

## Victimization of Violence Against Children and Its Prevention

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study examines violence against children as a persistent social and legal problem that threatens minors' physical, psychological, and moral development and undermines the effective realization of their fundamental rights. While existing scholarship has extensively analyzed offender profiles, particularly cisgender male perpetrators, the victimological-ecological characteristics of child victims and their role in the emergence, concealment, and recurrence of violence remain insufficiently explored. **Method:** The research employs a qualitative legal and criminological approach, drawing on the analysis of national legislation, doctrinal literature in victimology and criminology, judicial and investigative practices, and findings from forensic psychological and psychiatric examinations. Systemic, logical, and comparative methods are used to identify victimogenic factors arising from interactions among offenders, victims, and their social environments. **Results:** The findings demonstrate that child victimization is strongly influenced by age-related psychological vulnerability, dependency on offenders, exposure to family violence, emotional instability, and structurally embedded helplessness. These victimogenic characteristics not only increase susceptibility to violence but also facilitate crime concealment and heighten the risk of severe consequences, including suicidal behavior. **Novelty:** This study advances victimological scholarship by shifting the analytical focus from offender-centered explanations to an integrated victimological-ecological framework, emphasizing prevention through early risk identification, reinforcement of protective factors, and coordinated legal, psychological, and social interventions.

## INTRODUCTION

It is known that today it is associated with the implementation of the tasks of instilling in the minds and hearts of the younger generation, transforming their legal protection from various negatives and ensuring their rights into a program of practical activity, and the role of improving the legal mechanism for this is important.

Indeed, the formation of the younger generation as comprehensively developed individuals and the comprehensive provision of their rights, increasing the role of various subjects in this process, a deeper study of the main features of modern development, and the preservation and transmission of national values to future generations are inextricably linked with the solution of such important issues. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the upbringing of a harmoniously developed personality has been considered as an important life and social problem in society for centuries.

In recent years, normative legal acts related to the protection of children's rights have also been adopted. Laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated September 14, 2016 No. 406 "On State Youth Policy," dated September 29, 2010 "On the Prevention of Neglect and Offenses among Minors" and dated April 11, 2023 "On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Connection with the Further

Improvement of the System of Reliable Protection of the Rights, Freedoms and Legitimate Interests of Women and Children, "This is confirmed by the adoption of the Resolutions of the President of the Russian Federation No. PP-4342 "On the Fundamental Improvement of the Activities of Specialized Educational Institutions," No. PP-4736 "On Additional Measures to Improve the System of Protection of the Rights of the Child" of May 29, 2020, and the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. UP-6275 "On Additional Measures to Further Improve the System of Guaranteeing the Rights of the Child" of August 9, 2021.

Also, as a result of the reforms carried out in this area in our country, a new system of studying victims of crimes and offenses, their victimological prevention, and subjects of victimization has been formed.

At this point, it should be noted that in order to fully understand the phenomenon of suicide among minors, it is necessary to study the personality of the victim of this crime.

A distinctive feature of the norm under study is that in this case the death is caused by the victim himself. For this reason, unlike in other crimes, greater attention should be devoted to examining and analyzing the victim of this offense.

At present, in many cases of incitement to suicide, certain family members (most often women), as well as individuals engaged in specific types of professional activity, become victims of the crime. Therefore, in addition to addressing the negative behavior, lifestyle, and conduct of such individuals, it is important to develop and implement preventive measures for persons who, due to their social status, physical condition, or type of professional activity, may become potential victims.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study adopts a qualitative legal and criminological research design for examining victimization of violence against children and the needed deterrent mechanisms for their effective prevention. The research methodology is based on a detailed analysis of doctrinal legal sources, national legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, international legal standards regulations and scientific literature in the area of criminology, victimology, psychology and juvenile justice. Specifically, the analysis of normative legal acts regulating the protection of children rights and prevention of violence, judicial and investigative practice related to the crimes involving violence and inducement to suicide among minor is widely examined. The research utilises formal legal analysis to interpret legal norms, comparative legal methods to measure similarities and differences between doctrinal approaches and systemic analysis providing the identification of correlation between victim traits, environment and criminogenic factors. Generalization of court rulings, criminal case documentation, findings of forensic psychological and psychiatric examinations are among the empirical components of methodology that enable the detection of indicative victimological features of minors who were subjected to violence. Lastly, the generalized conclusion about covert victimization and factors contributing to it is drawn based on the sociological data and results of previous empirical studies. Induction, deduction, and synthesis are examples of logical approaches used to create generalization and theory. This

integrated methodological approach constitutes an objective and comprehensive assessment of the phenomenon of victimization of children, the identification of the conditions, factors and causes of victimization, and is an effective scientific basis for the development of victimological prevention measures aimed at reducing violence against children and ensuring an effective protection of their rights and legitimate interests

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As we know, in criminology there is a separate branch known as victimology, which is the study of the crime victim.

The term “victimology” derives from two words: the Latin *victima* (“victim”) and the Greek *logos* (“knowledge, doctrine”), meaning “the study of the victim [1].

In victimology, the concepts “crime victim” and “victim of crime” are generally used as synonymous.

The idea that the victim plays a significant role in the chain of causes leading to juvenile suicide is not new. Such an approach has long been reflected in the sources of the theory and history of state and law.

One of the renowned legal scholars, Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), proposed introducing legislative norms requiring compensation for the harm caused to the victim in order to impose heavier punishment on the offender [2].

However, it was only in the first half of the 20th century that the behavior of the victim began to be systematically studied as an important factor in crime. In 1948, the German scholar Hans von Hentig published a large and specialized scientific work entitled *The Criminal and His Victim*. In the course of his research, he examined criminal cases and concluded that victims often display certain behaviors and traits that provoke or contribute to the commission of a crime by the offender.

In his study, Hentig focused primarily on the victim as a factor in the occurrence of crime. He also advanced the idea that criminality should be understood as a specific relationship between the perpetrator and the injured party. According to him, it is possible – based on the information gathered about victims – to distinguish certain types of relationships between offender and victim. These relationships are closely linked to crime itself. This makes it possible not only to analyze crimes already committed but also to predict potential future victims and to identify instances of latent (hidden) crime [3].

On this basis, it can be said that victimology is a doctrine about the victim, whose subject matter consists of the relations forming the link between “offender and victim”.

It should be emphasized that in the study of the causes of crime, victimology plays an important role. Moreover, understanding the role of the victim in the commission of a crime from a scientific perspective is of great significance for developing crime prevention measures [4].

Accordingly, the main purpose of criminal victimology is to determine and study the role and importance of the victim in the emergence of crimes such as incitement to suicide, as well as the victim’s “contribution” to the occurrence and development of the criminal situation. For this purpose, it is necessary to collect relevant general information about the

victim's personality and their behavior prior to the crime. Above all, a thorough examination of the victim's personality, particularly their behavior that may have contributed to the commission of the crime, is essential.

Victimology may be defined as the doctrine that studies the typical traits of individuals – both natural and legal persons – that make them objects of criminal aggression, determine the nature and degree of their criminal involvement, as well as their ability to defend their interests against criminal assaults and the means of strengthening such ability.

A crime victim is a natural or legal person against whom a criminal assault has been committed. This criminological concept also encompasses those who are at a higher risk of becoming victims of crime. Such individuals are persons whose characteristics make them more vulnerable to criminal assault compared to other similar social subjects.

The individual traits that increase the likelihood of becoming a victim of criminal aggression are referred to as victimogenic traits, while those that reduce such vulnerability are termed anti-victimogenic traits.

The concept of "crime victim" is thus broader than that of "injured party." In studying crime victims, the main focus is on identifying the characteristics that create or facilitate conditions for the commission of a crime.

Victimhood also includes characteristics related to a person's social status that provoke or facilitate the commission of a crime against them. In this sense, victimhood can be understood as a set of traits that make a person more prone to victimization. These may be manifested in the form of reckless, risky, or imprudent behavior or inaction. Over time, the concept of victimhood has expanded to include not only the moral, psychological, and emotional state of the individual but also their status and role in various spheres of social life.

In the case of minors, suicide occurs during adolescence, a period marked by specific behavioral stereotypes. These include opposition reactions, imitation reactions, negative imitation reactions, compensation reactions, hypercompensation reactions, emancipation reactions, group formation reactions, and reactions connected with hobbies or favorite activities [5].

For example, an opposition reaction arises when the adolescent's behavior and activity face excessive criticism, restrictions, or neglect of their interests by adults around them. Such reactions may also develop due to unrealistic demands, such as excessive academic or other burdens, family conflicts, school failure, or perceived injustice [6].

Depending on the adolescent's character and emotional traits, discontent may be expressed actively – in the form of rudeness, aggression, irritability, demonstrative suicide attempts, and the like – or passively, through refusal to eat, skipping classes, or running away from home.

It has been determined that an individual's position in society, even without considering their personal traits, can create circumstances under which they may become the target of certain criminal acts. At the same time, the victim's personality and behavior play a distinct role not only during the offender's preparation for a crime but also at the moment of its commission and even in cases of reoffending [7].

The study of juvenile victims of suicide provides an opportunity to identify the reasons why crimes committed against them often remain latent. Victimological prevention serves to warn a person of criminal risk and, by encouraging them to change their behavior, aims to reduce the likelihood of them becoming victims of incitement to suicide or of being driven to take their own life. Preventive measures are directed at strengthening self-defense against criminal attacks, learning from the mistakes of others, and ensuring that the more successfully an individual can protect themselves in a criminogenic environment, the less likely they are to become a victim.

Information on the psychological state, behavior, morals, ethics, education, and spirituality of both the perpetrators of juvenile suicides and their victims often reveals close similarities. The fact is that individuals with negative behaviors, low levels of education and spirituality, and distorted social-psychological conditions tend not to restrain themselves in fulfilling their desires. Naturally, such traits are not absent in crime victims as well.

Research results show that 49% of suicide victims became targets of criminal aggression due to their own negative behavior—such as being quarrelsome, slanderous, or frivolous—or because they created favorable conditions for such crimes to occur.

The correlation between a person's traits and behavior, which make them prone to becoming a victim of incitement to suicide, and social actions has a probabilistic nature. Thus, the negative tendencies in the behavior of such individuals only emerge in connection with specific life situations shaped by their social, psychological, and psycho-physiological characteristics [8].

For this reason, victimology studies not only the degree of victimhood in individuals but also victimogenic situations. A victimogenic situation refers to a concrete life condition, linked to the specific traits and behaviors of a victim-prone individual, which creates an opportunity for them to suffer physical, material, or moral harm through unlawful or criminal means [9].

According to suicidologists, actual rates of suicide in different countries may be significantly higher than those reported in official statistics, as it is not always easy to distinguish between an accident and a suicide, and in some countries the true rates are deliberately concealed [10].

Age-related aspects of suicide. Suicide is very rare in childhood. Suicidologists believe that suicidal behavior begins after the age of 10, peaking at 14–15 years. The “rejuvenation” of suicide is primarily linked to the rapid development of information technologies and the spread of the internet. In particular, the growing number of websites promoting suicide and the lack of parental supervision have contributed to an increase in suicides even among children under. There have even been cases of group suicides occurring simultaneously, which are considered forms of unconscious suicide among children.

Suicide-prone stages of life can conditionally be divided into three periods:

1. 14–24 years – where identity-related problems are the main factor;
2. 35–55 years – where professional failures and family conflicts dominate;
3. 70–80 years – where loneliness and illness are the primary concerns.

Compared to middle age, suicides are more common during adolescence and old age.

The emergence and realization of intent to commit the crime of driving juveniles to suicide is largely influenced by the personal and psychological traits of the victims, which shape their behavior and interactions with offenders. Therefore, reducing victimhood among this category of individuals should be one of the key priorities of prevention. The fewer victim-prone individuals exist in society, the lower the overall level of victimhood, which in turn can improve the effectiveness of crime prevention efforts.

When working with victims to prevent them from becoming crime victims, it is essential to always take into account their psychological state and their perception of the offender at the time of the crime. Emotions such as fear, anger, shame, and resentment may distort their perceptions.

Criminologists classify victimhood into several types:

1. Individual victimhood – when a person, due to social, bio-physiological, or psychological traits, becomes involved in situations that lead to crime and suffers harm to some extent.
2. Related victimhood – when certain individuals, under the influence of various conditions, are predisposed to becoming victims of specific types of crime.
3. Group victimhood – when categories of people with similar socio-demographic, psychological, or bio-physical traits are prone to victimization by certain crimes.
4. Mass victimhood – when parts of the population, due to their subjective traits, become objectively victimized by crimes.

Among these forms of victimhood, one of the main factors identified is the specific traits of minors who have taken their own lives. It should be emphasized that falling into a victim position is not determined solely by an individual's subjective traits but also by external factors. In other words, a person may become a crime victim not only due to their personal characteristics but also due to their interaction with other influencing conditions.

It should be particularly emphasized that during adolescence, that is, between the ages of 14 and 19, the likelihood of committing suicide is significantly higher. In this period, crisis conditions associated with the formation of self-identity ("I-consciousness") should be noted separately. Aggressive behavior, emotional outbursts, conflicts with parents, and failures in love relationships are among the main factors that push adolescents toward suicide. At the root of these lie neuro-humoral conditions, dishormonal changes, and early manifestations of psychopathy. Drug abuse during this period should also be specifically highlighted. Any form of fanaticism in adolescence can serve as a dangerous factor inciting suicide. For instance, even a football team's loss can sometimes lead a fanatical teenager to commit suicide.

When examining the issue of the victim's behavior, judicial and investigative practice interprets the "fault" of the victim in two ways: first, from a legal or moral standpoint; second, as the victim's own self-harming actions along with those of the perpetrator.

It should be noted that there is no consensus in theory regarding the expression "victim's fault." In victimology, it is argued that, in crimes involving driving someone to suicide, the victim's fault lies in the fact that their antisocial behavior creates conditions

for another person's harmful actions and leads to damage precisely as a consequence of that behavior [11].

Furthermore, the harm caused to the victim may be negatively connected both with the perpetrator's actions and with the victim's own actions, and the latter may be intentional or negligent. However, if the victim could not and was not expected to foresee that their actions might cause them harm, the notion of "victim's fault" is excluded. For this reason, in cases where young children or mentally incompetent individuals suffer harm because their own actions allowed for such harm, it is not appropriate to speak of "victim's fault."

What significance does the victim's "fault" have in cases concerning crimes against life, health, and sexual integrity? Can such fault serve as a circumstance excluding criminal liability for the offender? The victim's fault cannot play a decisive role in socially dangerous crimes. If the elements of a crime are present, the offender must be held criminally liable regardless of the victim's fault.

Turning to judicial practice: in one case, Sh. was subjected to repeated sexual violence by her stepfather. As a result, she attempted suicide in order to escape this violence. However, in such situations, prior to the commission of the crime, the victim's own exposure to danger has no effect on the offender's guilt. In other words, the guilt does not increase or decrease because of the victim's behavior. Yet, this does not mean that the victim's behavior is entirely irrelevant. Rather, it may be closely connected to and have an influence on the degree of the offender's guilt. Thus, the victim's behavior must be considered when determining the offender's culpability, which should be reflected directly in sentencing. Although the behavior itself is not directly connected with the criminal outcome, it can influence the evaluation of responsibility. This process manifests in the offender's consciousness [12].

Research findings also show that small children are more frequently subjected to domestic violence than adolescents, and this has a negative impact on their mental and emotional development. As they grow older, they may encounter difficulties at school, struggle to communicate with peers, and suffer from depression, intense anxiety, and other psychological disorders. According to UNICEF experts, among such children, cases of alcoholism, drug addiction, and juvenile delinquency are widespread. Children growing up in families where domestic violence is prevalent tend to be more aggressive.

Even when children themselves are not directly beaten or sexually assaulted, observing such behavior among relatives with whom they live negatively affects their mental and psychological well-being. Around 40% of children who are victims or witnesses of domestic violence cannot escape its consequences even as adults: they either become victims of violence themselves, or—because they grew up in an environment where family conflicts were resolved through violence—resort to violent behavior in their own lives.

Violence may affect both men and women, but since minors are far more vulnerable to violence, and the forms, severity, and consequences of violence differ

sharply in their case, recent reforms emphasize the need to provide them with special protection.

According to D. MacLeod, in family relations, adults often view children as an additional means of control. Therefore, during prevention efforts, it is crucial for professionals to understand the intentions of perpetrators in cases of child abuse [13].

Domestic violence is distinct from offenses committed in public or educational institutions due to its unique features: the abuser has complete control over the victim, leaving the victim with no possibility of escape or safety; violence is committed with the aim of dominating and controlling another person; there is an emotional bond between the abuser and the victim. The victim may feel strong emotional dependence on the abuser and may even defend them when third parties attempt to intervene; members of society are often reluctant to interfere in family matters; domestic violence is cyclical in nature.

Experts note that children living in families with domestic violence face numerous risks, such as exposure to traumatic events, neglect, direct abuse, and the potential loss of one or both parents. All these factors can have negative consequences and a significant impact on the child. Research consistently identifies three categories of problems among children affected by domestic violence:

1. Behavioral, social, and emotional problems – high levels of aggression, anger, hostility, oppositional behavior, and disobedience; fear, anxiety, withdrawal, and depression; difficulties with peers, siblings, and social interactions; low self-esteem.
2. Cognitive and attitudinal problems – poor cognitive performance, low academic achievement, lack of conflict-resolution skills, limited problem-solving abilities, acceptance of violent behaviors and attitudes, rigid gender stereotypes, and belief in male privilege.
3. Long-term problems – high levels of adult depression and trauma symptoms, and passivity toward violence in adult relationships [14].

An adolescent prone to suicidal tendencies must be considered in the context of their life circumstances. For example, in cases where a potential offender exerts negative external influence, factors such as the process of growing up, family relationships, peer communication, and the individual's place and role in society should be examined. In addition, heightened sensitivity, depressive states, suicidal inclinations, dramatic situations, and coercive conditions identified in this study can all determine whether suicide or attempted suicide occurs.

The study of interrogation records of victims (in suicide attempts) shows that victims saw no other way to escape psychological or physical violence and threats. In such cases, death itself is not the goal, but rather a means of liberation from unbearable psychological violence that, in the victim's view, could only be overcome by suicide.

For instance, citizen M.'s (step)daughter D. was subjected to sexual violence under Articles 118 and 119 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan. To escape this abuse, from 2015 to 2020, she attempted suicide three times in different ways (cutting her

veins, overdosing on pills, and hanging herself), but survived due to circumstances beyond her control.

Post-mortem forensic complex psychological-psychiatric examinations in criminal cases of minors driven to suicide show that, usually, these victims had not previously exhibited suicidal tendencies or been subjected to external psychological or physical violence prior to the crime itself.

When examining the identity of minors who are victims of suicide, many authors have noted characteristics such as gender, age, and social factors. For example, I.B. Boyko, E.G. Ermolaeva, and E.K. Volkonskaya have highlighted in their studies that suicidal behavior is more common among boys. I.A. Pogodin also reported that the peak age for completed suicides is between 10 and 13 years old. Furthermore, it has been noted that between 32% and 47% of men suffering from depression attempt suicide [15].

This conclusion is difficult to dispute. However, taking judicial practice into account, in some cases involving victims of crimes under Article 103 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, minors are distinguished by age-specific traits, such as insufficient mental stability. In very rare cases, the decision to commit suicide results from a single incident, without repetition or continuity. Some court verdicts also provide descriptions of the psychological state of minors shortly before suicide.

For example, minor B. had been in a state of prolonged negative emotional distress and, due to repeated incidents of rude treatment by his stepfather, fell into depression. As stated in the court's verdict, prior to his death, minor B. was in a state of severe depression characterized by deep emotional experiences, a persistent decline in mood, a sense of humiliation of personal dignity, an intensifying urge to commit suicide, hopelessness about life, and manifestations of despair and hatred.

Such a psycho-emotional condition leading to suicide is not unique to children and adolescents but can also be found among adults and individuals of working age. Based on the above, the emergence of severe depression, the intensification of hopelessness, the fear that the violent methods used by offenders against victims would never cease, and the desire to resolve this fear at any cost represent the most essential characteristics of the victim's personality [16]. It should also be noted that the victim, unable to find any other means of resisting the abuse and violence inflicted by the perpetrator, perceives death as the only solution – this itself stands out as a distinctive feature.

In particular, when asked the question, *"Can the mental stability and moral resilience of a person become a cause leading to them becoming a victim of incitement to suicide?"*, 47.4% of respondents answered "no," while 52.6% said "yes, it is possible."

To the question, *"What characteristics are typical of a crime victim?"*, 90.4% of respondents answered "the victim's material or other dependency," 37.6% noted "age factors (the elderly, minors, and youth)," 28.6% said "poor health (disability)," 15.7% pointed to "fear, shame, or reluctance to damage one's reputation," and 10.4% indicated "a high degree of self-doubt."

Thus, the distinctive characteristics of victims of such crimes include psychological instability or vulnerability to external negative influences, dependency on the offender

(financial or otherwise), lack of self-confidence, inability to find a way out of the situation, and a heightened sense of shame in resisting aggression. Furthermore, as we have already noted, the victim's sense of "shame" – arising from the possibility that others might learn of the threats and violence inflicted upon them – also contributes to their decision to commit suicide.

On the basis of all the points mentioned above, it is advisable to develop a criminological concept of the victim of the crime of inducing minors to commit suicide.

Accordingly, we propose the following authorial definition of the victim's personality in cases of minors' suicide. Specifically, a person who has become a victim of the crime of inducing a minor to commit suicide is one who, unable to resist acts of cruelty, violence, blackmail, slander, rude treatment, or humiliation directed against them, ends their own life as a result [17].

A victim of the crime of inducing minors to commit suicide is, therefore, an individual who, due to heightened sensitivity to external negative factors, and being unable to resist cruelty, violence, blackmail, slander, rude treatment, or humiliation inflicted on them by another person (because of weakness or dependency), commits suicide as a last resort.

Victims of the crime of inducing minors to commit suicide can be divided into the following categories:

1. Minors and youth – who, due to their age, are not sufficiently capable of adequately assessing environmental factors, and are characterized by heightened sensitivity.
2. Minors (including youth) – who, by virtue of their age, are unable to properly evaluate surrounding circumstances and are therefore highly impressionable.
3. Relatives or family members (father, mother, siblings, etc.) – whose distinguishing feature is their inability to find ways to cope with life due to close personal (domestic, financial) ties with the perpetrator.
4. Persons not closely related to the perpetrator but acquainted due to circumstances – who, because of submissiveness or strong self-respect, see death as the only way to escape from conflicting situations.

## CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding :** This study concludes that a victim's decision to commit suicide or attempt suicide under conditions of cruelty, sustained pressure, and violence is primarily determined by their inability to resist or overcome prolonged psychological or physical coercion, rather than by an isolated incident. **Implication :** Taking into account the victim's age, social status, and family environment, the findings indicate that the decisive factor lies in the personal characteristics formed during the process of socialization, which shape vulnerability, dependency, emotional resilience, and coping mechanisms in the face of victimization. **Limitation :** Despite its theoretical and practical contributions, this research is limited by its reliance on qualitative legal and criminological analysis and judicial practice, which may not fully capture the diversity of socio-cultural contexts or allow for broad generalization across different jurisdictions and populations. **Future Research :** Future studies should therefore incorporate mixed-

method or longitudinal empirical designs, cross-national comparisons, and interdisciplinary perspectives to examine how socialization processes, protective factors, and early interventions interact over time in reducing victimhood and preventing suicide among vulnerable groups, particularly minors.

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