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Conflict-related sexual violence:

Effectiveness of support measures

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Abstract

This master's thesis presents a detailed analysis of conflict-related sexual violence, particularly in the context of the Colombian armed conflict. It critically assesses the existing support measures for survivors, exploring their effectiveness through a systematic literature review. The study not only highlights the challenges faced in implementing these measures but also offers insights into potential enhancements, contributing to the broader discourse on gender-based violence and conflict resolution.

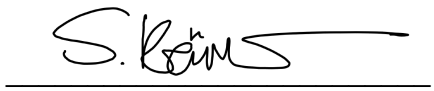
Resumen

Esta tesis de maestría presenta un análisis detallado de la violencia sexual relacionada con conflictos, específicamente en el contexto del conflicto armado colombiano. Evalúa críticamente las medidas de apoyo existentes para los sobrevivientes, explorando su efectividad a través de una revisión sistemática de la literatura. El estudio no solo destaca los desafíos en la implementación de estas medidas, sino que también ofrece perspectivas sobre posibles mejoras, contribuyendo al discurso más amplio sobre la violencia de género y la resolución de conflictos

Declaration of Independence

I hereby declare on oath that this academic work was composed independently and no other resources were used other than those indicated in the bibliography. Furthermore, all parts of the work that are derived from the wording or meaning of other works have been appropriately referenced with source citations. I also declare that this thesis has not yet been part of another examination process.

Peking, 16.12.2023



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Declaración de Independencia

Por medio de la presente, declaro bajo juramento que este trabajo académico fue compuesto de manera independiente y que no se utilizaron otros recursos aparte de los indicados en la bibliografía. Además, todas las partes de este trabajo que provienen del texto o significado de otras obras han sido debidamente referenciadas con citas de las fuentes. También declaro que esta tesis aún no ha sido parte de otro proceso de examinación.

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1. Setting the Scene: A Contemporary Overview of Sexualized Violence and the Case of Colombia

Sexualized violence in armed conflicts is a distressing reality that, although not inevitable, occurs in most armed conflicts (Wood 2009). Scholars debate whether sexualized violence serves as a cheap weapon of war to exert both physical and psychological power and control or is a result of lawlessness and a lack of control by higher authorities. Despite various theoretical approaches to prevent this type of violence, it remains a painful reality. Therefore, the present work raises the question of what the current state of sexualized violence in armed conflicts looks like in general, and specifically in Colombia, which has been in an armed conflict for several decades. Furthermore, it examines what support measures are available for victims and survivors and how effective these are.

The current state of research indicates that support measures for victims and survivors of sexualized violence in conflict zones, both top-down (e.g., from the United Nations) and bottom-up (e.g., locally founded women's groups), are limited and unclear. A systematic review by Tol et al. (2013) found only a few studies on the effectiveness of these measures. Although some studies, like those by Bolton (2009) and Bass et al. (2013), showed improvements in symptoms among survivors, these studies had significant weaknesses in their designs. This underscores the necessity for further research in this area.

The aim of this paper is to bridge this research gap and provide a current overview of the knowledge in this area. This is particularly relevant as the last comprehensive literature review on this topic dates back ten years. Thus, the work intends to contribute to the improvement of the selection and effectiveness of intervention strategies, as demanded by Tol et al. (2013).

The methodology of this paper is based on a systematic literature review. This approach aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of research. The systematic literature review enables the identification of effective support measures and the avoidance of those that have shown no improvements or even harm for the victims and survivors in various areas. This contributes to the collective knowledge base and the improvement of support for victims and survivors of sexualized violence in armed conflicts.

The thesis serves to answer the aforementioned research questions:

1) What is the current state of the art about sexualized violence in armed conflicts in general and specifically in Colombia?
2) What support measures are available for victims and survivors in general, and how effective are these?

Words and Naming

The decision to use the terms "sexualized violence" instead of "sexual violence" and "victims and survivors" in my master's thesis is based on a careful consideration of the implications and nuances associated with these terminologies.

"Sexualized Violence" instead of "Sexual Violence":

The term "sexualized violence" is preferred by some scholars because it focuses on the process and dynamics of power and control in the act of violence (Dolan et al. 2020). This expression emphasizes that the violence has a sexualized character or is sexualized, not necessarily that it is committed out of sexual motives. It highlights that this form of violence is primarily about power, oppression, and humiliation, where sexuality is used as a tool to exercise this power.

By using "sexualized violence," I distance myself from the connotation that "sexual violence" sometimes carries, implying that the violence might be connected to sexuality in a consensual or positive sense.

Victims and Survivors:

The use of "victims and survivors" reflects the broad spectrum of experiences and identities that individuals who have experienced sexualized violence may hold.

While "survivors" carries a strong connotation of resilience and resistance, placing a narrative emphasis on healing and recovery, the term "victims" acknowledges that a crime has been committed and that these individuals have suffered an injustice. As noted by Mardorossian (2014) and Stallone (2021), exclusively using the term "victims" risks undermining the agency of these individuals and minimizing their capacity to share their stories.

Employing "victims and survivors" simultaneously aligns with the recognition that these terms are not contradictory but can coexist to reflect different aspects of the experiences. This approach, as suggested by Nordås and Cohen (2021) and Sanyal (2020), allows for a more nuanced perspective on the complexity and diversity of the experiences of those who have endured conflict-related sexualized violence.

Overall, these terminological decisions reflect the desire to provide a more accurate and nuanced portrayal of the experiences of individuals affected by sexualized violence. They demonstrate respect for their diverse perspectives and emphasize the importance of agency, resilience, and the recognition of the injustice suffered.

The Evolution of Research on Sexualized Violence in Conflicts: Bridging Political Science and Socio-Ecological Resilience

The research interest in sexualized violence in armed conflicts has increased in recent years, as evidenced by a rise in publications and citations in this area. Particularly since the Bosnian War in 2001, research has shifted from women's and gender studies to political science, thereby expanding the focus on the connections between politics and sexualized violence in conflicts. This shift has contributed to a more comprehensive understanding and to political solutions. Over the last fifteen years, conflict-related sexualized violence has been increasingly viewed as a distinct field of study, leading to a broader scope of research (Nordås and Cohen 2021).

Janine Natalya Clark's scholarly work adds a fresh perspective to understanding resilience in the context of sexual violence during conflicts. She emphasizes the interaction between individuals and their social environments, developing a unique 'connectivity' framework. Applying this to data from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia, and Uganda, Clark proposes expanding the Transitional Justice field into socio-ecological realms, exploring both theoretical and practical implications of this shift (Clark 2023).

In my master's thesis, I frequently reference the approach of Clark (2023), presented in her book "Resilience, Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Transitional Justice: A Social-Ecological Frame." This approach focuses on the idea of 'Connectivity' or interconnectedness as a core component for analyzing sexualized violence in armed conflicts. This framework comprises three main components:

Broken and Ruptured Connectivities: This dimension considers how conflicts and experiences of violence can destroy or damage existing relationships and networks. It involves capturing the damages and ruptures in individuals' social ecologies, including the impacts on familial, community, and institutional connections.

Supportive and Sustaining Connectivities: This component concentrates on the positive and supportive networks and relationships that help individuals cope with the aftermath of violence and conflict. It includes the resources and support individuals receive from their social, familial, and community networks and highlights the importance of this support in the healing process.

New Connectivities: This dimension explores how individuals and communities build new relationships and networks following a conflict or trauma. It focuses on the ability to create new supportive structures and actively engage in shaping their social ecology to foster and strengthen resilience.

The concept emphasizes that resilience does not exist in isolation within individuals, but rather should be understood as a relational and dynamic process that emerges from the interplay of individuals and their social ecology. The book argues that this socio-ecological approach is significant both for addressing conflict-related sexualized violence and for the practice of transitional justice. Through this approach new perspectives for supporting victims and survivors of violence and conflicts can be opened.

Personal Reflections in This Work

As the author of this thesis, I want to position myself as a white, middle-class, heterosexual, non-disabled, cisgender woman who was born and raised in Germany. I wish to disclose this partly privileged speaking position. My motivation to write this thesis stemmed from a desire to better understand and address sexualized violence in armed conflicts. Embracing a profeminist stance is important to me in order to uncover, name, and reduce patriarchal structures.

Throughout this work, I, as the writer, have experienced various emotional stages, consistently documenting, and reflecting on them with professional support. This process helped me work through my personal connection to the topic. I believe this is essential for anyone wanting to work in the field of sexualized violence in armed conflicts. It allowed me to embrace projective grief and anger and to consciously regulate closeness and distance to the experiences of others. I frequently had to ask myself questions like "Where do I recognize this from (e.g., the feeling of powerlessness)? Which pain is mine? What do I need, which might not align with what the victims and survivors of sexualized violence in armed conflicts need?" etc. Subsequently, I was able to return to the subject with compassion, without projecting my emotions onto the victims and survivors – doing so risks turning my empathic feelings into the feelings of others, and presuming to 'know what they need', which would be an overstepping of boundaries.

Since this process ran parallel to the work on the thesis, I will provide insights into my documented reflections throughout. In doing so, my intention is not to shift the focus from the suffering of the victims and survivors onto myself, but rather to acknowledge how reading their stories and experiences impacts the entire social environment, not least the readers and thus the witnesses.

1.1. Definition of Conflict-Related Sexualized Violence

Different definitions are employed to delineate the concept of sexualized violence in armed conflicts with the highest level of clarity. However, to represent the complexity of the area, it is necessary not only to address the question "What is sexualized violence in armed conflicts?" but also questions like "Who is the perpetrator? Who are the victims and survivors? When

and in what contexts does it occur? Why does it happen? For what purpose does it happen?" These aspects are explored in the chapter "State of the Art" on sexualized violence.

In the literature, there is no consensus on the definition of conflict-related sexualized violence (Nordås and Cohen 2021). The complexity of the term "sexualized violence" arises from the various definitions and interpretations it can encompass. In this context, various approaches to definition are presented to define the term as clearly as possible. It is important that a very clear demarcation of what exactly falls under sexualized violence and what does not is avoided. This approach allows for a broader and more comprehensive examination of the phenomenon, which is necessary to understand its complexity and the different forms in which it can occur.

The definition of sexualized violence in terms of a ‘divisio’ encompasses different forms of violations. Scholars differentiate these forms as the underlying logics vary depending on the type of violence. Earlier studies often implicitly assumed that conflict-related sexualized violence closely correlates with other forms of war violence; however, evidence at the micro level shows that this is not universally the case. In the same conflict scenarios, various types of sexualized violence may occur simultaneously. The majority of definitions encompass rape and perceive conflict-related sexualized violence as encompassing a wide range of abuses. This spectrum not only includes violent acts but also extends to non-violent forms, such as humiliation and making inappropriate sexualized comments (Nordås and Cohen 2021). Other forms include domestic sexualized slavery, genital mutilation, sexualized torture, and forced prostitution, sterilization, pregnancy, and abortion (Stallone 2021).

Michel Foucault describes conflict-related sexualized violence as "nothing more and nothing less than an aggression" (Defert and Foucault 2016), which, however, is criticized by feminist theorists for trivializing this form of violence (Carse 2004). Sexualized violence is seen as a pure act of violence that has nothing to do with sex, as real sex is based on consent and is free from violence (Brownmiller 1977). This definition avoids blaming victims and survivors and emphasizes that sex should be viewed as a weapon and not as motivation (Sanyal 2020).

How Does the International Criminal Court Define It?

Contemporary quantitative studies on a global scale frequently utilize the “Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict” (SVAC) dataset (Cohen and Nordås 2014). These studies adopt its definition of sexual violence in armed conflicts, which is grounded in the framework established by the International Criminal Court. This definition by SVAC covers both direct acts of violence or physical force and the threat of violence or coercion. The definition is comprehensive, detailing seven distinct types of violence under its umbrella.: “(1) rape, (2) sexualized slavery, (3) forced prostitution, (4) forced pregnancy, (5) enforced sterilization/abortion, (6) sexualized mutilation, and (7) sexualized torture” (Cohen and Nordås 2014). Each of these forms has its own definition; for example, in the SVAC database, rape is defined according to Wood (2006, S. 308) as "the forced (under physical force or the threat of physical force against the victim or a third person) penetration of the anus or vagina by the penis or another object or the mouth by the penis." It's crucial to note that this perspective also accounts for the involvement of female perpetrators as well as male victims and survivors. (Nordås and Cohen 2021).

In this work, I focus on conflict-related sexualized violence according to the definition of the United Nations (United Nations Secretary-General 2015): “Rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, and other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls, or boys that is linked, directly or indirectly, to a conflict.” This comprehensive definition is used to capture the broad spectrum of violent acts that can occur in conflict situations and underscores the need to recognize and address all forms of sexual violence in conflicts through support measures.

1.2. Relevance of Research on Sexualized Violence in Conflict and Peace Studies

Despite its comparatively modest size, research on conflict-related sexualized violence has exerted significant influence on the broader academic field.

The introduction of sexualized violence as a subject for rigorous theoretical and empirical studies has challenged the historical neglect of gender issues in conflict studies (McDermott 2020). Research addressing sexualized violence in armed conflicts not only fosters a comprehensive understanding of conflict dynamics but also provides deeper insight into the internal mechanisms of armed groups. This enhances the comprehension of transitional justice and aids in understanding the reintegration of societies after conflicts. Thus, literature on conflict-related sexualized violence has profound implications for various aspects of conflicts and political violence. To better understand the dynamics during wars for individuals, societies, and states, it is necessary to extend analysis to different forms of violence and diverse actors. Furthermore, the literature offers insights into the interplay between war and peace, the rhythm of warfare, as well as methodological nuances, ethics, and data analysis. These in-

sights contribute to more comprehensive discussions about violence, peace, and conflict (Nordås and Cohen 2021).

The study of sexualized injuries unveils hidden potential and sheds light on political processes, including elections, protests, and suppression. The increased interest in conflict-related sexualized violence has heightened awareness of gender issues and inclusion in conflict studies, led by a growing number of female scholars. Scholars emphasize the necessity of inclusion and participation from conflict-affected regions (Nordås and Cohen 2021).

Furthermore, sexualized violence takes a central role in the growing discussion about the civilian population during conflict (Balcells and Stanton 2021), while simultaneously being a crucial element in both positivist and interpretive/post-positivist studies of gender issues in the field of international relations (Reiter 2015; Sjoberg et al. 2018).

The academic exploration of sexualized violence in conflicts is deeply embedded in the contours of world politics and inseparably linked with the development of sexualized violence as a recognized war crime. In this sense, the examination of sexualized violence must be viewed in the historical and political context that has made it globally significant. The historiography of this field is closely connected with political activism, particularly from feminist movements (Nordås and Cohen 2021).

In summary, the study of conflict-related sexualized violence provides valuable insights into key issues of conflict, expands the understanding of the dynamics of violence, and highlights the importance of ethics and inclusion. This scholarly endeavor reveals the multifaceted aspects of conflict and its consequences, impacting the global sociopolitical debate.

2. Methodology

Personal Reflection: AI and Anglo-centrism

In recent literature reviews, it has become the norm to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools like connectedpapers.com, consensus.app, sourcely.net, or evidencehunt.com etc.. However, several key factors influenced my decision not to use AI for literature research in my study. Firstly, there was the concern of epistemic violence, as AI might reinforce dominant perspectives and suppress minority opinions, leading to a biased representation of knowledge. Additionally, the issue of power structures arises, as control over AI tools often lies in the hands of large, influential organizations, potentially fostering a centralization of power and knowledge. Another point is the potential re-colonization through AI, favoring Western or Eurocentric perspectives and thus marginalizing knowledge from other cultures. My free search on Google Scholar made the prevailing Anglo-centrism apparent, manifesting in a significant overrepresentation of studies and perspectives from English-speaking countries. This I attempted to counteract by consciously using Latin American databases and Spanish search terms. Where possible, filters were set to find articles from Colombia and Spanish-language sources.

Moreover, there are concerns about the quality and reliability of information generated by AI, as it may struggle to assess the credibility of sources, leading to erroneous or misleading results. Data privacy and ethical considerations also played a role, as the use of AI in research raises questions about data protection and the ethical use of data. Finally, there is a risk that AI systems reflect existing biases in their training data, leading to skewed research outcomes. These considerations were crucial in my choice to use more traditional research methods to ensure a balanced, critical, and ethically grounded analysis.

In my engagement with the research literature on Colombia, I found that despite the rich expertise of local researchers, their work is strikingly underrepresented in the global scientific discourse. This seemed paradoxical, as they, as local specialists, possess unique insights and profound knowledge. The challenge of finding Spanish-language or specifically Colombian articles emphasized for me the discrepancy in the 'Power of Voice' in scientific discourse. Are voices from certain regions less heard? This question led me to intensify my search, specifically accessing Spanish-language databases and resources and establishing contacts with Colombian institutions. This process opened my eyes to the importance of broadening the perspective and ensuring that diverse viewpoints are heard, especially in a dynamic and context-specific field like research on Colombia.

2.1. Introduction to the Methodology

The systematic literature review involves a structured and systematic search for relevant literature. It includes defining specific search terms, selecting appropriate databases, and determining inclusion and exclusion criteria (Purssell and McCrae 2020).

The chosen method of systematic literature review is suitable to shed light on the current state of support measures for victims and survivors of sexualized violence in armed conflicts, as it is assumed that there is already some isolated empirical research on this matter.

To fulfill the study's aims and address the research questions, a systematic overview of the literature was undertaken. This method involves gathering and amalgamating existing empirical findings, adhering to specific criteria for what to include and (Gough et al. 2017). The implementation of this overview was carried out in accordance with established guidelines for systematic reviews. A systematic review is a process guided by a fixed protocol that requires a methodical and structured approach. To ensure the reproducibility and the possibility of repeating the study, the research process must be transparently documented, which is a key criterion for the objectivity of scientific work (Gough et al. 2017; Patole 2021).

2.2. Systematic Literature Review

My research involved a comprehensive literature search across seven bibliographic databases. These included Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina y el Caribe, España y Portugal (Redalyc), all relevant for the research area. The time frame for my literature search spanned from October 2022 to October 2023.

The selection of search terms was meticulously done to cover a broad spectrum of pertinent studies. They included terms like “Sexualized violence in armed conflict” and were supplemented by more specific terms related to “support measures” and “Colombia”. In addition to these terms, synonyms, and related terms such as “aid”, “healing”, “Latin America”, etc., were included in the search. An overview of the search terms and the Boolean operators is provided in Figure 1. For example, searches were conducted for “(Sexual violence OR sexualized violence) AND Colombia”. The Boolean operators are understood as follows: OR is used when authors use synonyms to describe a similar concept, AND to focus and thereby reduce the search results.

Search terms					
Boolean operators	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR
AND	Sexual violence	Sexualized violence	Sexual aggression	Sexual assault	Rape

AND	Armed conflict	war	combat		
AND	Support	Healing	Help	Assistance	Rehabilitation
AND	intervention	Aid	measures	Trauma healing	Best practice
AND	Colombia	Latin America			

Table 1: Free search words and Boolean operators

The strategy for grey literature involved two steps: First, countries or regions were identified where support measures for survivors and victims of sexualized violence in armed conflicts were documented. For this purpose, I drew on data from international humanitarian organizations, human rights organizations, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Amnesty International, International Red Cross, etc.. In the subsequent phase, my research extended to grey literature, which involved reviewing evaluations on websites, humanitarian reports, and various non-scholarly publications. The selection of search terms for this grey literature was based on the specific countries and regions identified during the initial step. To maintain the search's efficiency, Internet searches were confined to the first ten results.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

For inclusion in the work, I established specific criteria. I included studies that address support measures for victims and survivors of sexualized violence in armed conflicts (both international and intranational), such as the evaluation of medical aid measures and the description of procedures for the prevention or treatment of physical and psychological symptoms. These studies had to clearly mention the context of armed conflicts and should contain at least one quantifiable measure in one of the areas of mental health and psychosocial support, medical care, legal aid, economic support or spiritual support.

The selection criteria for the literature review excluded concise descriptions of measures, personal opinions, letters to the editor, book critiques, guides, toolkits, and descriptions of programs that lacked evaluative components. To ensure that the sources were both comprehensible and accessible, the search was restricted to publications in English and Spanish.

Additionally, starting from review articles on the effectiveness of support measures for victims and survivors of sexualized violence (Tol et al. 2011; Schopper 2014), further reports were identified. The backward search was applied, but with awareness of its limitations: It is problematic that non-cited literature cannot be found. There is also the risk of falling victim to a 'citation cartel', namely when certain schools of thought cite almost exclusively the works of those who think alike. Furthermore, with the 'method of concentric circles', one can usually

only discover a few sources from neighboring disciplines (Kornmeier 2018). Therefore, the so-called "forward search" was also used (Kreft 2019; Schulz 2019; Stallone and Janetsky 2021a; Touquet and Schulz 2021; Zulver 2017).

2.3. Search Strategy

Scopus	A comprehensive, multidisciplinary database that covers many international journals, including publications from Colombia.
Web of Science	This database also provides access to a broad range of scientific articles from various countries, including Colombia.
Redalyc (Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina y el Caribe, España y Portugal)	A specialized database focusing on scientific journals from Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal.
SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online)	A database that serves as both a bibliographic resource and a platform for electronic publishing, covering regions including Latin America, Portugal, Spain, and South Africa, and featuring a significant number of journals from Colombia.
LILACS (Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences)	A major database for health sciences in Latin America and the Caribbean.
JSTOR	Offers access to a wide range of academic journals, including those from Latin America.
Google Scholar	Although not a specialized database, Google Scholar can still help in finding scholarly articles from Colombian sources.

Table 2: Databases used for literature research

To identify relevant literature, various databases were utilized: Scopus, Web of Science, Redalyc (Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina y el Caribe, España y Portugal), SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online), LILACS (Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences), JSTOR, and Google Scholar. These sources cover a broad spectrum in the fields of social sciences, psychology, and health sciences. The search terms used included free-text keywords and their combinations, aligned with the research questions and selection criteria. While the free-text words were the same across all databases, Thesaurus/MeSH (Med-

ical Subject Headings) terms were adapted according to each database. MeSH is a common classification system in medical and biological databases (Boynton 2017). This means these terms were modified according to the specific requirements or format of each database, as different databases have varying classification systems or term definitions. In some databases, a combined search method was employed, integrating Thesaurus/MeSH terms with specific free-text words. In Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, the search was limited to free-text terms. These keywords were grouped to form the final search strings. Boolean operators were used to link the search terms and optimize the search process. Additionally, truncations were used to expand the search results. The following filters were applied: a) peer-reviewed, b) publication date (2001-2023), c) language (English, Spanish). To ensure the comprehensiveness of the research findings, no further filters were applied. Additionally, the bibliographies of included studies were searched to cover all relevant articles in this field of research.

2.4. Selection Criteria

The literature selection was guided by predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. These selection criteria were based on the CLIP approach, the objective, and the research questions, and are summarized in Appendix A. CLIP is often used in literature searches for health policy. It systematically examines relevant literature according to Client group, Location, Intervention/Improvement, and Professionals involved (Wildridge and Bell 2002).

Due to the described challenges in data collection in the area of sexualized violence in armed conflicts and measuring the effectiveness of support measures, studies were also included that investigate proxy and predictor variables (e.g., subjective well-being, absence of psychopathology, agency, life satisfaction, social support).

In my systematic literature review, various works were excluded to ensure the quality and relevance of the results and to ensure that they are specifically tailored to the research question. The excluded studies included:

Studies that involved other forms of violence or humanitarian disasters such as earthquakes were excluded. This was necessary to maintain a clear focus on the specific impacts of sexualized violence. The exclusion of these studies also aimed to center the results on the context of armed conflicts, as the transferability of findings from other humanitarian contexts was considered unreliable. This decision was made because such studies did not provide meaningful contributions to the specific research question and thus did not add value to the understanding of the impacts of sexualized violence.

Studies focusing on general impacts of armed conflict on mental health or socio-economic inequalities, without explicitly addressing victims and survivors of sexualized violence, were also excluded. The reason for this was that while these works offer valuable insights into the

general consequences of conflicts, they did not address the specific impacts on victims and survivors of conflict-related sexualized violence.
Contributions that dealt with relevant topics such as the use of SRH (Sexual and Reproductive Health) services in armed conflicts but did not specifically address victims and survivors of sexualized violence were not included. It was important to identify works that specifically examined the impacts of sexualized violence on the affected individuals.

Through this rigorous selection process, it was ensured that the included studies were directly relevant to the research question and provided meaningful, specific insights into the psychological impacts of sexualized violence in the context of the armed conflict in Colombia. This approach guaranteed a high quality and accuracy of the research findings.

2.5. Selection Process

For the purpose of identifying and eliminating duplicates in the literature, the EndNote software (Clarivate Analytics, 2019) was employed. The process began with the importation of studies from databases like Scopus, Web of Science, Redalyc, SciELO, LILACS, JSTOR, and Google Scholar into EndNote, achieved through manual search and review of references. Once in EndNote, duplicates were identified and removed. This set the stage for a two-phase screening process: initially, titles and abstracts were screened, followed by a thorough examination of the full texts.

2.6. Screening

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were then applied to the titles and abstracts of the identified studies. Full reports were obtained for studies that met the criteria based on title and abstract screening or where insufficient information was available. These criteria were reapplied to these full reports to ensure that only relevant studies were included in the final analysis. Titles were excluded if no abstract was available, and the title and other provided information suggested that the study did not fall within the scope of application.

Full-text screening was conducted with the remaining articles, applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria again.

2.7. Data Analysis

The remaining articles were analyzed to synthesize relevant findings. Information from the extraction protocol was employed, and the articles were revisited multiple times to ensure the inclusion of all pertinent data.

2.8. Ethical Considerations

As a systematic literature reviewer, I do not directly collect sensitive or personal data from study participants. However, it is crucial to consider the views and insights of authors and participants from the original studies I review(Suri 2020). The ethical dimension of my work is grounded in assessing the quality and significance of evidence from previous research. Re-

flecting on the published information, absence of data, outcomes, and their implications from a critical and ethical perspective, always in line with the research purpose, is essential. As a reviewer, I am aware of my subjective viewpoint and strive to minimize any potential biases. My approach is characterized by transparency throughout the review process, ensuring ethical integrity (Suri 2020). My aim in this systematic review has been to adhere to these principles and uphold ethical standards.

Regarding the ethical principles for medical research involving human material and data as established in the Declaration of Helsinki, I ensure in my review that the life, privacy, health, dignity, and integrity of individuals are protected in the best interest of research participants (World Medical Association 2013). In examining studies involving victims and survivors of sexual violence in armed conflicts, I verify that researchers have 1) obtained informed consent from those involved, 2) maintained the anonymity and privacy of participants and prioritized their rights over research objectives, 3) built upon and collaborated with similar research to prevent over-researching this vulnerable group, 4) addressed or avoided sensitive and potentially retraumatizing topics with due sensitivity, 5) demonstrated cultural awareness and understanding, and 6) been aware of their own biases and assumptions (Clark-Kazak 2017). In my review, I have considered these ethical considerations and incorporated them into the quality assessment of studies to ensure that the studies I examine comply with ethical standards.

3. Broken and Ruptured Connectivities: Current State of the Art Sexualized Violence in Armed Conflicts

To represent the current state of the art regarding sexualized violence in armed conflicts, particularly in the case of Colombia, I have adapted the Laswell Formula (Lasswell 1948) and Geißner's situational analysis (Geißner 1979) from other disciplines. Accordingly, the following questions are addressed: "When does it happen?", "Who are the perpetrators?", "Who are the survivors and victims?", "Why does it happen?", "Why does it still happen?", "What is the legal status?", "What are the consequences?" This approach aims to provide a structured, comprehensive overview of the current knowledge in this field.

Figure 1: State of the Art Sexualized Violence in Armed Conflicts (Own Illustration)

Preliminary: Critical Assessment of Data Related to Sexualized Violence

Data collection in the field of sexualized violence is fraught with challenges. The rapid expansion of quantitative studies has highlighted concerns about data distortions and limitations (Davies and True 2015; Krüger and Nordås 2020). However, qualitative data also face similar distortions, such as underreporting and stigmatization (Nordås and Cohen 2021). Gathering quantitative data on sexualized violence in armed conflicts is challenging due to the dark figure of underreporting. Many survivors remain silent, driven by fear of retaliation or stigma

from disclosure. This silence exacerbates data collection difficulties in conflict zones, where security risks and logistical obstacles hinder the gathering of reliable information. Furthermore, the lack of a uniform definition of sexualized violence complicates data comparability.

At the same time, qualitative data struggle with the subjectivity of narratives. Personal accounts, which are the backbone of qualitative research, may be colored by individual experiences and biases. Representativeness often suffers from small, non-representative samples, distorting the breadth of the phenomenon. Additionally, memories of traumatic events can become distorted over time, affecting the accuracy of reported incidents.

Comparisons of rates are even more challenging, considering the use of different methods and standards in surveys. For instance, rape was reported by 11% of surveyed displaced women in Colombia; 19% in Burundi; 25% in Azerbaijan; and 39% during the genocide in Rwanda (Ward and Marsh 2006; Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2005).

Despite these challenges, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are essential to understand the complex dynamics of sexualized violence in armed conflicts. All data should therefore be critically viewed under the appropriate conditions.

Sexualized Violence in the Armed Conflict in Colombia

Sexualized violence is also a part of the armed conflict in Colombia. The following subchapters first present the current state of sexualized violence in armed conflicts. After presenting the general current state of research, an overview of what is known about each point in the Colombian conflict will be given, since situation descriptions often mention several aspects at once (who committed sexualized violence, when, where, and to whom), it is not feasible to separate this information analytically.

3.1. When Does It Happen?

Sexualized violence in armed conflicts encompasses more than just rape and does not necessarily end with the conflict's conclusion. In conflict situations, for instance, violence in intimate partnerships can occur more frequently than war rapes (Stark and Ager 2011; Palermo and Peterman 2011). Variations in sexualized violence between different conflicts, actors, and over time are documented (Cohen 2013a; Hudson and Cohen 2016; Wood 2009; Nordås and Cohen 2021).

The forms, severity, and perpetrators of sexual violence vary during war, peace, and post-war periods. While partner rape is common in all periods, more specific forms like forced pregnancies in war camps or forced marriages to combatants are more specific to wartime (Wood 2014; Hudson and Cohen 2016).

The SVAC dataset defines "conflict-related" as violations committed by armed actors during or immediately after conflicts, excluding civilian actors (Nordås and Cohen 2021). This definition contrasts with broader definitions used by political and advocacy groups or the United Nations, which include any sexualized violence directly or indirectly associated with a conflict (Guterres, António, 1949- and UN. Secretary-General 2019; Nordås and Cohen 2021).

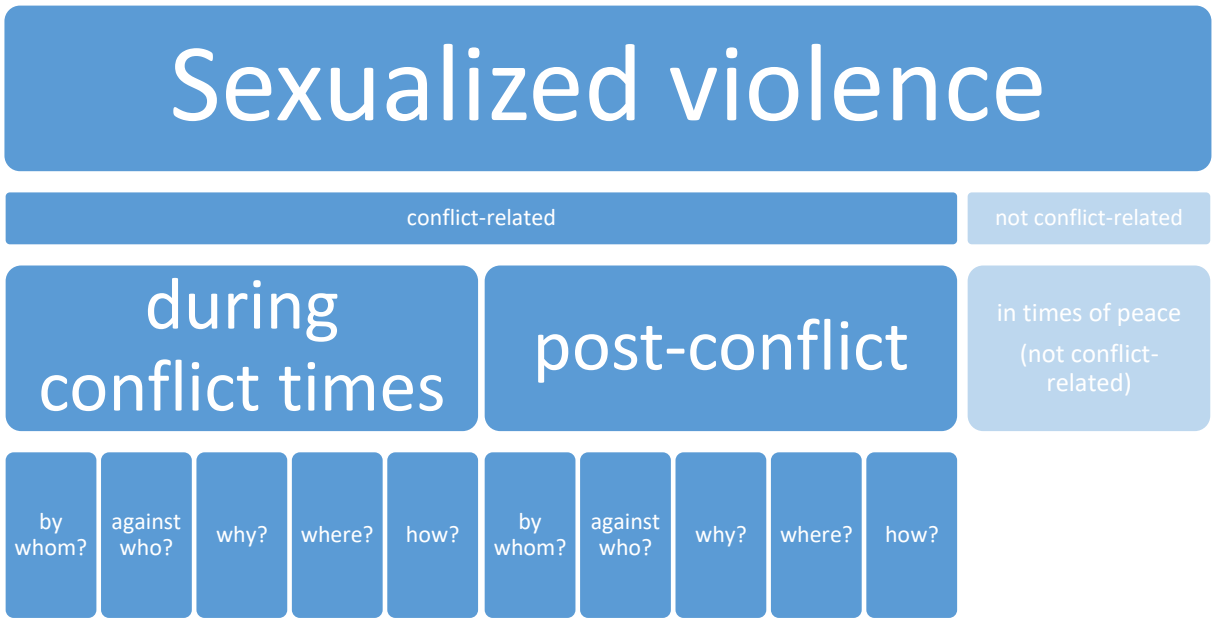


Figure 2: conflict and non-conflict related sexualized violence

3.2. Who are the Victims and Survivors?

The impacts of sexualized violence in armed conflicts are extensive and diverse, affecting women, men, sexual minorities, indigenous populations, and combatants. This highlights the need for comprehensive and inclusive approaches in both research and intervention programs to address the complex dynamics of sexualized violence in conflict situations (Carpenter 2010; Moore and Barner 2017; Tejero 2023).

Women are disproportionately affected, but men and boys are also victims of gender-based violence, including acts like forced recruitment, gender-selective massacres, and sexualized violence (Carpenter 2010). Acts of "social cleansing" specifically targeted marginalized groups with sexualized violence, including indigenous women, internally displaced persons, people with HIV/AIDS, households with female heads, members of women's movements, and homosexuals (Amnesty International 2004).

Sexualized violence, both within and beyond armed conflicts, transcends gender, age, ethnicity, and other identity factors, leading to severe consequences for both children and adults (Lund et al. 2019).

Sexual minorities in civilian and ethnic conflicts face heightened risks of war crimes, including sexualized violence, torture, and death. Studies indicate that toxic homophobia, misogyny, and hypermasculinity contribute to sexualized violence against women, men, and sexual minorities during wartime (Moore and Barner 2017). This violence is often used to demoralize communities, emasculate, and instill fear, with targeted violence against sexual minorities being particularly strategic (Moore and Barner 2017; Tejero 2023). The invisibility of sexual minorities in armed conflicts, largely for security reasons, leads to their absence in official statistics in conflict-affected countries, exacerbating challenges in addressing their specific needs (Moore and Barner 2017).

Marginalized communities also show increased vulnerability to sexualized violence in conflict zones. This vulnerability is intensified by triple discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, and poverty, making them a critical focus in human rights and humanitarian efforts (Herrera et al. 2018; OXFAM 2009; UN. Secretary-General 2012).

Combatants in armed groups are not immune to sexualized violence. Within military ranks, sexual minorities are targeted for 'correction' or punishment, often due to deviations from heterosexualized norms. This practice indicates an increasing pathologization of various sexual orientations and gender identities in highly militarized environments (Tejero 2023).

Personal Reflection: Anger

How could it leave me unaffected?

Reading for months about the atrocities in this world and how people - girls and women like me - must endure these horrors, how could it not matter to me?

What irony to have to write a scientific, rational, and logical paper on a topic that pierces my heart. After each day spent at my laptop, I have to run, breathe fresh air, cry, and scream. Who would I be if it didn’t affect me?

And it feels like descending day by day back into that dark chamber, where one can't escape pain and suffering. I am so angry! Angry at this work, angry that this happens in the same world I call home, to my brothers and sisters born in a different place but not a different time. I am so angry. And it feels like there's nothing I can do about it.

3.3. Who are the Perpetrators?

Perpetrators of sexualized violence include a complex array of actors, both state and non-state entities, each with their unique motivations, dynamics, and patterns. Wood’s research distinctly focuses on armed organizations, rather than cultures, states, or conflicts, as the key unit of analysis to understand variations in wartime sexualized violence.

3.3.1. State Actors

The prevailing misconception attributing wartime sexualized violence mainly to undisciplined rebel groups has been disproven by empirical evidence. Contrary to this myth, states more frequently emerge as perpetrators of sexualized violence during armed conflicts (Cohen and Nordås 2014). Instances of state-perpetrated sexualized violence have been documented even in situations where rebel groups showed restraint, highlighting the significant role of states in such atrocities (Nordås and Cohen 2021).

Existing explanations for state actors' involvement in sexualized violence focus on principal-agent dynamics, suggesting agents may commit such acts due to personal motives or desires (Mitchell 2005). This argument is supported by global statistical analyses, albeit based on limited data (Butler et al. 2007). However, this perspective contrasts with human rights scholarship emphasizing state repression driven by strategic motives and leadership coordination (Davenport 2007). Research into fighters' perspectives within armed organizations provides insights into the perception of sexualized violence as a weapon, further enriching the discourse (Baaz and Stern 2009; Hudson and Cohen 2016).

3.3.2. Non-state Armed Groups

A clear dichotomy exists between state actors and non-state armed groups in their propensity for sexualized violence in conflict. States tend to be associated with higher rates of sexualized violence, while non-state groups are more likely to establish norms against such assaults, possibly driven by their reliance on civilian support (Muvumba Sellström 2021).

3.3.3. UN Peacekeepers, Private Military Contractors, Police

Further research reports on sexualized violations by UN peacekeeping forces and explores patterns of sexualized violence associated with other state-connected entities in conflicts, such as private military contractors (Nordås and Rustad 2013; Karim and Beardsley 2017; Westendorf 2020). Sexualized violence committed by the police in both peacetime and conflicts remains an underexplored issue, warranting further investigation (Ferstman 2020).

3.3.4. Women

In parallel, research highlights female perpetrators in specific cases (Johnson et al. 2008; Cohen 2013b; Sjoberg 2016).

3.4. Purpose and Causes of Sexualized Violence

Understanding the reasons behind sexualized violence in conflicts is crucial as it offers valuable insights for future efforts to prevent such violence. Scholarly studies have revealed strategic uses of sexual violence by perpetrators, including intimidation, punishment for non-supporters of an armed group (Leiby 2009) as a reward or pleasure for troops (Baaz and Stern 2009), stress relief (Kim, 2012), and to socialize troops and enhance combatant status (Cohen 2013b). Recognizing the nuanced behavior of different conflict parties can inform strategies for intervention and prevention (Muvumba Sellström 2021).

Some scholars initially viewed conflict-related sexualized violence as a natural and inevitable side effect of war due to male sexual drives (e.g. Farwell 2004), while later contributions viewed rape in wartime also as a violation of "family honor" rather than individual harm (Mackenzie 2010). Early research on sexualized violence in war primarily used empirical evidence to illustrate theories about dynamics, causes, and consequences rather than to test them. Studying the reasons for restraint by armed organizations arises from the focus on variations in the literature on conflict-related sexualized violence. Instead of only explaining why sexualized violence occurs, it is equally important from both an academic and policy perspective to understand why some actors rarely commit acts of sexualized violence (Nordås and Cohen 2021). The reorientation towards examining the actions of perpetrators rather than focusing solely on victims is pivotal, reflecting the diverse behaviors among conflicting groups. It's observed that certain groups show restraint and reduce instances of sexualized violence, underscoring behavioral differences. This indicates that not every actor in conflict situations is involved in commanding or facilitating sexual atrocities (Muvumba Sellström 2021).

Understanding sexualized violence in conflict situations is complex, encompassing various motivations and dynamics (Nordås and Cohen 2021). Literature typically presents arguments and ideas about why sexualized violence occurs in armed contexts in an unstructured manner, at best chronologically according to the development phases of hypotheses. New theories on the motivations behind sexualized violence in armed conflicts often seem to emerge, paraphrasing previous approaches and, due to the nature of the subject, supported by little empirical data. This is partly because data on perpetrators' motivations are scarce and because such data are often deemed less reliable and useful due to factors like impulse, unconsciousness, shame, and "social desirability."

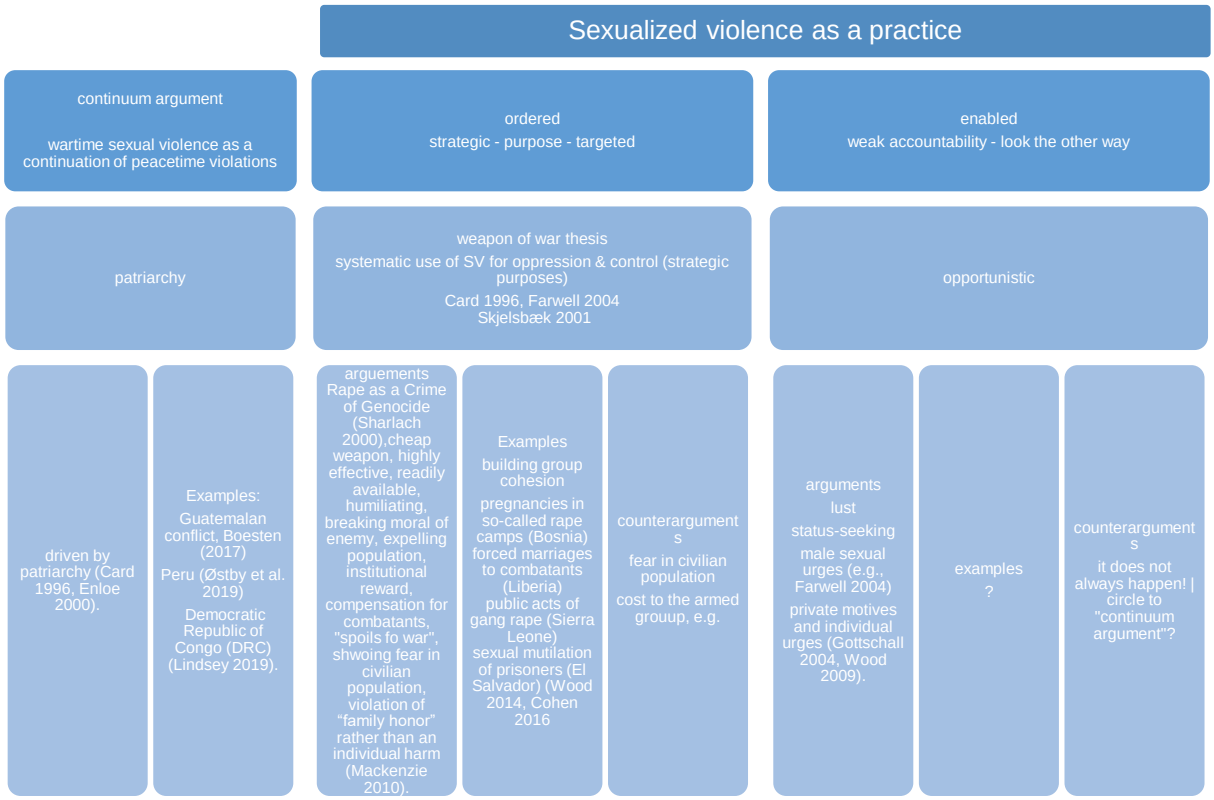


Figure 3: Arguments about the Motivations of Sexualized Violence (Own Illustration)

The above graphic provides an overview and logically organizes various theoretical approaches: The diagram offers a structured analysis of the complex topic "Sexualized Violence as Practice". The first row distinguishes between the "Continuum Argument" and "Ordered" as well as "Enabled" violence. The Continuum Argument views wartime sexual violence as a continuation of peacetime violations, driven by society's patriarchal structures, exemplified by conflicts in Guatemala, Peru, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This view is supported by the notion that wartime sexual violence is propelled by patriarchal norms already present in peacetime (Card 1996; Enloe 2000).

The second row focuses on "Ordered" violence, where sexual violence is characterized as strategic, purposeful, and targeted. Termed as a "weapon of war," it serves to exert oppression and control (Card 1996; Farwell 2004; Skjelsbæk 2001). Arguments supporting this view label rape as a crime of genocide, as a cheap, effective, and humiliating weapon aimed at breaking enemy morale, displacing populations, and providing rewards and compensations to combatants ("spoils of war"). This is evidenced by examples such as group pregnancies in "rape camps" (Bosnia), forced marriages (Liberia), and sexual violence as part of gang rituals (Sierra Leone).

On the other side of the diagram, "Enabled" violence is characterized by weak accountability and turning a blind eye, often leading to opportunistic acts of sexual violence. The arguments for this include lust, status seeking, male sexual drives, and individual motives. This is further

substantiated by examples and counterarguments, such as questioning whether this type of violence always occurs and whether it can be part of the "Continuum Argument". In summary, the diagram presents a range of views supported by empirical examples and theoretical arguments, mapping a network of causes and rationalizations for the complex practice of sexualized violence in armed conflicts and reflecting the complexity and diverse perspectives present in the academic debate on this topic.

Ultimately, the various arguments from the research literature are distilled into three main approaches:

1) The Continuum Argument: the degree/likelihood of sexualized violence in peacetime is continued multiple times in wartime.
2) Sexualized Violence is Ordered: In armed contexts, sexualized violence occurs deliberately and pursues a strategic goal.
3) Sexualized Violence is Enabled: Due to weak or no accountability and the overlooking by superiors and people who could use their influence to prevent sexualized violence, it occurs in armed contexts.

Wood's concept of sexualized violence as a practice offers a resolution to the simplified model: The concept of violence as a practice, differing from strategy or opportunism, has broader applicability beyond sexualized violence. It can be used to explain various forms of political violence and behaviors of armed groups (Wood 2018).

3.4.1. Continuum Argument & Patriarchy

The concept of patriarchy is central to the Continuum Argument, linking sexualized wartime violence to the prevailing status of women in society. Peggy Reeves Sanday suggests that societies with egalitarian structures and extensive participation opportunities experience fewer rapes, emphasizing that "the value given to mutual respect in daily life is transferred to sexualized relationships" (Sanyal 2020). This argument is supported by early research viewing war rapes as a continuation of previous violations by the patriarchal system (Card 1996; Enloe 2000). "Reflecting a prevalent understanding in the critical feminist literature on conflict-related sexualized violence […] several women emphasized that being entrenched in patriarchal norms prevailing in society sexual violence existed prior to the armed conflict and will exist when the conflict ends" (Kreft 2020). However, some researchers point out that the Continuum Argument falls short as forms and severity of sexual violence vary between wartime and peacetime (Hudson and Cohen 2016; Wood 2014).

Counterarguments suggest that patriarchal structures alone do not explain the varying patterns of sexual violence in war (Cohen 2013a). Wood (2009) notes that not all armed groups practice sexualized violence, challenging the notion that such violence is an inevitable aspect

of warfare. Research, such as on the civil war in Burundi, demonstrates that despite similar causes of conflict and gender norms, different groups exhibit distinct patterns of sexualized violence (Muvumba Sellström 2021).

3.4.2. Enabled (opportunistic argument)

	Ordered	Enabled
Definition	Sexual violence on the basis of explicit authorization or instruction, and generally having a strategic political and/or military purpose.	Sexual violence that is not necessarily related to a strategic objective but rather mainly facilitated by weak accountability mechanisms and norms that are supportive of sexual coercion.
Motives	Strategic; Purposive; Targeted.	Practice; Recreational; Indiscriminate.
Example of violent acts	Mass rape used in religious or ethnic conflicts; sanctioned sexual exploitation of civilians; sexual torture in interrogations; sexual humiliation; systematic sexual slavery and forced marriage.	Indiscriminate sexual harassment, abuse and assaults of civilians, including rape at roadblocks, markets and private homes; rape and sexual torture for extortion or exploitation.
Examples of perpetrator groups	• Former Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and Interahamwe; • Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).	• US military (Abu Ghraib); • National Council for the Defence of Democracy – Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD).

Table 3: Typology of Wartime Sexualized Violence (Nordås and Cohen 2021)

Early literature often viewed sexualized violence as opportunistic, driven by individual impulses (Gottschall 2004; Wood 2009). This view is based on the "Dampfkesselmodell" (pressure cooker model), which assumes an irrational male sexual drive, contradicting the notion of male rationality. However, recent research like Muvumba Sellström (2021) indicates that such acts of violence are multifaceted in motivation, including, but not limited to, factors like lust. Another perspective sees sexualized violence as a result of principal-agent dynamics, with discipline and education serving as means of restraint (Butler et al. 2007; Hoover Green 2018; Whitaker et al. 2019). This view points to an opportunistic nature of violence but underscores the necessity for higher-level control. Muvumba Sellström (2021) argues that institutional decisions such as rule-setting and enforcement are predictive of sexualized violence.

Wood (2006; Wood) notes that despite the enabling of sexualized violence, it is not always enacted. Enabled violence, not based on strategy, arises from weak accountability mechanisms or social complicity (Muvumba Sellström 2021). This type of violence can occur in contexts like the Burundi Civil War, where it is used to demonstrate power but not based on explicit orders. Contrasting with this, human rights literature emphasizes that state repression often follows strategic motives and is coordinated by leaders (Davenport 2007).

3.4.3. Ordered (Weapon of War Theory)

The "Weapon-of-war" theory views sexualized violence as a strategic instrument of war. However, Baaz and Stern (2013) caution against equating the widespread consequences of sexualized violence with the intentions of commanders. Sexualized violence in war is historically rooted in power and colonization dynamics, reflecting patriarchal claims of possession regardless of race and class. Ordered violence is executed by command and serves strate-

gic or tactical goals, such as punishing or controlling civilians or humiliating an enemy group (Muvumba Sellström 2021). This form of violence can serve as a cheap, effective, and humiliating weapon to oppress enemies and control territories, also functioning as a reward for fighters (Wood 2014).

However, the "Weapon-of-war" theory does not explain all instances of sexualized violence in conflicts. It should be seen as a partial explanation for specific types of atrocities and actions of some armed actors. Targeted attacks with an instrumental purpose are part of military operations, and the strategic use of this violence does not preclude opportunistic or excessive actions. Strategic actions in line with the "Weapon-of-war" thesis include, for example, systematic mass rape to humiliate the enemy (Muvumba Sellström 2021). Cohen (2013a) examines the role of sexualized violence, particularly gang rapes, in war for promoting intra-group cohesion. He finds that armed groups with forced recruitments are more prone to rapes and argues that rape is neither opportunistic nor exclusively strategic. Cohen's work explains how socialization processes explain group rapes by state forces and rebel groups (Nordås and Cohen 2021).

Studies indicate that not all armed men in conflicts, such as the Burundi Civil War, engage in sexualized violence, highlighting the role of individual choices and enabling processes. For instance, forced recruitment practices in Sierra Leone led to more rapes by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Counterarguments to the "Weapon-of-war" theory question the perception of sexualized violence as a cost-effective weapon of war, noting significant potential costs for the armed group and perpetrators, including political backlash and emotional burden (Nordås and Cohen 2021). Muvumba Sellström (2021) argues that this theory fails to explain decentralized raids and abuses that bring no real benefit to armed actors. The theory also doesn't account for actions resulting from disobedience or ineffective control by commanders. Scholars advocate a broader understanding of rape as a crime of genocide to emphasize the role of sexualized violence in oppression and control (Sharlach 2000).

The distinction between the Continuum Argument and ordered vs. enabled lies mainly in emphasis and context. The Continuum Argument views sexualized violence as a continuous expression of societal gender structures, while the "ordered" and "enabled" theories focus specifically on conditions and decisions within armed conflicts. These perspectives complement each other but offer different explanations for the causes and conditions of sexualized violence in wartime. Both the enabled and ordered theories face criticism: the "ordered" hypothesis is said to not explain all cases of sexualized violence in conflicts and fails to consider the complexity of individual and group dynamics. The "enabled" hypothesis is criticized for underestimating the importance of leadership and strategic planning in some cases and overstating the role of opportunism.

3.4.4. Sexualized Violence as a Practice

Sexual violence within armed conflicts often takes the form of a deliberate strategy or an opportunistic act. Researchers like Nordås and Cohen (2021) have noted that warring factions sometimes systematically use sexual violence as a tactic, while other times it arises from neglect or tacit acceptance, leading to a lack of punishment for such acts (Wood 2018). This distinction between "ordered" and "enabled" sexual violence underscores the varying dynamics and socialization processes within armed groups that lead to sexual exploitation.

Elisabeth Jean Wood's work provides a nuanced understanding of this issue. She posits that rape, when occurring frequently within an organization but not formally as a policy, is a "practice" driven from "below" and tolerated from "above". This means that while commanders do not directly order such acts, they also do not take effective measures to prevent them. This category encompasses rape driven by individual motivations and social interactions among combatants, highlighting a complex interplay between the individual actions of combatants and the overarching policies (or lack thereof) of their leaders.

Wood's typology elaborates on how the commander's attitude towards rape — whether they promote it as policy, tolerate it, or actively prohibit it through punishment or norm inculcation — combines with the combatant's motives to result in three types: rape as policy, rape as practice, and rape as absent. Understanding when rape is likely to be prevalent as a practice involves examining not just societal gender norms but also how these norms are reshaped by the organization's socialization processes.

The concept of "rape as a practice" significantly contributes to the understanding of sexual violence in warfare. It explains how certain forms of violence, like rape, can become frequent without being an official policy, often due to social pressures within the military unit or the failure of commanders to punish such acts effectively. This understanding helps to explain why sexual violence might be pervasive in certain armed organizations even when it is not strategically advantageous or formally condoned.

In terms of policy and judicial implications, recognizing rape as a practice rather than a strategy or policy can shift the focus to different forms of accountability and justice. It can broaden the understanding of human rights violations and lead to more effective interventions during war, potentially mitigating the occurrence of sexual violence in real-time (Wood 2018).

To put it simply, "sexual violence as a practice" refers to situations where such acts are not officially part of an armed group's strategy but occur frequently because they are not effectively prohibited by the leadership. This tolerance, whether intentional or due to neglect, leads to a culture where sexual violence becomes normalized within the ranks, driven by the dynamics of the group rather than by direct orders. This understanding is crucial for address-

ing and preventing sexual violence in armed conflicts, as it highlights the need to consider the social and organizational structures that allow such violence to persist (Wood 2018).

The latest article regarding the theory of why sexualized violence occurs in contexts of conflict identifies two main motives for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: strategic and expressive (Guarnieri and Tur-Prats 2023). The strategic use of sexual violence corresponds to the common perception of rape as a weapon of war and involves commanders authorizing or ordering it to achieve military objectives. The expressive use of sexual violence arises from the personal motivations of combatants, such as power, sexual gratification, or alleviating frustration. Cultural distance in gender norms is considered in decisions about the use of sexual violence, for both strategic and expressive motivations.

The main findings of the study also indicate that actors with more male-dominant norms are more likely to engage in sexual violence in conflicts. Furthermore, the intensity of sexual violence increases when there is a large cultural distance in gender norms between perpetrators and victims, especially when the perpetrator is more male-dominant than the victim. (Guarnieri and Tur-Prats 2023).

Overall, these insights demonstrate the complexity and diverse dynamics of sexualized violence in armed conflicts and underscore the importance of examining the role of leadership and group dynamics in the emergence and tolerance of such acts of violence.

Personal Reflection: The Power to Choose the Answer to "Why"

I'm contemplating two distinct perspectives on conflict-related sexual violence. On one hand, there's the narrative that labels it a 'weapon of war'. On the other, interviews with representatives of Colombian women's organizations and victims' associations suggest a different view, attributing this violence to entrenched patriarchal structures. This makes me wonder, which of these approaches empowers the victims more? Does seeing sexual violence as a 'weapon of war' provide more room for meaningful action, or does understanding it as a product of patriarchal systems offer a more effective path for change and agency?

Beyond the search for the "truth," that is, what really is the reason for sexualized violence in armed conflicts (I distance myself from the assumption that there is one reason that can explain the occurrence of this form of violence), an intriguing question would be which explanation is the "wisest." I would consider the wisest explanation to be the one that allows the most self-efficacy/power to the victims, survivors, and their environment. If the answer to "Why?" involves continuum argument and patriarchal structures, this opens up room for action to mobilize against these social structures. In contrast, the pressure cooker model minimizes the self-efficacy of the victims and survivors, as the decision to healthily regulate this pressure cooker and thereby protect others lies with the perpetrators themselves.

One may not be able to choose why something happens, but they can choose the narrative and explanation they believe in.

3.5. Why Does It Not (Always) Happen?

Research on sexualized violence in armed conflicts underscores the importance of internal organizational and institutional aspects in uncovering patterns of violence in both state and non-state armed groups. Cohesion, ideology, governance, and training play a central role in analyzing the behavior of armed actors (Nordås and Cohen 2021).

Elisabeth Jean Wood focuses in her article "Armed Groups and Sexual Violence: When Is Wartime Rape Rare?" on the rare occurrence of sexualized violence by armed groups in war, with the example of the LTTE in Sri Lanka, which refrained from sexualized violence (Wood 2009).

Wood identifies two key factors for the absence of sexualized violence: the attitudes of group leaders and the violence patterns of combatants, which depend on their own norms. The role of leadership and military hierarchy in controlling the use of violence, as well as the cultural norms and beliefs of recruits, are crucial (Wood 2009).

Wood attributes the absence of sexualized violence in the LTTE to their strict discipline and a prohibition by the leadership, which aligns with the cultural norms of Tamil society. For sexu-

alized violence by state forces in Sri Lanka, she identifies two patterns: rape and sexualized torture in custody, and rapes at checkpoints and during military operations (Wood 2009).

Muvumba Sellström (2021) emphasizes that both government armies and rebel groups can make decisions regarding their handling of sexualized violence. Ideology is considered a crucial factor for restraint. Organizations that view sexualized violence as contradictory to their ideals tend to avoid it. Research has also shown that commanders have the choice and ability to control the violence exercised by their fighters. Organizations with robust political indoctrination and training are most likely to deter sexualized violence (Muvumba Sellström 2021).

Moreover, research indicates that groups reliant on civilian support in smuggling networks are motivated to enforce restraint in the use of sexualized violence. Leadership and principal-agent dynamics are often key to understanding the variation of sexualized violence by different organizations. The extent of leaders' investment in the political education of rank-and-file fighters can help explain the restraint of groups in sexualized violence (Hoover Green 2018). Rebel groups that elect their leaders are less likely to commit sexualized violence, possibly because the leaders do not want to alienate their followers or abuse potential recruits, and because elections mitigate principal-agent problems (Sawyer et al. 2021).

3.6. Why Does It Still Happen?

The prosecution as a deterrent against sexualized violence is questioned, as there is little empirical evidence supporting its effectiveness (Cronin-Furman 2013; Dancy, Geoff, et al. 2019). On the other hand, Binningsbø and Nordås (2022) emphasize the dangers of impunity in conflict-related sexualized violence.Future research should assess the impacts of anti-impunity measures, considering the associated high costs (Kirby 2015; Medie 2020a). Loken et al. (2018) argues that state fragility creates opportunities for human rights NGOs to initiate legal processes.

Wood (2014) highlights that the effectiveness of measures to end or prevent sexualized violence depends on whether it is strategic, opportunistic, or has evolved as a practice at the level of armed groups. In cases where rape was ordered or strategically executed by leaders, as in Rwanda, Bosnia, and the Rohingya crisis, different approaches might be required than in situations where perpetrators acted independently.

3.7. What is the Legal Situation of Sexualized Violence in Armed Conflicts?

International legal norms, such as those established by UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), identify sexualized violence as a security issue and recognize war rape as a serious violation of human rights and as a weapon of war (Amisi et al. 2018; Coles et al. 2014).

However, a challenge exists in the impunity for perpetrators, who often remain unpunished. This underscores the need for more effective prosecution and justice for the victims and survivors (Schopper 2014; Binningsbø and Nordås 2022).

3.8. How Do Survivors and Victims React?

3.8.1. Resilience

A strong emphasis on “damage” and harm done to those subjected to such violence (Durbach and Chappell 2014; Ba and Bhopal 2017) frequently detracts from other dimensions of their experiences. In this context, the lack of attention to resilience is one example of the “incomplete story” that Tuck (2009) associates with damage-centered research (Clark et al. 2022).

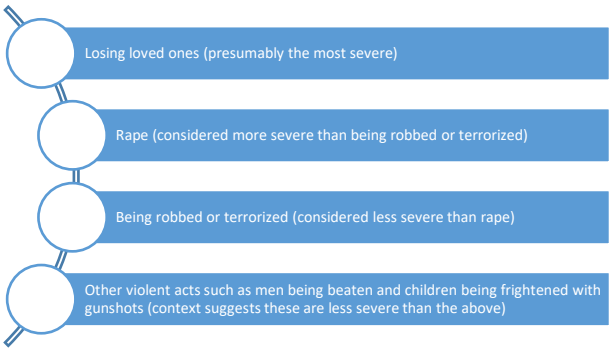


Figure 4: Scale of aggression (Benard und Schlaffer 1999)

Supporting this approach, which emphasizes the agency of victims and survivors as well as their perspective ("with us, not about us"), sociologists Cheryl Benard and Edit Schlaffer report on their interviews about the progress of ethnic cleansing and displacement during the Bosnian War. They observed a striking aspect in how women described cases of sexualized violence during these events. Instead of highlighting them separately, the women placed these assaults on the same level as other brutal acts. The women partly viewed these attacks as desexualized components of the aggression against their entire group. The cases ranged from intimidating children with gunfire, attacking men, to raping women – all as part of the same violent conduct. The rapes were placed on a scale of aggression – more severe than simple robbery or intimidation, but less grave than the loss of loved ones. These reports were given unambiguously, with certainty about the wrongdoings of the perpetrators. The focus was not on a sexualized act but on an act of war (Benard and Schlaffer 1999).

3.8.2. Strategic Submission

In the internal armed conflict in Peru during the 1980s, civilian women submitted to the sexualized demands of armed actors to protect their family members from death (Theidon 2012), and entered into sexualized relationships with a specific soldier to avoid violent mass rapes by other soldiers (Boesten 2010; Theidon 2012). This also occurred during the Russian invasion of Berlin from 1944 to 1948, where German women in Berlin committed themselves to specific Russian soldiers to prevent mass rapes by many others (Anonymous, 2000). These examples, albeit brief, all draw attention to how victimhood and agency intersect in unique ways during sexualized violence. They also show that strategic submission is not unique to

Colombia, making a deeper analysis of this type of victim response to rape even more necessary (Stallone 2021).

3.8.3. Mobilization

In armed conflicts, women respond to sexualized violence by collectively mobilizing and actively advocating for change. A key element of this mobilization is that women "politically in response to the collective threat that conflict-related sexual violence constitutes to women as a group" (Kreft 2019). This mobilization is not limited to individual experiences but is based on a shared understanding of sexualized violence as part of a continuum of violence and discrimination against women. Through their involvement in civil society organizations and public protests, women aim to change sociopolitical conditions. Kreft emphasizes that in various contexts, women have significantly expanded their social, economic, and political participation and actively engaged in peace efforts. These responses to sexualized violence in times of war demonstrate how women, despite extreme challenges, act as strong agents and strive for fundamental changes in their communities (Kreft 2019).

3.9. What are the Consequences? Effects of Sexualized Violence

I am acutely aware of the criticism from feminist scholars, such as Meger (2016), who point out that the portrayal of the consequences of sexualized violence is often highlighted as the worst possible harm, particularly for women. This tendency can unintentionally reinforce patriarchal notions of women's sexual purity, as emphasized by Nordås and Cohen (2021). While I recognize the necessity to depict the consequences of sexualized violence in my work, I am committed to situating this form of violence within a broader context. My aim is to avoid contributing to the solidification of such problematic notions with my portrayal. At the same time, I am aware that other forms of violence can also have severe consequences.

3.9.1. Psychological Consequences

Studies have shown that individuals directly exposed to violent events have a higher prevalence of anxiety, depression, somatization disorder, and eating disorders. Research has established a statistically significant relationship between experiencing violence in armed conflicts and the emergence of mental health disorders. These disorders predominantly include depression, somatization disorder, and a tendency towards alcohol abuse, indicating the profound psychological impact of such conflicts.(Londoño et al. 2012).

A review article by Carpiniello, Bernardo examines the mental health consequences of war and armed conflicts on refugees, asylum seekers, and people in war zones. This article is based on 22 studies published between 2005 and 2022 and shows increased prevalence rates of anxiety disorders, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, particularly among women and children. Special attention is given to the high prevalence rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, and depression among victims and survivors of sexualized

violence, as well as the associated physical consequences such as pregnancies, genital injuries, sexually transmitted infections, and sexual dysfunctions (Carpiniello 2023).

Further studies shed light on the psychological consequences of sexualized violence in armed conflicts, especially among women. These studies emphasize the need to consider both short-term and long-term trauma effects. Among the survivors, mental disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorders, medically unexplained symptoms, substance use disorders, and suicidal thoughts are widespread. The prevalence rates of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression among women who were raped during the Bosnian Civil War are alarmingly high. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence led to extreme trauma, stigmatization, and destruction of families, affecting not only women but also children and men (Eichhorn et al. 2015; Tol et al. 2013; Johnson et al. 2010; Bartels et al. 2010; Mukwege and Nangini 2009; Nelson 2012; Christian et al. 2011).

3.9.2. Physical Consequences

Sexualized violence in conflict zones causes extensive and serious health problems for victims and survivors. As Ellsberg M., Heise, L. (2005) note, the medical consequences include sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancies. Campbell (2002) and Morrison (2007), cited in Coles et al. (2014, S. 95), emphasize that sexualized violence is not only a human rights violation but also a significant public health issue, with impacts extending far beyond the victims and survivors.

Gynecological problems that can arise as a result of sexualized violence are also addressed in research, as reported by Amisi et al. (2018) and Tol et al. (2013) add that the health consequences include sexually transmitted infections and HIV, unintended pregnancies, abortions, physical injuries, and maternal mortality.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a study by Mukwege and Nangini (2009), cited in Amisi et al. (2018), found that patients at the Panzi Hospital reported several extreme forms of sexualized violence. This included the intentional transmission of sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia and HIV, which posed additional challenges in socio-economic reintegration.

This deliberate transmission of diseases exacerbates the socio-economic obstacles for those affected, as outlined by Kelly et al. (2011) and Mukwege and Nangini (2009). Additional studies, such as that by Zea et al. (2013), Castro Torres and Urdinola (2019), Bendavid et al. (2021), support these findings and provide further insight into the complex effects of armed conflicts on the health and well-being of affected communities.

3.9.3. Social and Societal Consequences

Sexualized violence in conflict areas leads to far-reaching and profound consequences for the survivors, extending well beyond physical and psychological traumas. Studies have shown that survivors face not only direct health problems but also enormous social challenges, including rejection by families and communities. This social exclusion significantly hampers their reintegration and psychological recovery (Kelly et al. 2011; Tol et al. 2013).

A study of patients at the Panzi Hospital in eastern Congo found that 29% of raped women were rejected by their families and 6% by their communities. This rejection was often based on the assumption that these women were contaminated with diseases, highlighting the destruction of family and community structures (Kelly et al. 2011). Despite efforts to raise awareness and change stigma, community stigmatization remains a major issue, particularly in eastern Congo (Finnbakk and Nordås 2019; Wood 2009). Survivors often face marginalization and loss of value, leading to strained relationships, impaired parenting ability, and community cohesion. Their socio-economic reintegration is further hindered by exclusion from educational and employment opportunities and by the perception of being unsuitable for marriage (Tol et al. 2013).

Long-term negative impacts of conflict-related sexualized violence are evident in studies that demonstrate how wartime violence affects post-war private sphere violence. For instance, in Peru, areas with higher rates of war-related sexualized violence became hotspots for domestic violence after the war (Quattrochi et al. 2019; Svallfors 2023). This has significant implications for efforts to mitigate the impacts of wars and for recovery efforts and is tied to debates over the effects of wars on gender equality (Lindsey 2019; Webster et al. 2019).

Qualitative studies on the perception of survivors of sexualized violence in communities in the Congo show that community members generally have no concerns about integrating survivors in economic areas, but hold strong reservations against more personal contact and association (Finnbakk and Nordås 2019). Babalola (2014) points out that egalitarian and non-traditional gender attitudes are associated with a lower prevalence of negative attitudes towards survivors, highlighting the need for changing gender norms to increase the acceptance of survivors.

The systematic analysis conducted by Ba and Bhopal (2017) significantly contributed to understanding the various effects of war-related sexualized violence on civilians, encompassing physical, mental, and social aspects. The study analyzed 20 studies from six countries and documented physical consequences such as pregnancy, traumatic genital injuries, rectal and vaginal fistulas, sexual health problems, and sexually transmitted diseases. The psychological consequences included post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression. Furthermore, social consequences such as rejection by family and community, as well as abandon-

ment by spouses were highlighted. These findings underscore the necessity of caring for survivors and their relatives and raise concerns about how they and their children are affected in the long term.

3.9.4. Positive Societal Consequences: posttraumatic growth

The impacts of war-related sexualized violence are complex and multifaceted. Besides the undeniable physical and psychological traumas it causes, there is also evidence of a phenomenon known as posttraumatic growth. This phenomenon is manifested in the increased mobilization of women as a response to the violence they have suffered. Berry (2018) and Kreft (2019) document such mobilization, where women perceive sexualized violence as a manifestation of patriarchal culture and gender inequality (Author's note: Continuum argument). This realization leads to mobilization around a broad spectrum of women's issues, aiming to change socio-political conditions.

In the broader literature on posttraumatic growth in the context of conflict-related violence, Bauer et al. (2016) link these developments to the resilience and growth of survivors. In Sierra Leone, for example, survivors of sexualized violence and their families have taken active measures to combat stigmatization and the negative social consequences associated with victim status (Koos 2018).

Empowerment programs for survivors of sexualized violence, as described by Amisi et al. (2018), can combat some of the negative consequences of this violence. They offer a way to foster resilience and help survivors take active roles in their communities.

Interestingly, research has also shown that extreme events like wars can sometimes lead to more prosocial behavior among those affected by violence. Gilligan et al. (2014), as well as Koos (2018), note that households in Sierra Leone affected by conflict-related sexualized violence invest more efforts and resources in the community to prevent social exclusion. Koos argues that confrontation with sexualized violence actually promotes prosocial behavior, like cooperation, help, and altruism.

These findings suggest that despite the severe and often destructive impacts of war-related sexualized violence, the capacity for resilience, empowerment, and social mobilization exists among survivors and their families. These dynamics offer important insights for the design of support programs and measures aimed at promoting cooperation, altruism, and assistance in affected communities.

3.9.5. Consequences in and for the Conflict

Sexualized violence has far-reaching impacts on conflict management and the dynamics within and outside conflict zones. On an international level, the recognition of sexualized violence in wars as a critical security issue has increased. Benson and Gizelis (2020) demon-

strate that reports of sexualized violence are associated with an increased number and intensity of diplomatic actions, particularly in terms of United Nations Security Council resolutions. This reflects the growing international recognition of the severity of the problem.

The effects of sexualized violence also extend to the fragmentation of rebel groups. Nagel and Doctor (2020) have found that sexualized violence is linked to the fragmentation of rebel groups. Commanders who build group cohesion through sexualized violence are more likely to split from the main organization, confident that their soldiers will follow them.

Furthermore, there is evidence that the occurrence of sexualized violence by state actors influences tendencies towards unification in conflicts. Chu and Braithwaite (2018) argue that sexualized violence is an indicator of weakness and that actors who perpetrate it are more likely to be inclined to salvage something from the conflict through a settlement. This suggests that the prevalence of sexualized violence by state forces increases the likelihood of states achieving negotiated outcomes.

A cross-country statistical analysis by Nagel (2019) reveals that the likelihood of conflict management and mediation efforts increases when sexualized violence by rebel groups becomes publicly known, defined as reporting in NGO and U.S. Department of State reports. This suggests that international attention and reporting on sexualized violence influence diplomatic efforts and conflict resolution processes.

Overall, it becomes evident that sexualized violence not only has devastating effects on those directly affected but also resonates through conflict processes and impacts diplomatic actions and the dynamics within rebel groups.

3.10. What is the Situation in Colombia? The Armed Conflict in Colombia

The armed conflict in Colombia, which has persisted since the liberation from Spanish colonialism in the 1820s, has led to complex social, economic, and political challenges. The conflict evolved from the 1950s as a bipartisan struggle between Liberals and Conservatives and intensified in the 1960s with the emergence of guerrilla groups such as the FARC, ELN, and M-19. The protracted civil war has claimed many victims and caused great suffering. The peace process between the GOC and the FARC, which began in 2012 and concluded with a peace agreement in 2016, represents a significant step towards ending the conflict, but challenges remained (Maher and Thomson 2018).

The ongoing presence and expansion of right-wing paramilitary groups in Colombia pose a significant challenge to the peace process. These groups, often referred to as BACRIMs, jeopardize peace through attacks on FARC members and intimidation of citizens in marginalized regions. Paramilitarism, closely linked with the interests of large landowners and drug traffickers, has significantly influenced the conflict dynamics and peace initiatives in Colombia.

The paramilitary demobilization process in Colombia, which began in the early 2000s, has led to new challenges. Despite the nominal demobilization of over 30,000 paramilitaries, paramilitary structures remained intact, and new armed groups like Los Urabeños and Aguilas Negras emerged. These successor groups have expanded their presence in Colombia and use forced displacement as a strategy to extend their territorial control (Maher and Thomson 2018).

Additionally, the ongoing conflict has led to significant changes in Colombia's agrarian structure. As highlighted by Navarrete-Cruz, Birkenberg, and Birner, the conflict accelerated the process of land dispossession and promoted the development of capitalist agriculture, adversely affecting small farmers and ethnic communities. This development, driven by the interests of agro-elites, paramilitaries, and state actors, has profoundly altered rural society in Colombia and led to a redistribution of land ownership (Navarrete-Cruz et al. 2023).

The conflict in Colombia has also had profound societal impacts, especially on women and marginalized groups. The correlation between neoliberal economic development and militarism raises questions that may remain unresolved through the peace negotiations. The 2016 peace agreement is lauded for its focus on gender, race, class, and land, but it also shows that a culture of militarism continues to contribute to structural and overt violence in Colombia (Meger and Sachseder 2020).

Another important aspect of the transition process in Colombia is the work of the JEP (Special Jurisdiction for Peace), particularly regarding specific issues of gender justice. The JEP's Macro-Case 11, which deals with the application of a gender approach to cases of sexualized violence, is an example of the delayed but important progress that the JEP has made despite political challenges and attacks. These efforts show how the JEP responds to the complex and multifaceted impacts of the conflict by centering the rights and needs of victims of sexual violence and dealing with sensitive crimes such as kidnappings and extrajudicial executions (Cuartas Arias 2023).

Paramilitary violence in Colombia, especially during the 1990s, was characterized by economic interests and ideological motives. It targeted civilians in rural regions to control land and drug smuggling activities. This violence also spread to urban centers and was particularly directed against women who advocated for land rights and against displacement. The post-conflict period in Colombia continues to be marked by violence and insecurity. Paramilitary masculinity remains a threat to sustainable peace, and new armed structures, such as the Bacrim, pose a significant threat to national security (Meger and Sachseder 2020).

The conflict in Colombia has led to significant mobilization of women, both at micro and macro levels. The mobilization around sexual violence led to the establishment of women's and

victims' organizations and influenced the peace agreement. International influences, such as the "Women, Peace and Security" framework, have further supported the mobilization of women (Towns et al. 2018).

Overall, the conflict in Colombia demonstrates the profound and complex impact on society and underscores the necessity of a comprehensive examination of the conflict's effects, particularly on women and marginalized groups (Towns et al. 2018; Meger and Sachseder 2020).

3.10.1. Who are the Perpetrators in Colombia?

Severe and systematic human rights violations were a defining feature of the conflict in Colombia, including frequent acts of sexualized violence by all parties to the conflict (United Nations 2002).

Amnesty International has shown that both government and paramilitary forces have used sexualized violence as part of their counterinsurgency tactics. Often, the aim was to punish communities in rebel-controlled areas for their alleged support of the rebels. These acts of sexualized violence frequently involved higher-ranking army personnel and occurred during raids on villages, house searches, at checkpoints, during detention, or when victims and survivors reported crimes. These human rights violations included, among others, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, sexual mutilation, and rape (Amnesty International 2004).

Rebel forces have also been accused of committing acts of sexualized violence, including the forced recruitment and sexual abuse of child soldiers, sexual slavery of women, forced contraceptive injections, and enforced abortions for female fighters (Ward 2002).

To control the social life and sexuality of women, rebel and paramilitary forces imposed curfews and behavioral rules regarding clothing and behavior in the communities they occupied. Any transgression was met with acts of sexualized violence. Amnesty International reported that women’s clothing was standardized, and clothing deemed provocative was prohibited. Unaccompanied women were considered a violation of gender roles, and cases were documented where prostitutes were paraded naked on trucks through villages, with a sign around their neck stating that they destroy homes (Amnesty International 2004).

3.10.2. Who are the Victims & Survivors and the Perpetrators?

An analysis in Colombia identified a total of 35,178 victims and survivors of gender-based violence between 1957 and 2016, with the majority, 89.2%, being women. Women of Afro-Colombian and indigenous origin were particularly affected. 35% of the victims and survivors were children or adolescents at the time of victimization (C-754-15 Corte Constitucional de Colombia 2017). Despite the high official numbers, there are no reliable or "unified figures on sexualized violence in Colombia" (C-335-13 Corte Constitucional de Colombia 2013). The

majority of conflict-related cases of sexualized violence remain unreported (C-335-13 Corte Constitucional de Colombia 2013; ABColombia 2017).

In a case study of an internally displaced persons community in Medellín, Colombia, the heightened vulnerability of women to sexualized violence was evident, particularly linked to their displacement and exacerbated by extreme poverty. This vulnerability manifested in various ways, such as young girls entering relationships with older men for financial reasons, or women remaining in abusive relationships due to financial dependency. Additionally, the lack of police enforcement and the dominance of illegal armed groups intensified the women's sense of helplessness. Despite numerous laws and resolutions aimed at protecting and supporting internally displaced persons and survivors of sexualized violence, there is a stark absence of effective state support. The control exerted by illegal armed groups over internally displaced persons communities further hinders the establishment of support and assistance frameworks. Compounding these issues is a pervasive lack of trust and support within the community, leading survivors to often remain silent, fearing that coming forward would be futile and mistrusting those around them (Meertens 2012).

The analysis indicated that the highest number of incidents was attributed to paramilitary groups (33%), followed by the demobilized FARC-EP (5.82%), and state actors (3.14%) (JEP 2023). Also, according to the Provisional Universe of Acts, 2,300 cases of sexualized violence between 1980 and 2016 were attributed to the FARC-EP, which aligns with the recent figures from the JEP (5.82% of 35,178 = 2047). Of these identified victims and survivors, approximately 1,800 were women and 296 were men.

Only a small fraction, between 18% and 22%, of Colombian victims of sexualized violence in the armed conflict have reported their experiences to the authorities. Many victims and survivors do not report because they believe the Colombian state cannot protect or effectively support them, they receive death threats from armed actors, or they distrust the justice system and the reporting process. Impunity for sexual crimes in Colombia remains almost complete, particularly for perpetrators from illegal armed groups (C-335-13 Corte Constitucional de Colombia 2013; ABColombia 2017). Some women choose not to report because they expect impunity for the perpetrator or are unaware of their rights or the existence of a reporting system (C-335-13 Corte Constitucional de Colombia 2013).

The Constitutional Court of Colombia documented several forms of sexualized violence in the conflict, including violence during invasions, massacres, and lootings; targeted individual acts for terror, retaliation, or information gathering; violence against women who have emotional relationships with the opposing side; against recruited women; for sexualized pleasure; for punishment for non-compliance with the behavioral code of the armed group; against fe-

male human rights leaders as a strategy of silence; forced prostitution and sexualized slavery; as well as threats to commit acts of sexualized violence (Auto 092/08 2023).

Personal Reflection: Sadness

It doesn't feel right to leave these numbers unremarked upon and to present them in a purely rational and factual manner. The figures are so large that I cannot comprehend them – adding another zero would make no difference in my mind. However, what did make a difference for me were the individual stories I heard – on YouTube, in articles citing qualitative interviews, and portraits such as in an exhibition at "Fragmentos" in Bogotá.

But what now? What now, after having witnessed the individually cruel, sad, and shocking stories of survivors and victims? Is all I can do to acknowledge that it happened and to be infinitely sad about it? I wouldn't want to trade places with any of the women, yet I wish so deeply that what they had to endure could be undone. Even though I myself have never had to experience sexualized violence in an armed conflict, I can still empathize and recognize, regardless of my passport, skin color, or first language, that what they had to endure is simply “not right”.

A doctor friend, seeing how deeply this subject affected me, said that my crying wouldn’t help the women. No, it doesn't, but maybe they don't need my help at all. Perhaps a first step is to collectively weep and mourn? So much sadness, oh so much sadness. I am so sad that women in the 21st century have to experience these acts of violence. I am so sad that women in the 21st century STILL have to endure these acts of violence that men have inflicted on us women so many years ago.

Therefore, my tears are not those of an observer, but those of a woman of this world who can empathize with sisters, mothers, and daughters. And so, my anger is not the anger of a woman who blames men, but the anger of a human child who, as part of a minority, can empathize with victims and survivors.

3.10.3. How do Survivors and Victims in Colombia React

Studies and research focusing on the experiences and reactions of victims and survivors paint a picture of great resilience, strategic submission, and complex victimization.

According to the study by Cadena-Camargo et al. (2019), young mothers living as internally displaced persons in Bogotá find themselves in a constant struggle between the status of being victims and the pursuit of self-determination. These women, having experienced direct physical and psychological violence, exhibit remarkable resilience and initiative. They make conscious decisions for themselves and their families and actively seek opportunities to improve their living conditions. These insights underscore the ability of these women to main-

tain hope and strength despite extreme adversities and to fight for a better life (Cadena-Camargo et al. 2019).

In the areas of Colombia plagued by armed conflicts, where state protection is often lacking, illegal armed groups prevail. Reports have emerged of women in these areas who strategically submit themselves to survive (Stallone 2021). Resisting these groups entails the risk of death, highlighting the difficult decisions faced by women in conflict zones, so strategic submission becomes a survival strategy in an environment of extreme uncertainty and threat.

The resilience and recovery capacity of women who have become victims and survivors of gender-specific violence is also addressed in the work of Bustamante Davila and Cano Briones (2021). Although their article does not specifically focus on victims and survivors of sexualized violence in the armed conflict in Colombia, it does shed light on the general resilience of women under extreme conditions.

Another important aspect is multiple victimization. According to a study by Martínez et al. (2017), 25% of women in Colombia have experienced more than six different types of violence. Research indicates that experiencing multiple victimizations is linked to heightened emotional stress, increased depressive symptoms, perceived stigma, and anxiety-stress symptoms (Campo-Arias et al. 2017). These outcomes underscore the complex and enduring psychological effects of violence and conflict on women in Colombia. Notably, despite these challenges, many victims and survivors still manage to find ways to cope with their experiences.

Why and For What Purpose Does It Happen in Colombia?

Sexualized violence in the armed conflict in Colombia is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon, deeply rooted in the structures of the conflict, patriarchal norms, and the dynamics of armed groups. Despite official prohibitions of rape in the codes of conduct of paramilitary groups and the FARC (Humanas, 2012), sexualized violence is applied in various forms and for different motivations.

According to Stallone (2021), however, it is difficult to determine exact perpetrator patterns, as both the FARC and the paramilitaries consist of many different factions led by different commanders. This diversity within the armed groups contributes to varying practices and motivations regarding the application of sexualized violence.

Kreft (2020) emphasizes in her research the divergence between the global perception of sexualized violence as a weapon of war and the differentiated view of Colombian civil society on this phenomenon: Interviews with civil society representatives reveal that in Colombia,

sexualized violence is not only closely linked to patriarchal structures and gender inequality but also variably practiced by different armed groups.

This research suggests that the question, "Why does sexualized violence occur in armed conflict?" in Colombia goes beyond the analysis of gender inequalities and patriarchal structures and includes factors such as the nature of the armed conflict, motivations of armed groups, and social conditioning within these groups. The role of local perspectives and civil society engagement is also crucial for developing effective measures to combat Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. Linda Cabrera, director of Sisma Mujer, an organization that advocates for victims and survivors of gender-based violence in Colombia, underscores the importance of recognizing the continuity between conflict and everyday situations in addressing this issue (Stallone 2021).

3.10.4. What is the Legal Situation in Colombia?

The Constitutional Court of Colombia has recognized the systematic nature of sexualized violence in the conflict and referred several cases for investigation and prosecution in multiple decisions (Corte Constitucional 2008, 2015). The Historical Memory Group in Colombia has documented various forms and purposes of sexualized violence committed by different armed actors (Medina A. 2011; CENTRO NACIONAL DE MEMORIA HISTÓRICA 2015; Riaño Alcalá and Uribe 2016).

In Colombia, the 2016 peace agreement between the government and the FARC introduced significant provisions on gender equality, marking a substantial progress (Stallone and Zulver 2023). Law 1257 of 2008 affirms that women's rights are human rights, including the right to physical and sexual health (Zalesne 2019).

In Colombia, the armed conflict has had profound impacts on human dignity, particularly affecting women physically, psychologically, and socially (Céspedes-Báez 2014). “Rape and other forms of sexualized violence in this context violate international humanitarian law and are prohibited under the Fourth Geneva Convention, the first two Additional Protocols, and customary international law. The Statute of the International Criminal Court classifies such acts as war crimes or crimes against humanity when they are part of a widespread or systematic attack against the civilian population” (Q&A: sexual violence in armed conflict 2016).

Every instance of rape in the context of an armed conflict is considered a war crime and violates international humanitarian law, as well as national and religious laws. Six years after the peace agreement between the FARC and the Colombian government, Macro Case Number 11 was initiated to investigate sexualized violence and other gender-based crimes (JEP 2023).

The International Criminal Court has repeatedly called on Colombia to fulfill its obligations to prosecute sexualized violence (United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence 2015). The Attorney General's office has prioritized relevant investigations, particularly under the transitional justice system of Law 975 of 2005 (Justice and Peace Law). Several proceedings under this system led to convictions of former AUC members for sexualized and gender-based violence (Kravetz 2016).

Law 1719, enacted by the “Colombian Congress in 2014, acknowledges that sexualized violence under certain conditions can be considered a crime against humanity. It enhances the status of survivors of sexualized violence, enabling them to receive compensation, psychosocial support, and free medical care” (Macarani 2015).

Personal Reflection: Being Shocked

God, if you exist, where were you? Where are you when women are treated without dignity, when obsession with power and sick inhuman drives turn people into monsters?

Why wasn't it enough that women had to endure this cruelty while they were alive? Why, when they were already dead, were they also dismembered? Why does it have to become even more gruesome? Why isn't there someone who says "enough is enough"?

How can I live on the same planet as people who are capable of this? Who have been made capable of this? And how can I live on the same planet as the people who turned others into such monsters?

I read it and want to cry and scream – and I realize how tempting it is to close the laptop, go outside, and stop engaging with the topic.

When I want to finish the work, I feel the need to become numb. To turn off my feelings and shock and just function rationally. To read these pieces of information and skim over them like a fuel gauge – just information, nothing more. But is that even possible?

3.10.5. What are the Consequences in Colombia?

The consequences of war-related sexualized violence in Colombia are profound and varied. They affect not only the individual quality of life of those affected but also shape the social and societal structures of the country. A key study in this context by Simancas-Fernández et al. (2021) is focusing on the quality of life of 1139 survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia. This study indicates that, despite support measures, the quality of life of victims and survivors remained low or moderately low after the peace agreements. Those particularly affected were victims and survivors of sexualized assaults and torture, whose quality of life was most impaired or lowest. The study emphasizes that the mere passage of time without specific measures is insufficient to remedy the damage.

In addition to the direct consequences of the violence experiences for survivors, such as physical injuries and psychological disorders, sexualized violence in Colombia also has far-reaching social and societal consequences. Survivors often face stigmatization and exclusion from the community, significantly hindering their reintegration and psychological recovery. Furthermore, studies have shown that sexualized violence in the context of armed conflicts in Colombia can lead to the fragmentation of rebel groups and diplomatic actions at the international level.

The psychological consequences for those affected are enormous. Studies have shown that individuals directly exposed to violent events have a higher prevalence of anxiety, depression, somatization disorder, and eating disorders. Specifically in Colombia, a study confirmed a significant connection between experiences of violence in armed conflicts and the occurrence of mental health disorders. The physical consequences are also severe, including unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and gynecological problems.

Overall, it is evident that despite the severe and often destructive impacts of war-related sexualized violence in Colombia, the capacity for resilience, empowerment, and social mobilization exists among survivors and their families. These dynamics provide important insights for the design of support programs and measures aimed at promoting cooperation, altruism, and assistance in affected communities.

4. Supportive and Sustaining Connectivities: Current State of the Art in Support Measures

"A program to repair fishing boats after a tsunami may be a better therapy than the short-term flying in of trauma trainers." (Brenssell and Hartmann 2017, S. 134)

Identifying suitable support measures for victims and survivors of sexualized violence is a complex challenge for various reasons. A poignant example of the unintended consequences of well-intentioned programs is provided by a study from Amisi et al. in 2018. In a focus group discussion conducted in June 2014 in the territory of Kalehe, DR Congo, participants reported about a support program that provided conspicuous shoes. These shoes unintentionally became a marker for survivors of rape, leading to additional stigmatization and shame. This example highlights the difficulty of developing effective and sensitive support measures that truly benefit those affected without creating undesirable side effects.

The following chapter is dedicated to a detailed examination of the support measures for victims and survivors of sexualized violence in armed conflicts documented in the literature. It analyzes the extent to which these measures have actually had positive impacts.

4.1. Types of Support Measures

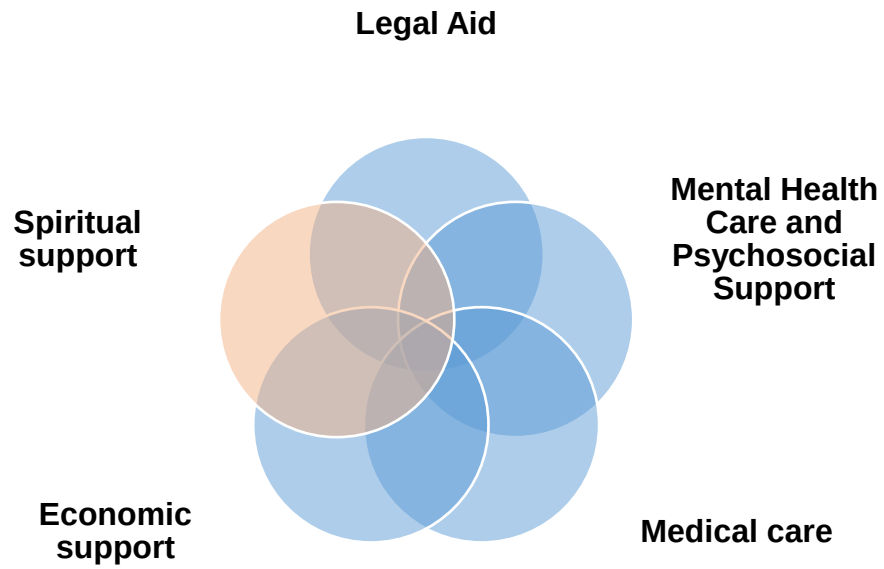


Figure 5: Types of Support Measures

The designations “Mental Health Care and Psychosocial Support”, “Medical care”, and “Legal Aid” are based on the terminology used by Davis et al. (2018).

In Colombia, victims and survivors of sexualized violence have access to various support measures. According to the United Nations Development Programme, these measures include psychosocial, medical, legal and economic support. Davis et al. (2018) recommend a

"multi-layered approach" in this context, which is based on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee pyramid model and encompasses different levels of psychosocial and mental health measures. This encompasses providing specialized individual services, offering general support that doesn't require specialization, bolstering support within communities and families, and integrating social considerations into fundamental services and safety measures.

Additionally, the spiritual component plays a significant role: research by van Dierendonck (2004), Bowland et al. (2011), La Rosa et al. (2016) and Murray-Swank et al. (2005) has shown that engagement with religion or spirituality can support the coping capacity of survivors of sexualized violence. Religion can also promote social cohesion and strengthen the ability to overcome adversities, as described by Berger (1969) and Durkheim (Pickering 2014). The multifaceted causes of violence require a cross-sectoral, integrated, and holistic approach, in which spirituality represents an important dimension.

Objective of Support Measures

Using the World Health Organization definition of health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being," the article by Clark (2022) illustrates that conflict-related sexualized violence impacts not only individual but also socio-ecological health. The article argues that in the context of transitional justice, the 'health' of social ecosystems is of crucial importance, in addition to individual health. It advocates a socio-ecological realignment of transitional justice and uses the concept of 'Healthworlds' by Germond and Cochrane (2010) to demonstrate how this realignment could look in practice.

The objective of support measures is, therefore, to promote not only the health of individuals, defined as more than the mere absence of disease, but also to improve the well-being of society as a whole through the strengthening of socio-ecological systems.

4.1.1. Medical Care

The medical care of victims and survivors of sexualized violence in conflict situations is an extremely important but complex field, requiring a range of specialized measures and a multidisciplinary approach. The United Nations Development Programme emphasizes the necessity of medical aid for victims and survivors of sexualized violence to treat physical injuries and provide preventive medication for sexually transmitted infections. This aid includes a wide range of services, including medical care, antidepressants, and nursing (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2014). The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes the importance of medical care as an integral part of supporting survivors of sexualized violence and has developed a corresponding care package based on scientific evidence (World Health Organization 2003). This package was adapted by World Health Organization /UNHCR for displacement situations and further developed to meet the needs of medical aid organizations (Schopper 2014).

Medical care aims to treat physical injuries, sexually transmitted infections, and other health problems that can result from sexualized violence. The treatment includes acute care, long-term treatment, reproductive health services, and psychosomatic treatment. Involved professionals include doctors, gynecologists, nursing staff, and psychosomatic specialists. The main goals are the healing of physical injuries, the prevention and treatment of infections, and support in coping with long-term health consequences.

Schopper (2014) emphasizes the challenges of medical care, particularly the timely access to services, and highlights that many survivors of sexualized violence will never seek help due to stigma, shame, and fear of rejection. This underscores the need to ensure safety, confidentiality, and awareness of the availability of services.

The guidelines of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee recommend that medical and psychosocial responses to sexualized violence should occur in the early phase of an emergency (Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings 2005). Certain interventions, like injury treatment or HIV prophylaxis, are time-sensitive and most effective when administered shortly after the incident. For instance, emergency contraceptive pills must be taken within seventy-two hours post-unprotected intercourse to be effective.

Davis et al. (2018) emphasize the need for more consistent development of approaches and stronger inter-institutional collaboration to ensure that survivors of sexualized violence have access to high-quality health services.

Kamali et al. (2020) examined the provision of sexual and reproductive health measures in conflict settings. Despite identifying numerous publications that cover a wide range of measures, the study points to a lack of evidence for effective delivery methods in such settings.

Another study highlights inequalities in access to reproductive and maternal health services in Colombia, particularly among women affected by forced displacement and gender-based violence (Rivillas et al. 2018).

Another important issue is the consideration of the impacts of conflict-related sexualized violence on reproductive and maternal health, as well as on children born out of war situations. Clark (2023) and Swaine (2020) highlight the necessity of focusing not only on the victims and survivors of sexualized violence but also on their children and the specific rights and gender-specific interests of these groups.

The effectiveness of medical care is influenced by various factors, including difficulties and delays in accessing services. Studies from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia illustrate how challenging timely access to services can be and the importance of improving

access to and utilization of medical and psychosocial services overall (Bartels et al. 2012; Tayler-Smith et al. 2012; Schopper 2014).

Zalesne (2019) sheds light on the challenges in accessing healthcare for Afro-Colombian women who are victims of sexualized violence. Even with advancements in healthcare legislation, there remains a notable disparity in both the accessibility and quality of health services. This discrepancy is especially pronounced for indigenous and Afro-Colombian women living in rural and isolated regions.

In conclusion, Schopper (2014) points out the challenges in proving efficiency and emphasizes the lack of objective measures for adherence to treatments like HIV post-exposure prophylaxis, and that there are significant variations in how post-exposure prophylaxis is provided even in stable environments. These insights indicate that further research and improved strategies are needed to provide effective medical care for survivors of sexualized violence in humanitarian settings.

4.1.2. Mental Health Care and Psychosocial Support

The impact of armed conflicts on mental health is a central concern in the research and practice of Mental Health Care and Psychosocial Support. It has been shown that experiences of violence in armed conflicts can cause significant psychological disorders (Londoño et al. 2012). In their study, they observed increased risks for anxiety, depression, somatization disorders, and alcohol abuse in the affected population. These observations highlight the severe mental health repercussions stemming from conflicts. This is further corroborated by a comprehensive study conducted in Colombia, which is recognized as the most extensive of its kind in the country. It distinctly illustrates the significant impact of the conflict on mental health. the(Bell et al. 2012).

In the field of psychological care, the focus is on the mental and emotional health of the individual. The importance of treatment approaches conducted by psychologists and psychiatrists, including therapeutic measures and the use of medications is also highlighted (Bustamante Davila and Cano Briones 2021). The goal of these measures is to alleviate symptoms and improve mental well-being, which is crucial in supporting individual healing processes and promoting long-term recovery.

Psychosocial care takes a holistic approach and considers social and environmental factors. This includes working with family structures, managing work stress, financial problems, and accessing community resources. Social workers, counselors, and case managers support individuals in coping with challenges in their social environment and daily life, contributing to the strengthening of resilience and improving quality of life (Bustamante Davila and Cano Briones 2021).

Ubillos-Landa et al. (2019) investigated the impacts of the armed conflict on women in Colombia and the effectiveness of a program for coping and emotion. This study focused on 62 women who were contacted through the non-governmental organization Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres and aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of a coping and emotion regulation program that focused on victimization and the coping strategies used in response to these acts of violence. The results showed that the program had positive impacts, leading to lower levels of post-traumatic stress, more functional coping strategies, and improvements in emotional, cognitive, and social indicators. The study confirmed the effectiveness of the program in assisting women in effectively coping with violence and contributing to the development of a more inclusive and pro-social society.

Tol et al. (2013) provide a systematic review of mental health and psychosocial support measures in armed conflicts. They examined seven studies employing various approaches, including counseling and cognitive-behavioral therapy. The results showed potentially beneficial effects, but robust conclusions were not possible. This underscores the need for further research and evidence-based approaches in this field.

Schopper (2014) and Hustache et al. (2009) point out an increasing implementation of mental health and psychosocial measures, albeit with little evidence. This highlights a gap between practice and proof of effectiveness, posing a challenge for the field. Tol et al. (2011) add that there is a lack of efficiency evidence for common practices in humanitarian settings, particularly for specialized for post-traumatic stress disorder and depressive outcomes, emphasizing the importance of sound research and evaluation in this area.

Overall, these research findings and practical approaches reveal the complexity and urgency of the topic. The need for an integrative perspective that encompasses both psychological and psychosocial aspects is clear, to ensure effective support for those affected by armed conflicts.

4.1.3. Legal Aid

Legal support for victims and survivors of sexualized violence, especially in conflict situations, is a crucial element in achieving justice and protecting the rights of survivors. The focus is on assisting with navigating the legal system, including the filing of reports and accompanying through the legal process. This support encompasses legal counseling, representation in court proceedings, and support in evidence gathering, involving lawyers, legal assistants, and human rights activists (Wirtz et al. 2014).

However, there is a significant gap in the provision of legal aid services for victims and survivors of sexualized violence, despite the recognition of sexualized violence as a violation of human rights and humanitarian law(Davis et al. 2018). None of the institutions examined of-

fered legal aid services for victims and survivors of sexualized violence, indicating a lack of normative guidance in this critical technical area (Davis et al. 2018).

Sanyal (2020) discusses the motivation behind initiating legal proceedings from the perspective of the victims and survivors. She emphasizes that courts often cannot provide the relief and reparations that victims and survivors seek, as they tend to focus more on feasibility and sentencing in criminal proceedings rather than on relief and reparations.

Legal support, as described by the United Nations Development Programme (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2014), is necessary to enable victims and survivors of sexualized violence access to justice, compensation, and protection orders. However, the reality often shows a gap between the legal provisions and the lived experience of the victims and survivors. Interviews in Colombia have revealed that material compensations promised by the Ley de Víctimas are often difficult to obtain and can take many years to materialize (Zulver op. 2022).

The effectiveness of legal support depends on whether the provided services meet the needs of the survivors. Studies reviewed by Spangaro et al. (2013) show that legal measures can lead to an increase in harm, mainly due to lack of support during and retaliation after testimony. It is recognized that reparations are the most significant means to improve the lives of victims and survivors, yet reparations programs are largely not implemented, and their impacts not evaluated.

The article "Reparations for Indigenous Women Subjected to Sexual and Environmental Violence in the Colombian Post-Peace Agreement" addresses the issue of reparations for indigenous Wiwa women in Colombia, who have become victims of sexualized and environmental violence. The study indicates that legal institutions in Colombia continue to neglect sexualized and environmental violence against indigenous women. It is noted that local and national judicial authorities do not recognize the cultures of indigenous women, reject their preferred forms of reparation, and impede access to justice. Furthermore, a continuing weakness in judicial responses and the near non-existence of legal precedents related to sexualized violence against indigenous women were identified (Loperena et al. 2023a).

It becomes clear upon review that providing legal assistance to victims and survivors of conflict-related sexualized violence is multifaceted, posing significant challenges at both individual and systemic levels. Effective solutions require a deep understanding of the needs of the survivors and an adaptation of legal systems and practices to meet these needs.

4.1.4. Economic Support

Economic support for survivors of sexualized violence is a crucial aspect of their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. The focus is on improving the economic situation of the

survivors, especially when they have lost their source of income due to violence. Components include financial aid, vocational training, and access to microcredits, with the aim of fostering economic independence and stability and enhancing self-confidence through work and income (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2014).

Economic measures such as skills training and microcredit loans are essential for the rehabilitation process, as survivors of sexualized violence are often rejected by their families and communities and cannot work as they did before the assault. Such supports are intended to help meet basic needs and facilitate socio-economic reintegration. Additionally, they aim to boost self-esteem, promote the healing process, and increase independence (Spangaro et al. 2013; Schopper 2014).

Amisi et al. (2018) explored the impact of support programs for survivors of sexual violence. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, programs like Dorcas Rurale and USHINDI provide examples of how economic support is implemented. DR offers various types of support, including loans, seeds, livestock, school fees for children, training in income-generating activities, and literacy education. These measures are intended to help women become financially independent and support themselves and their children.

USHINDI facilitates the formation of voluntary savings and loan associations, alongside providing training in diverse fields. The program, administered by local personnel, places a strong emphasis on women's empowerment. It demonstrates the importance of not only providing financial support but also imparting education and skills that enable women to be active participants in their community and economy. The results showed that the programs improved perceived social inclusion and economic well-being for both survivors and non-survivors, with the impact on economic well-being being greater for survivors (Amisi et al. 2018).

Bass et al. (2016b) examined the effects of Village Savings and Loans Associations on female survivors of sexualized violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The results indicate that participants in the Village Savings and Loans Associations reported improvements in per capita food consumption, a reduction in experiences of stigma, and improved access to social resources. This highlights that economic measures can also contribute to improving mental health and social well-being.

These examples illustrate how economic support can not only improve the financial situation of survivors of sexualized violence but also significantly contribute to promoting their social inclusion, self-confidence, and mental health. They demonstrate the necessity of a holistic approach that considers both economic and psychosocial aspects to ensure effective support and rehabilitation.

4.1.5. Spiritual Support

Spiritual care, an aspect of mental health, focuses on assisting in the spiritual processing of experiences and the search for meaning. This includes pastoral care, spiritual counseling, and rituals for grief management. Involved are professional clergy and spiritual counselors, with the aim of providing emotional comfort, strengthening inner peace, and facilitating the processing of feelings of guilt and shame.

In academic discourse, the role of spirituality in healing trauma and loss is less emphasized, although a rich body of knowledge can be found in non-academic sources such as YouTube videos, websites, as well as through personal experiences of people on the ground. In Colombia, where Christianity is deeply rooted, religious leaders in local communities often enjoy prestige and trust and can promote social change. However, these faith leaders, caring for traumatized and bereaved individuals, might experience spiritual struggles themselves, which can affect their ability to function in their role (Le Roux and Sauer 2016).

The increasing recognition of the role of religious communities in people's lives leads to enhanced collaboration between governments, development, and humanitarian organizations with religious actors. Currier et al. (2019) explores the complex intersection of faith, displacement, and sexualized violence in Medellín, Colombia. Based on interviews with survivors of sexualized violence and faith leaders, the research shows that religion and spirituality can influence the handling of sexualized violence, both positively and negatively (Bowland et al. 2011; La Rosa et al. 2016; Murray-Swank et al. 2005). However, there is also criticism of churches that often fail to address the causes and consequences of sexualized violence and uphold patriarchal structures (Clarke et al. 2008; Kaviti 2015; Le Roux 2014; Le Roux et al. 2016; Le Roux and Bowers-Du Toit 2017).

Another article by Santamaria et al. (2023) explores the understanding of "healing" from the perspective of indigenous women in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia, in the context of the Colombian peace agreement. Here, "healing" is perceived as a holistic process that encompasses spiritual, cultural, and territorial aspects. Central elements include harmonization, the connection of body and territory, and the creation of healing spaces and rituals. The involvement of the community and the preservation of cultural practices are crucial. Indigenous healing practices, based on rituals and ceremonies, and consultation with spiritual authorities are essential for restoring balance and harmony. This approach emphasizes the importance of cultural and spiritual practices in the healing process, the interconnectedness of people and nature, and the need to integrate the expectations of indigenous women in reparation measures to acknowledge the profound impacts of conflicts in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (Santamaria et al. 2023, S. 171).

Integrating diverse spiritual approaches to address trauma and loss can create a rich, multi-layered healing process, leveraging the strengths of each tradition and enriching the healing experiences of those affected.

In this integrative approach, Christian pastoral care and indigenous healing practices complement each other in various ways. On one hand, traditional Christian care offers emotional comfort and a framework for processing feelings of guilt and shame, while indigenous practices open a deeper, earth-connected, and cross-cultural healing approach. These practices emphasize harmony with the environment and the relationship between body and territory, which can enhance the awareness of the importance of the physical environment in personal healing within their communities.

Both approaches also emphasize the role of community in healing. Christian communities often provide well-structured networks for social support, while indigenous practices highlight collective participation and the importance of each individual in the healing process. This combination can lead to a more holistic community involvement, where individuals feel both supported and actively engaged.

Cultural preservation and integration also play a crucial role. By integrating indigenous practices, Christian communities contribute to the preservation of indigenous cultures while also promoting understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. This integration broadens spiritual understanding and opens new perspectives on spirituality, connecting personal faith beliefs with a deep understanding of natural and cultural contexts. This could contribute to Clark (2022)'s Third Point of New Connectivities.

The exchange between Christian and indigenous leaders can also lead to mutual education and enlightenment. This exchange enhances awareness of the complexity and diversity of trauma healing and creates a more comprehensive network for support and intervention in areas with high rates of displaced persons, victims, and survivors.

Overall, the combination of these diverse spiritual approaches allows for an integrative healing process that honors and utilizes both traditional and indigenous perspectives. This approach can not only promote individual healing but also contribute to the strengthening and healing of communities by providing a comprehensive understanding of the varied needs and backgrounds of those affected.

4.2. New Connectivities

4.2.1. Resilience in a Social Context

Research by Bustamante Davila and Cano Briones (2021) illustrates that resilience should be understood as a process emerging from the interaction between individuals and their social ecologies. This approach underscores the importance of community and social networks

as an integral part of the healing process. Embedding victims and survivors in a supportive social environment can significantly enhance their resilience and well-being.

4.2.2. The Role of Community and Group Identity

In Colombia, for example, the support and sense of belonging within the community are crucial for survivors. Social leaders who advocate for the rights of victims and survivors despite threats to their lives enhance the sense of security and belonging in the community. These factors can become a source of resilience and a purpose in life (Clark 2023). Similarly, a study on male survivors in Northern Uganda argues that belonging to survivor groups can be a path to justice, providing support and a platform for sharing experiences (Schulz 2019).

In an interview with Ana Manuela Ochoa she points out the importance of collaborative efforts between institutions and women, emphasizing that women's aspirations go beyond subjective reparations and compensation — they seek liberation as women (Santamaria et al. 2023). As an illustration, within the context of the JEP, women have been advocating for their own homes or spaces of healing where they can convene to share and process their experiences, as well as places where they can participate in rituals, sit, and weave together (Carianil et al. 2020).

4.2.3. Meaning of Support and Opportunities

Clark et al. (2023) highlight how support in context and opportunities enable affected individuals to actively seek help. In urban areas of Colombia, historically less affected by armed conflict, support and opportunities were more pronounced. This demonstrates that geographic location and the strength of the social network can significantly influence the availability and effectiveness of support services.

4.2.4. Family Support and Relationships

Family support is another critical factor. Nelson (2003) notes that the family can be both a haven and a reflection of broader societal horrors. In Colombia, family support positively correlated with perceived health and quality of life, underscoring the importance of the family as a protective resource. This support can be invaluable, especially in a society shaped by prolonged conflicts (Parry 2022).

4.2.5. Friendly Support

In Colombia, many internally displaced people have lost or been separated from their families, highlighting the importance of friends and peers as a source of support for victims and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Friendships, especially within women's associations or groups of survivors, provide a platform for exchange and mutual support (Clark 2022).

4.2.6. The Importance of Listening without Judgment

Campbell et al. (2009) emphasize the importance of active listening without judgment. The opportunity to express oneself and be heard without fear of condemnation or misunderstanding is crucial for the healing of victims and survivors. This empathetic approach can create an atmosphere of trust and safety, necessary for survivors to process and share their experiences.

4.2.7. The Role of Helpers and Advocates

Experiences of helpers, advocates, and other professionals working directly with victims and survivors demonstrate that their responses and handling of the survivors' narratives can significantly impact the healing process. The understanding and support from these professionals are crucial for the successful reintegration of survivors into society.

Social measures based on community, family support, friendships, and the understanding of professional helpers are vital for the healing and reintegration of victims and survivors of sexual violence in armed conflicts. These measures provide not only practical support but also help create an environment of trust, safety, and acceptance, essential for the long-term resilience and well-being of those affected.

Research in the field of sexual violence in conflict situations has revealed a multitude of initiatives and mobilizations where civilians, particularly women, come together to provide support and take preventive measures. Scholars such as Kreft (2019), Schulz (2019), Schulz and Touquet (2020), Stallone and Janetsky (2021b) and Zulver (2017) have explored these dynamics, illustrating various ways in which victims and survivors organize and advocate for their rights following traumatic experiences (Stallone 2021).

A notable example of such initiatives is the organization "Mujeres Sembrando Vida," which focuses on the needs and rights of women in conflict-affected areas. This organization provides essential resources and support to improve the living conditions of affected women (Stallone and Janetsky 2021b). Another study describes how peaceful resistance is a form of strength for women who have decided, despite suffering and violence, not to remain silent but to actively advocate for justice (Zulver 2017).

A study by Zulver (2021) is based on research conducted in Putumayo, Colombia, and includes interviews with members of the Alianza de Mujeres Tejedoras de Vida. This organization, comprising 137 women's organizations, emerged in response to increasing violence in the region and advocates for women's rights, political participation, and socio-economic development.

In "Clamor for Justice: Sexual Violence Armed Conflict and Violent Land Dispossession," the efforts of Q'eqchí women in Guatemala are highlighted as they seek justice following experi-

ences of sexualized violence (Méndez Gutiérrez and Carrera Guerra 2015). Kreft (2019) underscores the remarkable agency of women in civil war situations, while Schulz (2019) documents the activities of the "Men of Courage" support group in Northern Uganda.

Mujeres Sembrando Vida utilizes WhatsApp networks to connect with victims and survivors, organizes workshops on gender equality, and manages a collective savings account to assist women in need (Stallone and Janetsky 2021b). Zulver (2017) in her study of the Liga de Mujeres Desplazadas emphasizes the importance of ethnographic methods in understanding the lives and challenges of the Liga de Mujeres Desplazadas women.

In Colombia, regional women's tribunals were held to draw attention to sexualized violence and violence against women during the armed conflict (Rowen 2017). The Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas, Negras e Indígenas de Colombia (ANMUCIC) represents another example of a grassroots organization advocating for the rights of rural Colombian women.

These diverse approaches illustrate how women respond to sexualized violence in conflict situations, mobilizing for justice, their rights, and a better life.

4.3. Organisations

The subsequent section will introduce small-scale support measures and grassroots organizations as examples of the mobilization of victims and survivors of sexualized violence. However, it is important to emphasize that these represent just a small segment of a wide range of possible actions and initiatives existing in this field.

4.3.1. Bottom-Up

Tejido Mujer - Cxhab Wala Kiwe: A grassroots organization established in 1993, focusing on promoting women's rights, economic empowerment, education, and the protection of indigenous women. (Tejido Mujer - Çxhab Wala Kiwe (nasaacin.org))

Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres: A feminist grassroots movement founded in 1996, dedicated to negotiating the armed conflict in Colombia and highlighting the impacts of war on women. (Ruta Pacifica De Las Mujeres | ¿ Quiénes Somos ?)

Mujeres en Zona de Contagio (MZC): Concentrates on sustainable social and human development, gender equality, and combating violence against women. (Misión, Visión, Valores – MZC)

Casa de la Mujer: A grassroots initiative committed to women's rights, political participation, and the establishment of a peaceful society (La Casa de la Mujer: imparable en la lucha por los derechos de las mujeres y la construcción de la paz con justicia social | UN Women – Colombia)

Centro de Atención Psicosocial a Víctimas (CAPS): A grassroots NGO founded in 2002, specializing in psychosocial care and training for individuals and social organizations affected by the sociopolitical conflict. (Somos – Corporación Centro de Atención Psicosocial – CAPS)

Corporación AVRE: This grassroots organization, established in 1992, offers comprehensive support and rehabilitation for victims of sociopolitical violence, strengthens social organizations, and incorporates mental health into its processes. (Corporación AVRE - MHHRI | Mental Health and Human Rights Info)

Corporación Humanas Colombia: A feminist NGO specializing in human rights, peace, security, and justice access for girls and women to promote socio-economic and institutional transformation. (Sobre Humanas - Corporación Humanas)

Fundación Renacer: Founded in 2006, this grassroots organization combats sexualized violence and supports victims and survivors. It provides legal and psychological support, as well as public awareness initiatives. (Fundación Renacer - Conoce los Servicios en este 2023 (fundaciones.co))

Corporación para la Vida Mujeres que Crean: A feminist organization focused on empowering and positioning women as individual, social, cultural, and political subjects to create an inclusive and democratic society. (Misión (mujeresquecrean.org))

National Network of Houses for Indigenous and Afro-Mexican Women: This organization provides indigenous and Afro-Mexican women access to their rights and creates spaces where they receive culturally relevant, gender-conscious, and human rights-oriented support. They continue their work despite cuts in funding, supporting women who experience violence. (Inicio | Red de mujeres Tejedoras de Sueños (redmujerestejedoras.com)

Association Casa Taller las Moyas: Based in Bogotá, Casa Taller Las Moyas is a non-profit organization focused on the education and development of children and teenagers in marginalized areas. It offers learning and recreational opportunities in a facility previously used as a drug trafficking hub. (Casa Taller Las Moyas: Un lugar donde niños y jóvenes aprenden en San Luis - Bogotá - ELTIEMPO.COM; Nicolasa Díaz Ortiz | Front Line Defenders)

Corporation National Network of Young Women Weavers of Dreams and Rights: This organization comprises a group of women with initiatives in production, distribution, and services. It aims to strengthen the capacities of enterprises in terms of equality and gender fairness, with a focus on various areas such as gastronomy, clothing, manicure, pedicure, embroidery, hairdressing, and the leather industry. (Inicio | Red de mujeres Tejedoras de Sueños (redmujerestejedoras.com))

4.3.2. Top-down

Ecuadorian Center for the Promotion and Action of Women - CEPAM: The Ecuadorian Center for the Promotion and Action of Women (CEPAM) is a feminist organization dedicated to advocating for gender equality, women's rights, and social justice. It endeavors to cultivate a society free from violence against women and children. (CEPAM – Actores del Desarrollo Sostenible (actoressostenibles.com))

Corporation House of Afro-Descendant Women (CAMA): The Corporation House of Afro-Descendant Women (CAMA) is a consulting organization specializing in gender and human rights. It collaborates with international bodies like the European Commission and was founded during a period when parts of society were aspiring for peace. (Más información. Casas de la Mujer Indígena o Afromexicana de Continuidad | INPI | Instituto Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas | Gobierno | gob.mx (www.gob.mx))

Corporation Sisma Mujer: A Colombian feminist organization, Sisma Mujer is committed to defending the rights of victims and survivors of violence and discrimination, contributing to the consolidation of the women's movement. (Misión y Visión - Sisma (sismamujer.org))

Red Cross in Colombia: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is actively involved in numerous conflicts, working to prevent sexualized violence and support victims and survivors by providing direct medical care or referring them to existing medical facilities. . (Umgang mit sexualisierter Gewalt | Internationales Komitee vom Roten Kreuz (icrc.org))

SEMA: Supported by the Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation, SEMA connects survivors of war-related sexualized violence worldwide, enabling them to influence policy and programs. In Colombia, SEMA collaborated with survivors and provided feedback on the Murad Code. (SEMA Network - Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation)

Dr. Mukwege led an event named "For us, but with us" by the women, where female victims and survivors of this crime presented their proposals for comprehensive reparations to the Colombian state. These proposals include medical care, psychological support, access to educational opportunities, avenues for self-employment, and most importantly, the exercise of justice to overcome the consequences of these victimization acts against them Women victims of sexual abuse propose reparation measures to the Colombian state (jep.gov.co)

UN Women: Since 2005, UN Women has been supporting initiatives in Colombia in the areas of women, peace, and security. It focuses on implementing peace initiatives, promoting women's political participation, and addressing gender-based violence, especially in regions like Antioquia, Cauca, Meta, and Nariño. (Colombia | UN Women – Americas and the Caribbean)

Personal Reflections on Action and Community

Researching and writing this chapter has been a profoundly powerful and inspiring experience. It appears that what may aid us primarily doesn't need to originate externally, but rather, it stems from the experience of agency, self-efficacy and the realization of not being powerless. The role of community emerges as a significant, reinforcing factor. This aspect certainly warrants further in-depth exploration in the context of aid measures for victims and survivors of sexualized violence in armed conflicts.

5. Approaches to Measuring the Effectiveness of Support Measures

Effectiveness denotes the quality of being successful in achieving what is wanted (Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2023). In this context, effectiveness is defined as the extent to which actual results meet intended goals or expectations.

In this regard, the question arises as to what the objective of support measures is in the first place – since the mere provision of support serves a higher purpose. This could be, for example, "healing", "improving quality of life", "stability", "resilience", "restoring the status quo", or various other goals. Depending on the area of the support measure, this then again differs according to the area of the support measure: The goal of medical support is not the same as, for instance, the goal of legal support.

The "healing process" is ultimately very complex and sometimes aims to return to the status quo prior to the act of violence. However, this raises the question: Was the status quo actually good? Is it desirable to restore it? At the same time, the experienced break from the status quo through the crime also entails, as expressed by Clark (2022), the potential for new connectivities. And, of course, the opportunity to ask anew, "How do we actually want to live?". The answer, of course, should not be prescribed by the "supporters", as they often do by predefining the goal.

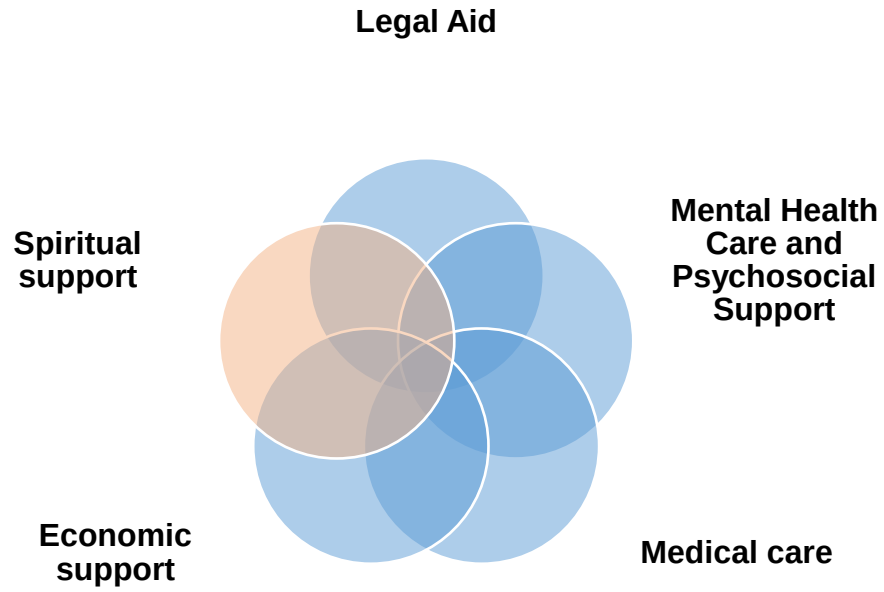
And at the same time, this also highlights the power and, hand in hand with it, the potential for violence, because: Who decides what is measured? Who, if not the victims and survivors themselves, can decide whether they have been "healed" or at least whether the support measures were supportive?

In doing so, it must not be overlooked that there are experts in various fields whose skills are clearly better suited to assess what is helpful and what is not: Just as it usually takes a doctor to identify, treat a disease, and in this sense make "healthy", but it is the patient who ultimately can perceive whether they are now healthy or not. So it is with the support measures: Deciding, talking, and acting WITH the victims and survivors, not ABOUT them.

Therefore, a component in the question of "How effective were the support measures?" also includes the inquiry into which support measures the victims and survivors requested, and which measures THEY considered sensible and supportive.

Consequently, the general goal of support measures is defined according to Santamaria et al. (2023): “It is about ‘healing-repairing those pains and evils that disturb precisely that harmony of the individual, the family and the community’ to achieve a consistent, integral, inclusive, and respectful repair (Carianil et al. 2020) with their ways of conceiving their life and social order.”

Depending on the area, the goal of the support measure varies, resulting in a different type of operationalization:



5.1. Medical Care

In the context of medical measures for victims and survivors of sexualized violence, efforts are primarily focused on treating physical trauma and the preventive provision of medication to avert sexually transmitted infections. These support services encompass a wide range of offerings, including general medical care, provision of antidepressants, and comprehensive nursing. It is important to emphasize that the effectiveness of such medications and treatment methods represents a fundamental medical question, existing independently of the context of armed conflicts, and primarily falls within the expertise of doctors and medical professionals.

In scenarios of armed conflicts, an additional dimension comes to the forefront: the often limited or entirely absent access to medical support measures for those affected. Kamali et al. (2020) criticizes, in this context, the lack of evidence-based methods for the effective provision of such medical services. Schopper (2014) further underscores that ensuring access to these services poses the primary challenge, especially since the effectiveness of measures such as HIV prophylaxis and emergency contraception is time-critical and only effective within the first seventy-two hours after unprotected sexual intercourse. Access to reproductive and maternal health services is also often impeded.

Therefore, the first level of assessing the effectiveness of such support measures lies in determining whether and to what extent victims and survivors have access to these essential

services. There is a glaring lack of comprehensive studies that illustrate where and for what reasons access to medical support services is lacking.

Studies from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Colombia illustrate the multi-faceted barriers to accessing medical services. Firstly, there is a significant discrepancy in the availability and quality of health services, particularly for indigenous and Afro-Colombian women in rural and remote areas (Zalesne 2019). Secondly, many survivors of sexualized violence avoid seeking help due to reasons such as stigma, shame, and fear of rejection (Schopper 2014).

An additional, yet insufficiently researched, area of concern is the long-term medical care of victims and survivors. A 2012 study suggests that a lack of follow-up treatments could be attributed to a deficiency in education and awareness. Kohli et al. (2012) found in a study of a community-based program in the Democratic Republic of Congo that, despite the regular provision of mobile clinic consultations, there was a significant decline in participation in follow-up examinations. The authors speculate that this may be due to a subjective "feeling better" of the patients and a lack of understanding of the need for follow-up consultations.

The challenges in creating a relevant evidence base for mental health and psychosocial support measures are extensive. These include the wide variety of proposed measures, ranging from counseling to specific psychotherapeutic approaches or a combination of these and/or additional psychotropic drug treatments. Furthermore, the timing and duration of the treatment in relation to the sexualized assault, the different professional levels and origins (national or non-national) of the healthcare professionals, the various outcome measures used to assess effectiveness, and finally, the range of research designs, from descriptive case studies to randomized controlled studies, are significant challenges.

This suggests that measures for education and targeted information exchange could play a crucial role in improving the effectiveness and sustainability of medical support measures.

5.2. Mental health care and psychosocial support

Measuring the effectiveness of mental health care and psychosocial support for survivors and victims of sexualized violence in armed conflicts is a complex challenge, as indicated in the chapter "Supportive and Sustaining Connectivities: Current State of the Art in Support Measures". Various measures in this field have been conducted, but not all cases involved the measurement of effectiveness. In cases where it was measured, it was done using different parameters that provide insights into the understanding of effectiveness in this area.

A key question in this context is the goal of psychosocial support. Many studies focus on the resilience of those affected, overlooking the fact that the understanding of resilience varies depending on the cultural background of the victims and survivors. It becomes evident that

the Western, Eurocentric, and Anglo-centric understanding is also applied to other countries and cultural regions without appropriate adaptation. The measurement instruments used include, for example, the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (Connor and Davidson 2003), the Resilience Scale (Smith et al. 2008), the Adult Resilience Measure (ARM) (Clark et al. 2022), and the Centrality of Event Scale (CES) (Clark et al. 2023). ARM illustrated in Appendix B and it becomes obvious how measurement works for Europe and the United States, while it falls short for other cultures.

Another important goal is the overall well-being, as discussed by Salas Picon et al. (2023) and Bustamante Davila and Cano Briones (2021). These studies relate resilience to quality of life in order to assess the effects of psychosocial support. Also, the article by Clark et al. (2022) shows, for example, that in the study predicting the psychological well-being of survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia, quality of life and social support were identified as significant predictors of mental well-being. Ryff's instrument for assessing psychological well-being was used, which includes six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. However, the study has limitations, including sample selection and a limited sample size, which do not allow for generalization of the results.

It is also critical to question the extent to which Western-defined measurement parameters, as applied in the ARM questionnaire, are universally applicable, especially in the context of culturally diverse groups such as indigenous women. This raises questions about the relevance and appropriateness of such measurement instruments in different cultural contexts.

A significant exception in the research literature is the article by Koegler et al. (2019), which focuses on solidarity groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo and provides deeper insights into the effects of these groups on mental health through qualitative interviews with survivors of sexualized violence. This study highlights the importance of education and economic support as key measures and shows the different experiences of women before and after their participation in the groups. Particularly noteworthy is that in this article, the victims and survivors themselves are given a voice regarding the effectiveness.

In conclusion, it can be observed that measuring the effectiveness of psychosocial measures for survivors of sexualized violence in armed conflicts encompasses a range of methods and approaches that may vary in their applicability and informative value. Taking into account cultural contexts and incorporating the perspectives of the affected individuals themselves are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of such measures.

5.3. Measuring effectiveness of Legal Aid

The measurement of the effectiveness of legal support for survivors and victims of sexualized violence in armed conflicts is a complex issue, defined by the goal of legal support. Understanding what victims and survivors expect from such measures is crucial (Sanyal 2020). The focus of legal support lies in navigating the legal system, including filing complaints and accompanying through the legal process – this does not always fully align with the expectations and desire for "justice" of the victims and survivors.

The effectiveness of a legal aid measure can be gauged by whether the victims and survivors actually receive the necessary support and how satisfied they were with it. Davis et al. (2018) identified a significant gap in the provision of such services, despite the general acknowledgment of sexualized violence as a violation of human rights and humanitarian law. They found that none of the institutes studied offered legal aid services for this group of victims, indicating a lack of normative guidance in this area.

Particularly in Colombia, it has been noted that material compensations promised by the Ley de Víctimas are often difficult to obtain and are long delayed (Zulver op. 2022). This especially affects minorities: Loperena et al. (2023b) identified almost no legal precedents in relation to sexualized violence against indigenous women.

The effectiveness of legal support also depends on whether the services provided meet the needs of the survivors. Studies reviewed by Spangaro et al. (2013). indicate that legal measures can lead to increased harm, mainly due to lack of support during and retaliation after testimony. Reparations are considered the most important means to improve the lives of the victims; however, reparation programs are often not implemented, and their effects are not assessed.

Rubio-Marín (2006) highlights the need to consult the victims and survivors themselves to understand what kind of support is most suitable for them. In conclusion, the measurement of the effectiveness of Legal Support can be both quantitative (whether legal support was received) and qualitative (satisfaction and effectiveness of the support received). There remains a significant need for further research in both areas to comprehensively understand and improve the effectiveness of these support measures.

5.4. Economic support

The measurement of the effectiveness of economic support for survivors and victims of sexualized violence in armed conflicts is a crucial area, as it significantly contributes to the agency and resilience of the affected individuals and impacts other areas of life. As demonstrated by Bass et al. (2016a), economic measures can not only improve the financial situation of survivors but also significantly contribute to their social inclusion, self-confidence, and

mental health. Despite the importance of this area, there are relatively few articles that address the effectiveness of economic support, especially in terms of long-term effects.

Economic support aims to meet basic needs and facilitate socioeconomic reintegration, enhance self-esteem, promote the healing process, and increase independence (Spangaro et al. 2013; Schopper 2014). An interesting perspective is offered by Koegler et al. (2019): This study explores the possibility that economic support enables victims and survivors to organize themselves and build a better life, for example, by providing spaces where they can meet.

In studies where the victims and survivors themselves were surveyed, participants in Village Savings and Loan Associations reported improvements in per capita food consumption, a reduction in experiences of stigma, and improved access to social resources. The effectiveness of the programs was measured by surveying survivors after their participation. In a study by Amisi et al. (2018) that included 1,203 women in South Kivu, results showed that the programs improved both perceived social inclusion and economic well-being for survivors and non-survivors, with greater impacts on economic well-being for survivors.

Thus, the measurement of the effectiveness of economic support programs largely relies on the direct feedback of participants and their subjective assessments of improvements in various areas of life. It is crucial to consider the long-term effects of these programs to ensure a comprehensive understanding of their effectiveness.

5.5. Spiritual support

Research in the field of spiritual support for survivors and victims of sexualized violence in armed conflicts is still relatively undeveloped and has long been overlooked. For example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) mentions psychological, medical, legal, social, and economic support in its measures but neglects the aspect of spiritual support. This omission contrasts with findings that emphasize the essential importance of spiritual support for the well-being of those affected. The aim of spiritual support is to promote emotional comfort, strengthening of inner peace, and the processing of feelings of guilt and shame.

A key approach in this area is to consult the affected women themselves and develop offers that correspond to their needs and culture. This requires an openness to learn from each other and exchange on an equal footing. van Dierendonck (2004) defines the goal as "spiritual well-being", which is measured not in isolation, but in combination with psychological well-being. His study examines the well-being of 1,139 victims and survivors of the armed conflict in Colombia who have benefited from reparation measures. The methodology included a sociodemographic and victimological survey, as well as the WHOQOL-BREF questionnaire (THE WHOQOL GROUP 1998), which evaluates various aspects of quality of life.

The study by Simancas-Fernández et al. (2021) revealed that the quality of life for victims and survivors remained low to moderately low after the achievement of peace agreements. Interestingly, the nature of the trauma had a more relevant impact on the quality of life than the number of traumatic events experienced. Sociodemographic factors such as age, education level, income, and marital status had a significant influence on the quality of life. However, the support received did not impact the overall quality of life.

In conclusion, it can be stated that research into the effectiveness of spiritual support in this context needs further development, with a greater emphasis on incorporating the perspectives of those affected to develop tailored and culturally adapted support offerings.

5.6. Interim Conclusion

In the current discussion on support measures for survivors and victims of sexualized violence in armed conflicts, traditional forms of support such as psychological, medical, and legal aid are often considered. However, there may be additional intervention possibilities that have received little attention so far. For instance, support in the form of technical assistance, which facilitates access to knowledge and information, could be explored. Likewise, a finer distinction between "economic" and "educational" support might be beneficial to better address the specific needs and goals of the affected individuals.

A key finding of the research is that there are few measurements – both qualitative and quantitative – of the effectiveness of support measures. And even in cases where effectiveness has been measured, the measurement is not always justified. To truly assess the effectiveness of such measures, it is crucial to consider the perspectives of the victims and survivors more strongly. As Santamaria et al. (2023) emphasizes, it is important to pay attention to "the agencies and interpretations that indigenous women make about their own losses, affectations, and damages, and therefore the ways of repairing them". This approach underscores the importance of the agency of those affected, who ultimately should decide the effectiveness and appropriateness of the measures. It raises the question of to what extent previous studies and articles have asked the victims and survivors what they need, and to what extent they were surveyed afterward to see if the measures helped them.

Furthermore, this underscores the necessity of conducting collective interviews and focus groups, incorporating cultural and spiritual dimensions as suggested by Theidon (2012). This implies a deeper listening and understanding of the needs and desires of those affected, in order to develop support measures that are not only effective but also respectful and responsive to the individual and cultural contexts of the survivors and victims.

The question "How effective are the support measures?" cannot therefore be answered at this point because victims and survivors do not always have access to the support measures

in the first place, these are rarely checked for their effectiveness in a further step, and when effectiveness is checked, this only happens in exceptional cases based on the assessments of the victims and survivors themselves.

Personal Reflection: Intersection of Business Administration and Support Measures

From my perspective, shaped by my experience in the field of economics and management, I see that some principles of this sector could indeed be applicable to the field of support measures for survivors and victims of sexualized violence in armed conflicts. In the world of marketing, the focus is on precisely defining and understanding target groups: Where are they? Who are they? How can they be reached? What do they want? These approaches could also be helpful in the context of support measures to precisely identify the needs and circumstances of those affected and to develop effective support offerings accordingly.

A key aspect here is the question of whether the "product", i.e., the support measure, is really suitable for the target group. How must the measure be designed to truly serve the victims and survivors? Considerations of the marketing mix, especially logistics and placement of measures, could offer valuable insights here. It is also important to consider and overcome additional barriers, such as stigmas. What educational work is necessary to break down prejudices and facilitate access to help?

Furthermore, target group analysis requires an expansion of the field of vision. It's not just about the immediate victims and survivors but also about their environment, including children, partners, family, and relatives. Their well-being and support needs are also crucial and must be included in the planning and implementation of support measures.

In this regard, a management approach that focuses on clear target group orientation, precise needs analysis, and strategic planning could indeed make a valuable contribution to the effectiveness of support measures. It is important to always keep in mind the specific challenges and needs of the target group and to adjust the measures accordingly to ensure truly helpful and sustainable support. This is only possible if victims and survivors are given the opportunity to express their wishes, thoughts, and needs regarding the support measures.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The challenges in assessing the effectiveness of support measures for survivors and victims of sexualized violence in armed conflicts are extensive and complex. One central issue is underreporting. According to Nordås and Cohen (2021), only between 18% and 22% of Colombian victims and survivors of sexualized violence have reported their experiences to the authorities. Many victims and survivors do not report, believing that the Colombian state can-

not protect or effectively support them. They receive death threats from armed actors or mistrust the justice system and reporting procedures. Impunity for sexual crimes in Colombia, especially by perpetrators from illegal armed groups, remains almost entirely (C-335-13 Corte Constitucional de Colombia 2013).

Furthermore, the lack of information and underregistration of cases of gender-specific and sexualized violence complicates the measurement of effectiveness. This is highlighted in the works of Paz (2009), who discusses the challenges arising from the lack of information and underregistration of such cases in Colombia. Another example of these challenges is a study in 407 communities in Colombia, which found that 17.6% of the adult female population between 2001 and 2009 had become victims of sexualized violence, but less than 20% of the cases were reported (Meertens 2012).

Stigmatization poses another obstacle in addressing sexual violence. The necessity to break the silence to confront sexual violence is emphasized by Nordås and Cohen (2021) and Santamaria et al. (2023). This silence can sometimes act protectively but presents a feminist dilemma in facing sexual violence.

The invisibility of sexualized minorities in armed conflicts, largely due to security reasons, leads to their absence in official statistics in conflict-affected countries, exacerbating the challenges in addressing their specific needs (Moore and Barner 2017).

My research has also shown how interconnected everything is and how an intervention in one area can impact other areas. An example of this is the study by Bass et al. (2016a), which shows how economic measures can not only improve the financial situation of survivors of sexualized violence but also significantly contribute to their social inclusion, self-confidence, and mental health.

These examples illustrate the need for a holistic approach that considers both economic and psychosocial aspects to ensure effective support and rehabilitation. They highlight that measures in one area can have far-reaching positive effects in other areas, underscoring the importance of an integrative and interdisciplinary research and practice in this field.

Overall, these examples demonstrate that the challenges in proving the effectiveness of support measures for survivors and victims of sexualized violence in armed conflicts are multidimensional and involve both methodological and ethical considerations.

6.1. Understanding, Not Just Measuring: Evaluation of Support for Survivors of Sexualized Violence

The assessment of support measures for victims and survivors of sexualized violence in armed conflicts raises profound questions about the measurability and effectiveness of such

measures. This issue is not only a reflection of the complexity of human suffering but also an indication of the limitations of quantitative research methods in such sensitive contexts.

Firstly, the question of measurability is of central importance. How can the success of support measures be quantified in a situation where personal experience is so subjective and multi-faceted? Operationalizing well-being or healing in such contexts is problematic. Who defines which criteria should be used to measure success or progress? Often these decisions are made by organizations or individuals who may not be directly familiar with the experiences of those affected. This epistemic power to decide what is measured and what is not can have unintended consequences for evaluating the effectiveness of support measures.

Another issue is that many aspects of well-being and recovery of victims and survivors cannot be quantified. Emotional healing, restoration of self-esteem, and regaining control over one's life are difficult to express in numbers. Therefore, qualitative methods that consider personal narratives, experiences, and perspectives must be part of the evaluation process.

The effectiveness of measures in this field is heavily dependent on their specific context. What is considered effective in a legal framework, such as the provision of legal assistance, may not necessarily have the same impact in the psychological realm. Therefore, it is crucial that the goals and methods of the measures are clearly defined and tailored to the specific needs of the affected individuals.

A participatory approach that centers the voices of those affected is indispensable. Involving survivors in the decision-making and evaluation process can help make the measures more relevant and effective. It is important for those implementing support measures to communicate directly with the victims and survivors to understand what they truly need and what has helped them.

In conclusion, evaluating support measures for victims and survivors of sexualized violence in armed conflicts requires a deep understanding of the complexity of human experiences. An approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods and foregrounds the voices of those affected appears to be the most promising way to assess the effectiveness of such measures.

6.2. Speaking About Sexualized Violence – Why It Is So Important

In today's world, silence surrounding the topic of sexual violence serves both as a protective mechanism for those affected and as a feminist dilemma. This complex issue is aptly highlighted by Yirley Velazco, a member of the organization "Mujeres Sembrando Vida". Velazco emphasizes the importance of incorporating new women into the community to clarify their minds, share their stories, and thereby heal their wounds. This approach aims to improve

conditions for those affected and create awareness of the individual experiences of all victims and survivors.

Simultaneously, Santamaria et al. (2023) point out that silence can sometimes act as protection but also presents an obstacle when it comes to breaking the silence and confronting sexualized violence. This silence often leads many victims and survivors to hesitate in seeking support measures, mainly due to the stigma associated with it.

Therefore, social liberation and the removal of shame from the minds of victims and survivors are crucial. Talking about these issues is of great importance, both in combating stigma and in raising awareness of how each story is individual, and to avoid painting a black-and-white picture.

An exemplary illustration of the diversity of narratives in the context of the conflict in Colombia is presented in Cadena-Camargo et al. (2019). This study delves into the narratives of women affected by armed conflicts in Colombia, particularly regarding their displacement, relationships with armed groups, and experiences as young mothers. Utilizing qualitative methods within an ethnographic approach, the study collects and analyzes the life stories of twenty internally displaced mothers.

Furthermore, Theidon (2006) emphasizes the importance of focusing on women's narratives, both in terms of their experiences with victimization and the diverse processes of resistance they developed in the context of experiencing such violence.

The highlighting of these varied narratives reveals that the often dominant concepts of agency, victimization, and survival in academic debates do not fully capture the real-life stories of those affected. These narratives are marked by a mix of ambiguity, helplessness, and resilience. The retelling of these life experiences challenges the simplistic view of displaced women as solely victims. Instead, it highlights their resilience and courageous choices made in circumstances beyond their control and in environments often devoid of support.

6.3. Outlook for the Future

The concept of interconnectivity, the idea that everything is interconnected, marks a revolutionary approach in my own thinking. An act of sexualized violence is not just an assault on a woman's body but affects her entire network of relationships – her family, society, nature, essentially everything connected to her. This comprehensive perspective on sexualized violence significantly expands the traditional understanding of the phenomenon.

Clark (2022) emphasizes in her work the need to not only prove the effectiveness of certain measures and disseminate this knowledge in the future but also to develop measures that go beyond a centered focus on the victims or survivors. By involving the entire environment in

the measures, awareness of sexualized violence could be sharpened, and paths to collective healing could be opened.

From a political perspective, the realization that conflict-related sexualized violence varies suggests that it can be mitigated and even completely prevented by armed groups. However, the challenge lies in identifying specific measures that can effectively reduce or prevent sexualized violence crimes. Despite the so-called "information paradox" (Clark and Sikkink 2013), which complicates capturing temporal trends in the prevalence of sexualized violence on the ground, the reported incidence of this form of violence remains consistently high, particularly in some conflicts.

Against this backdrop, the scientific community should continue to theorize and evaluate which types of measures are best suited to mitigate conflict-related sexualized violence.

6.4. Open Questions

The exploration of the role of spirituality in the aid and care of victims and survivors of sexualized violence represents a significant yet under-explored field of research. The question of how spiritual practices and beliefs can contribute to the healing and support of these individuals offers various starting points for future studies. Likewise, the question remains whether bottom-up approaches are generally more effective than top-down strategies in combating and processing sexualized violence. Comparative studies here could provide important insights.

Another crucial area of research concerns the assessment of measures against impunity. Future research should more precisely investigate the effectiveness of these measures in the context of their associated high costs. Studies referring to the works of Kirby (2016) and Mediе (2020b) could provide insightful perspectives on the cost-benefit ratio of legal and political measures. This research could be crucial in developing more efficient and equitable systems to combat sexualized violence.

Clark (2022) concept provides a structured framework for researching the impacts of measures in cases of sexualized violence. It is evident that previous research primarily focused on the aspect of "Broken and Ruptured Connectivities," exploring how sexualized violence affects the social, familial, and psychological connections of victims and survivors.

The second point highlighted in Clark's work pertains to the reconstruction and restoration of these connections. This area includes studies that deal with various paths of healing and restoring the social and psychological integrity of those affected. This present work would also fall into this category. However, the third point, opening up to new connections, remains relatively unexplored. Here, the question arises as to the extent to which those affected can establish new social, emotional, and psychological connections and how this process can be

supported by measures. Researching this aspect could provide important insights into how survivors of sexualized violence can be reintegrated not only into their former lives but also into new social structures.

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Appendix A: CLIP Formula

In this context, CLIP stands for "Client, Location, Intervention, Problem," a formula commonly used in social work, healthcare, and related professions. It helps professionals identify and structure the key elements of a case or situation. CLIP facilitates a systematic approach to assessing and planning assistance.

CLIP	
Client	Refers to the individual or group requiring or receiving support or services. In social work, it could be an individual, a family, or a community. Example: Victims and survivors of sexualized violence in armed conflict.
Location	The geographical or physical context where the client lives or receives services, affecting the type of support needed and resource availability. Example: Colombia
Intervention	The specific actions, services, or supports provided to assist the client, ranging from counseling to material aid. Examples include mental health, medical, legal support, psychological & psychosocial, economic, and spiritual support interventions.
Problem	The specific challenges or difficulties faced by the client that need to be addressed. Example: Consequences of experiencing sexualized violence in an armed conflict.

Appendix B: Adult Resilience Measure-Revides (ARM-R)

Adult Resilience Measure-Revised (ARM-R)

ARM-R

	To what extent do the following statements apply to you? There are no right or wrong answers.	Not at all [1]	A little [2]	Somewhat [3]	Quite a bit [4]	A lot [5]
1	I cooperate with people around me	1	2	3	4	5
2	Getting and improving qualifications or skills is important to me	1	2	3	4	5
3	I know how to behave in different social situations	1	2	3	4	5
4	My family have usually supported me through life	1	2	3	4	5
5	My family knows a lot about me	1	2	3	4	5
6	If I am hungry, I can get food to eat	1	2	3	4	5
7	People like to spend time with me	1	2	3	4	5
8	I talk to my family/partner about how I feel	1	2	3	4	5
9	I feel supported by my friends	1	2	3	4	5
10	I feel that I belong in my community	1	2	3	4	5
11	My family/partner stands by me during difficult times	1	2	3	4	5
12	My friends stand by me during difficult times	1	2	3	4	5
13	I am treated fairly in my community	1	2	3	4	5
14	I have opportunities to show others that I can act responsibly	1	2	3	4	5
15	I feel secure when I am with my family/partner	1	2	3	4	5
16	I have opportunities to apply my abilities in life (like skills, a job, caring for others)	1	2	3	4	5
17	I enjoy my family's/partner's cultural and family traditions	1	2	3	4	5

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