

OPEN PEER REVIEW

# The Role of Social Prevention in Criminal Policy for Protecting Victims of Emerging Sects

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## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The phrase “emerging mystic sects... have caused numerous problems” lacks a clear operational definition of what qualifies a group as an “emerging sect.” Define this term with criteria (e.g., organizational structure, deviation from orthodoxy) and provide one or two illustrative examples.

The paragraph beginning “Moreover, emerging mystic sects, as a social phenomenon...” repeats earlier content about their societal harm. Consider condensing this to avoid redundancy while sharpening the link between social harm and prevention policy.

The paragraph on the four scenarios of Article 500 bis is disproportionately long and dense. Consider summarizing the legal distinctions in a table or breaking them into subsections for readability.

In the clause “the material element of the crime is established,” clarify what is meant by “material element.” This term should be explicitly defined or linked to legal theory for readers outside the Iranian criminal law context.

The transition between legal analysis and developmental social prevention is abrupt. Insert a paragraph clearly justifying why the legal shortcomings necessitate attention to developmental prevention as a policy alternative.

The discussion relies heavily on older sources (e.g., Sotudeh, 2007). Integrate more recent studies or statistical findings from the past five years on family influence in preventing sect recruitment.

The paragraph “Humans have various physical and psychological needs...” is overly rooted in theological justification. While religious perspectives are relevant, supplement with contemporary psychological and sociological evidence.

The sentence “Schools significantly contribute to the socialization...” is theoretically sound but requires empirical support. Include evidence from Iranian educational studies demonstrating this effect.

The recommendation “Instruction hours should not be overly long and continuous...” is subjective and lacks specificity. Provide concrete curriculum reform suggestions or best practices drawn from educational policy research.

The paragraph claims “national media has underperformed...” but later notes that it has aired problematic content like Van Helsing. Clarify whether the critique is about neglect, complicity, or mismanagement in cultural messaging.

Section: Challenge of Social Prevention – Vague call for coordination

The sentence “each participating entity must understand its role...” is general. Specify which institutions in Iran are currently involved and where coordination breakdowns occur, possibly citing examples or past failed initiatives.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

## 1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The assertion “In Iran, emerging mystic sects have grown significantly in recent years...” would benefit from empirical support. Include statistics or scholarly citations to demonstrate the scale or timeline of growth.

The block quote from Shakeri & Abdi (2016) is too lengthy and not adequately integrated into the discussion. Summarize key points and analytically connect them to the argument, rather than relying on extended quotations.

The statement “there is still no specific and comprehensive criminal policy...” is too sweeping. Acknowledge partial measures, like Article 500 bis, earlier in the paragraph to maintain precision and avoid oversimplification.

The paragraph emphasizes the negative potential of peer groups but underrepresents their positive role. Balance the discussion by referencing peer-led youth initiatives or social integration programs.

The distinction between community-based and developmental social prevention is underdeveloped. Define the two approaches more clearly at the outset of each section and emphasize their complementary rather than overlapping roles.

The claim “Cultural poverty is a significant factor...” needs a more critical analysis. What indicators are used to assess “cultural poverty”? Is it a metaphor or a measurable construct? Provide a source that operationalizes this concept.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

## 2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.