

Daily Experiences of Married Women Regarding Domestic Violence in the Commune of Matete, Democratic Republic of Congo

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Abstract

Introduction: Domestic violence can take several forms: physical, sexual, psychological or economic. It occurs between partners or former partners in an intimate relationship, regardless of whether the perpetrator shares or has shared the same home as the victim. The aim was to understand the daily experience of married women in the city and province of Kinshasa, whether they experience violence within couples. **Methods:** This study falls into the field of public health, more precisely it deals with the protection of women's rights. It is a qualitative study, approached in its phenomenological approach. The target population is made up of married women attending the Matete New Alliance Hospital Center whose sample size is 11. It was determined after collecting the data, the redundancy of which was observed at the 10th head of household. **Results:** the marriage of a violent partner represents a stumbling block for women and an obstacle to women's emancipation; In their union sexual violence, physical violence or torture, deprivation of financial means (financial violence); They encountered consequences such as gastritis, tension disorders, neurosis. As for coping strategies in the face of violence: the women interviewed resort to spiritual support by relying on God, dialogue with their partner, entertainment and asking friends for advice. As for expectations, women want the Congolese State to create schools for the re-education of husbands and for educators (parents and churches) to give advice to young people before marriage. **Conclusion:** It is important for the Congolese State, families, schools and churches to establish/reinforce the notion of initiating men to good behavior in marriage.

Keywords: Marriage, domestic violence, intimate relationship, Congo.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Life as a couple, despite the societal developments of recent decades, continues to represent an ideal. Women victims of domestic violence are often prisoners of this "ideal". Domestic violence occurs within a romantic relationship (Marie-France Hirigoyen, 2005).

Domestic violence is a serious and persistent social problem; a third of women on the planet have already been victims.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2017 globally, almost a third (30%) of women

who have been in a relationship report having experienced some form of physical and/or sexual violence from a partner. their intimate partner during their lifetime and no less than 38% of murders of women are the work of their male intimate partner" (WHO, 2017).

A 2019 study conducted by the WHO, based on interviews with 24,097 women in 10 different countries, shows that domestic violence concerns, depending on the country, between 15 and 70% of the women interviewed. This study only focuses on violence against women in the domestic context" (WHO, 2020).

In the continent of America, the *National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (2010)*, reports that In the United States, more than a third of women in the United States (35.6% or approximately 42.4 million) have been victims of rape, physical violence or harassment by their partner at some point in their life.

Canada regularly publishes various measures painting the picture of domestic violence in the country. Police statistics already show that in 2009, 173,600 women aged 15 and over reported to the police that they were victims of criminal violence, or 1.2% of Canadian women. The rate was slightly lower among men, at 1.1%. Regarding women, the complaints recorded by the police concerned simple assault (50%), threats (13%), major assault (10%), sexual assault (7%) and criminal harassment (7%) (Statistics Canada, 2013).

It should be noted, however, that the 2009 General Social Survey (GSS) revealed that only 23% of women and 7% of men victims of criminal domestic violence report the incident to the police. There are therefore 5 times more women and 14 times more men who are victims of domestic violence than reported by police statistics.

Statistics Canada also carries out a much more in-depth survey every 5 years based on surveys on large probability samples representative of the Canadian population. The 2009 General Social Survey (GSS) shows that 6% of Canadians report having been victims of some form of criminal violence from a spouse or ex-spouse in the 5 years preceding investigation. Contrary to police statistics, the 2009 GSS shows that the proportions of male and female victims are similar. On the other hand, the survey reveals that women were three times more likely to say that they had been victims of more serious forms of violence compared to men. Also, the physical and psychological injuries resulting from this violence were more pronounced among female victims.

Secondly, the 2009 ESG broadened the questions to more tangential forms of violence such as psychological violence (saying hurtful words, belittling, jealousy, etc.) and financial violence (refusing to reveal one's income to one's spouse) which increase the victimization rate to 17% of Canadians for the same 5-year period.

The GSS sample also made it possible to identify sociodemographic factors. Quebec and Newfoundland had proportions of domestic violence lower than the Canadian average. People identifying as gay and lesbian were twice as likely to report being victims of domestic violence as heterosexuals. This proportion was 4 to 1 among people identifying as bisexual. Indigenous citizens were also twice as likely to say they were victims. People with disabilities or

restricted mobility, ultimately, had a higher rate of 8% compared to 6%.

It should be noted that in North America, violence is a more taboo subject than in Europe. When domestic violence aims to take control of the spouse, most often, it takes hold gradually within the couple. In some cases, a person may show physical or psychological violence during an argument with their spouse. Domestic violence is characterized by a relationship of domination. They are distinguished from marital disputes between equal individuals (Senate, 2016).

In Belgium, a study by the University of Ghent on violence against women, Brussels experiences a very high rate of domestic violence: one in two women have already suffered violence there. On the other hand, one in twenty men would be victims (European Court of Human Rights, 2016).

In France, according to the National Observatory of Delinquency and Penal Responses (ONDRP, 2012), in 2010-2011, a little more than 1.9% of the French population aged 18 to 75 declared having been a victim of physical or sexual violence within their household, or around 840,000 people.

It should be noted that the nature of the abuse endured differs depending on the sexes. Domestic violence suffered by men is much more often physical than sexual, and that suffered by women is more often sexual than physical. In addition, it is mentioned that while women frequently report their ex-partner as their torturer, the vast majority of men are subject to the influence of their current life partner (ONDRP, 2015).

A study carried out in 2014 as part of the 4th interministerial plan to combat violence against women estimates the economic repercussions of violence within the couple and their impact on children at 3.6 billion euros, on a low hypothesis. in France for the year 2012 (health; police and justice; social assistance; production losses due to deaths, incarceration and absenteeism; human harm; impact on children) (Maité Albagly, Catherine Cavalin, Claude Mugnier and Marc Nectoux, Psytel, 2014).

The living environment and safety survey report published in 2017 states that "women are much more concerned than men". The 2019 ONDRP report counts 405,000 victims per year on average between 2011 and 2018; 68% of these victims are women and 60% are under 40 years old. In cases of domestic homicide, one victim in five is a man, often a former executioner. According to the ONDRP "when 10 women out of 100 file a complaint following the violence they have suffered, out of 100 men suffering from domestic violence only 3 dare to turn to justice" (Leila Marchand, 2015). But in 2020, the confinement introduced

increased the number of domestic violence in the Paris police headquarters area (Master Casanova, 2020).

In Switzerland, data from the Police Crime Statistics (SPC) in 2011 reveal that women were 3.1 times more often affected by domestic violence than men. Foreign women living as a couple are 4.5 times more often exposed than Swiss women (Police crime statistics 2009-2011).

Africa is not spared from this situation. In [Algeria](#), a multiple indicator survey (MICS3) by the National Statistics Office in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Hospital Reform and financed by [Unicef](#), revealed that 67.9% of Algerian women accept that their husbands beat them (Amel Bouakba , 2009).

In [Ethiopia](#), 71% of women who had already had a partner had experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, during their lives, including 35% serious physical violence. During the 12 months preceding the study, 53% of these women had suffered at least one of these two forms of violence. In Namibia, the number of victims of one or two of these forms of violence stood at 36%, 20% of them in the last 12 months. In Tanzania, this figure was 41%, including 22% in the last 12 months. (WHO, 2020).

In Chad, more than a third of non-single women aged 15–49, or 35%, have been victims of acts of physical, psychological and/or sexual violence caused by their spouse at least once in their life and among them, 49% declared in 2014-2015 to have been injured in the last 12 months following acts of domestic violence (Virginie Le Masson, Colette Benoudji, Sandra Sotelo Reyes, Giselle Bernard, 2017).

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, domestic violence is a reality in several households, especially during the confinement period according to our sources. Some women experience physical and psychological violence from their partners. The latter hit them, rape them regularly and humiliate them with insults, criticism and negative words. Furthermore, this violence and sexual assault is rarely followed by a complaint. These women prefer to remain silent in order to protect their marriages (Radiookapi.net). The aim of this study is to understand the daily experience of married women in the city and province of Kinshasa, whether they experience violence within couples.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

2.1 Type of Study and Study Environment

This research is part of the qualitative approach, it is an exploratory descriptive study of the phenomenological type. She used an empirical-inductive approach to explore married women's daily experiences of violence. It was carried out in the commune of Matete.

2.2 Target Population and Sampling

The target population is made up of married women attending the New Alliance Hospital Center in Matete. She used accidental non-probability sampling. This type of sample provides the researcher with units having experienced the phenomenon studied, namely individuals with experience of one year or more in marriage. The sample size is 11 women. It was determined after collecting the data, the redundancy of which was observed at the 10th woman.

Data Collection Method, Technique and Instrument

This study used the phenomenological survey method which made it possible to collect information concerning the population's experience of self-medication. To collect the data, the structured interview technique helped to obtain information from those responsible in the households. This technique is advantageous because it captures the lived experience of the participants. This information was obtained using the interview guide.

This guide consisted of three (3) parts, namely: the explanatory statement, identification and questions on the theme under study, this guide was accompanied by certain tools such as: the recorder, the pen, the notebook.

2.4 Data Analysis Plan

There are several qualitative analyzes. This study used thematic analysis which is defined by the authors Paillé and Muchhheilli (2003), as the transposition of a given corpus to a certain number of themes representative of the content analyzed and in relation to the direction of the research.

Carrying out a qualitative analysis in the context of research involves writing work which is located at three levels corresponding to major moments of qualitative analysis (Paillé and Muchhheilli, 2003):

- The first level corresponds to the work of description-translation through which we move from the observed scene or the testimony delivered to its inscription in a written discursive form.
- Second level is that of the transposition-rearrangement work, carried out after the field notes or the full reports have been annotated, categorized, commented on or rewritten. This is the moment when the words or gestures of the actors are weighed, reconsidered, resituated by the researcher, who reformulates them in his own words.
- The third concerns the reconstruction work. This involves writing a report or a thesis which often takes the form of an argument based around the main categories of analysis, understandings and avenues of interpretation.

This qualitative analysis using conceptualizing categories consists of defining the category as a textual production presented in the form of a brief expression and allowing the naming of a perceptible phenomenon through a conceptual reading of research material.

For these authors, a category is a description of the essential nature of the phenomenon, so as to identify an overall life and to identify its singularities, which allows them to be adequately visualized and distinguished from related phenomena.

The work of analysis using categories implies an analytical intention going beyond the strict synthesis of the content of the material analyzed in an attempt to directly access the meaning; the use for this purpose of annotation brings the researcher to understanding.

The data resulting from this analysis procedure will be presented in boxes with four columns, that is to say that from the themes that emerged, we retained sub-themes supported by verbatim, as well as the meanings.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethics being a set of principles which govern moral problems, it is also imposed in matters of scientific research which is carried out on the human person. The following rules were observed during the survey: respect for the rights of respondents, for example: if the respondent refuses to participate, no obligation is imposed on them, because participation in the survey was voluntary; respect for privacy, respect for confidentiality and anonymity.

3. RESULTS

Table 1: Distribution of study subjects according to their sociodemographic characteristics

Initial	Age	Occupation	Parity	Length of marriage
FEM1	28 years	Household	4 children	7 years
FEM 2	36 years	Household	7 children	10 years
FEM 3	34 years old	Nurse	3 children	11 years old
FEM 4	29 years	Biologist	2 children	9 years
FEM 5	28 years	Household	3 children	7 years
FEM 6	33 Years	Household	5 children	17 years
FEM 7	59 years old	Saleswoman	8 children	39 years old
FEM 8	29 years	Household	1 child	3 years
FEM 9	34 years old	Teacher	3 children	6 years
FEM10	23 years	Household	2 children	3 years
FEM11	27 years old	Midwife	2 children	6 years

In this first box, we note that the eleven women are aged from 23 to 59 years old, they are respectively housewives, teachers and midwives, with a parity of 1 to 8 children and whose duration of marriage ranges from 3 to 39 years.

3.1 Results of the Qualitative Analysis

The categorical analysis consisted of grouping (by going back and forth) the verbatim (in the form of words) with regard to coherent categories and themes.

After the full reading of our transcriptions of the interviews recorded with 18 nurses, having used the syntactic analysis unit in a closed coding of the interviews, according to a data analysis matrix at four levels: subtheme, categories, verbatim and meanings. The central theme chosen is: "Daily experience of domestic violence".

The syntactic unit is a sentence or a group of words from the verbatim interviews or observation notes; that is, ideas expressed.

The data analysis was only focused on the speeches. The redundant verbatim were then grouped together in a cloud to bring out the categories.

From this central theme retained, two sub-themes arise, namely: Women's daily experience of domestic violence and Expectations of married women.

❖ Sub-theme 1: Women's daily experiences of domestic violence

From this sub-theme emerged three categories, namely:

- Category 1: Depiction of the marriage of an abusive partner
- Category 2: Types of domestic violence experienced
- Category 3: Consequences of violence
- Category 4: Coping strategies in the face of violence

❖ Subtheme 2: Expectation of married women

The analysis of this second sub-theme brought out two categories, namely:

- Category 1: Expectation of the Congolese state
- Category 2: Expectation of educators

3.2.1 Women's daily experience of domestic violence

▪ Portrayal of the Marriage of an Abusive Partner

Marriage to a violent partner represents a stumbling block for women and an obstacle to women's emancipation. They express this in these terms: **FEM1**,

FEM2, FEM3: “...I have been married for seven years, I don't know this husband that God gave me has become a stumbling block for me.... » **FEM4, FEM5, FEM8:** “...I see as if I have no rights, because the husband insults me like you can't imagine, to the point that even the neighbors already know about it, I don't know because I am a woman, I have no rights?...”

▪ Types of Domestic Violence Experienced

In the statements of these women, it appears that they suffered sexual violence in their union, physical violence or torture, deprivation of financial means (financial violence). They state this: **FEM1, FEM4, FEM5:** “... To the point that when he only knocks the door, you have to open it quickly, otherwise as soon as he comes in it's to take you directly to bed in order to have sex, otherwise you have to take off the wedding ring and go home...” “... The only situation that bothers me a lot is the sexual intercourse that the man wants to do to me by force, again I don't want it and we can stay even a week... » “... The only problem is sexual relations, look how I have these children who follow one another without respecting the interval, especially if he has been drinking, we must do that at all costs...” **FEM2, FEM9,:** “... When you are during sexual intercourse, he demands so many positions and different movements from you...” “... The husband insults me, he even hits me during the process to the point that my three-year-old child asks me, mom, why are you cry?... ”

▪ Consequences of Violence

In their violent situations, they encountered consequences such as gastritis, tension disorders, neurosis. **FEM11, FEM8:** “... This has already brought me gastritis, I suffer a lot from it...” “...The gastritis is there, the blood pressure drops from time to time...” **FEM1, FEM3:** “... I only sleep.” he is absent, especially when I only see his face, my mind is disturbed...”

▪ Coping strategies in the face of violence

To overcome all situations of violence in their lives, the women interviewed resort to spiritual support by relying on God, dialogue with their partner, entertainment and asking friends for advice. This is what they express in these stories: **FEM1, FEM8:** “... In any case may God help me, because I don't know what to do...” “...The State will do nothing, all we need is God to give solution...” “...I rely only on the words of God and also the advice of people...” **FEM11:** “... We need mutual understanding so that it does not become violence...” **FEM7:** “...To surpass myself That's why I take time to talk with colleagues to relax and to give advice when we are together, it lets me out of steam, otherwise I can throw a fit...”

3.2.2 Expectation of Married Women

As for expectations, women want the Congolese State to create schools for the re-education of husbands and for educators (parents and churches) to

give advice to young people before marriage. **FEM7, FEM10:** “...If you have the opportunity to educate them, you who had studied, because I don't know what to do...” “... I ask President FATSHI to return the school of re-education for husbands to us...” If there somewhere, a church or school where they can get advice on how to change is good. **FEM1, FEM5, FEM9:** “... As parents have always advised us women before going to marriage, they do the same for boys...” “...I can ask that we organize something like a meeting for advise husbands...”

4. DISCUSSION

The results show us that the eleven women are aged 23 to 59 years old, they are respectively housewives, teachers and midwives, with a parity of 1 to 8 children and whose duration of marriage ranges from 3 to 39 years.

To do this, violence in the couple can occur at all ages of life, whether you are a minor, adult or elderly person, in all types of couple relationships: marital, extra-marital or romantic relationships, heterosexual or homosexuals (**Jacques** Faget, 2004). Philippe Vasseur (2004) also adds in his study on the profile of women victims of domestic violence that women victims of domestic violence do not have a specific profile.

Regarding women's daily experience of domestic violence, the marriage of a violent partner represents a stumbling block for women and an obstacle to women's emancipation. Their words reveal this: **FEM1, FEM2, FEM3:** “...I have been married for seven years, I don't know this husband that God gave me has become a stumbling block for me.... » **FEM4, FEM5, FEM8:** “...I see as if I have no rights, because the husband insults me like you can't imagine, to the point that even the neighbors already know about it, I don't know because I am a woman, I have no rights?...”

In the statements of these women, it appears that they suffered sexual violence in their union, physical violence or torture, deprivation of financial means (financial violence). Some women spoke about this: **FEM1, FEM4, FEM5:** “...To the point that when he only knocks the door, you have to open it quickly, otherwise as soon as he comes in it's to take you straight to bed in order to do the sexual intercourse, otherwise you have to remove the wedding ring and go home...” **FEM2, FEM9,:** “...When you are during sexual intercourse, it requires so many positions and different movements...” **FEM3, FEM6:** “...When my husband has the money, he runs away from home to go to other women, and marriage is only good when he has nothing...” **FEM11, FEM8:** “...I see as if I have is no right, because the husband insults me like you can't imagine, to the point that even the neighbors already know about it, I don't know because I'm a woman I don't have any rights?... » These statements are consistent with the results found in Statistics Canada which show in the 2009 General Social

Survey (GSS) that 6% of Canadians report having been victims of a form of criminal violence from a spouse or a former spouse during the 5 years preceding the investigation. Contrary to police statistics, the 2009 GSS shows that the proportions of male and female victims are similar. On the other hand, the survey reveals that women were three times more likely to say that they had been victims of more serious forms of violence compared to men. Also, the physical and psychological injuries resulting from this violence were more pronounced among female victims.

Furthermore, the 2009 ESG broadened the questions to more tangential forms of violence such as psychological violence (saying hurtful words, belittling, jealousy, etc.) and financial violence (refusing to reveal one's income to one's spouse) which increase the victimization rate at 17% of Canadians for the same 5-year period. These testimonies confirm the results found in Ethiopia, 71% of women who had already had a partner had been confronted with physical or sexual violence, or both at the same time during their life, including 35% with serious physical violence. During the 12 months preceding the study, 53% of these women had suffered at least one of these two forms of violence. In Namibia, the number of victims of one or two of these forms of violence stood at 36%, 20% of them in the last 12 months. In Tanzania, this figure was 41%, including 22% in the last 12 months. (WHO, 2020).

On the other hand, Algeria a multiple indicator survey (MICS3) from the National Statistics Office in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Hospital Reform and financed by Unicef revealed that 67.9% of Algerian women accept that their husbands beat them (Amel Bouakba, 2009).

In their violent situations, they encountered consequences such as gastritis, tension disorders, neurosis. This is what they explain: *FEM11, FEM8: "...It has already brought me gastritis, I suffer a lot from it..." "...The gastritis is there, the blood pressure drops from time to time..." FEM1, FEM3: "...I only sleep if he is absent, especially when I only see his face, my mind is disturbed..."* Lamya, Dubois, Jaafaric, Carlb, Gaillardbd, Camusbd, W.El Hagebd (2009) affirm our results in showing that the majority of consultants victims of domestic violence suffered from a psychiatric disorder (52%) with a predominance of anxiety (28%) and addictive (19%) disorders. The prevalence of potentially traumatic life events is high in this group (83%). Traumatic psychological domestic violence was associated with an increase in the prevalence of psychiatric comorbidities, anxiety (72%), depression (100%), post-traumatic stress disorder (100%) and alcohol addiction (100%) or to another psychoactive substance (50%).

To overcome all situations of violence in their lives, the women interviewed resort to spiritual support

by relying on God, dialogue with their partner, entertainment and asking friends for advice. Some women declared this: *FEM1, FEM8: "...In any case may God help me, because I don't know what to do..." "...The State will do nothing, we only need God to provide a solution..." "...I I rely only on the words of God and also the advice of people..." FEM11: "...We need mutual understanding so that it does not become violence..." FEM7: "...To overcome this, I take the time to chats with colleagues to relax me and advice when we are together, it lets me down, otherwise I can throw a fit..."*

Women want the Congolese State to create schools for the re-education of husbands and for educators (parents and churches) to give advice to young people before marriage. This is what they say: *FEM7, FEM10: "...If you have the opportunity to educate them, you who had studied, because I don't know what to do..." "...I ask President FATSHI to return the school of re-education of husbands..."* If there is somewhere, a church or school where they can follow advice to change, that's good. *FEM1, FEM5, FEM9: "...As parents have always advised us women before 'go to marriage, they do the same for boys...' "...I can ask that we organize something like a meeting to advise husbands..."* Supporting our results, The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (2019) states that the DRC has accepted numerous recommendations aimed at preventing and punishing all forms of discrimination and violence against women, including sexual and within the family, since 2013, the Committee expressed deep concerns about violence marital rape and the inadequacy of the legal provisions prohibiting it, in particular marital rape, as well as the absence of reception structures for victims. The Committee recommended that the DRC prohibit domestic violence, including marital rape with appropriate sanctions. This reinforces the position of the Human Rights Committee which also recommended that the DRC adopt legislation offering appropriate protection against domestic violence, in particular by criminalizing intra-family violence and marital rape, because it should be noted that the current legal framework does not make it possible to prevent or combat domestic violence, even less, domestic violence is not covered either in Law 06/018 of July 20, 2006 modifying and supplementing the decree of January 30, 1940 establishing the Congolese Penal Code and law 06/019 of July 20, 2006 modifying and supplementing the decree of August 6, 1959 relating to the Code of Criminal Procedure which had strengthened the repression of sexual violence.

5. CONCLUSION

Violence in couples can occur at all ages, whether a minor, adult or elderly person, in all types of couple relationships: marital, extra-marital or romantic relationships, heterosexual or homosexual. The vast majority of victims are women. For our study we used

thematic analysis, which allowed us to arrive at the results: the marriage of a violent partner represents for women a stumbling block and an obstacle to the emancipation of women; In their union sexual violence, physical violence or torture, deprivation of financial means (financial violence); They encountered consequences such as gastritis, tension disorders, neurosis. As for coping strategies in the face of violence: the women interviewed resort to spiritual support by relying on God, dialogue with their partner, entertainment and asking friends for advice. As for expectations, women want the Congolese State to create schools for the re-education of husbands and for educators (parents and churches) to give advice to young people before marriage.

It is important for the Congolese State, families, schools and churches to establish/reinforce the notion of initiating men to good behavior in marriage.

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