Perception of Victim Treatment by Police and Courts: A Study among University Students in India and Japan*

Kumaravelu Chockalingam**
Murugesan Srinivasan

Previous research has established that the perception of victim treatment is influenced by a number of factors such as socio-demographic characteristics, economic status of the people, prior victimization and so on. Against this background, a study was conducted to examine the factors influencing the perception of victim treatment by police and courts. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire from a sample of 725 students from the city of Chennai (India) and 715 students from the city of Mito in Japan. The results revealed that while some of the factors such as gender, age, religion and community of the respondents have significantly influenced the perception of victim treatment, the effects of place of stay, nativity and income on the perception of victim treatment were not found to be significant.

Keywords: Perception, Victim Treatment, Police, Courts

Introduction

Perception of victim treatment by police and courts is influenced by a number of factors such as socio-demographic characteristics, economic

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** Kumaravelu Chockalingam is professor of Criminology and Victimology, Tokiwa International Victimology Institute, Tokiwa University, Mito, Japan. Email: profkcinindia@yahoo.com. Murugesan Srinivasan is senior Lecturer, Department of Criminology, University of Madras, Chepauk, Chennai, India. Email: isvchennai2003@yahoo.co.in.
status of the people, prior victimization and so on. Previous studies have shown that the perception is influenced by prior victimization (e.g. Smith, 1984), socio-demographic and economic characteristics and so on (e.g. Scaglion and Condon, 1980; Jefferis, Kaminski, Holmes and Hanley, 1997, cited in Fisher, 2002). Negative perception of victim treatment by police and courts determines the behaviour in terms of non-reporting of crimes, fear of crime and so on. For example, previous research has examined and demonstrated that police-related reasons play an important role in victims’ decisions not to report crimes to the police (Nikolić-Ristanović, 1998). In the light of previous studies, the present study was carried out among the students of two different countries, namely, India and Japan where there are marked differences in the position of victims in their respective criminal justice systems. The study aims to examine the factors influencing the perception of victim treatment and how that perception determines behaviour in terms of non-reporting of crimes.

Review of Literature

Several studies were conducted on the factors influencing public perception of the police and courts. In a survey among the neighbourhoods of varied ethnic and income backgrounds in the United States, Scaglion and Condon (1980), cited in Fisher (2002), examined the factors affecting the individuals’ perception of the police. They found that lower income minority groups have less favourable attitudes towards police than middle income whites and that young people tend to have less favourable attitudes than older people. Other studies (Jefferis, Kaminski, Holmes and Hanley, 1997; Levin and Thomas, 1997, cited in Fisher, 2002) found race to be an important correlate in influencing citizens’ perception of police. Research has consistently shown that African-Americans expressed a negative attitude towards the police and have low confidence in them (Thomas and Hyman, 1977; Scaglion and Condon, 1980; Baker, Nienstedt, Everett and McClery, 1983; Brown and Coulter, 1983; Webb and Marshall, 1995; Huang and Vaughn, 1996, cited in Ho and Mckean, 2004). A similar result was found in a study conducted among the residents of Ashville, North Carolina by Ho and Mckean (2004). It revealed that demographic characteristics such as age and race were statistically correlated with confidence in the police. African-American respondents expressed a low
level of confidence in the police when compared to Caucasians. Contradictory to these findings only a few studies found that the effect of race on confidence in the police was not significant (Jesilow, Meyer and Namazzi, 1995; Cao, Frank and Cullen, 1996, also cited in Ho and McKean, 2004).

A substantial number of studies were also conducted in India among different segments of the population on the attitude/perception towards the police. Such studies have examined the factors influencing the public perception of the police. A study by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India in 1980 found that people in rural areas had a better opinion of the police than those in urban areas. About 50 per cent of respondents from the rural sample stated that the police did a good job. Of the urban respondents only a sixth thought so. While analysing the influence of some of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents on their attitude towards police functioning, Chockalingam and Srinivasan (1993) found that education and nativity significantly influenced the attitude of student respondents. Raghavan (1989) conducted an opinion survey among a cross-section of the population in Tamil Nadu to assess what the public thought of police performance and conduct. All the above studies have demonstrated that police did not have a favourable or positive image among the public. Furthermore, the above studies have also established that the perception of the police is influenced by many socio-demographic characteristics.

Previous contacts with the police and prior victimization are also the factors that were found to have an impact on the citizens’ perception. For example, Smith (1984) established that the more a person is victimized, the more likely the chance for that person to perceive that crime in general is increasing locally. Subsequently, a person’s victimization experience and perception of increasing crime will adversely affect his/her perception of the quality of performance of the local police. Decker (1981); Coulter (1983); Jefferis, Kaminski, Holmes, Hanley (1997); Miller and Hess (2002), cited in Fisher (2002), also found that previous contacts and the results of those contacts have an impact on the perception of citizens. The studies taken up in Nigeria (Alemika, 1988 and Alemika & Chukwuama, 2000, cited in Alemika & Chukwuama, 2005) found that persons who had contact with police had a less favourable attitude towards them. Interestingly, in the study conducted by Alemika and Chukwuama (2005), it was found that persons who did not have any contact with the police said they were performing a good job (68 per cent) than those who had contact with police (42 per cent). In contrast to
these findings, some of the studies found that those who had prior contact with the police had a favourable attitude towards them. In India, Diaz (1989) examined the public expectation, perception and attitude towards the police among the educated public and found that those who had prior satisfactory treatment and interaction with the police, had a better attitude towards them, than those who had never come into contact with the police. The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) (2003), South Africa conducted a national victim survey with the aim of measuring crime trends, public perceptions about crime and safety, as well as confidence in the criminal justice system in the country. It was found that of those who had been in contact with the police, more than half (56 per cent) said they had changed their opinion of the police and of these, 54 per cent said their opinion had improved.

Previous research has also established the relationship between prior police contact and reporting or non-reporting of crimes. Xie, Pogarsky, Lynch and McDowall (2006) studied the relationship between prior police contact and the subsequent victim reporting based on the data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (1998–2000). They found that the effort the police put in investigating a prior victimization reported by a person increases the likelihood of that person reporting a subsequent victimization. Individuals’ decisions for the non-reporting of crimes are influenced by many factors. One of the factors relates to the domain of a past personal and/or otherwise acquired experience with the police (Zvekić and del Frate, 1995, cited in Nikolić-Ristanović, 1998). The findings of a victimization survey carried out during 1996 in Belgrade (Serbia) as part of the International Crime (Victim) Survey showed that police-related reasons played an important role in victims’ decisions to not report crimes to the police. The study also revealed certain other significant findings. Of the total number of crimes experienced by respondents, only 33.3 per cent were reported to the police. Generally, the respondents of the above study cited the following reasons for not reporting crimes to the police: (a) the crime was not serious enough; (b) the police could not do anything about it; (c) the police usually do not want to become involved in such cases and so on (Nikolić-Ristanović, 1998).

Against this background, the present study was conducted among the University students in India (Chennai) and Japan (Mito) to assess their perception of victim treatment by the police and courts. The study examined the following hypotheses:
1. Socio-demographic characteristics and economic status effect the perception of victim treatment;
2. Prior experiences of victimization effect the perception of victim treatment;
3. There will be a difference in the perception of victim treatment between the students of India and Japan; and
4. The non-reporting of the victimization to the police is dependent on the perception of victim treatment.

**Method**

**Sample and Sampling Procedure**

**India**

The universe of the study included students who were pursuing their undergraduate degree programs (BA/BSc/BCom/BBA/BCA)\(^1\) in various colleges affiliated to the University of Madras in the city of Chennai. A complete list of colleges affiliated to the University of Madras within the city of Chennai was prepared. The number of affiliated colleges within Chennai city was 30. For administrative purposes, Chennai city is divided into North, Central and South by the Chennai City Police. Out of the 30 colleges functioning in the entire city of Chennai, around ten colleges situated in Central Chennai were chosen for the purpose of the present study. The next step involved was the classification of colleges into men’s and women’s colleges. Under the University of Madras, there are exclusive men’s colleges, women’s colleges and co-education colleges. Among the colleges, two men’s colleges, two women’s and one co-education college were chosen for the study so as to ensure representation from both male and female students. The multistage cluster sampling method was adopted to select the colleges from the list of colleges affiliated to the University of Madras. *Purposive sampling method* was used to choose samples and a sample size of 725 was drawn from the selected colleges.

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\(^1\) The undergraduate degree courses include Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Science (BSc), Bachelor of Commerce (BCom), Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) and Bachelor of Computer Applications (BCA).
Japan

The universe of the study included students who were undergoing their undergraduate courses in Tokiwa University and some students of the neighbouring Ibaraki University. Initially, a list of faculties of Tokiwa University was prepared. There are three faculties with eight colleges/departments in Tokiwa University. They are Applied International Studies, with two departments, Human Sciences, with three departments, and Community Development, with three departments. By using the *purposive sampling method*, a sample of 650 students from different departments of Tokiwa University and 65 students from Ibaraki University were chosen. Thus, a total of 715 samples were drawn for the purpose of present study.

Research Tool

A structured and self-explanatory questionnaire comprising of questions relating to the variables chosen for the study was constructed. As this paper is part of a major project, the questionnaire included items relating to variables such as perception of vulnerability or perceived risk of crime victimization, perceived factors of vulnerability, fear of crime victimization, sources of fear of crime victimization, *perception of victim treatment by police and courts* and perception of victim services by police and courts. Hence, the research tool consisted of *eight* parts with a total of 75 items. Of this Part I consisted of six items relating to socio-demographic and economic characteristics of the students and Part II consisted of six items on the details of past experience of victimization including the reasons for not reporting the victimization to the police. There were 27 items relating to perception of victim treatment by police and courts. The perception of victim treatment was measured on a five-point Likert scale. Prior to the use of the research tool for data collection, pilot studies were conducted among a small group of 30 students both in India and Japan to compute the reliability and validity of the tool. The values of Cronbach’s Alpha ($\alpha$) for the tool used in Japan and India were found to be 0.853 and 0.915, respectively. Since the values of alpha are greater than 0.70, it can be concluded that items of the tool altogether form a good scale and measured effectively what the tool intended to measure.
Method of Data Collection

In both the countries, questionnaires were administered to the students in groups in different classrooms. Before administering the questionnaire, the hired research assistants in India and the professors in Japan who volunteered to provide assistance and were conversant in Japanese explained the aim of the research to the students. In India, only the students who expressed their consent to participate in the survey were included in the sample. However, there was full cooperation and overwhelming response from the students of Japan to participate in the study. It took approximately 20–25 minutes for the students in Japan and 30–35 minutes for the students in India to fill in the questionnaire. The period of data collection lasted for about 42 days in India and 25 days in Japan.

Scoring

The items under the variable “perception of victim treatment” had a five-point Likert scale to measure the perception. Positive responses were assigned high scores and negative responses low scores in descending order.

a. Strongly Agree......................................“5”
b. Agree ......................................................“4”
c. Do Not Know.........................................“3”
d. Disagree..................................................“2”
e. Strongly Disagree.................................“1”

Then the total score of all the related items was taken for analysis. The perception of the respondents was considered positive in case of a higher score and vice versa.

Results

The data were processed and subjected to statistical analysis. Bi-variate analyses were used to test the hypotheses of the study. The results thus obtained are presented below along with the discussion.

Socio-demographic Characteristics and Economic Status Effect Perception of Victim Treatment
To test the hypothesis ‘Socio-demographic Characteristics and Economic Status Effect Perception of Victim Treatment’, bi-variate statistical tests such as Independent sample’t’ tests and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were applied. Of the independent variables such as age, sex, religion, community, nativity, year of study, place of stay and monthly family income, only sex ($t = 3.800; p = 0.000$), age ($F = 3.391; p = 0.003$), religion ($F = 4.995; p = 0.001$) and community ($F = 3.654, p = 0.012$) influenced the perception of victim treatment. Such influence was found only among the Indian respondents and not among Japanese ones. However, when the mean scores were compared, there was no marked difference between the groups. That is, when the Duncan Multiple Range test was applied to find the difference between the age groups of the respondents and their perception of victim treatment, no significant difference was observed. Similarly, no significant difference was observed in the other variables – religion and community. The analysis also revealed that perception of victim treatment by police and courts is influenced by the sex of respondents in India but this is not the case in Japan (see Table 1).

### Table 1. Sex vs. Perception of Victim Treatment by Police and Courts in India and Japan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of respondents</th>
<th>Sex Freq (%)</th>
<th>Mean score</th>
<th>$t$-value</th>
<th>$p$-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>430 (59.31)</td>
<td>295 (40.69)</td>
<td>81.0023</td>
<td>78.1390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>359 (50.21)</td>
<td>356 (49.79)</td>
<td>86.2145</td>
<td>87.7921</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean score of female respondents in India is lower and hence it can be stated that females have negative perception of the treatment of victims by police and courts when compared to males. The findings of the present study are in line with some of the previous studies which showed that females have a negative perception of the police (see Chockalingam and Srinivasan, 1993). However, some studies have also shown that males expressed a more negative attitude towards the police than females (see Sprott and Doob, 2008). This negative perception among the female respondents in India could...
perhaps be due to the rise in certain forms of crimes against women and the non-addressing of the needs of female victims by the agencies of the criminal justice system. Additionally, women's organizations expose the facts related to the handling of female victims by the police through meetings and seminars.

**Prior Experience of Victimization Effects Perception of Victim Treatment by Police and Courts**

To test the hypothesis ‘Prior Experience of Victimization Effects Perception of Victim Treatment by Police and Courts’, Pearson Correlation was applied. The results showed that the correlation coefficient between the prior experience of victimization of respondents in India and their perception of victim treatment by the police and courts is positive and the correlation is significant at 0.05 level (see Table 2). However, there was no such correlation among the Japanese sample.

Table 2. Correlation Coefficient of Prior Experience of Victimization and Perception of Victim Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient (r)</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Japan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Past experience of victimization</td>
<td>Perception of victim treatment by police and courts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past experience of victimization</td>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.088*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of victim treatment by police and courts</td>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>0.088*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>725</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at 0.05 level

Several studies have established that previous contact with the police and prior victimization are the factors that impact on the citizens’ perception (For example, Alemika, 1988; Diaz, 1989; Alemika and Chukwuoma, 2000; Miller
and Hess, 2002; Institute of Security Studies, 2003 and so on). Interestingly, some of the above studies have also demonstrated that those who had prior interaction with the police perceived them better. Yet some other studies have established that those who have experienced victimization were more likely to give negative evaluations of the police (Sprott and Doob, 2008); and victims were more likely than non-victims to judge police performance as a poor one (Orr and West, 2007).

**Differences in the Perception of Victim Treatment by Police and Courts between the students of India and Japan**

As specified earlier, the perception of victim treatment by the police and courts was measured on a five-point Likert scale. The results revealed that varied responses were observed between the respondents of India and Japan.

**Table 3. Perception of Victim Treatment by Police**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Victim Treatment by Police</th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>0.561</td>
<td>0.454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>7.325</td>
<td>1400.989</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE of Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>712</td>
<td>56.7935</td>
<td>10.87757</td>
<td>0.40765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>52.5962</td>
<td>10.58577</td>
<td>0.40270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of t-test indicate a significant difference in the perception of victim treatment by police between the respondents of India and Japan (since
the $p$-value is less than 0.01). Further, the mean score of the Indian sample (52.5962) is lower than that of the Japanese sample (56.7935), which in turn indicates that Indians have a negative perception of treatment of victims by the police (see Table 3).

Table 4. Perception of Victim Treatment by Courts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Victim Treatment by Courts</th>
<th>Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>t-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Variances assumed</td>
<td>12.237</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>4.016</td>
<td>1394.828</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of cases</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE of Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>30.2693</td>
<td>5.31934</td>
<td>0.19921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>29.0981</td>
<td>5.60725</td>
<td>0.21300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is inferred from the results of $t$-test that there is a significant difference in the perception of victim treatment by courts between the students of India and Japan, since the $p$-value is less than 1% level of significance. While analysing the mean score, it was seen that Indian sample (29.0981) have low score when compared to the Japanese sample (30.2693). Hence, it may be stated that Indians have negative perception of treatment of victims by courts. However, the mean difference is minimal (see Table 4).

The above results indicate that the respondents in India have a negative perception of treatment of victims by the police and courts. This may be the reflection of the treatment of victims by the police and courts in India. But there may be a disjuncture between the reality and the perception. In other words, while the perception of the public of the police is negative, in reality the victims may receive a better treatment from the police and courts. However,
in one of the recent studies conducted among the victims of violent crimes, the victims had by and large a negative perception of the police with respect to victim treatment, victim assistance, police efficiency, police impartiality and police corruption (Enoch, 2008).

**Non-Reporting of the Victimization to the Police is Dependent on Perception of Victim Treatment by Police and Courts**

Table 5. Correlation Coefficient of Non-Reporting of the Victimization to the Police and Perception of Victim Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient (r)</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Japan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-reporting of the victimization to police</td>
<td>Perception of victim treatment by police and courts</td>
<td>Non-reporting of the victimization to police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-reporting of the victimization to police</td>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.113**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of victim treatment by police and courts</td>
<td>Pearson correlation</td>
<td>-0.113**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>725</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Significant at 0.01 level

The non-reporting of the criminal victimization to the police and the perception of victim treatment by the police and courts are negatively correlated \( r = 0.113^{**} \) and is significant at 0.01 level with respect to the respondents in India (see Table 5). As established by previous research, individuals’ decisions for not reporting their victimization to the police are influenced by many factors; police-related reasons were found to be one of the important factors (Nikolić-Ristanović, 1998; Zvekic and del Frate, 1995 cited in Nikolić –Ristanović, 1998). Hence, it is natural that the respondents who did not report their victimization to the police have a negative perception of victim treatment by the police and courts. It can also be noted from the findings that there was no correlation between the reporting behaviour and
perception of victim treatment among the respondents in Japan. At this juncture, it is to be noted that around one-quarter of the sample (22.2%) in India and 33.6 per cent in Japan are reported to be victimized by a crime. Of the respondents who have been victimized by a crime, only 14.9 per cent of the Indian sample and 22.9 per cent of the Japanese sample have reported their victimization to the police. The above respondents cited several reasons for not reporting their victimization to the police. Some of the main reasons were fear of ill-treatment by the police and the thought that the police were ineffective, inefficient or prejudiced.

Conclusions

In line with the previous studies, the findings of the present study have established that socio-demographic characteristics such as age, sex, religion and community influence the perception of victim treatment by the police in India. The outcome of the study has proved the hypothesis that prior experience of victimization affect the perception of victim treatment by police and courts. The findings of the study have also demonstrated that only the respondents in India have negative perception of treatment of victims by the police and courts. The outcome of the study has also proved the hypothesis that the non-reporting of victimization to the police is dependent on the perception of victim treatment by the police and courts.

References


Kumaravelu Chockalingam, Murugesan Srinivasan


Opažanje načina na koji se prema žrtvi postupa od strane policije i sudova: Istraživanje na populaciji studenata univerziteta u Indiji i Japanu

Prethodnim istraživanjima je ustanovljeno da na opažanje načina na koji se tretira žrtva utiču brojni faktori kao što su socio-demografska obeležja, ekonomski status, ranija viktimizacija itd. Ovo istraživanje je upravo sprovedeno sa ciljem da ispita faktore koji utiču na opažanje načina na koji se prema žrtvi postupa od strane policije i pred sudovima. Podaci su prikupljeni korišćenjem strukturiranog upitnika na uzorku od 725 studenata grada Čenaj u Indiji i 715 studenata iz grada Mito u Japanu. Stavovi o postupanju policije i sudova prema žrtvi mereni su petostepenom skalom Likertovog tipa.

Dobijeni rezultati su pokazali da neki faktori, kao što su rodna pripadnost, uzrast, religija i zajednica kojoj ispitanik pripada, imaju značajan uticaj na opažanje načina na koji se žrtva tretira. S druge strane, efekti mesta boravišta, mesta rođenja i visine prihoda nisu se pokazali značajnim u tom smislu. Rezultati istraživanja potvrđuju hipotezu da prethodno iskustvo viktimizacije utiče na percepciju načina na koji se žrtva tretira od strane policije i sudova. Nalazi studije takođe su ukazali na to da ispitanici u Japanu i Indiji različito opažaju postupanje policije prema žrtvi: naime, utvrđeno je da način na koji se žrtva tretira od strane policije i sudova opažaju kao negativan samo ispitanici iz Indije. Konačno, rezultati istraživanja potvrđuju i hipotezu da neprijavljivanje viktimizacije policiji zavisi od percepcije načina na koji policija i sudovi postupaju prema žrtvama. Pored uverenja da je policija neefikasna ili opterećena predrasudama, jedan od glavnih razloga neprijavljivanja viktimizacije jeste i strah žrtve da će se policija prema njoj postupati loše.

**Ključne reči:** Opažanje, postupanje prema žrtvi, policija, sudovi