

Review

Victim-offender mediation and reoffending

Background and objectives:

- Victim-offender mediation – VOM – is an optional meeting mediated by an impartial mediator.
- The VOM model was implemented nationwide in Denmark in 2010 after regional tests. The Danish model includes all types of offences and serves as a supplement, not an alternative, to a sanction.
- The current study examines the impact on the offender of having participated in mediation by looking at the rate of reoffending. The study also describes the typical crime cases – along with their offenders and victims – that form the basis of conflict mediation in Denmark.

Research design:

- The study is based on a natural experimental design.
- The treatment group consists of cases in which VOM has taken place (1,340 cases in total), while the control group comprised cases in which the offender agreed to participate in VOM but the victim subsequently refused to participate (546 cases).
- The study applies regression analysis and propensity score matching.

Findings:

- Descriptive analyses show that despite the natural experimental design there are a few differences between the treatment and control groups. The treatment group consists of younger offenders than the control group.
- Some minor differences between the two groups are found as regards the crime committed and the sentence imposed.
- A number of regression analyses are conducted in order to assess whether an impact can be found for subgroups of offenders or by using different criteria for reoffending. However, none of the analyses point to an impact of having participated in VOM. A similar conclusion is reached by using propensity score matching.
- The study suggests that participation in VOM does not have a crime prevention effect. This might be explained by the rather limited scope of VOM compared to other restorative justice models like conferences as VOM does not involve family members or others who might be able to help the offender desist from crime. Other possible explanations are also discussed.

