

**Does the Presentation of Information about Restorative Justice Impact the Public
Justice Orientation towards Restorative Justice?**

Bachelor Thesis - Conflict, Risk & Safety

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate if information about restorative justice presented to the public impacts the justice orientation which is measured by the level of the individuals' orientation towards restorative or retributive justice. Moreover, it is researched if the presented information about restorative justice impacts participants' trust in the justice system. The conducted study was a quantitative study in which an experimental research design with three conditions was adopted. Therefore, three groups were tested in a pre – and post-design. A total of 146 participants took part in the study. The first condition received information about the goals of restorative justice. The second condition received additional information about the programme types and structure while the third condition received both types of information.

The results revealed that presenting information regarding restorative justice had a significant effect on participants' restorative justice orientation. This suggests that participants expressed an increase in their restorative justice orientation after receiving information on restorative justice. However, the difference established was only minimal. Moreover, there was no decrease in retributive justice orientation found after presenting information on restorative justice. No effect on the participants' trust in the justice system was found. It is suggested that this could be due to more variables such as individual characteristics, past experiences, and personal views that might be complex to change with only the presentation of information.

Does the Presentation of Information about Restorative Justice Impact the Public Justice Orientation towards Restorative Justice?

What is restorative justice? This a question only a few individuals might ask themselves and even fewer might know how to answer this question. Even though restorative justice is a widespread concept that has grown in the last ten years (Roberts & Stalans, 2004), research in the field of criminology found that overall, the public is not very educated or familiar with the criminal justice system (Roberts, 1992).

One principal element of the justice system to address crime is retributive justice (Perry, 2006). It refers to the unilateral exertion of punishment to restore justice (Wenzel et al., 2008). Therefore, it often focuses on punishing the offender while mostly overlooking the victim (Bastian et al., 2013; Okimoto et al., 2012). Restorative justice compared to that incorporates bringing the victim, offender, and other impacted parties together in a secure and encouraging setting to talk about the harm done and come up with solutions (Zehr, 2015).

However, studies on restorative justice have generally found that the general public frequently has little knowledge and grasp of the concept of restorative justice (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). For instance, according to research by Double and Greene (2000), only 11% of participants had heard of restorative justice programmes in their respective states. Moreover, it was found by Sita and Edanyu (1999) that many of those who had heard of restorative justice had misconceptions about what it comprises. Parallel to this, research shows that although the public has favourable attitudes toward restorative justice programmes such as compensatory sentencing, awareness of restorative justice is typically very limited (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). Furthermore, Marshall (1999) argues that public support and engagement of the community are essential to the success of restorative justice programs.

In the article written by Van Gelder et al. (2015) it is stated that judges are not completely immune from the “force of public opinion” (Van Gelder et al., 2015, p. 672). This consequently means that the public opinion might influence how judges perceive certain

penalties themselves and act upon it because of the influence of public opinion (Van Gelder et al., 2015). This is why it is suggested that the public opinion can be important for the exertion of justice in general (Van Gelder et al., 2015) which consequently might also affect the exertion of restorative justice.

Consequently, it is important to understand how public opinion regarding justice can be influenced. Van Gelder et al. (2015), state in their article that increasing knowledge can impact an individuals' attitude regarding suspended sentences. Hence, it is of interest to establish which approach to increase knowledge has the greatest effect on an individuals' restorative justice orientation. By determining what kind of information can increase knowledge, communication strategies and educational initiatives can be improved to foster a better understanding and appreciation of restorative justice principles.

Definition of Restorative Justice and Retributive Justice

The question of what restorative justice incorporates is not easy to answer as the concept is very broad and there is not one clear definition (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). However, it can be said that restorative justice is a term that refers to a wide range of methods within the justice system. Menkel-Meadow (2007) describes that it includes compensation, recognition of mistakes, apologies, as well as various initiatives to aid recovery such as the social integration of offenders into their communities.

Zehr (2015), who is considered one of the "founding fathers of the restorative justice movement" (Nylund et al., 2018, p. 30) describes that the main goal of restorative justice is to include the victim, the offender, and the community in the process of addressing the harm that has been done. Therefore, instead of punishment, restorative justice focuses on healing and closure for those affected by the crime (Zehr, 2015). Mousourakis (2003) describes that restorative justice aims to understand the root causes of criminal behaviour through open dialogue and shared responsibility. Further, Hutchinson (2009) argues that restorative justice

approaches bring together all parties in a secure environment to discuss the harm and find solutions. Additionally, Walgrave et al. (2019) argue that restorative justice aims to repair relationships, promote healing, and hold the offender accountable, while also providing support and healing for the victim through community involvement. In short, it can be said that ideally, restorative justice contains four Rs: “repair, restore, reconcile, and reintegrate the offenders and victims to each other and to their shared community” (Menkel-Meadow, 2007, p. 3).

In contrast to that, retributive justice entails merely the unilateral exertion of punishment to restore justice (Wenzel et al., 2008). According to Bastian et al. (2013), the main idea concerning retributive justice is a "just deserts" approach (Bastian et al., 2013, p. 1). Therefore, due to the damage inflicted on the victim and society, the severity of the punishment should be proportionate (Bastian et al., 2013). Moreover, it can be said that retributive justice usually overlooks the needs and rights of the victim (Okimoto et al., 2012).

Therefore, it can be said that individuals may have different orientations about how justice should be achieved which may be based on their underlying beliefs and values and how they think about different justice approaches (Okimoto et al., 2012). For this research, the justice orientations are broadly categorized into two main types: retributive justice and restorative justice which were explained earlier. It is important to note that justice orientations are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and individuals may hold a combination of retributive and restorative justice beliefs to varying degrees (Okimoto et al., 2012).

Benefits of Restorative Justice

After attempting to answer the question of what restorative justice is, it is equally important to state why restorative justice is beneficial. Restorative justice, as described by Menkel-Meadow (2007), focuses on rehabilitating those affected by a crime. It aims to reintegrate offenders into the community and provide support for victims such as mental

rehabilitation (Menkel-Meadow, 2007). Therefore, it promotes the recovery of both the victim, the community as well as the offender (Menkel-Meadow, 2007).

Research shows that participating in a restorative justice program can have different benefits for both victims and offenders. Therefore, it can positively impact victims and their relatives' well-being by decreasing feelings of anxiety or anger (Kayali & Walters, 2021). Furthermore, research by Walters (2015) established that restorative conversation can reduce the pain experienced by individuals that were affected by homicide. Therefore, relatives of the victim of this case reported that engaging in a restorative dialogue with the offender empowered them to move forward and prevent the crime from controlling their lives (Walters, 2015). Similarly, the offender in the case discussed by Walters (2015) acknowledged the positive impact of participating in such a dialogue.

Moreover, it is evident that the majority of victims who engaged in victim-offender mediation, a programme that is incorporated within the restorative justice approach, are more satisfied with their involvement in the process (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018). Therefore, more than 80% of crime victims are satisfied with victim-offender mediation (Hansen & Umbreit, 2018). Research also shows that offenders who participated in restorative justice approaches have a lower risk of reoffending compared to offenders who did not participate in such a program (Kayali & Walters, 2021; Maxwell & Morris, 2002).

The Importance of Public Opinion on Restorative Justice

Even though there are many benefits to restorative justice approaches the public is not very educated or familiar with restorative justice in general (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). However, as suggested by Marshall (1999), it can be expected that public support and therefore the public opinion might influence the application or success of restorative justice.

Roberts and Stalans (2004) name two reasons for that. According to restorative justice concepts, initially, the victim and the community at large are expected to participate

significantly in the process that determines the sentencing of the offender (Roberts & Stalans, 2004). Therefore, it can be suggested that the opinion of the public might influence the process of sentencing as well as the participation in restorative processes. The likelihood that victims and offenders will agree to participate in restorative justice approaches might increase if the general public supports it and has a favourable attitude towards it. This is mainly suggested due to the finding that public opinion can have a persuasive effect on individuals' attitudes (Sakai, 1981). Therefore, Sakai (1981) found that when individuals were encouraged to deliver a public speech that contradicted their personal beliefs, they altered their private opinion to align with the counter-attitudinal stance. Applying this to the context of restorative justice, it can be inferred that if the general public expresses support for restorative justice, there might be a higher likelihood of participation of the public. Conversely, participation rates may be lower if the public is unsupportive.

This can also be further supported by the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) which explains behaviour based on attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). According to TPB, individuals' behavioural intentions are influenced by their attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms (social pressures and norms), and their perception of how much control they have over performing the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of restorative justice, subjective norms may influence individuals' attitudes and intentions to participate. If the public supports restorative justice and considers it favourable, individuals may be more likely to have positive attitudes and may be motivated to engage in restorative processes.

In addition, it has been shown that even judges are not completely immune to the influence of public perception of sentencing (Van Gelder et al., 2015) which also includes sentencing with a more restorative approach. Connecting to that, it can also be suggested that public opinion can also affect restorative justice-related legislation and policy. Depending on the opinions of their voters, elected officials may be more or less likely to support programs

for restorative justice as it was visible from the argument presented before that states that judges were not completely immune to the influence of public perception (Manza et al., 2002; Van Gelder et al., 2015). If judges were affected by the force of the opinion of the public it can be said that most likely politicians are also not immune to this influence as it was also established by Manza et al. (2002).

Increasing Knowledge to Impact Justice Orientation

Even if the public opinion might be important for the exertion of restorative justice (Marshall, 1999) it is found that individuals might not know much about restorative justice or might have some misconceptions (Harris & Umbreit, 2003). Therefore, it can be suggested that, for some individuals, the idea and principles of restorative justice might still be unheard of.

Generally, it can be said that public opinion is the collection of attitudes and beliefs held by a group of people on a particular issue or set of issues and it is shaped by a complex range of factors and interactions, including the media, political events, social networks, and personal experiences (Davison, 2023). Even though it might be complex to impact public opinion, it is suggested that it might be possible (Public Opinion | Definition, Characteristics, Examples, Polls, Types, Importance, & Facts, 2023). To attempt to impact the attitudes and opinions of the general population, some techniques may be utilized. One way to impact individuals' opinions or attitudes towards something is by increasing their overall knowledge (Van Gelder et al., 2015).

McPhetres et al. (2019) found that educating individuals about a certain topic can result in a more positive attitude towards that specific topic. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that individuals might become more knowledgeable about the principles and advantages of restorative justice as a result of being educated and exposed to information regarding this topic. Consequently, individuals may adopt a more favourable attitude toward restorative

justice as a result of their more extensive knowledge and awareness, which might then be represented in a more restorative justice orientation and a decreased retributive orientation. This was also mentioned in the article written by Van Gelder et al. (2015) who stated that individuals are more likely to deviate from their originally formed opinion regarding sentencing towards a more positive attitude when given more information. Furthermore, it was also established that respondents' expressed preferences for sentencing could be influenced by informing them of all available sentencing options (Indermaur et al., 2012). Therefore, this could also be applied to the context of restorative justice which is why it is hypothesized that:

H1: After receiving information about Restorative Justice the Restorative Justice Orientation increased.

H2: After receiving information about Restorative Justice the Retributive Justice Orientation decreased.

Trust in the Criminal Justice System

Increasing knowledge about restorative justice might also impact trust in the criminal justice system. The procedural justice theory gives more support for this suggestion. Procedural justice theory emphasizes the significance of perceived fairness in legal procedures and decision-making processes (Hough et al., 2010). It suggests that individuals are more likely to accept and trust the outcomes of the justice system when they believe the processes and results are legitimate and fair (Hough et al., 2010). According to this concept, perceptions of procedural fairness are significantly influenced by elements including transparency, voice, impartiality, and consistency (Newman et al., 2020). This is why it can be argued that understanding procedural justice theory might be important in the context of restorative justice. By raising awareness of restorative justice principles and practices and integrating them into the criminal justice system, it is possible to enhance the public's trust in

the system and promote a sense of procedural justice. When individuals are more aware that in an impartial restorative justice process parties have a voice, an element related to procedural justice, the public might have more trust in the criminal justice system.

Furthermore, Roberts and Stalans (2004) argue that aligning laws with public opinion can foster trust in the execution of the justice system. This also again emphasizes the importance to increase knowledge about the justice system in order to promote trust. Therefore, increasing knowledge about restorative justice might consequently also increase trust in the criminal justice system. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: Increasing the knowledge about Restorative Justice increases the Trust in the criminal justice system.

Present Study

This study aims to investigate if information about restorative justice presented to the public impacts the justice orientation. At this moment it cannot be said what type of information will have a greater impact since not much research in this field is done. Therefore, the goal was to establish if the opinion on restorative justice, which is measured by the level of the individuals' orientation towards restorative or retributive justice, is impacted after presenting different types of specific additional information about restorative justice. This is why it was tested if it made a difference in the individuals' justice orientation if the goals, details about the programme types and structure or both conditions were presented. This type of information was chosen as it was suggested that this might present the key aspects of restorative justice. Therefore, the hypotheses were created that

H1: After receiving information about Restorative Justice the Restorative Justice Orientation increased,

H2: After receiving information about Restorative Justice the Retributive Justice Orientation decreased,

H3: Increasing the knowledge about Restorative Justice also increases the Trust in the criminal justice system.

Method

Design

The conducted study was a quantitative study in which an experimental research design with three conditions was adopted. Participants were randomly and automatically distributed to one of the three conditions. For this study, a between-subjects design was adopted and a pre-post-test design was used. Participants in the first condition received additional information about the goals of restorative justice (Goals). Participants that were assigned to the second condition were provided with additional information about the programme types of restorative justice as well as their structure (Programme and structure). Participants in the third condition received both types of information (Both).

Participants

Participants for all three conditions were selected by the sampling technique of non-probability sampling. Therefore, participants that happened to be the most accessible were chosen. This is therefore called convenience sampling (Etikan et al., 2016). To recruit participants the subject pool named "SONA" from the University of Twente in the Netherlands was used. Participants that attended the online study via SONA were rewarded with 0.25 SONA credit points. Moreover, "Reddit" was used to gather participants. Therefore, surveys were exchanged by the researcher and other individuals. Taking part in this study then worked as an incentive that the participants got rewarded with a participant for their own study.

In total 278 participants took part in this study. Two participants were excluded after they indicated at the end of the study that they want to withdraw their participation. 83 participants were excluded as they did not finish the whole study and 47 participants were removed after they ended the study prior to the first survey question. After that, 146 participants were included in further analysis.

All background characteristics of each condition as well as the overall sample can be found in Table 1. The highest percentage in the group that stated a different nationality, indicated American nationality, namely 46,39%. Noticeably is that the condition “Programmes & Structure” had less male participants and the majority were female participants.

Table 1*Sample Characteristics*

| | | Condition | | | Total Sample |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | | Goals | Programmes & Structure | Both | |
| Count | | 50 | 48 | 48 | 146 |
| Mean Age | | 30.86 | 30.54 | 27.77 | 29,74 |
| Gender | Female | 29 (58%) | 34 (70.84%) | 26 (54.17%) | 89 (60,96%) |
| | Male | 20 (40%) | 10 (20.83%) | 19 (39.58%) | 49 (33,56%) |
| | Non-Binary | 1 (2%) | 4 (8.33%) | 2 (4,17%) | 7 (4,79%) |
| | Other | 0 | 0 | 1 (2.08%) | 1 (0,68%) |
| Nationality | German | 13 (26%) | 11(22.92%) | 15 (31.25%) | 39 (26,71%) |
| | Dutch | 4 (8%) | 3 (6.25%) | 3 (6.25%) | 10 (6,85%) |
| | Other | 33 (66%) | 34 (70.83%) | 30 (62.5%) | 97 (66,44%) |
| Educational Background | High-School Diploma | 22 (44%) | 25 (52.08%) | 25 (52.08%) | 72 (49,32%) |
| | Bachelor's Degree | 13 (26%) | 14 (29.17%) | 14(29.17%) | 41 (28,08%) |
| | Master's Degree | 10 (20%) | 2 (4.17%) | 6 (12.50%) | 18 (12,33%) |
| | Other | 5 (10%) | 7 (14.58%) | 3 (6.25%) | 15 (10,27%) |

Materials

The study was held only online which is why a stable internet connection, as well as a working Laptop, was necessary to participate. For this study, the web-based software “Qualtrics” was used which allows the user to create surveys or questionnaires and generate reports. The consent form asked for personal demographic information such as nationality, age, gender, educational background, current study programme and it informed the participant about the confidentiality and anonymity of the study (Appendix A). A short informational text was presented to every participant which broadly explained the concept of restorative justice (Appendix B). This was done to ensure that every participant had a basic understanding of restorative justice since this was necessary to fill out the questionnaire. Furthermore, a debriefing form was used to state the real nature of the study (Appendix F). To analyse the data, R-Studio Version 4.2.0 an integrated development environment for R was used.

Manipulations

In the first condition, participants got presented with additional information about the goals of restorative justice (Appendix D). The second condition provided additional information about the programme types of restorative justice as well as their structure (Appendix E). Lastly, the third condition included information that was presented in the first condition as well as the second condition. Therefore, in this condition information on the goals as well as the programme types and structure of restorative justice was displayed. The information that was presented to each condition was written taking into account different sources informing about the key concepts of restorative justice such as those of the University of Wisconsin Law School (n.d.) and Dandurand and Griffiths (2006). Furthermore, the language used was adjusted to make the information easily understandable. The presented information was decided to be used to provide participants with a clear understanding of the key aspects of the restorative justice approach.

Questionnaires

The questionnaire consisted of 18 questions addressing the level of restorative or retributive justice orientation as well as the level of trust in the justice system (Appendix C). Therefore, six questions each measured the variables restorative or retributive justice orientation as well as trust in the justice system.

Variables

Restorative Justice and Retributive Justice Orientation

The restorative justice orientation as well as the retributive justice orientation were measured twice. Once pre the manipulation and once post. The test consisted of 12 items each addressing the level of restorative or retributive justice orientation (Appendix C). Six questions each measured the variable of the justice orientation (restorative or retributive). Answers were ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7) on a seven-point Likert scale. To measure the retributive justice orientation statement questions like “As a matter of fairness, an offender should be penalized” were used. An example of an item measuring restorative justice orientation would be “Without an offender's sincere acknowledgement of having acted inappropriately, the injustice is not completely restored”. Those questions were adopted from a study done by Okimoto et al. (2012). In the study by Okimoto et al. (2012), the justice orientation (restorative vs retributive) was researched and measured.

Trust Scale

The trust scale was measured twice in total. Once pre the manipulation and once post. It consisted of six items each addressing the level of trust in the justice system (Appendix C). Answers were ranging from “never” (1) to “always” (5) on a five-point Likert scale. To measure trust in the justice system questions like “Please tell me how often do you think the

courts make mistakes that let guilty people go free?” were asked. Those questions got adopted from the study done by Jackson et al. (2013).

The factor analysis revealed two factors with Eigenvalues greater than one. Upon closer examination, it was observed that two items, namely item one and item four, demonstrated low factor loadings compared to the other items. As a result, these two items were excluded from the measurement. The items that were excluded were “Please tell me how often do you think the courts make mistakes that let guilty people go free?” and “All laws should be strictly obeyed”.

Following the exclusion of these items, the remaining four items were subjected to a reliability analysis. The outcomes showed that the items formed a reliable scale to measure trust in the justice system ($\alpha = 0.76$). The Bartlett test was significant indicating a significant relationship among the variables ($\chi^2 = 147.197, p < .001$). Sampling adequacy was moderate to high (KMO = 0.74).

Procedure

First, the participants were contacted directly or via an open request within a public social media forum and provided with the link to the study that took place online. Participants were randomly and automatically distributed to one of the three conditions. After that, participants first read the informed consent which educated them on the confidentiality and anonymity of the study (Appendix A). When the participant agreed to the terms stated in the consent form their demographics were measured. After that, every participant was provided with an informational text which included a general description of the concept of restorative justice so that the basic level of knowledge was the same for every participant (Appendix B). Following, participants answered the questionnaire including 18 questions in total measuring the restorative and retributive justice orientation as well as the trust in legal authorities (Appendix C). Next, participants were randomly assigned to one out of the three conditions

and received the corresponding information (Appendix D, E). Following, the same questionnaire was presented again including 18 questions in total measuring the restorative and retributive justice orientation as well as the trust in legal authorities. After finishing the questionnaire, all participants were given a debriefing form which stated the confidentiality and anonymity of the study and informed participants of the true nature of the study as well as possible withdrawal and contact options (Appendix F). After that, the participants had to agree again to the use of their data. With that, the study was completed. The study was given ethical approval by the ethics committee of the University of Twente.

Data Analysis

To analyse the data, R-Studio Version 4.2.0 was used. The data was cleaned by excluding and deleting incomplete responses and those participants that stated that they wanted to withdraw their participation. Then, descriptive statistics were analysed to ascertain the demographic characteristics of each condition as well as the correlations between the variables. After that, the hypotheses were tested using paired sample t-tests. The resulting p-value allows to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-and post-test scores. Moreover, an ANOVA was performed to compare the post scores across all conditions for all variables to establish if there was a difference between the conditions.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2

Mean Score and Std. Deviation all Variables and Conditions

| Condition | Restoration | | Retribution | | Trust | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|------|-------------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | pre | post | pre | post | pre | post | |
| Programmes & Structure | | | | | | | |
| | <i>M</i> | 3.00 | 3.18 | 3.69 | 3.53 | 2.92 | 2.91 |
| | <i>SD</i> | 1.01 | 1.26 | 1.32 | 1.18 | 0.843 | 0.826 |
| Goals | | | | | | | |
| | <i>M</i> | 3.02 | 3.15 | 3.63 | 3.63 | 3.12 | 3.14 |
| | <i>SD</i> | 1.01 | 1.35 | 1.32 | 1.42 | 0.846 | 0.897 |
| Both | | | | | | | |
| | <i>M</i> | 3.45 | 3.05 | 3.56 | 3.62 | 3.03 | 3.07 |
| | <i>SD</i> | 1.38 | 1.35 | 1.41 | 1.22 | 0.883 | 0.892 |
| Whole Sample | | | | | | | |
| | <i>M</i> | 3.14 | 2.99 | 3.60 | 3.68 | 3.018 | 3.039 |
| | <i>SD</i> | 1.22 | 1.42 | 1.29 | 1.43 | 0.654 | 0.476 |

Before running the analyses, it was aimed to get an overview of the data. Table 2 provides the mean scores and the standard deviation of all variables and conditions for the pre and post-test. The highest score on the justice scale is 7 while the lowest would be 1. The

highest score for the trust scale is 5 while the lowest would be 1 as the concept was measured on a five-point Likert scale.

The results show that the average score for the restorative justice orientation was higher pre compared to post in the “Both” condition. Furthermore, the mean of the retributive justice orientation in the condition “Both” was higher post than compared to pre-manipulation.

Table 3

Correlations Matrix Restoration, Retribution and Trust

| | | Restoration | | Retribution | | Trust | |
|-------------|------|-------------|-------|-------------|--------|-------|------|
| | | pre | post | pre | post | pre | post |
| | pre | 1.00 | | | | | |
| Restoration | post | 0.85* | 1.00 | | | | |
| | pre | -0.09 | -0.05 | 1.00 | | | |
| Retribution | post | -0.08 | -0.03 | 0.91* | 1.00 | | |
| | pre | 0.15 | 0.10 | -0.33* | -0.29* | 1.00 | |
| Trust | post | 0.04 | -0.01 | -0.43* | -0.37* | 0.66* | 1.00 |

*Note: *p-value < 0.05*

Table 3 states the correlation matrix of the variables. Noteworthy is that there is a negative correlation between retributive justice orientation and trust.

Hypothesis Testing

Justice Orientation. The first hypothesis in this study was: “After receiving information about Restorative Justice the Restorative Justice Orientation increased”. With a paired sample t-test it was examined if a difference existed on the pre- and post-test. The outcomes showed to be significant ($t(145) = 2.40, p = 0.01$). The score on the post-test was significantly higher compared to the score on the pre-test. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted.

The second hypothesis namely “After receiving information about Restorative Justice the Retributive Justice Orientation decreased” was tested with the same procedure as the first hypothesis. The outcomes showed that there was no significant difference found ($t(145) = -1.64, p = 0.10$).

Table 4

ANOVA Results Restoration and Retribution

| Concept | Df | Sum Sq | Mean Sq | F Value | Pr(>F) |
|--------------------|-----|--------|---------|---------|--------|
| Restoration | | | | | |
| condition | 2 | 3.84 | 1.92 | 0.94 | 0.39 |
| Residuals | 143 | 289.30 | 2.02 | | |
| Retribution | | | | | |
| condition | 2 | 0.41 | 0.20 | 0.09 | 0.90 |
| Residuals | 143 | 299.16 | 2.09 | | |

Table 4 shows the results of the ANOVA analysis. This was done to analyse if the specific conditions showed a difference in the post-test on the justice orientations to get more meaningful results. The outcome revealed that there is no statistically significant difference

between the group means ($(F(2,143) = 0.949, p = 0.39)$, $(F(2,143) = 0.097, p = 0.90)$).

Therefore, neither the retributive nor the restorative post scores are significantly different between the conditions.

Trust. To test the third hypothesis namely “Increasing the knowledge about Restorative Justice increases the Trust in the criminal justice system” a paired sample t-test was done. There were no significant differences in the trust scores between the pre-and post-test scores ($t(145) = -0.504, p = 0.615$). Therefore, this hypothesis was rejected.

Table 5

ANOVA Trust Pre and Post

| Variable | Df | Sum Sq | Mean Sq | F Value | Pr(>F) |
|------------|-----|--------|---------|---------|--------|
| Time | | | | | |
| Trust pre | | | | | |
| condition | 2 | 0.91 | 0.45 | 2.16 | 0.11 |
| Residuals | 143 | 30.20 | 0.21 | | |
| Trust post | | | | | |
| condition | 2 | 1.39 | 0.69 | 3.16 | 0.04* |
| Residuals | 143 | 31.56 | 0.22 | | |

*Note: *p < 0.05*

Table 5 states the outcome of the ANOVA analysis for both the pre as well as the post-scores for the variable trust. This was done to get more meaningful results regarding if the specific conditions showed a difference in the pre or post-test on trust. The results of the ANOVA test that compared the pre-scores for trust in different conditions did not reach statistical significance ($F(2, 143) = 2.16, p = 0.11$). Therefore, the pre-scores for trust were not statistically affected by the condition variable.

A significant effect was seen for the post-test trust scores for different conditions ($F(2, 143) = 3.16, p = 0.04$). Therefore, it can be said that post scores for trust were impacted by the condition variable in a statistically significant manner.

Table 6

Tukey's post-hoc pairwise comparisons for the conditions, Variable Trust

| Condition | Difference | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | p-value |
|-------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|---------|
| Goals – Both | 0.07 | -0.15 | 0.29 | .72 |
| Structure – Both | -0.16 | -0.35 | 0.06 | .21 |
| Structure - Goals | -0.23* | -0.45* | -0.00 | .03* |

Next, a post-hoc analysis in the ANOVA measuring the variable trust was done to determine which specific conditions are significantly different from each other as a significant difference in the ANOVA was found. The results can be found in Table 6. The analysis revealed a significant difference between the “Programmes & Structure” and “Goals” condition ($p = 0.03$). However, no significant differences were found between the “Goals” and “Both” conditions ($p = 0.72$), or between the “Programmes & Structure” and “Both” conditions ($p = 0.21$).

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine if different types of information presented to the public about restorative justice had an impact on peoples' justice orientation and trust in legal authorities. This was examined since it is suggested by Roberts and Stalans (2004) that the public opinion might have an impact on the application of different justice concepts. Therefore, it is important to establish how the public opinion might be impacted. Moreover, it was found by McPhetres et al. (2019) that the presentation of information can influence attitudes positively. Thus, this study examined the effect of the presentation of information to impact individuals' justice orientations.

The study found that providing information about restorative justice increased the restorative justice orientation. However, participants who received both types of information showed a decrease in restorative justice orientation. It is suggested that this could be due to information overload. The study did not find an effect of information on decreasing retributive justice orientation, suggesting that these orientations are not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, there was no impact of information on trust in the criminal justice system found.

Impact on Justice Orientations

The results of this study show that after receiving information about restorative justice the restorative justice orientation increased. These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing the role of information in impacting attitudes and opinions (McPhetres et al., 2019). Van Gelder et al. (2015) found in their research an impact of information on attitudes regarding suspended sentences. Therefore, the findings of the respective research portray a similar outcome to those of the research done by Van Gelder et al. (2015). Even though the effect of the presented information in this study on the restorative justice orientation might be modest, these findings highlight the value of providing individuals with

information in order to promote beneficial shifts in attitudes and orientations and further support existing research.

Moreover, the differences in restorative justice orientation between the conditions were also tested. Therefore, no significant difference between the conditions was found. However, it was established that people who only received information about the goals of restorative justice or the programmes and structure showed a higher increase in this orientation, whereas people who received both types of information showed a lower orientation towards restorative justice. This could be due to the fact that participants in the condition that got presented with both types of information received double the amount of information in text form compared to the other two conditions. The amount of information could have led to an overstimulation or “Information fatigue” (Groes, 2016, p. 142) which is the perception of being unable to cope with the overwhelming quantity of information and knowledge available (Groes, 2016). Consequently, the presented amount of information might have led to cognitive overload which might have led to a decrease in restorative justice orientation. It is suspected that the participants in the condition that received both types of information were overwhelmed with information, making it difficult for them to efficiently process and comprehend the given information. This suggestion might also be supported by the findings of Fanning and Gaba (2007) who found that adults experience improved learning when they are actively involved or take part in the process of encountering both concrete and transactional events in an emotional manner (Fanning & Gaba, 2007). This might have not been the case in the present study as information in text form was presented and the involvement of the participants was not measured or tested. In general offering information seems to influence the restorative justice orientation. However, the impact seems to be small.

Contrary to the expectation, this research did not find an effect that retributive justice orientation decreases after receiving information about restorative justice. It could be a possibility that the information that was presented did not have a significant impact due to the

participants' pre-existing attitudes and opinions regarding retributive or restorative justice that might be ingrained and resistant to change (Okimoto et al., 2012). Furthermore, it could be possible that the content of the presented information was not sufficient to cause participants' retributive justice orientation to change noticeably. To check if the content of the presented information was sufficient to cause noticeable changes in participants' retributive justice orientation, future research could use compare a control group, vary the content and depth of information, and conduct qualitative assessments. Moreover, it could be possible to impact individuals' restorative justice orientation without impacting the retributive orientation. Therefore, these two orientations might be not mutually exclusive, meaning that changes in one orientation might not automatically result in changes in the other. This is also supported by the research findings of Okimoto et al. (2012) which indicate that interventions or factors that target restorative justice principles can have an impact on individuals' restorative orientation without necessarily altering their retributive orientation as these variables are not mutually exclusive.

It is also important to note that other contextual elements, such as individual experiences and characteristics or cultural characteristics, may have a bigger influence on participants' retributive justice attitude than the information that was initially provided (Okimoto et al., 2012). This could have led to overriding its influence. Therefore, future research might use focus groups or in-depth interviews to gain important knowledge about how individual experiences and cultural characteristics might influence these attitudes. More future directions are addressed in the part concerning limitations, recommendations and strengths of this research.

Impact on Trust

This study found no effect on increasing the trust in the criminal justice system by displaying information about restorative justice. Contrary to the expectation, it can be

concluded that the presentation of information about restorative justice did not increase the trust in the justice system. To get more meaningful results it was also tested if specific conditions differ significantly from each other. Therefore, it was established that participants that were presented with information about only the programme types and structure or the goals of restorative justice exhibited a slight increase in their trust in the justice system. Therefore, those conditions exhibited different degrees of trust compared to those exposed to the condition that received both types of information. This could also be explained with the same reason as why there was also no effect in the specific condition that received both types of information for the restorative justice orientation. As a result of the large amount of information provided, their trust in the justice system may have not been impacted. This might suggest that programs that concentrate on particular types of information of restorative justice such as only the goals or the programme types as well as structure may have an impact to positively influence trust in the criminal justice system.

Limitations, Recommendations and Strengths

While interpreting the findings it is important to take limitations and recommendations into account. One limitation is that the survey was done online. Therefore, the attendance or attention of the participants could not be controlled which is why the level of engagement and focus during the completion of the survey may have varied among participants. Also, it could not be controlled if the participants carefully read all the presented information without skipping sections of the information. This could have potentially affected the quality of the responses. To improve further research, it is recommended to incorporate test questions or assessment questions within the survey to test whether participants carefully and attentively read and understood the displayed information concerning restorative justice. Therefore, it can

be beneficial in assessing the effectiveness of information delivery and detecting any potential biases or restrictions caused by participants' differing levels of comprehension.

Due to the study being held online, it was possible to reach many participants at the same time which consequently resulted in a higher sample size. Moreover, since the survey was about assessing the attitude towards justice orientations the possibility that participants gave socially desirable answers was decreased as the survey was done online and anonymously (Abildgaard, 1999). The survey is suggested to have been easy to complete for participants since it was accessible online through a link, and the questions were asked on a Likert scale that made it uncomplicated to respond (Arnold et al., 1967).

Looking at the demographics of the samples from the different conditions it can also be said that in general more female individuals participated compared to males which might introduce a gender bias in the study affecting the generalisability. There may be differences in responses between males and females due to gender differences in attitudes, beliefs, and experiences relevant to the subject of the research (Sweeney & McFarlin, 1997). The difference in the gender composition of the sample may introduce a gender bias and limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, previous research suggests that females tend to have a higher restorative justice orientation and may give lower sentences (Boyd & Nelson, 2017; Courier-Journal, 2019). This gender difference could have influenced the observed increase in restorative justice orientation in this study. Future research should consider ensuring that samples are balanced in terms of gender, with equal representation of males and females. This will help avoid gender bias and enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Important to note is that more than half of the sample consisted of a variety of different nationalities. Therefore, it is possible that cultural and language differences among the participants could have influenced the interpretation and response to the questions displayed within the survey, as well as the information, that was presented in the English language. Therefore, it is recommended that if a variety of different nationalities participate in

the survey future research should consider displaying survey materials and questions in multiple languages to accommodate participants who may have limited proficiency in English.

Furthermore, restorative justice orientation varies within different cultures and nationalities (Liu & Palermo, 2009) which is why the generalizability of the findings to specific cultural contexts or nationalities may be limited. Thus, the sample might not be representative of a specific population. To improve this, future studies should aim for larger and more representative samples from specific populations. This would provide a deeper understanding of how cultural factors impact research outcomes in the context of restorative justice.

Important to name is also that the displayed information might have been too lengthy. Therefore, the concentration and attention span could have been impaired which consequently could have resulted in participants not fully comprehending the presented information as well as survey questions (Groes, 2016). The length and complexity of the information presented may have overwhelmed some participants, leading to potential inaccuracies (Groes, 2016). In addition, the information was presented within a text format. This could have potentially limited the engagement and comprehension of the content as visually presented information is proven to be more engaging and easier to understand than text alone (Lin et al., 2014).

Therefore, it should be considered to present information in different formats such as videos or incorporating visual cues to improve engagement and attention (Maniar et al., 2008). However, if the information is presented within text format it should be considered to use shorter texts to ensure and maintain the participants' attention and to not overstimulate the cognitive load (Groes, 2016). Therefore, complex information can be reduced into smaller sections which might improve comprehension and reduce the chance of information overload. Incorporating headings, bullet points, graphics, and emphasizing important information can also make it less difficult for participants to navigate and understand the displayed content

(Arslan-Ari, 2017; Grant, 1993; Vekiri, 2002). This is suggested for future research since it may help to determine the most effective ways to communicate and engage with individuals. By exploring various approaches, researchers can optimize communication effectiveness and tailor the presentation to meet the needs of diverse audiences.

Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge about how information presentation affects individuals' attitudes about justice concepts. Therefore, this study extends the understanding that information might affect attitudes and orientations in the context of justice by exploring the effects of several forms of restorative justice information. Moreover, insights on the potential effectiveness of specific information, such as highlighting goals or programme types and structure of restorative justice are provided. However, more research is needed to understand to what extent and how the orientation towards restorative justice might be impacted. Therefore, improved information delivery approaches to encourage greater impacts on individuals' justice orientations and trust levels should be considered. However, it can be concluded that by optimizing communication strategies, it may be possible to effectively impact the public opinion and promote a better understanding of the justice system as well as justice concepts.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

Dear participant, thank you for participating in this study, which is part of my Bachelor's Thesis!

This study aims to examine people's opinions towards Restorative Justice.

Short texts, as well as two questionnaires, will be displayed and completing the study will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

The participation is completely voluntary and you can withdraw from the study at any given time, without stating a reason. All of the answers remain anonymous and will be treated confidentially. The data will only be used for research purposes.

If you feel uncomfortable you can stop participating at any moment without giving a reason. Furthermore, if you want your data to get removed from the study, you can also contact the researcher in order to get the data deleted. Participants who indicate they are interested can receive a summary of the research results.

This research has been approved by the Ethics Board of BMS.

Contact: l.a.muller@student.utwente.nl

Supervisor: j.jonas-vandijk@utwente.nl

Please answer the following question:

I agree that I read and understood the information. I am aware that my answers are used for research purposes, that I can withdraw at any moment, and that my answers remain anonymous.

Appendix B

Information for the same knowledge level

Governments can use different responses to deal with crime.

The response people are most familiar with is Retributive Justice: someone commits a crime, gets caught and legal authorities punish the offender with, for example, a jail sentence.

However, another form of justice exist, namely Restorative Justice.

Restorative Justice is a set of principles and practices that create a different approach to dealing with crime and its impacts. Restorative Justice practices work to address the dehumanization frequently experienced by people in the traditional criminal justice system. Instead of viewing a criminal act as simply a violation of a rule or statute, Restorative Justice sees this action as a violation of people and relationships.

Additionally, Restorative Justice seeks to include those most directly affected by a crime in the justice process, namely offenders, victims and survivors. Rather than a process focused on the offender, Restorative Justice focuses on those who have been harmed and the harms they have experienced. In the Restorative Justice process, victims are empowered to participate more fully than in the traditional system. Likewise, the community plays an important role in the restorative process by establishing standards of conduct, helping to hold an offender accountable, and providing support to the parties involved and opportunities to help repair the harm that has occurred.

Appendix C

Survey Questions measuring Retribution Orientation

1. As a matter of fairness, an offender should be penalized.
2. The only way to restore justice is to punish an offender
3. Justice is served when an offender is penalized
4. Only a punishment restores the justice disrupted by an incident
5. For the sake of justice, some degree of suffering has to be inflicted on an offender.
6. An offender deserves to be penalized

Survey Questions measuring Restoration Orientation

1. For justice to be reinstated, the affected parties need to achieve agreement about the values violated by an incident.
2. To restore justice, the offender and the victim need to reaffirm consensus on their values and rules.
3. Without an offender's sincere acknowledgement of having acted inappropriately, the injustice is not completely restored.
4. A sense of justice requires that the offender and the victim to develop a shared understanding of the harm done by an incident
5. Justice is restored when an offender has learnt to endorse the values violated by the incident.
6. For a sense of justice, everyone, including the offender and the victim, need to reaffirm their belief in shared values.

Survey Questions measuring Trust

1. Please tell me how often do you think the courts make mistakes that let guilty people go free?"
2. Based on what you have heard or your own experience how often would you say the police generally treat people with respect?
3. How often do you think the courts make fair, impartial decisions based on the evidence made available to them?
4. All laws should be strictly obeyed.
5. The police generally have the same sense of right and wrong as I do.
6. How often would you say that the police or legal authorities take bribes?

Appendix D

Information Goals

The Main goals of Restorative Justice programmes can be sorted into four categories:

1. Damage repair:

The main purpose of Restorative Justice is to recover damages caused by crime or wrongdoing. This means that the focus is on the needs of the victim rather than just punishing the perpetrator. Restorative Justice seeks to understand the harm done and address it in ways that promote healing and recovery. This may involve providing the victim with an opportunity to share their story, express their feelings, and have their needs addressed. It may also involve the offender making restitution or taking other actions to repair the harm caused.

2. Build relationships:

Restorative Justice aims to establish or restore relationships between parties involved in a crime or wrongdoing. This includes victims, perpetrators, and communities. By connecting people and facilitating communication and understanding, Restorative Justice promotes healing and helps prevent future harm. Restorative Justice recognizes that relationships are essential to healthy communities and seeks to strengthen those relationships through dialogue, empathy and mutual respect.

3. Promote accountability:

Restorative Justice aims to promote accountability for the offender in a way that is meaningful and productive, rather than simply punitive. The focus is on helping offenders understand the harm they caused and take responsibility for their actions. This may involve the offender making a public apology, providing restitution, or engaging in community service.

4. Reintegration:

Restorative justice aims at reintegration by focusing on repairing harm caused by a crime or conflict and restoring relationships between the victim, offender, and the community. Through this process, the offender is encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, make amends, and learn from their mistakes. This approach helps to reintegrate the offender back into the community as a responsible and contributing member, reducing the likelihood of reoffending.

Appendix E

Information Programmes and Structure

There are many different programmes that are built on restorative justice principles. The two most used are:

Victim-Offender mediation and Community and family group meetings:

1. Victim-Offender mediation is a restorative justice process in which the victim of a crime and the offender come together to discuss what happened and how to proceed. This voluntary process usually begins with a trained mediator who meets separately with the victim and offender to explain the process and help prepare for the meeting. The mediator then arranges a face-to-face meeting where the victim and offender can talk to each other directly, with the mediator facilitating and supporting the conversation. During the meeting, victims have an opportunity to express how the crime has affected them and ask questions., Offenders can take responsibility for their actions and apologize for the damage caused. Mediators facilitate open communication and help keep conversations respectful and constructive. During the mediation process parties try to come to an agreement together.

2. Community and family group meetings not only the victim and offender brought together to resolve the offense, but also the broader community. This may include family, friends, community members and professionals who are there to support and facilitate the process. This process typically begins with an invitation to participate in a meeting or conference. Once participants have been identified, they gather in a safe, neutral location, usually a community centre or other public space. A facilitator trained in the meeting process begins by describing the purpose and goals of the meeting. Each participant is then given the opportunity to share their views on the situation and express their feelings and concerns. A facilitator helps keep the conversation flowing and ensures that everyone has a chance to be heard. Groups and parties work together to find a plan or solution that everyone can agree on. Once a plan or solution is agreed upon, the group works together to put it into action. The facilitator can follow up with the group to make sure the plan is working and provide additional support if needed.

Appendix F

Debriefing

Thank you for participating!

You have reached the end of this study.

In this study, it was examined which information that is provided about Restorative Justice influences people's opinion on Restorative Justice. In particular, It was examined if there is a difference between the opinion if the goals of Restorative Justice are presented or if more details about the program structure are displayed or both types of information and which information has a stronger influence on the individual opinion. In addition, it was tested if the information presented increases the trust in the justice system.

Do you still give consent for your participation after being provided with the nature about the study?

If you have any concerns, questions, remarks, want to withdraw or want to know the outcomes of the study, do not hesitate to contact:

L.Müller

Mail: l.a.muller@student.utwente.nl

or the supervisor of this study:

j.jonas-vandijk@utwente.nl