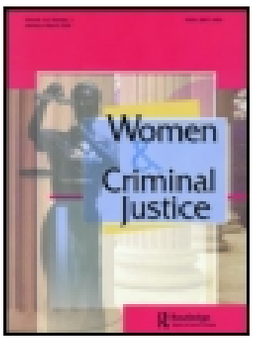

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Genderneutrality and the Prevention and Treatment of Violence – A Dutch Perspective

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One of the important themes in debating violence in the international political fora is 'violence against women', which is explicitly emphasized by The Convention of Istanbul. The Netherlands have ratified this convention but partially due to Dutch influence it was stated that although women do suffer more from violence, that does not mean that there are no male victims of violence and that the state and policy makers should provide for them too. As a consequence, Dutch government aims at 'gender neutrality' in their approaches to prevent and treat violence. This approach has dealt with some criticism, some wonder nowadays whether this focus on 'gender neutrality' has negative consequences for addressing the hardship that women have to deal with. In our contribution we will try to answer the previous question by looking into three examples: domestic violence, honour-related violence, and prostitution & human trafficking policy, all in the Netherlands.

Keywords Domestic violence, honour-related violence, prostitution and human trafficking, Dutch policy on combatting violence, violence against women

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"VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN" AS A CONCEPT: THE DUTCH PERSPECTIVE

One of the important themes in debating violence in the international political fora is "violence against women". The general idea is that women suffer more from violence than men and that men are usually the offenders responsible for violence against women. The claim is that there is no symmetry in victimship and offending of violent crimes regarding gender. This line of reasoning echoes through policies of the United Nations and also through those of the European Union. A good example is the Convention of Istanbul[1] that is based on the understanding that violence against women is a form of gender-based violence that is committed against women because they are women (Council of Europe, 2011). It is the obligation of the state to fully address it in all its forms and to take measures to prevent violence against women, protect its victims and prosecute the perpetrators. Failure to do so would make it the responsibility of the state. The convention leaves no doubt: there can be no real equality between women and men if women experience gender-based violence on a large-scale and state agencies and institutions turn a blind eye.

The Netherlands has also ratified this important convention (Council of Europe, 2015). However, partially due to Dutch influence it was stated within the text of the convention that although women do suffer more from violence, recognizing the fact that there is no symmetry in violent experiences in relation to gender, that does not mean that there are no male victims of violence and that the state and policymakers should provide for them too. As a consequence, Dutch government aims at "gender neutrality" in their approaches to prevent and treat violence. This approach has dealt with some criticism and some wonder nowadays whether this focus on "gender neutrality" has negative consequences for addressing the hardship that women have to deal with.

FOCUS OF OUR CONTRIBUTION

In our contribution we will try to answer the question if a gender-neutral policy has negative consequences for combating violence against women and at the same time, is able to provide, as it was stated as one of its goals, for male victims. We analyze three crimes: domestic violence, Honor-related violence, and prostitution and human trafficking, all in the Netherlands. These phenomena are examples for a typical Dutch approach, and we will give a brief overview of the situation in the Netherlands based on Dutch studies and partly on empirical research conducted by the authors regarding these particular topics. For each example we will address the following questions:

- What have we learned about the three examples (domestic violence, Honor-related violence and prostitution & human trafficking) with regard to the gender of victims and offenders in the Dutch context?
- How do Dutch government, policies and the criminal justice system deal with these phenomena from a gender perspective? How is aimed for "gender neutrality"?

On the basis of these three examples, we will address this final question: What lessons might be learned from the Dutch experience?

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE GENDER OF VICTIMS AND OFFENDERS IN A DUTCH CONTEXT

Combatting domestic violence has been an explicit priority of the Dutch government since 2002. By 2002, the government"s policy changed from a focus on (sexual) violence against women to a broader approach with a focus on domestic violence (Central government, 2018). In reforming this policy, the term "violence against women" disappeared and the more gender-neutral term domestic violence was introduced. The question is, does leaving out the women in policy formulations has consequences for effective treatment of domestic violence? And do policymakers, as was formulated, really account for male victims of domestic violence? Before discussing policy and practice of domestic violence programs at the end of this paper, we first shed some light on the gender of female and male victimization and perpetration of domestic violence in the Netherlands.

Although domestic violence is more than Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) alone, over half of the domestic violence is violence perpetrated by an intimate partner or ex-partner (ten Boom et al., 2018). Therefore, when we refer to domestic violence, we mainly refer to intimate partner violence. In the Netherlands from 2015 onwards the research and documentation center of the Ministry of Justice and Security (WODC) conducted multiple studies on domestic violence (ten Boom et al., 2018). These studies were done in the context of advice given by the council of Europe with regard to preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence (Central Government, 2018). One of these studies examined the prevalence of self-reported victimization and perpetration of domestic violence (physical and sexual violence) among the Dutch population aged 18 and older (6835 respondents) (Eijkern, van Downes, & Veenstra, 2018). The survey for this study was adjusted to be more gender sensitive in measurement (de Vaan, Dijkstra & Witkamp, 2016) by making a distinction between female and male victims and perpetrators (which is often not done) and by measuring the impact of domestic violence. The study revealed that over a five-year period, about one in 20 adults (5.5%) have experienced some incident involving physical and/or sexual violence in the home setting. This concerns 6.2% of women and 4.7% of men. Detailed information on sex differences reveals that women are more often victims of violence committed by their partner or ex-partner and that men are more often victims than women of physical violence committed by "family friends" (a very different type of relationship). It is also apparent that women have to deal with structural violence more often than men. For example, women are six times as often victims of structural violence committed by their partner or ex-partner as men are, and women are also more severely injured than men (Eijkern, van Downes, & Veenstra, 2018). Regarding perpetration of domestic violence, 3.5% of the respondents said they had committed domestic violence in the past five years. There are no significant differences between men and women, they are 3.4 and 3.6 percent respectively. Perpetrators report mainly about physical violence and hardly about sexual violence. Women report significantly more perpetratorship against (former) partners than men do.

Studies measuring victimization and perpetration of domestic violence in more high-risk samples and police registrations show a slightly different picture. Police registration showed that 75% of women and 24.5% of the men were victims of domestic violence while far more men than women were registered as a suspect of perpetration (91.3 vs. 8.7%) (Ferwerda & Hardeman, 2013). In a sample of young men and women, incarcerated in a juvenile justice institution significantly more women (62%) than men (43%) reported being a victim of domestic violence (Slotboom, Hendriks, & Verbruggen, 2011). A study of female prisoners in the Netherlands showed that 59% of the women reported being the victim of intimate partner violence (Joosen & Slotboom, 2015). These results closely resemble a New Zealand prison study among male and female offenders (Bevan, 2017). Victimization of IPV in adulthood was found in 61% of female prisoners and 10% of male prisoners. However, in the Dutch study (Joosen & Slotboom, 2015), female prisoners not only reported being a victim of IPV but 38% also reported being the perpetrator of IPV. Similar results were found in a small sample of incarcerated men and women in New Zealand (Robertson & Murachver, 2007) were 46.7% of women and 41.7% of men reported severe physical violence against their partners. Although these prevalence rates show much less symmetry in male and female victimization than self-report studies from the general population, it also shows that in high-risk samples domestic violence, both as victim and as perpetrator, is very often a common part of turbulent and complicated lives of people, both for men and women.

These prevalence rates give some indication that different types of IPV can be distinguished with more or less gender symmetry in violence, namely situational couple violence, intimate terrorism and violent resistance (Johnson, 2011). Situational couple violence is seen as the most common type of violence with most gender symmetry in victimization and perpetration (reflected in the WODC prevalence study). Intimate terrorism is seen as a pattern of coercive control that involves mostly men as the perpetrator of physical violence to control their partner. Although this is not the most common type of IPV, it is known from female victims seeking help from criminal law enforcement or seeking help in shelters for protection (Muftić, Finn, & Marsh, 2015). To conclude, both Dutch prevalence studies in different samples (general population and high risk) and the literature on IPV (for a short overview see Muftić et al., 2015) show that combatting domestic violence against women should be taken very seriously, but that male victimization should not be forgotten in policymaking.

HONOR BASED VIOLENCE AND GENDER: WOMEN HAVE PROBLEMS AND MEN CAUSE THEM

When talking about violence committed in the name of Honor, in the Dutch context Honor refers to the Honor of the family. Family Honor often involves issues like choosing a partner, condemning extra-marital sexuality and pregnancies, and problems when relationships break up. Many Dutch people would undoubtedly consider issues like choosing or leaving a partner to be matters involving two individuals at most. In Dutch society, however, there are also groups that believe that such steps in an individual's life concern the whole family and that the family is well within its rights to use violence to punish this kind of "deviant" behavior.

In 2017, the Dutch police dealt with 1496 cases in which offending the family Honor was suspected to be a motive for (threats with) violence. In the Netherlands, complex cases of Honor based violence are put to the National Expertise Center for Honor-Based Violence of the Dutch National Police Force (LEC EGG). In 2018 the LEC EGG handled 529 cases. Almost a third of these cases were threats. In 2018 the LEC EGG dealt with five cases of murder or manslaughter. Most cases handled by the LEC EGG have a Turkish (17%) or Moroccan (19%) background. In almost 20% of the cases more than one ethnic group was involved. A third of these cases included people of autochthonous Dutch descent. In public opinion violence in the name of Honor is often associated with Muslim communities, but on a regular basis the police also encounter cases taking place among Christian groups (LEC EGG, 2019; Janssen, 2018).

It has been pointed out that regarding violence in the name of Honor the term gender is often used in a one-sided way by linking it to women only, and more specifically to female victimization (Thapar-Björkert, 2007). However, we hardly read anything about women who actively commit violence themselves or encourage others to commit violence in the name of Honor. When the involvement of men is described, the emphasis is firmly on being an offender and hardly ever, if at all, on victimization (Janssen & Sanberg, 2013). The general idea is that woman have problems and that men cause them. However, of the before mentioned five lethal cases in 2018, two victims were males. In an analysis of fifty threats seen by the Dutch police made in 2006, it emerged that five men were victims. In an analysis of eleven cases with a fatal outcome (including suicide) also from 2006, six of the victims were men (Janssen & Sanberg, 2010). Over the years, the Dutch police have seen male victims on a regular basis.

In literature many authors settle the issue of male victimization by announcing that men can also be victims, but do not delve deeper into the issue. In general, one might state that men can also be found guilty of damaging the family Honor by choosing an unacceptable partner, causing an extramarital pregnancy, having an extramarital affair (Janssen, 2018). Thapar-Björkert (2007) is one of the few who distinguishes various ways in which men may become victims of Honor-related violence: next to the fact that men can become victims for the same reasons as women, she underlines some extra issues. Men may compromise family Honor by getting caught stealing. For the rest, Thapar-Björkert mentions various kinds of group pressure exerted on male relatives. This could involve the pressure to marry a particular partner, but also the pressure to use fatal violence on someone who violates Honor in order to restore the family's reputation. Incidentally, the opinions are divided as to whether men who actually use fatal violence in such a situation should still be considered victims. Another example of group pressure is that men have to carry the can for violence committed by another person. For the family, for example, it is "more prudent" for a young man without children or work to take the punishment brought about by a pater familias with a job that provides the much-needed income. Group pressure may also result in victimization if men are dependent on their in-laws. This is sometimes the case for sons-in-law who run the risk of being financially exploited and emotionally suppressed. For the rest, Thapar-Björkert links the sexual orientation of men to being victims of violence in the name of Honor. By being openly homosexual, men display behavior that is viewed as the equivalent of the sexually unacceptable behavior of women and girls in communities adhering to Honor-related notions.

Dutch literature on Honor and violence also describes forms of male victimization mentioned by Thapar-Björkert (see for an overview: Janssen, 2018).

The fact that we are aware of examples of male victims of Honor codes does not mean that violence in the name of Honor is the same for men as it is for women. For instance, the starting position of men and women is often different: for instance, men are often more independent socially and economically than women are. As a result, they have more opportunities to get away with dishonorable behavior or to find their way out of a problematic situation on their own. The police have noticed that it is relatively easier for men to find refuge if they are threatened. For a woman, the road to finding shelter is often rockier because she has children, for instance, or has not mastered the language. In the community, too, they tend to be more suspicious of women who temporarily stay out of reach of their families. Family members might ask themselves these questions: Do indecent things happen in shelters? After all, the women staying there have withdrawn from the supervision of their own families. Male victims do not have these issues when seeking shelter. But for males, it is more difficult to claim victimhood. Presenting oneself as a victim is often not considered as a manly thing to do. But if a male victim wants to receive help or some of assistance, he must come forward as a victim. That is a dilemma.

"Honor Related Violence" or "Violence Against Women"?

Explaining Honor-related violence from a cultural perspective often goes hand in hand with notions about gender. In the international debate, we see the underlying thought that certain cultural communities in which a patriarchal system prevails negatively affect and restrict women's positions and social roles. Violence in the name of Honor is then an expression of that inequality. Another line of argument stresses that, under the pretext of multiculturalism, Western governments are apparently ignoring the violence of men against women in ethnic minority communities. Outside the West it is often suggested that, by linking Honor-related violence to specific non-Western cultures or ethnic groups, Westerners make it someone else's problem, something that is not a factor in their own society. If cultural factors are addressed, there is a one-sidedness in which ethnic minority women, in particular, are presented as passive and weak-willed victims in multi-ethnic society. The stigma of passive, subordinated women from the east, who modern Westerners must save from their oppressive men, is not new and is typified as colonial feminism. This brings with it a risk of paternalistic interventions and the demonizing of certain communities, and the men in those communities in particular. The work of organizations in non-Western countries committed to preventing and addressing violence is also being made difficult because conservative opponents accuse them of allowing Western countries to exploit them for their own "post-colonial" purposes or even of promoting wicked Western and/or Christian morals. From that perspective, it is considered more prudent to speak of "violence against women" instead of "Honor-related violence" because "violence against women" occurs all over the world. Another argument for replacing the term "Honor-related violence" is that there is little Honor to be gained from this kind of aggression (Janssen, 2018). Summarizing, although "violence against women" has the attractiveness of being an understandable and simple tag, it does not do justice to the complexity of violence. In the Netherlands attention is paid to male victims,

because it is understood, that although there is no symmetry in Honor-related violence, simply understanding this as violence against women, is not correct either.

REGULATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING BY PROSTITUTION POLICY AND GENDERED STEREOTYPES

The connection between national prostitution policy and the national policy against human trafficking is a new phenomenon since the beginning of the 21st century in Europe and the United States. Documented by the so-called *Palermo Protocol* (December 15, 2000) prostitution and human trafficking have become part of the international fight against organized crime. This Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, a supplement to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime is the most important international legal instrument with a widely accepted definition of trafficking. This emphasis on women and children in the Palermo Protocol is criticized by scholars as reflecting a gendered stereotype because women are supposed to be victims and men are perceived as perpetrators. In contrast, the definition of the European Union in the Framework Decision on combating trafficking in human beings (July 19, 2002) is referring to men *and* women (Breuil, Siegel, Van Reenen, Beijer, & Roos, 2011, pp. 34). The Dutch regulation of human trafficking is largely based on international agreements as the Palermo Protocol of the UN even as European Regulations.

Human trafficking and prostitution as two different, but fused phenomena, have both become part of combating organized crime. At the heart of the current debate about the interrelation of human trafficking and prostitution, a central assumption is that the legalization of prostitution is combined with an increase of women trafficked for sexual purposes because legalized prostitution has increased the demand for commercial sex. The European Parliament resolution on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality (February 26, 2014) is an expression of this, recommending member states to apply the Nordic model, punishing and deterring the client of prostitution, to abolish or decrease prostitution. Many European member states have not yet linked their prostitution policy to the Nordic policy combating human trafficking. The Dutch policy is characterized by a normalization strategy and legalization of prostitution aims to protect prostitutes and to improve the detection and punishment of forced prostitution. Women are not automatically perceived as victims and can legally work as prostitutes when they have a working permit. In the Dutch Code of Criminal Law, the definition of trafficking as proposed by the European Framework Decision is implemented according to which exploitation is central for prosecuting human trafficking. Following the European Framework, the consent of the victim of being exploited is irrelevant.

Breuil et al. (2011) are stating that the Dutch law enforcement and the Dutch anti-trafficking policies do have a stereotypical perception of trafficking, the perpetrators and victims: an innocent victim and the powerful, evil, traffickers. The research points out that such images legitimize law enforcement and harsh and far-reaching instruments with an emphasis on repression. Contrasting with these stereotypical assumptions of the victims, several empirical studies in the Netherlands have shown that most of the trafficked women do not identify themselves as victims, as innocent and passive individuals. Mostly these studies do not

reflect the gendered images. Trafficking does not only happen to women and perpetrators of human trafficking are not only male. Moreover, victims and perpetrators are not necessarily opponents but can switch although this is the prevailing images used by law enforcement. In addition, studies that focus on the individual experiences of those affected show that agency plays an important role in the lives of trafficked women. (Breuil et al., 2011, pp. 40-42).

Coming back to the prostitution topic, in the Dutch Criminal Code, a distinction is made between forced and voluntary prostitution. Forced prostitution is legally categorized as human trafficking, the Dutch prostitution policy has been directed at voluntary prostitution. The clear distinction between forced and voluntary prostitution is inherent to the normalizing strategy of Dutch policy. Selling sex has always been legal. In 2000, the pimping and brothel keeping prohibition was abolished and legalized. The underlying ideas are that normalizing policy of voluntary prostitution can regulate sex work in the public space and create safe and fair working conditions for prostitutes that are comparable to the working conditions in other sectors. Regulating voluntary prostitution gives the possibility to set limits on the number of brothels refuse or rescind a license to brothel keepers if they employ minor or illegal residents or do no not shape an environment regarding hygiene, health, and safety (Outshoorn, 2004; Zeegers & Althoff, 2015).

The legalization of voluntary prostitution was one of the central goals focusing on women and increasing the opportunities for self-determination and its effects on the conditions that women need to act independently in their work as prostitutes for making autonomy possible. The underlying idea was to normalize this form of prostitution and making the working conditions comparable to those of workers in other sectors. Defining prostitution as work was a goal particularly strived for by parts of the feminist movement (Zeegers & Althoff, 2015). Studies show that prostitutes often prefer to be independent and self-employed because of the greater control over working situations, anonymity, and finances. However different evaluation studies such as that of Outshoorn (2012) emphasize that the licensing policies of municipalities hinders such innovations and restricted the number of licenses for prostitute-owned brothels and starting their own business. Normalizing the Labor and social position could not all realize the idea of preventing economic exploitation. The one-sided attention paid to human trafficking by police implies questioning how women end up into prostitution. Economic exploitation which is not related to trafficking such as low income and the working conditions in the brothel did not get the necessary attention (Wagenaar, Altink, & Amesberger, 2013). The gendered focus of the Dutch prostitution policy with respect to women's agency and self-determination has improved the position for women as sex workers but not at a level that was expected.

Does the gendered perspective has also improved gendered stereotypes? Prostitution in generally is still associated as a gendered phenomenon and regarded as forced and not as voluntary, i.e. as exploitation. The latter can be explained by the difficulty to draw a clear distinction between voluntary and forced. Research (Verhoeven, Van Gestel, De Jong, & Kleemans, 2015) illustrates that there are intimate relationships between suspects and victims of sex trafficking which has parallels with domestic violence. Such a relationship is not only characterized by violence, intimidation, and control, but also by care and pleasure. This can be applied to prostitution as well as human trafficking and sometimes the transitions are fluid. Perhaps this is the reason why human trafficking in the public debate is still associated

with the sexual exploitation of women. Sex work is automatically equated with sexual violence, linked to the image of the vulnerability of women in all situations of prostitution, and sex workers are seen as female victims of human trafficking. This applies in particular to migrant sex workers, who are always regarded as potential victims of human trafficking. Public debate on human trafficking is dominated by the assumption and images of the migrant women as the typical victim of sexual exploitation. Effect is that prostitution policy increasingly is controlled by human trafficking rhetoric which serves as justification of closing brothels and abolishing prostitution in the public space. Recently, we can observe such a trend in the Netherlands (f.i. Siegel, 2015). However, human trafficking and prostitution are not inherently connected although the gendered stereotypes let believe us.

HOW DO DUTCH GOVERNMENT, POLICIES AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM DEAL WITH THESE PHENOMENA FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE? HOW IS AIMED FOR "GENDER NEUTRALITY"?

Does the Dutch gender-neutral formulated violence policy accounts for both violence against women on the one hand and for male victims and female perpetrators on the other hand? In the Netherlands, many different programs have been developed and offered by many different organizations. In 2013 a gender scan on violence in dependency relations was conducted and a gender toolkit was developed for municipalities and professionals with tools to pay more attention to the role of gender in domestic violence (Daru, Mejdoubi, de Vaan, & Visser, 2016). Also, the action program on domestic violence and child abuse "Violence doesn't belong at home" ("Geweld hoort nergens thuis") was launched in 2018. However, women are not mentioned as a specific group in the action program, despite the fact that, as was mentioned before, police registration shows that 90% of the perpetrators of domestic violence who came in contact with the justice system are men and that in three-quarters of the incidences the victim is a woman (Ferwerda & Hardeman, 2013). Although the action program was developed for all victims and all kinds of violence in "dependency relations" and therefore formulated as gender neutral, the question is, how does it work in practice? Are programs and interventions really gender neutral? What kind of programs are developed and for whom? The report of the Dutch government executing the Istanbul convention (Central Government, 2018), describes a number of actions explicitly focused on violence against women or violence in dependency relations with a gender sensitive lens. Also, an internet scan conducted by one of the authors revealed that most of the interventions and programs developed by NGO"s are female victim oriented. Very few programs are developed for male victims. However, developing mainly female victim-oriented interventions does not mean that the program is gender sensitive. Only when explicitly including the role of gender in the intervention, it will be really gender sensitive. References to gender and gender roles were not clearly found in the short descriptions of the interventions. A smaller number of programs mainly applied by criminal justice organizations target both victim and perpetrator in the same intervention but mostly the interventions refer to men as perpetrators and females as victims although common couple violence is mentioned as well. The interventions that target the perpetrator were all developed for men although one intervention mentioned that the

intervention could also be used for female perpetrators. Another intervention developed for male perpetrators explicitly paid attention to gender roles.

Interesting enough the Dutch part of the CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) network (Dutch CEDAW Network, 2018), consisting of NGOs and independent women's rights experts in the Netherlands recently delivered a shadow report on the implementation of violence against women and violence in dependency relations (Istanbul Convention). They conclude that an underlying comprehensive gender-analysis of violence against women is missing in the Dutch policy on violence and therefore the main causes of violence between men and women are not taken into account and hinder an effective approach towards combating violence. However, they also conclude that some concrete suggestions for the integration of a gender perspective can be found in follow-up research to the gender scan of Daru, Mejdoubi, de Vaan, and Visser (2016), conducted by Steketee, Römkens, Pels, LüNnemann, and Harthoorn (2016). In this study Steketee and others target the prevention of intergenerational violence and conclude that there are few Dutch interventions that pay attention to gender-related inequalities and the importance of the emancipation of women, men and their children (daughters and sons), in a balanced and well-integrated way. They make concrete suggestions for improvement but also conclude that most attention has been paid to interventions after violence in dependency relations has taken place and more attention needs to be paid to primary prevention.

Although the above applies to all three examples of violence discussed, human trafficking and prostitution policies have some extra issues to tackle. With regard to human trafficking and prostitution, a problem is that trafficking in human beings is mainly associated with prostitution, and prostitution is approached as gendered phenomena with the goal to protect women. This perspective on prostitution is linked to a gender-sensitive policy in combination with a human trafficking policy which is based on gender stereotypes - of women as victims - which has a major impact on the approach. In recent years, referring to human trafficking, more and more working places have been closed where prostitution no longer is tolerated, following the official rhetoric, in order to protect the women or to combat human trafficking. It seems as if in this way gender stereotypes regain entry via the back door and determine the Dutch gender-sensitive prostitution policies.

So, what can we conclude about the gender neutrality of the Dutch policy combatting violence? And what are the consequences for men and women involved in violence? All in all, we can conclude that although the Dutch government explicitly has formulated their violence policy as gender neutral and is criticized for not paying enough attention to gender sensitive policies in combatting violence in dependency relations, it is not completely ignoring the role of gender. Prevalence studies are made more sensitive, tools for developing more gender sensitive programs are developed, in practice, most victim-oriented programs target female victims and most perpetrator programs target males but there is also an increasing focus on male victimization. However, the gender sensitivity of the measures to provide shelter, protection, and support after the violence has taken place is not clear and very few primary prevention programs pay attention to the role of gender. Also, criminal justice interventions targeting perpetrators, hardly focus on gender and gender roles, and no interventions exist for female perpetrators. Also, as is clearly seen in linking prostitution with human trafficking, there exists the risk of gender stereotyping.

All things considered, we can conclude that the official policy of the government combatting violence is formulated in gender-neutral terms, but in practice, the approach is slightly less gender-neutral than might be envisaged, with more emphasis on providing assistance to female victims and treating male perpetrators. That does not mean that this will guarantee enough attention for "violence against women". As several researchers and policymakers have repeatedly emphasized, too little attention is paid to causes and treatment of violence based on a gendered framework. In addition, despite the fact that policy is aimed at all victims in dependency relationships, little attention is still paid to male victims. The gender-neutral policy of the Netherlands may not be as neutral as formulated - but it does require clarity about the direction of the approach. We now call the policy gender-neutral, but in practice we mainly have an eye for female victims and male perpetrators, we have too little eye for a gendered framework and at the same time we also maintain gender stereotyping. Room for improvement in the Dutch policy on combatting violence. However, a lesson learned from the Dutch experience is that, despite the necessary improvement that still needs to be done, the Dutch gender-neutral framework offers ample opportunity to incorporate police and practice for male victims, female perpetrators and a gendered framework.

NOTE

1. The Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence was adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on 7 April 2011. It was opened for signature on 11 May 2011 on the occasion of the 121st Session of the Committee of Ministers in Istanbul. Following its 10th ratification by Andorra on 22 April 2014, it entered into force on 1 August 2014.

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