



Social Support and Recovery from Child Sexual Abuse that Occurs in a Conflict Setting: Narratives of Survivors in Gulu District, Uganda

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Overview of Presentation

- Background and problem
- Methodology
- Meaning of Recovery from CSA
- Social support
- Conclusion and contribution



Background

- LRA/GoU conflict in Northern Uganda from 1988 to 2007
- Atrocities targeting civilian population (Baines, 2007)
- Children were the main victims (Baines et al., 2006; Akello et al., 2010; HRW, 2005).
- > 25,000 children abducted by rebels (UNICEF, 2004).
- Turned into sexual slaves and forcefully married (Bruce, 2011; Annan et al., 2010; Baines et al., 2006).
- Widespread violence in community (Kinyanda, et al 2010).
- Erosion of cultural checks and balances



Background

- Social support a key resource in CSA recovery (Arias & Johnson, 2013; Banyard and Williams, 2007; Hymann et al, 2003).
- Influx of govt and non-govt programs (Abili, 2006)
- Support from family & community (Kamya, 2013).
- Questions of the survivors recovery experiences in view of social support received



Problem statement

- Researchers have attempted to unravel how CSA survivors recover
- Focus on abuse in familial context in western world
- Studies have highlighted the importance of social support in the recovery from CSA
- War in northern Uganda weakened social capacity and eroded the pillars on which social support is founded.
- There is a gap in the literature about war CSA survivors' recovery experiences, and their perceptions on the relevance of social support.



Objectives

- To explore recovery from war CSA in Gulu, focusing on meanings, perspectives and experiences of adult survivors
- To examine the formal and informal social support services for survivors of war related Gulu district
- To analyze the survivors' perception of the contribution of social support to recovery from war CSA



Key Concepts

- Recovery: the ability to live a meaningful and satisfying life as defined by the individual, regardless of the effects of CSA. A personal process including control over one's own life



METHODOLOGY



Methodology: Design

- Retrospective qualitative research study.
- Facilitates understanding of complex information.
- Social construction philosophical world view
- Narrative analysis as the strategy of inquiry
- In-depth interviews research methods



Methodology

- Study Area: Gulu district
- Pilot: June-September 2014 (15 participants)
- Main data collection: February-April 2015 (25pts)
- Sampling criteria:
 - Adult survivors of CSA (>18 at the time of the study)
 - Experienced CSA during the war (1988-2007)
 - Accessed post abuse help from formal/and informal providers
 - Resident in Gulu district



Data Collection Methods and Analysis

- A narrative approach, thru in-depth interviews
- Participants narrated their experiences thru interpreter.
- All recorded interviews were transcribed in English.
- The data analysed using a holistic-content approach, and themes developed through the process.
- Reconstruction and restorying women's stories
- Findings considered in light of the literature and with the women's stories, and themes reconsidered in an iterative process until saturation.



Meanings of Recovery from Child Sexual Abuse in a War Context

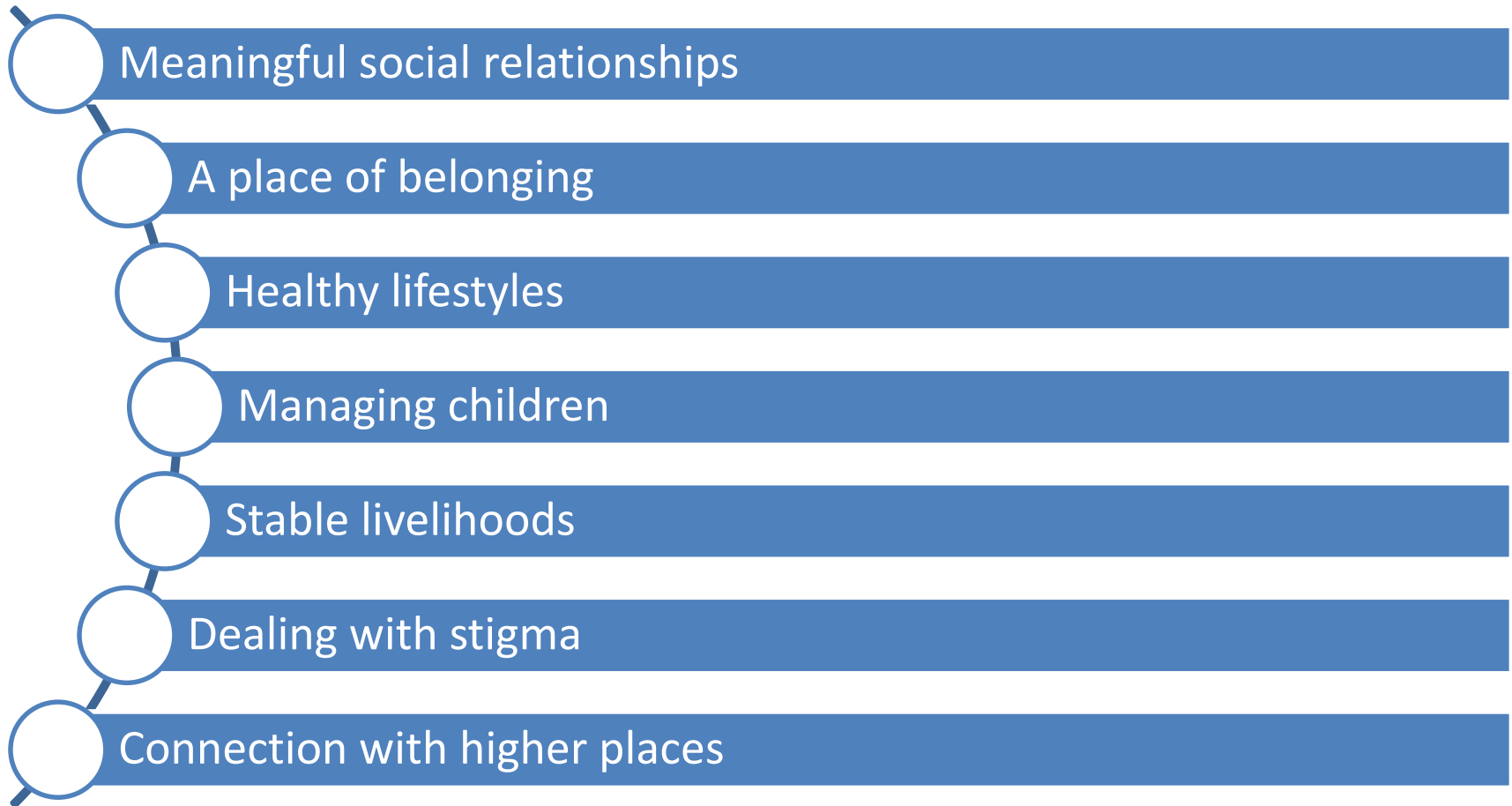


Meaning of Recovery

- The narratives do not provide a chronological account of women's recovery journeys
- Illuminate survivors' experiences and meanings of recovery
- The meaning of recovery is socially constructed through women's knowledge of their bodies, gender roles and in the power relations within their contexts.
- Recovery is deeply rooted in survivors' social functioning and in integration in family and community life in the post abuse period.
- Transcends emotional recovery



Meaning of Recovery





Social Support For Sexually Abused Children In Northern Uganda



- Social support analysed from the experiential realities of survivors.
- Asked about support from different sources



Context of Social Support to CSA Survivors

- The context in which the abuse occurred dictated the timing and nature of support
- Support from both formal and informal sources was available for the girls who experienced abuse in the context of the community
- Diminished capacity of families as a source of instrumental support
- Captivity context: Limited access to professional support
- Stigma and isolation of returnees
- The conflict in northern Uganda attracted organisations to support children affected by conflict.
- Reception centres



Support from Formal Sources

- **Instrumental Support**
 - Basic Material Support
 - Medical support
 - Financial Support
 - Home construction
 - Vocational and business training support
 - Reception centre-follow up support
- **Emotional and informational support**
 - Counselling
 - Talking about the Sexual abuse: Conflicting Narratives
- Inadequate Perceived Support



Survivors' Social Networks

- Abandonment by friends
- Experiences of Survivors Returning from LRA Captivity
- Creating new Networks for Social Support



Concluding Observations

- Recovery is a broad experience transcending emotional trauma and extending to the social and political context
- Recovering from CSA begins with life events
- Limited focus of support to the survivors in captivity inhibits recovery



Contribution

- Broadened the meaning of recovery from CSA in war context
- From a Social Work perspective, this study provides insights into how the survivors have experienced recovery as well as the use of social support in this recovery process.
- By prioritizing the survivors' meanings of recovery from child sexual abuse and drawing out their experiences on social support, this study contributes by informing Social Work's responsiveness to the social and cultural realities of the survivors of war related child sexual abuse in Gulu.



- Thank you for listening