THE CAUSES OF LATENCY OF PARTICULAR CRIMES AGAINST MORALITY ([15])

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Abstract: This article resumes the results of research on the latency of particular crimes against morality (rape, sexual violence, and sexual abuse, procuring and soliciting prostitution, manufacturing of child pornography). Among others, in order to collect data from the respondents (size of a sample — 153 male representatives and female representatives above 18 years old) an explorative method of questionnaire has been used. Main issues explored were the following: personal experience with these types of crimes (how, where, when, etc.); willingness to report these crimes to the police (why yes or no, when, under which circumstances, how to increase their willingness, etc.); motivation for cooperation with the police; effectiveness of crime detection and clarification (criminal police service, investigative service, national police organisation); main problems related to crime detection and clarification; estimations of the level of latency of particular crimes against morality and real criminal rate.

THE GROUNDS FOR RESEARCH

Taking into account the opinions of many experts in policing, a 'moral crime' is considered a latent crime. Having analysed the criminal situation, one may state that the causes of this phenomenon often come from a perpetrator who nearly always tries to avoid prosecution, but also from a victim who cannot, does not know, or does not want to report a crime to the police ([16]). Analogically, crime statistics do not provide enough information about this phenomenon. The abovementioned facts were indirect reasons to launch the research titled 'Problems during detection and clarification of particular moral crimes'. Moreover, any relevant information on research with the same or similar topic in the EU area has not been found by the research team.

The applied research focused on the detection and clarification respectively, investigation of particular crimes against morality (rape, sexual abuse, sexual violence, procuring and soliciting prostitution, manufacturing of child pornography) and more specifically on a police reality (processes, determinants and constructs of detection and clarification) (Lison, 2012). A prevailing intention to publish the results of the first research phase in this scientific study is to provoke a discussion on this issue and share information with EU researchers.

([15]) This designation for sexual and sex-related crimes follows the current Slovakian penal legislation (note from the editors).

([16]) It was found, for example, one case, in 10 investigation files, where a mother knew about the sexual abuse of her child but, due to several reasons (existential, emotional, etc.), did not report the abuse to the police..

STUDY RESULTS

Data collection in the first phase of research was mainly provided through the questionnaire (from November 2013 to March 2014). The sample consisted of 153 respondents between the age of 18 and 50 (nearly 84 % of them were from the age group 18–30, 13 % from the age group 30–50 and 3 % above 50). In terms of gender, 63 % of male representatives and 37 % of female representatives participated in the survey ([17]).

First of all, a personal experience with these crimes was the main issue. Some 79 % of respondents denied personal experience, 20 % answered positively (1 % do not know or do not want to answer). Then, they were asked about the type of crime with personal experience (the most frequent type of crime was rape, sexual abuse and sexual violence).

Figure 1 — **Personal experience with particular crimes against morality**
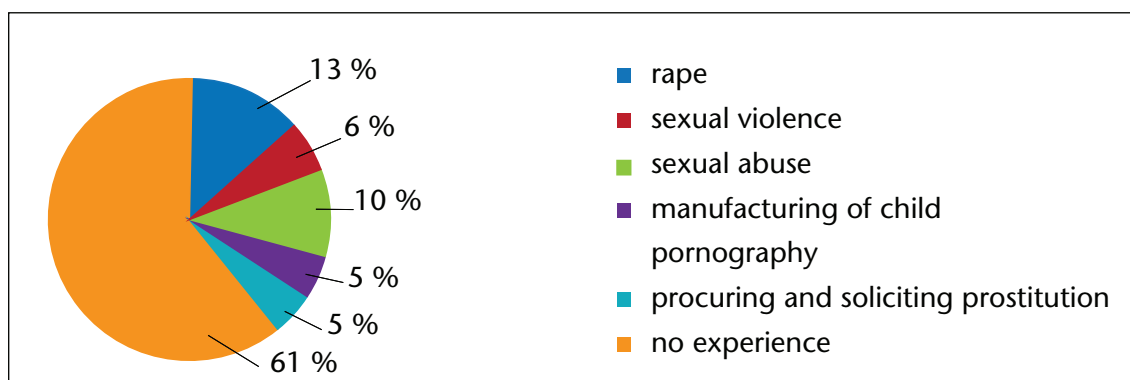
In addition to this, the circumstances under which they met with these types of crime were another issue. The survey results revealed that 24 % of respondents had indirect experience with particular crimes against morality from the mass media, an educational process; as members of the security services (17 %); from their relatives, friends, neighbours, acquaintances (12 %). Paradoxically, only two respondents claimed that they were victims of some of these crimes and four respondents were witnesses (nobody confessed to certain crimes).

It was also found that nearly three quarters of respondents reported a crime to the police (or eventually would report if they had an opportunity to do so). Less than 10 % claimed that they had not reported a crime or would have reported a crime and 13 % of them hesitated. Moreover, information on the decision-making process about reporting a crime (how long it took or would take) has been important. More than 70 % of respondents claimed that they had reported a crime just after it had been committed, 17 % after a certain period of time (finding the courage to do it, dealing with it, etc.) ([18]), more than 4 % denied the possibility to report a crime to the police, and more than 9 % hesitated.

Logically the reasons why they reported (would report) a crime to the police (respondents had a multiple choice) was another issue. The most frequent answers were: to ensure a fair and accurate trial (70 %); to help protect the victim from a criminal offender (60 %); angry that it was not ethical or correct, respectively nobody deserves to be treated like that (46 %). Nearly 31 % indicated that the reason for reporting a crime was their fear that the perpetrator could continue to commit crimes and cause harm to a potential victim. Less than 2 % presented other reasons for reporting a crime such as respecting legal duty, and more than 6 % did not find any reasons for reporting a crime.

([17]) Research also focused on other characteristics of respondents (besides the age and gender) e.g. on residential living, settlement size or population.

([18]) It often took them more than 1 week and less than half the year.

Figure 2 — **Reasons for reporting a crime**
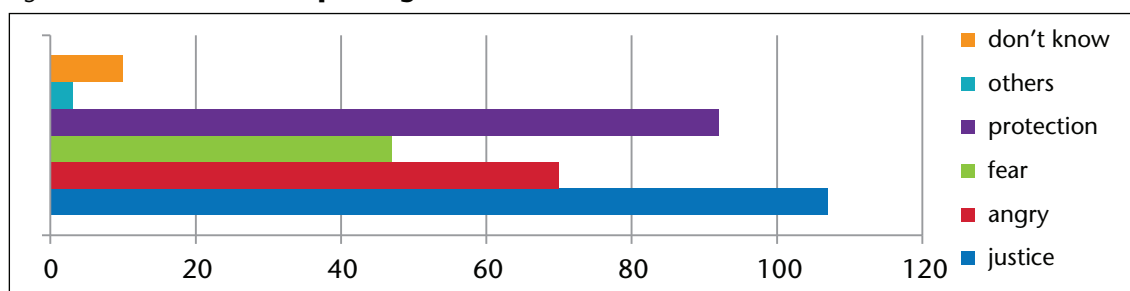
On the other hand, the reasons why they (would refuse) refused to report a crime to the police have belonged to the object of the research. The respondents could choose from various parallel alternatives or present their own opinions. Most than a half of them (51 %) claimed that they (would report) reported a crime under any circumstances ([19]). The most frequent reasons for not reporting the crime were: fear of revenge from the perpetrator; doubts (I was not sure what actually happened; whether a victim wanted to report it, etc.); worry about potential problems (confrontation with the perpetrator and his relatives; visiting law enforcement institutions, etc.); it was viewed as a private matter; ignorance; lack of confidence in the police; and so on.

Figure 3 — **Reasons for not reporting a crime**
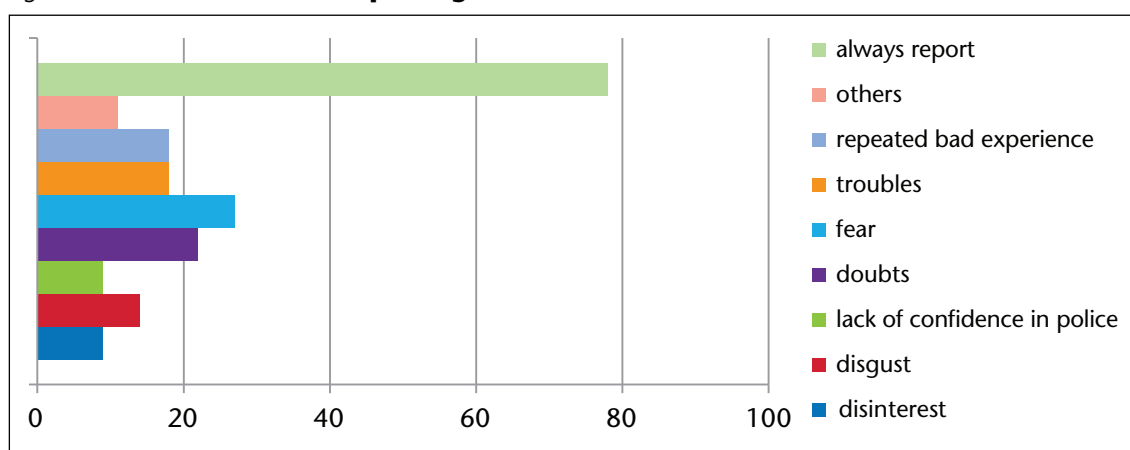
The task was to discover how to increase public participation in this field ([20]). Some 65 % of respondents believed that the police could improve the situation themselves (quick solution of the case, adequate punishment), 33 % stressed a positive influence on public opinion (the importance of mutual cooperation; giving publicity to successful police work, etc.), more than 20 % of them referred to the importance of public education oriented on youth, and 19 % underlined the increase of trustworthiness of the police through its *depoliticisation*, joint proceedings of the police and the trials, elimination of bureaucracy in the trials and prosecutors, increase of the effectiveness of crime investigation; change public opinion on the police as 'fine collectors'; focusing on crime prevention instead of repression; elimination of corruption in the police.

([19]) Slovak law makes it illegal not to report certain types of crime (felonies and corruption).

([20]) As it was mentioned before, respondents could choose from various parallel alternatives, or present own opinions.

Figure 4 — **Motivation for cooperation with the police in this field**
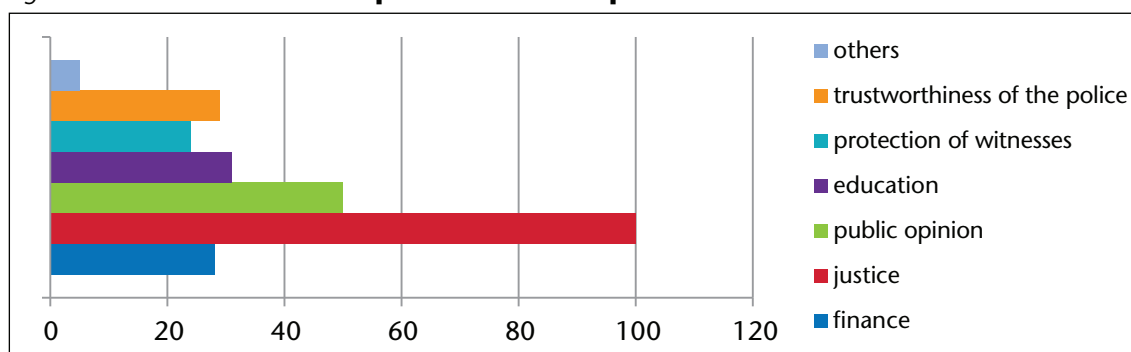
Working on the assumption that the effectiveness of the police activity during detection and investigation of these crimes could have a great impact on the level of their latency, it seemed to be useful to focus on it. In the survey, evaluation of police effectiveness (criminal police service, investigation service, and police in its entirety) was a partial task. As Figure 5 shows, there are still some imperfections in the police activity that should be eliminated.

Figure 5 — **Effectiveness of the police activity during detection and investigation of particular crimes against morality**
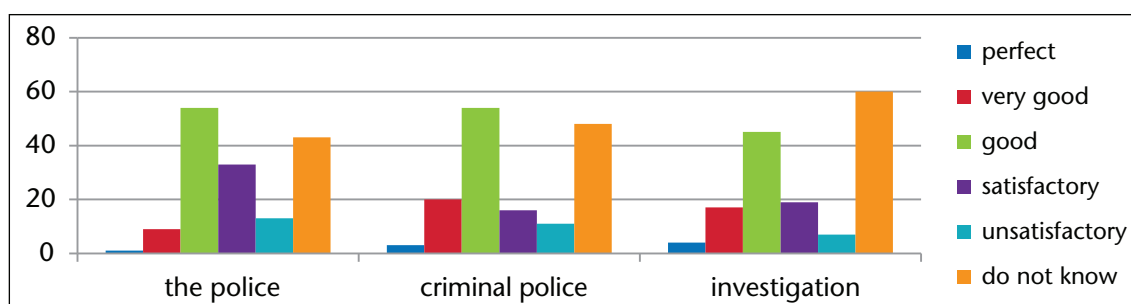
Thus, diagnosis of the most frequent problems during the detection and investigation of these crimes was the next ambition of the research team. As Figure 6 indicates, insufficient police management was considered the biggest issue during these processes (nearly 44 % of respondents) and it was followed by a low level of motivation that came from personal, financial, career or social reasons (41 %). Another relevant determinant (39 %) was a big workload (too many criminal cases, stressful time factor, responsibility, etc.).

Figure 6 — **Main problems during detection and investigation of particular crimes against morality**
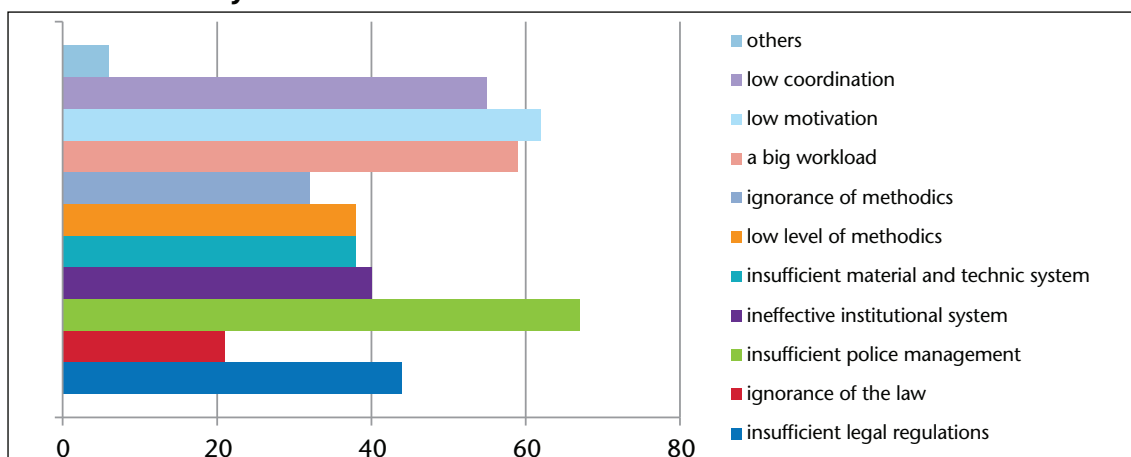
Figure 7 provides information about the estimate on latency of particular crimes against morality. The results from the survey show that the highest level of latency was linked to child pornography and pimping (1:21-50, it means that 1 revealed crime indicates more than 20 and less than 50 latent crimes). Such crimes as rape, sexual violence and sexual abuse reached significantly lower level of latency (1:6-10).

Figure 7 — **Estimate of the latency of particular crimes against morality**
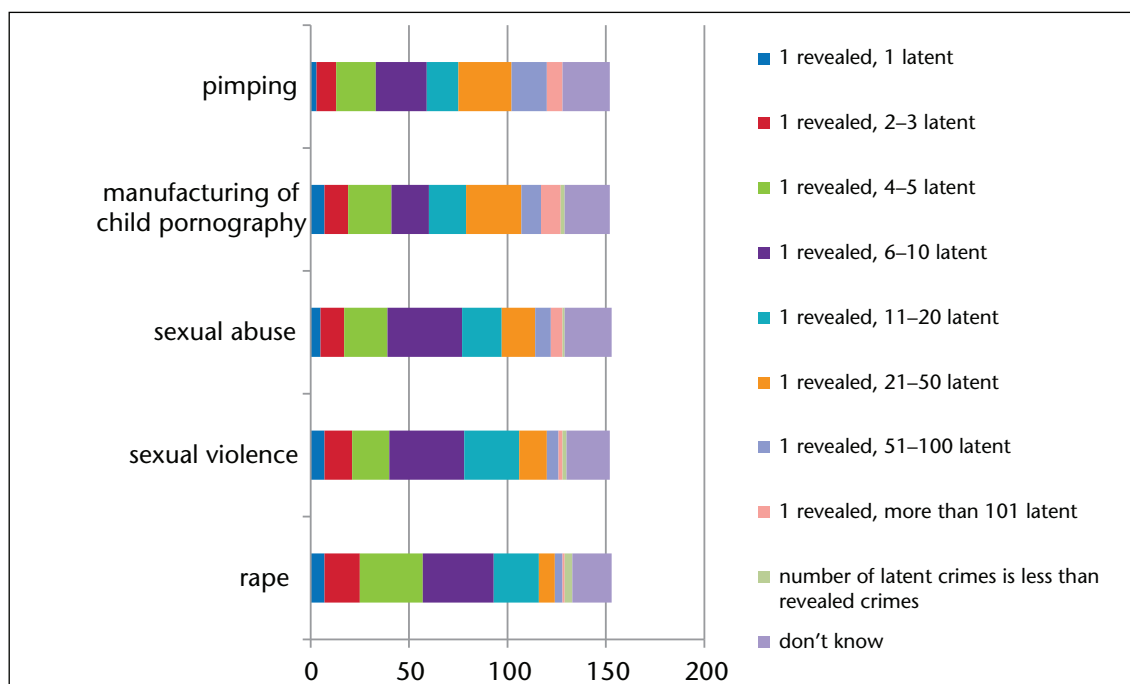
On the basis of these facts, it is possible to create a totally different concept of a real crime rate. For instance, in 2013 the police discovered 91 cases of rape and 45 of them were successfully clarified (investigated). Assuming that one revealed crime indicates more than 20 and less than 50 latent crimes (rape), the estimate of this crime would be 270–450 crimes (where 270 crimes is the lowest estimate and 450 is the highest estimate). Figure 8 provides information on an estimate of real (or potential) crime rates of particular crimes against morality; according to the results of the research (the latest crime figures with estimations have been compared).

Figure 8 — **Estimate of real (or potential) crime rates**
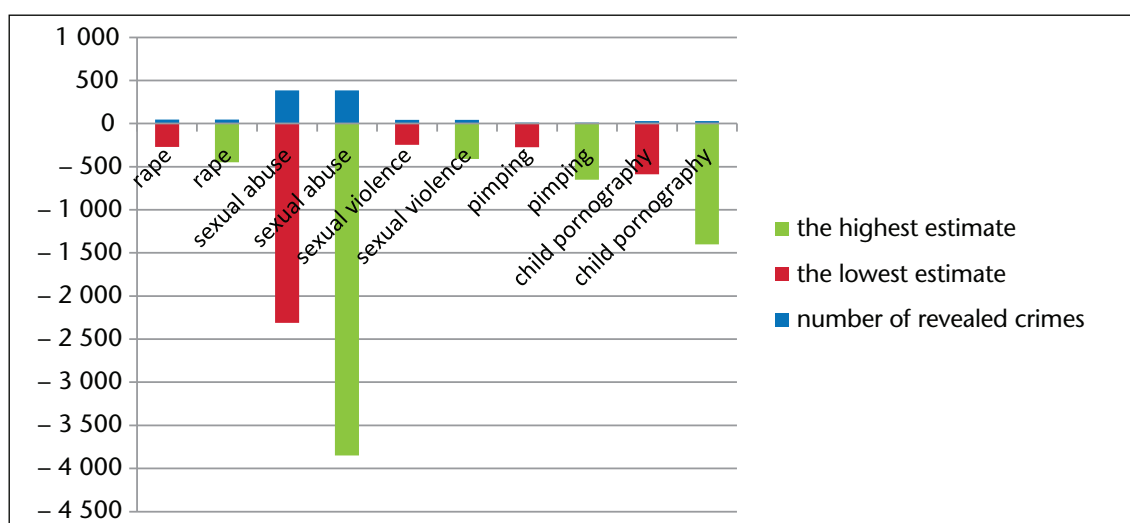
CONCLUSION

From the partial results of the survey, it follows that detection and investigation of particular crimes against morality is still ineffective and negatively influence the level of their latency. The goal of the research was to identify these problems and find some solutions. It is inevitable that an active approach of the police as well as mutual cooperation with the public were really functional. Moreover, cognition of the latency can bring undeniable benefits to competent bodies (legislative, executive and judicial).

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