

# Prevention of latent victimization faced by women

## Abstract

Latent victimization or in the author's word "dark statistics of crime" or intangible victimization is a type of victimization in which firstly, its label as a victimization is not visible or apparent and, in some cases, it is not even acceptable as a victimization; secondly, it does not conform to the known definition of victimization; thirdly, there are no statistics concerning it; fourthly, the duration of victimization does not have a certain limit; and finally, in most of the cases, criminal of such victimization is not known or at least there is not a direct criminal.

Due to various historical, cultural, political, and economical reasons women are exposed to such victimization more. On the other hand, because of its profound, mysterious, and wide impact on the oncoming victimization, prevention of this type of victimization is particularly important. In order to prevent this type of victimization, some basic measures and basic and structural reformations in legislation and cultural, educational, economic, political, and, even, discourse domains are essential and inevitable.

**Keywords:** victimization, latent victimization, prevention, violence

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## Introduction

This paper aims at investigating prevention of latent victimization faced by women. But is it specific to women or both sexes are involved, if we take the definition proposed by the author for latent victimization into account? The answer is not absolutely positive. But as we will discuss, women are more exposed to such victimization, not simply because they are women, but they are treated differently in relation to their individual and social roles and generally they experience gender discrimination.

As we know, victims are those who are affected by crimes and suffer the outcomes of such crimes. Many of victims will become criminals as a result of the traumas they experience as victims.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, sometimes victimization is done in such a subtle, latent and invisible way or in justified and customized forms and by some individuals that it is difficult and doubtful to define it as a crime and identify the criminal. As a result it is ambiguous to identify the victim. The author believes the existence of black statistics that make it difficult and doubtful to investigate the causes of victimization and develop criminal policies to prevent and fight against victimization and similarly, latent victimization and high statistical figures concerning it make it difficult to prevent victimization. On the other hand, this type of victimization involves many invisible and destructive effects on activities and morale and particularly on women delinquency. Latent victimization is a type of victimization that not only doesn't conform to formal definitions of victimization, but also has not any direct criminal. On the other hand, it is not seen by the researchers, but its destructive and mysterious effects will appear over time and become unpredictable. This will become one of the underlying causes of delinquency especially among women. Therefore, the subject is worth studying.<sup>2</sup>

## First discussion: the causes of latent victimization of women

Before the start of the discussion, it should be noted that Ezzat

Fattah proposes a different definition for latent victim: "Latent victims refer to those who have a high predisposition and potential to be victimized and unconsciously expose themselves to victimization and push the perpetrator to their side. Masochists are the most prominent examples of such individuals.<sup>3</sup> Of course, the author does not agree with the choice of this title (hidden victim) for such victims. It seems that latent victim is a victim who is not clearly considered as a victim, and his tolerance of the traumas and the criminal acts is not seen formally and clearly. In other words, this is a kind of black statistics and can also be called intangible victimization. In this paper, latent victimization is investigated with such a definition proposed by the author. The definition proposed by Ezzat Fattah for latent victim is more consistent with seductive or stimulant victims.<sup>4</sup>

A. Causes of crime from a feminist criminological point of view: there has been a complete neglect of women in criminological investigations, partly due to the domination of men in academic criminology in the past and present time. The results of such investigations and studies are necessarily derived from a male-oriented approach and theory toward world and, on the other hand, the selection of research topics is based on the issues that are important and interesting for men. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to this issue. A fundamental part of feminist tries to reveal the hidden aspects of violence against women and the structural violations women have been subjected to for a long time. Therefore, this theory mainly places emphasis on certain types of crimes against women that are perpetrated simply because they are women.

It seems that the crimes perpetrated against women and the crimes they are involved in, are resulted from suppression and social oppression against women, as well as the economic dependence of women on men or on public institutions that provide financial aids for them.

B. One of the other causes of women's victimization is their little political involvement. This lead to women's voices often not heard in the decision-making process. Women often don't take part in de-

mocratic institutions. Only 15% of parliamentarians in the world are women, and women's organizations usually have little power to influence political discourse, while one of the expectations of advocates of any form of democracy is that it should represent all individuals. Countries vary with respect to limitation women experience for their presence in the society. However, there are boundaries and barriers for women presence in the political arena in all countries. Some of the most important factors contributing to this lack of presence are the fear that women may take on responsibilities that are still considered to be unique to women, cultural perceptions about the role and responsibility of women, political cultures that usually try to prohibit women from real and not symbolic political presence, and perhaps the unwillingness of most women to be involved in boring and competitive arenas of men.<sup>5</sup>

The author suggests that this type of man-oriented culture dominating our society has automatically caused political and social isolation of women. This political isolation may be one of the indirect or latent reasons contributing the victimization of women, though the author believes that violence against women's political rights appears to be a kind of direct latent victimization. In our discussion about prevention measures for avoiding victimization against women, we introduce the mechanisms to fight against such victimization.

## Second discussion: causes of violence against women

Violence is defined literally as anger, coarseness, bad-temperedness and something opposite to softness. Violence has been also defined as any aggressive behavior intended to harm another person. Some researchers also believe that violence encompasses a wide spectrum of behaviors from very harsh and harmful behaviors to negative reactions, such as indifference and neglect. As the author of the paper, I believe that assuming this definition means that the scope and domain of latent victimization of women by society and family, and even the dialogue, customs and culture are as widespread as the number of women in the world.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, violence against women is a clear example of women's victimization.<sup>7</sup> Violence against women may be psychological, physical, financial, and sexual:

**Psychological violence:** Refers to any kind of word and action that threatens the mental and psychological health of individuals such as unjust criticism, insult and humiliation.

Swearing, threatening to remarriage and divorce, restricting the freedom of behavior and activity, forcing to see images and scenes that are against the custom, etc consist most of the examples of latent victimization that can be classified as psychological violence.<sup>8</sup>

**Physical violence:** Any type of violent behavior that bring about injury and physical harm such as beating, choking, acid spraying, abortion because of the sex of the fetus and torture.<sup>9,10</sup>

**Sexual violence:** Any type of harsh behavior that involves sexual abuse and harm such as harassment, physical contact, rape, prostitution, and sex trade and creating pornographic content like images and videos.<sup>11</sup>

**Financial violence:** Any kind of violent behavior that causes pressure, harassment and financial discrimination such as failure to satisfy essential needs, abuse of property and assets of the spouse, etc.

In many parts of the world including our country, ruling over women and violence against them is considered normal. In many

cases, violence against women is not considered as violence and as a result no attempt is made to solve this problem. In Iran, women frequently experience violence. However, often they consider it as a private issue and do not let others to interfere. In many cases, the traditions and customs governing in the society supports violent behavior against women. The most common type of violence against women is family violence.

Violence against women in families causes irrecoverable harm to the family and society, which not only accompany physical and psychological damage to women, have adverse effects on children. Women have been accustomed to violence because they have experienced traditional pressures for thousands years and they always try not to disclose this violence to others. Based on statistical data, most women who have experienced violence don't file a complaint in court concerning such violence, and so this is latent violence. It can be said that men's violence and the acceptance of violence a phenomena that begins in childhood. The attitude of family members towards the boys of the family enhances the self-confidence and aggressive attitude in boys and makes girls susceptible to accept violence. Lack of laws for protecting women fuel the problem. Usually police, the judiciary and etc. try not to disclose such family problems because they consider such violence as a private matter relating to families.<sup>12-15</sup>

On the other hand, it is believed that woman (Eve) has tempted man (Adam) and this has ultimately led to man deprivation from Paradise. Such beliefs have led to portraying a devilish picture of women in western Christian world, and later in Islamic societies. Some Christian and Islamic clergies have used such mythology to refuse the concept of women and men equality in enjoying human rights. But the author views, they have forgotten that God has bestowed only one daughter to his prophet (peace be upon him) who is the main reason for the creation of the world. The magnificence of this woman called "the mom of his father" is not possible to understand by people. In the Holy Quran, God the most pious people as his most cherished servants. They have forgotten Quran Surah Al-Kausar. They have forgotten that what we say in the name of religion is not necessarily the word of God, but it is illusion in our own mind we use to justify our words and deeds. We must answer God for this. How beautiful is the word of the leader of Islamic republic of Iran, Imam Khomeini, that a man goes to the ascension from a woman's skirt. On the other hand, the economic mechanisms and even the physical characteristics of women are also factors contributing to the harms they experience. Beating a woman in the family always accompanies problems. This is partly because a set of factors contribute to such violence. Also, violence between family members is different from violence between people who do not have such family relationships, because violence occurs in the family in private, while other cases of violence often occur in the public. But no one witnesses the violence in the family, and in some cases even there isn't any one who resolves the problem. An important question is raised here: why women continue to live with such violent person? The answer lies in the degree of women's dependence on men in various aspects like economic, social, and emotional and etc. Even women's ignorance of their human rights plays a role here. This is indicated in the higher divorce rate among educated women.<sup>16,17</sup>

## Third discussion: prevention methods

One way to prevent victimization is to support the potential victim. On the other hand, prevention of victimization is considered as a kind of victim support, as supportive victimology is one of

the branches of victimology. On reason for protecting victims is to prevent delinquency of victims in the future, because they may try to take revenge on the perpetrator and the society that has not defended them against the violence. This is considerably more important factors that contribute in latent victimization. But, as the concept of support suggests, this is a reaction aimed at compensating the harm and recover the pains caused by the crime.<sup>18</sup> But in the author view, the nature of victimization is such that the stage after the victimization is not separable. This is because in most cases victimization lasts for a whole lifetime. Therefore, support plays an essential role for such victim and is needed to take effective measures and reform legal, economic, cultural and social structures.<sup>19,20</sup>

### The supportive method for family violence

According to Women's Rights magazine, one of the ways to prevent victimization of women and support victim women is the idea of Safe Room, My Room: "A group of experts believes women need a safe room to stay safe from family violence. Rashaklyi, a women's social worker in the UK believes that if women have a safe room for themselves in their homes. They can stay safe from the behavioral abuse of their spouses. This room is equipped with a telephone system and a single phone call is all needed to connect women to police."<sup>21-24</sup>

The room must enjoy safety features including doors and windows. This social worker and expert places emphasis on the importance of this issue: 'Domestic violence forces women to escape from their homes.<sup>3</sup> But they face more violence outside their homes. Therefore, providing them with security at home is an important step towards reducing violence against women.' 'We need to help people, especially women to ensure them that they are safe in the home, a place where most experts believe is the best choice to provide security'.<sup>25-28</sup>

### Prevention of victimization of women with more political presence in society

So far in this paper, whenever we talked about the causes of victimization of women, we pointed to instability of the women, the lack of a social center for women and, most importantly, the weak political presence of women in society as the causes of such victimization. But how can we enhance the involvement of women in political arena to prevent such victimization? Continuous efforts must be made to create cultural and social change in order to take infrastructural measures for eradication of poverty among women. Additionally, providing them with the necessary education to enter the fields that were previously participated with men predominance and empower women's group is one of the most important ways to support the women presence through political parties and groups. This concept is often called Kuta's mechanism and is one of the most effective ways to encourage women to involve in political areas.<sup>29</sup> In some cases, legal enforcement of Kuta's mechanism has been encouraged and enhanced through legislation of national and regional laws and. In rare cases, this mechanism has been considered in the constitution. Kuta's mechanism is legally protected by either assigning a certain number of seats in the parliament to women (Reserved seats) or by requiring them to consider a certain percentage of their seats for women. The reserved seats for women have been implemented in Uganda and Tanzania. In this system, always a number of seats are considered for women. In Nepal, parties must consider 5% of their seats for women. Usually, legal support is the most ideal strategy for improving the participation of women in political areas, as a certain number of women will always be involved in political activities. A

brief comparative study conducted on Kuta's mechanism indicated its high impact on women's political involvement. However, some critics of this mechanism are advocates of other mechanisms such as education, enhancement and empowerment of women.<sup>30-34</sup>

### Prevention based on the idea of higher importance of health in relation to beauty

Gradual victimization of women is partly due to the use of women to promote fashion and beauty, which leads to cosmetic surgery and poor diets. In some cases, these methods even threaten the life of women, who unfortunately still have not be able to find their true status in most areas.<sup>35</sup>

An intense competition has begun between women's health and beauty since a decade ago. The first formal victory was recorded for women's health. An international world fashion show is held annually in Madrid, Spain. They announced that very lean mannequins are not eligible to attend the fashion show, because some of the mannequins are so lean that represent the appearance of a patient, instead of showing the beauty of body parts. About 30% of mannequins that participated in the show last year haven't been accepted to participate this year, because they their weight to height ratios have been lower than the health level, although many designers of cloths and mannequins have objected to this decision. This decision is considered a success for advocates of women's health. The officials of this show emphasized that very slim mannequins with the appearance of patients will not be allowed to participate in the show, because women's health is more important to their beauty. Additionally, they announced that emphasis of the show will be placed on the quality of the designs and clothes, rather than on the promotion of unhealthy slimness of women. According to the director of the annual fashion show which is held in Madrid, this decision is important for health, though it may surprise a lot of people. This decision is the first formal step to emphasize the importance of women's health and oppose the promotion of unhealthy slimness as a female beauty. This news was reported by CNN as a quote from Reuters news agency. This report indicates that for the first time, some practitioners of fashion industry have taken responsibility for promotion of beauty and have opposed to the promotion of unhealthy and wrong pictures of women beauty.<sup>36-40</sup>

Fashion industry, magazines, Hollywood films, advertisements and generally mass media define stereotypes of beautiful woman. These stereotypes portray a woman which is overly and abnormally slim and deprived from a healthy diet and does not have healthy and enough food. This slim body image has been frequently repeated in various media. As a result, overly slim body has become a criterion for beauty body. Usually, young women and girls resort to diets in an attempt to reach such beauty. Sometimes they go so extreme that they get they become ill due to not eating sufficient food including loss of natural anorexia and bulimia. In the United States, one out of every five girl students suffers from illnesses resulted from no eating enough food.<sup>41</sup> About 20% of individuals that suffer these diseases loss their lives. Feminist researchers and activists try to show people that such slim body is a wrong and artificial criterion for women beauty and does not conform to the reality of normal life.<sup>42</sup> For instance, they point to a Barbie bride doll with over two meters height and only 46 kg weight that is promoted as the standard of woman beauty, while an average US woman's height and weight are 163 cm and 66 kg, respectively. If the Barbie doll was alive with the same qualities, she could not stand his weight, not to mention that she could not be pregnant at all. Doesn't this exemplify latent victimization of women?<sup>43,44</sup>

## Conclusion

Studies suggest that the prevention of victimization depends on the identity of the victim and when and where these strategies are implemented. The undeniable fact is that woman and man are two different sexes, but the dark side of the fact is that this difference has become a basis for discrimination and always has accompanied negative implications for women. The author of the paper believes that justice doesn't mean equality, but justice is to consider difference and judge accordingly. But when this difference always benefits one side, it means injustice. If this difference has been viewed and created based on a correct base and free of any bias, it would never have caused gender discrimination in societies. If the difference has been created to meet a right objective, it will accompany the right proportions and justice. The author believes that men and women are equal from human worth viewpoint because according to the Quran, the most cherished people for God are the most pious ones. The author believes that fair opportunities and rights must be provided for gender based on their difference and women should not be considered as lower beings. She also believes that women should not be deprived of political and economic rights, as this deprivation is an indirect reason behind victimization of women and the society itself must pay the costs associated to this gender perspective. Indeed any victimization is a potential crime and delinquency and when we talk about a victim, it is a warning signal that indicates potential criminals and delinquent in the future. But the author believes that the following factors contribute to the victimization of women, especially, latent victimization of them:

- a. There are some acts and provisions in the Civil Code and the Islamic Penal Code that have institutionalized the victimization of women and violence against them.<sup>41</sup> For example, the precise meaning of *Osr va Haraj* (Hardship) must be precisely defined in the law, in order to prevent reverend judges to practice their personal taste and not to consider daily beatings of women as *Osr va Haraj* without any discrimination. Also, in the next step, after the woman confirmed this *Osr va Haraj* in the court, this revised and clear definition prevent the deprivation of women from their absolute rights. Of course, she may frequently become victim in the course of proceedings to prevent *Osr va Haraj* in the court. And most importantly, the certificate of incompatibility has been issued for some women, but their problem has not been still resolved because of lack of guarantees for implementing it for men.
- b. A patriarchal culture is dominant in the society and men insist on this culture. In spite of this fact, unfortunately some women have accepted this culture and superiority of men.
- c. Women don't enjoy a stable social status from the perspective of society and even women themselves.
- d. Women are treated based on their gender and such behaviors are absolutely dominant in the society. This leads to the deprivation of women from job opportunities and their diminished involvement in political areas.
- e. There are problems in the upbringing of children in the families that make girls to accept violence and make boys violent.
- f. There is a lack of self-esteem and self-empowerment due to educational and training reasons.<sup>45</sup>
- g. Women and men suffer poor Islamic insight concerning the issue.

According to Maslow's table, one of the human needs is the need to be respected.<sup>46</sup> But some societies deprive women from gaining their legitimate status or legitimate position in a period of time that women are also forced to participate in social activities. This happens through distortion of values, deprivation of women from their opportunities and insisting on male gender role and patriarchal culture. As a result, this thought begins to form in such women that the only way remained for them to achieve respect and express themselves is to have beautiful face, beautiful body, and become more attractive. However, this increases the delinquency of women in the form of sexual crimes and brings about the victimization of these women. As a result, they resort to cosmetic operations and diets in order to lose weight at the expense of their health. Doesn't this lead to the victimization of women? Doesn't this lead to a type of victimization and violence against woman's tired body and soul? More transparent and effective policies can be made concerning women through increasing women's education and empowerment level and using Kuta's mechanism for increasing their political participation. This is because women deal with such problems and they are more effective in devising solutions to their own problems. Additionally, the presence of women in political positions reflects their ability and creates self-esteem in women. This breaks one of the gender-based laws that has a history as long as the history of human being. On the other hand, women has always witnessed that superior post have been taken by men and so the domination of such man-oriented is obvious. As feminists believe, change in discourse is required to moderate the dominant culture. Aren't the terms like "being human" and "human words" better than the terms like "being male" and "male words", respectively? Family violence finds more opportunities to appear when it interferes with the concept of privacy. Such interference forces women to tolerate victimization to prevent the violation of this privacy and disassociation of the family warmth. In such condition, man continues to abusing the concept of privacy as an excuse for their delinquency and crimes. In order to prevent this trend, legislation of laws is required to protect women against family violence. Such legislation should involve a separate criminal description for those who perpetrate family violence. Also, stringent regulations are needed for law enforcers to prevent them from failing to do so and ensure the women's right. In addition, a legal exception is needed for the scope of the concept of privacy in order to prevent someone to misuse this libertarian concept and cover their unjustified acts.<sup>47</sup>

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## Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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