

Title: The Role of Empathy in Justice Sensitivity
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Empathy is an important construct that includes empathic concern (an emotional aspect of empathy) and perspective taking (a cognitive component of empathy; Oliver, et al., 2018). Prior research has determined that the majority of adults deliberately avoid using empathy due to its cognitive and emotional costs (Cameron, et al., 2019). Additional research determined that individuals who practiced empathic concern were more willing to help others than those who practiced perspective taking (Oswald, 1996). In the context of the court system, significance has been found when investigating the effects of empathy manipulation on jurors (Haegerich, 2000). The purpose of the present study was to examine the role of empathy in individuals' justice sensitivity. One hundred and twenty-two (39 males, 83 females) participants who were enrolled in psychology courses from a community college volunteered to participate for course credit. Participants completed an online survey, which took approximately 20 minutes to complete. This survey also included asking participants to respond to a real-life court case (i.e., about Juan Rodrigues who is currently facing a charge of twenty years for "accidentally" leaving his twin children his car that resulted in their deaths). It was expected that subscales of empathy would be positively related to several perspectives of justice sensitivity, and that increased empathy for the defendant, compared to the victims, would be related to less severe charges. A majority of the hypotheses were supported. These results suggest that various types of empathy play a strong role in individuals' sensitivity to several aspects of justice.

References

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