

UDK: 343.541:355.012](497.5)

Izvorni znanstveni rad

Primitljeno: ožujak 2019.

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PSYCHO-SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF WAR CRIMES OF RAPE IN THE ĐAKOVO-OSIJEK ARCHDIOCESE DURING THE GREATER-SERBIAN AGGRESSION

Summary

Defining war as the most tragic form of anti-humanism, anti-personalism and anti-culturalism, the authors address the war crime of rape as the most difficult form of traumatic experience. The introductory section of the paper presents crimes and abuses at many levels that are characteristic for every war, including the Croatian War of Independence. Among all forms of traumatic experience, rape is reported as a complex event characterized by extremely negative emotional consequences that leave severe and lasting consequences visible in the everyday life of the traumatized person. The first part of the paper deals with life after a traumatic rape event. The second part is largely devoted to the psychosocial consequences that rape victims of war live with today. The authors use the findings of a survey of rape victims from the War of Independence in the area of the Đakovo-Osijek Archdiocese. Based on testimonies, predominant feelings among victims are described, as well as mechanisms to manage these feelings and live

with the trauma. The paper also describes the challenges faced by family members and society in providing support. The third part particularly emphasizes the consequences of the Greater-Serbian aggression during the War of Independence in the Đakovo-Osijek Archdiocese.

Keywords: war, war crime of rape, psychosocial consequences, Greater-Serbian aggression, Đakovo-Osijek Archdiocese.

Introduction

War, as a special form of criminal atrocity, affects many spheres of human life in sociological, psychological, bioethical, moral, spiritual and many other dimensions, provoking special need for Church pastoral care.¹

One of particular domains of pastoral dedication is directed to the phenomenon of rape, which was very often a way of cruelty, manifested to many women, of any age. This has left severe life-long consequences as a psycho-traumatic experience, needed to be sublimated, processed and healed in order to achieve return of victims to quasi-normal lives, provided by legal, psychological, medical, social and spiritual assistance.

Since this goal is very hard to achieve, even after a very long period of time, it has attracted our interest to elaborate the witness experiences of the women group, *Sunčica*, rape victims of the Croatian War of Independence, in the territory of the Đakovo-Osijek Archdiocese.

1. Croatian War Atrocity Circumstances

The war is an ethnocidal, ecocidal, and culturecidal event that takes place on behalf of unsubstantiated greater-state goals, destroying human lives, natural, material, cultural and religious goods. As such, war is the most tragic form of anti-humanism, anti-personalism and anti-culturalism, which leaves man an indelible trace.² The nature of war is manifested in achieving one's goal by threatening or realizing damage to others. The winner is the one who either more efficiently terrorizes the opponent or is able to inflict more harm than they will endure. As such, war is the most brutal form of conflict between socio-political entities, caused by conflicts

¹ A similar work of elaborated title, with greater impact on pastoral Church approach to the victims, could be found in: Sanja KOPUNOVIĆ LEGETIN - Suzana VULETIĆ - Stanislav ŠOTA, „War Crimes of Rape in the Croatian War of Independence”, *Nova Prisutnost* 17, 2 (2019.), 229-249.

² Cf. Nikola SKLEDAR, „Žena i rat”, *Zaprešički godišnjak* 3 (1993.), 85.

of interest: economic, political, religious, ideological; which intends to destroy the opposite side by force (weapon).³

In most of the wars, no rules are respected, but they are overwhelmed by personal, blind and primitive passions, and fanatic hatred of bullies and attackers. Many forms of war crimes are present, and a particular group consists of those forms pertaining to the civilian population.

War crimes against a civilian population are done by anyone who violates the rules of international law, during a war, armed conflict or occupation, by ordering an attack on a civilian population, a settlement, individual civilians or persons unable to fight resulting in death, severe bodily injury, severe health distress, a non-target attack on civilian populations, killing, torture and inhumane treatment, involving serious suffering or bodily harm or health damage to a civilian population, carrying out displacement or relocation, forcing rape and prostitution, implementing measures of intimidation and terror, hostage taking, collective punishment, detention in concentration camps and other unlawful detentions, such as forced labour, hunger, robbery, destruction and apprehension of other people's property.⁴ Crimes such as genocide, capture, physical, psychological and emotional abuse, rape, forced pregnancy, emigration, forced labour, starvation, robbery, extortion and appropriation of someone else's property were particularly used in the Croatian War of Independence as a war strategy in our region by the enemy Serbian army.

Croatian War of Independence as a defensive war for the independence and integrity of the Croatian state against the aggression of the associated Greater-Serbian forces of Yugoslavian Army (JNA), was one such aggression, that has left severe consequences on many lives.

The Đakovo-Osijek Archdiocese, was the most affected by the destructions of war of all dioceses in Croatia. The cruellest atrocities and acts of destruction took place in its territory, with the largest number of people killed, wounded, deported and displaced from their homes.⁵

³ Cf. Davor MARIJAN, *Domovinski rat* (Zagreb: Croatian Institute of History, 2016.), 391-392; N. SKLEDAR, *Žena i rat*, 85.

⁴ Cf. Željko HORVATIĆ (ed.), *Rječnik kaznenog prava* (Zagreb: Masmedia, 2002.), 501-502.

⁵ Cf. Marin SRAKIĆ, *Istina će vas osloboditi!: Ratna izvješća i apeli, ekumenska nastojanja te prigodni (na)govori i propovijedi o pomirenju, evangelizaciji kulture, o blagoslovima i posvetama crkvi* (Đakovo – Osijek: Đakovačko-osječka nadbiskupija - Nadbiskupski ordinarijat, 2013.), 5-8.

The war crime of rape is the most brutal form of abuse that is very little spoken and written of in relation to its number and frequency in the Croatian War of Independence, which has left the victims great consequences at all levels of human existence. That has been the prime motivation for analysing this topic.

The area of our research and our interlocutors who spoke about the trauma of war rape were victims of the East Slavonian battlefield and the Đakovo-Osijek Archdiocese, particularly from the town and surrounding area of Vukovar. The trauma of the war crime of rape is a complex concept, so it was necessary to look at the situations from multiple angles and to approach issues interdisciplinary.

2. Life with Traumatic Experience

According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* of the American Psychiatric Association⁶, traumatic events include military combat, violence, abduction, terrorist attacks, torture, confinement in camps, seeing violent deaths from assaults, etc. A traumatic event is an experience characterized by an extremely negative emotional charge or a series of such experiences that partially or completely disable the person's ability to integrate the mindset, namely memories and ideas, and emotions associated with the experience. A special kind of traumatic experience is trauma caused by unknown people, because they disrupt the existential meaning that people have built up in their life up until that moment. In addition to a difficult internal experience, it undermines confidence, control and security in the environment, and social and interpersonal relationships. There are complex, reflexive symptoms that cannot be controlled because they occur outside consciousness-subconsciousness, and they are an attempt to protect the victim from the possibility of re-traumatization in the social world and the environment.

The most serious form of traumatic experience is the one inflicted by another person, among which the cruellest form is the war crime of rape, in which a person is repeatedly exposed and abused through capture and detention before being raped, reaction of family, intimidation, humiliation, physical, psychological and emotional pain. The main characteristic of sexual violence is the conduct of sexual acts without voluntary consent, which have been compelled by force or by various threats. It is different

⁶ Cf. Vera FOLNEGOVIĆ-ŠMALC, *Dijagnostički i statistički priručnik za duševne poremećaje* (Zagreb: Naklada Slap, 1996.), 439.

from all other forms of violence because, apart from a physical attack that entails the possibility of health risks related to HIV infection, sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy, the intimate and psychological boundaries of the victim are violated, and silence is often a form of coping with and living with trauma because reports of violence and litigation are often seen as revictimization.⁷ Victims of this form of violence often fail to convey their experiences and seek protection, and even satisfaction, for the atrocities committed against them. Sexual violence as a traumatizing sexual experience can be significant for the overall development of personality.⁸ The fact that characterizes every raped person is the grave truth that physical violence and psychological trauma have long-term consequences.

Rape survivors describe a set of symptoms called *Rape Trauma Syndrome* (RTS) that includes physical and psychological reactions and behavioural changes.⁹ Victims of war rape have *physical consequences* related to physical injuries, reproductive organs, the possibility of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, and unwanted pregnancy; *social* such as labelling, stigmatization and rejection of the person, and *mental* ones that imply impaired mental and sexual health, self-esteem, traumatic reactions and disorders.¹⁰

Rape trauma syndrome is a broader term than PTSP because it includes physical and mental changes and changes in victim's behaviour that result from experiencing sexual violence. The basic subjective and behavioural problems of victims of rape and sexual abuse are: feeling ashamed, humiliated, depressed, broken, marked, dirty or worthless; they are constantly returned to traumatic events in their dreams, thoughts and memories, constantly questioning their own guilt about the event, feeling angry, outraged at what just happened to them, not trusting people; some of them are not feeling any satisfaction in life, or have no interest in anything.¹¹ The suffered crime of war rape as a traumatic event, leaves on the victim long

⁷ Cf. Maja MAMULA, *Seksualno nasilje - teorija i praksa* (Zagreb: Ženska soba – Centar za seksualna prava, 2005.), 12.

⁸ Cf. Vladimir HUDOLIN, *Psihijatrijsko psihološki rječnik* (Zagreb: Panorama, 1968.), 364.

⁹ Cf. Liz KELLY, *Preživjeti seksualno nasilje* (Zagreb: Ženska soba - Centar za seksualna prava, 2008.), 183-212.

¹⁰ Cf. M. MAMULA (ed.), *Seksualno nasilje*, 8-16.

¹¹ Cf. Lidija ARAMBAŠIĆ, *Psihološke krizne intervencije: psihološka prva pomoć nakon kriznih događaja* (Zagreb: Društvo za psihološku pomoć, 2000.), 280-283.

lasting emotional, mental, physical and behavioural reactions. Because of their suddenness, they bring people into a state of helplessness and fear, but in the long run, insecurity in their lives and meaninglessness. Just as rape leaves a deep mark on the victim and the indelible consequences, so it does on the victim's family, and the entire community, whose honour and dignity are impaired.¹²

From all of the above, it is important to restore a sense of security and confidence in the world and in life when integrating support and assistance with different methods and continuous work, integrating trauma into one's life experience.¹³

A retired professor Vladimir Gruden, Ph.D., claims for the rapes during the Greater-Serbian aggression:

“With such an act a woman is endangered not only physically but it also destroys her dignity[...] Raping is a special form of sadistic journey to pleasure. Victimological research often notes victim's participation in this form of crime. When it comes to collective rape, perpetrators often have similar or common history. These are the immature persons of lower cultural levels in which the erotic urge came too close to the aggressive urge. They are incapable of ordinary sexual encounters and such persons are the result of inadequate inner family relationships and the nurturing of such a social legacy in which the ability of sublimation is considered as weakness and shame of the group to which they belong. They are incapable of controlling impulses. They are prone to any form of addiction. The urge to destruction is usually redirected later in time to aggression against other members of the group and later to direct or indirect auto-aggression[...]”.¹⁴

Due to the trauma specificity, recovery is more successful if the victim has psychosocial help from experts, in particular the support of the community, especially the family.¹⁵ Regarding the social issue, victims of

12 Cf. Branko BRKIĆ, „Kaznena djela protiv spolne slobode i spolnog ćudoređa te poseban osvrt na silovanje i bludne radnje: teorijski i praktički aspekt te problemi međusobne distinkcije”, *Hrvatska pravna revija* 3, 2 (2003.), 99.

13 Cf. L. ARAMBAŠIĆ (ed.), *Psihološka prva pomoć nakon kriznih događaja*, 26-29.

14 Vladimir GRUDEN - Zdenka GRUDEN, *Ožiljci na duši Hrvatske* (Zagreb: Medicinska naklada, 1996.), 46-47.

15 Cf. Gordana LEROTIĆ, „Obiteljska i bračna psihoterapija”, Rudolf GREGUREK - Eduard KLAIN (ed.), *Posttraumatski stresni poremećaj - hrvatska iskustva* (Zagreb: Medicinska naklada, 2000.), 114-120.

war crimes of rape still have difficulties to cope with it today. It is evident that they are confronted with their tragedy in various ways, but many have confirmed that the greatest difficulty is the way to face and deal with the trauma of their closest.¹⁶ Whether an individual can more or less endure a traumatic experience and build a bridge between past, present and future depends on several factors, such as: intensity and timing of trauma, possible previous traumatic experiences not worked out, genetics, age, social relationships, family support and social environment in general, etc.¹⁷ Therefore, it is important when providing support and help to use a variety of methods and to continuously work on restoring the sense of security and confidence in the world and life, integrating trauma into one's own life experience.¹⁸

In order for us to have a better insight into the issue, but also to get acquainted with the real consequences that the victims of war crime of rape still live with today, and to think about ways of helping, we conducted a survey among victims who had the strength to speak about the trauma and the results are shown below.

3. Survey on Psychosocial Consequences of War Crime of Rape

The survey entitled *War Crimes of Rape During the Croatian War of Independence in the Territory of the Đakovo-Osijek Archdiocese and the Attempt to Provide Psychosocial and Spiritual Assistance to Victims* was completed by victims of war rape included in the activities of the Sunčica Foundation.¹⁹ The research²⁰ was carried in 2017 on the victims

16 Cf. Marijana MITROVIĆ - Monika ŠIMEK, *Trauma i samopomoć* (Osijek: Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights Osijek - Education Centre, 2004), 16.

17 Cf. L. ARAMBAŠIĆ (ed.), *Psihološke krizne intervencije: psihološka prva pomoć nakon kriznih događaja* (Zagreb: Naklada Slap, 2012.), 30-31.

18 Cf. L. ARAMBAŠIĆ (ed.), *Psihološke krizne intervencije*, 26-29; Mihály SZENTMARTONY, *Osjetljivost za čovjeka. Pastoralna psihologija* (Zagreb: Glas Koncila, 2009.), 206-208.

19 The Sunčica Foundation was established as the first institutional support for victims in seeking legislative protection, on the proposal of the City of Zagreb and the Office for Veterans Affairs.

20 The study involved 20 respondents. Interpretation with regard to gender is very discouraging because, research shows, men are more difficult to speak and acknowledge the experiences of sexual abuse. The sample is appropriate and cannot be considered representative because we do not have information as to how many victims there actually are in the area of the Đakovo-Osijek Archdiocese. The paper

who had been raped during the Croatian War of Independence, living in the Đakovo-Osijek Archdiocese area, most often in the area of Vukovar and its surroundings, as a survey for the final thesis of the Postgraduate Specialist Study of Pastoral Theology at the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Đakovo. It was posted to 20 members of Sunčica Foundation.

The main goal was to: check the opinions, attitudes and feelings of victims of traumatic experiences, detect and evaluate quality of life after traumatic experience and to identify the difficulties victims of traumatic experiences face in life in order to improve and enhance the psychosocial and spiritual care of victims. We tried to address the following issues: What are the important factors that affect the quality of life in the victim's family and community? How do victims see their lives, find meaning and seek help? Diagnose the difficulties and problems that rape victims face in their lives after a traumatic experience.

The sample consisting of the elements is called the appropriate sample, therefore, the persons at our disposal at the Sunčica Foundation responded to the survey. Survey, used in this research, consists of a general part (gender, age, confinement in a camp, exposure to forms of violence) and a targeted part. We used a survey (unpublished manuscript) compiled by the Sunčica Foundation group (2016). The questionnaire consists of 64 questions pertaining to aspects important for research and the provision of psychosocial and spiritual assistance to victims. Participants answered the survey using both closed and open-ended questions and Likert-type particles ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The response time was unlimited. This is the first validation without the validation process of the questionnaire being carried out previously. The questionnaire was anonymous. The survey was conducted in September and October 2016. and was processed by Monika Ećimović, M.Sc.

In accordance with the set goal, we have been given answers to questions about the important factors that affect the quality of life in the victim's family and community, how victims see their lives, find sense and help, and we diagnosed the obstacles and problems that rape victims

is a revised and partially reworked part of the Sanja Kopunović Legetin's specialist's thesis entitled War Crimes of Rape During the Croatian War of Independence in the Territory of the Đakovo-Osijek Archdiocese and Attempts to Provide Psychosocial and Spiritual Assistance to Victims, within the Postgraduate Specialist Study of Pastoral Theology, course: Pastoral Work in Crisis Situations, at the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Đakovo, defended on 13 September 2017, made under the direct guidance of assistant professor Stanislav Šota, Ph.D. and her mentor associate professor Suzana Vuletić, Ph.D.

encounter in their lives after traumatic experiences. During the research there were issues that researchers did not expect, because the respondents showed openness and honesty beyond expectations.²¹

Questions and answers, ideas and constructive suggestions spontaneously arise from each other, and in particular, there was talk of abolition, ignoring the victims before the law, misunderstanding and silencing by the community and even the closest ones when it comes to the war crime of rape. The testimonies of many victims testify that many unpleasant feelings have been present daily even after nearly three decades, that the victims themselves seek help and somehow manage to rise above their condition, but what makes them the victims even today is condemnation of the environment and family members and unsatisfied justice, and by September 2017' their unresolved legal status as victims.²²

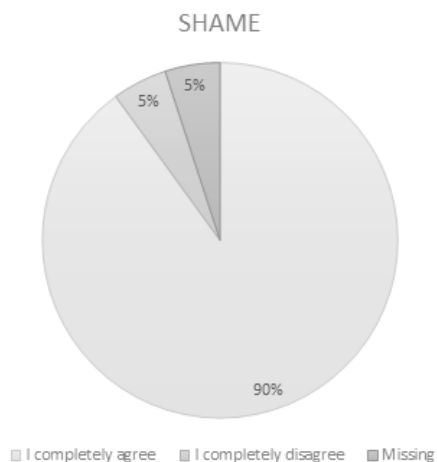
The following text introduces the dominant feelings of victims of war crimes of rape, the strategies of confronting and living with the truth, but also the reactions of family members and the environment with regard to the knowledge of members of their family being raped.

4. The Main Results Concerning Psychosocial Consequences of Rape

When it comes to the dominant feelings that are almost daily present in rape victims, we can talk about shame, guilt, tension, depression, and the desire for vengeance. The feeling of shame after the war crime of rape is felt by as many as 90% of the respondents.

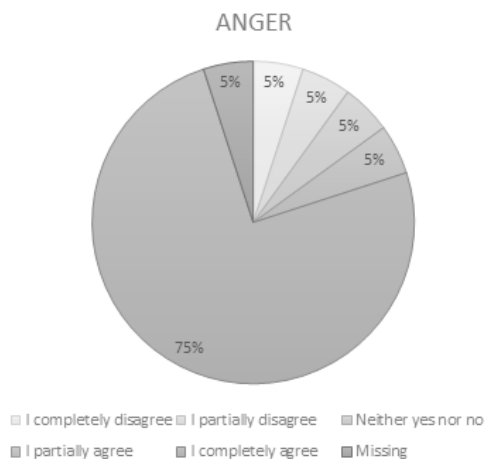
²¹ The survey itself evoked the manifestation of their traumas and issues related to war crimes of rape. They were encouraged to speak about the broader picture of war trauma. During the survey some respondents needed to get some fresh air, take a walk or a break, some women even cried, and in most of the respondents, nervousness and a decrease in concentration were observed after several questions answered. After completing the survey, they needed further discussion about war trauma.

²² Cf. <https://www.zakon.hr/z/794/Zakon-o-pravima-%C5%Bertava-seksualnog-nasilja-za-vrijeme-oru%C5%BEane-agresije-na-Republiku-Hrvatsku-u-Domovinskom-ratu> (20. 12. 2018.)



Graph 1: Shame of rape victims

Anger because rape happened to them and that there was no one to defend them and for many other reasons felt 90% of respondents. Obviously, the persons who had been raped did not expect any form of aggression and they had partial trust in the YPA, but after being left to paramilitary Serb formations, one of the most frightening feelings they experienced was the feeling of powerlessness and being left to delusions²³ of various psycho-socio-pathological persons present in the paramilitary formations that were in the service of the Greater-Serbian aggression.²⁴

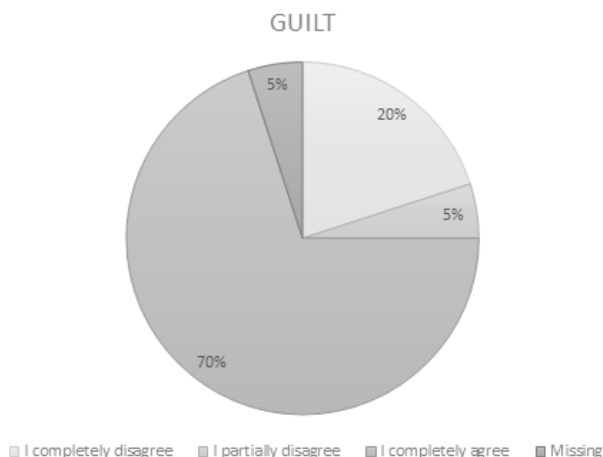


Graph 2: Anger of rape victims

²³ Cf. V. GRUDEN - Z. GRUDEN, *Ožiljci na duši Hrvatske*, 46.

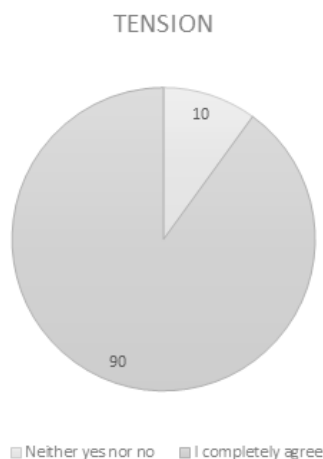
²⁴ Cf. V. GRUDEN - Z. GRUDEN, *Ožiljci na duši Hrvatske*, 179.

Although they did not “deserve” the rape, 70% of victims feel guilty because they had not escaped earlier from a place threatened by war and for other reasons.



Graph 3: Guilt of rape victims

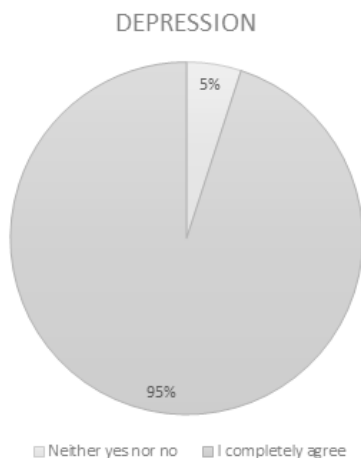
90% of victims still live with the constant tension within themselves.



Graph 4: Tension of rape victims

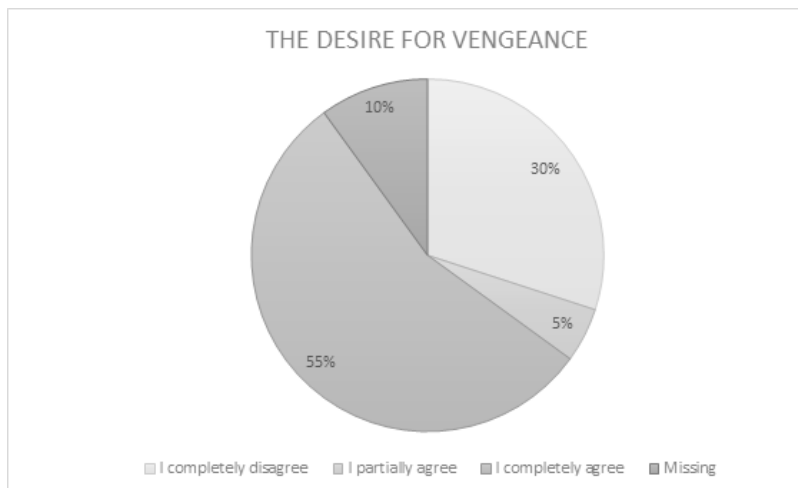
Depression as a result of the suppression of horrific events that occurred to the victims is present in 95% of the respondents.²⁵

²⁵ Cf. V. GRUDEN - Z. GRUDEN, *Ožiljci na duši Hrvatske*, 88-89.



Graph 5: Depression of rape victims

The desire for revenge against the enemy is felt by 55% of the respondents. In the tradition and culture of man of our essence, those people necessarily create and seek the way how to respond to the experienced evil.²⁶

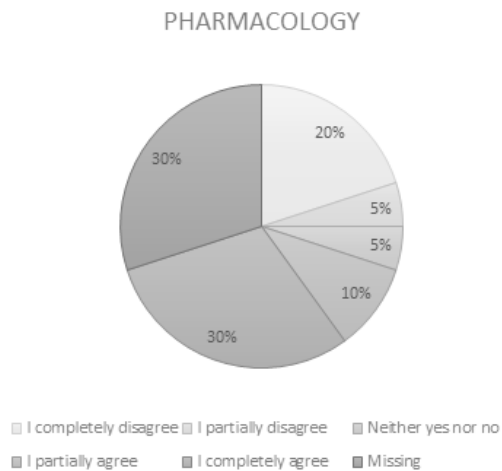


Graph 6: The desire for vengeance of rape victims

²⁶ Stanislav ŠOTA, „Nietcheovsko, egzistencijalističko-kršćansko, te kristovsko poimanje mira i pomirenja stradalnika Domovinskoga rata u Đakovačko-osječkoj nadbiskupiji”, Miljenko BREKALO, *Domovinski rat i njegovi društveno-ekonomski odrazi na razvoj hrvatskog Istoka* (Zagreb: Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, 2016.), 366.

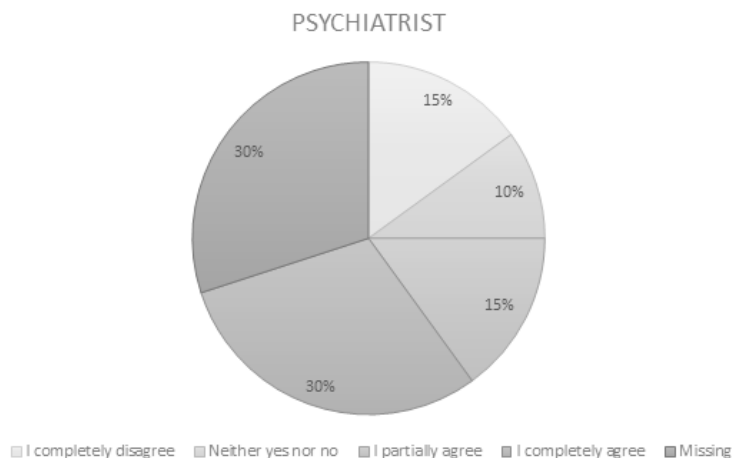
Dominant feelings, according to the testimonies of the respondents, are in great numbers shame, depression, tension, anger, and in somewhat lesser extent guilt and the desire for vengeance. Since they had to find a strategy for confronting and living with the fact of rape, there were different testimonies of what helped them: to some pharmacology, to others psychiatrist, to most conversation with women who experienced the same tragedy and work therapy, and to some confessions, prayer communities, pilgrimages and spiritual renewals.

Pharmacology and pharmacotherapy helped almost half of the respondents.



Graph 7: Pharmacology support to rape victims

In addition to pharmacology, some victims retained their mental health by going to a psychiatrist.



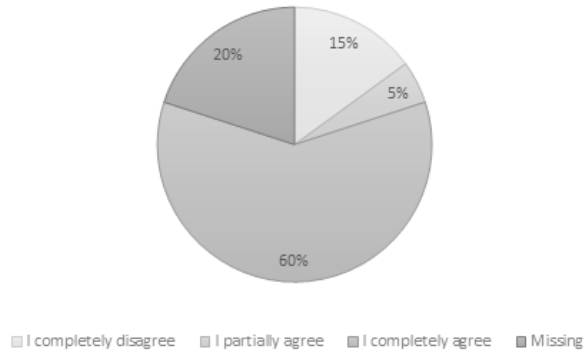
Graph 8: Psychiatrist support to rape victims

As the most successful and common strategy of confronting and living with the truth, there was a conversation with victims who experienced the same traumatic experience, meaning that the society in Croatia should have previously heard the victims of war rape and assist them using an interdisciplinary approach.

In conversation with the priest with whom they first came into contact, it turned out and manifested how much victims really believe, that is, trust the Church as an institution and the priest, for those who are religious. Unfortunately, despite being pointed out by one of the authors of this paper, the Church has not sufficiently recognized the trauma in general and thus the trauma of rape as a traumatic moment. This is most often apparent in the comparison of young people whose parents did not experience direct war and suffering and the young people in Vukovar who, due to the transgenerational dimension of the trauma, actually felt it; that is, their scale of values in comparison to, for example, the values of the young people in Osijek who attended marriage preparation course, shows discrepancy.²⁷

²⁷ Cf. S. ŠOTA, „Religioznost i kritički osvrt mladih vukovarskog dekanata na tečaj pripreve za brak te komparacija transgeneracijskih vrednota potrebitih za stabilnost i kvalitetu života u braku i obitelji”, Dražen ŽIVIĆ - Sandra CVIKIĆ - Ivana BENDRA, *Vukovar '91 – javni diskursi i pozicije moći* (Zagreb – Vukovar: Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, 2018.), 155-175.

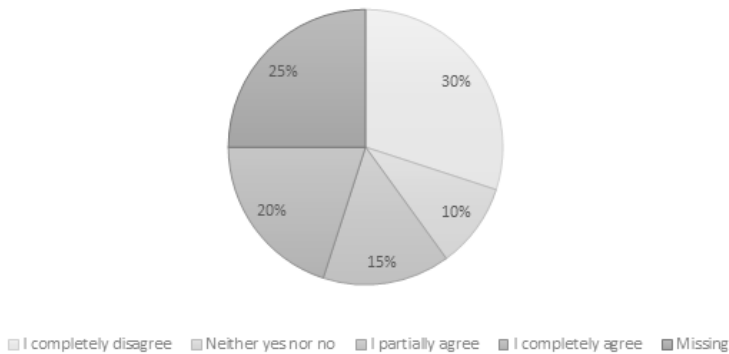
TALKING TO THE VICTIMS WHO EXPERIENCED THE SAME TRAGEDY



Graph 9: Group support to rape victims

Some victims were greatly helped by the faith and the sacrament of confession as a place of recognition to themselves and each other that the tragedy happened.²⁸

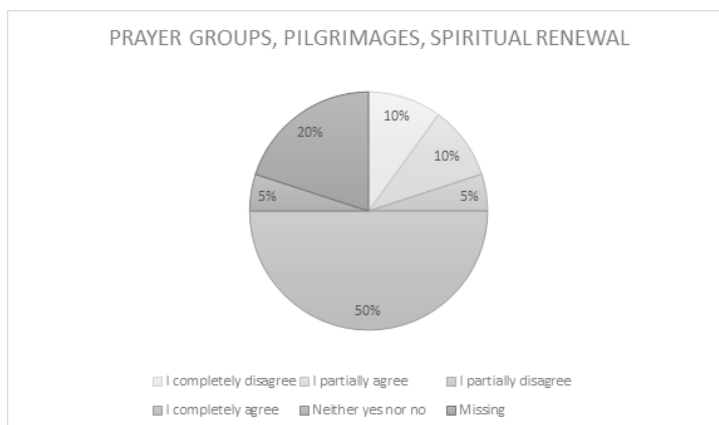
RECOGNITION AND CONFRONTATION THROUGH THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION



Graph 10: Sacramental support to rape victims

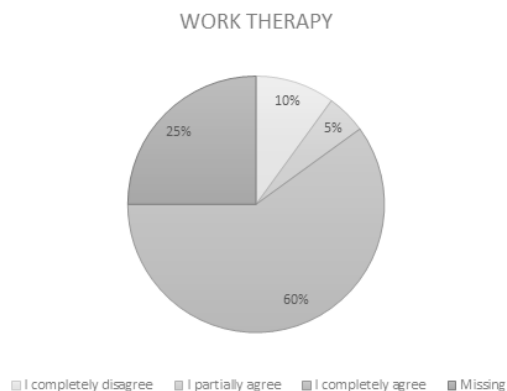
In the context of faith, many found comfort and peace by going to spiritual rejuvenation or sacred places, where in prayer they tried to interweave their past into the present and learn to live with traumas in the future.

²⁸ Cf. Vladimir GRUDEN, „Uloga kluba u liječenju posttraumatskog stresnog poremećaja”, R. GREGUREK - E. KLAIN (ed.), *Posttraumatski stresni poremećaj*, 199-201.



Graph 11: Spiritual support to rape victims

Work therapy is a very effective and common strategy that has helped a large number of victims feel good and valuable.



Graph 12: Work therapy support to rape victims

Survey results show that victims have found different strategies to face and live with the tragedy that has happened to them and try to live with their traumas. The fact that every raped person is marked with is in the hard truth that physical violence and psychological trauma have long-term consequences. Raped women who survived describe the presence of many symptoms²⁹ that include physical and psychological reactions and behavioural changes.³⁰

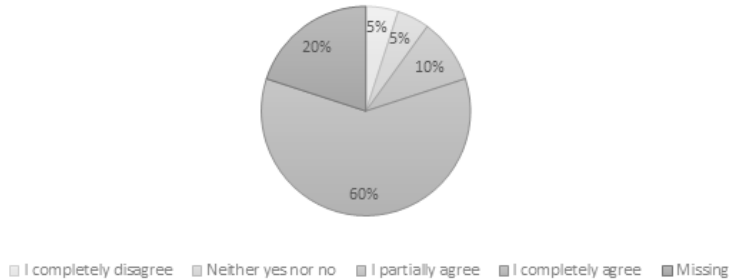
The most common consequences in the victim's everyday life are the memory of the rapist and act of rape, insomnia, nightmares, sudden

²⁹ The collective name is RTS (Rape Trauma Syndrome).

³⁰ Cf. L. KELLY, *Preživjeti seksualno nasilje*, 183-212.

mood swings, sudden panic attacks, anxiety, depression and problems with concentration. Even today, more than half of the victims still suffer from the sudden memory of the rapist and the act of rape and a return in thoughts with all the accompanying negative feelings.³¹

MEMORY AND A RETURN IN THOUGHTS OF THE RAPIST AND THE ACT OF RAPE

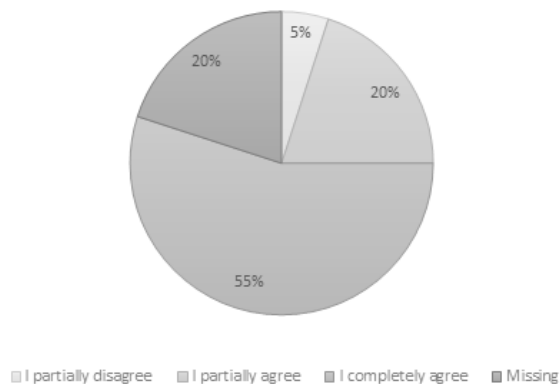


Graph 13: Thoughts of the unforgivable in rape victims

The most common symptoms of PTSD include: insomnia, remembrance and recollection in the mind of the rapist(s) and the act of rape, nightmares, sudden mood swings, difficulty in concentration, anxiety, sudden panic attacks and depression.

Insomnia and the side effects of bad or no sleep are known to the vast majority of victims.

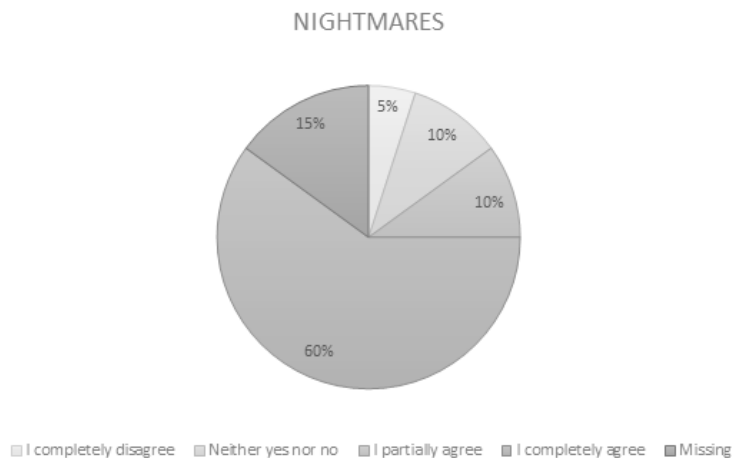
INSOMNIA



Graph 14: Insomnia in rape victims

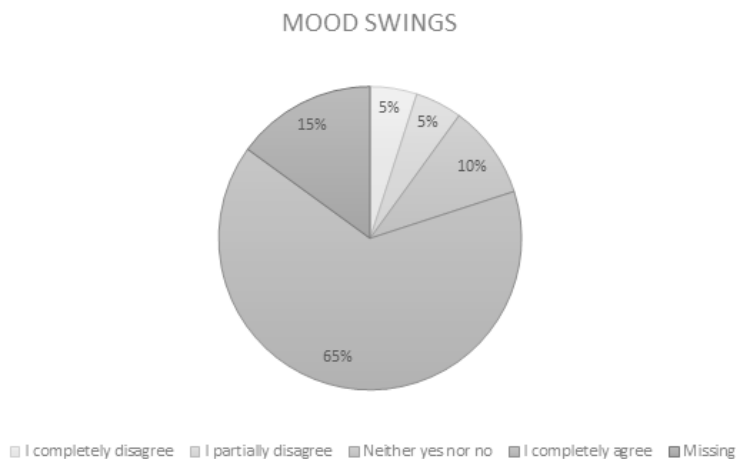
³¹ Cf. Damir DE ZAN, „Dijete i trauma”, R. GREGUREK - E. KLAIN (ed.), *Posttraumatski stresni poremećaj*, 144-146.

When they manage to fall asleep, the victims are often tortured with nightmares related to the trauma of rape and war events in general.



Graph 15: Nightmares in rape victims

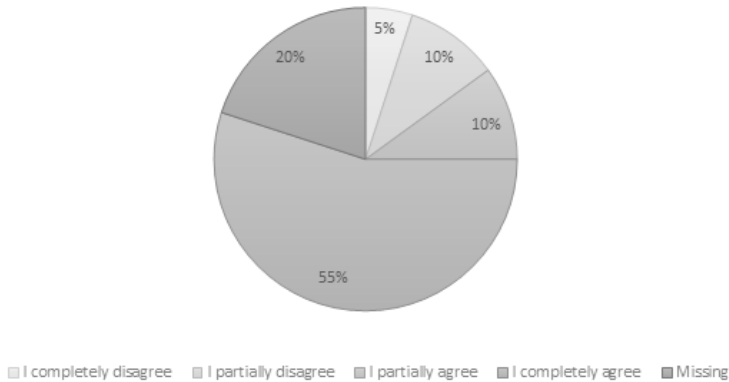
Unpleasant and always surprising sudden mood swings are present in 65% of the victims surveyed.



Graph 16: Mood swings in rape victims

Half of the surveyed are suffering from a sudden feeling of great fear and intimidation, known as panic attacks, that carry a series of psychosomatic symptoms.

SUDDEN PANIC ATTACKS

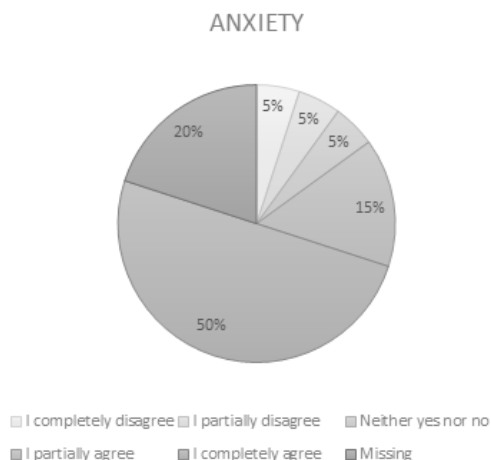


Graph 17: Panic attacks in rape victims

More than 60% of victims suffer from an unpleasant feeling of anxiety that lasts long. Anxiety often arises as a result of social, political, legislative and even ecclesiastical reality, that is the public. During individual therapy, whether it was for the veterans (men) or women who were raped during the Croatian War of Independence, the issue of peace, reconciliation and forgiveness often imposed itself. Since more than 90% of population in Croatia are Christians, many victims along with anxiety felt the burden of forgiveness and reconciliation. During individual and group therapy one of the authors of the paper has come to so-called three levels, that is, believes that there are several levels of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation.

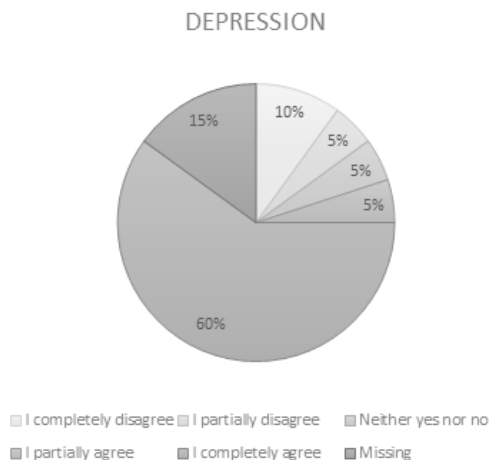
The first is so-called *Nietzschean aspect*, which in itself is not actually forgiveness, but an attempt to escape the facts of the evil endured, and such persons often use pharmacological agents as a form of salvation. The other is the *existential-Christian aspect*, which many victims expected from the aggressor and did not experience, and this resulted in the absence of reconciliation, forgiveness, and especially peace. Professor S. Šota, thinks that the only possible aspect of true peace and forgiveness is the *aspect of Christ* (meaning to go from desire and come to personal peace, and regardless of the attitude towards the aggressors, forgive them as Christ forgave *hoping that one day they might be aware of what they have done*)³²

³² Cf. S. ŠOTA, „Religioznost i kritički osvrt mladih”, D. ŽIVIĆ - S. CVIKIĆ - I. BENDRA, *Vukovar '91 – javni diskursi i pozicije moći*, 155-175.



Graph 18: Anxiety in rape victims

Most of the interviewed victims experienced depression as a result of suppression of severe trauma manifested in reduced mood, loss of energy, interest and satisfaction, disturbance of appetite and sleep, and also thoughts of suicide, which leads to loss of joy in life and loss of ability to work and live in everyday life.



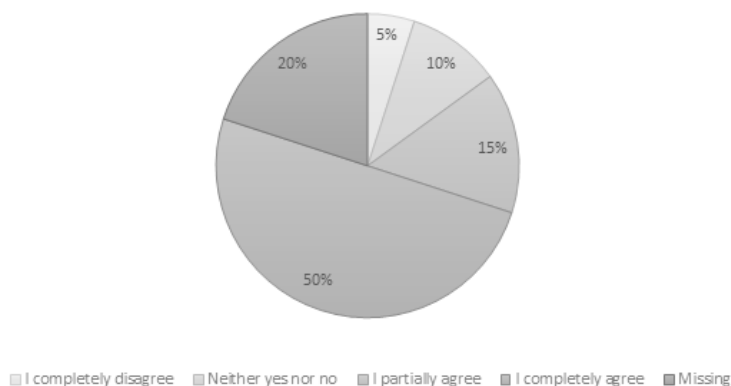
Graph 19: Depression in rape victims

Difficulties in concentration due to serious thoughts, and in some as a symptom of depression, are present in half of the respondents.

Speaking of the most common symptoms of PTSD in victims of war crime of rape, it is important to mention the remembrance and recollection in the mind of the rapist(s) and the act of rape suffered by 70% of victims, insomnia and nightmares in 75% of victims, sudden mood swings

in 65% of victims, and roughly the same percentage of them experienced panic, anxiety, depression, and problems with concentration.

TROUBLE WITH CONCENTRATION



Graph 20: Concentration problems in rape victims

Victims of war crimes of rape even today live with the consequences of the same, struggling with various feelings and symptoms of PTSD, find different strategies of living with the hard truth, but rape as the most cruel type of traumatic event does not leave its mark only on the victim but also on family members, local community, and even the entire nation to whom the victim belongs.³³

It is not easy for victims to deal with their trauma, but it is even more difficult when it comes to the misunderstanding of their closest, their community, and society in general.³⁴ The following results of the survey point to the fact that rape leaves a deep mark in the marital-family relationships of the victim and that support is largely not received within the family, and especially from the environment.

It is important to point out that the vast majority, as much as 60% of victims, were married during the war. When asked about the greatest obstacle to their marriage after the rape, the victims had different answers.³⁵ It is evident that as many as 20% of those questioned did not answer, some referred as the difficulty the silence about the truth, difficulties in sexual

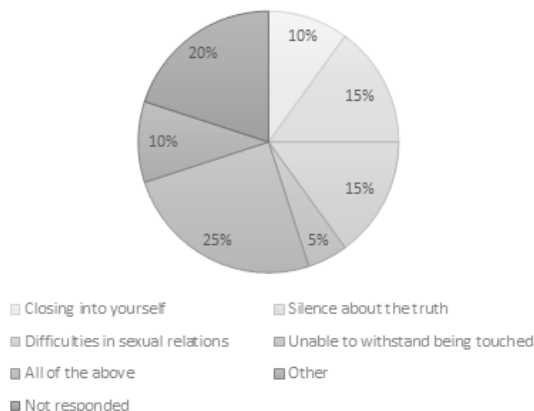
³³ Cf. V. GRUDEN - Z. GRUDEN, *Ožiljci na duši Hrvatske*, 109-138.

³⁴ Cf. Milka KVAKIĆ, „Socijalni aspekti posttraumatskog stresnog poremećaja – kliničko iskustvo“, R. GREGUREK - E. KLAIN (ed.), *Posttraumatski stresni poremećaj – hrvatska iskustva*, 195-198.

³⁵ Cf. M. KVAKIĆ, „Socijalni aspekti posttraumatskog stresnog poremećaja“, 195-198.

relations, self-closure, and intolerance to being touched, while a quarter of respondents spoke of all the aforementioned as a major difficulty.

THE BIGGEST ISSUE FOR YOUR MARRIAGE AFTER THE RAPE



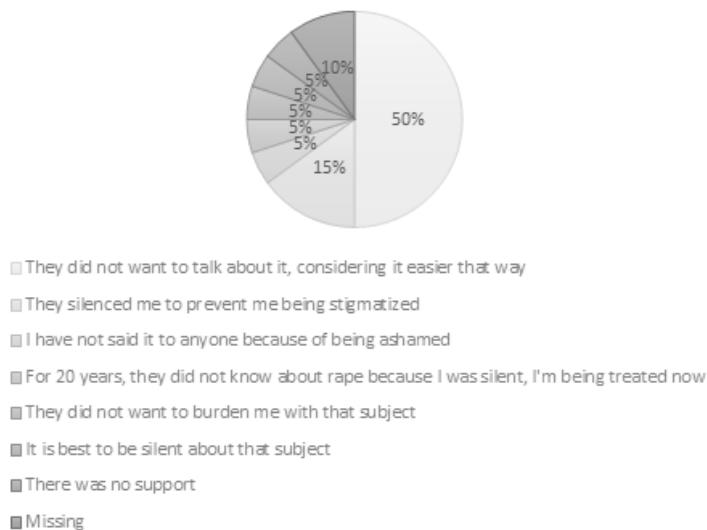
Graph 21: Marriage issues of rape victims

Great number of the responses of impaired marriage relationship is missing, as much as 40%, while other victims have different experiences. About the marriage break-up after the war and rape, more than 50% of respondents did not answer because neither children nor their spouse (usually husband) are willing to accept the fact of rape, while the experiences of other victims are different: some marriages survived, and a quarter of marriages broke up. Respondents also talked about the difficulties of acknowledging the truth. Most of the family members of the victims did not want to talk about rape, considering that it was easier that way, silencing the victims so they would not be embarrassed, thinking it was best to keep quiet, and all of this was very destructive to the victims. The most common responses of the interviewed regarding the issue of their surrounding's behaviour are presented.

When asked about the reactions of the environment, the victims have different experiences: a large number felt compassion, especially with children, slightly less with spouses, while almost the same number experienced condemnation of the victim, and consideration that rape happened in the past and should be *left* there. Some people were terrified of the truth and did not want to talk about it, resulting in the suppression and silence of the victims. Most victims still have a hard time talking about rape as a traumatic experience, and when they encountered misunderstanding and even condemnation, some victims have decided to deal with their trauma on their own.

Visible from the elaborated data based on the survey is the fact that victims of war rape are still suffering from many consequences and confronting the truth and they will suffer their whole lives. Dominant feelings after these traumatic events are: shame, anger, guilt, tension, depression, and some have a desire for vengeance. The majority of the respondents were married, and the great difficulties caused them a silence about truth, self-closure, difficulties in getting into sexual relationships, intolerance to being touched, and so on. Of those who answered the question, a quarter experienced divorce after the crime of rape and war in general. Family members mostly did not want to talk about rape, considering it easier that way, or they even silenced the victim. Society mostly does not understand them, and those who express their compassion, also give them the advice of leaving the crime of rape in the past.

HOW DID THE FAMILY MEMBERS ACT REGARDING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE RAPE?



Graph 22: Reactions of family members of rape victims

The strategy for dealing with the truth and the consequences is different, and most were helped by talking to women who experienced the same tragedy, work therapy, hagiotherapy, and going on pilgrimages and spiritual renewals; fewer were helped by pharmacology, psychiatrist and sacrament of confession.

Conclusion

A traumatic event of any kind leaves the lasting and severe consequences on the victim's life. The most difficult form of traumatic experience is rape, since the person is exposed to a greater variety of forms of abuse.

The Croatian people were no exception to this horror and traumatic experience during the Greater-Serbian aggression in the Croatian War of Independence in the wide area of the Republic of Croatia. In this paper, we have attempted to give overview of the situation in the areas extending along the Đakovo-Osijek Archdiocese.

After inspecting the problem of living with the traumatic experience of war rape, it is also exposed through concrete experiences of the interviewed victims of war crimes of rape, supported by the facts about the many psychosocial consequences that this horrible act leaves on the victim. The paper deals with dominant feelings, posttraumatic symptoms, difficulties in marital-family life, but also the relationship of the entire community in recognition and living with the truth about war crimes of rape.

Since it is a wounded person at all levels of existence, it is necessary to heal it at the same levels and to help integrate the traumatic experience into one's own life, especially to bring about personal peace. Psychosocial assistance as a process of psychological and social empowerment of individuals, their families and the whole environment helps the victims to find within themselves and their surrounding ways and means to successfully face stress, overcome the crises and traumatic experiences and gradually build healthy lifestyles. That is a specific vocation for the pastoral activities of the Church.

PSIHOSOCIJALNE POSLJEDICE RATNOG ZLOČINA SILOVANJA U ĐAKOVAČKO-OSJEČKOJ NADBISKUPIJI TIJEKOM VELIKOSRPSKE AGRESIJE

Sažetak

Definirajući rat kao najtragičniji oblik antihumanizma, antipersonalizma i anti-kulture, autori progovaraju o ratnom zločinu silovanja kao najtežem obliku traumatskog iskustva. U uvodnom dijelu rada prikazani su zločini i zlostavljanja na mnogim razinama koji su obilježje svakog pa tako i Domovinskog rata. Među svim oblicima traumatskog iskustva navedeno je silovanje kao kompleksan događaj obilježen iznimno negativnim životno emocionalnim posljedicama koje ostavljaju teške i trajne posljedice vidljive u svakodnevnom životu traumatizirane osobe. Prvi dio rada govori o životu nakon traumatskog događaja silovanja. Drugi dio rada je u najvećoj mjeri posvećen psihosocijalnim posljedicama s kojima žrtve ratnog zločina silovanja i danas žive, a do rezultata se došlo provedenom anketom među žrtvama ratnog zločina silovanja tijekom Domovinskog rata na području Đakovačko – osječke nadbiskupije. Temeljem iskaza, prikazani su dominantni osjećaji prisutni u žrtvama ratnog zločina silovanja, mehanizmi suočavanja i življenja s traumom te velike poteškoće glede pitanja podrške članova obitelji i društva. Treći dio posebno ističe posljedice dijela velikosrpske agresije tijekom Domovinskog rata u Đakovačko – osječkoj nadbiskupiji.

Ključne riječi: rat, ratni zločin silovanja, psihosocijalne posljedice, velikosrpska agresija, Đakovačko-osječka nadbiskupija.

Prijevod: Autori