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Victimological Characteristics of Violence Against Women and Improving its Prevention

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Abstract: This article examines the victimological characteristics of violence against women and explores ways to improve its prevention. The study focuses on the social, criminological, psychological, and legal factors that contribute to women becoming victims of violence. Particular attention is paid to the characteristics of victims, the circumstances and forms of violent behavior, risk factors associated with repeated victimization, and the challenges of identifying latent cases of violence. The article analyzes the importance of victimological prevention in reducing the likelihood of violence and protecting women’s rights and legitimate interests. The study also considers the role of law enforcement agencies, social institutions, and community-based prevention mechanisms in identifying risk situations and providing timely assistance to victims. Based on the analysis, proposals are developed for improving preventive measures, strengthening interagency cooperation, enhancing early identification of potential victims, and increasing the effectiveness of legal, social, and psychological support. The findings emphasize the need for an integrated victimological approach aimed not only at responding to committed acts of violence but also at preventing repeated victimization and addressing the underlying risk factors.

Keywords: Violence Against Women, Victimology, Victimization, Victimological Characteristics, Domestic Violence, Criminology, Prevention, Repeated Victimization, Victim Protection, Risk Factors, Law Enforcement, Legal Protection, Social Support

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1. Introduction

Violence against women remains a significant social, legal, and criminological problem that affects the physical safety, psychological well-being, dignity, and fundamental rights of victims. It may occur in different forms, including physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and domestic violence, and can arise both within family relationships and in broader social environments. The victimological study of such violence is particularly important because effective prevention requires not only an examination of offenders and the circumstances of crimes, but also a systematic analysis of the characteristics, vulnerability factors, behavioral patterns, and social circumstances of victims.[1]

From a victimological perspective, women who experience violence may differ considerably in terms of age, social status, family circumstances, economic independence, education,

employment, and access to social and legal support. Certain circumstances may increase the risk of victimization, including economic dependence on an abusive partner, social isolation, previous exposure to violence, lack of awareness of legal remedies, and reluctance to seek assistance. At the same time, the existence of such factors should not be interpreted as placing responsibility for violence on the victim. Responsibility for violent conduct remains with the perpetrator, while victimological analysis serves to identify circumstances in which effective protection and prevention can be strengthened.

An important characteristic of violence against women is that many incidents may remain unreported. Victims may refrain from contacting law enforcement or social services because of fear of retaliation, economic dependence, concern for children, social pressure, lack of information about available assistance, or distrust of institutions. Consequently, official statistics may not fully reflect the actual scale of victimization. The identification of latent forms of violence therefore represents an important element of victimological research and preventive policy.[2]

The prevention of violence against women requires a comprehensive approach combining legal, institutional, social, psychological, and community-based measures. Law enforcement agencies play an important role in identifying threats, responding to reported incidents, protecting victims, and preventing repeated violence. However, effective prevention also depends on cooperation between law enforcement bodies, healthcare institutions, educational organizations, social protection services, local communities, and specialized support organizations. Early identification of risk factors and timely intervention can contribute to reducing the probability of repeated victimization.

The relevance of this study is also determined by the need to improve victimological prevention mechanisms. Traditional preventive measures that focus primarily on the offender may be insufficient when victims remain exposed to continuing risks. A victim-oriented approach makes it possible to identify individual and situational vulnerabilities, develop appropriate protection measures, improve access to legal and psychological assistance, and establish mechanisms for preventing repeated victimization.[3]

The purpose of this study is to examine the victimological characteristics of violence against women and identify ways to improve its prevention. The study focuses on the factors associated with women's victimization, the circumstances in which violence occurs, the problems of detecting latent cases, and the institutional mechanisms available for protecting victims. Particular attention is given to measures aimed at early prevention, victim protection, interagency cooperation, and reducing the risk of repeated violence.

The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of using its findings to improve preventive activities, strengthen victim protection mechanisms, increase the effectiveness of cooperation between relevant institutions, and develop more targeted approaches to preventing violence against women.[4]

2. Methods

The methodological basis of the study is formed by a combination of criminological, victimological, legal, sociological, and analytical approaches. The victimological approach is used as the central methodological framework because it allows the research to examine violence against women from the perspective of victimization, vulnerability factors, victim–offender interaction, and the circumstances contributing to repeated victimization. The criminological approach is applied to identify the causes and conditions associated with violent behavior, while the legal approach is used to examine mechanisms for protecting victims and preventing violence within the relevant legal framework.

The study employs methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison, classification, and generalization. The analytical method is used to examine the main forms and characteristics of violence against women and to identify factors that may increase the risk of victimization. The

comparative method makes it possible to distinguish different categories of victims and different forms of violence according to their circumstances, frequency, consequences, and preventive requirements. Classification is used to systematize victimological risk factors into social, economic, psychological, family-related, and institutional categories.[5]

Particular attention is given to the analysis of repeated victimization. For this purpose, the study considers the circumstances that may contribute to the continuation or recurrence of violence, including the victim's dependence on the offender, social isolation, insufficient institutional protection, and limited access to support services. The research also considers latent victimization as an important methodological category, since the absence of an official complaint does not necessarily indicate the absence of violence.

A comprehensive approach is applied to evaluate existing prevention mechanisms. Preventive measures are examined at several levels: individual prevention directed toward persons exposed to a high risk of victimization; family-level prevention addressing situations in which violence occurs within intimate or family relationships; institutional prevention involving law enforcement and social protection bodies; and community-level prevention aimed at increasing awareness, early identification of risk, and access to assistance.[6]

The methodological framework also incorporates a systems approach, which allows victim protection and violence prevention to be considered as interconnected elements of a single institutional mechanism. On this basis, attention is paid to the coordination of law enforcement agencies, healthcare providers, social services, educational institutions, local communities, and other relevant organizations. The combination of these methods makes it possible to develop a comprehensive understanding of the victimological characteristics of violence against women and formulate scientifically grounded directions for improving its prevention.

3. Results and Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that violence against women should be considered not only as an individual criminal act but also as a complex victimological phenomenon influenced by interconnected social, economic, family, psychological, and institutional factors. From a victimological perspective, the characteristics of victims and the circumstances surrounding violent incidents are important for developing effective prevention mechanisms. The results indicate that victimization is frequently associated with a combination of vulnerability factors rather than with a single isolated circumstance.[7]

One of the important findings concerns the role of family and interpersonal relationships in the occurrence and continuation of violence. In situations involving domestic violence, the victim and perpetrator may remain in close and continuing contact, which distinguishes such cases from many other forms of criminal victimization. Economic dependence, shared housing, the presence of children, emotional dependence, and social pressure may make it difficult for victims to immediately terminate contact with the perpetrator or seek assistance. Consequently, preventive measures should take into account not only the fact of violence itself but also the continuing relationship between the victim and the offender.[8]

The analysis also demonstrates the importance of distinguishing different forms of violence. Physical violence is generally more visible because it may produce identifiable injuries; however, psychological and economic forms of violence can remain less visible while significantly affecting the victim's ability to exercise personal autonomy. Psychological pressure, intimidation, threats, humiliation, controlling behavior, and economic restrictions may contribute to prolonged victimization and create conditions in which subsequent acts of violence become more difficult to prevent. Therefore, preventive mechanisms should not be limited to responding to visible physical harm.

Another significant result concerns the problem of latent victimization. Women may refrain from reporting violence because of fear of retaliation, concerns about children, economic

dependence, social stigma, family pressure, or uncertainty about available legal and social support. As a result, official records may not fully represent the actual extent of victimization. This indicates the importance of developing mechanisms for early identification of risk situations through healthcare institutions, social services, educational organizations, community structures, and other institutions that may come into contact with persons experiencing violence.[9]

The findings further indicate that repeated victimization requires particular attention. If the causes and circumstances that generated the initial violent incident remain unchanged, the victim may continue to face a significant risk of further violence. Consequently, preventive intervention should not end with the registration of an incident or the application of a particular legal measure. Effective prevention requires continuous assessment of risk, monitoring of dangerous situations, access to safe accommodation and support services where necessary, legal assistance, and appropriate psychological and social support.[10]

An important aspect of improving victimological prevention is the development of individualized preventive measures. Victims have different levels of vulnerability and different social circumstances; therefore, a uniform preventive response may not be equally effective in every case. Individual risk assessment can help determine the appropriate combination of legal protection, social assistance, psychological support, and institutional intervention. Such an approach also makes it possible to identify cases requiring urgent intervention and situations in which the probability of repeated victimization is particularly high.[11]

The study also highlights the importance of interagency cooperation. Effective protection of women requires coordinated interaction between law enforcement agencies, healthcare organizations, social protection institutions, educational bodies, local community structures, and specialized support services. Fragmented responses can result in delays, duplication of activities, or gaps in victim protection. Establishing clear procedures for information exchange, referral, risk assessment, and follow-up support can therefore strengthen the overall prevention system.[12]

The results suggest that law enforcement agencies have a particularly important role in the early identification and prevention of violence. Their activities should include timely registration and assessment of reports, identification of risk factors, protection of victims, prevention of repeated violence, and coordination with relevant social and legal services. At the same time, the effectiveness of law enforcement intervention can be strengthened when officers receive specialized training in victim-sensitive communication, risk assessment, and the identification of less visible forms of violence.[13]

The victimological approach also demonstrates the importance of preventing secondary victimization. A woman who has experienced violence may face additional psychological or social pressure when seeking assistance. Insensitive treatment, repeated questioning without appropriate safeguards, disclosure of confidential information, or failure to provide adequate information about available remedies can discourage victims from further cooperation with institutions. Therefore, victim protection should include not only protection from the original perpetrator but also procedures designed to ensure respectful, confidential, and rights-based treatment throughout the assistance process.[14]

Based on these findings, improving the prevention of violence against women requires a transition from predominantly reactive intervention toward a more proactive and risk-oriented victimological model. Such a model should combine early identification, individualized risk assessment, immediate protection where necessary, continuous support, interagency coordination, and measures aimed at preventing repeated victimization. The effectiveness of prevention should consequently be assessed not only by the number of detected incidents but also by the ability of preventive institutions to reduce recurring risks and improve the safety and access to assistance of victims.[15]

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that violence against women represents a multidimensional victimological phenomenon that cannot be effectively addressed through isolated legal or law enforcement measures alone. The risk of victimization is influenced by a combination of family, social, economic, psychological, and institutional circumstances. Therefore, the prevention system should be based on a comprehensive understanding of the victim's situation and the specific circumstances that may contribute to continued or repeated violence.

The analysis confirms the importance of identifying victims and potential victims at an early stage. Particular attention should be directed toward circumstances associated with increased vulnerability, including economic dependence, social isolation, previous exposure to violence, threats, controlling behavior, and limited access to legal and social assistance. Identification of such circumstances can provide an opportunity for preventive intervention before violence becomes repeated or more severe.

A significant direction for improvement is the development of individualized victimological prevention. Preventive measures should correspond to the specific risks faced by each victim and may include legal protection, psychological assistance, social support, temporary safety measures, and continuous monitoring of high-risk situations. Such an approach can make preventive activities more targeted and responsive to the actual needs of victims.

Strengthening interagency cooperation is another important condition for improving prevention. Law enforcement agencies, healthcare institutions, social protection bodies, local communities, educational organizations, and specialized support services should operate within a coordinated system of victim identification, referral, protection, and follow-up assistance. Clear institutional responsibilities and effective information-sharing procedures can reduce gaps in victim protection.

The prevention of repeated victimization should also become an important component of preventive policy. Assistance should not be limited to the immediate response to an incident. Where continuing risk exists, preventive institutions should evaluate the circumstances that may lead to renewed violence and take appropriate protective measures. This approach makes it possible to address not only the consequences of violence but also the conditions that allow victimization to recur.

The study further emphasizes the need to reduce secondary victimization. Women who seek protection should receive respectful, confidential, and legally appropriate treatment. Improving professional training for law enforcement officers and other specialists who work directly with victims can contribute to more effective communication, better risk assessment, and greater trust in support mechanisms.

Improving the prevention of violence against women requires an integrated victimological model that combines early detection, individualized risk assessment, legal protection, social and psychological support, interagency cooperation, and prevention of repeated victimization. The implementation of these measures can strengthen the institutional capacity to protect women, improve the effectiveness of preventive activities, and contribute to the creation of a safer social environment in which victims can exercise their rights and obtain timely assistance.

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