

How Can Rape Investigations be Enhanced?

Consideration of Attrition in Rape Cases: second follow-up study.

Abstract

Attrition of rape cases is highest during the police investigation. As annually increasing reports of rape contrast with low conviction rates, this research determines which features of an investigation impact the likelihood of attrition. Cox Proportional Hazards Analysis of 620 rape cases highlights where and when attrition is greatest, in order to improve each stage of the investigation. The analysis found initial attendance by uniformed officers and conducting an interview significantly decreased attrition likelihood. Alternatively, matching the gender of officer to victim significantly increased likelihood. Moreover, victim-perpetrator relationship significantly impacted case length.

Introduction

Rape is defined by the Sexual Offences Act (2003) as intentional penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth, with a penis; whereby victim does not consent, and perpetrator does not reasonably believe that consent was given (Weare, 2020). Recent statistics (Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, 2019) state that 58,657 rapes were reported in 2019, but only 1,925 convictions were secured. This is the result of the 'Rape Attrition Problem'. Most rapes go unreported, and the ones that do rarely lead to prosecution (Brown, 2011) as cases drop out of the Criminal Justice System (CJS, Lea, Lanvers & Shaw, 2003) Consequently, an increase in reporting does not correspond to an increase in conviction (Burman & Brook-Hay, 2018). Attrition is at its greatest at the beginning of a police procedure, with victim withdrawal accounting for a significant proportion of cases (Stanko & Williams, 2009) or police withdrawal, due to a small number of false allegations paired with insufficient evidence (Holh & Stanko, 2015).

Although previous research has established attrition during investigation (Daly & Bouhours, 2009; Hester & Lilley, 2016; Stanko, 2007), the consistent use of logistic regression analysis has meant that studies were unable to identify the point at which investigations fail. Therefore, alternative analytic methods may be beneficial for identifying when attrition occurs, and which variables have an impact.

One potential variable is victim-perpetrator relationship. Contrary to myths, where rapes are committed by strangers in public places (Estrich, 1987); approximately 90% of rape victims knew the offender (Rape Crisis England & Wales, 2019). Research analysing differences between stranger and acquaintance cases (acquaintance defined by any relationship, from first date to marital) found that harsher sentences were given to stranger rapists (Golge, Yavuz, Mudderrisoglu & Yavus, 2003), and that as level of prior acquaintance increased, the level of perceived seriousness of crime decreased (Monson, Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Binderup, 2000).

This led to Feist, Ashe, Lawrence, McPhee and Wilson (2007) subcategorising acquaintance into partner, ex-partner, friend, acquaintance, family and stranger. Differences between categories have been significant, with arrests more common in Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) cases than acquaintance cases (Hester and Lilley, 2016). However, this could be due to an increase in IPV cases being reported because of developments in policy and public perceptions (Woodhouse & Dempsey, 2016). Moreover, partner cases have 7% higher chance of victim withdrawal, contrasting with family rape victims, who were doubly likely to remain in the process (Kelly, Lovatt & Regan, 2005). Further research is needed to understand the effect of victim-perpetrator relationship on attrition.

Hester and Lilley (2016) uncovered additional differences, including that victims of acquaintance rape were more likely to have consumed alcohol. Researchers demonstrate that around half had consumed alcohol prior to their rape (Ceccato, Wiebe, Eshraghi & Vrotsou, 2017; Waterhouse, Reynolds & Egan, 2016). Cases where victims had taken drugs were 10% more likely

to result in victim withdrawal; when both drugs and alcohol were involved, this increased to 57% (Kelly, Lovatt & Regan, 2005). Hester (2015) states that victim alcohol consumption had a positive effect on arrests, but only one resulted in conviction, potentially because more blame is placed on victim if substances were consumed (Stepanova & Brown, 2017), as alcohol/drug use has been associated with heightened interest in sex (Maurer & Robinson, 2008). Therefore, rates of attrition are high when drugs/alcohol were involved (Lea, Lanvers and Shaw, 2003). Waterhouse, Reynolds and Egan (2016) found an interaction effect, with offenders being 4.24 times more likely to be intoxicated in IPV cases, compared to only 19% of victims and 65% in stranger cases (Office of National Statistics, 2018). As both factors show contradictory results in terms of attrition rates, the present study aims to gain further understanding of how both factors impact on attrition.

Expanding on research by Sweeting, Cooper and Cole (in preparation), this study will analyse variables already established on one of the largest samples recorded in this topic area (N=620), with the addition of victim alcohol/drug consumption and victim-perpetrator relationship, to gain further understanding of their influence on attrition within an investigation.

Method

Quantitative analysis was conducted on secondary data of 620 rapes reported to an English Police force between 26/09/2017- 08/05/2019. All cases ended before a charging decision was made by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS); most cases ended during investigation.

The data was acquired through a Police Officer, using FORCEWIDE and NICHE, two logging systems used in investigations. FORCEWIDE logs details of the initial report, including time, date, individual who made the report and which officer responded. NICHE collates interview details and when the case was closed. Personal details from these systems were omitted from the dataset to protect anonymity.

With police officer providing accuracy and quality assurance of data, specific investigation variables were gathered. These included: date and time of offence, date and time reported to police, who made the report (victim or third party), who was initially called out (Criminal Investigative Department (CID) detective or uniformed officer) and when end of investigation was decided. Additionally, data was collected pertaining to victim-perpetrator relationship (stranger, acquaintance, friend, family member, spouse or ex-partner), victims' alcohol and/or drug consumption, whether victim visited a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), the age of the victim when offence took place (adult or juvenile), whether a medical examination was conducted, gender of attending officer, whether officer gender matched victim, if an arrest or caution was issued and whether it was the victim, police or CPS decision to end the case.

Outcome Coding

A Home Office outcome code was assigned to all 620 rape cases by police to adhere to the recording guide (CPS, 2016). The following codes were given to different cases:

- No crime- Evidence suggests no crime had been committed.
- 18- Investigation can go no further at this time and no suspect has been identified.
- 15- Suspect is known to victim and investigation is supported, but there is not enough evidence to pass onto CPS.
- 14- Suspect is unknown to victim and investigation is not supported.
- 16- Suspect is known by victim and investigation is not supported.

Temporal Coding

When reporting time and date of offence, the duration may have lasted hours, days or even longer. Therefore, the last possible date and time were recorded. As such, if offence took place sometime in October 2018; *31st October 2018, 23:59* was reported. If a specific year or multiple

years were reported, the last possible time and date of the year were recorded, e.g. *31st December 2018, 23:59*.

When reporting timings to police, victims may not be specific. Therefore, when *Early hours* or *Afternoon* are reported, *05:59* and *16:59* will be displayed, to make timings consistent.

Similarly, *Early June* will be illustrated as *07/06/2018*, as that concludes the first week of the month.

Relationship Categorisation

 NICHE included a tick box system for officers to categorise victim-perpetrator relationship. However, there were discrepancies between box ticked and notes, especially with whether victim and perpetrator were romantically involved at the time of offence. Therefore, the decision was made by the researcher on how to separate the relationship variable.

Contrary to previous studies, who constitute acquaintance rape cases as any relationship where victim knew perpetrator (Sleath & Bull, 2012; Viki, Abrams & Masser, 2004), the present study constitutes acquaintance as having a minimal relationship that does not fall under any of the other conditions, e.g. teacher, coach or as described below, a date. When notes stated that offence took place on a first date, the case was coded under the Stranger condition. Alternatively, when a few dates had taken place, it was placed under the Acquaintance condition. This was based on Monson, Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Binderup (2000) who found similar results between stranger and early dating conditions, however, found differing results when sexual activity had taken place. As this activity is more likely following a few dates, these two categories differ.

Analysis

Overall case length (from reporting to withdrawal decision) was calculated using Excel. Cases were uploaded to R Studio, where a Cox proportional hazards model was used to observe

each variables' influence on duration of the case, and to analyse whether the likelihood of attrition was increased or decreased by each variable.

Due to the Cox Model only being able to analyse variables with two conditions, a different method was adopted for Victim-Perpetrator Relationship variable, which had six. Kruskal-Wallis test was selected, as different conditions produced independent scores and each conditions' sample sizes varied, so parametric assumptions could not be met.

Results

Outlier Analysis

Upon visual inspection of the dependent variable (Case Length), Case 460 was determined to be an outlier, as difference between this figure and the second-largest figure was over 8 million hours (Case 460= 8768416.43, Case 47= 16789.1167). This increased the mean by over 14,000 hours (with outlier= 17105.09 and without= 2967.27) and the standard deviation by over 32,000 hours (with outlier= 352039.227 and without 2697.34940). With a large dataset, having one less case did not substantially alter the statistical power of the analysis. Therefore, this case was excluded from analysis, so sample was reduced to 619 cases.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 summarises findings categorised based on outcome code. Suspect was known to victim in 85.5% of cases, with relationships varying from spousal (34.4%) through to acquaintance (12.9%). At time of offence, victims had consumed alcohol 38.3% and drugs 8.1% of the time. These figures may overlap, with some individuals consuming both. 24.6% of victims were juveniles (under 18 when crime took place).

The offence took place on a weekend day 38.9% of the time, which was twice as likely than occurring on a weekday (18.7%). However, results need to be taken with caution, as a large percentage of victims did not state a specific day when reporting (42.3%). The crime was reported

at the weekend 54.6% of the time. The individual reported the crime themselves in 57.4% of cases. First attending officer was CID in 67.2% of cases, mainly female (64.5%) and this matched gender of victim 65.9% of the time, with sample consisting of 571 females and 49 males. Video interviews were conducted in 40.3% of cases, though only 9% happened within 24 hours of reporting. During the investigation, 2.7% of individuals attended a SARC and 13.4 % had medical examinations. Suspect was arrested in 35.2% of cases.

Overall, attrition occurred largely due to victim withdrawal (63.8%).

Table 1: All investigative findings for whole sample and different outcome codes.

| Outcome Codes (Percentages in Parentheses) | Total Sample | Initial Reporter: | | First Attendance: | | Victim Gender: | |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| | | 3rd Party | Victim | Uniform | CID | Male | Female |
| All Cases | 619 | 264 (42.6) | 355 (57.4) | 203 (32.8) | 416 (67.2) | 49 (7.9) | 570 (92.1) |
| 14 | 141 (22.7) | 73 (51.8) | 68 (48.2) | 45 (31.9) | 96 (68.1) | 20 (14.2) | 121 (85.8) |
| 15 | 227 (36.6) | 89 (39.2) | 138 (60.8) | 84 (37) | 143 (63) | 17 (7.5) | 210 (92.5) |
| 16 | 233 (37.6) | 93 (39.9) | 140 (60.1) | 68 (29.2) | 165 (70.8) | 10 (4.3) | 223 (95.7) |
| 18 | 18 (3.1) | 9 (50) | 9 (50) | 6 (33.3) | 12 (66.7) | 2 (11.1) | 16 (88.9) |

Table 1 Continued:

| Outcome Codes (Percentages in parentheses) | Attending Officer Gender: | | Withdrawal: | | Interview Conducted: | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Male | Female | Victim | Police/CPS | <24 hours | >24 hours | No Interview |
| All Cases | 220 (35.5) | 399 (64.5) | 377 (63.8) | 242 (36.2) | 56 (9) | 194 (31.3) | 369 (59.6) |
| 14 | 49 (34.8) | 92 (65.2) | 141 (100) | - | 1 (0.7) | 13 (9.2) | 127 (90.1) |
| 15 | 88 (38.8) | 139 (61.2) | 3 (1.3) | 224 (98.7) | 43 (18.9) | 145 (63.9) | 39 (17.2) |
| 16 | 74 (31.8) | 159 (68.2) | 233 (100) | - | 10 (4.3) | 29 (12.4) | 194 (83.3) |
| 18 | 9 (50) | 9 (50) | - | 18 (100) | 2 (11.1) | 7 (38.9) | 9 (50) |

Table 1 Continued:

| Outcome Codes (Percentages in Parentheses) | Day of Offence: | | | Day of Reporting: | |
|--|-----------------|------------|-------------|-------------------|------------|
| | Weekday | Weekend | Cannot tell | Weekday | Weekend |
| All Cases | 116 (18.7) | 241 (38.9) | 262 (42.3) | 281 (45.4) | 338 (54.6) |
| 14 | 26 (18.4) | 44 (31.2) | 71 (50.4) | 63 (44.7) | 78 (55.3) |
| 15 | 47 (20.7) | 94 (41.4) | 86 (37.9) | 102 (44.9) | 125 (55.1) |
| 16 | 38 (16.3) | 97 (41.6) | 98 (42.1) | 108 (46.4) | 125 (53.6) |
| 18 | 5 (27.8) | 6 (33.3) | 7 (38.9) | 8 (44.4) | 10 (55.6) |

Table 1 Continued:

| Outcome Codes (Percentages in Parentheses) | Victim attended SARC* | Victim Medical | Juvenile** | VGMOG*** | SAIC**** | Victim Alcohol Consumption | Victim Drug Consumption |
|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---|------------------------------------|
| All Cases | 17 (2.7) | 83 (13.4) | 152 (24.6) | 408 (65.9) | 218 (35.2) | 237 (38.3) | 50 (8.1) |
| 14 | 1 (0.7) | 7 (5) | 36 (25.5) | 93 (66) | 13 (9.2) | 53 (37.6) | 17 (12.1) |
| 15 | 10 (4.4) | 60 (26.4) | 58 (25.6) | 144 (63.4) | 142 (62.6) | 99 (43.6) | 15 (6.6) |
| 16 | 6 (2.6) | 11 (4.7) | 55 (23.6) | 160 (68.7) | 62 (26.6) | 75 (32.2) | 18 (7.7) |
| 18 | - | 5 (27.8) | 3 (16.7) | 11 (61.1) | 1 (5.6) | 10 (55.6) | - |

*SARC- Sexual Assault Referral Centre

**Victim was below 18 years of age when offence occurred

*** Victim Genders Matches Officer Gender

**** Suspect Arrested/ Interview under Caution

Table 1 Continued:

| Outcome Codes (Percentages in Parentheses) | Victim & Suspect Relationship: | | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| | Spouse | Ex-partner | Friend | Acquaintance | Family | Stranger |
| All Cases | 213 (34.4) | 43 (6.9) | 147 (23.7) | 80 (12.9) | 46 (7.4) | 90 (14.5) |
| 14 | 28 (19.9) | 5 (3.5) | 25 (17.7) | 29 (20.6) | 9 (6.4) | 45 (31.9) |
| 15 | 70 (30.8) | 24 (10.6) | 67 (29.5) | 23 (10.1) | 20 (8.8) | 23 (10.1) |
| 16 | 114 (48.9) | 14 (6) | 54 (23.2) | 25 (10.7) | 17 (7.3) | 9 (3.9) |
| 18 | 1 (5.5) | - | 1 (5.5) | 3 (16.7) | - | 13 (72.2) |

Table 2 displays mean times (in hours and days) for each phase of the investigation, subcategorised into outcome codes. The investigation in its entirety lasted an average of 124 days, from time of reporting until case was withdrawn. An interview was conducted on average 20 days after reporting. The large Standard Deviation value (37.37) highlights the large number of cases where an interview did not take place.

Cases were split into offences occurring prior and post 2017 to analyse the average time from offence to report. This was because reporting dates began in 2017, so separates the dataset into recent and historical cases. Between 2017-2019, it took 51 days on average to report the rape. Prior to 2017, average days between the crime and reporting was 5250 (around 14 years).

Table 2: Mean timings throughout investigation for whole sample and outcome codes. Standard Deviations in Parentheses.

| Report | Time from Report to Drop Out (Mean) | | Time from Report to Interview (Mean) | | Time from Offence to Report Prior to 2017 (Mean) | | Time from Offence to 2017-2019 (Mean) | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|--|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| | In Hours | In Days | In Hours | In Days | In Hours | In Days | In Hours | In Days |
| All Cases (619) | 2967.27 (2697.35) | 123.64 (112.39) | 487.56 (896.90) | 20.32 (37.37) | 126008.36 (114422.50) | 5250.35 (4767.60) | 1216.47 (2670.10) | 50.69 (111.25) |
| 14 (141) | 1806.40 (1857.45) | 75.27 (77.39) | 550.68 (683.97) | 22.94 (28.50) | 141589.42 (121982.91) | 5899.56 (5082.62) | 1586.52 (3153.02) | 66.11 (131.38) |
| 15 (227) | 4286.72 (2880.87) | 178.61 (120.04) | 546.40 (994.85) | 22.77 (41.45) | 124081.95 (119871.11) | 5170.08 (4994.63) | 1051.34 (2173.13) | 43.81 (90.55) |
| 16 (233) | 2357.85 (2361.66) | 98.24 (98.40) | 227.11 (329.89) | 9.46 (13.75) | 108506.71 (97098.60) | 4521.11 (4045.78) | 1167.68 (2707.52) | 48.65 (112.81) |
| 18 (18) | 3309.52 (3161.12) | 137.90 (131.71) | 289.00 (403.09) | 12.04 (16.80) | 205341.67 (134343.65) | 8555.90 (5597.65) | 1067.77 (3657.32) | 44.49 (152.39) |

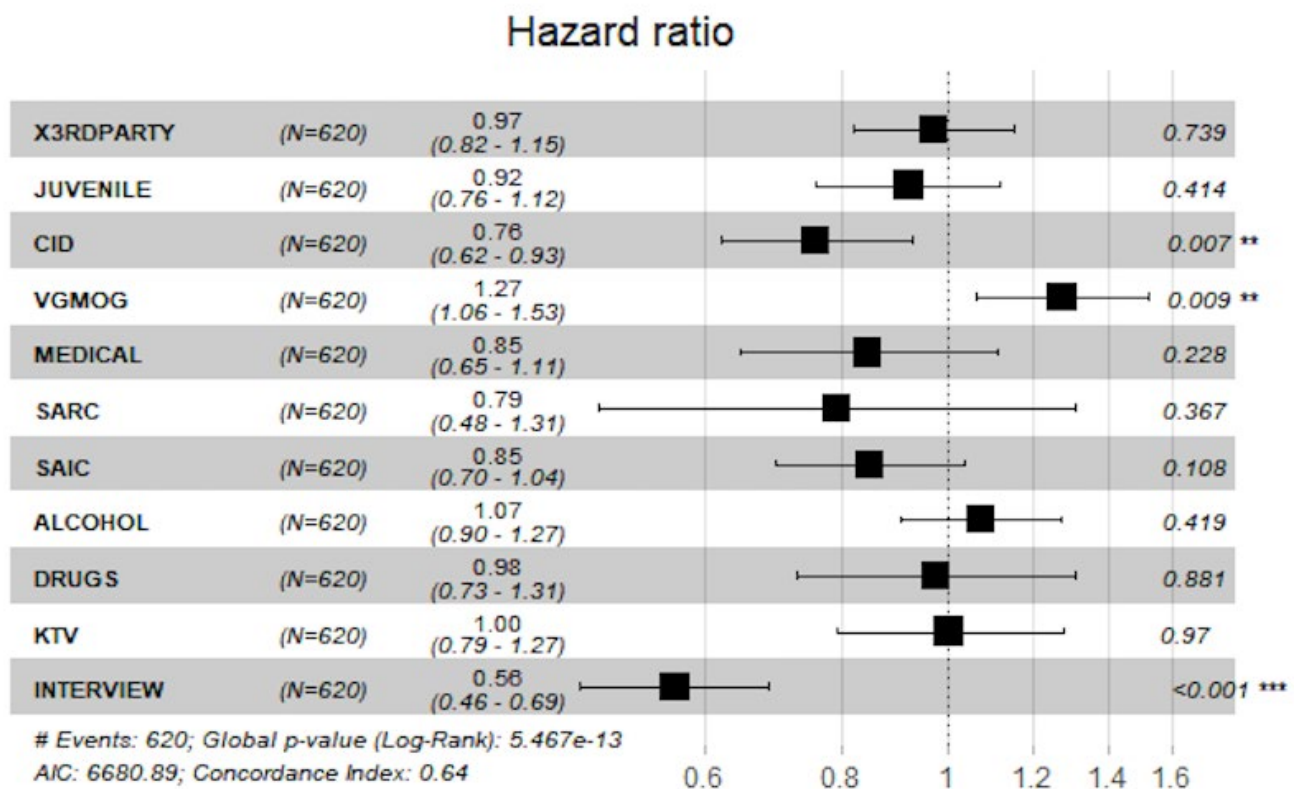
Cox Analysis

Table 3 provides results of Cox Proportional Hazards Analysis. This model analyses multiple predictor variables in order to see their impact on the survival of a rape case.

Survival of the case refers to analysing time between reporting and attrition. When Hazard Ratio displays a result greater than 1, it proposes that the predictor increases likelihood of attrition. Less than 1 would suggest a decrease in likelihood. A Hazard Ratio of exactly 1 would illustrate that the predictor did not influence case survival.

A Schoenfeld's test for residual was run, to test that each residual actually has an effect on the case length and that the effect is consistent over time. As well as this, a global test, being the equivalent of an F test, tested the overall model. Results came back non-significant, highlighting that each predictor is consistent over time.

Table 3: Cox Proportional Hazard Ratios for all investigative factors of whole sample²



Hazard ratios: <1= decreased likelihood of attrition, >1= increased likelihood of attrition, 1= no effect on attrition

*= p <0.05, **= p <0.01, ***= p <0.001

²X3RDPARTY= Third-party reported

CID= Detective first on scene

VGMOG= Victim gender matches offender gender

SARC= Victim attended a Sexual Assault Referral Centre

SAIC= Suspect arrested/interviewed under caution

KTV= Suspect known to victim

Hazard Ratios

Conducting an interview significantly decreased likelihood of attrition. Mean case length when a victim was interviewed was 4159.09 hours (173 days), compared to 2159.80 hours (90 days) when they were not.

Rank of attending officer also significantly decreased likelihood of attrition, with mean length of time being 3032.03 hours (126 days) when CID was first on scene, compared 2834.55 hours (118 days) with a uniformed officer.

Interestingly, a match between the gender of the victim and the gender of the officer significantly increased likelihood of attrition, with mean case length being 2813.29 hours (117 days) when they matched, compared to 3265 hours (136 days) when they did not.

All other variables did not produce a significant result. Alcohol consumption produced a marginal increase in likelihood of attrition, knowing the perpetrator had no effect and the rest marginally decreased likelihood.

Figure 1 plots case survival of all 619 cases from data presented in *Table 3*. Visual inspection indicates that majority of cases have concluded by 3000 hours (125 days).

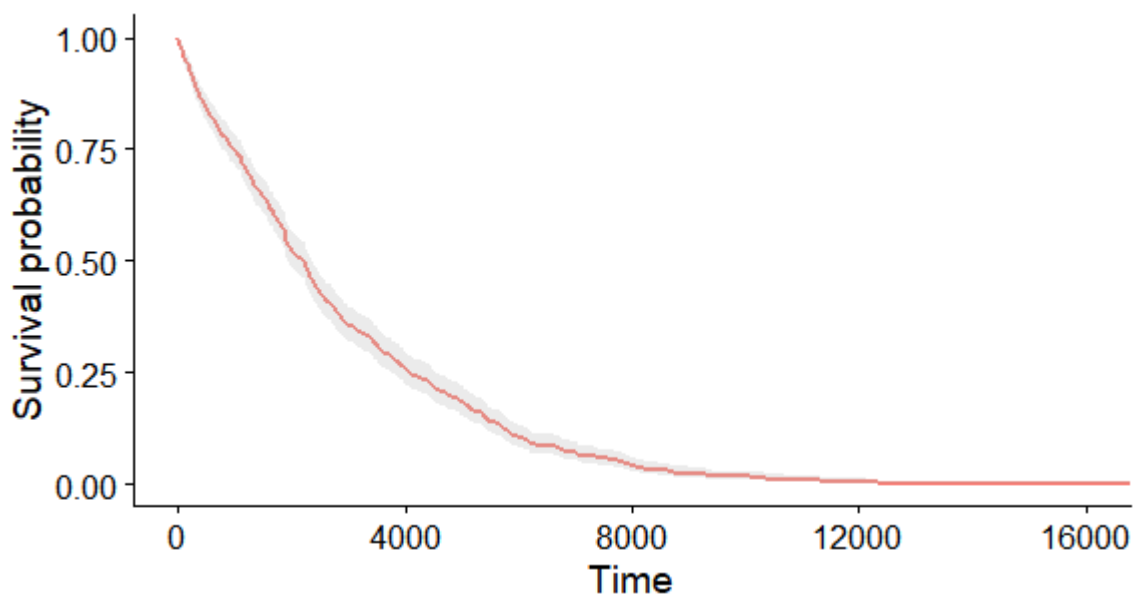


Figure 1. Summary plot of investigation length (in hours) for whole sample

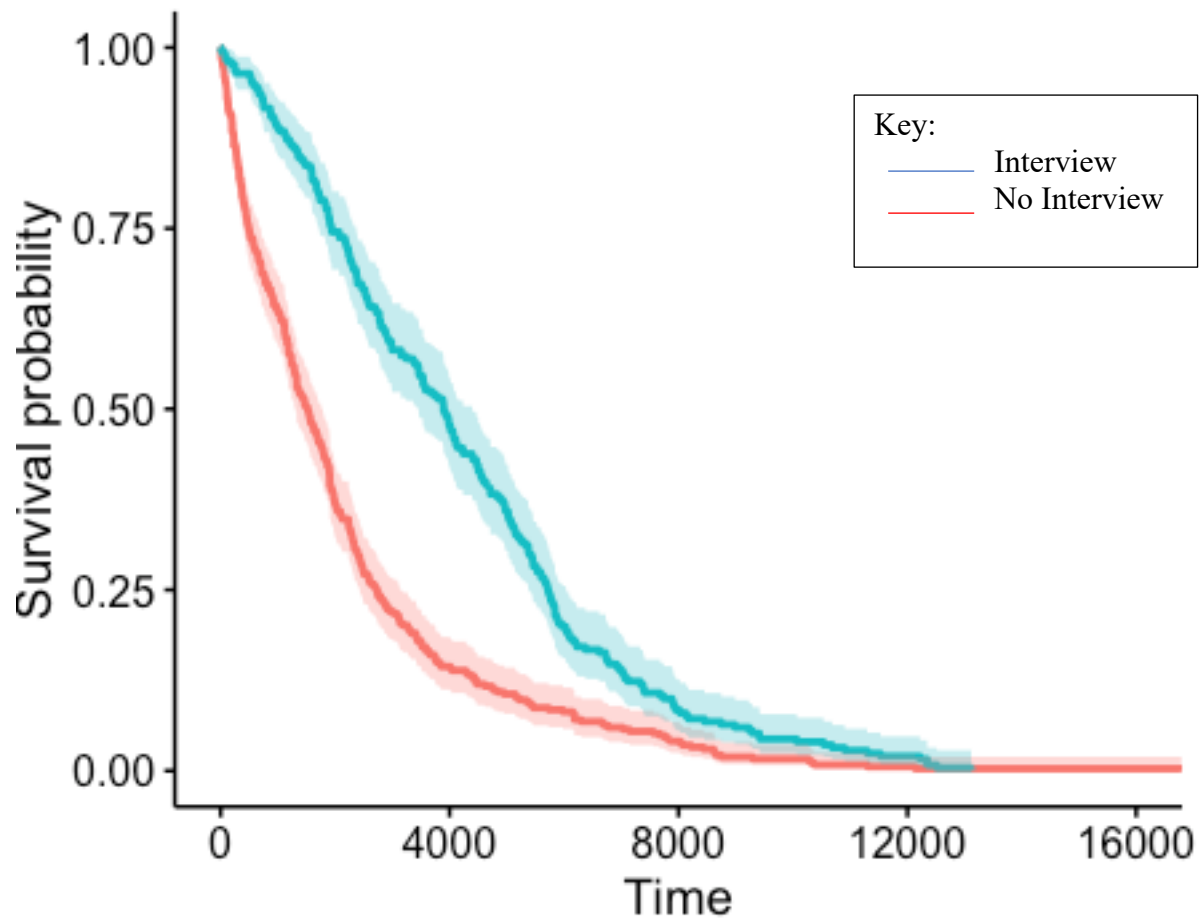


Figure 2. Survival plot of whole sample comparing the effect of an interview on case length

Figure 2 visually interprets the different trajectories of cases, depending on whether or not an interview took place. It shows that when no interview is conducted, the majority of cases are concluded around 3000 hours (125 days). Alternatively, when an interview took place, the case lasts twice as long, concluding around 6000 hours (250 days).

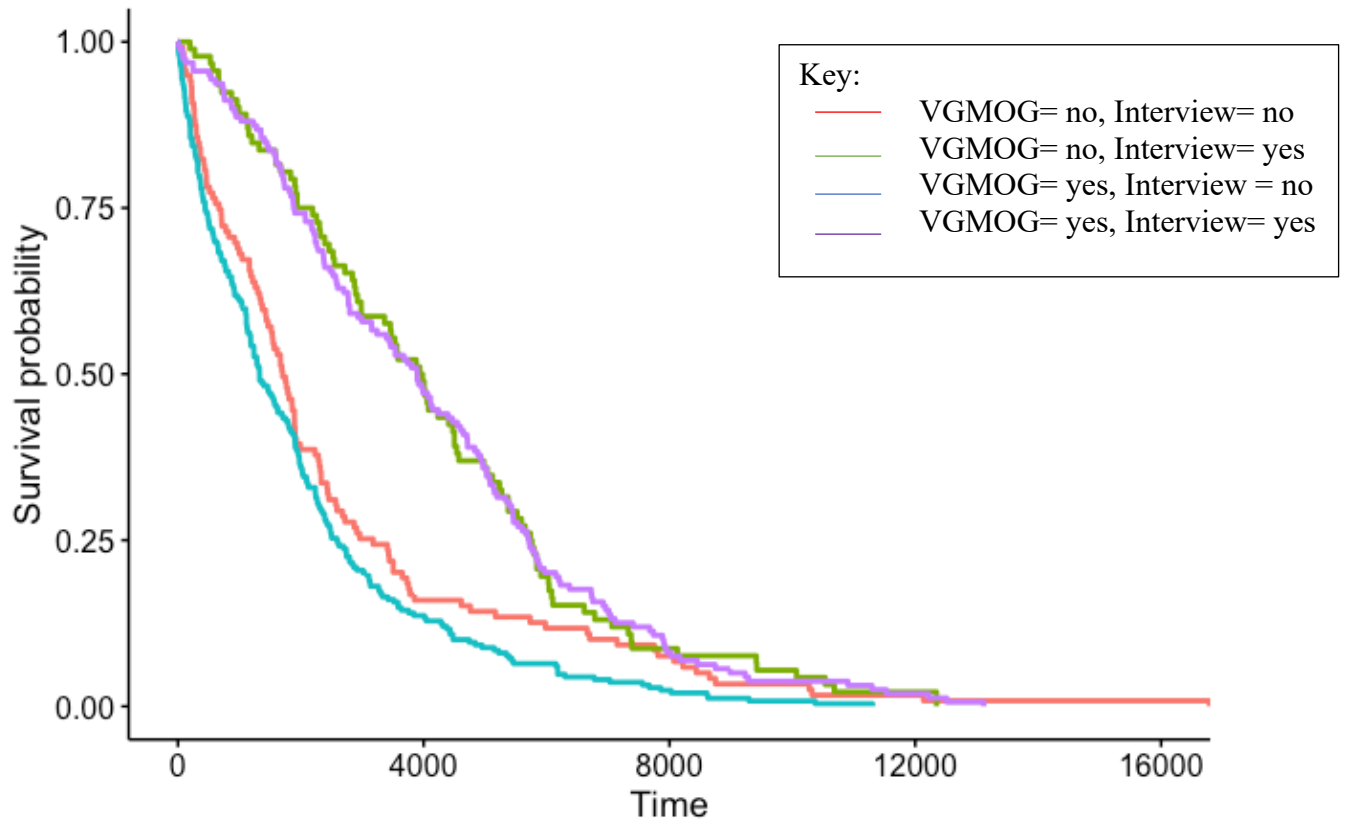


Figure 3. Survival plot of whole sample comparing the interaction of VGMOG and interviews influence on case length

Figure 3 continues to highlight the importance of the interview on case length, with both conditions where an interview took place, regardless of whether victim gender matched officer gender, providing survival of the case until around 6000 hours (250 days) compared to the other two conditions concluding around 4000 (167 days).

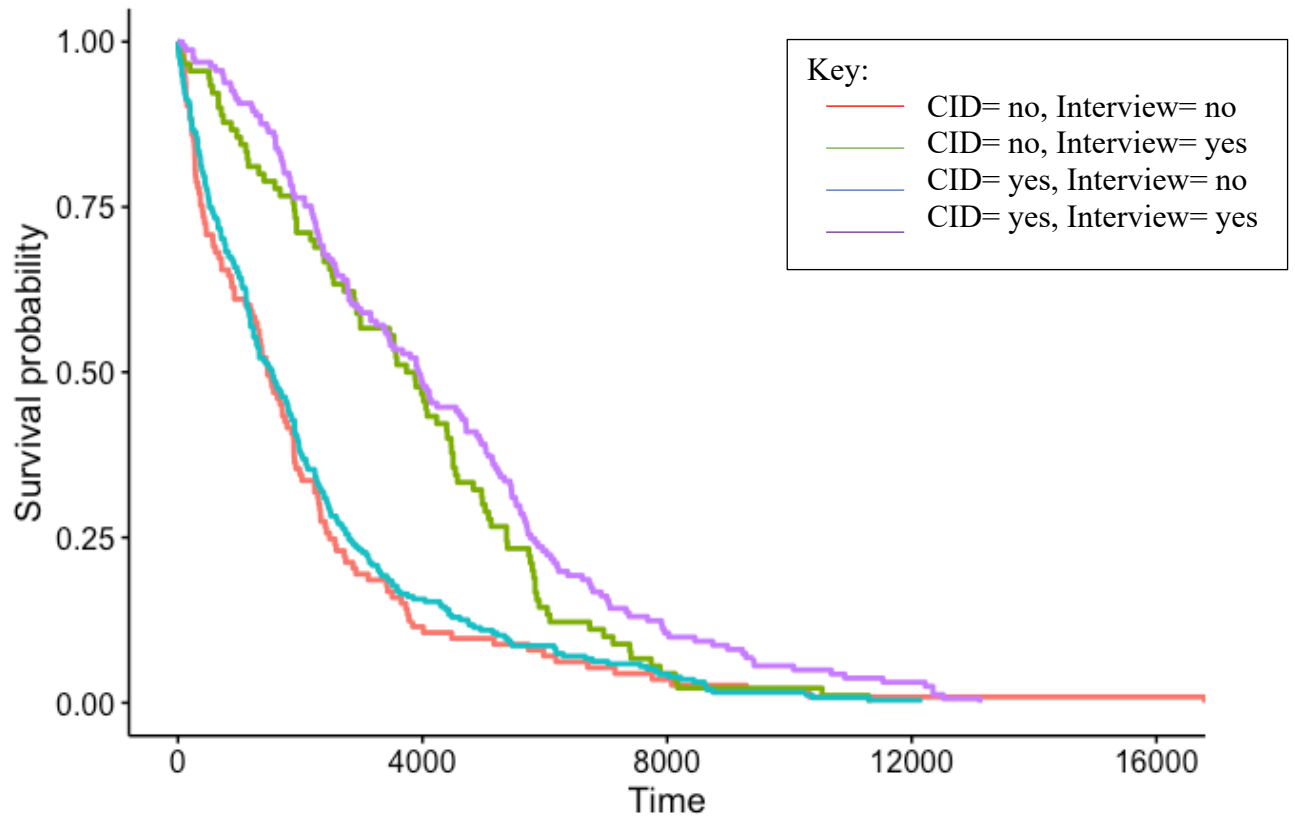


Figure 4. Survival plot of whole sample comparing the interaction of officer rank and interviews influence on case length

Figure 4 shows that the two conditions where an interview was conducted produced cases that were likely to survive until at least 6000 hours (250 days), compared to without, where they concluded around 4000 hours (167 days). However, the interaction of having a CID first attending and an interview taking place does make a difference to the overall case length, with cases more likely to last until around 8000 hours (333 days).

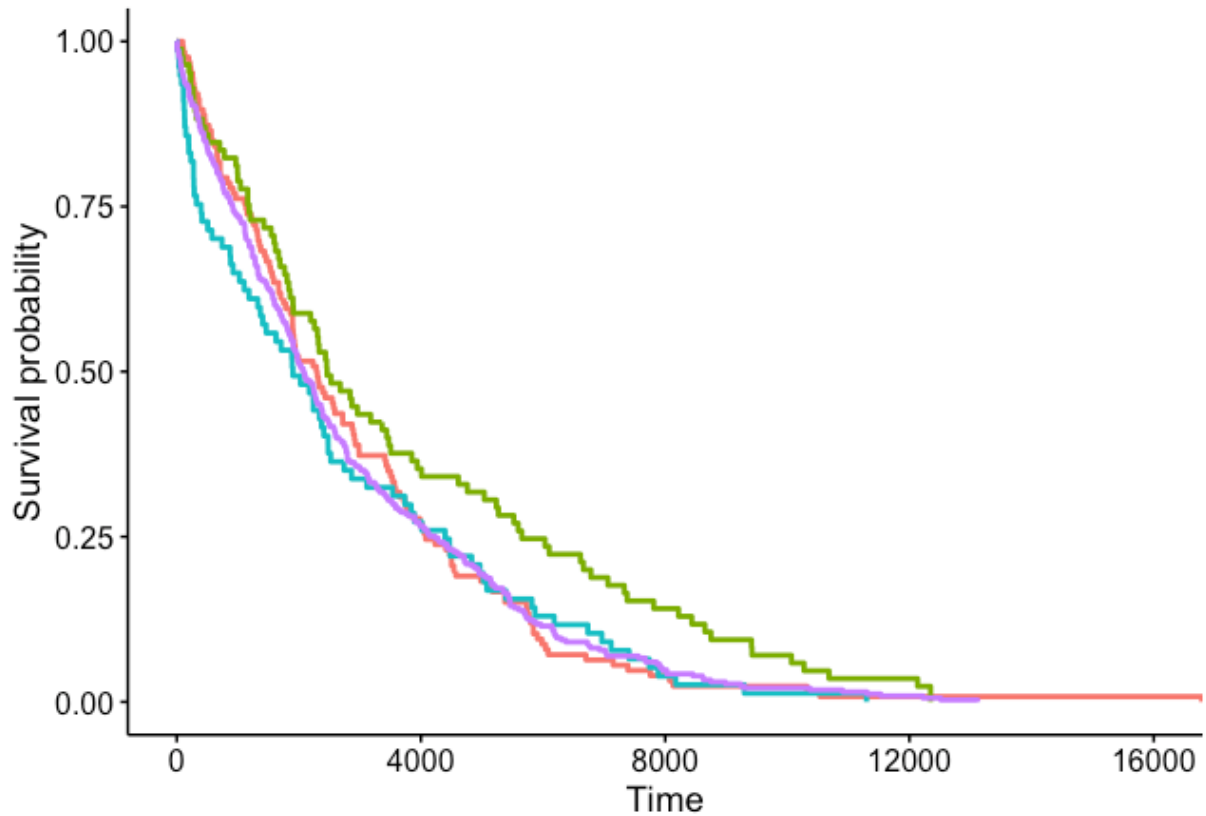


Figure 5. Survival plot of whole sample comparing the interaction of VGMOG and officer rank influence on case length

Figure 5 shows that the effects of CID first attending and not matching officer and victim gender produces a higher likelihood of case survival, with most cases lasting until around 8000 hours (333 days), compared to the other three conditions, where it is around 6000 (250 days). That being said, the condition where the gender-matched, and uniform attended first produces a much lower survival probability from the beginning.

Kruskal-Wallis Analysis

A Pair-Wise comparison was run in order to compare all the individual relationship conditions against each other. However, as this involved performing 15 individual tests, the p-value had to be adjusted for each test, to stabilise the Type I error rate at 5%. As such, the p-value's reported are the Adjusted p-value's produced by SPSS.

Case length was found to be significantly affected by victim-perpetrator relationship ($H(5) = 30.87, p < 0.05$). *Figure 6* plots the case length based on victim-perpetrator relationship of the whole sample.

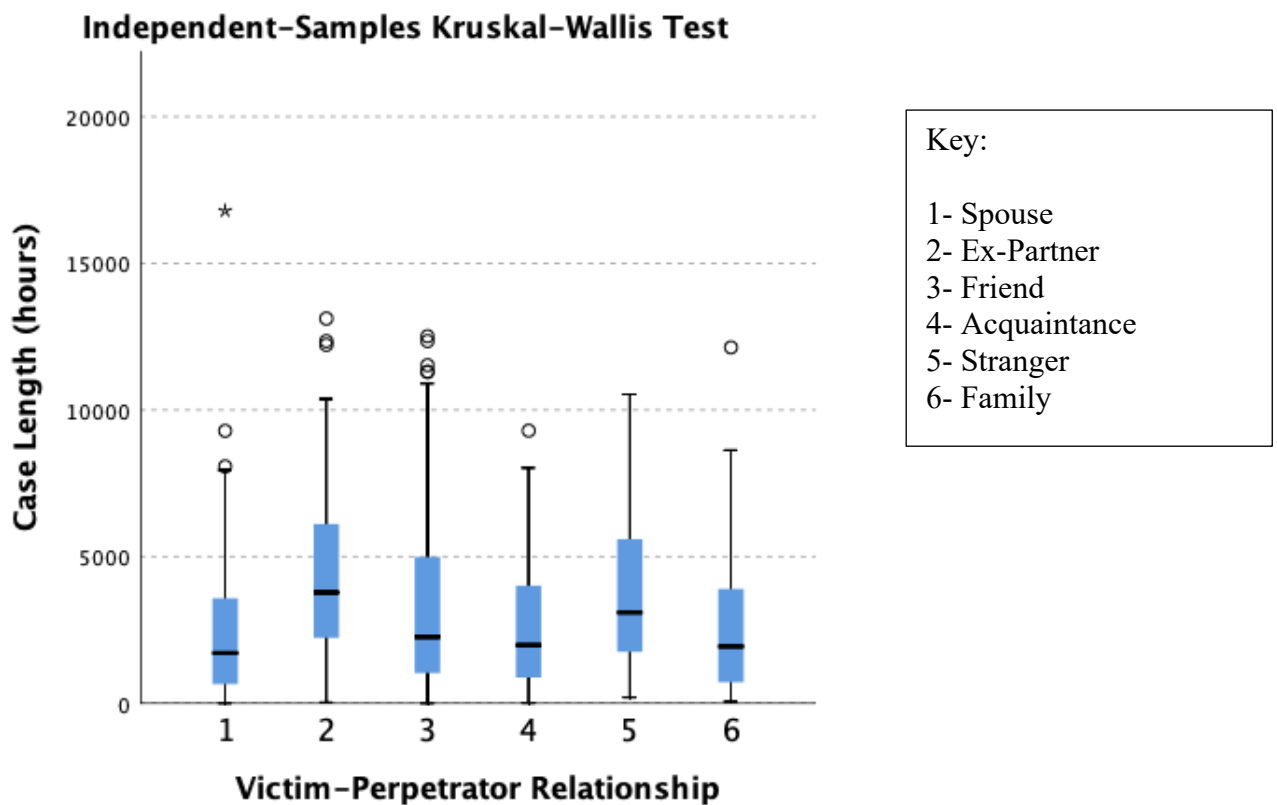


Figure 6. Summary plot of victim-perpetrator relationship effect on case length (in hours) for whole sample

Cases where an ex-partner was the perpetrator resulted in the longest case length of 4622.55 hours (192 days), followed by stranger with 3815.61 hours (159 days) and friend

with 3388.02 (141 days). The other three groups resulted in similar case lengths, with acquaintance obtaining a case length of 2627.91 (109 days), family with 2571.02 hours (107 days) and spousal relationships lasting 2454.39 hours (102 days).

Pairwise comparisons showed that there were significant differences between case lengths of the Spouse and Stranger conditions ($p=0.011$, $r=-0.14$), Spouse and Ex conditions ($p=0.00$, $r=-0.18$), Ex and Family conditions ($p=0.003$, $r=0.15$) and Ex and Acquaintance conditions ($p=0.009$, $r=0.14$).

Discussion

This research illustrates that victim withdrawal is the main reason for early investigation discontinuance. Conducting an interview and officer rank significantly decreased likelihood of attrition and a match between the gender of the victim and the gender of the officer increased likelihood. Additionally, victim-perpetrator relationship had a significant effect on case length.

Interview

In line with the pilot study (Sweeting, Cooper and Cole, in preparation), present findings illustrate that victim interview significantly decreased likelihood of attrition.

However, results show there was an average of 20 days from report to interview and 59.6% were not interviewed at all. This is problematic, as inconsistencies in memory recall increase overtime (Holh & Conway, 2016). Additionally, interviews can be used as ‘evidence-in-chief’ at trial (CPS, 2020) and prosecutors state that logical and chronological structure, which is more likely when obtained closer to event, would be classed as stronger evidence (Westera, Powell & Milne, 2017). Therefore, failure to obtain an interview quickly, or at all, could significantly impact charging decisions (McMillan & Thomas, 2009).

Moreover, Hamlyn, Phelps and Sattar (2004) found that recounting their story was important in the victim feeling satisfied with the police process, suggesting that more victim interviews may lead to less victim withdrawal.

Victim Gender Matched to Officer Gender

The present study found that when gender of victim and officer matched, likelihood of attrition increased. With the sample consisting mainly of female victims, this result contradicts previous research, which suggested that a female police officers' socialisation would lead to a greater understanding of victims' situation (MacLeod, 2016). However, it has been suggested that female officers are encouraged to involve themselves in stereotypical male culture (Loftus, 2008), leading to less differences portrayed by the genders. Furthermore, the current findings support that male police officers were more likely to believe rape allegations (Galton, 1975) and that female officers blamed victims more than male officers (Sleath, 2011). Therefore, matching a female officer to the victims' gender could negatively impact attrition.

Victim-Perpetrator Relationship

Results show that victim-perpetrator relationship has a significant impact on length of investigation. Furthermore, significant differences were found between ex-partner and spouse, family and acquaintance, as well as between spouse and stranger conditions. When comparing stranger to non-stranger cases, it has been found that the latter is more likely to continue to trial, since the perpetrator is more likely to be identified (Munroe & Kelly, 2009; Hansen et al., 2019). Although conviction rates are higher, non-stranger cases are likely to produce shorter sentences (Simon, 1996), especially if there was previous sexual activity (Spohn & Spears, 1996). However, ex-partner cases have been found to be more similar to

stranger cases in the increased level of force and injury (Du Mont, Parnis & Forte, 2006). The potential physical evidence and the lack of relationship leading to fewer mitigating factors in victim's decision making in ex-partner cases may be the reason for the longest cases. Moreover, current results support findings by Hine and Murphy (2016) who found that police officers produced significantly different authenticity rankings for ex-partner (96.73), acquaintance (95.96), stranger (93.29) and partner (85.84) cases. Officers rape myth acceptance levels result in a perceived lack of credibility in IPV cases (Hine & Murphy, 2019). Ellison (2018) has proposed extending explanations to juries about IPV cases. Therefore, improvements need to be made in all areas of the CJS to improve investigation and conviction rates of different victim-perpetrator relationships.

Officer Rank

CID first contact increased length of investigation, compared to uniformed officer, supporting Page (2007), who found that experienced officers accepted fewer rape myths than inexperienced officers. This demonstrates the need for specialist training, as untrained officers are likely to blame stranger and acquaintance rape perpetrators differently (Sleath, 2011). Lee and Stanko (2017) have shown that adaptations to training of Sexual Offences Investigation Trained (SOIT) officers incorporates victim needs alongside investigation needs, in order to reduce victim withdrawal. Therefore, positive steps have been taken to improve investigations.**Limitations**

One limitation is lack of male rape cases in sample. Although men are less likely to report rape (Doherty & Anderson, 2004), lack of research surrounding male victims means that their experience is being overlooked (Davies & Rutland, 2007). Future research should focus entirely on male cases or strive for a gender-balanced sample.

Furthermore, the sample was geographically limited, meaning that results may not be generalisable. With Kelly, Lovatt and Regan (2005) finding inconsistencies between different police forces, other forces should be analysed alongside the current force in future.

Further Research

Using current methodology to compare investigations that secured a conviction against those who did not would be beneficial to highlight which variables positive impacted investigations. Moreover, future research should include additional variables pertaining to the perpetrator, to help place less blame onto victims (Sleath, 2011), reflecting that a jury's job is to judge the perpetrator (Viki, Abrams & Masser, 2004).

Conclusion

Analysing the largest sample of rape attrition cases, this study has found that conducting interviews and CID first attendance results in decreased likelihood of attrition. Matching offender gender to victims increased the likelihood. Victim-perpetrator relationship resulted in significant different case lengths. Overall, further research into rape attrition rates is needed, in order to enhance the investigation stage of the process. However, with only 18/620 cases referred to the CPS, reform is vital throughout every stage of the CJS, in order to reduce the number of victims being failed by the system.

References

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