

An assessment of adolescents' knowledge about and attitudes toward sexual crimes in a Swedish context

Introduction

During their lifetime, many people become the victim of a sexual crime. In Sweden, the majority of the victims have an age between 16-24 years and females are more likely to be victimized than males (Brå, 2017). Research have been conducted about risk factors and consequences for these crimes (Daigle, 2013) but less attention has been given to knowledge about and the attitudes toward these in the general population, especially among adolescents (e.g. Jung, Ahn-Redding & Allison, 2014; Witkowska, 2005). The aim was therefore to assess Swedish adolescents' knowledge about and attitudes toward sexual crimes.

Conclusion

The studied adolescents were found to have quite good knowledge about and less supportive attitudes toward sexual crimes. The results suggest that negative consequences of poor knowledge about and attitudes toward sexual crimes, for example poor reporting rates, should be less prevalent among these adolescents. Interventions should primarily target the less knowledgeable groups and those showing more supportive attitudes, utilizing the sources found to affect this.

References

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Method

Participants were a convenience sample of 245 adolescents between 16-19 years old. A questionnaire was created including short scenarios and statements to assess the adolescents' knowledge and attitudes, along with questions regarding which sources affected this. Independent samples t-tests, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Kurskal-Wallis tests were used to test for differences between sociodemographic groups while linear multiple regression were used to test which sources affected the adolescents' knowledge and attitudes. The participants were informed about their participation being voluntary, the conditions regarding giving their informed consent and how their information would be treated.

Results

The adolescents were found to have quite good knowledge about sexual crimes. Females, those born in Sweden, social science students and 16-year olds were more knowledgeable than their counterparts. Family, media or commercial and the internet were found increase their level of knowledge. The adolescents were also found to have less supportive attitudes toward sexual crimes. Males, those born abroad and those studying another educational program than social science had more supportive attitudes toward sexual crimes than their counterparts, while no significant age differences were found. Family, media or commercial, the internet and other (for example conscience, experiences and the police) were found to protect the adolescents from developing supportive attitudes.

