

Multiple Victimization and Social Exclusion: A Grounded Analysis of the Life Stories of Women

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Abstract

This work explores life stories of socially excluded women who experienced multiple victimization. It seeks to understand the existential dimension of victimization experience, particularly how victims integrate their victimization experiences in their meaning or sense that they give to their existence and their lives. The study included 12 participants who suffered multiple victimization and who were in a situation of social exclusion. Individual interviews were conducted about their life stories, adapted from McAdams interview. The qualitative methodology used was grounded analysis. The results highlighted the focus of their life stories in violence suffered in adulthood, specifically, in intimacy. It was found that being from Black race, having a low socioeconomic status, and being unemployed, seemed to increase victimization vulnerability. Despite the several types of violence, participants do not describe and give meaning to the “multiple” feature of victimization. However, victimization is the matrix of their life story, expressing itself in a discourse of vulnerability/fragility. Furthermore, some women revealed discourses of resistance that may reflect the concept of “postvictimization growth,” in which they conceptualize positive changes arising from victimization experiences. From a humanistic and existentialist perspective, victimization might provide some sense of personal unity to these women’s troubled lives.

Keywords

victimization, social exclusion, women, life story, meaning