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Gender Relations and Social Reintegration of Rape Survivors in South Kivu: An Analysis of Favorable and Unfavorable Factors for Reintegration

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ABSTRACT

Stereotypical beliefs about male honor often impede the social reintegration of rape victims. We conducted a qualitative study in Kalehe territory in the province of South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo, to understand strategies that facilitate the continuity of married life despite dishonor due to the rape of their wife. We interviewed men and women in eight couples separately. Our respondents implemented marital survival mechanisms that had not been thought out or planned. These strategies mainly involved a symbolic acceptance of women after rape. In our sample, some men remained in their marriages despite the perceived economic, sexual, and identity-related emasculation that made them less than men. Others engaged in polygamy. The presence of children born of rape made it difficult to their mothers for social reintegration. However, female children born from rape seemed to better reintegration than boys because of house chores, and marriage, from which their stepfather would benefit a bride price. The boys, on the other hand, were considered as herders and a potential danger associated with their biological fathers. In conclusion, our study shows that, although women reintegrated their matrimonial homes, they experience violence due to the hegemonic masculine socialization and patriarchal foundations.

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Rape is an extremely serious practice that frightens women in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. It is used by various armed groups to humiliate and dishonor local communities (Dunia, 2017). Women are raped by military in various circumstances. They experience rape at home in the presence or absence of their husbands. After the attack, the perpetrators abduct and take them into the forest to serve as sex slaves to their attackers for several days, or even months causing threat to their husbands to flee. Those who cannot flee are either killed or beaten and subject to enforcement to watch their wives being raped (Mouflet, 2008). Women are raped outside their

homes, in the fields, when getting water or going to the bush to look for firewood (Duroch, 2004).

According to Baaz and Stern (2009), rape in the Congo has been examined under several possible explanations. First, rape is a kind of booty of war in which men rape and commit acts of sexual violence to their victims for their own enjoyment. Second, military use rape to terrorize and subjugate communities to impair the dignity of their male enemies. Third, it is used as a weapon to destroy the community structural relationships. Many armed groups destroy family ties by violently raping Congolese women to live their victims sterile. We have observed a kind of male power that fits into the ideological axioms of male supremacy that feminist writer Dworkin and Dufresne (2006) defines as a man's capacity to terrorize, by using himself and constraint to induce fear in a class of people.

A marriage often breaks down after a rape has occurred. Some surviving female victims of rape, those who were not a subject driven to the forest for sextape slavery, are referred to hospital for medical treatment. Consequently, some are fired or abandoned by their husbands. In that case, a long process is necessary before the women can return home. During this separation, the children remain with their father if survived from killing. Sometimes a father flees far from his home village, abandoning his children. If this happens, they are taken by relatives (grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.) to await the possible return of one of their parents (Kelly et al., 2011).

There is no doubt that the effects of rape last longer than the act itself. A woman who has been a subject to rape in a field is afraid of coming back to her farming activities. Thus, there is a decline in family productivity and sudden increase in poverty and food insecurity. Women who become pregnant after a rape are often forced to bear their unwanted children, as the community views abortion as an outcast act and illegal (Nelson et al., 2011). In addition to the physical scars of rape, women often experience psychological harm, which can reflect in serious depression, fear, anxiety, shame, guilt, and persistent nightmares (Brown, 2012). Victims of rape and sexual violence do not receive psychological treatment and are forced to relive their trauma every day without support or emotional guidance. Many raped women are abandoned by their husbands or their communities and labeled as impure and outcast, often leading to revictimized (Kelly et al., 2011).

The effects of rape often go beyond the individual, affecting her family, her village, and her whole community. The rapist's goal is not only to mutilate or kill his victim but also to control a whole sociopolitical process by paralyzing it. This is an attack against both personal identity and cultural integrity (Finnbakk & Nordås, 2018). Gottschall (2004) mentions that rape in wartime, unlike rape in peacetime, is not identified as a crime of passion, related to uncontrollable sexual urge. It is a crime motivated by the desire to dominate women or other men through women. Feminist publications, as well as a good

deal of social and historical research work, have shown that rape is not a consequence of war but a strategy for waging war and is used to maintain the order of the gender and social control over women (Branche & Virgili, 2011). It is one of the instruments of hegemonic masculine dominance (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

In patriarchal societies, women are often considered as depersonalized symbols who bear men's honor and reproduce the culture and other traditional values (Saucier et al., 2015). Thus, stereotyped beliefs about male honor often led husbands to reject their wives in case of rape (Kelly et al., 2011), whether individual or gang rape. This means that dishonoring a woman amounts to dishonoring her entire community, and principally the men. Women victims are injured not only by the rape but by the reactions of their husbands and their communities, which have been dishonored.

Social reintegration is even more complicated for women who bear their assailants' children after rape (Kelly et al., 2011). These children, who are symbols (products) of dishonor, compound the rape itself, and their existence stresses the woman's suffering and the discrimination against her by her husband and the community. As the fruits of rape-caused pregnancies, these children represent a real puzzle for their mothers and relatives, who are responsible for raising a child they never wanted to have. In many cases, these children are described as bad luck children or snake children (Muhayisa et al., 2016).

Benghozi (1994) describes rape as dishonoring violence that incorporates three levels of shame: being ashamed, being shameful and bearing shame. It is an ongoing crime of defilement, a violence of shame that affects not only the woman's physical being but also her moral and social being (Moureau, 2017), and this makes it difficult for the victim to reintegrate socially. It is both shameful to live with a raped woman and dangerous to keep her in one's home (Guinamard, 2010). The most frequent reflex of husbands, and even the community, is rejection. The most common social reaction is distancing and stigmatization (Finnbakk & Nordås, 2018; Mahano & Kangami, 2018). Even in France, and Europe in general, which are very different from South Kivu, women say that they no longer feel like themselves after rape. They no longer recognize themselves; they have changed and their whole life is turned upside-down. Shame is also very common in Europe and the rest of the world, and rejection is still frequent (Moureau, 2017).

Nevertheless, some raped women manage to reintegrate into their families with their children if they and, most of all, their husbands develop resilience. For example, Skjelsbæk (2006) reported that, in Bosnia, where rape was also used as a weapon of war, some women were supported by their husbands after being raped. To face up to their attackers, who wanted to exterminate an entire ethnic group by attacking the women, the men developed resilience strategies. We can describe this as positive masculinity that transforms men's dishonor

into a strength enabling them to support women in difficult situations. In Canada, survivors of rape take part in adaptive activities based on emotion regulation such as sports, reading, and drawing. Other women turn to religion; they attend church and pray often, seeking support, understanding, and meaning for their lived experiences. Negative practices are also described, such as drug and alcohol consumption to overcome emotions, as well as isolation, avoidance, and denial. Self-destructive strategies without suicidal ideations and multiple sex partners have also been reported (Northcott, 2013). The sociocultural context in the DRC, a country where issues related to inequality of men and women persist, would likely lead to different strategies than those observed in Canada and Bosnia.

Several studies have focused on rape and sexual violence in the DRC, with the aim of restoring women's dignity and well-being, but very few have analyzed the reasoning and strategies used by husbands to settle arguments for or against the reintegration of the raped women into their marriage and family. However, this is not automatically supported by an understanding, welcoming, positive attitude, either individually or collectively, due to social norms related to male domination, which consider rape as a kind of unfaithfulness and betrayal by the woman. Two tendencies are observed in men in the DRC. The first is to be supportive of their wives insofar as they consider themselves to be victims too. The second is to repudiate the victimized wife. In either case, these behaviors are guided by the material and symbolic functioning of the group and the community, through a cost-benefit calculation. This calculation also applies to the rape survivors in their exercise of reintegrating into their households and families. Our study seeks to shed light on this kind of reasoning and strategy within a married couple, by adopting a reading of gender and paying particular attention to cases where a child was born of the rape.

Method

A qualitative approach was used to define and understand the social reintegration strategies that women and their husbands implement so they can continue to live as a couple despite the rejection and stigmatization they suffer from in their families and communities. First, a pre-survey was conducted with the Panzi Foundation to identify rape survivors who had received treatment there more than 10 years before. Then the survey was done in Kalehe Territory, the homeland of many of the rape survivors who had been treated by the Panzi Foundation, which put us in contact with Naomi, a psychosocial assistant who lived there. Naomi was visited in Kalehe, where she is responsible for a women's group within the local church affiliated with the Eighth Community of Pentecostal Churches in Central Africa (8^e CEPAC).

Kalehe is one of eight territories in the province of South Kivu in the eastern DRC. It is located about 80 kilometers north of Bukavu, the provincial capital, and close to Kahuzi-Biega National Park, an area in which many armed groups operate. The common language of the area is Swahili, but people also speak their local language, Kihavu. The population lives mainly from agriculture; but as is the case throughout South Kivu, women in Kalehe do not own land. To earn money, a woman and her husband may also work on plantations belonging to churches, non-governmental organizations, or certain individuals.

The selection of respondents was facilitated by Naomi, who speaks the local language. Women concerned were firstly located and identified by our survey. Then, the individual consent from each woman and her husband was obtained. The selection process produced eight couples in which the wives had been raped by members of armed groups. Interviewees included one couple in which the wife had been raped before the marriage and only one couple that did not have a child resulting from the rape. In this study, we did not investigate cases of rape committed by members of the community in which the victims lived, since in those cases the aggressors act cunningly to avoid being identified and judged. Victims of this kind of rape are often too ashamed and afraid to report it. Moreover, rape by a community member is usually veiled in silence; the victim remains in her family, and consequently she has never been treated or separated from her husband, which means that the idea of reintegration into the family does not apply.

Women and men who took part in our study were interviewed simultaneously, in separate sessions, by a female interviewer and a male interviewer. In this study area, a woman may not discuss intimate questions with a man with whom she is not in an amorous relationship. Similarly, men would feel embarrassed to discuss intimate matters with a woman. Nevertheless, we were aware that positioning issues could mean that men would perceive the male interviewer as a judge or a competitor and therefore might not reveal to him certain weaknesses or failures caused by their socialization. In patriarchal societies, men are taught from childhood to take ownership of paternal superiority through a feeling of rivalry, unlike little girls, who experience this superiority with powerless admiration. Men occupy positions of power and have more privileges than women as advocated in (Delphy, 2000). Our analyses are based both on individuals (husband and wife) taken in isolation and on the couple. Here, the sampling unit is the individual, while the unit of analysis is both the individual and the couple, which enabled us to compare and understand the wife's discourse in relation to her husband's and to identify the information we sought from the couple.

Our sample was composed of couples who were married and lived together before the rape and who were still together, except for one couple in which the wife had been raped before marriage, as mentioned above. In this work, anonymity of interviewees has been protected by assigning letter codes to

the couples: CA, CB, CC, CD, CE, CF, CG, and CH. At the interview location, the couple was placed in two separate rooms – the wife in one room and the husband in another. To induce trust in the couples, interviews were conducted in the residence of a former community organizer with the Panzi Foundation known by the couples as facilitator as Naomi.

An interview guide was used in which the questions had been translated from French into Swahili and others from Swahili to Kihavu. The interview essentially concerned the couple's perceptions of their experience before, during and after the rape. The qualitative analysis consisted of reading and re-reading the narratives to identify prominent and recurring themes. Themes were chosen based on the number of times the issues were raised in the self-reported narrative. Narratives stories were used to identify support man gave his wife and what their daily experiences were in the community. We also analyzed the potential impact of a child born of rape on familial and marital relations and the community's influence on these relationships. This influence was captured through the representations and discourse of the spouses participating in the study.

Results

Many strategies have been used by family and community members to support the socio-reintegration of rape survivors. The latter include the support from husbands, acceptance of polygamy by women and men, emasculation of men, and having children in the family.

Support that survivors received from their husbands and others immediately after the rape

All couples interviewed thought that, before the rape, they were leading a functional lifestyle. The women were raped between 2002 and 2010, and their children of rape were now 10 to 18 years old. All these victims said that they had not received any support from their husband's right after the rape, whether the crime was committed at home or in the forest, where the women had spent between six months and two years. Men were reluctant to sexual intimacy for the fear to catch sexually transmitted diseases, mainly HIV. Considering their wives to be impure since they had had sexual relations with several unknown men, it was necessary for physicians, friends, parents, fathers-in-law, or even other community members to intervene and make men aware that they should not abandon their wives. This was the case with Mr. CA, who said, "I was afraid that my wife had HIV, but I was reassured by the hospital later." Hence, we can see a double avoidance: the men avoided contact with their wives, who had become unclean or ill in their eyes; they also avoided facing the shame their spouses were now enveloped in. Thus, the women victims received very few visitors during their stay in hospital.

Polygamy as a way to escape from dishonor

The results show that, after women rape, the first reaction of all the men was to think of marrying a second wife for obvious reasons, such as the inability to care for their children and the devaluation of their wives considered as prostitutes. In our study, three men opted for polygamy: Mr. CC, CD and CF while others remained monogamous couples following their economic, sexual, and identity-related emasculation as a subject of discussion in the following section. In all cases, the men avoided divorcing their first wives since they were unable to take care of the children when the women were not there. In South Kivu, it is the custom that, if a couple divorces or separates, the children remain with their father; in many cases, it is common for these children to be mistreated by the new wife. Mrs. CC's comments confirm this inability on the part of men: she said, "When I returned from captivity in the forest, I found my youngest child full of sand fleas; my husband was unable to care for them correctly." These stories reveal that there are fixed, gender-based organizational imperatives that structure family functioning. In this context and in patriarchal societies in general, the work of care is traditionally women's responsibility, Mr. CC told us,

I made several decisions: she left; she didn't want to, but I had to remarry as well. But, on the other hand, I wondered what I'd do with five children if my wife didn't come back home. So, I put up with it.

Taking care of the children and providing other kinds of care is a role assigned to women, but, in patriarchal Congolese society, if a man fires his wife, the latter does not take the children with her since they belong to their father. We will not use the term "custody" since that would imply that a divorce had been granted, whereas in rural areas that is an almost nonexistent procedure that calls for sums of money that rural populations do not generally possess. The three men also justified their polygamy by considering that their wives had become impure and unclean, essentially prostitutes. Talking of her husband, Mrs. CF said,

My husband went off and took another wife, but after nine years, he came back to me becoming a drunkard, insulting me too often, and calling me an Interahamwe woman (the term refers to Hutu militia who committed the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and who immigrated to DR Congo), and convicting me for not running away during the rape.

Mrs. CF herself considered that she was guilty and felt obliged to apologize to her husband. Mrs. CF was raped twice by two different attackers at different times. Her husband considered her to be a prostitute since she was unable to flee. During the interview, she admitted to us that she had been soiled and no longer deserved to take her place at her husband's side. Thus, she saw his polygamy as a sort of pardon she had been granted. When talking about

polygamy, Mrs. CG said, “I pardoned my husband because he had pardoned me too.” The reasons mentioned above led Mrs. CF and Mrs. CG to internalize a kind of guilt. We use the term “pardon” because they considered being raped as dishonoring not only their husbands but their communities. Mrs. CD stated,

He couldn't stand the fact that I was raped. He went and married a second wife, and he spends more time with her. He doesn't do anything at home anymore. He's become very violent, like a madman. He drinks alcohol and he's starting to terrify me. He never stops insulting me, saying that I'm a prostitute, I should return to my husbands, but he was there when the bandits came.

According to these remarks, Mr. CD considered that his wife had become the wife of her assailants, which is why he used the word “husbands” in the plural. Mrs. CF and Mrs. CD had to continue living with their husbands, who now maintained a second home where they spent most of their time. Their precarious economic situation kept them under male domination and induced them to tolerate conjugal violence. They would not find it easy to marry again in their environment because of the dishonor and defilement they bore but also because of the number of children they had to support. Mr. CD married a second wife but abandoned her after nine years and returned to his legitimate spouse. In this case, we note that there are two victims: the first wife, whose economic precarity and dishonor meant she had to agree to stay married to Mr. CD, and the second wife, who was abandoned along with her child and thus became an indirect victim of the rape.

As for Mr. CC, his first reflex was to marry another woman and have a child out of wedlock, but he decided to return to his first wife in exchange with certain value to her because of her deflowerance. He told us, “Great women come from the village. Imagine that you were the first one to know her [sexually], and then suddenly this incident happens. And you tell yourself, it could happen to anyone!” This man had great consideration for his wife. His words “great women come from the village” mean that villagers are women of value, virgins, morally acceptable compared with city women.

The three men who became polygamous had in common the fact that their wives had experienced multiple rapes and had remained with their attackers for several months. These men resisted welcoming their wives back and treated them as prostitutes – dirty and impure – when returning home; all of them became violent against the survivor. The five other men remained in monogamous couples for various reasons. Mr. CA and CH were physically attacked while their wives were being raped in front of them. They felt sexually weakened and incapable of marrying second wives. Mr. CD admitted indirectly that he did not have many material goods and consequently was unable to marry a second wife. He said,

Some people asked me to abandon my wife and marry another, but I said to myself that I had no father and no material goods to get one. So, I decided to keep on praying and wait for my wife, and after six months, she came back.

Men who remained in monogamous couples shared the following characteristics: they participated in farm work with their wives, they prayed, they prioritized their children, they did not have the financial resources to marry a second wife, and they had been counseled by friends or the church even though their family members (brothers and parents) told them not to stay with a defiled woman. Mr. CA said, “I went to Panzi with my wife, and I gave her advice, telling her to be patient because God would help her, and I was praying for her to be cured.”

Rape of the wife and emasculation of her husband

For men, the loss of material goods reduced their power over their wives. They were no longer able to satisfy their wives either materially or sexually, nor could they take a second wife. Based on social representations and certain widespread stereotypes, a man who does not meet those two criteria is not a man: he loses his identity. The case of the CA couple explains this perfectly. Mr. CA could not marry a second wife because he was financially unable to do so. He said,

Some people advised me to take a second wife because I should not remain [die] with only two children, but I have no father or mother and I don't have enough property to marry a second wife. I don't have the means to clothe her and here's the family [talking about his two children] that God gave me.

As for his wife, Mrs. CA complained of her husband's inability to give her more children. In her view, satisfaction as a couple was conditioned by fertility. Since her husband had watched her being raped and experienced physical, and probably sexual, violence, he had lost his virility, and therefore his masculinity. He was seen as less than a man or not a man by his wife, who nonetheless decided to remain in the marriage. Both partners were at rock bottom and had no choice but to continue living together. Mrs. CA said,

You see him like that but he's not a man anymore. My husband is no longer a man: he doesn't do anything in bed anymore. I can't talk about this to relatives because my husband has never had the courage to talk about it either. I'm unable to conceive and I suffer a lot while I'm ovulating.

Mr. CA's remarks strengthened the argument about their sexual dysfunction following the rape. Each of them accused the other. Mr. CA said, “Yes, she gets her period twice a month, and that leads her to believe that something's wrong with me. She tells me, ‘It can't be on my side.’” In these comments, he assigns

responsibility for the couple's sexual dysfunction to his wife's irregular menstrual cycle, yet at the same time, he ends up acknowledging his sexual impotence by stating, "I was beaten around my hips and since then it hurts when I have sex." The CH couple had a similar problem: the wife's menstrual cycle was disrupted, and the husband became sexually impotent after being beaten around his hips. It is clear to see that the attackers' objective was not only to rape the women but also to dishonor their husbands by making them impotent. This is a case of rape used as a weapon of war to destroy a whole community.

Children can unify or disturb the family

The children of rape are unloved; often, they are accepted by their siblings and the husband only as additional workers for the family. They owe their existence within the family to their mothers. Mrs. CD said, "If I die, this child will no longer survive." She was worried about the future of her child, who was perceived as a disruptive factor. Moreover, Mr. CD considered the boy as likely to corrupt the couple's other children; he was like a symbol of his Interahamwe father – the killer, the rapist, the thief who could never father a good child. In the CD and CG couples, the child of rape was considered as a stranger in the family and in the community; these children were often stigmatized when they played with their half-sibling or neighbors' children. Mrs. CD said this about her daughter born of rape:

The neighbors mutter when they see her go by, and wherever she wants to play, people say that she's Interahamwe. We hid it from her, and we hid it from our children, but it's hard to hide these kinds of things: people sometimes insult her, especially when she's playing with other children.

When he was asked how many children the couple had, Mr. CG said six, then went silent, and then said, "There's also the one the quarrel is about – the one we say isn't ours." This husband says "we" to represent the family or the couple, which might lead one to believe that his wife also has doubts about the child's parentage. In reality, "we" refers to the man and his other children. Mrs. CD decided to send her child to school, against the will of her husband, who wanted to use him to look after the goat. We observed that the mother was strongly attached to her child, unlike the father, who considered him to be a goatherd or employee. Conflicts exist within the couple, both as marital partners and in their role as parents, because of the presence in the family of children born of rape. These children constantly remind people that their mother was raped. Despite the discrimination, these children experienced from their siblings, their stepfathers and the community, all the women in our sample felt a maternal bond to their children. Mrs. CC had this to say on the topic:

His brothers never stop insulting him all day long, saying that when my husband and I will die, they will end up firing him, and that hurts me a lot. They treat him as Interahamwe and tell him that he consumes their food unnecessarily even though he is not a member of their family. My elder child once asked if he could go back to his father. My family in-laws advised my husband to kill the new child, but he didn't want to and justified it by saying that he'd end up leaving the house when he grows up. If I had enough money, I'd buy him some land far from the village where he could set up house.

We heard the same discourse from the CD couple when they talked about their children born of rape. Mrs. CD said, "They live in harmony but that's because I'm still alive. After I die, I'm sure they'll be kicked out of the house. It's because of them that my husband went and married another wife."

Our female respondents were not at all satisfied with their conjugal and parental life. They suffered and wondered about their children's future. The husbands seemed to minimize the problem in their discourse; they wanted to show that everything was fine, and their marital relationships were working despite difficulties and poverty. They related everything to material goods, in line with the roles assigned to them within the group. Their wives' feelings and pain meant absolutely nothing to them. This behavior stems from the way in which boys and young men have been socialized through the ages so that they are able to resist pain and do not appear weak. This is corroborated by Mrs. CB's comments, which contradict her husband's: "After the rape, and especially after my husband learned that the attacker impregnated me, he said he didn't love me anymore because I was carrying an Interahamwe child, and he would corrupt my children." The husband, on the other hand, said, "Everything is fine with us, because before my wife was raped, we weren't as poor as we are now. This child is ours too – he doesn't have anywhere else to go." Meanwhile, Mr. CD stated, "The neighbors always tell my two children that they are Interahamwe, but the children work hard, especially the girl." The stepfather came to accept the new child over time, and this acceptance was conditioned by the fact that the child contributed to the household labor. Talking about her husband, Mrs. CD told us, "In the beginning, he didn't want this child but after being advised by friends and parishioners, he ended up accepting him."

Community as a pillar of social integration of rape survivors

In wartime, rape can be considered as a social fact; consequently, it needs to be combatted by the whole community. Certain community members think this way and work to make the male victims aware that they should not reject their wives. Some comments from our female respondents appear below:

He didn't want to go to the hospital with me, but the neighbors almost forced him to do it. (Mrs. CA). He wanted to repudiate me, but the neighbors dissuaded him because I had been raped while he was there, and I wasn't the only case. (Mrs. CD). He'd already kicked

me out, but later, I'd say his brother forced him to take me back for the good of the children. (Mrs. CC)

These quotes show that, when several members of a community were raped, it created solidarity and they mutually supported each other. This solidarity is reinforced by the family ties existing in many South Kivu villages, where the inhabitants are grouped into clans. In this system of social organization, respect for elders – for fathers-in-law and parents – plays a big role. The family has a strong impact on the couple, as a son-in-law owes his father-in-law respect. “My dad played a huge role with his advice and by using his authority,” said Mrs. CG. Mrs. CB describes how she was supported by her husband, following advice received from other men whose wives had been rape victims in the past:

My husband only adopted the child a few years later, based on the advice he got from other men, and mainly one of his friends in Kalehe whose wife had been raped and who had agreed to keep living with her. They encouraged saying that if they had been women, they would have been raped too, but the luck was that they were men. Hence, we gained trust from both men and women.

The initial rejection by men whose wives were raped was justified by the fact that they expected to be more stigmatized than supported by the community because of the dishonor. Their first reaction was to leave their victim wives. As mentioned above, it takes collective resilience to face up to a wrong perceived as affecting the community. The rape survivors also showed solidarity: they supported each other because they had all gone through the same thing. They took new victims to treatment centers, gave them advice, visited them, and helped them during childbirth. In addition to that, medical treatment centers are a great help with the women's social reintegration. Some men rejected their wives not only because of the dishonor, but also because they were afraid of catching sexually transmitted diseases, due to stereotypes suggesting that any woman who has been raped has HIV. Mr. CA, for example, said that it was only after they went to Panzi that he was evidenced that his wife had not been infected and decided her support after confirmation revealed by medical and psychological treatment for returning home.

Case of rape occurring before the couple's marriage

Mrs. CE is the only woman in our study who was raped six months before the marriage. Despite everything, her fiancé did not abandon her. Here is Mr. CE's story:

She was raped when we were still engaged, I loved her and I decided to marry her despite everything. She was crazy happy; she was so surprised that she fainted. She often tends to underestimate herself; I tell her to try and talk to me about her problems. In any case, for now, thanks to advice from my friends, I have no more doubts. In the beginning,

I worried of what everyone might say about me. Before, we were living in the same house, but we did not have the same opinions. We didn't even have sex for the fear of sexual intimacy dominance. We went to a health center where we were diagnosed, and they found that neither of us had HIV.

Mrs. CE's behavior might suggest self-victimization. The wife's fainting was fueled by the lack of hope in her fiancé to marry her. She told herself that she no longer deserved to be married, as reported to us. Since she had become unclean and shameful, she no longer imagined that she could be loved, let alone married, especially by a man who knew about the rape. Therefore, rape and couple's resilience depend on the attitudes of both partners, victim and her spouse. It is argued that Mr. CE really loved his fiancée and did not have to be pressured to marry her. He never blamed her for what had happened. In this district, young men and women often marry spouses they did not necessarily choose for themselves; marriages are often arranged by the parents. Free choice often occurs when the young men are financially independent: they have a good job or are landowners so they can provide the bride price without any help from their parents.

At the time of the interview, Mrs. CE had post-traumatic stress disorder; she would not agree to have sex with her husband, who, for his part, was still afraid of getting a sexually transmitted disease. In the case of this couple, the husband's support was crucial in developing the victim's resilience. It was very clear that this husband was showing love, tenderness, and empathy, which improved his wife's self-esteem.

Discussion

When we talk about the social reintegration of rape victims, we postulate a return to their previous situation and social relations. This study aims at analyzing strategies used by husband to facilitate the reintegration of survivors of rape in the family. Our results show that the woman is doubly undermined, by the dominant patriarchal system and by the rape, which makes her "less than a woman"; thus, gender relations and socially constructed inequalities are created that appear to regulate the dominating relationships admitted by the victim. Bourdieu (1998) states that, when dominated people apply schemas that are the outcome of domination to what dominates them, their acts of knowledge are inevitably acts of acknowledgment, of submission. Kaufman (1999) mentions that in patriarchal societies dominated by men, violence or the threat of violence is a mechanism used from childhood to establish a hierarchy. When a man mistreats a woman, it is not because he has lost control but because he is imposing control over her.

Our results show that couples do not use rational, thought-out strategies that they planned and then implemented; rather, they display a set of behaviors and strategies to continue living as a couple and face the dishonor due to rape. Men

and women in this study were not great strategists, but simply people who had to cope with the situation life had handed them, with gendered social injunctions and with their own resources, to manage from day to day. They applied adaptation strategies and cost-benefit calculations and handled numerous contradictions, tension and connections between factors that are favorable (resilience-related) or unfavorable (risk-related) to reintegration. The couples' source of resilience came from without friends and family, children or the church. A certain temporality is observed regarding to woman's acceptance within the couple. The immediate refusal after the rape by the man tends to be justified by rape with the only possibility of reintegration in case the woman has received support from friends, family's advice for the husband to bear the victim.

Gender, as a dynamic process, is at work in the movement between the resistance of culturally and socially rooted hierarchies, inequalities and resistance as stated by Bereni et al. (2008). These factors and movements are visible at every level of social reality in our results: in the woman's conceptions, attitudes, and behaviors; in her husband; in the close family; in relations among survivors; and in relations with the extended family, the community, local authorities, and important people, including religious authorities, and outside players (medical personnel) regarding rules, laws and beliefs. Men developed several strategies, starting from their dominance, to facilitate the women's reintegration into married couple after rape for example: polygamy, which provides the physical presence of another woman to take care of the children, in the absence of the first wife; the reduction in virility following the men's physical and sexual emasculation, which makes them more supportive of their wives; the counseling by friends and family, community, and mainly the church, of both men and women; the symbolic acceptance of children of rape by the husbands of the rape victims for reasons of individual interest, including cow herding by boys and housework by girls.

Polygamy appears to be a kind of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1998), which is legitimized by the women themselves as a sort of pardon granted by their husbands. It is a harmful effect of male domination, but in Africa this kind of marriage is also, as Kakassa (2018) points out, rooted in traditional customs and in the imaginative world, and is explained as enabling the survival of clan, family, or community. In the imagination, it spawns the representation of a loving relationship that is fragile, that faces the permanent risk of breaking up but that must, in this ideal vision, be freely granted, including by the woman who undergoes it. This is very different from a modern couple for whom similar tensions would lead to divorce. From these results, it is clearly stated the intersection of social relations related to gender and class. Rural women experience both economic and intellectual vulnerability, which reinforce social inequalities and keep them inferior to men. They remain under male domination and are not well informed of their rights and remain under the yoke of custom and religion.

Men who were financially and sexually emasculated seemed to be more supportive of their wives. In fact, deprived of their dominance, they were unable to marry second wives or separate from their first wives, whom they were no longer able to satisfy sexually or materially. The men's loss of virility reduced their domination over women. They became less than men, or even feminized men (Sivakumaran, 2007), especially in a society where sexual relationships appear as a relation of social dominance constructed based on the fundamental division between male (active) and female (passive) principles (Bourdieu, 1998). As a result, it was difficult to reach conclusions in our study regarding whether this category of men had a real strategy for supporting their wives who had survived from rape. These devalued men appearance to be supportive but, they no longer had sufficient means to dominate their wives.

An interesting finding of this work was the revelation of a certain solidarity among different stakeholders in the social system. For women, it was clear that there was solidarity among victims, but not necessarily among all women. As mentioned above, some community members, particularly the victims' neighbors, insulted the children born of rape, which hurt the parents of these children, especially the mothers. It believed that some women were defendant to the concept of man dominance while others are attributing dominance to other women. Even though they recognize the weight of discrimination they themselves are the victims of, they support the argument that explicitly contests discrimination for fear of betraying their culture and damaging family and social cohesion. They are afraid of being suspected of having "Western morals," associated with perversion (Pambè & Sawadogo, 2017).

Gender in action through societal norms imposes uniform femininity on all women. There are *good* women, who fit into the established norms, and *bad* women, who do not fit the norms, whether due to constraint or by choice. As this study found, a woman raped is a bad woman, because she dishonors her husband and the whole community. The latter no longer meets the criteria for positive womanhood. According to these norms essentially made of a scoreboard for women dominance, women are categorized into two groups: Good, who are likely to accuse and judge women and Bad woman. This refers both to Bourdieu's (1998) concept of symbolic violence and to the dimension of gender as a social construction. Note that the fact that one of the women respondents gave herself sexually for the first time to her husband mitigated his anger and facilitated her reintegration into the couple. Virginity is a cultural value; it is a symbol of the man's honor and shapes the value of women in several areas in the DRC.

As for men, we can see a major division into two positions. On one hand, according to our investigations, those who had been direct or indirect victims of rape in the past encouraged their counterparts to support their wives through this ordeal and not to abandon them. On the other hand, another larger category of men advised their counterparts to repudiate their wives. It is

interesting to note that men in the first category became resilient, since they benefited from support and coaching from community members and advice from parents-in-law, friends, and medical personnel.

Considering attachment to children, whether they were the couple's or just one partner's, is a key factor in married life. Yet, men remained in the couple for fear of having to look after their children alone since, in our study area, children remain with their fathers in case of divorce. This attachment to children is ambiguous in the case of children born of rape. For this category, it appears a priori that girls are favored over boys. In fact, in absolute terms, the children's status is different: girls have instrumental value and boys have symbolic value (Bereni et al., 2008). These two kinds of value are hierarchically ordered: symbolic value is considered superior to instrumental value. But in the case of children of rape, girls represent a material advantage while boys represent a danger to the community of men. Acceptance by the stepfather and siblings are due to gender in action. From this perspective, women must do housework, while men guard the cattle – the symbol of wealth. The existence of children of rape in the families of rape survivors makes it more difficult for these women to reintegrate since, in addition to constituting evidence of the rape, they are symbols of their biological fathers and constantly remind the family of the traumatic event.

Furthermore, the position of girls is even more difficult in a family where they are not considered full-fledged family members, but rather objects to be used. In a study of the challenges facing foster families in eastern DRC, Foussiakda and Kasherwa (2020) found that, in the city of Bukavu, some girls who were living in the street or experiencing other difficulties and who were placed in foster families ran the risk of sexual abuse by their foster fathers. Girls who were the outcome of rape were also subject to such abuse. Nevertheless, in our study, girls appeared to be better accepted than boys, probably because they provided free housework and family care and gave their fathers a chance to acquire material goods through their bride prices. Their duties included getting water, cooking, and farming, while the boys were herders.

Finally, in the case of the rape happened before marriage, the husband's support seems to have been crucial for developing the victim's resilience. The husband's story was a manifestation of love, tenderness, and empathy, which enhanced his wife's self-esteem. This result is like those of Koudou et al. (2016), who observed the same phenomenon in numerous rape victims in Côte d'Ivoire. This couple deserves to be valued by their community and could serve as a model for other couples living through similar problems. In the eyes of the community, this kind of man is considered to bear his wife's dishonor and his masculinity is reduced; paradoxically, this strengthens his resilience and consolidates the couple, as he builds solidarity with his wife to overcome the community's challenges. Similar cases are mentioned in Skjelsbæk's (2006) study, in which some men were able to support their wives: instead of avenging their male honor on them,

they protected them from society. Overall, our results showed that even when wives were physically reintegrated back with their husbands, they underwent a second wave of violence, the outcome of hegemonic masculine socialization and the patriarchal foundations of their home community.

Conclusion

Several mechanisms are used by husbands and their wives to facilitate the reintegration of rape survivors into the marital relationship. These mechanisms range from acceptance of polygamy to real support from husband to her wife. Many couples stay together because of their children, but child born from rape is a disruptive element in the marriage.

Men marry second wives because they are no longer able to have sex with rape survivors whom they consider impure, unclean, and likely to have contracted sexually transmitted diseases. Moreover, having a second wife is a kind of punishment for women who are now considered prostitutes, unfaithful and dishonorable. In fact, men accept to stay in a married couple because they have lost the power of domination. Indeed, they have been emasculated economically and sexually. Other men and women stay in the marital relationship because they are not able to care of their children individually. In a patriarchal system, women are more responsible for children than men who are viewed as responsible to family financial support. The reintegration of women who have children born from rape is advocated as child gender based. Indeed, in one side, girl is more likely to be accepted by the father who uses her in the household work and hopes to receive the dowry when she gets married. The boy, on the other hand, is seen as a rapist and is perceived only as a worker who will take care of animals, for example. Finally, our results show that the social organization favors the maintenance of women in their conjugal couples. The villages are organized into clans, and the men are under pressure from their relatives (brothers, fathers-in-law, fathers) and receive advice on how to stay in their marriage. As for the women, they receive support from their sisters, who are sometimes organized into an association of survivors with the support of civil society organizations and the church. Therefore, psycho-social support for survivors of rape is important to facilitate their reintegration into the marital relationship.

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Ethical standard and informed consent

The present study was approved by the National Committee of Health Ethics under the number CNES001/DPSK/177PP/2020. All participants provided informed consent before the discussion to be done.

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