

## Multiple Victimization & Sexual Revictimization

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### Abstract

Committing multiple victimization and sexual revictimization towards others can be labeled inhuman crimes that cause various forms of trauma to victims. In return, this results in higher mortality and tarnishes the connections between members of society. Five thousand three hundred people were used as a sample amount for the survey. The researcher wanted to know how people experiencing multiple victimizations and sexual revictimization can cause strain to one's social life. The researcher also wanted to explore the connections to higher mortality rates as a result of the multiple victimizations and/or sexual revictimization to an individual. Results show that typical victims are those with little income and with an age range of 18 – 25; however, typical victims of sexual revictimization are usually outdoors during high-crime hours and with an age range of 18 – 25. With a lack of support, information and professionals with adequate experience to help those experiencing these offenses, victims resort to drugs, sex, and crime to ease their pain, making them feel alone in the world.

**Keywords:** Victimization, multiple, sexual, crime, drugs, revictimization, outdoors, abuse

### 1. Introduction

When the criminal justice system was created, the main goal of this system was to ensure an offender was punished for their wrongdoings. The only thing heard from victims of crime was their account of the incident through a complaint and testimony in order for authorities to decide the offender's fate. Because of influential people advocating victims needed to be heard and given rights, the criminal justice system now has the field of victimology and victims' rights, which enhances victim's satisfaction, comfort in reporting, speed of healing process, cooperation and faith in social services/government/criminal justice (VAT Online, VSP Overview).

Although the criminal justice system has evolved, victims are still prone to facing criminalization and facing more than one form of crime. Facing more than one crime, known as multiple victimization, occurs when the same person or place suffers from more than one criminal intent over a specified period of time (Robinson, 1998). Multiple victimization refers to the experience of more than one type of violent victimization episode, usually in the same violence category, over a relatively long period of time (Davis, 2007). People who are victimized multiple times usually face greater or increased trauma than a person who is victimized once. This increased trauma is a result of them reflecting on the current crime, but they reflect on the past crimes, and at times, linking both experiences together. If not taken seriously and treated with adequate care, a person experiencing multiple victimizations is more likely to commit homicide or suicide, have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), engage in substance abuse or become sexually promiscuous.

Sexual revictimization, a form of multiple victimization, is most often conceptualized as "the phenomenon in which individuals who have experience child sexual abuse (CSA) are at a greater risk than others for adolescent or adult sexual victimization (Anderson, 2004). Sexual revictimization is the repeated victimization of a person, including the offender sexually assaulting the victim. Victims of sexual revictimization can be victimized and revictimized by strangers, acquaintances, friends or family members (National Center for Victims of Crime, 2011). These victims have the highest revictimization rate of any group apart from domestic violence (Davis, 2007).

With both multiple victimization and sexual revictimization, victims link current and previous victimizations together and in result, face serious repercussions such as ones abovementioned. Experiencing these forms of victimizations can result in survivors isolate themselves from one society at large. Without community support, there will be increased violence in these neighborhoods resulting in a lack of structure.

Development of rights for crime victims need to be established; however, few steps have been taken to make survivors aware that they face future victimizations if they do not to ensure their safety and stay aware of the crime(s) occurring in their community. Although multiple victimization and sexual revictimization reoccurs in societies, it is rarely studied. Many are not aware of the gravity to understand how a person (in general) can be prone to being a victim a second or third time. Awareness starts by educating people of the traits offenders look for when identifying a victim facing these forms of crime, in addition to tips on how to cope and move past the ordeal(s).

### *1.1 Literature Review*

Rodgers (1995) found that those who participate in many outside activities in high risk situations increase their interaction with strangers thereby decreasing guardianship and increasing the likelihood of personal victimization. Outside activities allow victims to interact with people having negative intentions, putting the victim at risk. Even if the survivor is committing illegal acts, one cannot assume the next person is willing to commit positive and legal acts in society. Rodgers also discovered that those whose main activity is remaining indoors have the lowest victimization rates because they are obligated to confine their time to family activities within their household.

Stevens (2005) discovered that other studies indicating a parental history of child abuse, neglect or domestic violence appears to be associated with increased risk of facing multiple victimizations. This claim also connects with the relationship victims have with their perpetrators. If the victim is personally connected to the perpetrator, it is likely that the perpetrator may have easier access to revictimize, as well as instill fear to ensure the victim keeps the assault secret.

Orcutt (2005) found that using sex to reduce negative effects may increase risk of sexual assault by way of contact with multiple, poorly known partners and impaired decision-making in potentially sexual situations. These actions can lead the victim developing unhealthy relationships, commitment issues and lack of implied self respect.

Farrell (1995) discovered various forms of repeated crime. Repeated violence is the work of the same perpetrator. Likewise, there is only one possible victim. Racial attacks, which follow repeated violence, have been referred to as ongoing or 'processual' crimes. They can take the form of harassment, 'wearing down' the victim(s) through incidents which may appear minor when viewed in isolation. Thus, a single racial insult may seem trivial; a repeated occurrence can transform the experience into a much more damaging form of psychological victimization. Farrell shows readers how various forms of victimization can affect a person and a community.

Walsh et al. (2012) discovered 52.7% of victimized adolescents, 50% of victimized college women and 58.8 % of victimized household-residing women reported sexual revictimization. Current posttraumatic stress disorder was reported by 20% of revictimized adolescents, 40% of revictimized college women and 27.2% of revictimized household-residing women.

Coscarelli (2011) reports that from September 15 to December 3, 2010, an 11-year old in Cleveland, Texas, was raped at least six times and was blamed for being raped by 19 boys due to the way she was dressed. Although most may not agree with her form of fashion, victim blaming does not negate the rapist of culpability. They feel the attire she wore could have played a role in why the offenders felt the right to attack her, victim blaming and dressed older than her age; however, it did not give them the right to assault her.

Brody (2016) reports that more often than not, women who bring charges of sexual assault are victims twice over, treated by the legal system as liars until proven truthful. Brody would often not sleep at night and avoid the block where the sexual assault was, changing her daily pattern.

### *1.2 Traits That The Revictimized Possess*

Qualities such as personality, demographics and being at the wrong place at the wrong time all contribute to people being victimized and revictimized. While some traits may not be recognizable by the victim or those close to their lives, offenders are well aware of the traits and how they can or can not be beneficial in terms of committing the crime. Factors such as severity, mental health effects and age may link early victimization experiences to later vulnerability and new types of victimization.

Out of the various age groups, young people (ages 18 – 25) are more likely to be repeatedly victimized than older individuals and males are at a greater risk of being repeatedly victimized than females, except for in the case of repeat sexual offenses (Davis, 2007). Other researchers have found that the unemployed have the highest victimization rates because the employed individuals; residential proximity to high concentrations of potential offenders (Rodgers, 1995). Having school or work as an outlet allows citizens to be in environments where positive work can be produced from, giving them less time to become victimized.

Victim minority status may also play a role in the amount of victimization one receives. For instance, data from CPS-referred cases in Missouri indicated that non-White racial or ethnic classification was significantly associated with

reoccurrence of physical abuse and neglect, but not sexual abuse (Stevens, 2005). Survivors of physical abuse and child sexual abuse have been found to be at higher risk when compared to survivors of child sexual abuse who was not physically abused (Classen, 2005).

Traits that determine who is eligible for revictimization depends on the location of the victimization and how crime is dealt with in the particular neighborhood. Some criminals may not rob people because there is a high penalty they will face if they do so; however, they may be willing to commit arson. Fate, a belief that some may not believe, can also play a role in a person being victimized as well. The factor of fate can also be linked to a victim just being at “the wrong place at the wrong time.” An example of this can be a 15-year old male walking home from the grocery store and one of the blocks he walked on happened to be a location of a shootout. Now fighting for his life because of a bullet to the chest, one can imply that he was not the intended target; he was just a victim who was at the wrong place at the wrong time.

### *1.3 Effects From A Social Standpoint*

Socialization is the act of one party interacting with one another. It is the process by which culture is learned and individuals internalize a culture’s social controls, along with values and norms about right and wrong (Oregon State (2011). When one socializes, they are expanding their network of connections, learning more about themselves and life’s lessons. When one is keeping to themselves, they can lose out on what others can offer them and potential positive or negative results that come along with the interaction(s).

In most situations, people face negative effects after experiencing victimization, including people who faced multiple victimization and sexual revictimization. Facing these crimes can make a victim depressed to a point where they do not want to go outside and interact with others. This can also lead to them always reflecting on their victimization and holding on the pain and feelings they had at the exact moment. With them always reflecting on their victimization, they can also be dissatisfied with their social relationships if they feel they can not relate to anyone else.

Negative social interactions may relate to revictimization by increasing survivors’ level of risky behaviors, such as excessive drinking or substances used as forms of coping with distress related to the assault. These behaviors may increase survivors’ risk of being targeted by potential perpetrators of sexual assault and hence increase their revictimization risk. Thus, negative social reactions may lead to revictimization through self-blame, low assertiveness and/or risky behavior (Mason, 2008).

## **2. Method**

In order to find out how many people in the city of West Haven experienced various forms of victimizations in their lifetime, the researcher utilized 10% (5,300 in total) sample set in a study. Once the 10% of people in the city is found, a surveying instrument would be created to conduct information gathering by asking direct questions to gain insight about the sample’s victimization. As of July 2009, the population of the citizens in the 06516 zip code (West Haven, CT area) is 53,007. There are 25,303 men and 27,704 women. Since the research pertains to the forms of victimization is general (no demographics needed), 10% of 53,007 would equal to 5,300.

Using this instrument, readers encountered questions that do not pertain to them; however, this is essential in knowing how to categorize study participants. Based on the answers given, the researcher would know how many people faced multiple victimizations and/or sexual revictimizations. They would know what help them seeked (if any), whether the person made a change in their life after the victimization(s) and demographics that can help infer why they may have experienced these victimizations. The demographics and features won’t make researchers believe that all people who share those same traits are always prone to victimization, but it does raise their awareness that people with those traits can be in danger of being victims of crime.

Wondering the survey’s respondents would stream the researcher’s mind, so out of the sample set, the researcher should ensure they have the survey distributed in various locations to the same amount of people so they would have a good chance of receiving accurate and reliable results.

To determine which type of people experience multiple victimization and/or sexual revictimization, the survey instrument asks readers questions regarding demographics, such as their employment status, marital status, ethnicity/race, education level and age range. In order to determine potential targets for sexual revictimization, like multiple victimization, one must know what made them original targets, as well as what is making them remain a target. Demographics such as the neighborhood they reside in can determine if they are potential targets for sexual revictimization. If one lives in a suburban setting where people can be separated and remain indoors, they can have less of a chance to face any form of sexual assault. If one lives in an urban setting where people live in the same area and usually go outdoors, they have a higher change of facing one or more forms of sexual assault.

Asking questions such as who were the perpetrator(s), the physical and emotional effects the victim experiences and if

they have any changes in their lives are important because it allows the researcher to see what factors can and cannot play a role in the victimizations, where they went wrong in keeping safe and can also lead the researcher to give them tips on how to remain safe. Both genders would receive the survey because the hypothesis testing does not discriminate against a particular gender.

Questions relating to the first resource a victim would use, what time span(s) has the victimizations occurred are essential in finding out the length of abuse one in West Haven has faced and forms of physical and psychological abuse experienced by victims allow the researcher to know which resources should and should not be used.

This can help figure out which resources society needs to put more effort into enhancing and which ones are not being consumed, so money is not wasted in attempting to maintain the resource. A threat to validity can include once people know the definitions of the crimes, people can change the answers they originally were going to circle. If interviewees felt that others were going to see the survey besides the researcher, they may decide to change their answers or not answer the survey at all. If an interview does not comprehend the question being asked in the survey instrument, that can be a threat to validity in terms of whether the instrument gets completed or not.

If interviewees see the survey instrument formatted as multiple choice, they may circle any answer(s) just to quickly complete the survey. If two people are next to each other filling out the survey, including a friend or anyone who faced these crimes, the person may feel pressured to not answer the survey. Reacting differently due to the environment and/or person in the area may change answers, including if one is in a rush to leave. In past surveys, history refers to other specific events that may have taken place during the course of study and may have produced results (Hagan, 2010). This may give researchers an idea of how a particular respondent may respond based on who's around and how comfortable they are with the questions. If respondents had time to research the topic, they may pick answers based off its popularity in the past. Giving respondents multiple choice as a survey instrument is not only the easiest way out, but gives the researcher a better chance of collecting more data for the research.

### **3. Results**

The purpose of this study was to determine how multiple victimization and sexual revictimization causes stress to one's social life. The study was to also see if there was a correlation to higher death rates due to these forms of victimization. Although both multiple victimization and sexual revictimization has been a problem within the criminal justice system, no published studies have attempted to see if there was any connection between the two crimes and how the problem(s) can be prevented. Further, although this was a sample survey, none have explored the trauma and effects these crimes have on both genders.

The researcher inferred that geographic area and demographics play a major role in the amount of multiple victimizations and/or sexual revictimization one faces. Typical victims of multiple victimization are found to be people who are usually outdoors during high-crime hours, people with little money, young people between the ages of 18 and 25 and mostly men. Typical victims of sexual revictimization are young women between the ages of 18 and 25, usually outdoors during high-crime hours and women who may dress in a provocative manner. In result, some survey questions would be left unanswered or some answers not fully accurate due to the crimes being sensitive topics that victims would not want to discuss or share with others. Besides the information being inaccurate, it would be expected the survey participants to even have faced more than one form of victimization. They may or may not admit to utilizing resources (whether deemed positive or negative) they may have used to cope with the ordeal(s), as well as what resources they would be willing to utilize.

Social support is the "availability of components of support from interpersonal relationships" including both formal and informal sources of help. Measures of social support can be structural (i.e. size and frequency of contact with network members) or functional (i.e. types of assistance such as emotional support or tangible aid) (Mason, 2008). Support systems that multiple victimized people can utilize are support groups. Although every experience is not the same and not one experience is important over the other, victims can help and learn from one another in order to keep safe, cope and be happy.

Victim advocates, workers in the criminal justice system, advocate for their client. They listen to their clients' feelings and desires, help give them a sense of power back, inform their clients about their rights in the criminal justice system and ensure they are being treated fairly. These advocates can help victims with the trial process every step of the way and can help clear up any confusion between the victim and the criminal justice system.

Professional counseling may be beneficial to a person experiencing multiple victimization. Utilizing this resource can allow a victim to receive adequate help if they were considering suicide and if they suffered from mental illnesses due to the crime(s) faced. With a counselor's help, they can also plan a safety route which they have the full say-so in choosing as well as expressing their thoughts about the victimization. During the past decade, victimization studies have

shown a number of people, businesses and households being repeatedly victimized more often than would be expected by chance alone (Nelson, 1980).

#### 4. Discussion

The Victims' Rights Movement has allowed victims to have rights in the criminal justice system, voice their opinions about the direction the trial takes and the ordeal they endured, as well as made them feel appreciated. The criminal justice system may have progressed when it comes to making sure survivors' voices are heard; however, crime continues to be committed by wrongdoers, leaving society to have more work to do. Crimes such as multiple victimization and sexual revictimization are prominent cases where officials have little information about, but are willing to prevent it from continuing. Although some forms of victimization one can not prevent, one can stop themselves from facing continuous forms of victimization.

By implication, victims become revictimized because their everyday routines bring them repeatedly in conjunction with the same or similar criminogenic situations. If they do not change their routines and continue to have other facts being equal, they have a high probability of being repeatedly victimized. Victimization events are 'accidents' in the sense that they are not willed or intended by victims, but are an unintended outcome—at least from the victim's point of view—of the pursuit of mundane objectives and strategies in everyday life (Hope, 2001). People being victimized on multiple occasions can be considered inhumane, causing trauma not only to the victim, surrounding families and societies as well.

Increased awareness and resources within the community will allow people to be knowledgeable on the topics, in addition to their negative effects. If not taken seriously and with adequate care, a person experiencing multiple victimization can commit homicide, suicide, face posttraumatic stress disorder, commit substance abuse and become sexually promiscuous. Promoting the traits that makes one a victim a first, second and/or third time will force the victim to change their daily routines and/or way of thinking in order to not face the harsh physical and emotional consequences that comes with being victimized.

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