



Empowerment and Victim Blaming

What you are doing is hiding your head in sand. Nobody is saying that rapers should not be convicted more, or that all rapes are caused by drinking. But you are criticizing those who educate women to take care of themselves, empower them. What you are saying is basically that women are too weak (like children) and are not in control of anything.

How about teaching women to protect themselves? Your position is the opposite of empowering.

It is empowering, because it is telling them they can control. You won't women to be children, who are helpless.

I am saying if a woman is making herself vulnerable by drinking immense amount of alcohol, she is being stupid. Listen and read.

The above statements are part of a series of tweets we received over the weekend. We have redacted the name of the tweeter to preserve their anonymity. We are sharing them because they exemplify the types of tweets we receive on an almost daily basis. This tweeter genuinely believes that we must empower women by changing women's behaviour and that women who drink are "stupid".

"Empowerment" is a word used a lot around the issues of sexual and domestic violence. The argument is that if we teach women to do X, it will prevent them from being victims. This includes, but isn't limited to, telling women not to drink alcohol, to take self-defence lessons, to stay inside at night and never walk anywhere alone. This is not "empowerment". This is victim blaming.

We need to change the language we use when discussing sexual and domestic violence and that includes not using words like "empowerment" to curtail women's behaviour.

The only people responsible for rape are rapists. Telling a woman that she should have behaved differently is not empowerment. It's precisely the language which prevents women from accessing support for fear of being blamed