



What Goes Around Comes Around: Coping with Threats to Belief in a Just World and its Relationship with Locus of Control

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ABSTRACT

The present research studied Lerner's (1970, 1980) just-world theory by manipulating two factors referred to an innocent victim and measuring several possible responses that participants may give when their belief in a just world was potentially threatened. Participants read a story about a victim who varied in terms of attractiveness (likeable or not) and responsibility for having caused her own incident (low responsibility vs. high responsibility). The general pattern of results was as follows: for the unlikeable low-responsibility victim, the primary response to protect justice-related beliefs was character derogation; instead of blame, for the likeable high-responsibility victim the protective measure appeared to be monetary compensation, as well as for the likeable low-responsibility victim, which was compensation too. Eventually, the unlikeable high-responsibility slightly put the blame on the victim. Concerning locus of control, the more a participant believed the world is just, the more internal his/her locus of control was. Major implications and future directions are suggested.

KEY WORDS: *just-world theory, innocent victim, protective measures, threatened belief in a just world, justice.*

INTRODUCTION

It is almost a human need the fact that people have to believe they live in a world where individuals get what they deserve and deserve what they get in order to maintain mental health. In other words, we need to think that what goes around, comes around either as a result of our actions or because destiny, as an uncontrollable strength, is on our side, and this is exactly the core of the just-world theory. Looking back, it has been over 50 years since this specific kind of heuristic was first studied, and it was Melvin Lerner in the middle 60s the one who took charge of this issue. What Lerner said was quite simple to understand, and his message was very clear: briefly, good things tend to happen to good people and bad things to bad people, despite the fact this is patently not the case and could be perfectly depicted as a superstitious way of thinking, in the sense that two independent events which are coincident in time do not have to be necessarily correlated. As a matter of fact, it is not uncommon to hear in the news innocent people that are sent to jail with no apparent reason and, of course, it is not unthinkable to start pondering on what kind of bad action they should have done

—although his sending into prison could be due to a procedural mistake or a judge bias.

Thus, people are motivated to defend their belief in a just world when it is threatened by injustices, either experienced or observed (Furham, 2002). If possible, justice is restored in reality (e.g., by compensating victims). If the injustice seems unlikely to be resolved in reality, however, people try to restore their beliefs in a just world cognitively by re-evaluating the situation (e.g., putting the responsibility/blame on the victim or derogating her/him), a process called assimilation of injustice (Dalbert, 2001). This just world dynamic was first evidenced by Lerner and Simmons (1966). These researchers confronted their participants with an “innocent victim,” a young woman participating in a learning task (a confederate, actually) who was punished for each mistake she made by being administered seemingly painful electric shocks. When led to believe that the experiment would continue in the same way, the participants showed disdain. The more the victim suffered, the more participants denigrated her (they thought less of her in terms of likeability, similarity). When led to believe, however, that the victim would be compensated for the pain of the electric shocks by receiving money for each correct answer in a second part of the experiment, they stopped showing contempt. Finally, nearly all participants who were given the choice between continuing the shock condition and switching to the compensation condition voted for the latter. Nevertheless, the fact of merely voting to award the victim was not enough to stop participants from derogating the victim. It was only when they were certain that compensation would be given that the injustice was no longer assimilated; that is, justice was restored, and it is precisely in this point where the situation is cognitively re-evaluated.

Since Lerner first introduced the Belief in a Just World hypothesis (in a nutshell, people confronted with injustices suffer and feel the need to restore justice) in the middle 60s, providing us with theoretical background as well as the first experiments, a substantial amount of research on belief in a just world has been focusing primarily on the maladaptive functions of this heuristic. Since the 70s, however, another strand of research has examined individual differences in this matter and found that it also serves important adaptive functions that act as a supporter of our mental sanity and sense of safety, and this important research development has also been recently retaken by Dalbert (2001). Nevertheless, this research agenda was triggered by the introduction of the first belief in a just world scale by Rubin and Peplau (1975), which assessed individual differences in considering that the world is generally a just place. We can find the importance of this conceptual change in the fact that this approach

allowed the Belief in a Just World to be studied within the framework of personality dispositions, and positive associations came to light, particularly those regarding internal locus of control.

Concurrently, it was also during the 1970 decade when the convergence between personality traits or attributes and the just-world theory found its summit thanks to an experiment carried out by Jones and Aronson (1973), and it was in this research where the variables responsibility and likeability were first experimentally introduced. In this study, participants read a story recreating a jury situation where the victim was a woman who had been raped and was said to be either a virgin, married or a divorcée. Under these circumstances, the victim was regarded as more at fault if she was a virgin or a married woman (and therefore by the conventional standards of the time more innocent and pure) than if she was a divorcée (Jones & Aronson, 1973)

Since the 1990s, more studies have thrown some light to the positive as well as the negative consequences of the belief in a just world from a more psychosocial perspective. Based on suggestions originating from earlier research (Furnham & Procter, 1989; Lerner & Miller, 1978), these studies have shown that it is necessary to distinguish the belief in a personal just world, in which one is usually treated fairly, from the belief in a general just world or the belief in a just world for others, in which people in general get what they deserve (Dalbert, 1999; Lipkus, Dalbert, & Siegler, 1996). In line with the self-serving bias in general (Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990) and in fairness reasoning in particular (Messick, Bloom, Boldizar, & Samuelson, 1985), research evidenced that people tend to endorse the personal more strongly than the general belief in a just world and that the two constructs have a different function. The personal belief in a just world is a better predictor of adaptability and cognitive flexibility (e.g., subjective well-being), and the belief in a just world for others (or general) is a better predictor of harsh social attitudes.

It was also during the final years of the 1990s and early 2000s when rape occupied a central place in the study of people's BJW (Carmody & Washington, 2001; Foley & Pigott, 2000; Lambert & Raichle, 2000). As could be perfectly predicted, males with high BJW scores were more negative to rape victims than low BJW scorers, but this was not the tendency in women, in whom self-identification may be probably affecting (Kleinke & Meyer, 1990). In the same research line, Brems and Wagner (1994) found furthermore that an accurate predictor for blaming or disdaining the victim was the attitude participants adopted toward rape and similar types of crimes. Furham and

Boston (1996) focused on the common points both rape theories and BJW had and some support was found for the hypothesis that high BJW scores would seek out explanations that attempted to restore some justice.

For Lerner (1965) and Rubin and Peplau (1975) BJW indicates an assumption that a person's fate is closely tied to his or her merit. Focusing on this definition, we can automatically think of locus of control, concretely about the internal pole of it. This implies that those who get good things to happen deserve their reward, whereas those who get bad things to happen deserve their misfortune. Just to remind the reader, a person's locus is conceptualized as either internal (the person believes they can control their life) or external, meaning they believe that their decisions are controlled by environmental factors which they cannot influence (Rotter, 1954). Thus, if we are talking about merit we are necessarily keeping our mind in the internal pole of locus of control, and that is exactly what we did in our research.

Certainly, all these studies focusing on BJW have not provided us with unequivocal theoretical background and support for a complete understanding of this phenomenon, and we have observed some explanations for this. To start with, many studies admitted psychometric problems regarding both measures of BJW and the different dependent variables involved, which could easily bias the real relationship. Secondly, several studies have shown certain confusion when designing the experiment in regard to other belief systems, such as religious ones, and the heuristic of BJW, where it is not clear which the moderating variables were. Eventually, we have realised a generalization tendency when talking about the experimental results in researches where only one single scenario was contemplated (e.g., road accident or physical violence), and we think that the type of traumatic event does indeed make a difference.

In the present research, we took into account the factors just noticed and attempted to minimise and control the negative effects on the study. In this regard, we believe a possible way to improve it was by identifying the potential moderating variables so that we can build psychometric instruments which are free from religious bits or any other matter which can bias the whole experiment. Other established measure to improve the experimental design of the present research was controlling the context in which the stories participants had to read. We only wrote about one single scenario so that people taking part in the experiment were not called to imagine any other frame. Furthermore, in the original experiment that Furham (2002) carried out, the instrument he used consisted of a newspaper story about a car accident whose protagonist was a

drug dealer, so we decided to use rape as an excuse to also go further and study how people react and how biased they are when they are exposed to this kind of events. To achieve these tasks, we have set some general and specific aims which are going to guide us through the study. As general aims, we are willing to find out how people perceive the direct victim of a crime (rape in this case), which kind of strategies are triggered when people's BJW is shaken and finally whether a relationship between BJW and locus of control does exist or not. As specific aims, we want to demonstrate that responses to victims of a certain crime are moderated by individual differences, to explore whether positive and negative reactions to victims are mutually exclusive or not, to study if indeed a victim who is aesthetically displeasing or possesses negative qualities provokes feelings of derogation for a judge or for another kind of observer in general and, eventually, to address, in a merely descriptive way, if responses to victims from strong just-world believers are more extreme, in comparison with weak believers.

We also set two hypothesis: the first hypothesis stated that the main strategies used when people's BJW is threatened in a context where a young girl has been raped should be character derogation, blame and monetary compensation. To address this first hypothesis we counted on two independent variables and three dependent ones: on the one hand, as independent variables we considered the attractiveness of the victim and her responsibility for having triggered the incident; on the other, as dependent variables we took derogating the victim, blaming her and making her receive an economic compensation, looking at them as protective measures to threatened beliefs in a just world. The second hypothesis predicted that the more we believe the world is just, the more internal our locus of control would be. For this task, we considered two variables: locus of control (internal or not, as dependent variable) and the condition of being a strong just-world believer (as independent one).

METHOD

Participants

Data for this research were collected from four separate samples in four separate sessions. The first one consisted of 51 subjects, 33 females (64.70%), 18 males (35.29%). The second sample consisted of 10 subjects, 9 females (90%), 1 male (10%). The third one was composed by 26 participants, 19 females (73.07%), 7 males

(26.92%). Eventually, subjects taking part in the fourth sample were 9, 7 females (77.77%), 2 males (22.22%). The total amount of participants was 96 and the mean average regarding age was 24.3. All the subjects participating in this experiment are currently enrolled at Universidad de Sevilla. Nevertheless, they belong to different faculties and institutions: Labor Relations (B.Sc, third course), Psychology (B.Sc, first and second course) and Documental Criminology (M.Sc, first course).

Materials

The Belief in a Just World scale is a 20-item questionnaire developed by Rubin and Peplau (1975). Briefly, it aims at assessing individual differences in the extent to which people believe that we are living in a just, ordered and predictable world. Participants rate on a 0 to 5 point scale the degree to which they agree with positive (e.g. "Generally, the world we are living in is a safe place") or negative (e.g. "Good deeds often go unnoticed and unrewarded", reverse-coded) statements.

In the present study, the scale shown 0.491 internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.05$, $p < .001$). For purposes of statistical analyses and in order to fulfill the second stage of the research, participants were classified as either strong or weak believers depending upon the scores they got in the BJW scale and thus on the basis of a median split (from 2.45 scores onwards a participant was considered a strong just-world believer)

The article participants read was introduced purposely as a full-length newspaper story, and four versions of it were created, each containing a determined combination of insight about the attractiveness of the victim (likeable or not) and her responsibility for the incident (responsible or not). All the articles in their four versions contained key words and sentences that emphasized the two dependent variables, such as quotes from an eyewitness and direct testimony from teachers and relatives.

To measure derogation, participants were asked the extent to which they considered the victim attractive in general and desirable to have as a neighbor ("would you mind if the protagonist in the story was your neighbor?" and "in the case you would not mind, would you be close to her? Justify your answer"). In addition, participants had to rate the victim according to 7 bipolar personality-trait items (e.g., prudent-reckless, mature-immature, intelligent-non intelligent), choosing one of the two poles.

To measure blame/responsibility, participants had to indicate the extent to which they believe that the victim was to blame ("now you are asked to rate on a scale from 0 to

10 the level of responsibility you reckon the victim has for the incident. You are also kindly requested to shortly justify your answer")

To measure economic compensation, participants had to suggest how much money they consider the victim should be granted by the judge or insurance in a civil trial. Since this question was fully open-ended, participants had the freedom to write down any amount.

Eventually, as locus of control was going to be also tested, participants were given the Locus of Control Test (Tous, 1984), consisting of 23 pair of questions. For each pair, only one statement could be chosen. In this test, on the one hand, affirmations referred specifically to internal locus of control; on the other, others explicitly related with external locus of control could also be pointed out.

Procedure

The procedure was similar for each sample. Participants were recruited thanks to some professors working at Universidad de Sevilla. Since the present study consisted of two stages, two different sessions per experimental phase were carried out; one dedicated to the first phase (BJW scale), another for the next one (newspaper article plus Locus of Control test). Once the students had taken their seats, the experimenter gave them a brief overview of what the experiment was going to be, being led to believe that the main goal was testing some ideas about justice or luck. In addition, short instructions about the questionnaire were written at the top of the paper in order to avoid confusion (see Appendix 1). After that, and during the first session, the experimenter gave them the Belief in a Just World scale (Rubin & Peplau, 1975) to complete.

Next, and after having established who the valid participants were (i.e., the ones who were classified as "strong believers"), these specific participants were given one of the four versions of the newspaper article (see Appendix 2 to 5) profiling the victim to read at their own pace and the Locus of Control test (21.87% of the participants were valid for this second phase). Similarly to the first session, they were also told some instructions about the way they should answer the questions aiming at testing the hypotheses, besides being suggested that they should address the Locus of Control test (see Appendix 6) after having completed the article questionnaire. The order of the questions was derogation, blame and compensation because the usage of one

strategy to deal with threat (e.g., economic compensation) might obviate the use of subsequently measured strategies (e.g., blame).

Regarding ethical issues, we did not need any informed consent as all the stories were fictional. The participants made clear their willingness to cooperate in the research by signing all the questionnaires they handled.

RESULTS

Explicit measures

Before treating any set of data, we purposely formed a derogation composite measure by joining the first three questions which participants read in the newspaper story-related questionnaire so that we could simplify the subsequent analysis ("would you mind if the protagonist in the story was your neighbor?", "in case you would not mind, would you be close to her? Justify your answer" and "rate the protagonist according to the following bipolar traits"). As predicted, the attractive victim ($M = 5.625$) was rated more favorably than the disgusting one ($M = 4.333$). Attending to the experimental condition which was meant to get the highest score in derogation, they obtained a total punctuation of 5.334 out of 9, being 9 the maximum to be reached according to our derogation scale. As expected, the other three groups obtained 3.00, 4.00 and 3.75 scores, which means that they shown less disdain to the victim.

Unexpectedly, in the blame measure the reckless victim was blamed less ($M = 2.153$) than the careful one ($M = 5.625$) according to our ten points-blame scale. Thus, the prudent protagonist was rated as being more blameworthy or behaviorally responsible for her incident. Focusing on the conditions which were supposed to get a higher score in this measure, they obtained 2.153 points out of 10 despite the apparent responsibility for having triggered the episode. Furthermore, we performed a Kruskal-Wallis test which led us to determine that inter-group differences did exist ($\chi^2 = 12.052, p = 0.007$), so actually there was a significant effect between conditions which depended mainly on the level of responsibility (high or low) .

Concerning the economic compensation measure, the condition meant to reach the highest sum of money got an average of €201800, in comparison with the other three, which would compensate the victim with €89400, €250 and finally €3900. Therefore, as we forecasted, the attractive victim with low responsibility for having caused her incident was highly compensated due to her likeable personality traits and her poor

degree of blame, as reflected upon the story. Because of the characteristics of our sample, we also carried out a Kruskal-Wallis test to find out whether inter-groups significant differences were indeed present or not. Once we performed this test, it shown that actually the inter-groups difference existed, and that it was statistically significant ($X^2 = 2.993$, $p = 0.393$).

Locus of control

For contrasting the locus of control-related hypothesis, we decided that only those participants with a strong sense of justice would hold the LC test (Tous, 1984) to find out whether the more one believed the world is just the closer to the internal pole would be. To address this analysis, we divided the locus of control continuum on the basis of a median split (from 11 scores onwards a participant was considered to be located at the internal LC pole) and we were able to test that actually all participants were above this score. Attending to this, we considered that a positive significant relationship between locus of control and believing in a just world did exist among our participants. The maximum score obtained in this sample was 20 out of 23; the minimum, 11.

DISCUSSION

With this research we threw some light to several aspects about the study of heuristics, in general, and this kind of bias specifically. First of all, we found that people use different cognitive strategies when exposed to threats to their beliefs in a just world as a protective measure to their mental health, and that those different strategies are called into action depending upon critical features of the victim, such as behavioral or personal traits, and the consequences of the incident she suffered (e.g., panic attacks, flashbacks, nightmares, major psychological disorders, etc.). However, in this matter the protective measures could be triggered even in the absence of dramatic repercussions, which could be acting as enhancers.

Going back to victims' personal traits, when certain person is unattractive or undesirable and he/she overcomes an intense stressful event it is not unthinkable to derogate him/her because bad people apparently deserve to suffer, or at least this is what we found in our research. Participants who read the story about the problematic girl derogated her worth more than the rest of people taking part in our research. Of

course, derogation happened too in the condition where the victim was not depicted as a reckless person, but probably the variable responsibility for her incident was involved when participants shown disdain about the protagonist in the story. Furthermore, there was one issue that highly gripped our attention: in other conditions, we would have expected the low-responsibility protagonist to be significantly more derogated than the high-responsibility one since blame would have provided a second way to protect BJW, but that was not the case as blame appeared not to be the favorite shortcut to reduce threat among our participants. However, it is important to note that blame was not actually the favorite chosen strategy among the participants who were reputed to select it, but we indeed found blame through the other experimental groups, probably because of the ambiguity the variable responsibility was expressed in the story and the several ways one could have interpreted it.

Conversely, in situations when we are not able to identify a major salient misbehavior or we might classify victims' personal traits as neutral, another option arises: the one related with compensating the person who suffers. This phenomenon could be regarded as a way of actually helping others apparently as an altruistic behavior (Berkowitz, 1973) which may be boosted by what we mentioned before —the neutrality of the personal traits and relative prudence when acting.

It goes without saying it that our research does not provide us with undisputable knowledge about the BJW phenomenon, mostly because of the amount of variables or biases we were not able to control, as well as other sorts of factors, such as experimental mortality or the lack of any response in several questions across conditions. We found out that our results were either inconsistent with the previous literature or statistically lower than expected. For instance, we may attribute the outcomes we obtained on the basis of a general misunderstanding of the questions appearing in Rubin and Peplau's BJW scale since we did not count on a Spanish adaptation of the questionnaire, being the translation ours. Another aspect to take into account is the fact that one might interpret this phenomenon the way she or she wants; that is, this interpretation would depend on the belief system a participant may have, as a mutually supportive set of assumptions, such as religious, philosophical, ideological, superstitious or a whole combination of them. The important thing here is that the first definitions of BJW did not include these kind of bits. Precisely, the description Lerner first claimed in 1965 and then Rubin and Peplau in 1975 was implicitly referring to internal locus of control, which means that superstitious or religious traces, for example, were ruled out from those definitions. Furthermore, another factor affecting our results and, more specifically, the internal reliability in our sample, was merely

cultural. As we were not provided with a proper Spanish version of Rubin and Peplau's scale we were obliged to translate it directly from English, and it is here where the cultural matter is noticed: this questionnaire is North American and we were testing it on a sample that had nothing to do with the United States, without any adaptation but translation. As a matter of fact, Spain and the States are so different that they almost have completely opposite scores when analyzing the 5-D cultural model (Hofstede, 1997). Therefore, cultural adaptations of the BJW scale is also needed.

The present study turned out to be especially useful firstly, and most importantly, because it was the first time that the BJW scale have been tested in a Spanish sample and secondly because of the awareness about new experimental directions it supplies. We believe that perhaps future research lines should focus on cultural and ethnological factors since all the previous studies are relative to the Western World and have been leaving in the background the so-called BRIC countries or the United Arab Emirates, for instance. Needless to say, an adaptation of the appropriate materials is required and should be carried out. Another engaging option would be to manipulate in a more accurate way the variable gender as very significant differences could be found out, mostly when a case of rape is presented, where a woman might feel self-identified. Alternatively, thought-listing tasks could be used just before assessing locus of control in order to explore the nature of participants' cognitions, and whether these cognitions are based on justice-related ideas or not.

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APPENDIX 1: BELIEF IN A JUST WORLD SCALE (RUBIN & PEPLAU, 1975)

A continuación se le muestra un cuestionario de 20 ítems que tratan de medir su concepción acerca de conceptos tales como la justicia o la suerte. Puede indicar su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo al final de cada pregunta utilizando el siguiente código:

- 0- totalmente en desacuerdo*
- 1-moderadamente en desacuerdo*
- 2-ligeramente en desacuerdo*
- 3-ligeramente de acuerdo*
- 4-moderadamente de acuerdo*
- 5- totalmente de acuerdo*

1. Considero que una persona raramente se merece la reputación que tiene.
2. En realidad, el mundo es un lugar justo.
3. Normalmente la gente que tiene 'golpes de suerte' se lo han ganado ellos mismos.
4. Los conductores prudentes tienen las mismas posibilidades de tener un accidente de tráfico que los imprudentes.
5. Lo normal es que en España los culpables en un determinado juicio salgan libres de culpa.
6. Los estudiantes casi siempre se merecen la nota que tienen.
7. La gente que se mantiene en forma tiene pocas probabilidades de sufrir un infarto.
8. Un político fiel a sus principios raramente sale electo.
9. Es poco frecuente que una persona inocente sea encarcelada.
10. En el deporte profesional, muchas faltas e infracciones pasan conscientemente inadvertidas ante el árbitro.
11. En líneas generales, la gente tiene lo que se merece.
12. Los padres que castigan a sus hijos casi siempre tienen una razón de peso para hacerlo.
13. Las buenas acciones normalmente ni son reconocidas ni recompensadas.
14. Aunque algunos hombres malintencionados se han hecho con el poder político por un tiempo, generalmente en el curso de la historia los buenos ganan a los malos.
15. Habitualmente las personas que desempeñan bien su puesto de trabajo promocionan u obtienen un ascenso.

16. Los padres tienden a ignorar las características más admirables de sus hijos.
17. Es bastante improbable que una persona reciba un juicio justo en nuestro país.
18. Las personas desdichadas son así porque traen la desgracia consigo mismas.
19. El crimen no compensa.
20. Hay mucha gente que sufre sin haber hecho nada para merecerlo.

APPENDIX 2: NEWSPAPER STORY, EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION: HIGH LIKEABILITY OF THE VICTIM VS. HIGH RESPONSIBILITY FOR HAVING CAUSED HER INCIDENT

En busca y captura un hombre acusado de abusar sexualmente de una adolescente de 16 años a la entrada de su domicilio

La Sección Segunda de la Audiencia Provincial de Sevilla ha ordenado este miércoles la busca y captura de un hombre acusado de abusar sexualmente de una joven de 16 años. Los hechos se remontan al pasado 25 de junio de 2013, cuando la joven accedía a su domicilio familiar tras celebrar en una famosa discoteca de la capital hispalense el fin de exámenes.

No es la primera vez que el acusado actúa. De hecho, el *modus operandi* siempre era el mismo: abordaba a las mujeres cuando entraban al portal, les robaba y a punta de pistola o navaja las violaba en garajes, sótanos, cuartos de calderas o trasteros, según informa el Ministerio de Interior, además de proferir desvalorizaciones, vejaciones y agresiones físicas de carácter severo.

La testigo, una mujer de 38 años, y los peritos médicos que han prestado declaración (psicólogos, psiquiatras y

forenses) han coincidido en dar credibilidad a la versión de la menor, en que su relato de los hechos era coherente y que no apreciaron tendencia a la fabulación. La testigo, que presencié los hechos escondida tras un portón adyacente, apunta que la muchacha **"...que vestía con una minifalda y un top llamativo y escotado, iba sola haciendo eses y emitiendo un pestazo a alcohol llegaba hasta mi nariz"**. Según informó luego la víctima, ella fue de las últimas en marcharse sola de la fiesta y su grupo habitual de regreso al barrio ya se había marchado.

Por su parte, los profesionales justificaron sus conclusiones por los detalles que la menor aportaba en su testimonio. Una de las psicólogas señaló que la adolescente era madura para su edad, sensata y sin rasgos psicopatológicos, y que las cosas que contaba eran verosímiles y coherentes.

Respecto a la joven, sus familiares y amigos más cercanos la consideran **"muy estudiosa, despierta, trabajadora en el instituto, respetuosa con todos, inteligente, y sin ningún codeo en el mundo de las drogas", además de ser "muy guapa y extrovertida, la típica niña con la que a todo el mundo le gusta estar"**

El psiquiatra del Hospital Virgen del Rocío que sigue tratando a la menor ha confirmado que padece trastorno de estrés post traumático y depresión, que se manifiestan en desórdenes del sueño, fobias, flashbacks emocionales, y cuadros muy frecuentes de ansiedad. Asimismo, refirió que la niña no es capaz de concentrarse y que manifiesta un rechazo a personas de sexo masculino. En cuanto a secuelas físicas, la joven padece contusiones muy graves en las rodillas, así como dislocamiento de cadera y fractura de muñeca.

Una vez haya leído detenidamente el anterior texto, se le harán una serie de cuestiones relacionadas con algunos aspectos de este suceso. Por favor, conteste con sinceridad y recuerde que puede añadir comentarios y observaciones en cualquier momento de la encuesta. ¡Gracias por su colaboración!

① A) ¿Tendría usted algún inconveniente en tener a la víctima de este suceso como vecina?

Sí No Otros (especificar)

En caso negativo, ¿mantendría un trato cercano con ella? Justifique su respuesta.

Sí No Otros (especificar)

B) A continuación, le mostramos una serie de atributos personales agrupados por pares. Para cada número, marque con una x el rasgo que defina mejor la personalidad de la víctima, según su propio criterio.

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5. Responsable..... Irresponsable
6. Atractiva..... No atractiva
7. Madura..... Inmadura

② Escriba ahora, en una escala del 0 al 10, siendo 10 el grado más alto y 0 el más bajo, el nivel de responsabilidad que usted achacaría a la víctima por lo sucedido. Justifique brevemente su respuesta.

③ ¿Consideraría usted que la víctima merece recibir una indemnización por el incidente? En caso afirmativo, imagine que usted es el juez designado para este caso y que tiene la tarea de establecer la cuantía exacta de la indemnización, ¿podría especificar dicha cantidad?

APPENDIX 3: NEWSPAPER STORY, EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION: HIGH LIKEABILITY OF THE VICTIM VS. LOW RESPONSIBILITY FOR HAVING CAUSED HER INCIDENT

En busca y captura un hombre acusado de abusar sexualmente de una adolescente de 16 años a la entrada de su domicilio

La Sección Segunda de la Audiencia Provincial de Sevilla ha ordenado este miércoles la busca y captura de un hombre acusado de abusar sexualmente de una joven de 16 años. Los hechos se remontan al pasado 25 de junio de 2013, cuando la joven accedía a su domicilio familiar tras celebrar en una famosa discoteca de la capital hispalense el fin de exámenes.

No es la primera vez que el acusado actúa. De hecho, el *modus operandi* siempre era el mismo: abordaba a las mujeres cuando entraban al portal, les robaba y a punta de pistola o navaja las violaba en garajes, sótanos, cuartos de calderas o trasteros, según informa el Ministerio de Interior, además de proferir desvalorizaciones, vejaciones y agresiones físicas de carácter severo.

La testigo, una mujer de 38 años, y los peritos médicos que han prestado declaración (psicólogos, psiquiatras y forenses) han coincidido en dar

credibilidad a la versión de la menor, en que su relato de los hechos era coherente y que no apreciaron tendencia a la fabulación. La testigo, que presencié los hechos escondida tras un portón adyacente, apunta que **"...la muchacha vestía un pantalón largo, camisa de manga larga negra y chaquetón, no parecía haber bebido o consumido nada incapacitante"**. Según informó luego la víctima, ella fue de las últimas en marcharse sola de la fiesta y su grupo habitual de regreso al barrio ya se había marchado.

Por su parte, los profesionales justificaron sus conclusiones por los detalles que la menor aportaba en su testimonio. Una de las psicólogas señaló que la adolescente era madura para su edad, sensata y sin rasgos psicopatológicos, y que las cosas que contaba eran verosímiles y coherentes.

Respecto a la joven, sus familiares y amigos más cercanos la consideran **"muy**

estudiosa, despierta, trabajadora en el instituto, respetuosa con todos, inteligente, y sin ningún codeo en el mundo de las drogas", además de ser "muy guapa y extrovertida, la típica niña con la que a todo el mundo le gusta estar"

El psiquiatra del Hospital Virgen del Rocío que sigue tratando a la menor ha confirmado que padece trastorno de estrés post traumático y depresión, que se manifiestan en desórdenes del sueño, fobias, flashbacks emocionales, y cuadros muy frecuentes de ansiedad. Asimismo, refirió que la niña no es capaz de concentrarse y que manifiesta un rechazo a personas de sexo masculino. En cuanto a secuelas físicas, la joven padece contusiones muy graves en las rodillas, así como dislocamiento de cadera y fractura de muñeca.

Una vez haya leído detenidamente el anterior texto, se le harán una serie de cuestiones relacionadas con algunos aspectos de este suceso. Por favor, conteste con sinceridad y recuerde que puede añadir comentarios y observaciones en cualquier momento de la encuesta. ¡Gracias por su colaboración!

① A) ¿Tendría usted algún inconveniente en tener a la víctima de este suceso como vecina?

Sí No Otros (especificar)

En caso negativo, ¿mantendría un trato cercano con ella? Justifique su respuesta.

Sí No Otros (especificar)

B) A continuación, le mostramos una serie de atributos personales agrupados por pares. Para cada número, marque con una x el rasgo que defina mejor la personalidad de la víctima, según su propio criterio.

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③ ¿Consideraría usted que la víctima merece recibir una indemnización por el incidente? En caso afirmativo, imagine que usted es el juez designado para este caso y que tiene la tarea de establecer la cuantía exacta de la indemnización, ¿podría especificar dicha cantidad?

APPENDIX 4: NEWSPAPER STORY, EXPERIMENTAL CONDITION: LOW LIKEABILITY OF THE VICTIM VS. HIGH RESPONSIBILITY FOR HAVING CAUSED HER INCIDENT

En busca y captura un hombre acusado de abusar sexualmente de una adolescente de 16 años a la entrada de su domicilio

La Sección Segunda de la Audiencia Provincial de Sevilla ha ordenado este miércoles la busca y captura de un hombre acusado de abusar sexualmente de una joven de 16 años. Los hechos se remontan al pasado 25 de junio de 2013, cuando la joven accedía a su domicilio familiar tras celebrar en una famosa discoteca de la capital hispalense el fin de exámenes.

No es la primera vez que el acusado actúa. De hecho, el modus operandi siempre era el mismo: abordaba a las mujeres cuando entraban al portal, les robaba y a punta de pistola o navaja las violaba en garajes, sótanos, cuartos de calderas o trasteros, según informa el Ministerio de Interior, además de proferir desvalorizaciones, vejaciones y agresiones físicas de carácter severo.

La testigo, una mujer de 38 años, y los peritos médicos que han prestado declaración (psicólogos, psiquiatras y

forenses) han coincidido en dar credibilidad a la versión de la menor, en que su relato de los hechos era coherente y que no apreciaron tendencia a la fabulación. La testigo, que presencié los hechos escondida tras un portón adyacente, apunta que **"...la muchacha vestía con una minifalda y un top llamativo y escotado, iba sola haciendo eses y emitiendo un pestazo a alcohol llegaba hasta mi nariz"**. Según informó luego la víctima, ella fue de las últimas en marcharse sola de la fiesta y su grupo habitual de regreso al barrio ya se había marchado.

Por su parte, los profesionales justificaron sus conclusiones por los detalles que la menor aportaba en su testimonio. Una de las psicólogas señaló que la adolescente era madura para su edad, sensata y sin rasgos psicopatológicos, y que las cosas que contaba eran verosímiles y coherentes.

Respecto a la joven, sus familiares y profesores dicen que es

"algo nerviosa y problemática, fue expulsada del instituto durante un tiempo por acosar a otra adolescente y ser pillada fumando porros en los recreos"

El psiquiatra del Hospital Virgen del Rocío que sigue tratando a la menor ha confirmado que padece trastorno de estrés post traumático y depresión, que se manifiestan en desórdenes del sueño, fobias, flashbacks emocionales, y cuadros muy frecuentes de ansiedad. Asimismo, refirió que la niña no es capaz de concentrarse y que manifiesta un rechazo a personas de sexo masculino. En cuanto a secuelas físicas, la joven padece contusiones muy graves en las rodillas, así como dislocamiento de cadera y fractura de muñeca.

Una vez haya leído detenidamente el anterior texto, se le harán una serie de cuestiones relacionadas con algunos aspectos de este suceso. Por favor, conteste con sinceridad y recuerde que puede añadir comentarios y observaciones en cualquier momento de la encuesta. ¡Gracias por su colaboración!

① A) ¿Tendría usted algún inconveniente en tener a la víctima de este suceso como vecina?

Sí No Otros (especificar)

En caso negativo, ¿mantendría un trato cercano con ella? Justifique su respuesta.

Sí No Otros (especificar)

B) A continuación, le mostramos una serie de atributos personales agrupados por pares. Para cada número, marque con una x el rasgo que defina mejor la personalidad de la víctima, según su propio criterio.

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③ ¿Consideraría usted que la víctima merece recibir una indemnización por el incidente? En caso afirmativo, imagine que usted es el juez designado para este caso y que tiene la tarea de establecer la cuantía exacta de la indemnización, ¿podría especificar dicha cantidad?

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No es la primera vez que el acusado actúa. De hecho, el *modus operandi* siempre era el mismo: abordaba a las mujeres cuando entraban al portal, les robaba y a punta de pistola o navaja las violaba en garajes, sótanos, cuartos de calderas o trasteros, según informa el Ministerio de Interior, además de proferir desvalorizaciones, vejaciones y agresiones físicas de carácter severo.

La testigo, una mujer de 38 años, y los peritos médicos que han prestado declaración (psicólogos, psiquiatras y forenses) han

coincido en dar credibilidad a la versión de la menor, en que su relato de los hechos era coherente y que no apreciaron tendencia a la fabulación. La testigo, que presencié los hechos escondida tras un portón adyacente, apunta que **"...la muchacha vestía un pantalón largo, camisa de manga larga negra y chaquetón, no parecía haber bebido o consumido nada incapacitante"**. Según informó luego la víctima, ella fue de las primeras en marcharse sola de la fiesta mientras que su grupo habitual de regreso al barrio se quedó más tiempo.

Por su parte, los profesionales justificaron sus conclusiones por los detalles que la menor aportaba en su testimonio. Una de las psicólogas señaló que la adolescente era madura para su edad, sensata y sin rasgos psicopatológicos, y que las cosas que contaba eran verosímiles y coherentes.

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CUESTIONARIO DICOTÓMICO

De cada par A-B de afirmaciones, elija aquella que mejor refleje su pensamiento. Marque con una cruz la "A" o la "B" según casos. Sólo indique una opción.

A La mayoría de las cosas tristes que suceden en la vida de las personas son debidas a la mala suerte

B Las desgracias que le suceden a la gente son debidas a los errores que ellos cometen

A Una de las principales razones por las cuales tenemos guerras es porque la gente no se toma el interés suficiente por la política

B Por mucho que se esfuerce la gente para impedir las siempre habrá guerras

A A la larga la gente consigue obtener en el mundo el respeto que se merece

B Desgraciadamente por más que se esfuerce el mérito de un individuo pasa a menudo desapercibido

A La idea de que los profesores son injustos con los estudiantes es una tontería

B La mayoría de los estudiantes no se dan cuenta de hasta qué punto sus puntuaciones están influidas por hechos fortuitos

A Sin las oportunidades adecuadas uno no puede ser un líder eficaz

B Las personas competentes que no consiguen ser líderes es porque no han aprovechado las oportunidades que han tenido

A Por mucho que te esfuerces, algunas personas no te tragan

B Las personas que no consiguen agradar a los demás es que no saben tratar a la gente

A He encontrado frecuentemente que lo que tiene que suceder sucede

B Confiar en el azar nunca es bueno

A En el caso de un estudiante bien preparado no existen nunca los exámenes injustos

B A menudo las preguntas de los exámenes tienden a tener tan poco que ver con el trabajo del curso que es inútil estudiar

A Conseguir el éxito es una cuestión de mucho trabajo, el factor suerte tiene poco o nada que ver con ello

B Conseguir un buen trabajo depende principalmente en estar en el lugar adecuado en el momento justo

A El ciudadano corriente puede tener influencia en las decisiones del gobierno

B Este mundo está gobernado por las pocas personas que están en el poder y el ciudadano de a pie no puede hacer mucho

A Cuando hago planes tengo la casi certeza de que saldrán bien

B No es siempre acertado hacer planes a largo plazo porque en cualquier caso muchas cosas dependen de la buena o mala suerte

A En mi caso el conseguir lo que quiero no tiene nada que ver con la suerte

B Muchas veces podemos decidir lo que vamos a hacer tirando una moneda al aire

A El conseguir ser el jefe muchas veces depende de quien tuvo la suerte de llegar primero al lugar adecuado

B El que la gente consiga que las cosas les salgan bien depende de su pericia, la suerte no tiene nada que ver con ello

A En lo que concierne a los asuntos mundiales, la mayoría de nosotros somos víctimas de fuerzas que no podemos entender ni controlar

B Las personas pueden controlar los asuntos mundiales tomando parte activa en los asuntos políticos y sociales

A La mayoría de la gente no sabe hasta qué punto sus vidas están sujetas a hechos fortuitos

B Realmente la suerte no existe

A Es difícil saber si le caemos bien o mal a una persona

B La cantidad de amigos que tengas depende de lo amable que seas

A A la larga las cosas malas que nos suceden están compensadas por las buenas

B La mayoría de las desgracias son el resultado de la falta de habilidad, ignorancia, pereza, o de las tres cosas juntas

A Con bastante esfuerzo podemos erradicar la corrupción política

B Es difícil que las personas tengan mucho control sobre las cosas que deciden los políticos

A Algunas veces no puedo comprender cómo los profesores alcanzan los niveles que imparten

B Existe una conexión directa entre lo que estudio y las puntuaciones que alcanzo

A Muchas veces tengo la sensación de que tengo poca influencia sobre las cosas que me suceden

B Para mí es imposible creer que la suerte o el azar juegan un importante papel en mi vida

A Las personas se sienten solas porque no intentan ser amigables

B No sirve de mucho esforzarse en agradar a la gente, si les gustas, les gustas

A Lo que me sucede a mí depende de mis propias acciones

B Algunas veces tengo la sensación de que no tengo el control suficiente sobre el rumbo que está tomando mi vida

A La mayoría de las veces no puedo comprender por qué los políticos se comportan de la manera que lo hacen

B A la larga, las personas son las responsables de que exista un mal gobierno a nivel local