

Secondary victimization of victims of sexual crimes by law enforcement authorities

Abstract

Although victims of crime received more attention in recent years than ever before, there are lots of myths about them in our society. These myths distort the view not only of the victims themselves, but of moral crimes in general and subsequently they have influence as to how victims are treated.

A victim who reports a sexually motivated crime has to face stressful and confusing criminal proceedings. During the proceedings victims are usually forced to testify repeatedly, meet the perpetrator, respond to hurtful questions about their past, their relationship with the perpetrator and justify their behaviour during primary victimization. All of these uncomfortable experiences are the causes of secondary victimization by law enforcement authorities.

The main aim of this thesis was to analyze criminal proceedings from the perspective of victims and focus on dangerous situations during which law enforcement authorities can cause secondary victimization to them. The author wanted to clarify the danger of secondary victimizations and dispel the myths and stereotypes which have influence on how we treat the victims and cause secondary victimization. As a source for analysis of criminal proceedings was not only the literature but also interviews with the people who have experience with victims of the crime.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The beginning is devoted to the history of victim's protection in the Czech legal system and current legislation. The following chapter theoretically explains all the important terms for this essay in a theoretical way, but also according to the legal system. The third chapter clarifies the most common myths and stereotypes that are applied to victims of sexual crimes by common society but also by law enforcement authorities. These stereotypes are explained and disproved on the basis of professional researches. The last chapter is about the whole criminal proceeding process and about everything to which the victims are exposed during these proceedings. The failures of the criminal proceedings are highlighted, and the thesis suggests what needs to be changed to minimize the danger of secondary victimization.

Keywords: secondary victimization, victim, stereotypes