

Forced sex, rape and sexual exploitation: attitudes and experiences of high school students in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo

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This paper reports on fieldwork carried out in 2011 with the aim of investigating the attitudes and reported behaviour of Congolese high school students concerning sexual relationships. A total of 56 boys and girls aged 16–20 from two urban and two rural high schools in South Kivu Province took part in focus groups, and 40 of these were subsequently interviewed individually. The majority of boys felt that they were entitled to sex from their girlfriends and that if persuasion was unsuccessful, the use of force was legitimate; this, in their minds, did not constitute rape. Girls, on the other hand, were clear that such forced sex was rape. However it may be understood, rape was perceived as having increased in recent years and was explained by weak legal systems, pornography and provocative dressing by girls. Boys were angry at the competition from older, often married, men who were able to provide monetary and other incentives to the girls.

Keywords: rape; gender violence; young people; sexual exploitation; Democratic Republic of Congo

Introduction

Since 1996, the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been subject to civil war, which has also involved international peacekeepers and military forces from neighbouring countries. Deaths have been estimated to be as high as 5.4 million people between 1998 and 2007, very largely civilians who died as a result of the disruption of food supplies and medical services (International Rescue Committee 2007), though much lower estimates – around one million – have been made by the Human Security Report Project (2010) and the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (2011). From interviews with 1462 men and women in and around Goma in North Kivu, Slegh et al. (2012) found that more than half had had a family member killed and that a quarter had lost a child. In addition, as many as 2.4 million people have been displaced to other locations within the eastern DRC and also to other countries.

Many women have been raped by members of the various armed forces, including United Nations peacekeepers. Many more women have been subjected to intra-community and intra-household violence in an environment where traditional social constraints and controls are in disarray. A survey in North and South Kivu provinces and Ituri district among 998 Congolese males and females aged 18 years and older found that 39.7% of women and 23.6% of men reported to have been subjected to sexual violence during their lifetime (Johnson et al. 2010). Slegh et al. (2012) found that 26% of men reported having carried out sexual violence, including 12% who forced their partner to have sex, and 53%

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of women said they had been subject to sexual violence. This survey ‘confirms high degrees of rape-supportive attitudes among men, affirming in many ways the perceived normality of rape and widespread acceptance on the part of men of multiple forms of violence against women’ (10). Such attitudes are more common among former combatants (Slegh et al. 2012) and displaced people (Lwambo 2013).

In such a context, young people develop their attitudes towards relationships and sex from a number of sources – tradition (as practised in their families and local communities), modernity (the mores of the outside world, as portrayed in films and other media) and religion (the area is very strongly Roman Catholic and virtually everyone is a regular churchgoer). In addition, they are subject to the fears and uncertainties of living in an area subject to the threat of civil war.

In a companion paper (Mulumeoderhwa and Harris 2014), we examine the attitudes and reported behaviours of high school students in South Kivu concerning relationships, sex and conflict. For girls, the risks of pregnancy and sexually-transmitted infections and loss of respect – both their self-respect and the respect of their boyfriend – made them careful about engaging in sex. For boys, sex in a relationship was seen as normal and a key indicator of entering manhood. When girls say no to a request for sex from their boyfriends, boys do not regard this as the final answer and begin trying to persuade her to change her mind. The majority, influenced by peer pressure, believe that it is OK to force a girlfriend to have sex. Indeed, force is a major way of resolving conflicts and often has the approval of girls as a ‘sign of love’. The need to build communication skills about relationships and sex was an important recommendation.

The aims of the present paper are to investigate the attitudes and reported behaviour of these students concerning forced sex within relationships, rape and the sexual exploitation of young girls by older men.

Methodology

The geographic context

The areas in which the fieldwork was carried out are Bukavu and Kavumu, where the four secondary schools for our data collection are located. Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province, is overcrowded with people who have moved from elsewhere seeking greater security. Kavumu is a rural area located some 50 km to the north of Bukavu. Given the widespread destruction and deterioration of basic infrastructure throughout the province, people in Kavumu have difficulty of accessing basic social services such as education, sanitary drinking water and primary health care. Such services are somewhat better in towns, but are limited in both quantity and quality.

In terms of sampling, the four schools were chosen for reasons of convenience but are broadly typical of high schools in the province. The 56 participants (the number was chosen to allow two focus groups of seven, one of boys and one of girls, at each school) comprised about a quarter of students at the schools in their final two years of study and were aged between 16 and 20 years. All participants were volunteers.

Data collection

A qualitative research methodology was employed, given that we wanted to investigate attitudes and reported behaviours in some depth. A survey would have allowed a greater number of respondents than the 56 boys and girls who participated in this study, but the resulting data would have been shallower. Eight focus groups were conducted, with the

first author acting as moderator for the boy's groups, while a female teacher moderated the girl's groups. The discussions were in Kiswahili and were recorded, transcribed and translated into English for later analysis. The particular benefit of focus groups derives from the interaction, discussion and debate among the participants. They provide a more natural environment than an interview in that participants influence others and are influenced by them – just as they are in real life. The moderator encourages interaction by feeding in questions at appropriate times. Focus group participants will differ in terms of the extent, insight and forcefulness of their verbal contributions and we were alert to the possibility that a dominant individual might push a focus group in a direction at variance with the views of the majority. Apart from trying to encourage all members of each focus group to participate, the use of direct quotations from informants is a way of guarding against a dominating individual, as was follow up in the form of interviews.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 40 volunteers (20 boys and 20 girls) from the 56 focus-group participants. The interviews allowed us to personalise the issues raised in the focus groups. For example, one focus-group question asked whether they thought it is acceptable for a boy to force his girlfriend to have sex; the related interview question was 'Would you force your wife or girlfriend to have sex?' Again, the responses were recorded, transcribed and translated into English for later analysis.

Data analysis

Our method of analysis can be described as interpretative thematic analysis. That is, by an intensive reading of the focus-group and interview transcripts, we sought to identify the beliefs and attitudes held by the informants. This method faces the risk that a researcher may deliberately or unwittingly inject his/her own biases into the results and reach inaccurate conclusions; that is, it may fail in terms of internal validity. We attempted to guard against this by having two people to carry out the focus groups and interviews (which also allowed the young men and women to speak more freely, given that the moderator was of their own gender) by using semi-structured interviews to check out the findings of the focus groups, and by involving two authors in the preparation of the article, both of whom were very aware of the possibility of bias. In the process of preparing the article, we had a number of discussions concerning the beliefs and attitudes that emerged under each theme. We believe that if outsiders were to analyse our data, they would identify similar themes and reach similar conclusions. The themes we identified arose largely from the questions asked during the focus groups and individual interviews, which, in turn, arose from our research objectives.

The project was carried out as part of a doctoral study by the first author (Mulumeoderhwa 2012), which was supervised by the second author. Ethical clearance for the project was granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Ethics Committee. The nature of the research was explained to learners and it was made clear that their contribution was entirely voluntary; in the event, there were no refusals and participants were very engaged during the focus groups and interviews. Parental permission was obtained for participants under the age of 18. For reasons of confidentiality, all of the responses reported are identified using pseudonyms. The opinions expressed during focus groups and individual interviews were very similar between rural and urban participants, which may reflect the common (Bashi) culture and a similar range of challenges facing young people. This study reports the respondents' comments in their own words and the quotations presented are, unless otherwise noted, representative of the beliefs articulated by the majority of participants.

Results

In this paper, we are mainly concerned with forced sex and rape in boy-girl relationships. However, we also recognise forced sex and rape in marriage, the rape of girls by older men, rape by militia and criminals, and other rape by strangers. We are aware of that individuals and cultures may understand and use the terms ‘forced sex’ and ‘rape’ differently. We use forced sex to describe rape within an intimate relationship (marriage or equivalent, boyfriend/girlfriend) and rape for the remaining cases because that is how our participants described them. The relevant Kiswahili terms are *ubukaji* for rape and *kitendo ya ndowa ya nguvu* for forced sex. Sexual exploitation involves the use of non-physical power, including the promise of monetary rewards, to coerce someone to provide sexual services.

For many boys, rape ‘does not exist’

During the individual interviews, we asked girls whether having sex with their boyfriend for the first time was their own decision. Some, like Kindja, feel that they were forced into it, while others were willing participants:

I had sex for the first time when I was 13 years old. Doing such an act was not my will, because I had no knowledge of it and I did not like it. That was the age in which my life was destroyed, the age that I did not know that such a thing can happen and I was not sexually skilled. A boy forced me, and he was more clever than me. He clearly knew the consequences that such an act could have but he did not warn me before. Having sex was his will, not mine. (Kindja, aged 17)

I had sex when I was 17 years old. Having sex was not my will but it was due to peer pressure. My friends advised me in this way: ‘Have it; it is very nice’ but when I had it, I found out that there is nothing special in it. (Nabintu, aged 19)

We have reported in detail (Mulumeoderhwa and Harris 2014) that the majority opinion among the boys was that girlfriends are obliged to provide sex on demand and the use of force is justifiable if their girlfriend is not willing to have sex:

A boy may love a girl only for sex ... which means that she is obliged to provide him with sex. (Nshokano, aged 17)

A boy’s girlfriend may agree to meet him somewhere. When they meet, he does not have two things in his mind but only one – to have sex with her. It may happen that he suggests it to her and starts the process of touching her. But soon he can realise that she does not like to have it. Therefore, he must use his strength so that he has sex with her. (Paul, aged 18)

Several boys picked up Kindja’s assertion that a girl’s life could be ‘destroyed’ as a result of forced sex. James, while agreeing with the sentiments of Paul and Nshokano, is able to put himself in the girl’s position:

‘I am in the boy’s bedroom and if I scream, people are going to question me how I entered here ... I am going to be ashamed and no-one is going to marry me any more’. She is not able to report it to her parents and this event is going to remain in her mind ... it remains a wound in her. Whenever she sees that boy, she says ‘This is the one who has destroyed my life’. (James, aged 18)

The fact that forced sex can have a profound negative effect on the girl is not enough to stop the majority of boys from seeing it as justifiable. Nor is the danger that, if it gets out, a boy’s reputation in the community may suffer:

When you force your girlfriend to have sex with her, it is really something shameful when people learn about it. You are going to lose your reputation everywhere you pass in your area. When she leaves your place because she is still angry, she is going to report to her parents:

'I was at Bashengezi's home, he told me this and that but I refused. He pulled me in his bedroom'. Once they hear it ... they bring you to the court, which sends you immediately in jail. (Bashengezi, aged 18)

A minority of boys saw the dominant discourse as belonging to a past era, in part because the possibility of having to face a court:

We are no longer living in that era in which people were doing as they wanted. So if a boy loved a girl and wanted to marry her, he would send his friend to wait and to drag her to his home so that he may rape her and marry her. These days the world has progressed, now everything needs consent. You have to suggest her if she does not like it, you leave her but you should not force her. She has got the right to bring you to the court if you force her to have sex. (Bahati, aged 17)

To the majority of boys, rape 'does not exist' when it comes to sex between them and their girlfriends. This opinion was also reported in North Kivu, where 45.9% of men agreed that 'if a woman doesn't show physical resistance when forced to have sex, then it's not rape'. Men spoke about their right to have sex with their partner even if she refuses, and do not regard this forced sex as rape (Slegh et al. 2012, 9–10).

Boys commonly think that it is physically impossible for a boy to rape a girl without her cooperation:

When I hear people speaking about the word 'rape' in relationships, this must be an exaggeration because it is difficult to rape a woman. ... You [girls] are the only one who control your body, so how come that a boy happens to penetrate his private part in you? I often conclude that it is the girl's will. I think that forced sex does not exist. ... Even if she is not strong and a boy is a giant he cannot penetrate his private part in her. ... There are girls here in Kavumu who willingly agree to have sex. It also happens that the girls' family send them to have sex with a boy, then, at the end they will say that he raped her whereas she did it willingly. It is wrong, wrong, wrong. Boys do not rape girls. (John, aged 17)

I also agree that rape does not exist, because you cannot rape a girl in one or three meter where someone else can hear you doing it. If girls say so, they are lying. If a girl can see such a situation, why she could not alert the neighbours who are there? That is why there is no rape ... (Gustave, aged 18)

In a previous paper (Mulumeoderhwa and Harris 2014), we noted considerable frustration and cynicism among boys concerning girls' behaviour. This comes out in the above quotes and was widely supported in both focus groups and interviews. John, aged 17, believed it is physically impossible for a boy – even if he is a giant – to rape a girl. Junius, aged 17, asserted that 'if you are not three boys, you cannot open her legs' but '... once she willingly opens them for you, this means she longed to have sex' (...). Gustave, aged 18, asked why girls do not call out to the neighbours if they are being raped. Joseph, aged 19, said '... she should scream or run away. [If she does not] ... and he takes her by force, I think that is not rape because she heard his intention, and did not leave. Some boys reported that rape is often the result of an entrapment, set up by the girl and her family to get money from the boy and his family.

The young male participants were very critical of older men – who are supposed to reinforce morality and good practices – who rape young girls. This they see as being very different from sex, including forced sex, between boyfriends and girlfriends.

Girls, on the other hand, were in no doubt about the reality of rape:

Forcing a girl to sleep with her is rape. People must look for an agreement [to have sex]. ... They should not live like animals. Boys and girls may have the urge to have sex, but he should not force her – that is rape. (Tegra, aged 17)

If a boyfriend forces his girlfriend to sleep with her, then that is rape because having sex was not in her mind. You find him making things that you were not expecting in your life. You

trusted him so much and could not believe him to do such a thing to you, but he forced you to have sex one day. (Grace, aged 19)

A number of girls criticised themselves for being weak and often giving in to boys' persistent demands when they did not want to. It may be, as the South African study by Kaufman and Stavrou (2004) suggests, that coercion and violence with respect to sex are so common that young women accept it as an expression of love and engage in it with very little negotiation or communication. Or they may see no way out of situations where they feel at the mercy of boys.

However, women were not always compliant victims. Some female participants agreed that rape has become a business and that girls entice men to rape them and then expose them as perpetrators, often with the hope of monetary gain:

... even we [girls] always blame men: 'Oh, he raped me' though you are the one who provoked that rape. That means a girl leaves her home while having in her mind to seduce a man. She knows that it is only a question for us [women] to say 'He raped me' and the guy is arrested although she is the one who induced the boy to rape her. (Mironyi, aged 18)

Nowadays many girls consider rape as a business. They give themselves up to be raped so that they bring the perpetrator to the court in the hope getting monetary compensation at the end. (Tegra, aged 17)

Finally, while there was a good deal of fear of rape by members of armed groups and robbers, none of the girls in our sample had experienced this.

Why rape is on the increase

Boys had a lot to say as to why rape is common and increasing. It is interesting to note that boys did not point to any general breakdown in social constraints as a result of civil war, although a few stated that 'rape was hardly noticed' a decade or so ago. Given that they do not include forced sex with their girlfriends as rape, they attribute the upsurge in rape largely to the predatory behaviour of older men.

The first explanation given by the boys was that the national government, as represented by the legal system, is failing to act harshly against rape and that there is little or no legal disincentive to rape:

Rape is increasing ... because of the government's failure to implement laws that it itself established. You find the law stipulating that a man who rapes get a fine and be imprisoned for certain years. Now it is as if the government wrote down it, but ignores it. When people perpetrate rape it keeps silent, so people keep on perpetrating it. (Damas, aged 20)

An aspect of this noted previously is entrapment, another version of which involves monetary payments by the alleged perpetrator to the victim's family:

A girl's parents easily drop the case if the perpetrator is a married man. He negotiates with the girl's dad and begs him as the following: 'Please do not kill me, I am going to pay a certain amount for this'. That is enough to corrupt the girl's father ... [who will] withdraw the case because of this amount. Tomorrow you find that man walking in the street. He is going to rape another girl tomorrow or after tomorrow because he has got money and influence. There is no justice that can track him. That is why rape is widespread here in our homeland. (Iste, 18)

Bosmans (2007) has confirmed a general lack of competence, power and resources among the judges to make people obey the DRC legislation on sexual violence. A lack of confidence in the judicial system means that rape is not often dealt with.

A second explanation from the boys was linked to the perceived influence of pornographic films in movie theatres, which are essentially rooms with a television and a VCR:

Nowadays children watch pornographic movies and these influence sexual violence in the community. When they [children] are sent back home because they did not pay school fees, instead of going back home they enter movie theatres where they spend their time watching those movies. . . . These movies are destroying them because they are likely going to practice on small children of their age. The sexual violence that they commit is generated from movies that they are watching. This situation also increases rape in the community. (Baraka, aged 17)

Boys are watching pornographic movies, these generate in them bad ideas. For instance after watching such movies, a boy starts wondering: 'Ah! This thing also exists. Yes! I have to practice it'. When he comes out, he is going to rape a girl that he meets. (Joseph, 19)

The third explanation, which generated the most energetic discussion, was a combination of girls' provocative dressing in combination with boys' lack of self-control:

Women are encouraging rape. Let us take for example a case of a woman who put on mini-skirt or that clothes that people these days call *kanga dadi* [a woman's t-shirt/shirt exposing part of breast]. Now when she passes in front of me, I see her dressing in such a way I am going to feel the urge of having sex with her. She is the one who incites me to have sex; they themselves cause rape. . . . A well-educated woman cannot expose her body; she puts on a long skirt that does not reveal her knees. Nowadays' girls do not care . . . they are those who are encouraging rape. (Paul, aged 18)

Dressing indecently can be estimated as causing 60% of rapes. You find that a boy did not have thoughts of having sex but from the fact of looking at a woman's revealed thighs or breast, he immediately feels the urge of have sex. Psychologically, his mind is going to shift from things he was thinking to sex. Now if it is a married man who sees that situation, he is going to do all to influence her with money till he has sex with her. (Toussin, aged 18)

Attributing blame for rape to the woman is common, and three quarters of men in the North Kivu study agreed that 'A woman who does not dress decently is asking to be raped' (Sleghe et al. 2012, 9). The blaming of women for provocative dressing is balanced to some degree by the assertion that men cannot control their sexual urges. This has been consistently reported in studies across Africa (e.g. Lalor 2004; Sathiparsad 2005; Rakgoasi 2010) and came out strongly in the present study:

To force a girl to have sex, it is not OK. But you must know that once you are in your bedroom, you force her because of sexual urge you are feeling. After finishing that action you realise that the act you committed was bad, but because the sexual urge overcame you, you could not realise that it was wrong to do it. (Iste, aged 18)

There are those men who can look at females' attire, then, they feel the sexual urge. While craving for sex, they feel their minds dictating them to have sex with those girls or women; they can only be at rest when they have sex with them. (Patrick, aged 17)

The explanations given by girls for the increasing prevalence of rape had some similarities with those of the boys. Again there was no indication from them of the breakdown of community controls as a result of armed conflict. The focus was on individual behaviour. The girls agreed that the way some girls dress can provoke boys to rape them:

To put on mini-skirt can encourage rape, because if you can be with your boyfriend maybe he cannot resist looking at your thighs. Especially if you are a light complexion girl, and put on mini-skirt and *voix cassée* [shirt or blouse exposing breasts]. He must crave for sex, and starts caressing you. You find yourself getting in a situation in which you did not expect, but you are the one who provoked it. (Furaha, aged 18)

We can see that some girls are wearing what really amaze. Even though you are also a girl, when you look at a girl wearing a provoking cloth, you can say: 'If I were a boy, I could court this girl. I do not court her because she dresses like this and that, but because I crave to have sex with her'. (Neema, aged 18)

As with boys, this was linked to the alleged incapacity of men to restrain themselves sexually. The distinction between ‘cannot’ (Odette) and ‘do not’ (Rehema), below, is potentially of great significance:

A man cannot hold his sexual urge, and is always running after women. Even if he is married, he cannot sexually restrain himself. He does not abstain from sex during the time of his wife’s pregnancy as required by the doctor, because he is used to have sex since he was young. (Odette, aged 17)

Young boys do not hold their sexual urge. When a boy is in relationship with you, and finds that you have a friend, he will suggest your friend to have sex with him, and if she refuses, he looks for an opportunity to rape her. (Rehema, aged 18)

A different and common explanation from girls was the negligence of parents, particularly in not providing enough money for their daughters to buy clothes, cosmetics and the like. As a result, girls sought this money in relationships, often with married men, who have more money than boys. Parents fail to reprimand their daughters when they bring new clothes home or to enquire where they got them:

... sexual violence is often the result of parental negligence. Parents abandon their children to themselves who start going everywhere they like without them [the parents] asking anything. They do not know their responsibility towards their daughters and do not even provide to their needs. Because of this, girls go out to look for money. This exposes them to rape. (Nabintu, aged 19)

Sexual exploitation – older rich men versus young poor men

... girls do not get enough money from their parents or from their poor boyfriends. ... But married men can give them money ... so because of many things that she receives from him, she decides to give herself up to him. (Mironyi, aged 18)

The participants’ responses here focused on the behaviour of those with economic resources or positions of power – usually married men – who use these to persuade girls to sleep with them. It is interesting to note that both boys and girls often describe this as rape, even though there may be no physical force involved:

A thing which is destroying our country is that you find that many girls are getting jobs by providing sex. A girl may only come at the office for the first day, and she gets a job. You do not understand how she gets that job; she gets it through sexual intercourse with the manager or boss who obliges her to sleep with him. She has no choice as she needs a job; she is obliged to have sex with him. (Christoph, aged 18)

Here in Congo we have got a problem; you can rape married woman and you are not going to be prosecuted. Why? Because a married woman is afraid of losing her job and because of that she is not going to resist. While she is in the office, her boss can tell her that he loves her and wants to have sex with her. She may not like to sleep with him, but he convinces her by telling her: ‘Oh! I am going to promote you’. He forces her and that is rape. (Nshokano, aged 17)

A second example concerns teachers in schools and universities who agree to pass students in return for sex:

At school you sometimes find that your classmate is not strong in mathematics. You often do assignments together. She passes her assignments, but you fail although you worked with her. When you ask her how she managed to pass, she tells you that she had sex with teacher, and advises you to sleep with the teacher as well. (Florence, aged 17)

Rape is widespread in our community, for instance let us take the school’s case. Teachers tell you to have sex with them; they rape you and still your rights. When you write a test and you sure that you have passed it but you find that the teacher has given zero. If you claim your marks, he invites you in the corner and starts convincing to have sex with him so that you may pass his course. Cases of rape are so many at school, secondary schools, and primary schools. They are more frequent at universities more than somewhere else. (Nabintu, aged 19)

Again, there was an acceptance of some responsibility by girls because of the way girls dress:

Our way of wearing can induce rape. Most of our teachers are young men and newly married men. For instance I am a student, and go to school putting on a mini-skirt uniform. In the classroom I sit in front, while the teacher is teaching. When he looks at my thighs, you know flesh is only flesh, I do not know a teacher who can resist looking at that. He is going to be confused and even forget his lesson while he is staring at my body. (Rehema, aged 18)

Returning to sex between boyfriends and girlfriends, the boys believe that spending money on a girl provides an entitlement for sex:

When I date a girl, I have an objective to have sex with her. I provide her with money or buy her soap and body cream. Then, in this circumstance, if she refuses to have sex with me, I can break up with her and look for another girl who can give me what I am looking for. (Aristote, aged 17)

If I refused to spend my money on a girl, I could not force her to have sex with me. She has got the right to accept or refuse ... (Baraka, aged 17)

Hallman's (2004) study of young people in South Africa found that both gift giving and coercion were frequently linked in boy-girl sexual relationships. The research of Kaufman and Stavrou (2004) explain that gifts play an important role in shaping the sexual terms of a relationship and may have destructive effects on the ability of women – and sometimes of men – to express their preferences for the type of sexual activity, its initiation and the use of safe practices when engaging in sex. Gifts are often accepted indirectly and sometimes openly as a sign of imminent sex. They denote physical obligation. When female participants were asked what might be expected should money be given and received by partners early in a relationship, they declared that this would mean the right to demand sex. In the study conducted in Kenya by Njue, Voeten and Remes (2011), many of the young women understood the receipt of money or gifts from their partners as loving signs, while young men recognised that their limited ability to provide for their girlfriends affected both the longevity of their relationships and their degree of control within them.

However, a few male participants rejected the assumption that receiving gifts meant that girls were obliged to provide sex:

I think that for a girl who is educated, she is not obliged to have sex though she has got a boyfriend who is giving her money, body cream, clothes and other things. She is not obliged to have sex before she is joined in matrimony to that boy. If she had previously sex with him, she will miss words to say during their honeymoon. (Paul, aged 18)

The role of married men in sexually exploiting girls has been noted several times. The boys were extremely critical of these 'sugar daddies' who compete with them for their girlfriends, and describe sexual relationships in these cases as rape, even though physical force may not be involved:

We often experience rape cases here in Kavumu where you find a married man who is 40 years old perpetrates rape because he has got money. When he meets a girl in the community who is flourishing ... she cannot think that he has got his wife and children of her age at home but she is going to love him because of money. That is why rape is widespread here. (Toussin, aged 18)

Here in Kavumu we are getting rape cases. It is not easy to understand that it is rape because you do not meet them having sex. But there are here old men who are 50 years old who date girls of 13 to 14 years old, this is rape. (Aimer, aged 19)

The economic power of older men, often in situations where household and personal survival is tenuous, is used to seduce young girls. Even when sheer survival is not an issue, girls may want more than their parents can provide. Transactional sex as a way

of securing the desired goods is common throughout Africa (e.g. Wamoyi et al. 2010; Stoebenau et al. 2011).

The boys are aggrieved by this competition for girls from older men. Aimer states their case with some eloquence:

Concerning this situation, I would like to say that married men are upsetting us [everybody laughs]. ... First, they upset us because we do not find and secure girlfriends anymore. When you date a girl, you find out that ... there is also a married man who is dating her. Then, you wonder what to do and do not get an answer. ... Secondly, you find that all damages that he causes on that girlfriend, you are the one who carry them on your head. How do you carry them? It is when he impregnates her. He is going to give her money, and tell her: 'Tell your parents that it is that boy who is the responsible of this pregnancy, you know that I have got children. Where am I going to put you? ... You will become a child among other children'. So she tells you that ... the pregnancy belongs to you. [Her parents] have never seen her with that married man because he often meets her in the dark area. You are the only boyfriend that her parents know; everybody is going to confirm that you are responsible. The married men really squash us so much we do not know how to defend ourselves anymore. It is money that brings all these things; you cannot provide or buy her shoes, and body cream. She is only going to love him because he is going to satisfy her needs. You especially find that girls need many things, if she sees her friend dressing a cloth that costs US\$50 she wants to get it as well. In brief, I say that married men upset us much; to stop upsetting us they must not date little girls. (Aimer, aged 19)

Boys referred to themselves as 'spare tyres', to be used in case of pregnancy. Studies elsewhere in Africa (e.g. Kaufman and Stavrou 2004; Wamoyi et al. 2010) confirm such competition. Boys find that they cannot compete financially with men who are earning considerable salaries. In the words of one girl, boyfriends are 'small handbags', while married men are 'suitcases':

... girls love married men because they have got money. Girls are now calling them 'cash money' because married men do not have to think about the money that they provide them ... whereas, a young man, when he has got money, must plan how to use it. Even if he has got money he cannot quickly give it to the girl. That is why girls think that married men are nice guys because they bring out money any time. (Clever, aged 17)

The anger that boys feel toward the older men motivates them, according to a number of girls, to rape their girlfriends:

Boys may start raping girls due to their anger that they hold against married men. It happens that you are in the relationship with a boy then he learns that you love a married man, of the same age as his father. Because of that he will not be kind anymore towards you, and will decide to rape and destroy you. (Feza, aged 18)

Young girls are giving themselves up to married men. ... When a young boy hears about her relationship with that married man, then he [the young man] does everything possible to meet and rape her. Sexual violence is widespread here due to this – we [girls] are encouraging it. (Tina, aged 17)

Drawing the themes together

If we consider the perspectives of boys and girls together, several important points emerge. First, there is a contrast between boys' beliefs that they are entitled to sex from their girlfriends and that force is justifiable in obtaining this entitlement and girls' view that they must agree to have sex and that forced sex, irrespective of the perpetrator, is rape.

Second, notwithstanding different understandings of what constitutes rape, it is viewed as common and increasing. Boys attribute this to poor law enforcement, the influence of pornography and girls' provocative dressing. Underlying this is the boys' assertion that they cannot control themselves sexually – if they become aroused, they must have sex.

Girls at least partly accept this and take some responsibility for dressing provocatively. They also blame on their parents for not controlling them and for not giving them sufficient money. As a result, they are prone to exploitation by older men and this arouses the anger of boys of their own age who cannot compete economically with the older men.

Third, sexual exploitation, where sex is secured from girls by applying non-physical power, is seen to be largely the work of older men – teachers, employers and sugar daddies – who compete with boys for young girls. This behaviour by older men represents a significant change from earlier days, when such men behaved much more in conformity with community mores. It results in anger and frustration among the young men and they may well take this anger out on their girlfriends. The social dislocation resulting from armed conflict in the region is also a likely factor in making older men's requests more common and the girls more willing to accept them.

It is clear that communication between girls and boys on such matters – collectively and as individuals – is lacking, and this is likely to result in ongoing misunderstanding. There is a clear need for educational programmes in secondary schools to discuss issues of sex, relationships and the handling of conflicts in intimate relationships, and the first author is developing a curriculum on these matters for use in secondary schools in the DRC. Its aims include: (1) helping students understand the attitudes and behaviours of men, particularly as they relate to women, and *vice versa*, (2) encouraging students to think about the attitudes they hold towards members of the opposite sex and to modify these where appropriate, (3) building communication skills between women and men, including frank but respectful communication about sensitive issues such as sex, and (4) developing skills in managing and resolving the inevitable conflicts that occur in male-female relationships. There is strong support for such an approach in the literature on the prevention of sexual violence. A major review of interventions to prevent sexual violence recently found that a key challenge is 'to reach boys and young men when their attitudes and beliefs about gender stereotypes and sexuality are [still] developing' (Ricardo, Eads, and Barker 2011, 2).

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Résumé

Cet article rend compte d'un travail de terrain conduit en 2011, dont l'objectif était d'explorer les attitudes et les comportements rapportés d'élèves du secondaire concernant les relations. 56 garçons et filles, âgés de 16 à 20 ans, inscrits dans deux écoles secondaires situées en zone urbaine et de deux autres écoles secondaires situées en zone rurale dans la province du Sud-Kivu ont participé à des groupes de discussion thématique, 40 d'entre eux ayant été interrogés individuellement. La plupart des garçons ont déclaré qu'ils étaient en droit d'avoir des rapports sexuels avec leurs petites amies et que s'ils n'arrivaient pas à les en persuader, leur usage de la force était légitime; dans leur esprit, cela ne constituait pas un viol. Pour les filles, en revanche, il était clair que les relations sexuelles forcées constituaient le viol. Cependant le viol était perçu par les garçons comme étant de plus en plus fréquent au cours des ans et justifié par des systèmes juridiques inexistantes, la pornographie et les tenues vestimentaires provocantes des filles. Les garçons ressentaient de la colère vis-à-vis des hommes plus âgés et souvent mariés, parce qu'ils les concurrençaient grâce à leur capacité à donner de l'argent et d'autres récompenses aux filles.

Resumen

En este artículo mostramos el trabajo de campo llevado a cabo en 2011 cuyo objetivo era investigar las actitudes y el comportamiento informado de estudiantes congoleños de enseñanza secundaria con respecto a las relaciones íntimas. En este estudio, en el que participaron un total de 56 chicos y chicas con edades comprendidas entre los 16 y los 20 años de escuelas secundarias, dos urbanas y dos rurales, de la provincia de Kivu del Sur, se organizaron charlas en grupo, y 40 de estos jóvenes fueron entrevistados después de forma individual. La mayoría de los chicos creían que tenían derecho a tener relaciones sexuales con sus parejas, y si no conseguían persuadir las, era legítimo usar la fuerza; esto, en su opinión, no significaba una violación. Por el contrario, para las chicas tal uso de la fuerza en las relaciones sexuales sí constituía una violación. Independientemente de cómo definían una violación, los jóvenes consideraban que las violaciones habían aumentado en los últimos años debido a sistemas legales deficientes, pornografía y la vestimenta provocativa de las chicas. A los chicos les irritaba tener que competir con hombres más mayores, con frecuencia casados, que ofrecían dinero y otros incentivos a las chicas.

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