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# A DEFENCE AGAINST MISAPPREHENSIONS OF VICTIMOLOGY

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Ishaan Deepak Joshi, MIT-WPU, Faculty of Law

## ABSTRACT

The field of victimology emerged as a discipline in social science in the course of the 1940s, coinciding with a notable shift in scholarly attention towards victims as a means to enhance comprehension of criminal behaviour. The initial scholars in the field of victimology directed their attention towards examining the involvement of victims in criminal incidents, leading to the formulation of the notion that certain victims may actively contribute to or incite their own victimisation. In recent decades, there has been a significant expansion in the field of victimology, primarily driven by advancements in the quantification of victimisation, the criminal justice system's approach to victims, and the increased focus on victim trauma and support services. The examination of victimisation has been broadened as a result of the contributions made by various scholars who have developed a range of theoretical frameworks aimed at enhancing our comprehension of the factors that contribute to differential rates of victimisation among individuals and groups. Nevertheless, these theories have faced criticism due to the perception that they attribute blame to victims for their own victimisation. The aforementioned theories have been subject to frequent criticism due to their tendency to assign blame to the victims. These hypotheses include the Victim Precipitation Theory, the Lifestyle theory, the Routine activities theories, as well as the Deviant Place Theory. This article provides a proper summary of various theories.

## **The Concept of the Victim Precipitation Theory**

During the course of the 1950s, Wolfgang introduced the term victim precipitation to describe situations whereby the victim was the initial instigator in the incident that led to their harm or detriment. The victim precipitation concept posits that victims can, either actively or passively, initiate an unlawful act that eventually ends in harm or fatality. The concept of "proactive precipitation" pertains to situations where the victim actively provokes or incites the perpetrator.

Passive precipitation refers to the occurrence when an individual, without deliberate intent, engages in behaviours or possesses certain characteristics that serve as catalysts or incentives for an attack. The occurrence of passive precipitation typically arises as a consequence of a power struggle. Academics have established a strong correlation between their comprehension of domestic abuse and violence from intimate partners.

The victim experiences a lack of agency due to the varying dynamics within their relationships. The majority of studies have consistently emphasised the power disparity between women, who are typically perceived as having less power, and men, who are often associated with greater power due to societal expectations of them as primary earners in households.

Consequently, a state of passive precipitation arises, wherein the woman assumes a dependent role in relation to the man, particularly within the context of a familial group setting. The individual may experience a sense of obligation to remain in abusive relationships in order to preserve a consistent and secure familial environment, as they may harbour concerns regarding their ability to independently provide for their household.

## **The Lifestyle Theory Framework of Victimization**

The concept of lifestyle theory is a theoretical framework that seeks to understand and explain the various aspects of an individual's

According to the lifestyle theory, individuals are targeted by criminals as a result of their choices in lifestyle. Numerous options available to victims inadvertently place them in proximity to perpetrators of crime and circumstances that are conducive to the occurrence of criminal activities. This theory additionally references research that demonstrates an association between the ways of life of individuals who have experienced victimisation and those who engage in offending behaviour. Both individuals exhibit impulsive behaviour and demonstrate a lack of self-control, thereby increasing the likelihood of the victim engaging in

dangerous circumstances and the culprit participating in unlawful activities. Any alteration in the customary behaviours of an individual or a collective, whether it pertains to prospective victims or perpetrators, can have a significant impact on the level of risk exposure and the potential for victimisation. The ideology posits that an individual's demographic characteristics are closely linked to their lifestyle and rates of victimisation. These characteristics include gender, marital status, age, race, as well as income. This proposition is derived from an analysis of behavioural patterns exhibited by individuals based on their respective demographic categories. For instance, it is commonly believed that men belonging to specific age groups and social statuses tend to adopt lifestyles that are associated with their respective demographic characteristics. Unmarried young men are thought to engage in late-night activities due to the absence of familial obligations that would necessitate their presence at home during those hours. This not only exposes individuals to the potential of becoming victims, but also increases the likelihood of their involvement with perpetrators, potentially leading them to adopt a nocturnal lifestyle. Based on the tenets of lifestyle theory, specific individuals possess a heightened susceptibility to becoming victims due to their engagement in actions, habits, or practises that increase their likelihood of encountering criminal acts and individuals. This phenomenon aligns with the principle of homogamy, which posits that individuals are at a higher risk of victimisation when they frequently interact or associate with members of social strata that have an overrepresentation of individuals involved in criminal activities. The risk of victimisation can be influenced by the extent to which an individual's lifestyle renders them vulnerable and prone to becoming victimised.

### **Hypothesis of Victimization as a Cause of Routine Activity**

The theoretical framework known as the routine activities theory, developed by Cohen and Felson, first emerged during the 1970s. The concept posits that victimisation and crime arise from individuals' routine activities, influencing the occurrence of crime in terms of the individuals involved, the locations, and the timing. The theory of routine activities posits that the occurrence of a crime necessitates the presence of three essential elements: a target that is vulnerable and conducive to criminal activity, an individual with the motivation to engage in criminal behaviour, and a dearth of capable guardians who can effectively prevent or deter the commission of the crime. The selection of a suitable target by a perpetrator is contingent upon the vulnerability of the victim. In order to ascertain the selection of victims, the perpetrator will engage in the observation of various factors including the victim's geographical whereabouts, lifestyle patterns, and behavioural tendencies. In the event that an individual with criminal

intent desires to unlawfully enter a residential property that exhibits indications of easy accessibility and valuable possessions, it becomes imperative for the offender to conduct a thorough examination of the homeowner's routine activities and the security measures implemented within the premises. Naturally, this signifies prioritising the victim's participation in the criminal sequence. Nevertheless, this study offers an analysis of the cognitive processes that the offender contemplates before engaging in the specific offence, thus providing insight into the development of the offending sequence. Capable guardians refer to individuals or objects that play a role in deterring the occurrence of criminal activities. Neighbourhood residents, educators, and parents are all potential individuals who possess the ability to serve as guardians. The absence of guardianship is associated with an elevated incidence of victimisation and criminal behaviour. According to the concept, the perpetration of a crime necessitates the presence of a motivating factor on the part of the offender. Stated differently, it is imperative for the perpetrator to possess the volition to engage in the unlawful act. The final component pertains to the motivated offender. According to Melander and Hughes (year), this element pertains to the personal inclinations of the offender that serve as motivating factors for engaging in criminal behaviour. Naturally, the influencing factors will differ based on an individual's goals and characteristics pertaining to engaging in criminal behaviour. For example, an adolescent who is engaging in initial drug experimentation. Individuals may exhibit motivation driven by their compulsion to satisfy their addictive tendencies. Consequently, this heightened state of motivation may prompt individuals to engage in criminal behaviour, if necessary, as a means to alleviate their drug addiction. Consequently, the perpetration of a criminal act engenders a scenario wherein an individual becomes a victim.

### **Risks of Exposure to Dangerous Places**

The deviant place theory is a criminological perspective that seeks to explain criminal behaviour by examining the influence of environmental factors on individuals.

The deviant place theory posits that an individual's likelihood of experiencing victimisation increases as they frequent hazardous locations, thereby increasing their exposure to criminal activities. Based on the proposed hypothesis, it is posited that individuals residing in socially unorganised high-crime areas are susceptible to victimisation, irrespective of their involvement in instigating the crime. Individuals residing in areas with high crime rates are at a heightened likelihood of coming into contact with individuals who have committed offences, irrespective of their own engagement in hazardous conduct or adoption of a perilous lifestyle. The

victimology hypothesis posits that safety measures implemented in high-risk neighbourhoods may have limited efficacy, as the population residing in these areas, rather than the victim's individual lifestyle choices, plays a significant role in increasing the likelihood of victimisation. In the event that an individual resides in a neighbourhood characterised by deviant behaviour, the sole recourse available to mitigate their susceptibility to criminal victimisation is to shift to a neighbourhood exhibiting lower levels of deviance and risk, thereby possessing a diminished crime rate.

### **Theorizations of Victimology**

The intent of victimisation hypotheses is to provide a framework for understanding the factors and processes that contribute to individuals becoming victims of crime or other harmful acts.

The process of theorising holds significant value within the realm of research in social science as it facilitates the analysis of behavioural patterns across diverse contexts and circumstances. It facilitates the establishment of groups that have been methodically linked through assertions of connections or a broader theoretical structure that aims to elucidate the phenomenon being examined and subsequently endeavour to delineate its genesis based on said phenomenon and its attributes. The primary objective of victimology hypotheses is not to assign culpability to the victims, as some scholars have contended.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to raise awareness regarding the various factors that contribute to an individual's susceptibility to victimisation or being singled out. The comprehension and examination of victims play a crucial role in the formulation of efficient deterrence strategies, as it facilitates criminologists' enhanced understanding of the respective roles assumed by all parties engaged in the sequential progression of criminal activities. The primary objective of any theoretical framework is to provide an explanation for observable phenomena and identify strategies for effecting change.

The primary objective is to ascertain a specific issue and devise a strategy for effecting a change in the circumstances. For instance, elucidations pertaining to the mechanisms and motivations underlying criminal behaviour, as well as elucidations regarding the factors contributing to individuals becoming victims of crime. One important consideration regarding victimisation pertains to the dissemination of information to victims regarding areas with high crime rates, commonly referred to as hot spots.

The objective is to provide individuals with information regarding areas where criminal activity

is prevalent, with the intention of encouraging them to avoid such locations, rather than imposing restrictions on their mobility. The decision to adopt these types of precautions is contingent upon the discretion of the individual. Furthermore, significant attention is currently being devoted to the examination of female victimisation due to its widespread prevalence. Numerous studies have devoted significant attention to the association between sexual violence victimisation and the clothing choices made by victims. The act of donning revealing attire has been recognised as a contributing element to the victimisation of women. It is important to clarify that the manner in which females dress should not be used as a justification for males to engage in sexual victimisation.

Nevertheless, it is important to advise women about the potential risks associated with wearing revealing attire, which may attract individuals with malicious intentions. In the scenario where a woman dons a short skirt and traverses a gathering of men, it is plausible for her to elicit compliments regarding her physical appearance. Conversely, there exists an additional cohort of individuals who will exhibit contrasting behaviour in comparison to the initial group, potentially engaging in the exchange of derogatory language and, in some cases, physically encroaching upon the personal space of the woman. The contrasting behaviour exhibited by these two groups highlights the inherent incomparability of individuals, as some individuals lack the capacity to exercise self-control and instead act impulsively. While it is true that there are individuals who hold women in high regard.

Therefore, the responsibility in this particular case continues to lie with the woman to utilise the precautionary measures available in order to prevent victimisation. Given the evident nature of this situation, it is crucial to incorporate victim hypotheses of this nature in order to educate men about the significance of self-restraint and the insufficiency of regulating women's bodies based on their perceived lack of control. When these discussions are openly conducted through academic studies, a platform is created where the issue of inappropriate behaviour can be openly discussed.

This allows for the inclusion of perspectives from both peers and elders who have either witnessed female victimisation resulting from such practises or have personally engaged in such behaviour and gained a clearer understanding through reflecting on their past mistakes. Another precautionary measure pertains to lifestyle, in accordance with the principles of the Lifestyle Theory. Individuals are advised to exercise caution regarding the routine activities of venturing out during late hours of the night. This situation exposes individuals to the potential

risk of becoming victims.

The theory in question does not assign blame to the victims, but rather advises them to be cautious of the potential presence of criminals during nighttime hours, who may be inclined to exploit any available opportunity to engage in criminal behaviour.

Consequently, individuals who traverse unaccompanied during nighttime are susceptible to victimisation, as they become targets for criminal activity. In order to mitigate the risk of victimisation, it is advisable to refrain from venturing out alone during nighttime, particularly in areas known for their high level of danger. Moreover, by comprehending the patterns of victimisation through the perspective of any one of the aforementioned theories, both the court system and the general public can enhance their ability to avert criminal activity and victimisation.

## **Conclusion**

As stated in the introduction of this paper, theories serve as guiding frameworks for researchers and other stakeholders in comprehending the reciprocal relationship between societal behaviours and the occurrence of crime and victimisation. Hence, in the examination of victimisation as a subject matter, the primary objective is to comprehensively assess the prevalence of victimisation, treating it with the same level of scrutiny as any other societal problem.

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