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Exploring Victim Rights and Support Systems in Osaka, Japan: Challenges and Solutions

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of existing victim support systems in Osaka, Japan, and to identify the primary challenges these systems face in meeting the needs of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and discrimination. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the research incorporates a literature review and interviews with key organizations including Zoe Japan, Amnesty International Japan, and Human Rights Now Japan. Additionally, using a quantitative approach, the study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of existing victim support systems in Osaka, Japan, and to identify the primary challenges these systems face in meeting the needs of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and discrimination. However, due to data limitation (insufficient data to geographical scope (Osaka, Japan), the analysis was generalized to Japan. The findings reveal significant barriers, including cultural stigma, limited resources, and insufficient inter-agency coordination, which impede victims' access to justice and support. This paper proposes actionable recommendations for enhancing victim support frameworks, with the ultimate goal of strengthening human rights protections within Osaka's evolving urban landscape.

Keywords

Victim Rights, Crime Victim Support, Japan, Osaka, Victimology, International Frameworks

1. Introduction

Osaka, Japan's third most populated city, is a bustling metropolis known for its rich cultural heritage, economic significance, and vibrant urban life (Japan Guide, 2020). Despite its progressive image, Osaka, like many major cities, grapples with

significant human rights challenges, particularly in supporting and protecting victims of various crimes. The complexities of urban life, combined with deep-seated cultural norms, create an environment where certain types of victimization—such as domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and discrimination—are both prevalent and difficult to combat (Hendry, 2015).

Japan's legal and social systems have traditionally been viewed as rigid, with strong cultural influences affecting the implementation and effectiveness of laws (Johnson, 2007). In Osaka, the intersection of modern legal frameworks with traditional social norms presents unique challenges in upholding human rights (Johnson, 2007). The city has made strides in developing support systems for victims, but these efforts are often hampered by limited resources, social stigma, and insufficient inter-agency coordination (Johnson, 2007).

The research problem addressed in this paper is the persistent gap between the legal provisions for victim support in Osaka and the actual effectiveness of these systems in providing comprehensive assistance. Many victims lack access to adequate resources, facing social, cultural, and institutional barriers that prevent them from fully recovering and reintegrating. Victim support services are grounded in the concept of *victim rights*, which refers to the entitlements of individuals harmed by criminal acts. These rights emphasize victims' needs to be treated with respect, protected from further harm, and provided fair access to justice, information, and support services (Dignan, 2005). Ensuring these rights is crucial to mitigating secondary victimization and validating victims' voices within the justice system (Dignan, 2005).

The primary objective of this study is to explore the specific challenges faced by victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and discrimination in accessing justice and support. These crimes are particularly impactful due to the severe psychological and physical trauma they inflict, compounded by cultural stigmas that discourage reporting. This study also seeks to analyze existing support mechanisms, assess their effectiveness, and suggest improvements to create more comprehensive victim support.

For example, domestic violence and sexual assault are often underreported in Japan due to cultural stigmas and fears of social ostracism (Dussich, 2001). Victims of these crimes experience immense psychological and physical trauma, made worse by inadequate support services. Human trafficking, while less visible, remains a serious issue, with victims often trapped in exploitative conditions and unable to seek help (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Discrimination, particularly against minority groups and foreigners, also poses significant challenges, affecting victims' ability to access essential services and integrate into society (Arudou, 2015).

By examining these issues through the lens of victim rights and support systems, this paper aims to highlight the existing mechanisms available to aid victims, evaluate their effectiveness, and identify key areas for improvement. The insights gained from this study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the current

state of victim support in Osaka and suggest practical strategies to enhance these systems, ensuring that all victims receive the justice and support they deserve.

This paper covers several critical areas related to victim rights and support systems in Osaka. The discussion is organized into key sections that collectively provide a detailed analysis of the subject:

- **Key Challenges to Upholding Human Rights in Osaka:** This section delves into the specific obstacles that hinder the effective protection of victim rights in the city. It examines legal barriers, social stigma, resource limitations, and coordination issues among various support agencies.

- **Existing Victim Support Systems in Osaka:** Here, the paper describes the main support systems available to victims in Osaka, highlighting the roles and contributions of key organizations such as Zoe Japan, Amnesty International Japan, and Human Rights Now Japan. Each organization's mission, services, and impact are discussed in detail.

- **Synthesis—Challenges Faced by Victims in Accessing Justice and Support:** This section explores the barriers that victims encounter when seeking justice and support. Issues such as accessibility, awareness, trust in institutions, and cultural barriers are analyzed to understand the difficulties victims face.

- **Interviews with Key Organizations:** Insights from interviews with representatives of Zoe Japan, Amnesty International Japan, and Human Rights Now Japan are presented. These interviews provide valuable perspectives on the challenges and successes of supporting victims in Osaka.

- **Quantifying Japanese Victim Rights:** To focus the analysis on demographic and socio-economic factors relevant to victimization in Japan, key descriptive variables such as gender, area of residence, parental status, occupation, and marital status were selected. The datasets were filtered to extract statistics and proportions for these variables, ensuring that the analysis was both precise and relevant to the study objectives.

The methodology used in this paper includes a comprehensive review of existing literature, an analysis of legal frameworks, and interviews with key representatives from organizations dedicated to victim support. The interviews with Zoe Japan, Amnesty International Japan, and Human Rights Now Japan provide firsthand insights into the challenges and successes of their work, enriching the analysis with practical examples and expert opinions. By combining these qualitative methods, the paper aims to offer a holistic view of the state of victim rights and support systems in Osaka, identifying actionable solutions to improve protection and support for victims. Additionally, the study incorporates a quantitative approach to evaluate victim demographics and satisfaction levels. Data was sourced from the National Police Agency of Japan's reports, focusing on victimization trends over the past five years, with an emphasis on 2023 (National Police Agency of Japan, 2023a; 2023b). Descriptive variables such as gender, area of residence, parental status, occupation, and marital status were analyzed to understand the socio-economic characteristics of victims. The datasets were filtered to

extract relevant statistics and proportions, ensuring a precise and relevant analysis. This quantitative methodology provides robust insights into the patterns of victimization and the effectiveness of support systems, offering a complementary perspective to the qualitative findings.

2. Literature Review

The protection of victim rights has increasingly become a focus of criminal justice reform, with the recognition that victims of crime deserve specific entitlements to ensure their dignity, safety, and participation in legal processes (Dignan, 2005). As Dignan (2005) characterizes, victim rights refer to the entitlements of individuals harmed by criminal acts, ensuring they are treated with respect, protected from further harm, and granted fair access to justice, information, and support services. Historically, victims were often overlooked within judicial systems and considered peripheral to the main proceedings between the state and the accused (Rock, 2004). The evolution toward recognizing victim rights represents a critical shift from retributive justice, centered on punishment, to restorative justice, which seeks to address the needs and rights of victims (Young & Stein, 2004).

2.1. International Frameworks for Victim Rights

Various international standards and frameworks aim to ensure that victims of crime receive adequate protection, support, and access to justice. One of the primary international instruments is the United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (1985), which was a landmark document in establishing international standards for victim rights. This declaration advocates for access to justice, fair treatment, and the provision of financial compensation for victims who have suffered significant bodily injury or impairment of physical or mental health due to serious crimes (United Nations General Assembly, 1985). It also mandates that victims should receive necessary material, medical, psychological, and social assistance through governmental, voluntary, and community-based means (Miers, 2014).

In addition, frameworks like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) emphasize the importance of protecting women from violence and ensuring their access to support services (Council of Europe, 2011). The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol), mandates comprehensive measures to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute offenders, emphasizing the need for victim protection services such as shelters, counseling, and legal assistance (UNODC, 2015). Similarly, the European Union's Victims' Rights Directive (2012) underscores the right to protection, privacy, and practical support, focusing on reducing secondary victimization (Directive 2012/29/EU, 2012).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 (Gender Equal-

ity) and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), reflect a global commitment to strengthening victim support mechanisms. These goals call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls and the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, signaling the international community's dedication to justice and victim protection (Daly, 2014).

2.2. Key Entitlements Under Victim Rights

Victim rights frameworks generally emphasize several key entitlements that safeguard victims' physical, psychological, and legal well-being. Access to justice, protection, and participation are foundational elements aimed at addressing victims' immediate and ongoing needs. Studies demonstrate that access to protective measures, such as restraining orders, is crucial for victims' immediate safety and emotional recovery (Kelly & Lovett, 2010). The Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention and other frameworks highlight that victims should be informed about legal proceedings and have access to necessary restitution and support services, emphasizing the importance of protection, privacy, and emotional support (Council of Europe, 2011).

2.3. Impact and Challenges of Victim Rights Frameworks

Research indicates that recognizing and institutionalizing victim rights positively impacts victims' experiences within the justice system by reducing secondary victimization and encouraging cooperation (Walklate, 2007). Secondary victimization, or retraumatization through interactions with criminal justice processes, often results from insensitive treatment, lack of privacy, or unclear procedural information (Campbell & Raja, 1999). Victim-centered approaches, as supported by frameworks like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) guidelines, facilitate victims' emotional recovery and enhance their perception of being respected and heard within legal processes (Daly, 2014).

Despite these advancements, challenges remain in fully realizing these frameworks' goals. Studies reveal discrepancies in implementing victim rights across countries, with resources, political will, and judicial training affecting the consistency of support services (Hoyle & Zedner, 2007). Balancing prosecutorial objectives with victim-centered practices is difficult, sometimes undermining the effectiveness of these frameworks (Pemberton & Groenhuijsen, 2012).

2.4. Japan's Policies and Cultural Barriers

In Japan, several laws aim to protect victim rights and provide support services, though their effectiveness varies due to ongoing implementation challenges. The Basic Act on Crime Victims (2004) represents Japan's commitment to supporting victims, outlining the state's responsibility to ensure victims receive appropriate care (Clack, 2003). The Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims (2001) allows courts to issue restraining orders and establishes shelters and counseling services, promoting public awareness of domestic violence

issues. Similarly, the Child Abuse Prevention Law (2000) mandates reporting suspected abuse and provides for child counseling centers, and the Act on Punishment of Activities Relating to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (1999) criminalizes child exploitation and provides protection for child victims.

Cultural and systemic barriers impact the effectiveness of victim protections, particularly in societies where cultural norms may discourage crime reporting. For example, in Japan, community harmony is often prioritized over individual grievances, leading to underreporting and reluctance to seek support in cases of sexual violence and human trafficking (Yokoyama & Koketsu, 2019). Research shows that limited interagency cooperation and uneven funding further restrict the enforcement of these laws, meaning victims may not receive the full support intended by policy frameworks (Karmen, 2010; Matsuo, 2020). From interviews conducted with various organizations, it has become evident that even when laws exist, they are only as effective as their implementation and the cultural environment within which they operate.

3. Key Challenges to Upholding Human Rights in Osaka

3.1. Legal System Barriers

The legal system in Japan, including Osaka, presents several barriers that impede the protection and upholding of victim rights. These barriers are rooted in the complexities of legal procedures, the rigidity of the judicial system, and gaps within the legislative framework. One significant issue is the complexity and length of legal procedures. Victims seeking justice often face prolonged court cases, which can be emotionally and financially draining (Matsui, 2011: pp. 54-95). The burden of proof in criminal cases is high, requiring substantial evidence for prosecution, which can be particularly challenging for crimes such as domestic violence and sexual assault, where evidence is often less tangible. The requirement for concrete proof and the meticulous nature of the legal process can discourage victims from pursuing justice, leading to underreporting and a lack of resolution for many cases (Johnson, 2002: pp. 9-15). Another critical barrier is the lack of victim-centered approaches within the legal system. Historically, the Japanese judicial system has focused more on the rights of the accused rather than the needs of the victim (Johnson, 2002: pp. 9-15). This can manifest in court proceedings where victims feel re-traumatized by having to recount their experiences multiple times in a public setting (Johnson, 2002: pp. 9-15). As discovered through the interviews, the limited use of protective measures, such as restraining orders and witness protection programs, leaves victims vulnerable to further harm.

3.2. Gaps in the Legislative Framework

The legislative framework itself has gaps that need addressing. While Japan has implemented laws to protect victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, enforcement remains inconsistent. For example, the enforcement

of the Act on the Prevention of Spousal Violence and the Protection of Victims often depends on local authorities' willingness and ability to act, leading to variability in protection across different regions, including Osaka (Johnson, 2002). There is also a lack of comprehensive legislation addressing the needs of all victims, such as those of discrimination and hate crimes, which can leave certain groups without adequate legal recourse (Johnson, 2002).

3.3. Cultural and Societal Attitudes

Cultural and societal attitudes significantly impact the willingness and ability of victims to seek help and justice (Dussich, 2001). In Japan, traditional values often emphasize harmony and family honor, which can lead to a reluctance to report crimes such as domestic violence and sexual assault (Dussich, 2001). The social stigma surrounding victims of crime, particularly women, can be severe (Dussich, 2001). Victims of sexual assault, for instance, may face victim-blaming attitudes that question their behavior and choices rather than focusing on the perpetrator's actions (Dussich, 2001). This societal tendency to blame victims rather than support them can discourage individuals from coming forward (Dussich, 2001). Moreover, the shame associated with being a victim can lead to isolation and a lack of support from family and friends, further exacerbating the victim's trauma (Dussich, 2001). The cultural emphasis on privacy and the reluctance to involve external parties in personal matters also plays a role (Dussich, 2001). Many victims prefer to endure their suffering in silence rather than seek help, fearing public exposure and social ostracism (Dussich, 2001). From my interview with organizations that work strongly with low-income individuals, this is particularly prevalent in cases of domestic violence, where the cultural imperative to maintain family integrity can outweigh the individual's need for safety and justice (Matsui, 2011: pp. 54-95).

3.4. Resource Limitations in Victim Support Services

The interviewers mentioned the lack of adequate funding and resources for victim support services is a significant challenge in Osaka. Support services, including shelters, counseling centers, and legal aid, are often underfunded and overstretched, unable to meet the demand for their services. This was mentioned both in news reports and during interviews. Shelters for victims of domestic violence and trafficking often have limited capacity and cannot accommodate all who seek refuge (Johnson, 2020: pp. 5-15). These shelters also face challenges in providing comprehensive services, such as long-term housing, job training, and mental health support, which are essential for victims' recovery and reintegration into society (Johnson, 2020: pp. 5-15). The shortage of such facilities means that many victims find themselves without safe accommodation, making it difficult to escape abusive environments (Matsui, 2011: pp. 54-95). Counseling and psychological support services are other areas where resource limitations are evident, especially due to the understanding that family is where you share your problems (Johnson,

2020: pp. 5-15). Victims of crime often require extensive mental health support to cope with the trauma they have experienced (Johnson, 2020: pp. 5-15). However, the availability of such services is limited, and wait times can be long. During my time in Osaka and Kyoto, I realized that I didn't find any psychological centers with English signs, which means it can be difficult to find for foreign victims. Additionally, specialized counseling for specific types of trauma, such as that experienced by sexual assault or trafficking victims, is not always available. Legal aid services are also insufficient. Many victims cannot afford private legal representation and rely on public defenders or pro bono services. However, the availability of such services is limited, and victims may not receive the legal support they need to navigate the complexities of the justice system effectively.

3.5. Coordination Issues among Support Agencies

Effective support for victims requires seamless coordination among various agencies, including law enforcement, judicial bodies, social services, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). However, coordination issues often undermine the effectiveness of these support systems. Inter-agency cooperation can be hampered by bureaucratic obstacles and a lack of clear communication channels. For example, law enforcement agencies do not always communicate effectively with social services, leading to situations where victims do not receive the necessary support after reporting a crime. Similarly, there is a lack of coordination between shelters and legal aid providers, leaving victims without comprehensive assistance. The fragmentation of services is another problem. Victims often need to navigate multiple agencies to receive the support they require, which can be confusing and overwhelming (Johnson, 2020: pp. 18-20). This fragmentation can result in victims falling through the cracks, particularly if they are unable to advocate for themselves effectively. A more integrated approach, where services are coordinated and streamlined, is essential to ensure that victims receive continuous and holistic support. Furthermore, there is often a lack of training and awareness among professionals involved in victim support (Johnson, 2020: pp. 5-15). During my interview with Amnesty International Japan, they shared how police officers, healthcare providers, and social workers are not always adequately trained to handle cases involving victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or trafficking sensitively and effectively. This lack of training can result in secondary victimization, where the victim's interactions with support services exacerbate their trauma rather than alleviate it.

In conclusion, upholding human rights and providing effective support to victims in Osaka faces several significant challenges. Legal barriers, social stigma, resource limitations, and coordination issues all contribute to the difficulties victims encounter in seeking justice and support. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes legal reforms, cultural change, increased funding for support services, and improved inter-agency coordination. Only through comprehensive and sustained efforts can the rights and needs of victims

be fully addressed and upheld in Osaka.

4. Existing Victim Support Systems in Osaka

Osaka, being a major urban center, has developed a range of support systems for victims of various crimes. These systems are a combination of government-run services and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work together to provide comprehensive assistance. Some important victim support systems are but not limited to shelters which provide safe havens for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, counseling centers which offer psychological support and trauma counseling for victims of violence and abuse, legal aid services which provide free or low-cost legal assistance to help victims navigate the judicial system. There is a hotline which operates 24/7 to offer immediate support and information to victims in crisis. They also lead advocacy and awareness programs which educate the public and advocate for policy changes to protect victim rights.

In my fieldwork, I had a chance to interview three different organizations that offer a diverse scope of activities, from legal support to education and awareness.

4.1. Zoe Japan[1]

Mission: Zoe Japan is dedicated to combating child trafficking and supporting its victims. Their mission is to rescue, rehabilitate, and reintegrate victims of trafficking, primarily focusing on women and children who have been exploited for sexual purposes or forced labor.

Services:
- **Rescue Operations:** Collaborating with law enforcement to identify and rescue victims from trafficking situations.
- **Shelters and Safe Houses:** Providing secure accommodations where victims can recover from their trauma.
- **Rehabilitation Programs:** Offering medical care, psychological counseling, and vocational training to help victims rebuild their lives.
- **Legal Assistance:** Helping victims navigate legal processes to obtain justice and compensation.

Impact: Zoe Japan has successfully rescued numerous victims from trafficking, providing them with the necessary support to recover and reintegrate into society. Their holistic approach ensures that victims receive comprehensive care, addressing their physical, emotional, and legal needs. By raising awareness and advocating for stronger anti-trafficking laws, Zoe Japan also contributes to broader systemic change.

4.2. Amnesty International Japan[2]

Mission: Amnesty International Japan focuses on advocating for human rights,

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[1]ZOE Japan English. "Home | End Child Trafficking | ZOE Japan." Accessed June 24, 2024. https://www.eng.gozoe.jp/.

[2]AMNESTY JAPAN. "Amnesty International Japan." n.d. https://www.amnesty.or.jp/.

including the rights of victims of crimes such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and discrimination. Their work involves legal advocacy, public awareness campaigns, and educational programs.

Services:

- **Advocacy Work:** Lobbying for legal reforms to protect victim rights and ensure justice for all.
- **Legal Assistance:** Providing pro bono legal support to victims to help them navigate the judicial system.
- **Educational Programs:** Conducting workshops and seminars to educate the public and professionals about human rights and victim support.

Impact: Amnesty International Japan has played a crucial role in bringing attention to the plight of victims and pushing for necessary legal changes. Their educational programs have increased awareness and understanding of victim rights among the general public and within professional circles. Their advocacy work has led to significant policy changes, improving the legal landscape for victims in Japan.

4.3. Human Rights Now Japan[3]

Mission: Human Rights Now Japan is committed to promoting and protecting human rights, with a particular focus on addressing discrimination and supporting victims of sexual violence. Their approach includes legal advocacy, direct support services, and public education.

Services:

- **Legal Advocacy:** Working to change discriminatory laws and practices and advocating for the rights of victims of sexual violence.
- **Support Services:** Providing counseling, legal assistance, and referral services to victims of sexual violence and discrimination.
- **Public Education:** Raising awareness about human rights issues and educating the public on the importance of supporting victims.

Impact: Human Rights Now Japan has made significant strides in addressing discrimination and supporting victims of sexual violence. Their legal advocacy has led to important changes in how sexual violence cases are handled, ensuring better protection and support for victims. Their direct support services have helped numerous individuals recover from their experiences and seek justice.

4.4. Effectiveness of Services

The victim support systems in Osaka have made notable progress in addressing the needs of victims, but there are still ongoing challenges.

Success Stories shared with me:

- **Zoe Japan** has successfully rescued and rehabilitated many victims of human

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[3]Human Rights Now Global Site—Human Rights Now (HRN) Is an International Human Rights NGO Based in Tokyo, Japan with UN Special Consultative Status. "Human Rights Now Global Site—Human Rights Now (HRN) is an international human rights NGO based in Tokyo, Japan with UN special consultative status." n.d. https://hrn.or.jp/eng/.

trafficking, providing them with the skills and support needed to rebuild their lives.

- **Amnesty International Japan** has achieved significant policy changes that enhance legal protections for victims, and their educational programs have increased public awareness.
- **Human Rights Now Japan** has effectively advocated for the rights of victims of sexual violence, leading to improved handling of such cases by law enforcement and judicial systems.

5. Synthesis—Challenges Faced by Victims in Accessing Justice and Support

Insights gained from interviews reveal the complex challenges victims face in accessing justice and support, highlighting obstacles such as accessibility, awareness, trust in institutions, and cultural barriers. These firsthand perspectives underscore the practical difficulties encountered by victims within Osaka's support systems, offering a nuanced understanding of the gaps in current victim services.

5.1. Accessibility Challenges in Victim Support Services

All interviewers shared with me that one of the primary challenges victims face in accessing justice and support services in Osaka is the issue of accessibility. Accessibility in victim support services refers to the ease with which victims can physically reach and navigate necessary resources, such as shelters, counseling centers, and legal aid offices (Yokoyama & Koketsu, 2019; Clack, 2003). It also encompasses procedural accessibility, which involves minimizing bureaucratic obstacles so victims can engage with support services and the legal system without undue complexity or delay (Yokoyama & Koketsu, 2019; Clack, 2003). Therefore, this encompasses both physical and procedural barriers that hinder victims from obtaining the help they need. As shared from the interview, many support services, such as shelters, counseling centers, and legal aid offices, are located in urban areas that are not easily accessible to everyone, particularly those living in remote or suburban regions. For instance, a victim of domestic violence in a rural area has to travel long distances to reach the nearest shelter or support center, a journey that can be both time-consuming and dangerous. Furthermore, victims with disabilities face additional challenges, as many facilities are not adequately equipped to accommodate their needs. This includes the lack of wheelchair access, inadequate signage for the visually impaired, and the absence of interpreters for the hearing impaired. The bureaucratic nature of the Japanese legal system can be daunting for victims. The process of filing a complaint, gathering evidence, and attending court hearings involves numerous steps that can be overwhelming, particularly for those without legal knowledge or resources. For example, victims of sexual assault need to undergo multiple interviews and medical examinations to provide sufficient evidence for their case, each interaction potentially re-traumatizing them. Additionally, the limited availability of legal aid means that many

victims cannot afford professional legal assistance, leaving them to navigate the complex legal procedures on their own.

5.2. Awareness and Outreach

Another significant challenge shared with me is the lack of awareness about available support services and legal rights. Awareness and outreach refer to the availability of clear, accessible information about support services, which is often limited, leaving many victims unaware of their rights or the resources available to them (Karmen, 2010; Matsuo, 2020). This gap is especially problematic as government materials are frequently presented in formal, bureaucratic language, making it difficult for victims to understand or access necessary support (Karmen, 2010; Matsuo, 2020). Additionally, all interviewers shared that many victims are simply unaware of the resources that exist to help them, which prevents them from seeking assistance. Information about support services is often not widely disseminated especially when it comes to youth. For example, while there are hotlines and shelters available for victims of domestic violence, many individuals do not know how to access these resources. This is particularly true for non-Japanese residents or tourists who are familiar with the local language and services. Additionally, the information that is available does not be in a victim-friendly format. Government websites and informational pamphlets are often written in formal, bureaucratic language that can be difficult for laypeople to understand. There is often insufficient outreach to vulnerable populations. For instance, migrant workers, who are at high risk of exploitation and trafficking, do not receive adequate information about their rights and available support services due to language barriers and social isolation. Moreover, awareness campaigns and educational programs about victim rights and support services are often limited in scope and fail to effectively reach the communities that need them most. Many individuals interviewed were Japanese speakers, and numerous human rights organizations lack English-speaking staff. As shared by these organizations, awareness and advocacy efforts are primarily directed toward Japanese citizens rather than non-citizens due to the shortage of English-speaking personnel.

5.3. Low Trust in Legal and Social Institutions

Trust in institutions refers to victims' confidence in legal and social support systems, which can be undermined by perceived bias and previous negative experiences, especially for marginalized groups (Walklate, 2007). When victims encounter dismissive or insensitive treatment, they may feel that institutions are unsupportive or even hostile, which discourages them from seeking help in the future (Walklate, 2007; Hoyle & Zedner, 2007). Mistrust of legal and social institutions is a pervasive issue that deters many victims from seeking justice and support. This mistrust can stem from previous negative experiences, perceived bias, or fear of not being believed. Victims who have had negative interactions with police, healthcare providers, or social workers are less likely to trust these institutions in

the future. For example, a victim of sexual assault who was treated dismissively by police officers or faced invasive questioning without sensitivity is reluctant to report future incidents. Such experiences contribute to a perception that the system is unsupportive or even hostile to victims. There is also a widespread perception that legal and social institutions are biased, particularly against marginalized groups. For instance, non-Japanese victims feel that they are treated unfairly compared to Japanese nationals, believing that their cases are not taken seriously or that they are less likely to receive adequate support. Similarly, victims from LGBTQ+ communities may fear discrimination and lack of understanding from support services. Many victims fear that they will not be believed or that their experiences will be minimized. This is particularly true for crimes like domestic violence and sexual assault, where societal tendencies often lean towards victim-blaming. As shared by ZOE Japan, the fear of being judged or dismissed by authorities can be a significant barrier to seeking help. For example, a domestic violence victim may worry that the police will view their situation as a personal matter rather than a serious crime, leading them to forgo reporting the abuse.

5.4. Cultural Norms

Cultural norms significantly influence victims' decisions to report crimes or seek assistance. In Japan, societal expectations often prioritize harmony and family honor, which can deter individuals from coming forward (Dussich, 2001). As John Dussich's (2001) study highlights, traditional values may lead victims to remain silent to avoid bringing shame upon their families, often resulting in unreported cases of domestic violence and sexual assault. This pressure to prioritize family reputation over personal safety discourages victims from seeking justice, thus perpetuating cycles of abuse and leaving them without adequate support. These cultural barriers are deeply ingrained and can be difficult to overcome. Japanese society places a high value on harmony and avoiding conflict, which can discourage victims from coming forward. The concept of "saving face" shared with me during an interview with ZOE Japan is paramount, and victims may fear that reporting a crime will bring shame not only to themselves but also to their families. This is particularly relevant in cases of domestic violence and sexual assault, where the stigma attached to being a victim can lead to social ostracism. For example, a woman who reports sexual assault may be viewed as tarnishing her family's honor, leading her to remain silent. Traditional gender roles also play a significant role in shaping victims' responses. Women are often expected to be submissive and endure hardships quietly, which can prevent them from seeking help. In the case of domestic violence, a woman might feel that it is her duty to maintain family unity at all costs, even if it means enduring abuse. Additionally, male victims of domestic violence or sexual assault may face even greater stigma due to societal expectations of masculinity, leading to underreporting and lack of support. Concerns about confidentiality further deter victims from seeking help. In close-knit communities, there is a fear that reporting a crime will not remain private, leading

to gossip and further victimization. For example, a victim of domestic violence in a small neighborhood may worry that everyone will know about her situation if she seeks help, leading to social isolation and judgment. There is also a cultural reluctance to involve authorities in personal matters. Many victims prefer to resolve issues within the family or community rather than seek outside help. This can be particularly problematic in cases of abuse, where the perpetrator may be a family member or someone within the victim's close social circle. For example, a victim of child abuse may not report the crime because it involves a parent or relative, preferring to endure the abuse rather than disrupt family harmony.

In conclusion, victims in Osaka face numerous challenges in accessing justice and support, including physical and procedural barriers, lack of awareness, mistrust of institutions, and cultural norms. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that includes improving accessibility to services, increasing awareness and outreach efforts, building trust in legal and social institutions, and challenging cultural norms that hinder victims from seeking help. Only by addressing these challenges comprehensively can we ensure that all victims receive the justice and support they need and deserve.

6. Main Information from Interviews with Key Organizations

- **Zoe Japan:** JK (Joshi Kōsei) businesses in Japan refer to establishments where high school girls (Joshi Kōsei) provide various services to clients. These services typically include non-sexual activities such as conversation, companionship, and sometimes more intimate services that border on or include sexual acts. The term "JK" specifically denotes high school girls, and these businesses capitalize on the allure of youth and innocence associated with schoolgirls. Clients often visit these establishments for the fantasy of interacting with a young girl in a controlled environment where they can fulfill their desires and fantasies. It is illegal for businesses to employ children under 18, so you will mostly find adults in these jobs. In some cases, if a customer has a long relationship with that business and is very loyal, they can ask for off-menu services, things that are not official services. Sometimes, they will be loyal to individuals under 18 and then ask for sexual services. Such businesses are hard to monitor because sexual services are connected to schoolchildren, and you never know if a person is older or younger than 18. Japanese children sometimes go on a date with an adult because of Japanese culture, which gives gifts to children. This leads to child pornography, as children share CSAM materials. This is the area of most concern, as perpetrators use AI to communicate with children in Japanese and then sell these materials on the Dark Web. When I asked if Japan uses Arachnid technology, they shared that the police lately have an Anti-Trafficking, Cyber Crimes, and Personal Safety Juvenile Units track that works with child pornography materials. Zoe Japan actively collaborates with all units to provide on-ground socio-psychological and legal support through connecting to services throughout Japan.

Japanese Child Consultation Centers hardly work to support child victims, but unfortunately, there are not enough social workers, and shelters are not specialized. This means that sex-trafficked children may be put with children taken from drug abuse. Therefore, there is no specialized treatment for them and no trauma-informed care.

Manga and anime can include graphic sexual representations of children, which can be extremely harmful and violent. It is considered virtual child sexual abuse materials (CSAM). And it is not illegal to have such sexual representation because virtual or AI-created CSAM is legal in Japan. So, Japan has become a hotbed and hosting country for all kinds of virtual CSAM because of its high sexual tolerance towards such materials. It can lead to extremely bad consequences because if someone views such content on a daily basis, the person can act like a real child, but this content can also be used for grooming, like showing these pictures and asking children to send such pictures to perpetrators. Considering that pedophilia is not considered an illness in Japan and there is no treatment for it, there is a lot of harmful impact, and it has not been researched yet, so there is a big gap in this.

- **Amnesty International Japan:** If you search online for the number of trafficking victims in Japan, you will find a low figure. This is because, according to Japanese law, many cases are classified as violations of the Labor Standards Act or Child Prostitution Act rather than as human trafficking. As a result, the official statistics on human trafficking are low. Consequently, the government does not see the need to invest significantly in victim services. To address this issue, Amnesty International Japan is actively working to promote advocacy and raise awareness at the state level. One of their key initiatives is to reduce victim blaming by advocating for the Nordic Model. This model decriminalizes prostituted individuals, treating them as victims, while penalizing the men who purchase these services. Implementing the Nordic Model enhances victim rights, particularly for male victims, by shifting the focus of the law. However, even if legal reforms are made, changing societal attitudes and culture takes time. Amnesty International Japan continues to strive for these cultural shifts alongside legal changes to improve the situation for trafficking victims in Japan.

- **Human Rights Now Japan:** Foreign workers in Japan are often exploited through technical programs and language courses. Upon arrival, they discover that they are there primarily for labor and subsequently face exploitation. Student visas are frequently misused to facilitate this exploitation, granting access to the country under false pretenses. Additionally, foreign women are deceived with promises of entertainment and tourist visas, only to be forced into sex trafficking upon arrival. Within Japan, single mothers and young women are particularly vulnerable, being targeted by host clubs and coerced into providing sexual services. Human Rights Now works to combat these injustices by raising awareness and advocating for stronger protections for vulnerable populations. They engage in extensive research and reporting to highlight the ex-

ploitation and abuses faced by foreign workers and trafficked individuals. By lobbying for policy changes and legal reforms, they aim to improve the legal framework that protects these individuals. Additionally, Human Rights Now provides support and resources to victims, helping them to escape abusive situations and rebuild their lives.

7. Results and Findings

This study reveals significant challenges in Osaka's victim support systems, as identified through interviews with representatives from key organizations and a comprehensive review of existing literature. The primary issues impacting victims include accessibility to support services, awareness of rights, trust in institutions, and cultural norms.

7.1. Accessibility to Support Services

Victims in Osaka face both physical and procedural barriers to accessing support services. Many essential services, such as shelters and counseling centers, are centralized in urban areas, leaving those in suburban or rural regions with limited access. This geographical inaccessibility forces some victims to undertake long, difficult journeys to reach safety and support, which can be especially burdensome and unsafe for those fleeing domestic violence (Yokoyama & Koketsu, 2019; Clack, 2003). Additionally, victims with disabilities encounter accessibility challenges due to inadequate facilities, such as the lack of wheelchair access and interpreters for the hearing-impaired (Johnson, 2020). Procedural complexities, including the bureaucratic processes within the legal system, also hinder access to justice, as victims face numerous steps and paperwork that can be overwhelming without legal support (Matsui, 2011).

7.2. Awareness of Rights and Available Support

A lack of accessible, victim-friendly information on available resources emerged as a substantial barrier, particularly for non-Japanese residents and those unfamiliar with legal and support frameworks. Many victims, especially marginalized individuals, remain unaware of their rights and the support services available to them due to limited outreach and complex government communications that often use formal, bureaucratic language (Karmen, 2010; Matsuo, 2020). This lack of awareness prevents victims from seeking help or understanding their rights within the justice system, underscoring the need for improved outreach and information dissemination, particularly in multilingual formats (Zoe Japan interview).

7.3. Trust in Legal and Social Institutions

Mistrust in legal and social institutions poses another major challenge for victims seeking support. Many victims who have encountered insensitive or biased treatment from law enforcement or social services are reluctant to approach these institutions again, fearing further harm or dismissal (Walklate, 2007; Hoyle &

Zedner, 2007). For instance, some victims of sexual assault reported experiencing victim-blaming attitudes from police officers, which deterred them from reporting future incidents. Interviews also highlighted that marginalized groups, including non-Japanese residents and LGBTQ+ individuals, feel particularly vulnerable to institutional bias and inadequate support, leading to further alienation from these services (Amnesty International Japan interview).

7.4. Cultural Norms and Societal Expectations

Cultural norms in Japan, which emphasize family honor and social harmony, often discourage victims from reporting crimes or seeking help. These societal expectations can pressure victims to remain silent to avoid bringing shame to their families, especially in cases of domestic violence and sexual assault (Dussich, 2001). Interviews with organizations revealed that such traditional values perpetuate cycles of abuse, as victims prioritize familial and social harmony over personal safety (Zoe Japan interview). Additionally, victims fear breaches of confidentiality, as reporting crimes may lead to social ostracism within tight-knit communities, further discouraging them from seeking help (Yokoyama & Koketsu, 2019).

8. Quantifying Japanese Victim Rights

8.1. Introduction to Methodology

To analyze the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of victims in Japan, descriptive variables such as gender, area of residence, parental status, occupation, and marital status were selected for detailed analysis. The dataset containing general statistics about these variables was filtered to create a focused subset, ensuring only relevant data was included. This subset, labeled as df_descriptive_stats, provides key insights into the distribution of these variables. Additionally, another dataset capturing proportional data, df_prop, was filtered in a similar manner to generate df_descriptive_prop, which highlights the percentages for each descriptive category. This dual approach—examining both raw counts and proportions—enables a comprehensive understanding of the victim demographics, ensuring that the analysis reflects both the absolute and relative prevalence of these characteristics. This methodology was critical in identifying patterns of victimization and their correlation with socio-economic and demographic factors in Japan.

The data for this research was sourced from reports published by the National Police Agency of Japan, specifically focusing on victimization trends over the past five years, with an emphasis on 2023 (National Police Agency of Japan, 2023a). These reports provide detailed statistics on various forms of victimization, including spousal violence, child abuse, sexual abuse, traffic accidents, and property damage. Additionally, data from the summary report on severe injuries and victim-related trends was also utilized to gain deeper insights into the experiences of victims (National Police Agency of Japan, 2023b). Both sources were accessed through the official National Police Agency website and form the quantitative ba-

sis of this study. By leveraging these datasets, the research aims to provide a comprehensive and evidence-based analysis of victim satisfaction with support systems in Japan.

8.2. Victimization

The bar graph presents data on victimization based on survey responses regarding whether individuals had experienced victimization or not. The survey focused on three specific categories of sexual victimization: forced or non-consensual sex, molestation, and victimization through violence, including attempted murder. Among these, forced or non-consensual sex was the most frequently reported form of sexual victimization. However, the majority of property damage victims indicated that they had not experienced forced or non-consensual sex. Molestation was another significant category of sexual victimization, while violence, including attempted murder, was reported less frequently. Overall, property damage was the most commonly reported form of victimization, but among those reporting sexual victimization, forced sexual victimization was the most prevalent. Metric "be" means that this violence happened and "do not have" did not occur.

Figures 1-3 illustrate the proportion of respondents who experienced various forms of victimization, such as forced or non-consensual sex, molestation, and
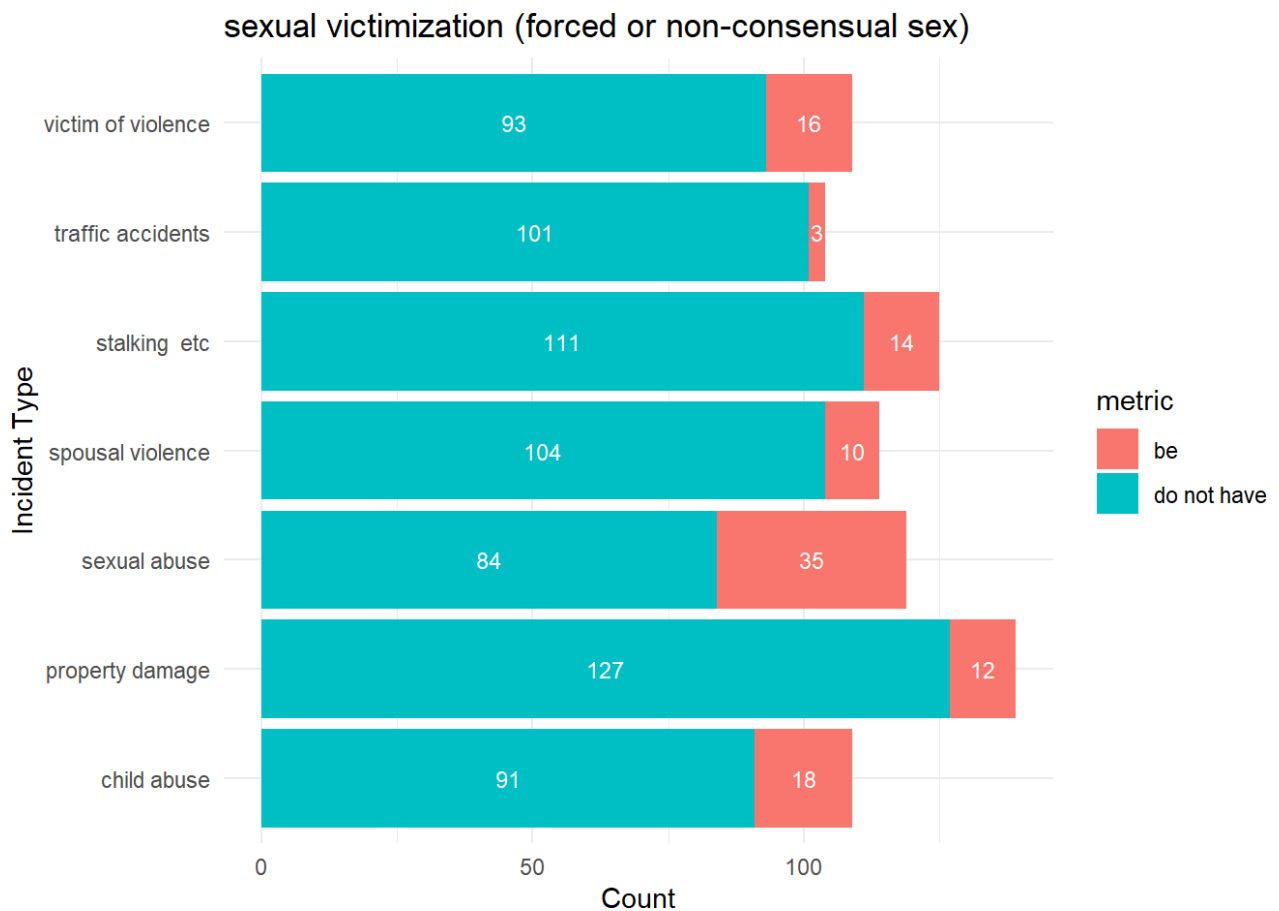
Figure 1. Bar graph of sexual victimization based on forced or non-consensual sex.

Figure 2. Bar graph of sexual victimization based on molestation.

Figure 3. Bar graph of victimization of violence including attempted murder.

violence, including attempted murder. To visualize the proportional distribution of victimization metrics across variables, bar graphs were generated using grouped percentage data. Each chart highlights the relative contributions of different metrics, enabling a clear comparison within each variable.

Figure 1 shows that the majority of the victims have not been forcefully sexually victimized. Based on Figure 1 and partially on Figure 2 of those who have been sexually victimized, the highest number of reported incidents were reported by victims who reported sexual abuse while traffic accidents victims recorded the least count.

Figures 4-6 illustrate the relative distribution of violence metrics across categories, providing a clear comparison of incident types and their prevalence meaning if individuals experienced it or not.

8.3. Violence

To analyze the proportional distribution of violence metrics, data was reshaped and aggregated. Proportions for different incident types were calculated and summarized as percentages within each category.

Figure 7 illustrates the distribution of domestic violence-related incidents, categorized by types such as victims of violence, traffic accidents, stalking, spousal violence, sexual abuse, property damage, and child abuse. Two metrics are shown: "be" (indicating victims who experienced the incident) and "do not have"
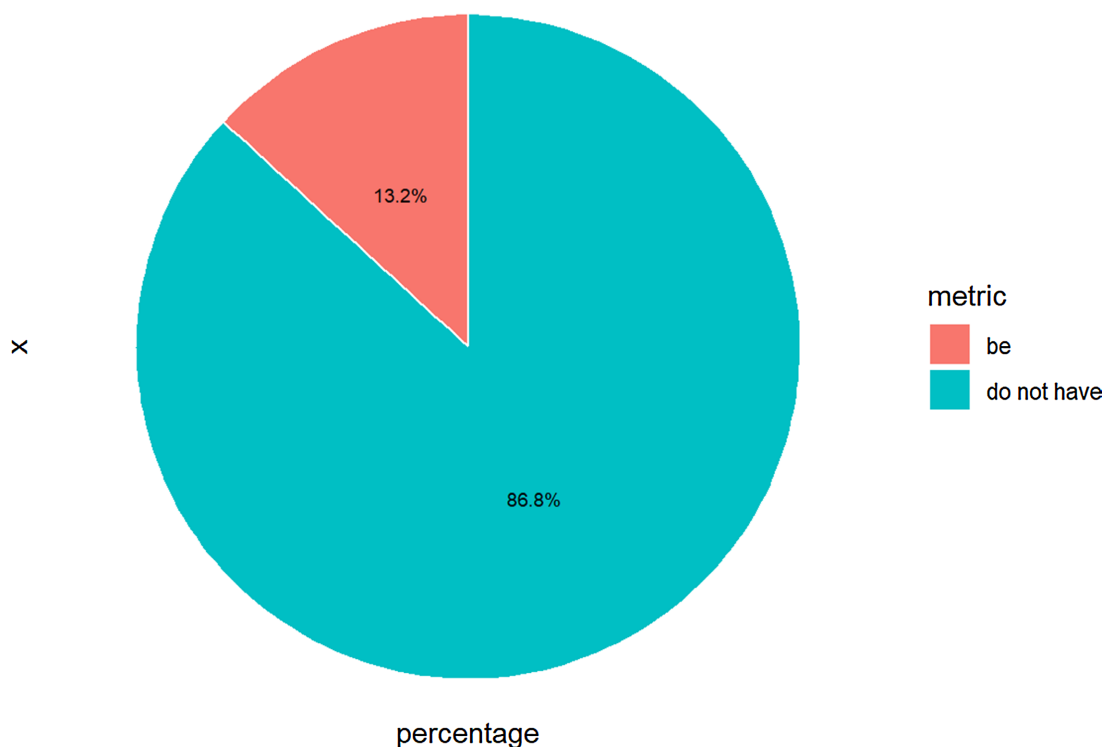
Figure 4. Pie chart of individuals experienced sexual victimization based on forced or non-consensual sex.

sexual victimization (molestation)
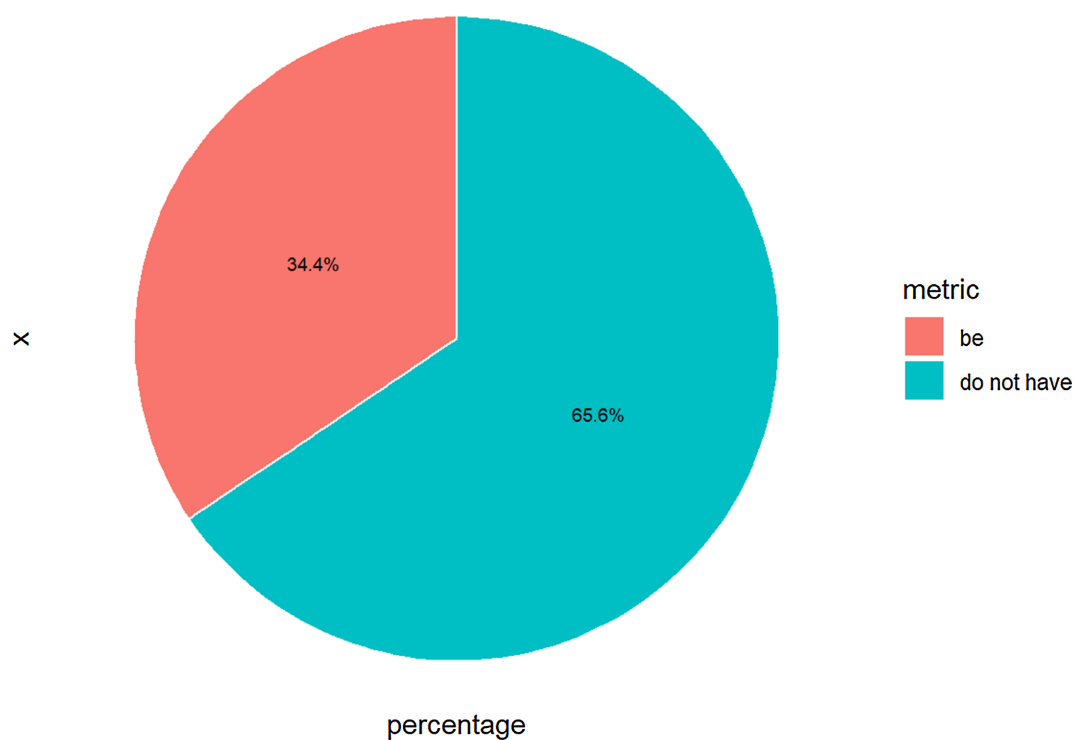
Figure 5. Pie chart of individuals experienced sexual victimization based on molestation.

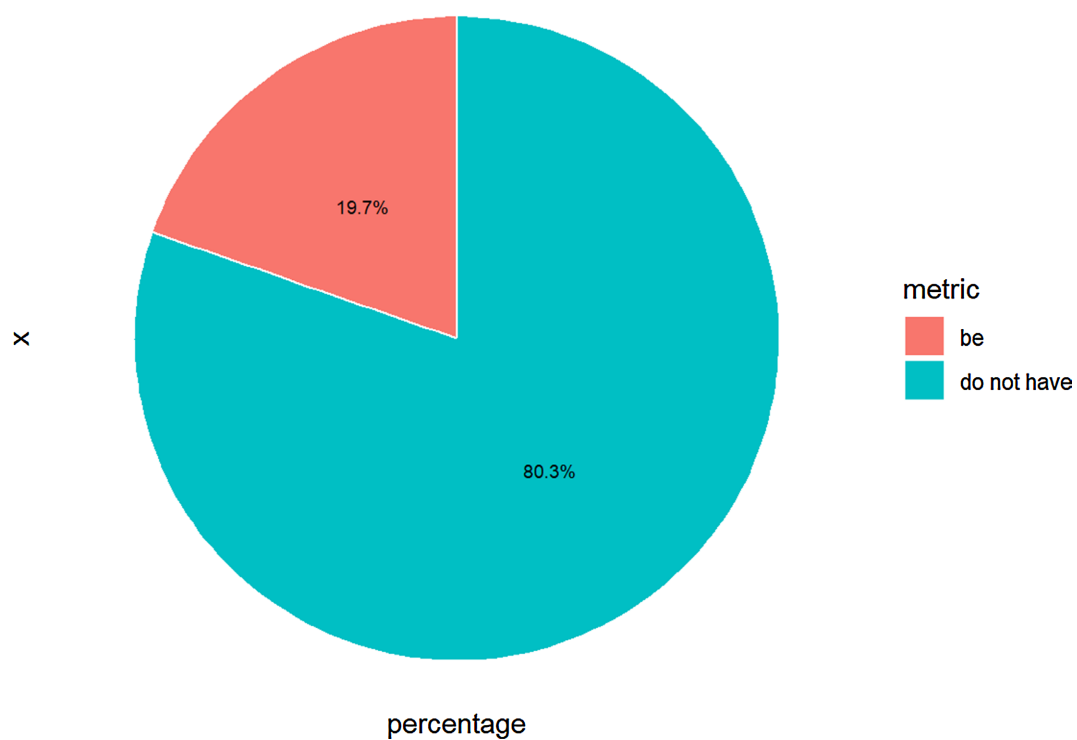## victimization of violence (including attempted murder)

Figure 6. Pie chart of individuals experienced victimization of violence including attempted murder.

(indicating those who did not experience it). **Figure 7** highlights that stalking and spousal violence have the highest number of reported cases under the "be" category, whereas incidents like traffic accidents and child abuse report fewer cases. Property damage shows the largest disparity between those who "be" and "do not have" experienced it, suggesting potential underreporting in other categories. These trends indicate variations in reporting or occurrence rates and emphasize the need for targeted interventions in addressing stalking and spousal violence.

Figure 8 illustrates the timeframe during which domestic violence-related incidents occurred, categorized by incident types such as victims of violence, traffic accidents, stalking, spousal violence, sexual abuse, property damage, and child abuse. The timeframes are grouped into three categories: "within the past 3 years," "within the past 3 to 10 years," and "before that."

The graph highlights that spousal violence has the highest number of incidents reported across all timeframes, with a significant portion (61 incidents) occurring "before that." Incidents like stalking and property damage also show a substantial number of recent reports, particularly "within the past 3 years." This distribution emphasizes the enduring and recent nature of specific domestic violence incidents, particularly spousal violence, which demands sustained and urgent intervention.

Figure 9 illustrates the victimization of violence, including attempted murder, categorized by incident types such as victims of violence, traffic accidents, stalking, spousal violence, sexual abuse, property damage, and child abuse. The two metrics presented are "be" (indicating those who experienced the incident) and "do not have" (indicating those who did not experience it). The graph highlights stalking and property damage as the categories with the highest number of respondents who "do not have" experienced victimization, while sexual abuse and spousal violence have higher reported cases of victimization under the "be" category. In contrast, traffic accidents and stalking show fewer "be" cases. This pattern underscores variations in victimization reporting and points to the significant impact of sexual and spousal violence, demanding tailored intervention strategies for these categories.

Figure 10 illustrates the timeframe in which incidents of violence, including attempted murder, occurred, categorized by incident types such as victims of violence, traffic accidents, stalking, spousal violence, sexual abuse, property damage, and child abuse. The timeframes are grouped into three categories: "within the past 3 years," "within the past 3 to 10 years," and "before that."

The graph highlights that incidents involving victims of violence have the highest number of reports occurring "before that," with 67 cases, followed by spousal violence and child abuse. Recent incidents ("within the past 3 years") are most prevalent in categories such as stalking and spousal violence. These findings emphasize the persistence of certain types of violence over extended periods while highlighting the need for timely interventions to address more recent cases.

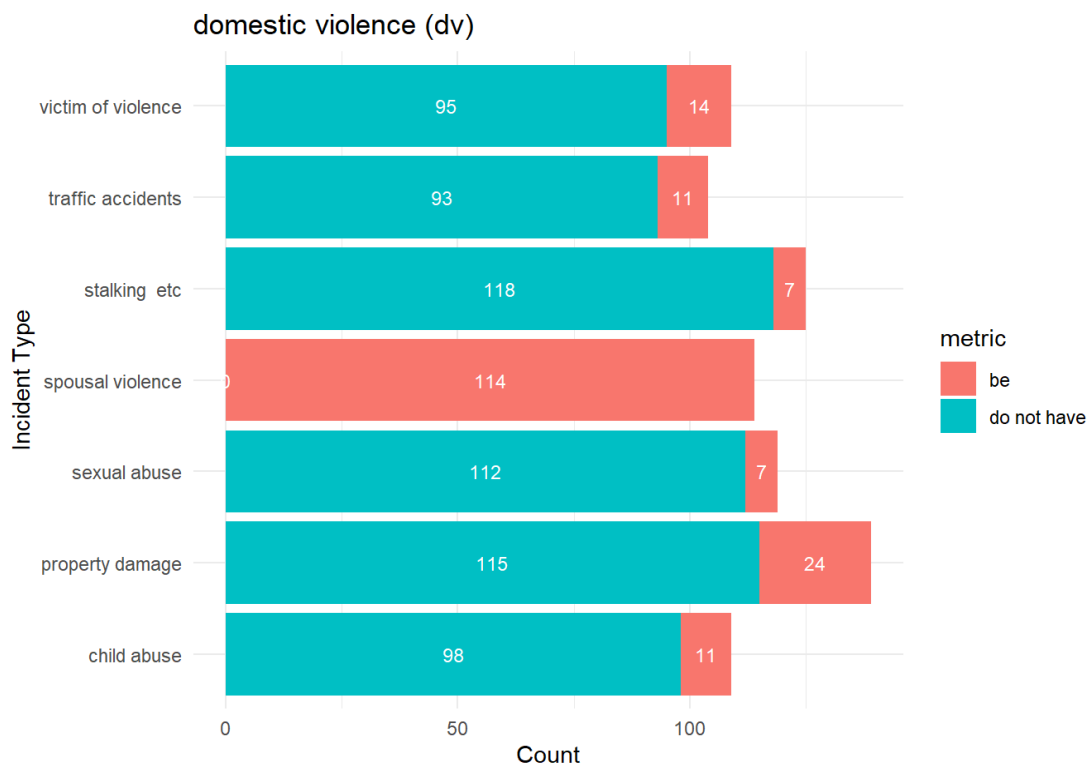**Figure 11** illustrates the proportion of reported domestic violence cases,

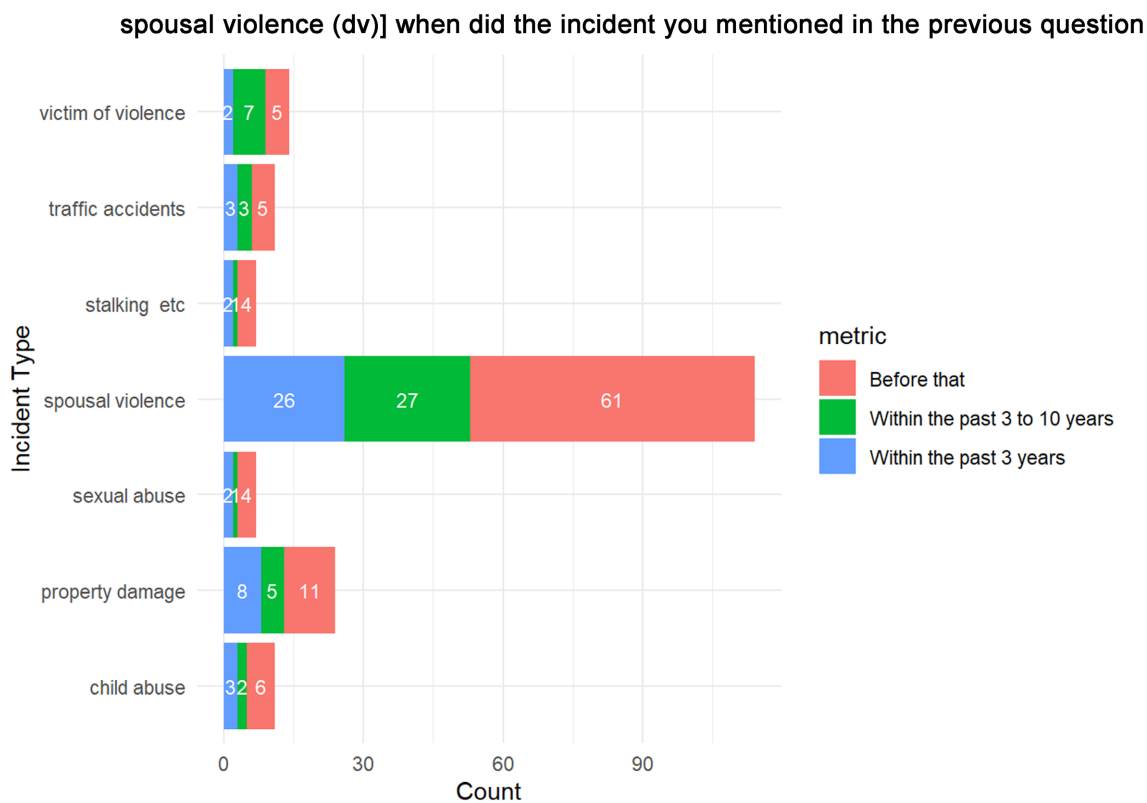**Figure 7.** Bar graph of domestic violence by incident type.

Figure 8. Timeframe of incidents by type of domestic violence.

Figure 9. Victimization of violence (including attempted murder) by incident type.
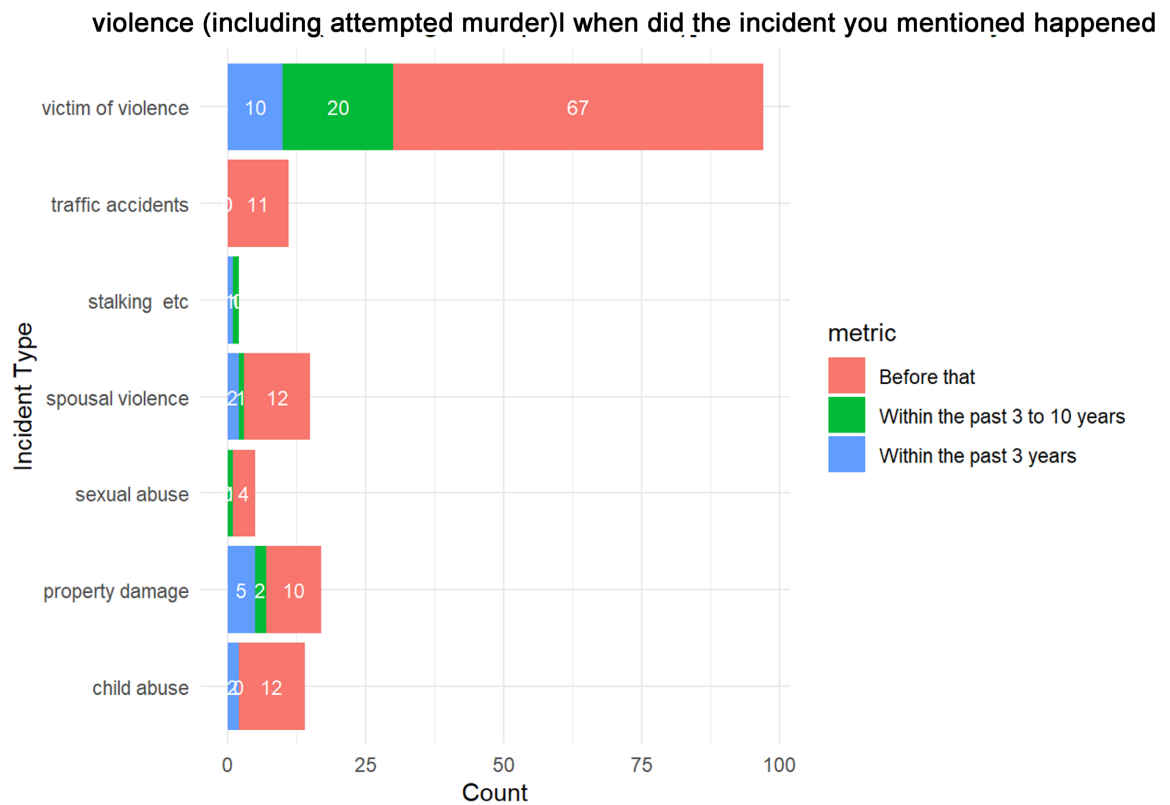

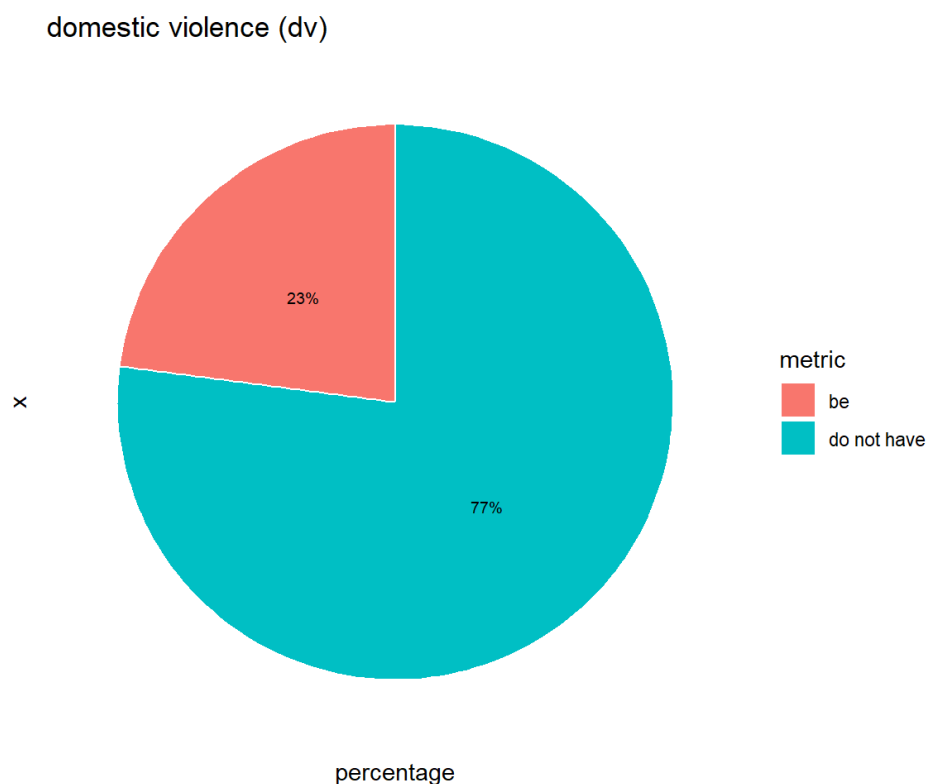**Figure 10.** Timeframe of violence (including attempted murder) by incident type.

Figure 11. Proportion of domestic violence cases.

categorized into "be" (indicating individuals who have experienced domestic violence) and "do not have" (indicating those who have not experienced it). The pie chart shows that 23% of respondents reported experiencing domestic violence, while 77% did not.

This visualization highlights that while a majority have not experienced domestic violence, a significant portion of individuals still report being affected, underscoring the importance of targeted interventions and support systems to address this issue.

Figure 12 depicts the timeframe during which incidents of spousal violence occurred, categorized into "within the past 3 years," "within the past 3 to 10 years," and "before that." The pie chart reveals that the majority of incidents (51.1%) occurred "before that," while incidents reported "within the past 3 years" and "within the past 3 to 10 years" each accounted for 24.5%. This distribution emphasizes the longstanding prevalence of spousal violence, highlighting the need for both preventive measures and historical case interventions.

Figure 13 illustrates the proportion of individuals who reported experiencing violence, including attempted murder, categorized as "be" (19.7%) and "do not have" (80.3%). The chart highlights that while the majority have not reported such victimization, nearly 20% of respondents indicate that they have experienced this type of violence. This emphasizes the critical need for targeted interventions and resources to support victims of severe violence.

spousal violence (dv)] when did the incident you mentioned in the previous question
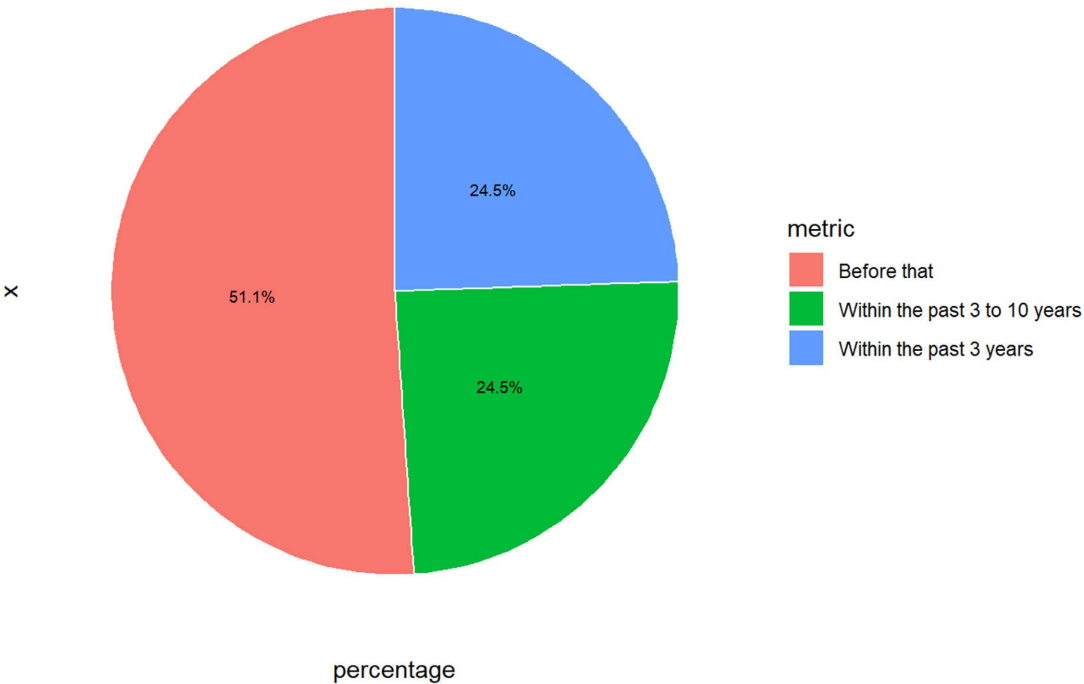

Figure 12. Timeframe of spousal violence incidents.

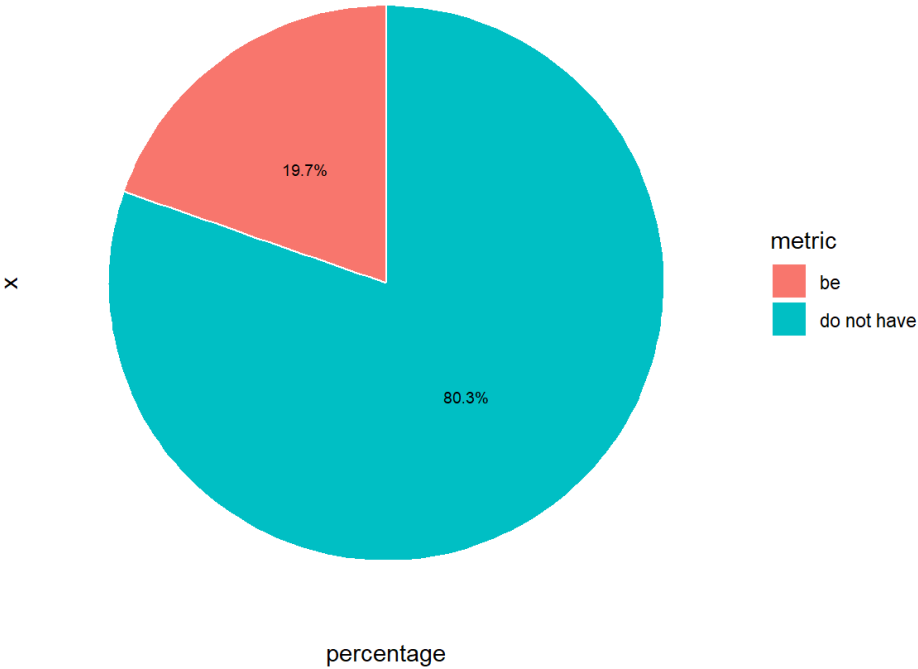victimization of violence (including attempted murder)

Figure 13. Proportion of victimization of violence (including attempted murder).

Figure 14 illustrates the timeframe during which incidents of violence, including attempted murder, occurred, categorized into "within the past 3 years," "within the past 3 to 10 years," and "before that." The pie chart reveals that the majority of incidents (72%) occurred "before that," while 15.5% were reported "within the past 3 to 10 years," and 12.4% occurred "within the past 3 years."

This distribution indicates that while a significant proportion of incidents are historical, recent cases highlight the ongoing nature of violence, emphasizing the need for sustained preventive measures and support systems to address both historical and recent incidents.

8.4. Child Abuse

Figure 15 highlights that child abuse accounts for the highest number of cases under the "be" category (109), indicating a significant prevalence of reported cases. In comparison, stalking and property damage also show higher "be" cases, while traffic accidents and sexual abuse are comparatively lower. This data underscores the urgency of addressing child abuse and ensuring robust support systems for affected individuals.

Figure 16 highlights that the majority of child abuse incidents (106) occurred "before that," with fewer cases reported "within the past 3 to 10 years" (13) and "within the past 3 years" (0). This pattern suggests that while child abuse has historically been prevalent, recent reporting trends indicate a need to examine barriers to timely reporting or potential declines in incidents. Other categories, such as spousal violence and property damage, show similar trends with the majority occurring in the "before that" timeframe.

Figure 17 illustrates the timeframe during which incidents of child abuse occurred compared to other types of incidents, such as victims of violence, traffic accidents, stalking, spousal violence, sexual abuse, and property damage. The data is categorized into three timeframes: "before that," "within the past 3 to 10 years," and "within the past 3 years". Figure 17 highlights that the majority of child abuse incidents (106) occurred "before that," with only a small number reported "within the past 3 to 10 years" (13). No cases of child abuse were reported "within the past 3 years". Similar trends are observed in other categories like property damage and spousal violence, with most incidents occurring in the distant past. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing historical cases and exploring barriers to the timely reporting of child abuse.

Figure 18 illustrates the distribution of child abuse incidents across three timeframes: "before that," "within the past 3 to 10 years," and "within the past 3 years." The pie chart reveals that the vast majority of child abuse incidents (96.7%) occurred "before that," with only 1.2% reported "within the past 3 to 10 years" and "within the past 3 years," respectively.

8.5. Satisfaction with Support Systems

Figure 19 illustrates the satisfaction levels of property damage victims with

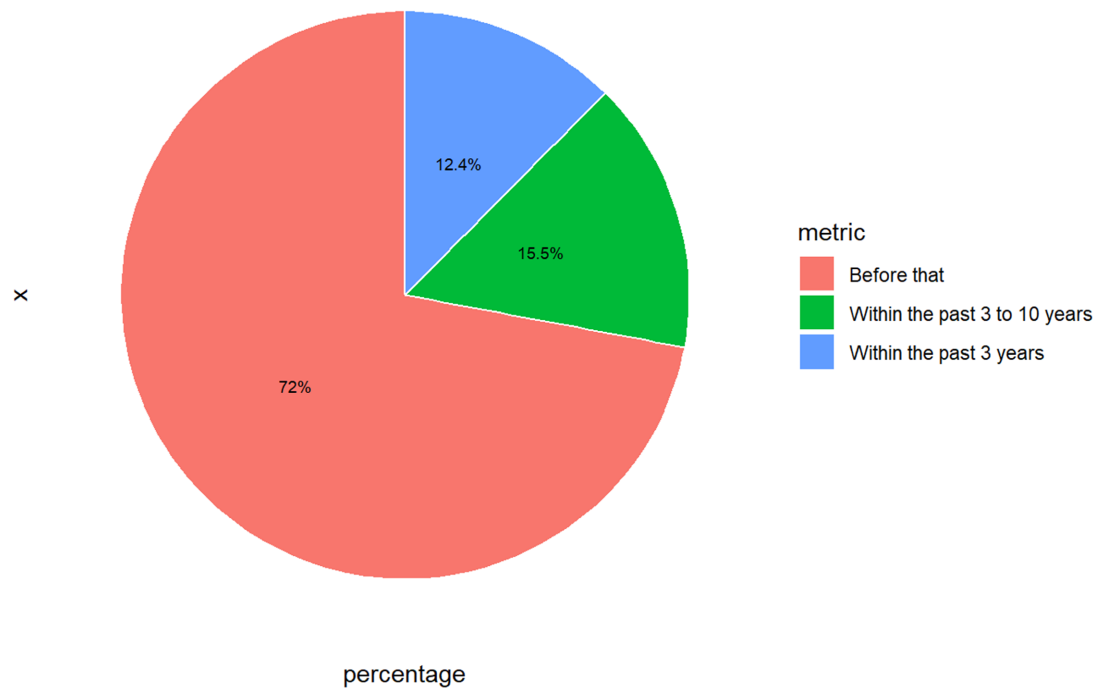## violence (including attempted murder)] when did the incident you mentioned in the previous question

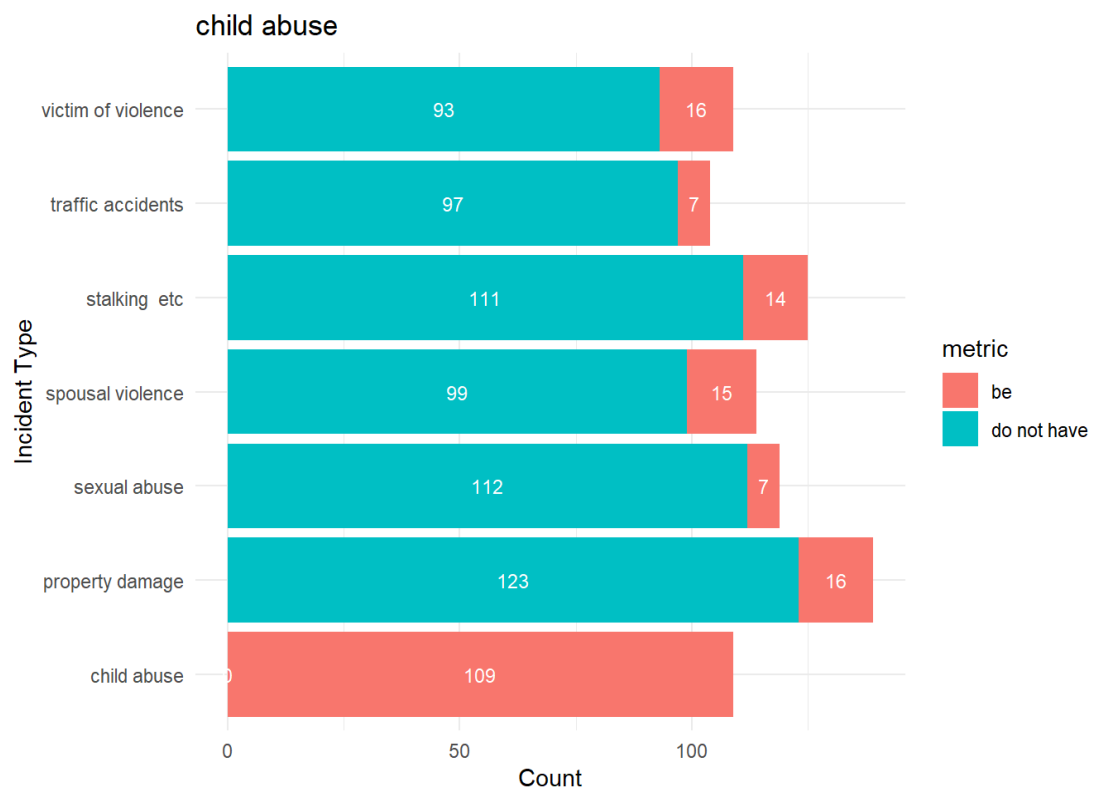**Figure 14.** Timeframe of violence (including attempted murder) incidents.

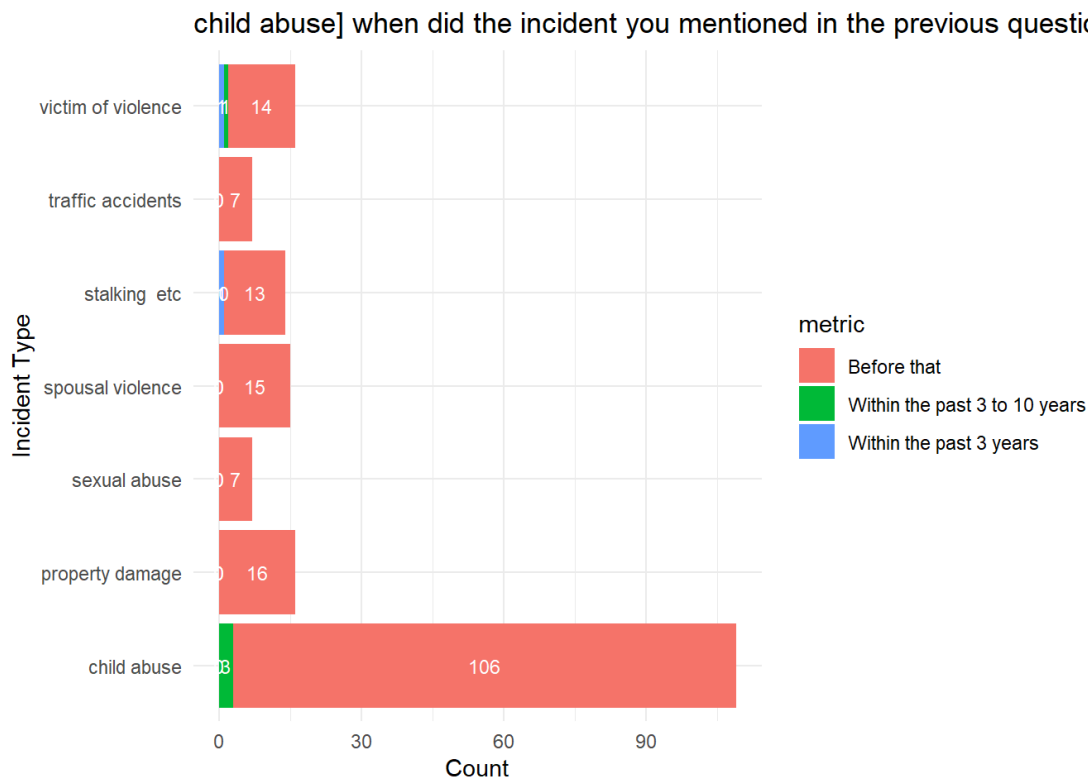**Figure 15.** Distribution of victimization by incident type (child abuse focus).

child abuse] when did the incident you mentioned in the previous question

Figure 16. Timeframe of child abuse incidents by type.
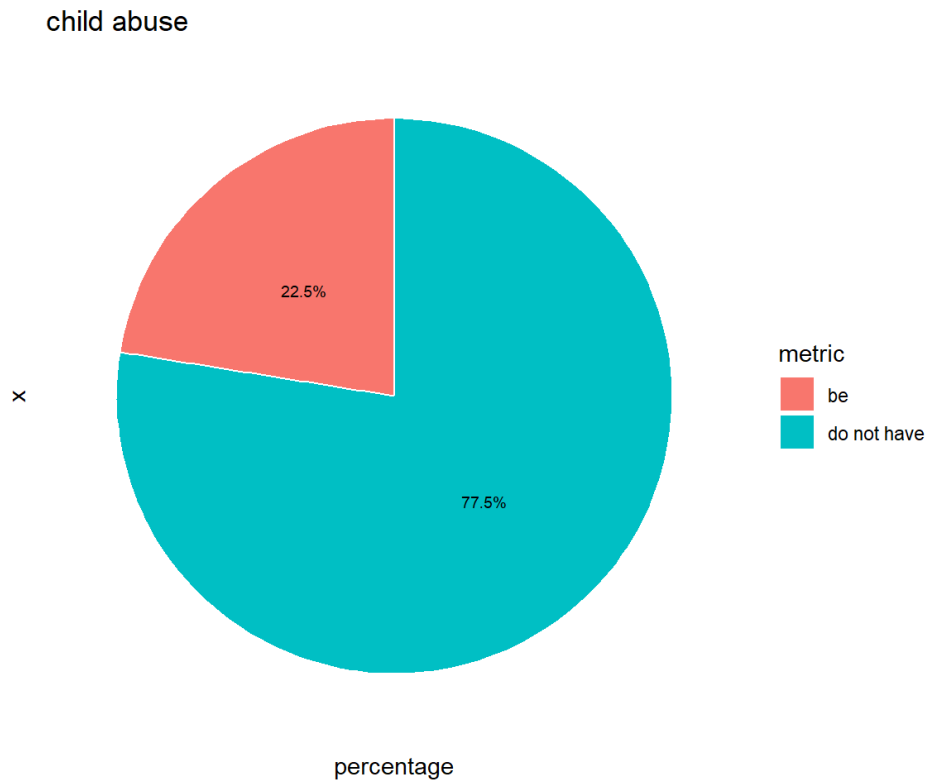
child abuse

Figure 17. Timeframe of child abuse incidents.

child abuse] when did the incident you mentioned in the previous question occur? if you remember it
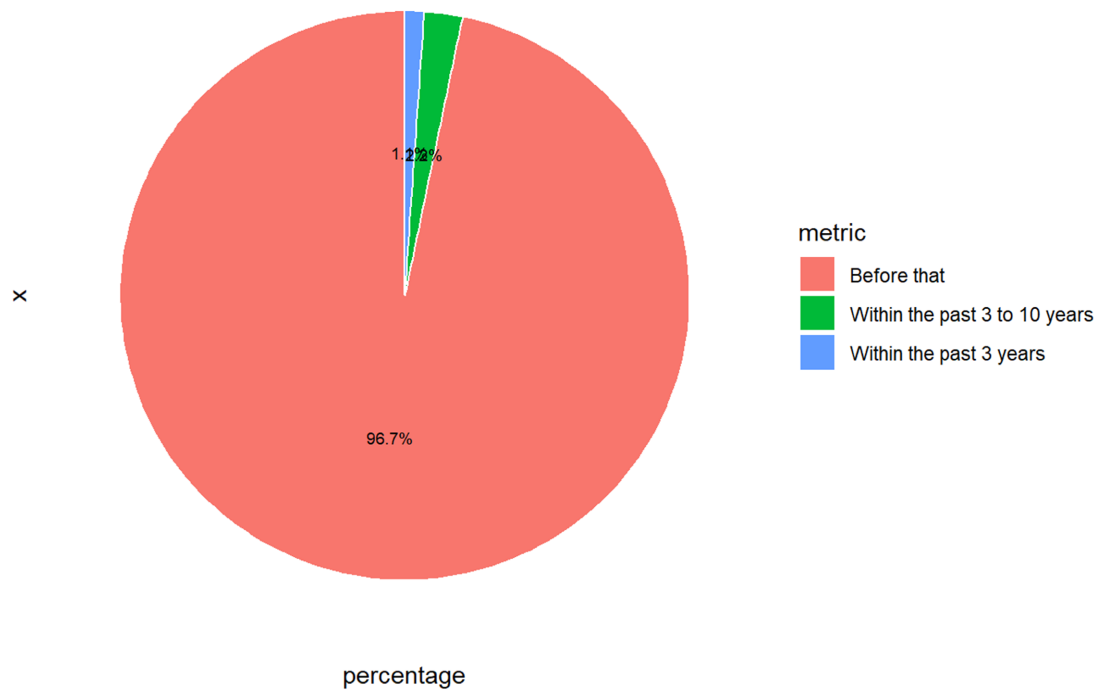

Figure 18. Proportion of child abuse incidents by timeframe.
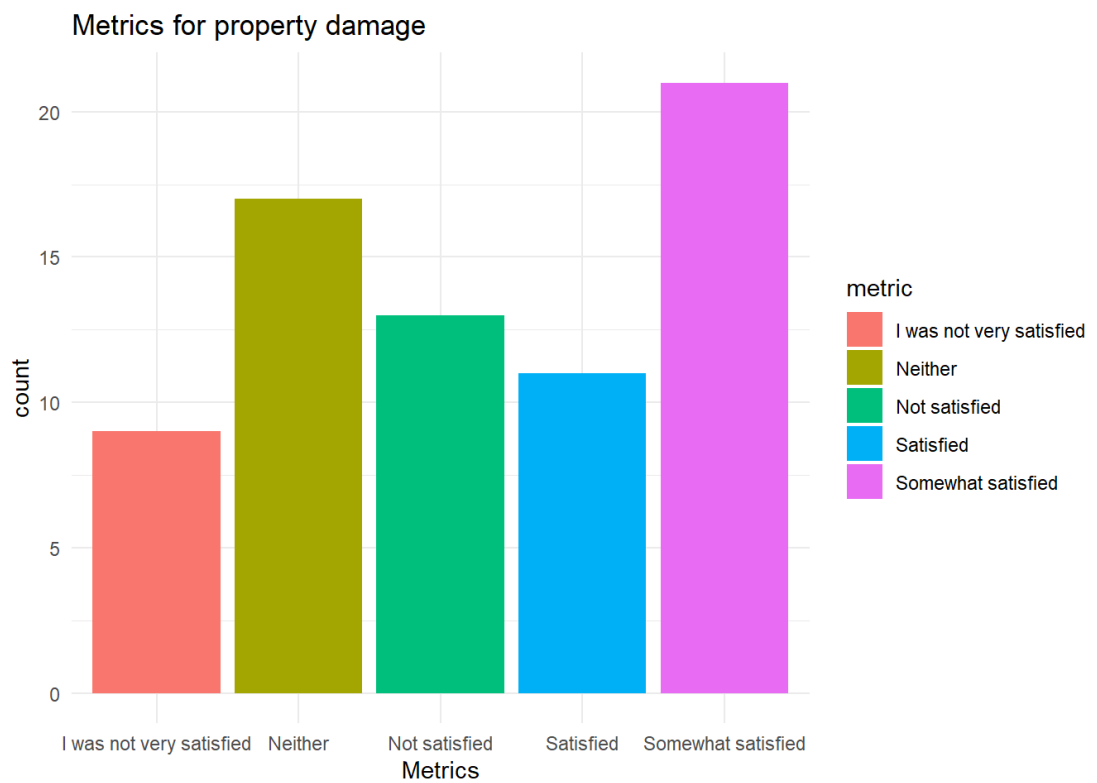
Metrics for property damage

Figure 19. Satisfaction levels among property damage victims.

support systems, categorized into responses such as "somewhat satisfied," "satisfied," "neither," "not satisfied," and "I was not very satisfied." "Somewhat satisfied" is the most common response, followed by "neither" and "satisfied," while very few respondents expressed dissatisfaction. These findings suggest that property damage victims generally have better experiences with support systems, likely due to straightforward processes for restitution or compensation. However, the significant proportion of ambivalent responses indicates inefficiencies or inconsistencies in the system. Streamlining restitution processes and improving communication with victims could further enhance satisfaction levels.

Figure 20 depicts the satisfaction levels of spousal violence victims, highlighting the prevalence of ambivalence and dissatisfaction.

Figure 21 depicts the satisfaction levels of child abuse victims, again highlighting the prevalence of ambivalence and dissatisfaction.

Figure 22 showcases the satisfaction levels of child abuse victims with support systems, emphasizing the inadequacy of existing structures. Figure 22 shows a smaller sample size, with the majority expressing ambivalence or dissatisfaction, as few respondents were "somewhat satisfied," and none indicated being fully satisfied.

Figure 23 displays the satisfaction levels of sexual abuse victims, with the highest proportion expressing dissatisfaction, followed by "satisfied" and "somewhat satisfied".

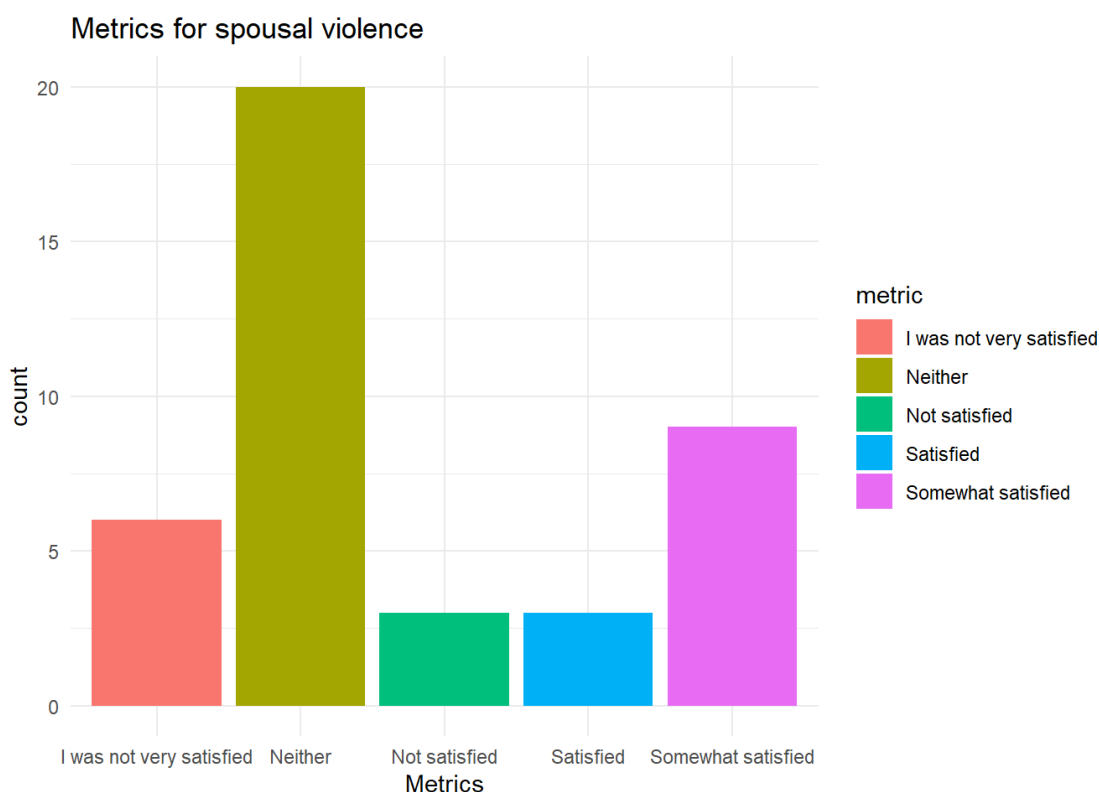Figure 24 shows satisfaction levels of traffic accident victims with support systems,

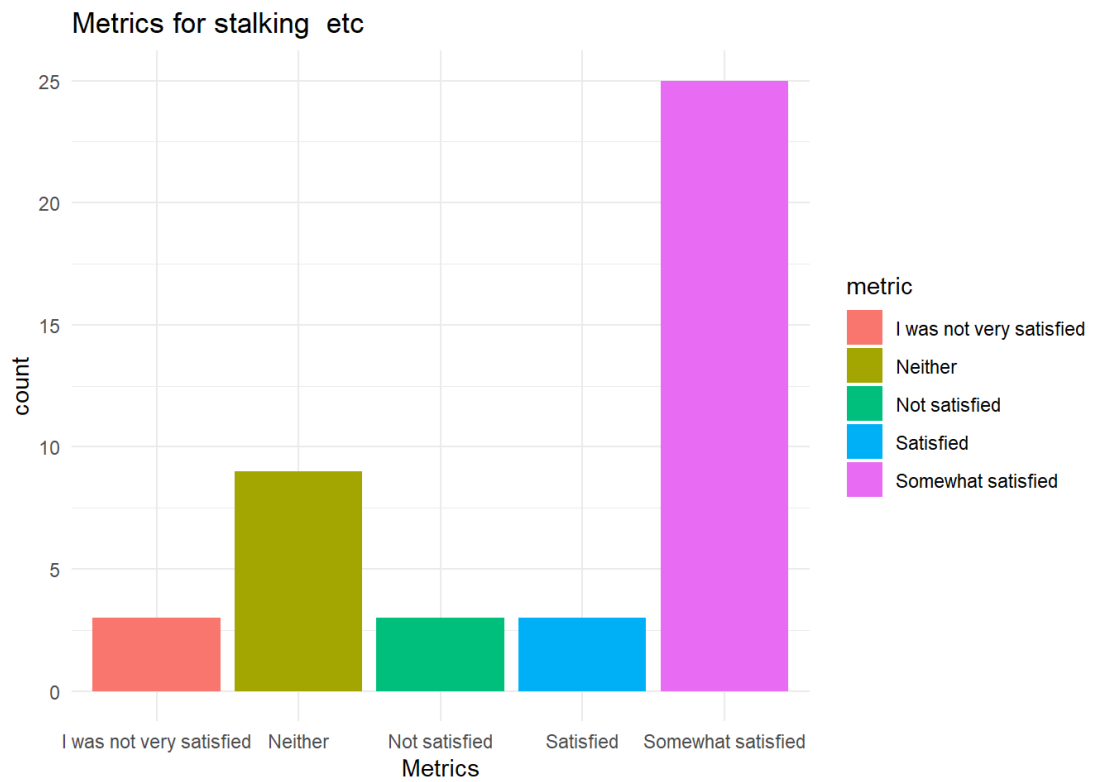**Figure 20.** Satisfaction levels among spousal violence victims.

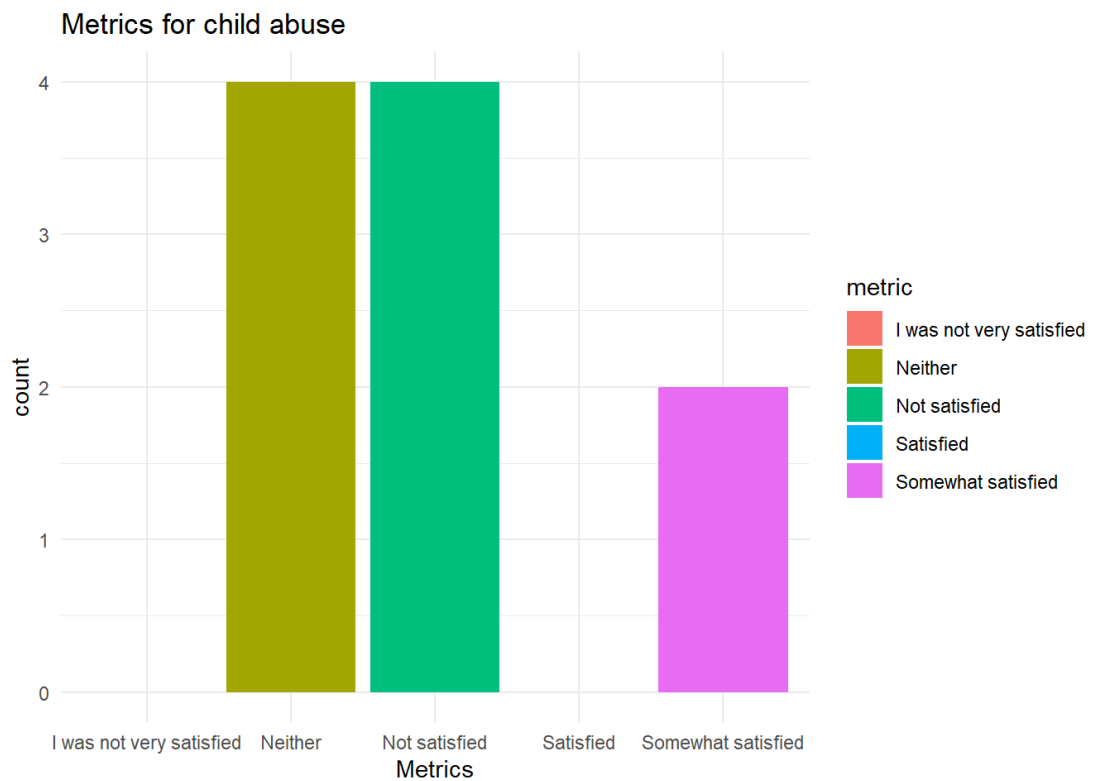**Figure 21.** Satisfaction with support systems for stalking.

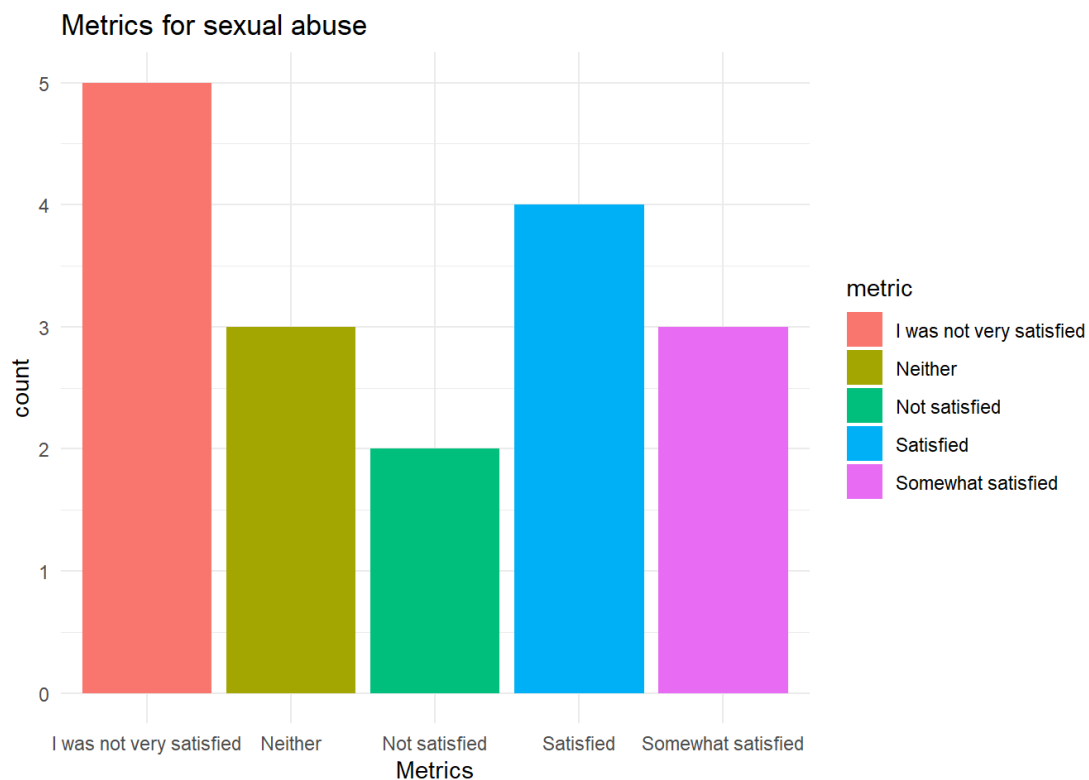**Figure 22.** Satisfaction levels among child abuse victims.

Metrics for sexual abuse

Figure 23. Satisfaction levels among sexual abuse victims.

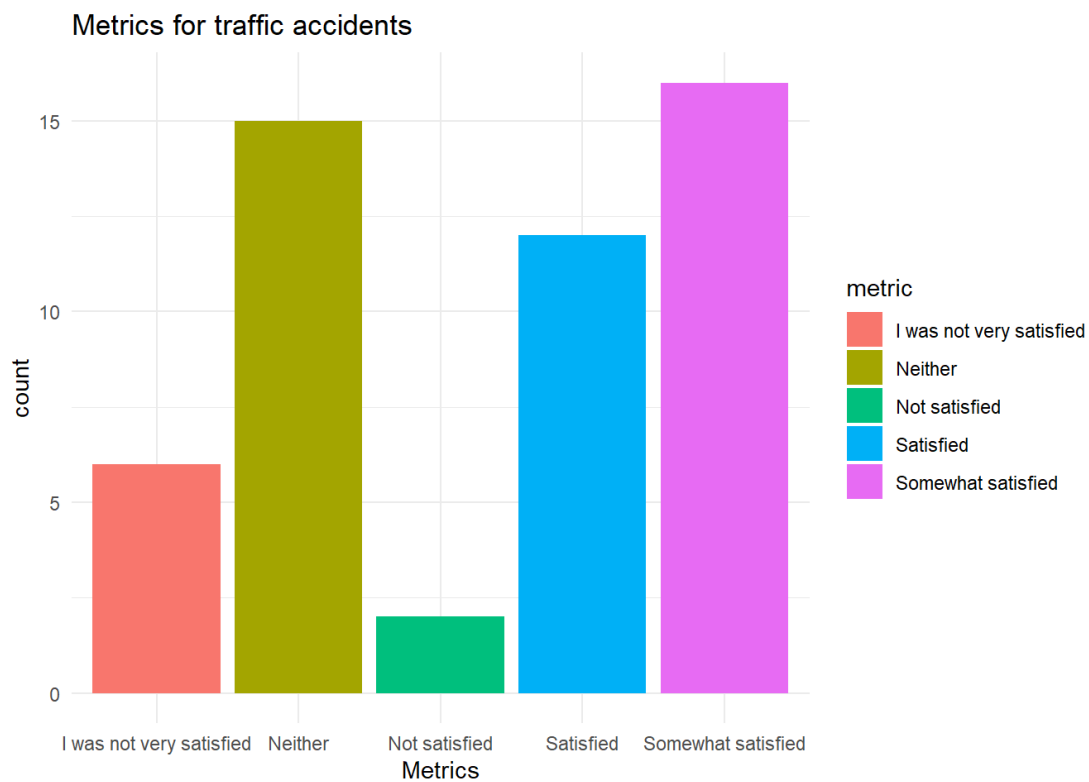## Metrics for traffic accidents

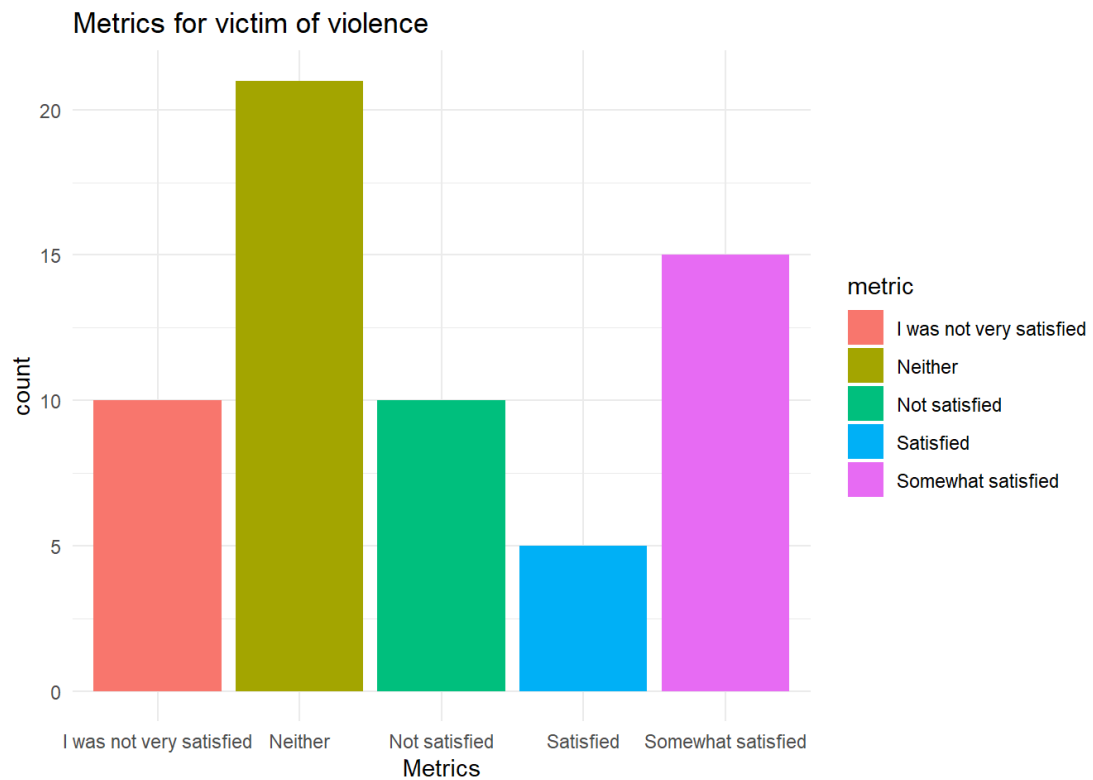**Figure 24.** Satisfaction levels among traffic accident victims.

Figure 25. Satisfaction metrics for victims of violence.

categorized as "somewhat satisfied," "satisfied," "neither," and levels of dissatisfaction: victims of traffic accidents report similar trends, with a large proportion "somewhat satisfied," followed by those who are "satisfied."

Figure 25 highlights ambivalence as the most common response, followed by moderate satisfaction, suggesting inconsistencies in support system effectiveness.

9. Conclusion

The challenges faced by victims in accessing justice and support in Osaka highlight critical gaps within Japan's victim support systems. While Osaka has made efforts to improve support services, systemic barriers remain deeply rooted. Accessibility limitations, particularly for those in suburban or rural areas, and procedural complexities hinder many from reaching the help they need. These challenges underscore a need not only for a more geographically balanced distribution of services but also for innovative solutions like mobile or digital platforms that can extend support beyond traditional service centers.

Awareness of available resources is also a significant obstacle, especially for non-citizens and marginalized populations. The formal language in government communications excludes those unfamiliar with legal jargon or who lack proficiency in Japanese. To overcome this, it is crucial to create inclusive outreach programs, such as multilingual campaigns in collaboration with community organizations serving diverse groups. Trust in institutions presents another substantial

challenge, particularly for marginalized groups like non-Japanese residents and LGBTQ+ individuals. The fear of mistreatment or dismissal discourages many victims from seeking support. Building trust requires institutional reforms, including mandatory sensitivity training for law enforcement and social service providers, and the establishment of confidential and anonymous reporting options. Japan's cultural emphasis on family honor and social harmony adds another layer of complexity. These norms discourage reporting, particularly for domestic violence and sexual assault. Addressing these requires a broader societal shift, promoted through public awareness campaigns and educational initiatives that emphasize the importance of personal safety over traditional values of privacy.

Specialized Recommendations

1) Develop Manga and Anime Series for Awareness Campaigns, with Ethical Safeguards

Manga and anime can serve as powerful tools for awareness, using relatable characters to educate audiences on victim rights, support resources, and resilience. However, care must be taken to avoid problematic themes like the sexualization of minors, which is prevalent in some manga and anime genres. Collaborations with ethical manga artists and studios could ensure that the content focuses on empowerment and resilience, promoting safe messages while being sensitive to depictions that could be triggering or inappropriate for vulnerable audiences.

2) Utilize Maid Cafes and Themed Spaces for Discreet Outreach and Support, Ensuring Safe Messaging

Partnering with popular themed spaces, such as maid cafes, can help make support information accessible in familiar and non-threatening environments. However, it is crucial to recognize the risk of reinforcing gender stereotypes or promoting settings that may inadvertently trivialize or fetishize trauma. Training staff to provide accurate, supportive resources without objectifying victim experiences is essential. These spaces could host themed events that promote safety and resilience without crossing into problematic representations.

3) Include Anime Characters in Public Service Announcements, While Avoiding Harmful Stereotypes

Using beloved anime characters in Public Service Announcements (PSAs) can reach diverse demographics, but it's important to select characters that do not reinforce harmful stereotypes, such as victim-blaming or the fetishization of minors. Characters promoting victim support should be depicted as strong and supportive allies, ideally coming from well-regarded, positive role models in popular series. These PSAs can be shown in public spaces, such as transportation hubs and online platforms, to reach a wide audience.

4) Leverage VTubers for Awareness Campaigns, Ensuring Sensitivity to Audience

VTubers (Virtual YouTubers) are widely popular in Japan and can reach young

audiences with messages about victim rights and services. Collaborating with VTubers known for socially conscious content can create a supportive, relatable source of information. Ensuring these virtual personalities adhere to respectful and accurate messaging is vital to prevent trivialization of serious issues. VTubers could host Q&A sessions or educational content on support services, making difficult topics more accessible without glamorizing trauma.

5) Create Resource Hubs in Manga Libraries and Popular Gaming Centers with Age-Appropriate Content

Establishing safe spaces, like manga libraries or resource hubs in gaming centers, provides victims with access to information on rights and support services in familiar settings. Age-appropriate guidelines should be applied to ensure that resources do not inadvertently expose minors to mature or triggering content. Digital or print materials at these hubs could use empowering narratives that foster awareness and offer support, with content vetted for ethical appropriateness.

6) Launch Interactive Pop Culture Exhibits and Installations Addressing Trauma and Resilience

Interactive exhibits focused on overcoming adversity, such as those using VR/AR technology, can provide educational experiences about victim rights and support in a culturally engaging way. Care must be taken to present sensitive topics respectfully, avoiding graphic depictions of trauma. Content that promotes resilience and offers practical support resources could help foster empathy among visitors and connect victims with support information in a controlled, safe environment.

7) Implement Trauma-Informed Training and Sensitivity Protocols Across Pop Culture Venues

Introducing trauma-informed training for employees at themed cafes, game centers, and other popular venues can create supportive environments that respect victim experiences. This training should include information on ethical standards to prevent content or behaviors that could inadvertently exploit vulnerable populations. For example, staff could be educated on the dangers of sexualizing minors and trained to provide information in a respectful, professional manner when discussing support services with patrons.

8) Expand Access to Digital Support Platforms with Clear Ethical Guidelines for Engagement

Digital platforms that provide access to counseling, legal resources, and information on victim rights could cater to victims who prefer anonymous, discreet options. These platforms should have strict guidelines to avoid exploitative content and ensure that support resources are portrayed respectfully. Collaborations with ethical digital creators and moderators could ensure that the platform remains a safe space for victims, especially for minors and those who may be vulnerable to exploitation.

9) Host Cultural Events and Safe Reporting Booths at Pop Culture Conventions, with Focus on Protection

Setting up safe spaces or booths for reporting and gathering information at anime conventions or other large-scale pop culture events could help connect victims with support services. These booths could offer discreet assistance and information in multiple languages, staffed by trained personnel who understand the sensitivities of providing support in a public space. Additionally, ethical standards should be applied to prevent any content or marketing that could inadvertently glamorize trauma or perpetuate stereotypes.

10) Develop Media Literacy Programs Addressing Ethical Depictions of Victims in Pop Culture

Educational programs focusing on media literacy could help the public recognize and challenge problematic portrayals of victimization in manga, anime, and other media. These programs could be integrated into school curriculums, community centers, or digital platforms, teaching young people to critically engage with media and recognize issues like the sexualization of minors or victim-blaming. By fostering a culture of informed consumption, Japan can promote safer and more supportive narratives around victim rights.

10. Future Research Directions

The complexity of Osaka's victim support challenges opens up numerous avenues for further research. First, longitudinal studies could track the effectiveness of mobile support units and digital platforms, assessing whether they truly increase accessibility for underserved populations. Additionally, research should investigate how multilingual and victim-friendly outreach campaigns impact reporting and service utilization rates among marginalized communities.

Exploring the effects of trauma-informed training for law enforcement and social workers would also be valuable, focusing on whether these interventions enhance trust and improve victims' experiences with institutions. Another area for future study is the efficacy of safe reporting centers in reducing underreporting among victims, especially in tightly knit communities with cultural stigmas around victimization.

Finally, assessing the societal impact of cultural sensitivity and anti-discrimination campaigns through shifts in public attitudes and behaviors would provide critical insights into the long-term success of these initiatives. By exploring these areas, future research can continue to inform effective policy and practice, contributing to a more inclusive and accessible support network for all victims in Osaka.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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