



## Restorative Justice Measures to Support Victims Under 18 Years Old in Sexual Crimes

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### Abstract

In terms of nature and characteristics, sexual crimes are exceedingly sensitive. Sexual crimes and those violating chastity with a long precedent based on Islamic jurisprudence are included in the category of victimless crimes. In addition to neglecting the harmful psychological effects on the victims and destructive effects such as lack of security among vulnerable groups, including Individuals who are less than 18 years old, the main reliance is on severe and unchangeable punishments and, in general, a purely punitive approach in response to the offender of a crime. Encouraging criminals to take direct responsibility for their behavior is one of the goals of criminal mediation. This goal is achievable only by requiring perpetrators to perceive the impact of the crime on the victim's life and providing them with an opportunity to participate in how the suffering caused by the crime can be addressed. The criminal who, due to the presence of repressive punishments, in the traditional criminal justice system, makes every effort to deny the behavior or justify it, in this practice becomes a helper to correct things. By entering the process of restorative justice and understanding the effect of his behavior on the victim's life, he feels responsible for removing the pain caused by his behavior, while in the traditional system, by considering the criminal as an enemy and outsider, his social adjustment will be much more challenging.

children have historically received the least amount of exposure and legal follow-up, despite the increase in sexual offenses against them. This is because they are the most vulnerable group in society. This not only demonstrates increased support from parents, educators, policymakers, and legal institutions for protecting their rights, interests, and dignity against social deviations, but it also makes a statement about the necessity of preventing and limiting possibilities for breaching norms.

Childhood victimization occurs everywhere: in homes, kindergartens and schools, in state-care institutions, neighborhoods, workplaces, and online. Despite the growth of



sexual crimes against children and teenagers, these crimes have always received the lowest amount of disclosure and legal prosecution. In this regard, restorative justice can be presented as an alternative solution to solve sexual crimes without the debilitating effects of custodial or mandatory punishments, and... Victim-centered RJ enables them to engage with offenders (usually accompanied by judicial supervision). In recent decades, most communities using RJ have succeeded in reducing sex crimes, but most of the programs of this system are aimed at rehabilitating juvenile or first-time offenders. Sexually abused children and adolescents are outside the scope of this system, and the failure and non-fulfillment of RJ's promise to protect victims and implement justice can be expected. Despite the high rate of childhood sexual abuse and the shortcomings of the criminal justice system in prosecuting such crimes, the need for RJ programs is felt more than ever with victims under 18 years of age.

A summary of the elements and features required for the implementation of restorative justice programs in support of victims under 18 by studying needs-based rights and using the knowledge of experts active in the field of sexually abused children and adolescents:

- Providing practical tips for implementing restorative justice with children and adolescents on the way to recovery.
- The usefulness of the participation of victims under 18 in the implementation of justice despite the difficulties at the beginning of the process. (participatory criminal policy in the true sense and far from formal and dramatic implementation) which expresses the desire of children and teenagers to have a voice free from any necessity in decision-making power.
- Providing clear and transparent explanations for the participation of children and teenagers safely and without any harm and danger.

Communicate, continue, and listen with respect as adults who are victims of such crimes. With regard to the issue of restorative justice in Iran's legal and judicial system, this research, which is qualitative in terms of descriptive-analytical method, deals with two main issues: first, identifying and expressing standards of restorative justice in order to provide maximum help and support to sexually abused children. Second, the challenges of Iran's legal system to operationalize restorative justice programs. In the current conditions of Iran's legal system, the result of the research shows that "the use of trained restorative justice activists and benefiting from the capabilities of non-governmental organizations" provides the recovery and treatment of sexual victims under the age of 18.

**Keywords:** Victim children, sexual abuse, Need- rights, Restorative justice.



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