

Chapter 41

Gender and Victimization: A Global Analysis of Vulnerability

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ABSTRACT

Studies on victimization are on gender differences with limited emphasis on the vulnerability of the victims. The chapter therefore examines the gender differences and vulnerability of victims around the world. The theoretical orientation of this chapter was based on the feminist theory and lifestyle routine-activities theory. Data for this study were obtained from secondary data and reviewed literature. The study established gender variation in victimization in different regions with respect to types of crimes. Individuals and contextual factors responsible for the gender differentials in the level of victimization were identified. The chapter suggests a useful policy that directs learning toward a more encircling rationalization of violence that incorporates both general and crime-specific factors based on gender differences.

INTRODUCTION

The major concern recently on the research of victimization is the gender differences in the vulnerability of the victims. While males make-up the larger proportion of the crime victims, females account for considerable shares of both offenders and victims (Selmini&McElrath, 2014). At the individual level, victimization is common among young unmarried males with low self-esteem and who have been victimized in the past (Truman, & Langton, 2014, Holtfreter, Reisig, & Pratt, 2008). Males are likely to involve in risky lifestyles such as stealing, getting drunk in public places, selling drugs and hanging out with friends who are criminally minded. This makes victimization to be highly concentrated within the adolescent (Truman, & Langton, 2014). Risky behaviour and delinquent are more among the adolescent, as they spent much of their hours with peers outside homes. It was also believed that perceptions of victimization vary depending on the dimension and whose report is being considered. For example, Makepeace (1986) argued that females normally reported a serious crime of violence done to them,

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Gender and Victimization

being the principal victim and sustaining sexual assault, physical injury, and emotional trauma while males rarely reported sexual assault. The risks of victimization are also distributed by social structure and the highest rates of victimization are suffered by those with low status, little power, and limited economic resources.

While the gap between the female and male rates of victimization are varied over time and societies, most of the criminological theories have argued about the variations of victimizations based on the demographic and lifestyle routine activities (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Fisher & Wilkes, 2003). For instance, demographically it was believed that those aged 16-24 years have consistently shown high personal and property victimization compared with other age categories and women in the same age group are more at risk compared with men (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002). It was also argued that female-headed households are more vulnerable to victimizations for two reasons: they are less likely to acquire a safe lifestyle and there is a lack of adult family members who can provide protection (Gartner, Baker & Pampel, 1990). Also, the lifestyle routine-activities theories assert that proximity to crime, exposure to crime, capable guardianship and target attractiveness will determine the extent of victimization. Few studies have shown that gender is a predictor at individual levels and the results produced mixed evidence (Fraser, 1996; Kuperminc, Lead, Emmons, & Blatt, 1997). In Gartner, Baker & Pampel's (1990) study shown that the highest numbers of people suffering from violent victimizations are those with low economic status and fewer economic resources. Even though women generally have lower economic support and fewer resources, it was revealed that their chances of homicide victimization are lower compared with men. Also, traditionally women normally faced a lot of risks from domestic violence but were somewhat protected from public sources of violence typically experienced by men. Although there is decreasing in gender differentiation roles, this may likely increase their encounter with offenders within the social sphere. For instance, working outside the homes has been identified as one of the ways to involve women in labour participation and improve their economic status (Adeyemi, Odusina & Akintoye, 2016) but this will expand opportunity for women's victimization by increasing the number of high-risked persons and situations to which they are exposed. Also, the employment status of women may not provide them the economic power or resources that could be used to purchase safety. On the contrary, married women who are not working outside home will have limited encountered with high-risk groups. (Gartner, Baker & Pampel, 1990). This also may lead to intimate partner violence within the household because such women may not have a voice in the household decision making. Looking at various studies on victimization (Agnew, 2006, Holtfreter, Reisig, & Pratt, 2008, Apel & Burrow 2011, Truman, & Langton, 2014, Berg 2014) there is limited knowledge on gender variation on victimization, reliable knowledge of gender-based violence and female victimization are important. Since gender analysis of vulnerability will provide useful insight for policy concerning violence that incorporates both general and crime-specific factors. This paper, therefore, addresses the following pertinent questions: Are there any gender differentials in victimizations? Who is most vulnerable and why? Are there any regional differences in victimization? What are the general and specific factors responsible for differentials in the vulnerability among victims?

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

The theoretical model of this paper is based on the feminist approach and lifestyle/routine theory (Gartner, Baker & Pampel, 1990; Hindelang, Gottfredson, & Garofalo, 1978). The feminist approach asserts that

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