



The Impact of Police Officer Responses on Sexual Assault Myth Endorsement and Survivor Blame

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03. Methodology

- Participants: 422 undergraduates.
- Design: 2x2x2 factorial using fictional vignettes.
- Variables: Police response (validating/dismissing), intoxication (yes/no), post-assault contact (yes/no).

04. Results/Findings

- No significant effects were found overall.
- However, participants with low belief in a just world (BJW) endorsed more SAMs when the police response was dismissive, and both intoxication and post-assault contact occurred.



01. Introduction

Sexual assault is underreported, partly due to fears of secondary victimization. Police responses to allegations can influence the endorsement of sexual assault myths (SAMs) and survivor blame. This study examines how survivor-perpetrator intoxication, post-assault contact, and police responses affect SAMs and survivor blame.

05. Analysis

No significant main effects or interactions were observed overall across the variables of police response, intoxication, and post-assault contact. However, an important finding emerged for participants with low belief in a just world (BJW). These participants exhibited higher levels of sexual assault myth endorsement when the police response was dismissive, and both intoxication and post-assault contact were present. This suggests that in scenarios where police officers dismiss survivors' accounts, individuals who hold low BJW are more likely to blame the survivor, especially when factors traditionally associated with survivor discreditation, such as intoxication and post-assault contact, are involved. This underscores the impact of police responses in shaping public perceptions of sexual assault and highlights the need for sensitivity training within law enforcement.

06. Conclusion

Findings highlight the need for enhanced police training on sexual assault cases to prevent SAM endorsement and improve survivor support.

02. Objective

To investigate the effects of police validation/dismissal, intoxication, and post-assault contact on SAM endorsement and survivor blame.

Related literature

Brown, A. L., & Testa, M. (2008). Social influences on judgments of rape victims: The role of negative and positive social reactions of others. *Sex Roles*, 58(7), 490-500. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-007-9353-7>

Campbell, R. (1998). The community response to rape: Victims' experiences with the legal, medical, and mental health systems. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 26, 355-379. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022155003633>

Goodman-Delahunty, J., & Graham, K. (2011). The influence of victim intoxication and victim attire on police responses to sexual assault. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, 8(1), 22-40. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jip.127>

