

ABSTRACT

An Exploration of the Experiences of Rapists, Rape Victims and Criminal Justice System Officials in the Prosecution of Rape Cases in Trinidad and Tobago

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This study investigated the involvement of rapists, rape victims, high court judges, magistrates, police officers and correctional officers in the prosecution of rape cases in Trinidad and Tobago. Participants were a population of seventy-three (73) convicted rapists, five (5) rape victims, five (5) judges, five (5) magistrates, ten (10) police officers and five (5) correctional officers. Mixed methods were used with purposive theoretical and random sampling conducted for the judge and magistrate cohorts, and purposive theoretical and convenient sampling used for the police and correctional officer cohorts. Convenient sampling was used for the rape victims. Data were analysed using coded themes and SPSS descriptive statistics. Most findings had significant representation and revealed inefficiencies in the criminal justice system. The waiting period prior to trial, the severity of the possible sentence rapists could receive, together with lengthy sentencing and harsh punishment without rehabilitation, contribute to a low recidivism rate of rapists. This study validated Hirschi and Gottfredson's (1983) age-crime relation, but controverted the age limit posited by several researchers, including Hanson (2002), Packard (2002), Prentky and Lee (2007) and Wollert (2006) who specifically suggested that the sexual recidivism rate declined to 0% between the ages of 44 and 60. The study found a recidivism rate of rapists of 0.32 per cent in Trinidad and Tobago. A novel model that reflects low recidivism rates of rapists was conceived.

Keywords: Simon Alexis; Criminal justice system; Harsh punishment; Lengthy trial; Rapists; Recidivism; Recidivism rate of rapists; Sex offenders.