

UNCOVERING THE TRUTH: THE COMPLEXITY OF MALE VICTIMHOOD AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the complex issue of male victimhood and its impact on society. Despite the common belief that men are not victims, research shows that men do experience victimization in various forms, including physical violence, sexual assault, and emotional abuse. However, male victimhood is often hidden due to societal expectations of masculinity and the stigma surrounding male vulnerability. The paper discusses the ways in which male victimhood has been ignored and even dismissed in public discourse and policymaking. The lack of attention given to male victims has resulted in a lack of resources and support for those who have experienced trauma. This not only affects male individuals but also has broader implications for society as a whole. The paper highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing male victimhood, as it is crucial for promoting gender equality and reducing violence and trauma in society. It also explores the challenges of addressing male victimhood and the need for a nuanced and intersectional approach that takes into account the different experiences of men based on their race, sexuality, and socio-economic status. Overall, this paper aims to uncover the truth about male victimhood and its impact on society, emphasizing the need for greater awareness, understanding, and support for male victims. This paper also explains why men are silent.

Keywords: male victimhood, body, forms of victimization, implication policy, and practice, challenges, legal cases, and some acts and laws

INTRODUCTION

Male victimhood is a complex and often misunderstood issue that has a significant impact on society. Despite common misconceptions, men can and do experience victimization in various forms, including physical violence, sexual assault, and emotional abuse. However, societal expectations of masculinity and the stigma surrounding male vulnerability often prevent male victims from seeking help or receiving the support they need. This paper aims to explore the

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issue of male victimhood and its impact on society, highlighting the importance of recognizing and addressing male victimization. It will examine the different forms of male victimization and the challenges faced by male victims in seeking help and support. The paper will also explore the impact of male victimhood on society as a whole, highlighting the need for greater attention and resources to address this issue. The paper will begin by defining male victimhood and examining the social and cultural factors that contribute to its invisibility. It will then explore the different forms of male victimization, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and harassment, and the challenges faced by male victims in seeking help and support. The paper will also examine the impact of male victimhood on society, including the effects on individuals, families, and communities. Overall, this paper aims to shed light on the issue of male victimhood and its impact on society, challenging the common myths and misconceptions surrounding male victimization. It is hoped that this paper will contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding gender-based violence and trauma and promote a more inclusive and compassionate approach to supporting all victims, regardless of gender. By recognizing and addressing male victimhood, we can create a safer and more just society for all.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The issue of male victimhood is not a new phenomenon. Throughout history, men have experienced various forms of victimization, ranging from physical violence to emotional abuse. However, the recognition and acknowledgment of male victimhood have been limited due to societal expectations of masculinity and the belief that men should be strong and unemotional.

In the 1970s, the feminist movement brought attention to gender-based violence and the victimization of women, leading to significant progress in addressing these issues. However, the focus on women's victimization also led to the erasure of male victimhood, with men's experiences of violence and abuse being dismissed or ignored.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of male victimization, with studies showing that men experience a significant amount of violence and abuse. For example, the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey found that one in six men experience sexual violence during their lifetime, with rates of domestic violence also being significant.

Despite this recognition, male victimhood remains underreported and under-addressed due to a variety of factors, including societal expectations of masculinity, the stigma surrounding male

vulnerability, and the lack of resources available for male victims. These factors contribute to the invisibility of male victimhood and perpetuate the myth that men cannot be victims.

The historical background of male victimhood highlights the need for a more nuanced and intersectional approach to addressing gender-based violence and trauma, one that recognizes the different experiences of men based on their race, sexuality, and socio-economic status. By acknowledging and addressing male victimhood, we can create a more just and equitable society for all.

THE COMPLEXITY OF MALE VICTIMHOOD

Male victimhood is a complex phenomenon that encompasses a range of experiences. However, male victimhood is often misunderstood or overlooked due to societal expectations around masculinity and vulnerability. This section will provide a comprehensive definition of male victimhood, drawing on existing research and literature. It will also explore the impact of toxic masculinity on male survivors of gender-based violence, including the barriers to seeking help and the stigma attached to male victimhood

BODY

I. Societal expectations and gender roles:

The societal expectations placed on men to be strong and invulnerable perpetuate the idea that men cannot be victimized. Men are often expected to be the protectors and providers, reinforcing the idea that vulnerability and victimhood are signs of weakness. This can lead to a lack of recognition and support for male survivors of gender-based violence.

II. Toxic masculinity:

Toxic masculinity is a term used to describe harmful attitudes and behaviors associated with traditional notions of masculinity. It perpetuates the idea that men should be dominant, aggressive, and in control, leading to a normalization of violence against men and women. This reinforces the culture of silence around male victimization and creates a barrier to seeking help and support.

III. Impact on society:

The impact of male victimization extends beyond the individual to affect society as a whole. The perpetuation of toxic masculinity contributes to a culture of violence and aggression, leading to higher rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of gender-based violence. Additionally, the lack of recognition and support for male survivors perpetuates harmful gender roles and reinforces harmful gender norms.

For example:

Public Health: Male victimization can have significant public health consequences, such as increased rates of mental health issues, substance abuse, and risky behaviors. These consequences can not only affect the individuals directly involved but can also have broader societal implications.

Criminal Justice: Male victimization can have an impact on the criminal justice system, as male victims may face barriers in reporting and accessing support. Furthermore, male perpetrators of violence and abuse may also have a history of victimization, highlighting the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing the root causes of violence.

Gender Relations: Male victimization can also impact gender relations and societal attitudes towards masculinity and femininity. Societal norms that view men as strong and invulnerable can create a barrier for male victims to speak out and seek help. These norms can also contribute to gender inequality and stereotypes that can harm both men and women.

Economic Costs: Male victimization can have significant economic costs, such as healthcare costs, lost productivity, and criminal justice expenses. These costs can have a broader societal impact on resources and can create a burden on government and social services.

IV. Need for more inclusive support systems:

Support systems for male survivors of gender-based violence must be more inclusive and accessible. This includes challenging gender roles and stereotypes, providing education and training for service providers, and creating more specialized services for male survivors. It is also essential to recognize the importance of intersectionality and how other factors, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability, impact male victimization.

V. Challenges in seeking help:

Male victims of abuse and violence face a number of challenges when seeking help, including societal attitudes that downplay or dismiss their experiences. Many men may be hesitant to seek help due to a fear of being seen as weak or unmanly, or due to a lack of resources or support systems available to them. Additionally, some men may be reluctant to seek help from formal institutions like law enforcement or social services due to negative past experiences, or a perception that these systems are biased against men.

VI. Impact on mental health:

Research has shown that male victimization can have significant impacts on mental health and well-being. Male victims of abuse and violence are at an increased risk of developing depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental health disorders. These impacts can be long-lasting and may contribute to a range of negative outcomes, including increased substance use, decreased academic or work performance, and reduced quality of life.

VII. Gender equality and male victimization:

Gender inequality is a root cause of male victimization, with societal attitudes that prioritize masculine strength and aggression contributing to a culture that trivializes or dismisses male victimhood. This can lead to a lack of resources and support for male victims, as well as a reluctance on the part of men to seek help due to fear of being seen as weak or unmanly. Addressing gender inequality is therefore critical to promoting social justice for male victims.

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VIII. Intersectionality and male victimization:

Finally, intersectionality is an important consideration in understanding male victimhood. Men who belong to marginalized groups, such as men of color, LGBTQ+ men, or men with disabilities, may face additional barriers to accessing support and resources when they experience victimization. By considering the intersection of multiple forms of oppression and discrimination, we can better understand the experiences of male victims and develop more effective strategies for promoting social justice.

IX. Impact of gender-based violence on male victims:

Gender-based violence has significant physical and psychological impacts on male victims. The trauma and stigma associated with victimhood can lead to long-term mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Moreover, the lack

of support and resources for male survivors can exacerbate these issues, leading to a cycle of victimization and marginalization.

FORMS OF MALE VICTIMIZATION:

Male victimization takes many forms and can occur in a variety of contexts. Some of the most common forms of male victimization include physical violence, sexual assault, and emotional abuse.

1. Physical Violence:

Physical violence is one of the most visible forms of male victimization, and it can have serious consequences for the health and well-being of male victims. Men are more likely than women to experience physical violence, and they are also more likely to be victims of homicide. The vast majority of perpetrators of physical violence against men are other men, with violence often occurring in the context of gang violence, domestic violence, or street violence.

2. Sexual Assault:

Sexual assault is another form of male victimization that is often overlooked or dismissed in discussions of gender-based violence. Men can be victims of sexual assault in a variety of contexts, including prisons, military settings, and domestic relationships. However, male victims of sexual assault are often reluctant to report their experiences due to shame, stigma, and fear of not being believed.

3. Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse is another form of male victimization that can have long-lasting effects on the mental health and well-being of male victims. Emotional abuse can take many forms, including verbal abuse, isolation, and controlling behavior. Men are often reluctant to report emotional abuse due to the perception that emotional abuse is not as serious as physical or sexual violence.

4. False accusations: Men can also be victims of false accusations, including false allegations of rape, sexual harassment, or domestic violence. Such accusations can ruin a man's reputation and even lead to imprisonment, but it is often difficult for men to prove their innocence.

5. **Discrimination:** Men can also face discrimination based on their gender, including in employment, education, and healthcare. This can lead to mental stress and even physical harm, but it is often dismissed or even celebrated as a form of "reverse discrimination".

IMPLICATION FOR POLICY AND PRACTICES:

In order to effectively address male victimhood, policies, and practices need to be developed and implemented that acknowledge and address the unique experiences of male victims. This can include:

1. **Increased Funding and Resources:** Governments and organizations need to allocate adequate funding and resources to support male victims of violence and abuse. This can involve developing specialized support services for male survivors and increasing funding for existing services that are gender-inclusive.

2. **Awareness and Education:** Awareness campaigns and educational initiatives can play a key role in addressing the societal norms that contribute to male victimhood. These initiatives can include educational programs in schools and workplaces, awareness-raising campaigns in the media, and targeted outreach to communities that are at higher risk of male victimization.

3. **Training and Capacity-Building:** Service providers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively support male victims of violence and abuse. This can involve providing specialized training and capacity-building initiatives for service providers working in areas such as healthcare, social services, and law enforcement.

4. **Addressing Intersectionality:** Policies and practices need to be developed that address the intersectionality of male victimhood. This can involve developing targeted initiatives for male victims who belong to marginalized groups, such as racial or ethnic minorities or the LGBTQ+ community.

5. **Comprehensive Approaches to Violence Prevention:** Addressing male victimhood also requires a comprehensive approach to violence prevention that addresses the root causes of violence and abuse. This can involve initiatives that promote healthy relationships, non-violent conflict resolution, and gender equality.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

While it is important to acknowledge and address male victimhood, there are also challenges and limitations that need to be considered. Some of these include:

1. **Societal Attitudes:** Societal attitudes towards male victimhood can be a significant barrier to effectively addressing the issue. Many people still hold onto traditional notions of masculinity, which can make it difficult for male survivors to come forward and seek support. This can also make it challenging to secure funding and resources for initiatives that address male victimhood.

2. **Legal Barriers:** Legal frameworks may also present barriers to effectively addressing male victimhood. In some jurisdictions, laws may not recognize male survivors as victims of certain types of violence or abuse. This can limit their ability to access legal remedies or support services.

3. **Lack of Research:** There is still a significant lack of research on male victimhood, particularly when it comes to certain forms of violence and abuse. This can make it difficult to develop effective policies and practices that address the unique experiences of male survivors.

4. **Stigma and Shame:** Male survivors of violence and abuse may also face significant stigma and shame, which can make it challenging for them to come forward and seek support. This can also contribute to underreporting of male victimization, making it difficult to accurately assess the scope of the issue.

5. **Intersectionality:** As mentioned earlier, intersectionality is an important consideration when addressing male victimhood. However, developing initiatives that effectively address the intersecting factors that contribute to male victimization can be challenging.

Despite these challenges, it is important to continue to work towards effectively addressing male victimhood. By acknowledging the unique experiences of male survivors and addressing the root causes of violence and abuse, we can work towards creating a more equitable and supportive society for all survivors.

WHY ARE MEN SILENT?

There are many potential reasons why some men may remain silent or hesitant to speak out about their experiences as victims of abuse or trauma. Here are a few possible factors to consider:

1. **Social expectations:** In many cultures, men are expected to be tough, resilient, and self-sufficient. Admitting vulnerability or weakness can be seen as a violation of these expectations and may lead to feelings of shame or embarrassment. Men may fear being judged or stigmatized if they disclose their experiences as victims.
2. **Fear of not being believed:** Unfortunately, there are still some stereotypes and misconceptions about men and victimhood that can make it harder for male victims to be taken seriously. Some people may assume that men are always strong and in control, or that they cannot be victimized by women or other men. As a result, male victims may worry that they won't be believed or taken seriously if they speak out.
3. **Lack of awareness or understanding:** Many people, including some men themselves, may not fully understand the scope and impact of male victimization. There may be a sense that "real men" don't get victimized, or that men who do experience abuse or trauma must have done something to deserve it. This lack of awareness can make it harder for men to recognize their own victimization or to feel comfortable seeking help.
4. **Systemic barriers:** Finally, it's worth noting that there may be systemic barriers that prevent male victims from accessing resources and support. For example, some organizations that provide services to victims of abuse or trauma may be geared primarily toward women or may assume that all victims are female. This can make it harder for male victims to find the help they need or may make them feel excluded or unsupported.
5. **Trauma responses:** It's also important to recognize that trauma can affect people in different ways, and some men may experience symptoms such as dissociation or avoidance that make it harder for them to talk about their experiences. In some cases, the act of disclosing trauma can even trigger a traumatic response, making it difficult for men to speak out.
6. **Fear of retaliation:** In some cases, men may be hesitant to speak out about their experiences because they fear retaliation from their abusers or others who may have power over them. This

can be especially true in cases of workplace harassment or abuse, where men may worry about losing their jobs or facing other negative consequences if they speak out.

7. Lack of support: Finally, it's worth noting that many men may not feel that they have a supportive network of friends or family members who they can turn to for help or validation. This can make it harder for them to feel comfortable opening up about their experiences or may make them feel like they have to "go it alone" when dealing with the aftermath of victimization.

Overall, it's important to recognize that male victimhood is a complex and multifaceted issue, and there is no one-size-fits-all explanation for why some men may be hesitant to speak out. However, by understanding some of the potential factors that can contribute to this silence, we can work to create more supportive and inclusive environments where men feel safe to seek help and share their experiences.

SOME LEGAL CASES

1. Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018): This landmark case decriminalized homosexuality in India, recognizing the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals to live with dignity and without discrimination. The case highlighted the issue of male victimhood within the LGBTQ+ community, with many men facing violence and abuse due to their sexual orientation.

2. State of Punjab v. Gurmit Singh (1996): This case addressed the issue of male rape, which is often overlooked and underreported in India. The Supreme Court of India recognized that men can be victims of rape and that the crime is not limited to women. The case helped to raise awareness of male victimization and the need to provide support and resources for male survivors of sexual assault.

These cases and acts highlight the growing recognition of male victimhood in India and the need to address the issue of gender-based violence and abuse in a more inclusive and compassionate manner. While there is still much work to be done, these legal developments are an important step towards creating a safer and more just society for all.

SOME EXAMPLES OF LAWS AND ACTS THAT PROVIDE PROTECTION TO MEN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

1. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005: This act recognizes that men can also be victims of domestic violence and provides legal protection and support for them. The

act defines domestic violence broadly to include physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, and economic abuse.

2. Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013: Although the title of the act specifically mentions women, it also covers male victims of sexual harassment at the workplace. The act mandates employers to provide a safe working environment for all employees and lays down procedures for addressing complaints of harassment.

3. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013: This act amended the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Indian Evidence Act, and the Code of Criminal Procedure to enhance the punishment for sexual offenses against both men and women. The act recognizes various forms of sexual assault and includes provisions for punishment for offenses such as stalking, voyeurism, and acid attacks.

4. Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012: This act is specific to child victims and covers boys as well as girls. It defines various forms of sexual abuse of children and provides for stringent punishment for the offenders.

5. Mental Healthcare Act, 2017: This act recognizes that mental health is an important aspect of overall well-being and lays down provisions for the treatment and care of persons with mental illnesses. The act also recognizes that men can be victims of mental health issues due to various forms of abuse and violence.

6. Indian Penal Code (IPC): The IPC is the primary criminal code of India, which defines various forms of crimes and their punishments. It includes provisions for offenses such as rape, sexual harassment, stalking, and domestic violence, which can be committed against both men and women.

7. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019: This act recognizes the rights of transgender persons and prohibits discrimination against them. It includes provisions for the protection of transgender persons from violence, abuse, and exploitation.

8. Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015: This act deals with juvenile justice and lays down provisions for the care and protection of children in need of care and

protection. It recognizes that boys and girls can be victims of abuse and violence and provides for their protection and rehabilitation.

9. The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993: This act provides for the constitution of a National Human Rights Commission, State Human Rights Commissions, and Human Rights Courts. It aims to protect and promote human rights, including the rights of male victims of violence and abuse.

10. The Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989: This act provides for the prevention of atrocities against marginalized communities, including men who belong to socially and economically disadvantaged groups. It includes provisions for the punishment of offenses such as assault, rape, and exploitation of these communities

RECOMMENDATION

1. Conduct more research that is inclusive of male victims and their experiences, and improve data collection and reporting systems to better capture the scope and nature of male victimization.

2. Provide education and training to professionals in fields such as law enforcement, healthcare, and social services to recognize and respond to male victimization in a compassionate and effective manner.

3. Promote a culture of empathy and understanding towards male victims, challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes, and provide resources and support to help male victims heal and recover from their experiences.

4. Recognize the intersectionality of male victimhood with other social identities, such as race, sexuality, and disability, and take a holistic and intersectional approach to address male victimhood.

5. Increase funding and support for organizations and programs that provide services to male victims of violence, including counseling, legal support, and crisis intervention.

6. Ensure that policies and practices related to victim services are inclusive of male victims and do not reinforce harmful gender stereotypes.

CONCLUSION

Uncovering the truth about male victimhood is essential for promoting gender equality and creating a safer, more just society for all genders. Male victimhood is complex and intersects with various other factors, including race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and disability. Additionally, societal attitudes towards male victimhood contribute to the marginalization and underreporting of male victims, perpetuating harmful gender norms and reinforcing gender inequality. To address male victimhood, we need to increase awareness and recognition of male victimhood, address the intersectionality of male victimhood, challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes, and develop interventions that are inclusive, sensitive, and effective. By taking these steps, we can create a society in which all individuals are valued and protected from gendered violence and abuse, regardless of gender.



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