondingly, people who have a stronger restorative justice orientation will focus more on the positive points of information about restorative justice, while neglecting and rejecting the negative points of information. Therefore, their restorative justice orientation becomes even stronger and their retributive justice orientation becomes weaker. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H3: The retributive justice orientation of retributive-oriented people becomes stronger and their restorative justice orientation weaker after reading the positive and negative information about restorative justice.

H4: The restorative justice orientation of restorative-oriented people becomes stronger and their retributive justice orientation weaker after reading the positive and negative information about restorative justice.

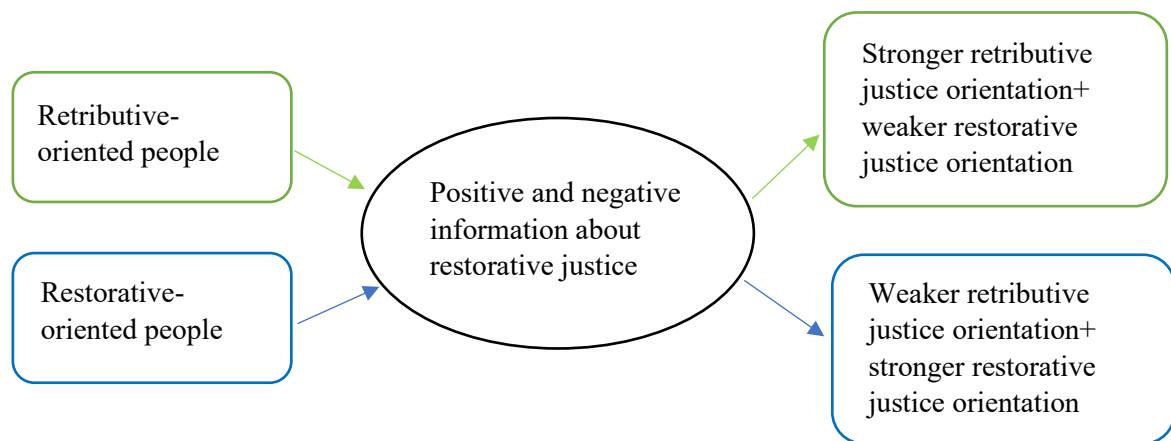


Figure 1. Research model

Method

Design

A pre-post research design without a control group has been used to estimate the participant's pre- and post-measured retributive and restorative justice orientations and to estimate the participant's attitudes towards the severity of punishments (dependent variable). Thereby, all participants received the same positive and negative information about restorative justice after the pre-measure of their retributive and restorative justice orientations. These pre-measured justice orientations (independent variables) were expected to have an impact on the attitude towards the severity of punishments (dependent variable) as well as the post-measures of the justice orientations. The study is a within-subjects design, meaning that all participants were exposed to the same questions and the same information about restorative justice.

The Faculty of Behavioural Sciences Ethics Committee of the University of Twente gave ethical approval for conducting the study.

Participants

In total, 70 participants have completed the survey. The age ranged between 19 and 32 ($M = 21.9$, $SD = 2.9$). Moreover, 48 participants were female (68.6%) and 22 participants were male (31.4%). Most participants were German (72.9%), followed by other (15.7%), and lastly, Dutch (11.4%).

Variables

Justice orientation

The retributive and restorative justice orientations of the participants were measured using the correlational two-factor model created by Okimoto et al. (2011). The first factor is the retributive justice orientation and the second factor is the restorative justice orientation. 6 items indicate a retributive justice orientation (e.g. *"As a matter of fairness, an offender should be penalized."*) and 6 items indicate a restorative justice orientation (e.g. *"For justice to be reinstated, the affected parties need to achieve agreement about the values violated by an incident."*). Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7).

Psychometric evaluations of the correlational two-factor model found high correlations of the items within each construct (retributive or restorative justice orientation) and have a high internal consistency (Okimoto et al., 2011). In this study, the internal consistency between the items indicating a retributive justice orientation was good for the pre-test ($\alpha = .82$) as well as good for the post-test ($\alpha = .88$). Moreover, the internal consistency between the items indicating a restorative justice orientation was excellent for the pre-test ($\alpha = .91$) as well as excellent for the post-test ($\alpha = .94$).

Attitude towards the severity of punishments

The attitude towards the severity of punishments was measured with 6 items created by the researcher. 3 items were supposed to indicate a positive attitude towards severe punishments (e.g. *“The best way to reduce the crime rate would be to increase the severity of punishments.”*), whereas the other 3 items were supposed to indicate a negative attitude towards severe punishments (e.g. *“If we were to adopt very severe punishments for crimes this might well lead to an even more aggressive society.”*). Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). Total Scores range between 6 and 42, with higher scores reflecting a positive attitude towards severe punishments and lower scores reflecting a negative attitude towards severe punishments. The scores of the items indicating a negative attitude towards severe punishments were reversed so that higher agreements with statements against severe punishments are translated into lower scores and lower agreements with these statements are translated into higher scores.

To test the validity of the items, a factor analysis of the post-test was run. The findings indicated two distinct components, explaining 63.3% of the variance. Item 1, item 2, and item 3 loaded strongly on only one of the two components (all loadings > .74). In contrast, item 4, item 5, and item 6 loaded strongly on the other component (all loadings > .55). These findings showed that items 1, 2, and 3 ($\alpha=.8$) may, indeed, indicate a positive attitude and items 4, 5, and 6 ($\alpha=.57$) may, indeed, indicate a negative attitude towards the severity of punishments. However, for the analyses, the general measures will be used, given the fact that the negative attitude scale has questionable reliability. In contrast, the internal consistency between all items was acceptable ($\alpha=.62$) for the pre-test and good ($\alpha=.71$) for the post-test.

Materials

An article about restorative justice served as a mean to influence the participant's justice orientations and attitudes towards the severity of punishments. Next to general information, it included a balanced amount of objective arguments in favour of and against restorative justice. More specifically, the arguments concerned the victim and offender satisfaction with restorative justice programmes, the opportunities and consequences for the victim and offender in participating, potential ways of misusing the programmes, positive and negative outcomes for the general public, and the effectivity and suitability of the programmes for different circumstances (see Appendix).

Procedure

The survey was created in 2020 with the online survey software Qualtrics (see Appendix). From 25.03.20 to 22.04.20, data was gathered from the participants. The recruitment was carried out through snowball sampling, which provided a heterogeneous convenience sample of students from the closer environment of the researcher. The participants were recruited via personal invitation by the researcher (WhatsApp and in-person). Also, the test subject platform of the University of Twente, Sona Systems,

which provides credits for students of the Behavioural and Management Sciences department for participating in research projects, served as a mean to motivate students to take part in this study.

For the sake of informing the participants prior to their participation about the study, a short overview was given on the topic of the study, its purpose as well as the expected time frame of 15 minutes for the questionnaire. Subsequently, participants were informed that the survey took place voluntarily and that they were allowed to withdraw from the study anytime. Further, they were notified that the data will be treated confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Moreover, the first page stated that the ethics committee of BMS gave ethical approval to conduct the research. The participants were, then, able to either provide or refuse informed consent. When they did not give consent, they were directly led to the end of the study. When they gave consent, the survey continued.

First of all, the participants were asked to answer questions about their demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, nationality). In the following, the participant's justice orientations were assessed by asking them to indicate to what extent they agree with statements about justice. After the completion of the questions about justice, participants had to indicate to what extent they agree with statements about punishments to assess their attitudes towards the severity of punishments. Further, the participants were asked to read an article about restorative justice carefully. As the next step, they were asked to answer the same questions estimating their justice orientations and attitudes towards the severity of punishments again, while considering what they have just read about restorative justice. Lastly, the survey included some control questions to assess participant's prior familiarity with restorative justice, asking whether they already knew what restorative justice was before this survey and whether the information about restorative justice was new to them.

The questionnaire ended with an acknowledgement for the participation, including the contact mail of the researcher in case of the occurrence of any questions, remarks, or the request of outcomes of the study. Moreover, the participants were cleared up about the real aim of the survey that has been withheld in the beginning to reduce response biases. Thereby, they had the chance to refuse their given informed consent after being provided with the withheld information.

Data Analysis

The data were tabulated in the statistical programme IBM SPSS Statistics 24. In general, 26 out of 96 (27%) questionnaires were incomplete. They were excluded from further data analysis to increase the validity and reliability of the results.

To analyse the demographic characteristics of the study population, descriptive statistics were computed, consisting of the frequency tables, means, and standard deviations. Next, the Mean Scores of participants with prior familiarity with restorative justice were compared to the Mean Scores of non-familiar participants to check for significant differences. Moreover, the Mean Scores of male and female participants were compared. To test the assumption of normality of the data, the skewness and kurtosis of the Mean Scores were assessed. Also, histograms of the distribution of the Mean Scores were created.

Furthermore, the statistical test Kolmogorov-Smirnov was performed to compare the Mean Scores to a normal distribution. The Cronbach's alpha estimated a between-score correlation of the set of items, which gave information about the internal consistency. A measure equal to or above .6 indicates acceptable reliability as determined by Nunnally (1978). Finally, a factor analysis of the items measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments was run to test the validity of the items because there were no psychometric evaluations available as the items were created by the researcher.

To get a first glimpse of whether the first two hypotheses about the relationship between people's justice orientation and their attitude towards the severity of punishments will be confirmed or not, it was tested how the Mean Scores of the respective justice orientations and the attitude towards the severity of punishments are correlated. A Pearson correlation coefficient of .6 or higher indicates a strong correlation, .59-.4 indicates a moderate correlation, and .39 or lower indicates a weak correlation (Mukaka, 2012). The significance level used was $<.05$.

For the sake of answering the first two hypotheses, a linear regression analysis was conducted for both the pre- and the post-test. It was tested how the Mean Scores of the respective justice orientations predict the Mean Scores of the attitude towards the severity of punishments. The significance level used was $<.05$.

For the sake of answering the last two hypotheses- and, therefore, the research question- about the influence of positive and negative information about restorative justice on people's justice orientations, paired sample t-tests were conducted. These aimed at estimating the differences between the before-and-after Mean Scores of the respective justice orientations among retributed-oriented and restorative-oriented participants. The significance level used was $<.05$.

Results

Descriptive statistics

First of all, the Mean Scores of familiar- and non-familiar participants with restorative justice were compared to each other. The independent sample t-test showed that there was a significant difference for the pre- and post-test measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments [Pre-test: $t(68) = 3.42, p = .00$; Post-test: $t(68) = 2.64, p = .01$]. Namely, familiar participants had a more negative attitude towards the severity of punishments (Pre-test: $M = 3.1, SD = .83$; Post-test: $M = 2.87, SD = 1.04$) compared to non-familiar participants (Pre-test: $M = 3.78, SD = .77$; Post-test: $M = 3.5, SD = .91$). Moreover, there was a significant difference found for the pre-test measuring the justice orientation [$t(68) = 2.43, p = .02$]. In this case, participants with prior familiarity with restorative justice had a weaker retributive justice orientation ($M = 3.6, SD = .85$) compared to non-familiar participants ($M = 4.1, SD = .78$). However, there was no significant difference found for the post-test measuring the justice orientation.

In addition, the independent sample t-test showed that there was no significant difference for the pre- and post-test measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments between female and male participants. Furthermore, there was no significant difference found for the pre-test measuring the justice orientation. In contrast, there was a significant difference identified for the post-test measuring the justice orientation [$t(68) = 2.33, p = .02$]. Precisely, male participants had a stronger retributive justice orientation ($M = 4.03, SD = 1.07$) compared to female participants ($M = 3.4, SD = .8$). A last point of consideration is that the pre- and post-measures indicate that female participants tended to weaken their justice orientations to a greater extent (Pre-test: $M = 3.8, SD = .78$; Post-test: $M = 3.44, SD = .91$ [$t(47) = 5.12, p = .00$]) compared to male participants (Pre-test: $M = 4.09, SD = .93$; Post-test: $M = 4.03, SD = 1.07$ [$t(21) = .42, p = .67$]).

Next, the assumption of normality was tested. The skewness and kurtosis of the Mean Scores are all in-between -1 and 1, assuming a normal distribution (see Appendix). Based on the histograms, the Mean Scores of the attitude towards the severity of punishments and the justice orientation are approximately normally distributed (see Appendix). Lastly, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test suggested that the Mean Scores of the justice orientations are normally distributed as the p-values are high. Further, the Mean Scores of the pre-test measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments are also normally distributed as the p-value is high. In contrast, the Mean Scores of the post-test are not normally distributed as the p-value is low (see Appendix). To conclude, the distribution of the Mean Scores of both variables is approximately normal. This may indicate high reliability of the results.

Correlational analysis of the justice orientation and the attitude towards the severity of punishments

To test whether H1 and H2 about the relationship between the respective justice orientations and the attitude towards the severity of punishments will be accepted or not, a Pearson correlational analysis and a two-tailed test were run for both the pre- and the post-test.

Beginning with the pre-test, there was a significant weak positive relationship found between the Mean Scores of the items indicating a retributive justice orientation and the Mean Scores of the items estimating the attitude towards the severity of punishments [$r = .37$, $n = 70$, $p = .00$]. Moreover, there was a significant weak negative relationship found between the Mean Scores of the items indicating a restorative justice orientation and the Mean Scores of the items estimating the attitude towards the severity of punishments [$r = -.34$, $n = 70$, $p = .00$].

Moving on to the post-test, the analyses found a significant strong positive relationship between the Mean Scores of the items indicating a retributive justice orientation and the Mean Scores of the items estimating the severity of punishments [$r = .53$, $n = 70$, $p = .00$]. Lastly, there was a significant weak negative relationship found between the Mean Scores of the items indicating a restorative justice orientation and the Mean Scores of the items estimating the attitude towards the severity of punishments [$r = -.27$, $n = 70$, $p = .00$].

Thus, the results indicate that the hypotheses about the relationship between the justice orientation and the attitude towards the severity of punishments (H1 and H2) can be accepted. However, it is essential to test the direction of the relationship between the variables in order to answer the hypotheses.

Linear regression analysis of the justice orientation and the attitude towards the severity of punishments

To answer H1 and H2, a linear regression analysis was run for the pre- and post-test. Thereby, it was tested how the respective justice orientations (independent variables) predict the attitude towards the severity of punishments (dependent variable).

Beginning with the pre-test, it was tested whether the justice orientation predicts the attitude towards the severity of punishments. The findings suggested that there is a significant effect between the variables [$F(2, 67) = 10.92$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .24$]. Further, it was particularly examined whether a retributive justice orientation positively predicts the attitude towards the severity of punishments (H1). The results showed that the Mean Scores of the items indicating a retributive justice orientation, indeed, positively predicted the Mean Scores of the items estimating the attitude towards the severity of punishments [$B = .31$, $SE = .08$, $p = .00$]. Next, it was examined whether a restorative justice orientation

negatively predicts the attitude towards the severity of punishments (H2). The expected prediction was supported by the results [$B = -.21$, $SE = .06$, $p = .00$].

Moving on to the post-test, it was tested again whether the justice orientation predicts the attitude towards the severity of punishments. The findings displayed there is a significant effect between the variables [$F(2, 67) = 27.99$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .45$]. Further, it was particularly examined whether a retributive justice orientation positively predicts the attitude towards the severity of punishments (H1). The results supported the expected prediction [$B = .49$, $SE = .07$, $p = .00$]. Lastly, it was examined whether a restorative justice orientation negatively predicts the attitude towards the severity of punishments (H2). Once again, the results showed that the Mean Scores of the items indicating a restorative justice orientation, indeed, negatively predicted the Mean Scores of the items estimating the attitude towards the severity of punishments [$B = -.16$, $SE = .07$, $p = .02$].

With regard to the correlational analysis, the results for H1 and H2 are as expected. Together, H1 and H2 can be accepted for both the pre- and the post-test.

Paired samples analysis of the pre- and post-test estimating the justice orientation

To test H3 and H4 about the influence of positive and negative information about restorative justice on people's justice orientations, paired sample t-tests were conducted. Total Scores of the justice orientation range between 12 and 84, with higher scores reflecting a retributive justice orientation and lower scores reflecting a restorative justice orientation. The scores of the items indicating a restorative justice orientation (items 7 to 12) were reversed so that higher agreements with statements in favour of restorative justice are translated into lower scores and lower agreements with these statements are translated into higher scores. Thereby, the median score of the justice orientation was 48. Therefore, participants with a Total Score of 49 and higher for the pre-test were categorized into retributive-oriented and participants with a Total Score of 47 and lower for the pre-test were categorized into restorative-oriented. Participants with the median score were not included in this analysis as they held a neutral justice orientation.

Table 1

Mean Scores of the Justice Orientations Among Retributive-Oriented Participants

		Mean	Std. deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Items indicating a retributive justice orientation	Pre-test	5.2	.77	.02	26
	Post-test	4.7	.97		
Items indicating a restorative justice orientation	Pre-test	4.48	1.13	.14	26
	Post-test	4.23	1.18		

The analysis found a significant difference between the pre- and post-test of the items indicating a retributive justice orientation among retributive-oriented participants [$t(25) = 2.24, p = .02$]. Unexpectedly, the Mean Scores of the items indicating a retributive justice orientation became lower for the post-test compared to the pre-test, meaning that the participant's retributive orientation became weaker after reading the positive and negative information about restorative justice (see Table 1). Moreover, unexpectedly, there was no significant difference found between the pre- and post-test of the items indicating a restorative justice orientation among retributive-oriented participants [$t(25) = 1.51, p = .14$].

Given these findings, H3 can be rejected.

Table 2

Mean Scores of the Justice Orientations Among Restorative-Oriented Participants

		Mean	Std. deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Items indicating a retributive justice orientation	Pre-test	4.12	.94	.00	40
	Post-test	3.42	1.05		
Items indicating a restorative justice orientation	Pre-test	2.57	.82	.62	40
	Post-test	2.62	1.08		

Furthermore, the results suggested a significant difference between the pre- and post-test of the items indicating a retributive justice orientation among restorative-oriented participants [$t(39) = 5.43, p = .00$]. As expected, the Mean Scores of the items became lower for the post-test, meaning that the participant's retributive justice orientation became weaker after reading the positive and negative information about restorative justice (see Table 2). However, unexpectedly, there was no significant difference found between the pre- and post-test of the items indicating a restorative justice orientation among restorative-oriented participants [$t(39) = -.49, p = .62$].

Thus, H4 can be accepted only partially.

Discussion

Prior research has outlined that there is a trend in which the public demands more severe punishments for offenders although crime rates are decreasing (Gelder et al., 2011; Unnever & Cullen, 2010). Furthermore, it was emphasized that the focus on the punishment of the offender entails societal problems and is, therefore, not necessarily effective (Darley & Gromet, 2009). One alternative approach which seeks to reduce these issues is restorative justice (Okimoto et al., 2011). However, restorative justice programmes do not gain a lot of popularity in the general public (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). Therefore, this research tried to investigate if and how people's justice orientations can be influenced to make them less punitive and more restorative in their demands.

To do so, this research had two objectives. The first was one was to test whether people's justice orientations predict their attitudes towards the severity of punishments. This was done by providing two questionnaires that measured the respective variables. It was hypothesized that a retributive justice orientation positively predicts the attitude towards the severity of punishments, while a restorative justice orientation negatively predicts the attitude towards the severity of punishments. The results offered support for these hypotheses: it was found that a retributive justice orientation, indeed, positively predicted the attitude towards the severity of punishments for both the pre- and post-test. Correspondingly, a restorative justice orientation was found to negatively predict the attitude towards the severity of punishment for the pre- and post-test.

These findings are in line with the research of Okimoto et al. (2011) which found that a retributive justice orientation predicts the demands for higher punishments and a restorative justice orientation predicts the demands for lower punishments. Retributive justice is, overall, known to focus on the retribution and punishment of the offenders, while restorative justice focuses on the restoration of the injustice through the mutual understanding of all parties affected by the crime (Okimoto et al., 2011; Wenzel et al., 2008). These focuses may be an explanation for the impact of people's justice orientation on their attitude towards the severity of punishments.

The second and main aim was to investigate to what extent providing people with positive and negative information about restorative justice influences people's justice orientations. This was done by conducting a pre-post research design and providing an article about restorative justice between the respective tests. Based on the theory of confirmation bias, participants were expected to pay more attention to information that confirms their beliefs, while ignoring and rejecting information that disconfirms them (Nickerson, 1998). Accordingly, it was hypothesized that the retributive justice orientation of retributive-oriented participants becomes stronger and their restorative justice orientation weaker after reading the positive and negative information about restorative justice. Correspondingly, it was hypothesized that the restorative justice orientation of restorative-oriented participants becomes stronger and their retributive justice orientation weaker. The results found a significant difference

between the pre- and post-test of the items indicating a retributive justice orientation for both groups. Here, the retributive justice orientation of retributive- and restorative-oriented participants became weaker. However, there was no significant difference found between the pre- and post-test of the items indicating a restorative justice orientation for both groups. In other words, the restorative justice orientation of retributive- and restorative-oriented participants approximately remained the same. Therefore, the hypothesis that the retributive justice orientation of retributive-oriented participants becomes stronger and their restorative justice orientation weaker was rejected. Further, the hypothesis that the restorative justice orientation of restorative-oriented participants becomes stronger and their retributive justice orientation weaker was only partially accepted.

The shift of restorative-oriented participants to an even weaker retributive justice orientation is likely to be explained by the confirmation bias. Thereby, the restorative-oriented participants paid more attention to the positive sides of restorative justice, while neglecting and rejecting the negative ones. Consequently, they disagreed with the statements indicating a different approach more than before reading the information about restorative justice. This suggestion is supported by Prooijen (2009). According to this research, restorative-oriented people select more information about victim compensations, while retributive-oriented people select more information about punishments (Prooijen, 2009). In other words, people may pay more attention to the information that is in accordance with their justice orientation and ignore or even reject the information that is not.

However, the participant's restorative justice orientation has not changed significantly. Thus, even though their retributive justice orientation became weaker, their restorative justice orientation did not become stronger in return. An explanation for this may be that retributive and restorative justice are not mutually exclusive, meaning that a decrease in one orientation does not necessarily lead to an increase in the other (Okimoto et al., 2011). Therefore, it seems like the information about restorative justice made people with a restorative justice orientation disagree on the statements indicating a retributive justice orientation even more, but at the same time, the positive information about restorative justice did not convince them to agree on the statements indicating a restorative justice orientation even more. A study by Ledet (2013) about systematic decision-making found that prior beliefs only strengthened if people found it difficult to think of evidence supporting alternatives. When they were provided with alternatives, however, their prior beliefs did not get stronger but persisted since they felt these beliefs were right (Ledet, 2013). As the participants, in this case, were provided with both arguments in favour and against restorative justice, it may explain why restorative-oriented participants did not strengthen their restorative justice orientation. Instead, the restorative justice orientation remained the same as they felt confirmed by the positive information which they gave more attention to due to the confirmation bias.

Regarding the results of retributive-oriented participants, prior research has suggested that a retributive justice orientation may be caused by people's unfamiliarity with restorative justice (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). When being provided with information about restorative justice, however, their

support for imprisonments declines and the support for victim compensations increases (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). Therefore, there were control questions about the familiarity with restorative justice included in the survey. The results found a significant difference between familiar- and non-familiar participants with respect to their justice orientation for the pre-test. More precisely, familiar participants were found to have a weaker retributive justice orientation than non-familiar participants on average. Thus, the shift of retributive-oriented people to a weaker retributive justice orientation is likely to be explained by the participant's unfamiliarity with restorative justice. Namely, when the participants were provided with information about restorative justice, their retributive justice orientation became weaker due to the acquisition of knowledge about other forms of justice than retribution. However, their restorative justice orientation has not changed significantly. In this case, it seems like the information about restorative justice made people with a retributive justice orientation question their orientation, but at the same time, the positive information about restorative justice did not convince them to agree more on the statements indicating a restorative justice orientation. A study by Schwind et al. (2012) about preference-consistent versus preference-inconsistent information in the context of recommender systems found that preference-inconsistent information made participants form a more moderate view on a topic at issue. Therefore, instead of immediately accepting a recommendation, it weakened the participant's preferences (Schwind et al., 2012). These findings may explain why participants with a retributive justice orientation did not change but, indeed, weakened their justice orientations when they learned about an alternative justice approach.

An interesting finding was that male participants had a stronger retributive justice orientation than female participants on average for the post-test. This finding is in line with the results of Okimoto et al. (2011). An explanation for this is delivered by a study by Applegate et al. (2002) about gender differences in crime attitudes. Through a number of different types of questions about citizen's views towards crime policy, punishment, and rehabilitation, it was found that men had stronger punitive views than women. Women, on the other hand, tended to express greater support for offender treatments (Applegate et al., 2002). Strong punitive views and support for rehabilitations are clear indicators for the respective justice orientations as elaborated in the introduction (Okimoto et al., 2011; Prooijen, 2009). Another finding of the pre- and post-measures was that female participants were more inclined to weaken their justice orientations than male participants after being provided with the article about restorative justice. A study by Chung and Monroe (1998) about gender differences in information processing found that males and females have different information processing styles. In fact, males tend to focus more on confirming information, while females tend to pay greater attention to disconfirming information (Chung & Monroe, 1998). This may explain why female participants weakened their justice orientations to a greater extent than male participants.

Based on the findings of this research, it can be suggested to what extent positive and negative information about restorative justice influences people's justice orientations. The retributive justice orientation of retributive-oriented and restorative-oriented people becomes weaker and their restorative

justice orientation remains the same after reading positive and negative information about restorative justice.

Strengths and limitations

One limitation of this study is the sample size. A sample size of only 70 participants is not representative. Another limitation regarding the sample is the study population. Through snowball sampling, the sample mostly consisted of female, German students. Thus, also in this regard, the sample is not representative. Together, the results of this research cannot be generalized. In other words, this research can be used as a starting point for future research but general conclusions cannot be drawn. On the other hand, the procedure of recruiting participants through snowball sampling was convenient for the researcher. For the participants, the procedure of completing the survey was convenient too as the survey was accessible through a link and the questions were easy to respond to through a Likert scale.

The next limitation is the method of self-reports. Response bias can occur, which is the tendency to answer questions on a survey untruthfully, misleading, or inaccurately. Since the questionnaires were about assessing one's attitudes towards justice and punishments, the likelihood was higher that participants gave socially acceptable or desirable answers. Therefore, the results of this research may lack validity. On the other hand, this research design is easy to be replicated and added on in further studies as the same questionnaire can be used.

Furthermore, the items estimating the attitudes towards the severity of punishments were created by the researcher. Therefore, there were no psychometric evaluations available. The factor analysis found two underlying factors of which one indicated a positive attitude towards severe punishments and the other one indicated a negative attitude towards severe punishments. However, the items indicating a negative attitude were found to have questionable internal consistency. Therefore, the results may lack validity. However, the internal consistency of the items was, overall, found to be at least acceptable. Furthermore, the items measuring the justice orientations were created by Okimoto et al. (2011) and psychometric evaluations were found to be good. In this research, the internal consistency was identified to be at least good. In return, the analysis found a significant effect between the justice orientation and the attitude towards the severity of punishments. Thus, in this respect, the test was appropriate for the context of this study.

Lastly, a strong limitation of this study is the missing control group. Consequently, the influence of the positive and negative information about restorative justice on the participant's justice orientation could not be controlled properly. Therefore, the after-measures of the justice orientation may not be internally valid. Another issue with the after-measures of the justice orientation is that the decrease of the retributive justice orientation and the consistency of the restorative justice orientation can be explained by prior research but there is no evidence available for this specific context that supports the findings. To conclude, the results of this research are only suggestive so that this research should solely be treated as a starting point for further research.

Recommendations

To improve further research, there should be at least a hundred participants to increase the representativeness and validity of the results. Moreover, a control group should be added to the pre-post research design which does not get provided with the same article about restorative justice. This way, the influence of the positive and negative information about restorative justice on the dependent variables can be controlled properly, which most likely increases the internal validity of the results.

Furthermore, due to the issue of response biases in self-reports, it would be helpful to combine this design with a non-self-report design such as an experiment. Experiments give the chance to reduce response biases and provide insight into cause-and-effect by demonstrating what outcome occurs when a particular factor is manipulated. E.g., researchers could provide criminal cases with different options of consequences for the victim and offender. Some options are retributive-oriented and others are restorative-oriented. The selected options determine the participant's justice orientations. Thereby, the treatment group gets provided with positive and negative information about restorative justice in-between such as through an article like in this research while the control group does not get exposed to the same information.

Next, even though the study was successful in finding a significant effect between the justice orientation and the attitude towards the severity of punishments, the number of items measuring the items should be increased to enhance the validity of the results. Also, for the future, it would be valuable to find causes for the effect, e.g., by including variables that mediate the relationship.

Finally, the investigation of the influence of information about restorative justice on people's justice orientation serves as a starting point for future research. More precisely, it would be interesting to explore whether people with either justice orientation tend to not only become less retributive-oriented but also more restorative-oriented if they receive different kinds of treatments. If that is not the case, one could investigate why people tend to become less retributive-oriented but not more restorative-oriented. This way, policymakers may get an idea of how to convince the public of restorative justice programmes and consequently, may be better able to implement these programmes more frequently.

Conclusion

This research was overall successful in finding significant predictions of the justice orientations on the attitudes towards the severity of punishments. Retributive-oriented people seem to prefer severe punishments which can be explained by the focus of retributive justice on the punishment of the offender (Okimoto et al., 2011). In contrast, restorative-oriented people seem to prefer lower punishments which can be explained by the focus of restorative justice on the restoration of the injustice (Wenzel et al., 2008). These findings emphasize that the majority of the general public, oppositely to this study population, is retributive-oriented as prior research found that people demand increasingly more severe punishments (Gelder et al., 2011; Unnever & Cullen, 2010). Therefore, a retributive justice orientation has not only an impact on people's demands for more severe punishments but also on the justice system

itself since policymakers comply to these demands (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). Thus, changing people's retributive justice orientation to a more restorative one could, indeed, change the justice system.

Regarding the second aim of this research, it was suggested that the retributive justice orientation of retributive- and restorative-oriented people became weaker due to the influence of positive and negative information about restorative justice on people's justice orientations. Based on the theory of the confirmation bias, restorative-oriented people seemed to select more positive information about restorative orientation, while neglecting or even rejecting the negative information which resulted in greater disapproval of the opposite justice orientation. Based on the findings of Roberts and Stalans (2004), on the other hand, a retributive justice orientation may be explained by the unfamiliarity with restorative justice. Thus, it is likely that in this case, the acquisition of new knowledge about an alternative justice approach has caused a weaker retributive justice orientation among retributive-oriented participants rather than the confirmation bias. However, the restorative justice orientation of both retributive- and restorative-oriented approximately remained the same. This consistency can be explained by the persistence of prior beliefs among restorative-oriented participants and by the formation of a more moderate view among retributive-oriented participants (Ledet, 2013; Schwind et al., 2012). Therefore, it can be concluded that the positive and negative information about restorative justice may make people disapprove or question retributive justice but it does not convince them to increase their restorative justice orientation in return.

The future goal should be to help policymakers implementing restorative justice programmes by finding a way to convince the public of the usefulness of these programmes. In any case, this research suggests that informing the public about restorative justice to make them question retribution as the only response to crime and thereby, to make them consider other forms of justice is a good start to reach that goal. Since people lack knowledge about the justice system, which was found to be associated with a general mistrust with justice policies, educating people about restorative justice could also lead to a gain of trust in the justice system (Gelder et al., 2011; Roberts & Stalans, 2004). Finally, by implementing restorative justice programmes more frequently, the effectiveness of the justice system would most likely increase as they help to combat criminal recidivism (Darley & Gromet, 2009). Therefore, the results of this research serve as a decent starting point for further research.

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Appendix

Normality tests

Table 3

Skewness and Kurtosis of the Mean Scores

	N	Skewness	Kurtosis
Mean Scores of the pre-test measuring the justice orientations	70	.57	-.37
Mean Scores of the post-test measuring the justice orientations	70	.36	-.15
Mean Scores of the pre-test measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments	70	.21	-.72
Mean Scores of the post-test measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments	70	-.2	-.63

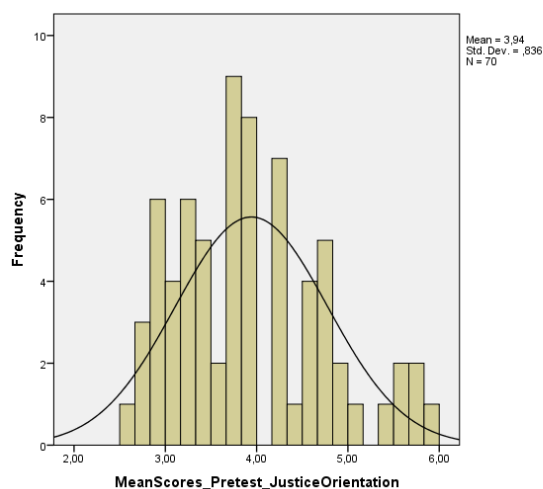


Figure 2. Histogram of the mean scores of the pre-test measuring the justice orientation

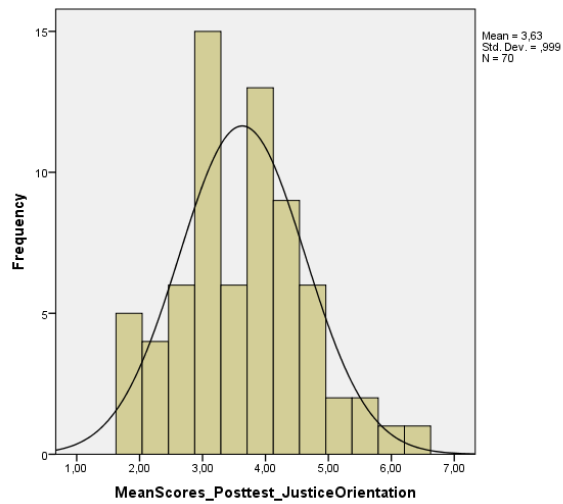


Figure 3. Histogram of the mean scores of the post-test measuring the justice orientation

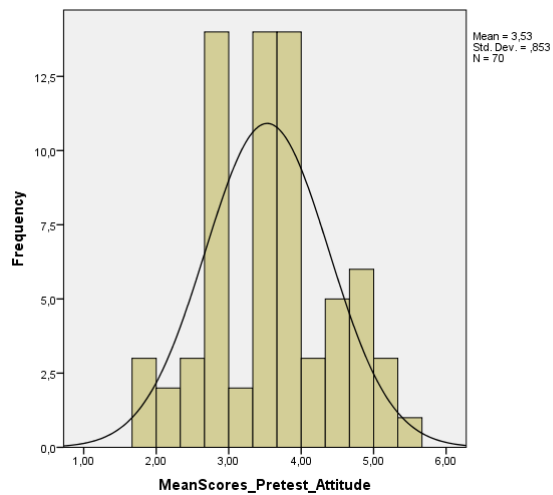


Figure 4. Histogram of the mean scores of the pre-test measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments

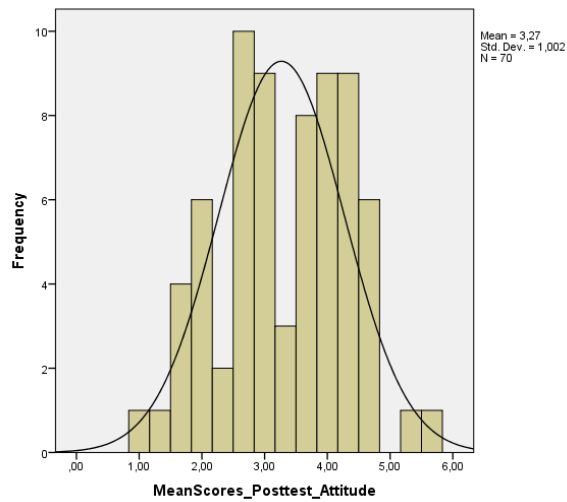


Figure 5. Histogram of the mean scores of the post-test measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments

Table 4

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of the Mean Scores

	N	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean Scores of the pre-test measuring the justice orientations	70	.07
Mean Scores of the post-test measuring the justice orientation	70	.2
Mean Scores of the pre-test measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments	70	.2
Mean Scores of the post-test measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments	70	.03

Independent sample t-test

Table 5

Mean Differences Between Familiar and Non-Familiar Participants with Restorative Justice

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
Mean Scores of the pre-test measuring the justice orientations	2.43	68	.02	.48
Mean Scores of the post-test measuring the justice orientation	1.84	68	.07	.44
Mean Scores of the pre-test measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments	3.42	68	.00	.67
Mean Scores of the post-test measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments	2.64	68	.01	.62

Table 6

Mean Differences Between Male and Female Participants

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
Mean Scores of the pre-test measuring the justice orientations	1.00	68	.31	.47
Mean Scores of the post-test measuring the justice orientation	2.33	68	.02	.58
Mean Scores of the pre-test measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments	1.41	68	.16	.31
Mean Scores of the post-test measuring the	1.91	68	.06	.48

attitude towards the
severity of punishments

Factor analysis

Table 7

Factor Loadings and Communalities of the Set of Items Estimating the Attitude Towards the Severity of Punishments

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Communalities
<i>“The best way to reduce the crime rate would be to increase the severity of punishments.” (Item 1)</i>	.74	-.35	.67
<i>“Criminals should get more severe punishments than they receive at the moment by our justice system.” (Item 2)</i>	.83	-.29	.77
<i>“Long prison sentencings are the only appropriate punishment for offenders to protect the general public.” (Item 3)</i>	.75	-.36	.69
<i>“If prison sentencings have to be used, they should be used sparingly and only as a last option.” (Item 4)</i>	.45	.55	.5
<i>“If we were to adopt very severe punishments for crimes this might well lead to an even more aggressive society.” (Item 5)</i>	.5	.56	.59
<i>“Sentencing alternatives, such as community service, probation, or restitution, are more effective for low-level offenders” (Item 6)</i>	.34	.68	.56

The survey

Informed consent

Dear participant,

Thank you for participating in this study! My name is Linda Merkel and this research is part of my bachelor thesis. The aim of this study is to examine people's attitudes towards justice. Completing the questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes.

Participation is completely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason. Your answers remain anonymous and will be treated confidential. The data will only be used for research purposes.

This research has been approved by the ethics board of BMS.

Please answer the following question:

I have read and I understand the information and agree to what I read. I declare that I have been informed about the method, nature, and purpose of the study.

- ☐ I consent
- ☐ I do not consent

Demographic characteristics

First, I would like to ask some general questions.

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Not specified
- ☐ I do not want to say

What is your age in years?

What is your nationality?

- ☐ Dutch
- ☐ German
- ☐ Other

What is your highest level of education?

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Pre-test measuring the justice orientation

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
As a matter of fairness, an offender should be penalized.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The only way to restore justice is to punish an offender.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Justice is served when an offender is penalized.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Only a punishment restores the justice disrupted by an incident.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For the sake of justice, some degree of suffering has to be inflicted on an offender.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

[illegible]

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
offenders to protect the general public. Sentencing alternatives, such as community service, probation, or restitution, are more effective for low-level offenders.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The article about restorative justice used in the survey

Now, please read the article about restorative justice carefully. Afterwards, some questions concerning the article will be asked.

Punishing the offender: getting out of it the easy way?

Nowadays, we see a shift in the way offenders are punished. A lot of countries introduced restorative justice programmes. This means that after a crime, offenders are not always immediately punished by a judge or public prosecutor, but the crime is given back to its direct involved parties: the victim, the offender, and the community. Through restorative justice, they have the opportunity to talk with each other about the consequences of the crime, how the crime impacted their lives, and ask each other questions. The aim of restorative justice is not to punish the offender, but to let the offender take active responsibility and repair the harm that has been done. However, a lot of restorative justice programmes end with an agreement between the involved parties, in which the reparative actions that the offender should take, are stated.

This is a new way of responding to crime and offences, but what are the effects of this type of punishment. Is it even effective or just a cheap and easy way of dealing with crime?

The idea of restorative justice is that both victims and offenders can benefit from so-called victim-offender-mediations: a direct face-to-face meeting between victim and offender in the presence of a trained mediator. Victims have the chance to take an active part in the process and reduce negative feelings, while offenders have the chance to take responsibility for their

actions and to redeem themselves. Indeed, research has shown that victims and offenders are more satisfied with restorative justice programmes than with traditional processes. However, this is not true for every victim and offender.

In some cases, the offender may show no empathy towards the victim, which could cause the victims even more harm. It could even re-victimize victims, which means that they get the feeling that they become a victim again, because the offender may blame the victim for being involved in the crime. Another possible scenario is that the offender abuses the opportunity, by manipulating the justice process to minimize their guilt and, in that way, replace the blame on the victims. Although some research shows that feelings of fear and anger of the victim decline after participation, some show an increase in these feelings.

Also, victims may attempt to shame the offender, which is also not the aim of the process. This could stigmatize them as criminal, which could increase reoffending rates. However, research shows that this risk is lower for offenders who participate in mediation compared to offenders whose case goes to court.

Another positive outcome of restorative justice is that this process has been found to reduce reoffending significantly. However, some researchers claim that the outcomes on reduced reoffending are based on a bias, because participation in mediation is voluntary for both victim and offender, which means that offenders who are willing to participate in mediation may already have different motivations compared to offenders who are not willing to participate. These pre-existing differences may explain the effects on reoffending. So it could be that restorative justice is not at all effective in reducing reoffending.

An important point to ponder is also that restorative justice may not be suitable for serious crimes like rape, which reduces the victim-offender-mediations to low committed crime only. However, reparative actions, such as community service or restorative justice, may work better for low-level criminals than prison sentencing as prison sentencing for low-level criminals have been found to actually increase reoffending.

A last point of consideration is that restorative justice could function as an alternative for the criminal justice system. Instead of a case going to court, victim and offender get the opportunity to come to an agreement. This agreement could be that both parties decide that no further punishment is needed. When this is communicated back to the judge, the judge can decide to drop the case. This means that the offender could use restorative justice as a way to avoid getting punished and participate only for their own benefits. However, it could be that, even

Whether restorative justice is the ultimate solution for committed crimes, remains a question. However, it is important to come up with many different justice approaches for many different situations. Whether it is a traditional punishment that helps the parties to go on with life or a victim-offender-mediation, the aim is always to find the most suitable way to deal with what happened.

Now, please answer the questions again while considering what you just read about restorative justice.

[illegible]

[illegible]

Post-test measuring the attitude towards the severity of punishments

Now, please answer the questions again while considering what you just read about restorative justice.

Indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

[illegible]

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
restitutions, are more effective for low-level offenders.							

Control questions about the prior familiarity with restorative justice

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Before this research, I already knew what restorative justice was	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The information I read about restorative justice in this research was new to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Due to this research, I have a better understanding of what restorative justice is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Debriefing

You have reached the end of the study. Thank you for participating.

With this study, I wanted to examine to what extent providing information about restorative justice can influence people's justice orientation. In particular, I wanted to examine if there is a bias in how people read information about restorative justice when their justice orientation is punitive or restorative.

Do you still give consent after being provided with the whole truth about the study?

- ☐ I consent
- ☐ I do not consent

If you have any questions, remarks or want to know the outcomes of the study, do not hesitate to write an email to:

l.m.merkel@student.utwente.nl

Linda Merkel