

MASTER THESIS

BREAKING THE SILENCE: THE IMPACT OF THE TOTYA PLATFORM ON ADDRESSING STIGMA SURROUNDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE MPIGI DISTRICT, UGANDA

A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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(Walyendo, 2019)

‘It is one thing to have been what I have been through, but to have no one acknowledge your pain enhances that pain threefold. To suffer in silence is the greatest kind of suffering.’

(Chatellier & CWSCP, 2021)

Declaration in Lieu of Oath

‘I hereby declare, under oath, that this master thesis has been my independent work and has not been aided with any prohibited means. I declare, to the best of my knowledge and belief, that all passages taken from published and unpublished sources or documents have been reproduced whether as original, slightly changed or in thought, have been mentioned as such at the corresponding places of the thesis, by citation, where the extent of the original quotes is indicated.

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Elwine Röell
Utrecht, 30 May 2024



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Abstract

Sexual violence in Uganda is a pervasive public health concern that profoundly affects the physical, psychological, and social well-being of survivors, particularly women, who face a high prevalence of abuse. Survivors often experience significant stigmatization, manifested through devaluation and mistreatment, which reinforce societal processes that keep survivors 'in', 'down', or 'away' from societal order. Located in the Mpigi District of Central Uganda, the Totya platform offers multi-layered interventions for survivors, thereby creating a safe space where they can share their experiences without fear of judgment. This research investigates the impact of the Totya platform on addressing the stigma surrounding sexual violence against women in the Mpigi District of Uganda. Utilizing qualitative analysis, the study examines the lived experiences of sexual violence stigma by conducting 14 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with female survivors, local parasocial workers, and police officers. Using thematic analysis informed by the 'Stigma Power Process Framework', this research reveals that Totya's interventions, which target anticipated, internalized, perceived, and enacted stigma, have significantly contributed to reducing the stigma surrounding sexual violence by effectively addressing stigma-induced concerns of 'staying in', 'being kept away', and 'being kept down'. Despite its considerable impact, this research identified potential areas for improvement, such as enhancing guidance for leading figures and expanding programs to positively shift perceptions towards new intimate relationships. Thus, the findings underscore Totya's significant role in addressing stigma and highlight the need for ongoing enhancement of interventions to sustain and deepen its impact.

Keywords: Uganda, Mpigi District, Stigma, Sexual Violence, Totya

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Sexual violence is a major public health issue globally and one of the most common forms of violence experienced by women (Nuwabaine et al., 2023). Nearly one in three women worldwide (29%) have endured sexual violence in their lifetimes (Li et al., 2023). The prevalence of sexual violence varies widely across different regions and sub-populations (Borumandnia et al., 2020). The situation is particularly alarming in developing countries, especially in Africa, where 33% of women have been victims of sexual violence (Xianguo et al., 2023).

Despite Uganda's legal framework prohibiting sexual violence, the prevalence of sexual violence against women remains high (Kabaseke & Kitui, 2021). According to the most recent 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey, up to 22% of women aged 15 to 49 in Uganda have experienced some form of sexual violence. This translates to over one million women being exposed to sexual violence annually in Uganda (2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey Key Findings, 2018). Moreover, up to 35% of women aged 18 to 24 have experienced sexual abuse during childhood, highlighting the systemic nature of the problem (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, n.d.).

Sexual violence encompasses various forms, including rape, unwanted sexual advances, sexual harassment, and systematic sexual slavery in conflict settings (World Health Organization, n.d.). In Uganda, poverty is identified as the leading cause of sexual violence (American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, n.d.). This economic hardship often leads to practices like transactional sex, locally known as '*okwegatta okwa mpa-nkuwe*' or '*give me, I give you sex*', which is common among young people in both urban and rural areas (Hayer, 2010). Additionally, factors such as substance abuse or conflict can also exacerbate the issue, with sexual violence being used as a 'weapon of war' to humiliate and destroy ethnic groups in conflict settings (Bruce, 2005).

In Uganda, sexual violence is a significant public health issue, adversely affecting the physical and psychological health of survivors as well as the economy. Survivors face a range of physical health issues, including chronic chest pain, untreated sexually transmitted infections, recurrent vaginal infections, and incontinence (Woldetsadik et al., 2022). Additionally, beyond the immediate physical harm, there is an increased susceptibility to diverse sexual and reproductive health issues (Krug et al., 2002). Furthermore, mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and later promiscuous behavior are common (Amone-P'Olak et al., 2016). Barriers to accessing healthcare, like limited availability and high medication costs, exacerbate these problems (Woldetsadik et al., 2022). Economically, the impact is profound, with gender-based violence costing the Ugandan economy around 20 million dollars annually (Population Matters, 2019).

Beyond its direct health and economic consequences, sexual violence significantly affects the social well-being of survivors, as they are frequently subjected to stigmatization (Krug et al., 2002). In Northern Uganda, survivors often report facing stigma and strained relationships with family members and intimate partners due to their experiences. This stigma also extends to their children born out of sexual violence (Woldetsadik et al., 2022). The stigma associated with sexual violence, characterized by devaluation and mistreatment, results in survivors being kept 'in', 'away', or 'down' within societal order. Consequently, the stigma surrounding

sexual violence leads to immediate and long-lasting impacts on the social and health outcomes of survivors (Logie et al., 2023).

The Mpigi District in Central Uganda is no exception to the widespread and stigmatized nature of sexual violence. In this context, the Totya platform, a locally-led organization, has emerged as a critical intervention, providing a safe space for survivors to share their experiences without fear of judgment or stigmatization. Totya offers three layers of intervention: psychosocial support and emergency care, awareness and education, and assistance in the legal process (Totya Platform, 2023). These interventions are interconnected with the stigma surrounding sexual violence against women, each playing a distinct role in addressing this stigma. Consequently, Totya significantly contributes to addressing the public health concerns associated with sexual violence, as stigma and poor community relations largely mediate poor general functioning among survivors (Amone-P'Olak et al., 2016).

1.2 Present Study

This qualitative research aims to provide a comprehensive overview of how the Totya platform addresses the stigma surrounding sexual violence against women in the Mpigi District of Uganda. Due to the high prevalence of sexual violence, the critical need for support, and the safe space for sharing provided by Totya, the Mpigi District offers a unique and suitable context for researching the dynamics of stigma and Totya's contributions to addressing it.

The research will utilize the 'Stigma Power Process Framework', and thereby explore how the social processes surrounding sexual violence serve to keep people 'in', 'down', and 'away' (Logie et al., 2023). This framework forms a robust foundation to create an in-depth understanding of the stigma experienced by female survivors of sexual violence and allows for a thorough evaluation of Totya's role in addressing this stigma.

1.3 Scientific and Societal Relevance

This research is of high scientific relevance as it addresses a notable gap in the current academic landscape by specifically examining the stigma associated with sexual violence against women in the Mpigi District of Central Uganda. While existing literature extensively covers this topic in various regions of Uganda and other African countries, specific insights into the Mpigi District context are lacking. Most research in Uganda focuses on the Northern region, where sexual violence often occurs as a consequence of conflict (Amone-P'Olak et al., 2016). However, the Mpigi District experiences neither instability nor conflict-related violence, making the attribution of sexual violence as a 'weapon of war' inapplicable in this region and leading to potentially unique variations in the associated stigma. Additionally, cultural differences within regions of Uganda and across other African countries influence the manifestation of stigma, complicating the ability to generalize findings and underscoring the necessity for localized research. Given the lack of scientific literature on the stigma surrounding sexual violence in the Mpigi District, this research aims to address this gap and contribute valuable insights to the academic field.

Furthermore, this research is highly relevant socially as it provides the first scientific analysis of Totya's impact on addressing the stigma surrounding sexual violence against women in the Mpigi District. As a result, the effects of Totya's interventions in reducing this stigma will become tangible. This will enhance Totya's accountability and transparency, enabling them to demonstrate to potential funders the concrete impact they are achieving. Given that Totya

relies entirely on external funding, showcasing this impact provides them with the opportunity to secure more resources, thereby expanding their reach and increasing their overall impact. Practically, the results can guide Totya in their strategies to address the stigma surrounding sexual violence. Moreover, potential findings could be extrapolated and serve as a model for similar organizations worldwide, helping them address comparable issues.

1.4 Survivor vs. Victim

This thesis will use the term ‘survivor’ instead of ‘victim’ to refer to the women who have encountered sexual violence. This decision reflects the acknowledgement that these women are not defined by their victimization; they are individuals who have endured trauma and continue to assert their agency. By employing the term ‘survivor’, this thesis aims to empower these women, emphasizing their strength, courage and capacity for resilience. This is crucial as it underscores the importance of providing these individuals with justice, support, and acknowledgment for their endurance.

1.5 Preview

The remainder of the thesis is structured as follows: *Chapter 2* outlines the theoretical framework that is at the foundation of this research. *Chapter 3* details the methodology employed. In *Chapter 4* the empirical results of the interviews are organized and presented according to the structure of the ‘Stigma Power Process Framework’. *Chapter 5* interprets the research findings, explores their alignment with existing literature, discusses the strengths and limitations of this research, and offers recommendations. Finally, *Chapter 6* closes with an overall conclusion of this research.

2. Theoretical Framework

The upcoming chapter elucidates the theoretical foundation of this research, articulating the institutional research settings, key definitions, theoretical assumptions, and concepts essential for addressing the main research question and relevant sub-questions, which will be presented later.

2.1 Totya; Supports Survivors of Sexual Abuse to Overcome Trauma and get Justice

The Totya platform offers a safe space for survivors of sexual violence to share about their experiences, challenges, and discomforts without fear of judgement, blame or any other form of stigmatization. To achieve this, Totya offers three layers of interventions. Together with the survivors, Totya is ‘Breaking the Silence’ around sexual violence, fostering a society that recognizes it as both a crime and a violation of human rights. Totya empowers survivors to speak up about their experiences, making ‘Totya’ a suitable name since it is a Luganda word that means ‘Fear not!’ (Totya Platform, 2024).

The forthcoming section provides essential details about Totya, laying the groundwork to comprehend its role in reducing the stigma associated with sexual violence. Additional information about Totya, including its founder’s story, organizational structure, and future directions is available in the appendix (Appendix A).

2.1.1 Mission, Vision and Values of Totya

Janet Aguti, the founder of Totya, articulates Totya’s vision as: *‘That we envision a community, or a world, where an individual does not suffer the effects of sexual violence but gets to live a trauma-free, fair and just life.’* Further emphasizing their objective, she defines Totya’s mission as: *‘Creating a safe space for communities and for individuals to come up and share about their experiences of sexual violence, of any form of sexual violence, in order to combat it in the community.’* (J. Aguti, personal communication, March 4, 2024). While pursuing their mission and vision, Totya is dedicated to adhering to its core values, which include impartiality, compassion, confidentiality, individuality, teamwork and accountability (Totya Platform, 2024).

2.1.2 Three Layers of Interventions: A Closer Look

Psychosocial & Emergency care

Survivors of sexual violence face the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, and other physical injuries. These health challenges necessitate both preventative and therapeutic care, yet many survivors are financially unable to afford such treatments. With the support of Totya’s network of partners, these survivors gain access to essential medical services, which at times cost up to \$29 per survivor (Totya Platform, 2024).

Furthermore, when a survivor calls in, Totya provides them with psychosocial support and thereby ‘walks’ them through the healing process. Consequently, the survivors can be freed from the effects of trauma and transform their feelings of shame and guilt to ‘survivor pride’ (Totya Platform, 2024). For the initial two to three months, Totya offers psychosocial support via telephone, starting with daily calls in the first month. During these calls, Totya tries to find out whether it is an option for the survivor to accept face-to-face interactions. After a period of three months, the survivors have the option to initiate calls to Totya after experiencing triggers, ensuring ongoing support tailored to their needs. The counselling is not solely focused on the survivor: *‘We want to offer holistic healing, so when we do the counselling, we make sure we are not only counselling the victim, but we are counselling the*

entire family, all the people in the same household with them.' (J. Aguti, personal communication, March 4, 2024).

Advocacy: Awareness and Education

Totyia advocates for sexual violence prevention to protect this and future generations. Thereby, they follow a public health approach to eradicate sexual violence, involving the engagement of individuals, groups, and crucial stakeholders through community outreach initiatives. During these outreach days, Totyia participates in educational activities focused on awareness and prevention, employing methods of participatory action (Totyia Platform, 2024).

Justice

Together with the survivors, Totyia seeks justice for both the survivors and their families. Many survivors of sexual violence are unable to bear the financial burden of seeking the justice they are entitled to. With the support of various partners, Totyia does everything within their power to ensure that survivors achieve justice. They collaborate closely with the Ugandan Police and Public Prosecutors to guarantee effective case management and persistent follow-up, ensuring that the perpetrators are held responsible for their deeds (Totyia Platform, 2024).

2.1.3 Totyia's Collaborative Efforts

Collaboration with Community-Based Parasocial Workers

To enhance its impact and reach, Totyia collaborates closely with community-based parasocial workers, who are recruited from the district's village health teams. These parasocial workers are Totyia's first line of ambassadors in the communities and they are often first responders in cases of sexual violence. Some of them have leadership roles, such as Chairpersons or Local Area Councils¹, making them highly trusted and capable of driving change within their communities (Totyia Platform, 2024).

The collaboration with parasocial workers was initiated in 2020. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, Totyia was unable to enter communities to offer sensitization or conduct rescue missions, as vehicles were not allowed to move. Consequently, the idea arose to work together with volunteer parasocial workers to provide services in communities that were not easily accessible in a timely manner. By equipping them with the same comprehensive training on emergency response, requirements, and objectives that is provided to local leaders and the police, Totyia has been able to extend its vital support services more effectively throughout the district's villages (J. Aguti, personal communication, March 4, 2024).

Collaboration with the Police and Health Facilities

An important achievement for Totyia has been its collaboration with the police, characterized by mutual respect. Janet highlights the profound impact of this partnership: *'If you do not know the police very well, you might think everyone in the police system is corrupt, which is not true. It is actually the lack of resources that hinders them from doing their work. When Totyia provides some of the resources they need, they actually accomplish a lot. So now we are in a kind of relationship where we are co-dependent on each other.'* A similar beneficial collaboration is being worked out between Totyia and the health facilities. Individuals referred

¹ In the Mpigi District, every village is headed by a local chairperson (LC), who is the first member of the Local Council Committee, which consists of 10 members in total (CW2).

by Totya to these facilities are given immediate attention and services (J. Aguti, personal communication, March 4, 2024).

2.2 Sexual Violence Dynamics and the Context of Central Uganda

To comprehensively evaluate how Totya addresses the stigma surrounding sexual violence, it is crucial to have an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of sexual violence and how they manifest within the Mpigi district, the area where Totya operates. Therefore, the forthcoming section will explicate these dynamics, offering both a broad perspective and a focused examination of Uganda and more specifically the Mpigi District in Central Uganda.

2.2.1 What is Sexual Violence?

Sexual violence constitutes a negative and traumatic life event that significantly impacts the psychological and sociological well-being of the survivor, regardless of gender. Its occurrence is influenced by many factors within various social, cultural, and economic settings. Sexual violence happens in all cultures, each with distinct definitions of what constitutes sexual violence (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). As a broad definition, the WHO outlines sexual violence as follows:

‘Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work’ (Krug et al., 2002, p.149)

Crimes of sexual violence not only inflict harm on the immediate victims but also undermine fundamental human rights (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). Specifically, sexual violence violates the women’s sexual and reproductive rights, which include the entitlement to a satisfactory sexual life, free of violence, coercion or the risk of unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection (Távora, 2006).

While it is acknowledged that gender-based and sexual violence can also impact men, it is women that predominantly constitute the survivors, while men typically assume the role of perpetrators in these instances (Távora, 2006). At the core of the issue, gender inequality emerges as a central driving force behind instances of sexual violence targeted at women (Krug et al., 2002). Thereby, it is not surprising that sexual violence is more likely to occur in cultures that foster beliefs of male dominance and the social and cultural inferiority of women compared to more feministic cultures (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013).

Different Forms of Sexual Violence

Sexual violence encompasses various forms, with rape being the most severe modality (Távora, 2006). Sexual violence includes a spectrum of both verbal and physical acts, thereby ranging from verbal harassment to forced penetration. The concept of ‘coercion’ mentioned by the WHO-definition encompasses a broad array of coercive tactics: from social pressure and intimidation to physical force. According to the WHO, sexual violence includes, but is not limited to:

- > Rape within marriage or dating relationships
- > Rape by strangers or acquaintances
- > Unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment (at school, work etc.)
- > Systematic rape, sexual slavery, and other forms of violence, which are particularly common in armed conflicts (e.g. forced impregnation)

- > Sexual abuse of mentally or physically disabled people
- > Rape and sexual abuse of children
- > ‘Customary’ forms of sexual violence, such as forced marriage or cohabitation and wife inheritance (World Health Organization, n.d.)

Health and Economic Consequences of Sexual Violence

Sexual violence has far-reaching effects on population health, impacting both the physical and mental health and social well-being of survivors (Krug et al., 2002). The consequences of sexual violence are profoundly negative and long-term due to the interconnectedness of the body, mind and soul (Sigurdardottir & Halldorsdottir, 2021). In some cases, the consequences can even lead to fatalities, which may be attributed to suicide, HIV infections, or homicide (Krug et al., 2002). The perceived consequences of sexual violence vary across cultures. For example, in cultures where shame and stigma are more prevalent, the survivors of sexual violence stay silent about their trauma, which affects them negatively (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013).

In addition to health consequences, sexual violence has significant economic impacts. The lifetime cost of rape and sexual assault is estimated to be over \$122,000 per survivor. For survivors already facing poverty, these financial burdens can affect their ability to maintain housing and provide for their families (Economics as a Factor in Sexual Violence, n.d.).

2.2.2 Sexual Violence: The Context of Uganda

The conceptualization and understanding of sexual violence vary by location, highlighting the importance of considering the specific context in which it occurs (Shampemba, 2023). Therefore, the following section will focus on sexual violence within the context of Uganda, and more specifically the context of Mpigi District in Central Uganda.

Prevalence and Response to Sexual Violence in Uganda

Despite the previously mentioned high prevalence of sexual violence in Uganda, only a small minority of the survivors seek help. Specifically, 6% of female survivors and 10% of male survivors initially seek services after experiencing sexual violence. However, fewer actually receive these services, with only 5% of female survivors and 8% of male survivors eventually obtaining them. This indicates that an additional 1% of female survivors and 2% of male survivors who seek help do not end up receiving it (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, n.d.).

Causes of Sexual Violence in Uganda

In Uganda, poverty is the primary cause of sexual violence, often leading to transactional sex as a means to access essential resources (American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, n.d.; Hayer, 2010). Transactional sex is defined as follows:

‘Non-marital, non-commercial sexual encounters or relationships primarily motivated by the implicit assumption that sex will be exchanged for material benefit or status’ (Kyegombe et al., 2020, p. 233)

The research by Haver (2010) shows that poverty encourages members of society to exploit the sexuality of young women. The study highlights instances where tradesmen and schoolteachers demand sexual favors as payment for goods and school fees, which is for

these women more affordable than monetary compensation. Additionally, poor families exploit female sexuality to acquire food and essential goods (Hayer, 2010).

While poverty is the most prominent cause of sexual violence, other factors, such as the abuse of drugs or alcohol, can lead to incidents of sexual violence (Bruce, 2005). Moreover, in conflict-related areas in Uganda, sexual violence happens because of the conflict, as sexual violence has been frequently used during war, mostly targeting young girls and women (Amone-P'Olak et al., 2016). When utilized as a weapon of war, sexual violence aims to humiliate, demoralize, and eventually destroy an ethnic group (Chatellier & CWSCP, 2021).

Sexual Violence in Mpigi, Central Uganda

Uganda is divided into four geographical regions: North, West, East, and Central. The Central region, which includes the capital city, Kampala, is the most populated. Additionally, Uganda is divided into 136 districts, each named after its chief city. Each district is further divided into counties and municipalities, and each county is subdivided into sub-counties (Montoleone, n.d.).

The Mpigi District, situated in Central Uganda, serves as the area of reach for Totya's operations. Despite the absence of statistics specific to Mpigi district, Janet, the founder of Totya, points out that Mpigi experiences slightly higher rates of stranger-related rape compared to other regions in Uganda. This trend can be attributed to the spacing between homes, as Janet explains: *'even if they made an alarm, they had banana plantations surrounding them, so no one could really hear and come and rescue.'* (J. Aguti, personal communication, March 4, 2024).

Ugandan Law on Sexual Offences

In Uganda, sexual offences are categorized as offences against morality. Judges can give at maximum the penalty of death, but solely to cases of rape, aggravated defilement² and detention with sexual intent. Alternatively, imprisonment ranging from 3 years to life imprisonment may be imposed, depending on the severity of the offence and other mitigating factors. In case the perpetrator is found not guilty by the court, the charges will be dropped. However, it is important to note that the State retains the option to bring the case to higher court, reflecting the legal system's commitment to ensuring justice and accountability in cases of sexual violence (*Information For Victims Of Rape And Sexual Assault in Uganda*, 2023).

Age of Consent

Ugandan national law prohibits engaging in sexual activities with individuals under the age of eighteen, citing their legal recognition as children and their inability to provide consent. This is outlined in Section 129 of the Penal Code Act of Uganda, which specifies:

'Any person who performs a sexual act with another person who is below the age of eighteen years, commits a felony known as defilement and is on conviction liable to life imprisonment' (International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children, 2018, p.1)

² Defilement is aggravated if an adult performs sexual intercourse with a very young child (between days to 14 years) or when other special circumstances are prevalent such as: HIV/AIDS positivity, offender's position of authority, victim being a blood-relative, victim being disabled, or if the offender has committed similar offenses before (Justice Centers Uganda, 2021).

This law makes it illegal for two individuals under the age of eighteen to engage in sexual activities, even when it is consensual (International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children, 2018). Consequently, even if girls under the age of 18 provide consent to engage in sexual activities, they are still regarded as survivors of sexual violence due to their inability to give valid consent.

Attitudes Towards Sexual Violence in Uganda

Research conducted with young individuals in the slum regions of Kampala, Uganda's capital, revealed that 34.3% agreed that it is permissible for a boy to force a girl into sex if he harbors feelings for her. Additionally, 73.3% acknowledged that it is common for both strangers and relatives to compel young females into non-consensual sexual acts (Kyegombe et al., 2020).

Another study by Hayer (2010) tries to issue young women's voices in Uganda. This research shows that young women in Uganda are significantly tolerant of sexual coercion. This acceptance seems to stem from power imbalances between genders and the socio-cultural environment that shapes their lives (Hayer, 2010).

Gender Imbalance

UNICEF further emphasizes the power imbalance between genders, revealing that half of all Ugandans aged 18 to 24 believe it is acceptable for a man to beat his wife, and 6 in 10 believe a wife should tolerate violence in order to keep the family together (Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, n.d.).

In his research, Morrow (2000) delves into the gender roles prevalent in Mpigi, emphasizing that the 'traditional' gender roles of the past have withstood the passing of time, thereby continuing to shape the characteristics of a desirable wife. Historically, the 'traditional' roles of women in Mpigi primarily included tasks such as cultivating, producing, and preparing food, as well as childcare and household maintenance. The man's needs and requirements structured household dynamics, expecting wives to be obedient and subordinate under the threat of violence. A woman's social standing was often tied to her 'ability' to produce children, with childless women facing social devaluation. Moreover, despite the increasing presence of women in the workforce and the availability of income-generating opportunities for rural and uneducated women, it remains common for their earnings to be appropriated by their male partners, especially in rural areas (Morrow, 2000).

Secret Atmosphere

The legal status of consensual sex among adolescents creates a secret atmosphere around these encounters, leading to less open communication and insecurity about what is considered acceptable. Moreover, it is probable that incidences of abuse are underreported, as children feel less free to talk about it and fear adverse consequences. A culture of silence around sexual issues and abuse hinders the disclosure of incidents and the provision of support for survivors (Goessmann et al., 2020).

2.3 Stigma and the Stigma Power Process Framework

This section investigates the concept of stigma, its implications, and the discrimination it generates. Furthermore, in subsequent sections, the Stigma Power Process Framework will be introduced, which will serve as the foundational framework for this research.

2.3.1 What is Stigma?

Erving Goffman, a Canadian sociologist, defines the term 'stigma' as the '*situation of the individual disqualified from full social acceptance*' (Fitzpatrick, 2008). Stigma stems from a lack of knowledge and is frequently manifested through stereotypes. Consequently, stigma results in prejudice, discrimination, and social isolation for the stigmatized individual, leading to their social exclusion. As a result, stigmatized individuals develop self-stigma and low self-esteem, contributing to deterioration in their quality of life (Santos et al., 2016).

Stigma encompasses various dimensions, manifesting as enacted stigma, perceived or normative stigma, anticipated stigma, and internalized stigma. Enacted stigma involves mistreatment and rejection directed at individuals perceived as 'different' or 'deviating from societal norms'. Perceived or normative stigma entails an awareness of harmful social norms (Logie et al., 2023). Anticipated stigma, which is the expectation of facing rejection or discrimination based on one's identity, is frequently mistaken for perceived stigma in studies, but it should be considered conceptually distinct. Specifically, it refers to the expectation of future events and represents the stigma individuals anticipate encountering, whereas perceived stigma typically refers to the recognition of existing stigma (Moore et al., 2013). Lastly, internalized stigma refers to the internalization of societal judgments, leading to the development of feelings of shame within individuals who bear the burden of societal prejudice. Together, these dimensions of stigma illustrate the multifaceted nature of the societal processes and individual experiences involved in the enactment of stigma (Logie et al., 2023).

2.3.2 Motivation to Stigmatize

Three main objectives can explain the motivation behind stigma: exploitation and dominance, the enforcement of social norms, and the avoidance of deviations. Firstly, exploitation and domination involve certain groups being 'kept down' to gain wealth, power, and higher societal status for the stigmatizers. Secondly, stigma leads to the enforcement of social norms, thereby 'keeping people in' by imposing a significant cost on individuals who deviate from societal norms. Consequently, stigma functions as a deterrent and a means of social control, influencing individuals to conform to accepted behavioral standards. Thirdly, stigma leads to the avoidance of deviations from the individual's 'normal' appearance, thereby 'keeping people away'. This behavior stems from the evolutionary advantage of avoiding diseases, fostering aversion to deviations from the local norm, and satisfying the human desire to distance oneself from those with physical or behavioral variations. Recognizing these underlying motives allows individuals to harness this 'power of stigma' to achieve the ends they desire (Link & Phelan, 2014).

2.3.3 Mechanisms of Discrimination

A broad range of methods exist on how to exercise stigma power, providing numerous ways to discriminate against individuals. Previous research identified various processes through which this discrimination takes place, including; direct person-to-person discrimination, interactional discrimination, structural discrimination and discrimination operating through the individual (Link & Phelan, 2014). The following paragraphs will shortly describe these different discriminating processes.

Direct Person-to-Person Discrimination

Direct person-to-person discrimination, the most overt form, occurs when individuals openly discriminate based on prejudices or stereotypes (Allport, 1954). However, relying solely on this direct approach poses challenges for the discriminator, as consistently maintaining a

lower status for stigmatized individuals requires constant presence, readiness, and resources. Moreover, societal norms and laws often oppose discrimination, making it socially unacceptable. The overt nature of direct discrimination also exposes the discriminator's interests, creating potential challenges. To navigate these difficulties, stigmatizers often find more effective ways, such as misrecognizing the interests of the stigmatized and making them less observable or perceived as the natural order of things (Bourdieu, 1990). In essence, direct person-to-person discrimination comes with difficulties prompting the need for alternative strategies to achieve desired outcomes (Link & Phelan, 2014).

Structural Discrimination

Structural discrimination manifests through social policies, laws, institutional practices, and negative social attitudes and thereby accumulatively disadvantages stigmatized groups over time (Structural Racism and Discrimination, 2023). These discriminatory acts at the structural level enable stigmatizers to achieve their aims without the burden or embarrassment of direct discrimination, thereby realizing their objectives at the macro level (Link & Phelan, 2014).

Interactional Discrimination

With interactional discrimination, individuals bring preconceived expectations into interactions with someone with a stigmatized status. During these interactions, the stigmatizers may display behaviors like hesitance, uncertainty, superiority, or excessive kindness. In response, the person with the stigmatized status may exhibit less self-assurance or warmth, creating a cycle where the interaction partner starts to dislike this person. Through repeated occurrences of these interactions in various situations, this pattern leads to the stigmatized individual being excluded and relegated to a lower social status. Despite the evident inequalities in these interactions, the acts of discrimination often remain unnoticed, thereby allowing stigma to operate in ways that are misrecognized (Link & Phelan, 2014).

Discrimination Through the Stigmatized Person

This mode of discrimination operates through stigmatized individuals' knowledge and potential acceptance of prevalent stereotypes, compelling them to conform to societal expectations. Consequently, cultural stereotypes introduce complexities and harmful effects that affect stigmatized groups, even in the absence of overt discrimination. The challenge with this form of discrimination lies in the difficulties of identifying specific perpetrators, leaving the discrimination hidden and misrecognized within the broader societal context (Link & Phelan, 2014).

2.3.4 The Stigma Power Process Framework

'Stigma power', can be seen as a resource that can be used to achieve the aims of stigmatizers. These stigma processes are often indirect and broadly effective. Moreover, these stigma processes are often hidden in taken-for-granted cultural circumstances (Link & Phelan, 2014).

Further examination of 'stigma power' resulted in the formulation of the 'Stigma Power Process Framework' (Link & Phelan, 2014). This framework examines how social processes of stigma serve to keep people 'in', 'down', and 'away' (Logie et al., 2023). Thereby, the framework shed light on the often 'hidden' and 'misrecognized' interests of stigmatizers, bringing to the forefront the stigma processes that are unrelated to the direct actions of the stigmatizers. Consequently, introducing the concept of 'stigma power' opens the potential for seeing stigmatizing situations from a new perspective (Link & Phelan, 2014).

Figure 1 below visualizes the ‘Stigma Power Process Framework’ and its concepts and operationalization (Link & Phelan, 2014). The following paragraphs will provide a more in-depth explanation of the various parts of the framework.

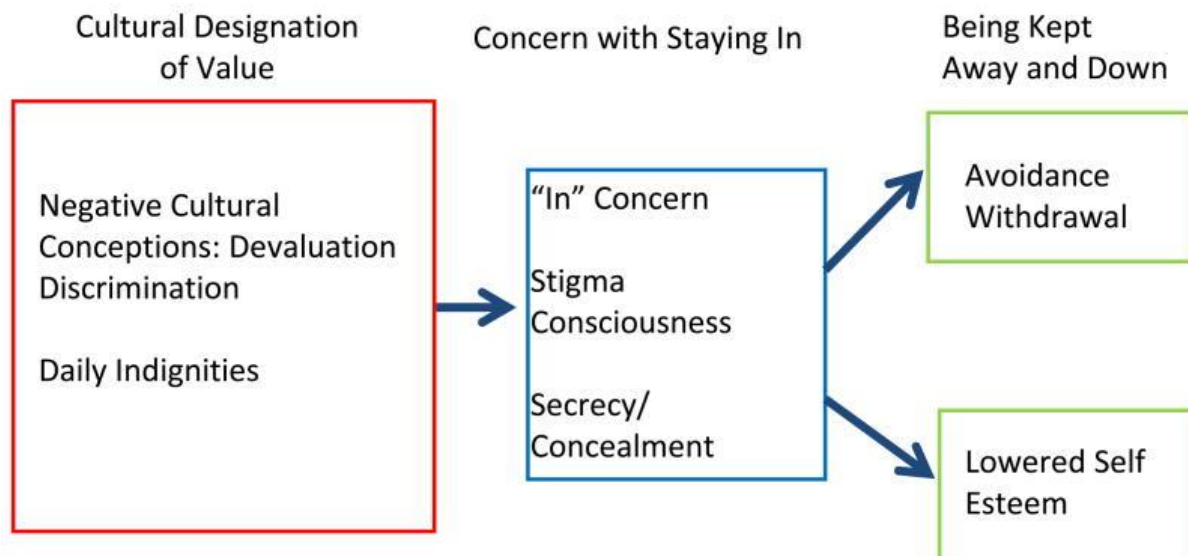


Figure 1: The Stigma Power Process Framework – Concepts and operationalization (Link & Phelan, 2014)

Cultural Designation of Value

As visible in Figure 1, the Stigma Power Framework starts with a ‘Cultural Designation of Value’, where individuals consider the societal appraisal of who holds value and who does not. This process also heightens awareness of one’s own social perception, including the anticipation of potential negative societal judgements and subsequent discrimination. Moreover, this part of the framework also considers the ‘Daily Indignities’ which are the everyday mistreatments that socially devalued persons experience due to their lower status (Logie et al., 2023).

Concern with Staying In

Secondly, the framework addresses the ‘Concern with Staying In’, emphasizing the avoidance of negative labels. Due to the negative cultural climate caused by stigma, individuals facing societal scrutiny strive to distance themselves from stigmatized labels, monitoring their behavior closely to conform to societal norms and avoid negative perceptions. They live with an ‘In Concern’ and monitor social interactions, fearing that even slight deviations from accepted norms could lead others to view them unfavorably. Additionally, this part of the framework focuses on ‘Stigma Consciousness’, where individuals are hyper-aware of how others perceive them and how it may be influenced by any aspect of their identity. Lastly, individuals may adopt a strategy of ‘Secrecy/Concealment’ to uphold societal norms. These three dimensions collectively represent concerns with ‘Staying In’. When these concerns drive individuals to take actions that reinforce conformity, they perpetuate the goals of those who seek to stigmatize them (Link & Phelan, 2014).

Being Kept Away

Thirdly, the negative cultural context fosters an anticipation of potential rejection and uncomfortable interactions, which prompts individuals’ ‘Avoidance’ and ‘Withdrawal’ of contact or threatening situations. Individuals may opt to limit their interactions to those who share similar experiences or who are aware and accepting of their personal history. When

withdrawal is successfully implemented, it aligns with the stigmatizer’s objective of keeping these individuals at a distance (Link & Phelan, 2014).

Being Kept Down

Lastly, due to negative societal evaluations tied to conditions, individuals who have encountered such circumstances may internalize feelings of diminished worth or value, thereby leading to ‘Lowered Self Esteem’. Although this decrease in self-esteem may not be the explicit intention of stigmatizers, it contributes to the overarching goal of maintaining certain boundaries or distance. Individuals with lower self-esteem may be more susceptible to manipulation through minor incentives and are less likely to push for broader inclusion or equitable treatment (Link & Phelan, 2014).

2.4 Stigma Surrounding Sexual Violence Against Women

2.4.1 Sexual Violence Against Women and the Stigma Power Process Framework

Utilizing the Stigma Power Process Framework, Logie et al. (2023) conducted a thematic analysis that resulted in a tailored version specifically addressing the stigma associated with sexual violence against women (Logie et al., 2023). This version of the framework lays the groundwork for a broader examination of sexual violence stigma across various Ugandan contexts, including Mpigi. Figure 2 presents the concepts and operationalization of the tailored version of the Stigma Power Process Framework, with the subsequent chapters delving into its components. By integrating literature from various regions within Uganda and other African countries, the subsequent analysis seeks to deepen the understanding of sexual violence stigma, building on the foundational theory established by Logie et al. This approach offers a comprehensive lens through which to view and address the multifaceted nature of sexual violence stigma.

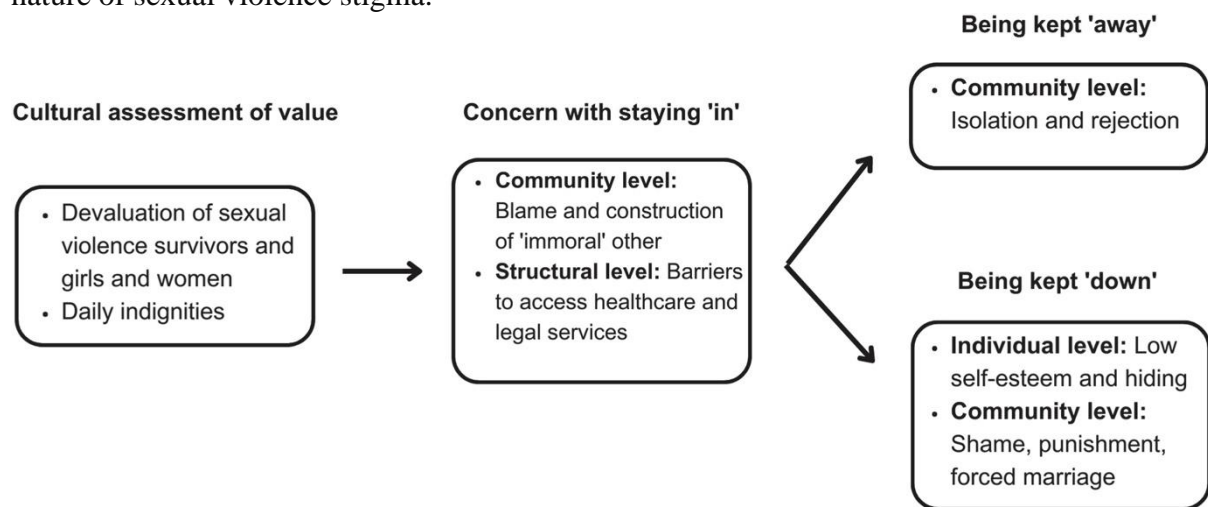


Figure 2: Applying the Stigma Power Process Framework to sexual violence stigma (Logie et al., 2023)

2.4.2 Cultural Assessment of Value

The cultural assessment of value reflects how survivors of sexual violence are aware that society negatively evaluates and judges them about their experiences (Logie et al., 2023). This cultural valuation will be further explored in the following paragraphs, examining both the devaluation of survivors and the daily indignities they endure.

Devaluation of Sexual Violence Survivors

In Uganda, survivors of sexual violence face judgement and are often deemed deserving of punishment for their ‘immoral’ behavior. This is operating under the false belief that

experiencing sexual violence is indicative of one's moral failing, leading to stigma surrounding sexual violence (Logie et al., 2023). Stigma can effectively reduce women who have experienced sexual violence as 'untouchables', by provoking feelings of disgust and rejection from both the women themselves and their surrounding communities (Chatellier & CWSCP, 2021). This diminishing view of survivors is reinforced by the broader cultural undervaluing of females relative to males. Consequently, survivors of sexual violence are stigmatized and considered inferior within society (Logie et al., 2023).

Daily Indignities

The cultural devaluation of Ugandan survivors is enforced through the 'daily indignities' they endure, manifesting as negative treatment including; being taken less seriously, unfair treatment, and exploitation. Within their communities, the survivors' opinions do not matter, making them voiceless. Moreover, survivors are being publicly criticized and mocked. Ultimately, such societal attitudes diminish the survivors' access to power, agency, and resources (Logie et al., 2023).

2.4.3 Staying in

The awareness of negative cultural perceptions, which might be accompanied by mistreatment of survivors leads to concerns with 'staying in' the social order (Logie et al., 2023). The subsequent paragraphs will describe how this concern of 'staying in' might lead to barriers in accessing essential health and legal support. Moreover, the role of community leaders and religious leaders on the negative cultural attitudes towards survivors will be examined.

Barriers to Accessing Healthcare and Legal Services

Reporting sexual violence allows survivors to obtain the necessary medical, psychosocial, and legal support to minimize the impact on their health and ensures that the perpetrators are held accountable. However, research in Uganda revealed that only 33% of female and 30% of male survivors of sexual and physical violence sought help, while 51% of women and 49% of men neither sought help nor told anyone about the violence (Ssanyu et al., 2022).

The research conducted by Logie et al. (2023) sheds light on the barriers to accessing health and legal services for survivors of sexual violence in Northwestern Uganda. The survivors often intentionally avoid environments where they might encounter stigma associated with their experiences. Consequently, on the structural level, stigmatizing leads to reduced accessibility to the healthcare and legal services that survivors of sexual violence deserve and need (Logie et al., 2023).

Barriers to Healthcare

In the realm of medical post-rape care, interventions such as post-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for HIV prevention and contraception to avoid unintended pregnancies are vital. However, in Northwestern Uganda, stigmatizing practices at the structural level often compromise the quality of care received by survivors and create barriers to healthcare engagement (Logie et al., 2023).

First, sexual violence survivors frequently report concerns about confidentiality breaches in healthcare settings, fueled by anticipated stigma. Moreover, healthcare practitioners frequently fall short in providing meaningful support to the survivors, often resorting to mistreatment, thereby reflecting the existence of enacted stigma. For example, some

healthcare professionals do not show empathy and compassion towards survivors of sexual violence. Furthermore, some practitioners may engage in victim-blaming behavior, exacerbating survivors' reluctance to disclose their abuse history (Logie et al., 2023).

Consequently, survivors may avoid seeking healthcare services due to fears of mistreatment (anticipated stigma) and an awareness of the societal devaluation of sexual violence survivors (perceived stigma). Additionally, the heightened visibility of sexual violence-related injuries due to inappropriate medical treatment can further exacerbate stigma (Logie et al., 2023). In response, survivors may turn to traditional practices as alternatives to formal healthcare, only seeking hospital care when their health deteriorates to a critical state, thereby jeopardizing their well-being (Logie et al., 2023).

Barriers to Justice

International and national legislation has progressed in acknowledging sexual violence as a criminal act and in implementing measures to ensure women's access to justice. However, in Uganda, there is a concerning trend of rising sexual violence statistics alongside persistently low rates of prosecution and conviction. These statistics are partly a result of the many challenges and obstacles survivors encounter when seeking justice for the crime committed against them (Kabaseke & Kitui, 2021).

In Uganda, female survivors of sexual violence face various procedural and institutional challenges when seeking justice, including; limitations in facilitating their initial interaction with the justice system, gaps in forensic procedures, unmet psychological support for survivors, a lack of legislation for witness protection, technological deficiencies, and limited legal knowledge among survivors. Additionally, the survivors might face discriminatory practices during the trial procedures and the defense counsel might use intimidating tactics (Kabaseke & Kitui, 2021).

Furthermore, Ssanyu et al. (2022) identify poverty and gender inequality as barriers to reporting. Expenses associated with reporting cases, like transportation costs, can hinder reporting and result in cases being settled outside of court. Female survivors have mostly noted gender inequalities as a barrier, often finding themselves in submissive and economically dependent positions relative to their male partners, who may also be the perpetrators of the violence (Ssanyu et al., 2022).

As a result, survivors tend to avoid reporting cases and engaging with legal systems, mostly due to anticipated structural stigma. The perceived inadequacies in support services for survivors, combined with potential difficulties in accessing sufficient services and evidence, often deter survivors from seeking justice through the Ugandan law enforcement channels (Logie et al., 2023).

Blame and Construction of the 'Immoral Other': The role of Community and Religious Leaders:

Survivors of sexual violence are often blamed and deemed immoral. In Northwestern Uganda, it is common for the community to view survivors as prostitutes who brought their misfortune upon themselves. Additionally, survivors are often criticized for not wearing 'proper clothing'. As a result, rather than offering support, some community members might express sentiments such as: *'You wanted it, you suffer'*, thereby further victimizing the survivors (Logie et al., 2023). Community leaders and religious leaders wield influence in their communities, which enables them to challenge and address the stigma and blame

directed at survivors of sexual violence and the children born out of sexual violence (Woldetsadik et al., 2022).

Cultural leaders play a crucial role in initiating dialogue about sexual violence and the associated stigma within communities. To address and unravel the roots of the stigma encountered by survivors, the leadership of cultural authorities is essential. In Uganda, where religion plays a significant role, the engagement of religious leaders is crucial, as they have the capacity to create a new environment within communities. Additionally, community leaders can play a pivotal role by organizing community gatherings where the experiences and rights of survivors are discussed. Such meetings aim to shift the stigma from the survivors to the perpetrators, fostering a more supportive environment for those affected (Kasande, 2017).

2.4.4 Being Kept Away

To distance oneself from those engaging in behaviors considered outside societal norms, it can be effective to ‘keep away’ the survivors. Consequently, both the survivors themselves and their children born out of sexual violence might encounter several challenges, which will be further described in the following paragraphs (Logie et al., 2023).

Social Exclusion and Isolation

The cultural devaluation of survivors legitimizes their exclusion from society (Chatellier & CWSCP, 2021). In the research by Woldetsadik et al. (2022), focused on Northern Uganda, two-thirds of the survivors describe experiences of rejection by certain family members, sometimes resulting in the breakup of families and relationships. The experiences of sexual abuse complicate their acceptance by some family members, who use the survivors’ experiences as a justification for their exclusion (Woldetsadik et al., 2022).

Besides family members, Logie et al. (2023) describe how community members often refuse to associate with survivors, labeling them as ‘a curse of the community’. Consequently, the anticipation of mistreatment and isolation by both the family and community can lead to the self-isolation of survivors, in which they feel forced to stay away (Logie et al., 2023).

Challenges with Individuals Born out of Sexual Violence

Both the children born out of sexual violence and their mothers encounter profound adversities. The research of Woldetsadik et al. (2022), conducted in Northern Uganda, highlights specific challenges faced by children born out of sexual violence. These challenges include difficulties with social inclusion, the legal inability to claim inheritance, and the lack of financial support for the children’s education. Survivors’ new partners often refrain from financially supporting these children’s education and their presence is mentioned as a source of conflict within relationships. Additionally, children born out of sexual violence face significant barriers to claiming inheritance rights, since societal norms link inheritance to the paternal lineage, and these children often do not know their fathers (Woldetsadik et al., 2022).

Within the Congolese context, the aftermath of sexual violence significantly impacts maternal-child relationships and societal views on children born out of sexual violence. According to Rouhani et al. (2015), the decisions faced by women who become pregnant due to sexual violence range from terminating the pregnancy, abandoning the child at birth, or raising the child. Those choosing to raise their children navigate a challenging spectrum of emotional responses, including conflicting feelings of love and hate. These difficult emotional dynamics can significantly impact the quality of maternal-child relationships,

which is crucial for a child's development. Instances of abuse, neglect, and strained relationships between mothers and their children born from sexual violence are documented, though some reports indicate the possibility of predominantly positive relationships (Rouhani et al., 2015).

The community's response to children born out of sexual violence and their mothers further complicates their situation. Often stigmatized and given derogatory names, those children embody the tangible consequences of sexual violence, contributing to the stigmatization, marginalization and isolation of their mothers within their communities. Despite instances of community acceptance for the survivors themselves, this inclusivity rarely extends to their children, highlighting a pervasive societal stigma (Rouhani et al., 2015).

2.4.5 Being Kept Down

At the community level, survivors face blame and punishment, which further intensifies their oppression. This manifests on the individual level as feelings of low self-esteem, shame, and the silencing of their voices (Logie et al., 2023). Moreover, survivors of sexual violence often encounter difficulties in their intimate relationships (Woldetsadik et al., 2022). The following paragraphs will delve deeper into these issues related to survivors 'being kept down'.

Low Self-esteem, Shame and Hiding

Due to negative cultural perceptions and internalizing behaviors stemming from internalized stigma, survivors frequently experience feelings of shame and low self-esteem. Because of shame and fear of exposure, survivors isolate themselves and hide their experiences of sexual violence (Logie et al., 2023).

Public criticism and mockery contribute to the low self-esteem of survivors. This stigmatization affects their social life in the community, making them feel outcasts, rejected, and worthless (Logie et al., 2023). Diken and Laustsen state the following: *'the rape victim often perceives herself as an abject, as a dirty and morally inferior person.'* (Diken & Laustsen, 2005).

The shame resulting from the stigma attached to being a survivor of sexual violence stands as one of its most harmful and enduring psychological impacts (Chatellier & CWSCP, 2021). To avoid shame, both survivors and their families tend to keep quiet about incidents of sexual violence (Logie et al., 2023). Survivors would rather hide what has happened than face exclusion from their communities. The silencing of women's voices amplifies their feelings of shame, deprives them of dignity, and denies survivors the chance to express and process their trauma. This leads to survivors internalizing feelings such as sadness, guilt, anger, or disgust. Moreover, survivors feel incredibly guilty afterwards as they see themselves responsible for the abuse (Chatellier & CWSCP, 2021).

Attitudes and Perceptions Towards Intimate Relationships

The research of Woldetsadik et al (2022) points out the effects on intimate relationships endured by survivors in Northern Uganda. The study reveals that survivors' experiences negative relationships with their current husband or partner, attributing these challenges to their past experiences of sexual abuse. The survivors rarely discuss their experiences with their current partners. Yet, during disputes or misunderstandings, their partners often exploit their past against them. Due to this emotional abuse, some survivors decide to leave their relationships. Nonetheless, the majority remain in their relationships, primarily for economic reasons, to ensure their children's support (Woldetsadik et al., 2022).

Additionally, within the Congolese context, men often reject their wives who have been survivors of sexual violence. This is both driven by the fear of HIV transmission and the prevailing societal notion that being intimate with a woman who has been raped is considered 'intolerable' in Congo (Chatellier & CWSCP, 2021).

Blame, Punishment, Forced Marriage

Due to family poverty and the negative attitudes towards sexual violence, the family members of Ugandan survivors might force them to marry their rapists (Logie et al., 2023). Moreover, in Ugandan society, where men and boys are often placed above women and girls, complaints against males are usually not taken seriously. As a result, men and boys are rarely punished and held accountable for acts of violence, while female survivors are often labeled as prostitutes and blamed for dressing inappropriately and getting the blame of their insults (Logie et al., 2023). Additionally, research conducted in Congo emphasized that patriarchal social structures, which sustain imbalanced gender dynamics, often assign the blame to female survivors for the shame and humiliation they have brought upon themselves, their families and their communities (Chatellier & CWSCP, 2021).

2.5 Research Objectives and Questions

The theoretical background discussed above offers a deeper understanding of sexual violence and its dynamics in Uganda, emphasizing the issue's magnitude and the negative effects of stigma on survivors. It provides a thorough examination of both general stigma and the stigma associated with sexual violence, utilizing the Stigma Power Process Framework to highlight the mechanisms of stigmatizing practices. Moreover, it introduces Totya as an organization addressing stigma against survivors in the Mpigi District of Central Uganda through vital interventions and successful collaborative efforts. Building on this theoretical foundation, the aim of this research is to determine how Totya addresses the stigma surrounding sexual violence against women in the Mpigi District of Uganda, leading to the formulation of the following main research question:

'How does the Totya platform address the stigma surrounding sexual violence against women in the Mpigi District of Uganda?'

Utilizing the 'Stigma Power Process Framework', the research explores how the social processes surrounding sexual violence serve to keep people 'in', 'down', and 'away'. Therefore, the main question will be addressed by looking at various sub-questions grounded in this framework:

Cultural assessment of value

'How are female survivors of sexual violence being (de)valued and (mis)treated in the Mpigi District of Uganda?'

Staying in

'How does the Totya platform helps to overcome the stigma-induced concern of 'staying in' among female survivors of sexual violence in the Mpigi District of Uganda?'

Being kept away

'How does the Totya platform helps to overcome the stigma-induced concern of 'being kept away' among female survivors of sexual violence in the Mpigi District of Uganda?'

Being kept down

'How does the Totya platform helps to overcome the stigma-induced concern of 'being kept down' among female survivors of sexual violence in the Mpigi District of Uganda?'

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology used throughout the data collection and analysis of this research. Initially, the research design and approach will be described. The chapter will then explore various aspects of interviewing as a research method within the present study's context. Subsequently, the practical and ethical considerations of the research will be addressed. This is followed by a discussion of the researcher's positionality. Finally, the quality of the research methodology will be assessed by examining factors like validity, reliability, and objectivity.

3.1 Research Design and Research Approaches

In this descriptive case-study, a qualitative and retrospective research approach has been adopted to explore the perceived experiences of stigma surrounding sexual violence in the Mpigi District of Uganda and to examine the role of the Totya platform in addressing this stigma. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for this task as it provides deeper insights into real-world problems and can explain processes and patterns of human behavior that can be difficult to quantify (Tenny et al., 2022). Therefore, the qualitative approach is ideal for investigating the intricate dynamics of stigma and the impact of an organization like Totya, ensuring that the nuanced perspectives needed for this research are captured.

3.2 Interviewing as a Research Method

Interviewing is the most frequently used method of data collection in qualitative research (Jamshed, 2014). In this study, the interviews were of semi-structured nature, where structured questions were combined with unstructured exploration. This approach enables the researcher to focus on specific topics while allowing interviewees the flexibility to expand on their responses or introduce new information as needed. Semi-structured interviews are particularly valuable in research on complex issues such as stigma because they permit the use of probes and spontaneous questions. These tools help deepen the researcher's understanding and clarify the answers provided by the interviewees, thereby enriching the data collection process (Swerdlhoff, 2016).

3.2.1 Research Population

Sample Size

In qualitative research the sample size is considered sufficient when additional interviews do not reveal any new concepts, reaching a stage known as ‘data saturation’ (Sargeant, 2012). Studies employing empirical data typically achieved saturation after conducting between nine to seventeen interviews (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Therefore, the aim of the research was to conduct enough interviews to achieve data saturation, with a predetermined minimum of ten interviews. Eventually, fourteen semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals associated with the Totya platform.

Target Groups

Initially, the aim was to include two perspectives in a balanced manner (1:1) by interviewing both female survivors of sexual violence and community workers, also known as parasocial workers, who volunteer for the Totya platform. The following inclusion criteria were maintained:

- > Participants should be related to Totya
- > Participants should be psychologically ready to speak up about this sensitive topic

During the fieldwork period, the opportunity arose to interview police officers from the gender department at the Katonga Regional Police Headquarters in Mpigi. These officers, who work closely with Totya, were included to enhance the credibility and saturation of the data collected. In total, it was possible to interview 5 survivors of sexual violence, 7 parasocial workers and 2 police-officers.

The inclusion of female survivors of sexual violence was motivated by their unique perspective. Their voices play a vital role in comprehending the complexities of the stigma surrounding sexual violence, given that they have personally navigated through such experiences. Furthermore, incorporating the direct involvement of those affected by the research topic ensures that their lived experiences are neither disregarded nor inaccurately portrayed. The inclusion of community workers provides a contextual understanding of the local dynamics, cultural factors, and social structures that influence the stigma surrounding sexual violence. They can identify the barriers survivors face in accessing support and overcoming stigma. Moreover, community workers often have established relationships of trust with survivors, which makes their perspectives trustworthy for this research.

Demographic Information Participants

Tables 1 and 2 presented below give a comprehensive overview of the relevant demographic information of the research participants.

	<i>CW1</i>	<i>CW2</i>	<i>CW3</i>	<i>CW4</i>	<i>CW5</i>	<i>CW6</i>	<i>CW7</i>
<i>Age</i>	41	38	44	50	44	58	47
<i>Place of Residence</i>	<i>Bukungi</i>	<i>Jimbi</i>	<i>Bujuko</i>	<i>Jeza B.</i>	<i>Jeza A.</i>	<i>Bunjako</i>	<i>Sangu</i>
<i>Education</i>	<i>P3</i>	<i>S4</i>	<i>S6</i>	<i>S6</i>	<i>S4</i>	<i>S4</i>	<i>S2</i>
<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Farmer</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Nurse</i>	<i>House Lady</i>	<i>Mechanic</i>	<i>Community Volunteer</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>Separated</i>	<i>Separated</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>Widow</i>
<i>Children</i>	8	5	2	7	6	4	6
<i>Religion</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Born</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Christian</i>	<i>Catholic</i>

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Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the community workers (parasocial workers)

	<i>S1</i>	<i>S2</i>	<i>S3</i>	<i>S4</i>	<i>S5</i>	<i>PO1</i>	<i>PO2</i>
Age	20	18	22	19	18	38	43
Place of Residence	Nkozi	Nkozi	Mpigi	Bunjako	Sangu	Mpigi	Sangi
Education³	P7	None	S4	P6	P7	S6	S6
Occupation	Mandazi Business (pancakes)	Tailor	Founder of Social Enterprise	None	None	Police Officer	Police Officer
Marital Status	Not Married	Not Married	Not Married	Not Married	Not Married	Married	Separated
Children	None	1	None	1	1	4	3
Religion	Catholic	Catholic	Seventh-day Adventist	Catholic	Catholic	Protestant	Catholic

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the survivors and police officer

Sampling Method

The research participants were recruited through ‘purposive sampling’, which enables the recruitment of individuals who can offer the most relevant insights for addressing the research question (Palinkas et al., 2013). This approach is particularly advantageous when dealing with hard-to-reach, specialized, or vulnerable populations, as it allows researchers to carefully select participants (Stewart, 2024). Given the study’s focus on such a population, purposive sampling was deemed highly suitable. Therefore, prior to commencing fieldwork, appropriate participants were identified and selected by collaborating closely with the head of the psychosocial support department of Totya.

3.2.2 Data Collection

To gather the necessary data, four-week field research was conducted at the ‘Jangu International’ community in the Mpigi District of Uganda. During the visit in February and March 2024, the Totya platform was still based at this SINA community, thereby facilitating access to the appropriate participants for the interviews.

Although English is the official language in Uganda, not all the participants appeared to speak English fluently. Consequently, five out of the fourteen interviews were conducted with the assistance of a translator. Two translators, both staff members of Totya, were involved in this aspect of the research. They were instructed to translate everything as accurately as possible and to remain objective regarding the content of the interviews. The remaining nine interviews were conducted directly in English, allowing for a more straightforward one-on-one interaction.

To capture data effectively the interviews were recorded, as handwritten notes are less reliable and can lead to missing key information. Recording allows researchers to focus better on the interview content and verbal cues, and also enables the creation of a ‘verbatim transcript’ of the interview (Jamshed, 2014).

Interview Settings

³ In Uganda, primary education spans 7 years (P1 to P7), while secondary education lasts for 6 years (S1 to S6).

Contact with suitable participants was established in various manners facilitated by Totya, leading to different interview settings. First of all, two days of fieldwork were solely dedicated to conducting interviews with both survivors of sexual violence and community workers. During these days, the researcher, accompanied by a translator, traveled to meet participants throughout Mpigi District using a vehicle provided by Totya. Depending on the circumstances, the translator and the researcher collaboratively determined how to create a safe interview environment for each interview. On the first day of fieldwork, to ensure a secure and quiet setting where participants could speak freely, interviews were conducted from within the vehicle. The second day of fieldwork involved two interviews, one with a survivor and another with a community worker. Both interviews were conducted inside the community worker's house, providing a private and comfortable environment for the discussions.

Additionally, during a scheduled gathering of community workers at the Muduuma city hall, the researcher made use of this opportunity to conduct several interviews with community workers. While the main meeting took place inside the hall, the researcher conducted interviews in a private space outside, where community workers came out of the meeting one by one to participate.

The research also extended to the Katonga Regional Police Headquarters in Mpigi, where interviews with the two police officers took place. Their office served as a private and secure setting for the interviews.

Furthermore, the researcher participated in a day of monitoring visits with Totya's psychosocial support department, which regularly goes into the field for check-ups on survivors within their communities. This day provided a chance to interview both a community worker and a survivor of sexual violence.

Lastly, one interview was conducted at the 'Jangu International' community itself with one of the scholars of SINA. To maintain the anonymity of this participant, this interview was held within the researcher's accommodation, ensuring a private setting where the discussion could proceed without interruptions.

Interview Guide

Semi-structured interviews generally follow a 'topic guide' that contains an ordered set of broad topics. Each topic encompasses a set of questions that serve as the foundation for the dialogue between the researcher and the participant. These topics are structured around principal ideas that the researcher has determined (Knott et al., 2022).

In this research, the topic guide (Appendix B) is organized around the various components of the 'Stigma Power Process Framework,' as detailed in the theoretical framework. To ensure participants feel at ease, the interview process begins with the researcher introducing themselves, the research topic, the interview setup, and obtaining informed consent. Moreover, the researcher emphasizes that there are no right or wrong answers, highlighting an interest solely in the participants' experiences, opinions, and ideas.

Following the initial introductions, the interview begins by gathering demographic data from the participant. This is followed by a chance for the participant to share more about their personal background, along with some more general, open-ended questions. Subsequently, the researcher gives the participant the opportunity to share their personal experiences with

sexual violence. As the interview progresses, more specific and targeted questions are introduced, aimed at addressing the research questions directly. Additionally, the topic guide includes several probes to draw out more detailed responses and specific examples from the participant.

Each interview ends with a closing, where the participant can share any additional comments and ask the researcher questions. During this final part, the relevance of the participants' contributions is acknowledged, confidentiality is reaffirmed, and information is provided on how participants can contact the researcher or Totya for any follow-up questions or concerns. This structured approach ensures a comprehensive and respectful engagement with each participant, facilitating a rich collection of data.

To accommodate the inclusion of different target groups in the research, the general topic guide was adapted into more specialized versions to better suit each interview context. While the core aim and topics of the interviews remain consistent across the different target groups, the phrasing and focus of the questions vary. Survivors respond based on personal experiences, whereas community workers and police officers provide insights from an observational standpoint. These extended guides ensured that all relevant information was captured effectively during the interviews.

3.2.3 Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed manually using an 'intelligent verbatim' approach, which involved omitting hesitations and correction of grammatical errors to simplify the analysis of the data (George, 2023). Automatic transcription software could not be used due to the accents of the participants. The researcher started the transcription process directly after the interviews, allowing for reflection on their role and the opportunity to adjust in subsequent interviews. The transcribed interviews are added to the appendix (Appendix F).

After completing the transcription, the data was analyzed using Atlas.ti 24 software through thematic analysis. The researcher utilized both inductive and deductive coding methods to achieve a comprehensive and detailed examination of the research topics (Bihu, 2023). The deductive coding was guided by the 'Stigma Power Process Framework' and existing knowledge of Totya's interventions, and as the coding progressed, new inductive codes emerged. Together, these codes resulted in the creation of a codebook, which is included in the appendix (Appendix E). From this coding process, a detailed report emerged that outlines the themes and links them to the research questions. The report is presented narratively and incorporates thematic maps and quotations that capture the essence of the themes.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

3.3.1 Ethical Approval

Before conducting the interviews, ethical approval (Appendix C) was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the MCI. The researcher treated the research participants and data with respect and ethical principles were considered throughout the entire research process.

3.3.2 Informed Consent

As being a fundamental principle of research ethics, informed consent (Appendix D) was obtained prior to the start of the interviews (Informed Consent, n.d.). In cases where participants were not able to fully comprehend the information on the information sheet, it was communicated verbally to them, either in English or with the assistance of a translator.

During the interviews, the well-being and consent of the survivors were in any case prioritized.

3.3.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Anonymity and confidentiality in case study research safeguards the privacy of human subjects involved, protecting their data throughout collection, analysis, and reporting (Hoft, 2021). In this research, to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the data was pseudo-anonymized by omitting all names and unique identifiers during the transcription process. Moreover, the data was stored on a private and password-protected computer owned by the researcher and deleted after the analysis was completed.

3.3.4 Prevention of Re-traumatization

This research involved interviewing vulnerable individuals about a sensitive topic, posing potential risks of re-traumatization. To mitigate these risks, comprehensive measures were taken to prioritize the participants' wellbeing throughout the study.

Before the interviews commenced, the head of Totya's psychosocial support department assessed whether participants were emotionally and psychologically ready to speak about their experiences without adverse effects. Sensitive interviewing techniques were employed to create a supportive and non-threatening environment, encouraging participants to share at their own pace with open-ended questions. Cultural sensitivity was ensured through continuous reflection on the local culture and ongoing involvement of community representatives. To address any potential re-traumatization, participants were assured of support from Totya if needed after interviews.

3.3.5 Interview Techniques

Interviewing participants on sensitive topics, which might pose a risk of harm to them, requires specialized skills and techniques (Elmir et al., 2011). Therefore, prior to starting the interviews, the interviewer did some personal preparation by reviewing general advice on conducting interviews about sensitive topics and by thoroughly studying the article by Campbell et al. (2009). This article is a qualitative study of rape survivors' recommendations for best interview practices (Campbell et al., 2009).

3.4 Positionality

The concept of positionality encompasses an individual's worldview and their position as a researcher within their study's social and political context. This positionality shapes the way research is conducted and directly influences its results and outcomes. Holmes (2020) notes that positionality is informed by reflexivity (Holmes, 2020). Reflexivity is the process by which researchers consider and acknowledge how their beliefs and experiences may impact the research process, including the effects on participant responses and the ways in which data are collected, interpreted, analyzed, and presented (Nyirenda et al., 2020).

Given the significant role that positionality plays in shaping research, the subsequent sections will explore the researcher's positionality in depth. This reflection is crucial as the researcher's positionality has had a profound effect on the production of knowledge in this study.

3.4.1 As a Western Researcher

Coming from a high-income country to study in a low-income setting, the Dutch researcher inevitably faced privileges and power imbalances. The stark cultural differences between the Netherlands and Uganda influenced the perspective on sexual violence, highlighting the importance of remaining objective through constant reflection. Consequently, investigating the stigma surrounding sexual violence in the local context of Uganda comes with considerations about the positionality of a western researcher.

First of all, interactions with participants, who infrequently engage with ‘muzungu’s’—the term used to refer to white or foreign individuals in Uganda—posed potential distractions and challenges. For instance, perceptions of higher status and wealth associated with ‘muzungu’s’ complicated power dynamics and threatened research objectivity. Although it was clearly stated that participating in the research was completely voluntary, one of the participants asked the researcher for financial support after the interview. To mitigate this risk of creating false expectations, clear communication regarding the aim of the encounter between the researcher and the participants was essential to managing expectations effectively.

On another note, the fact that participants perceived the researcher as an outsider also had positive implications as it fostered a sense of safety in discussing sensitive topics, such as sexual violence. Despite potential distractions and challenges, the researcher’s non-judgmental stance and temporary residence in Uganda provided a safe environment for open dialogue. Moreover, a researcher from a completely different culture where there is less stigma surrounding sexual violence created a safe place for the participants to discuss this sensitive topic. This was evident when a participant questioned whether the researcher was a survivor or counsellor, expressing surprise at the absence of judgment.

Furthermore, the researcher had to consider differences in time management and planning between the Ugandan context and the structured approach typical of the Netherlands. Adaptation to the Ugandan perception of time, characterized by more flexibility and the absence of a strict schedule, was essential as the researcher had to seize opportunities to conduct interviews as they arose. This contrast underscores the need for flexibility and an open mindset when conducting research in diverse cultural settings.

3.4.2 As a Woman

As this research has a feminist nature, the female gender identity of the researcher cannot be seen as neutral and should be taken into consideration. The researcher’s own experiences as a woman might inform her understanding of the issues at hand. Moreover, it is assumable that the participants, especially the female survivors of sexual violence, felt more comfortable sharing their experiences with a woman as they might fear men after their experiences, allowing a more in-depth data-collection

However, despite these potential positive aspects of the female identity of the researcher, Ugandan gender norms and roles differ significantly from those of the researcher’s Dutch cultural background. Therefore, the researcher aimed to approach the study with a deep understanding of the gender dynamics at play to prevent biases or assumptions stemming from these differing gender dynamics from influencing the research process.

3.5 Quality Criteria of the Research

In the 1980s, Guba and Lincoln introduced criteria for determining the trustworthiness of qualitative research. Their landmark contribution remains a foundational element in qualitative research methodologies and is still widely used today (Morse, 2015). The criteria established by Guba and Lincoln, also known as the 'Four-Dimensions Criteria', encompass credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Forero et al., 2018). In the subsequent sections, each of these criteria will be examined individually to evaluate the quality of this research.

3.5.1 Transferability (External Validity)

Transferability, also known as external validity, refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be applied to other contexts. In case study research like this, the goal is not to generalize the findings to a wider population, as case studies do not rely on samples (Priya, 2020). Thus, this qualitative study cannot be generalized to other contexts, given the specific historical, geopolitical, social, and economic context of the Mpigi District. Furthermore, the limited sample size of 14 interviews in this study prevents the generalization of its findings to a broader population. Therefore, the aim of this research is analytical generalization, which involves generalizing theories rather than generalizing across populations.

To achieve analytical generalization and enhance the study's external validity, thorough contextual descriptions are provided, underpinning the conclusions and enabling readers to assess their applicability to different contexts or similar scenarios. Furthermore, specific target groups are justified, explaining the criteria and characteristics that influenced their selection, aiding readers in understanding relevance across contexts (Quintão et al., 2020).

3.5.2 Credibility (Internal Validity)

According to the article of Patino & Ferreira et al (2018), internal validity is defined as: *'the extent to which the observed results represent the truth in the population we are studying and, thus, are not due to methodological errors.'* A study's internal validity can be compromised by various factors, such as errors in measurement or in the selection of participants (Patino & Ferreira, 2018).

It should be noted that the accuracy, and consequently the internal validity, of this study was at times complicated by language barriers. In some interviews, where no translator was involved, the questions were not always understood correctly by the participants. This issue was particularly evident in the interview with community worker 2, where there was significant miscommunication, leading the participant to respond from the perspective of perpetrators rather than survivors.

To boost the internal validity of the study, the researcher actively rephrased questions during interviews to resolve miscommunications. This approach was effective in clarifying misunderstandings and enabling the collection of necessary and valid data.

3.5.3 Dependability (Reliability)

Dependability, or reliability, refers to the degree to which a study can be replicated and whether, in case of multiple observers within a research team, they agree about what they see and hear (Nyirenda et al., 2020). Techniques that can be used to enhance the dependability of research include recording interviews, coding the responses and using analytical methods of data analysis. Additionally, researchers should carefully consider the format in which data

will be collected, the overall structure of the research, and the technological tools they plan to use (Quintão et al., 2020).

Therefore, to boost the dependability of this research, a clear topic guide was developed and specifically tailored for the various target groups to ensure consistent data collection. Additionally, the use of recordings and the Atlas.ti coding program contributed to improving external reliability, enabling more accurate and systematic analysis of the collected data.

3.5.4 Confirmability (Objectivity)

The criterion of confirmability emphasizes the importance of neutrality in research, requiring that the researcher's interpretations remain free from bias. As noted by Nyirenda et al. (2020), maintaining reflexivity is essential for managing such biases (Nyirenda et al., 2020).

Therefore, to enhance the confirmability of this study, the researcher consistently reflected on the research process, the sensitive nature of the topic and any potential ethical issues that could affect data analysis. Furthermore, as described before, the researcher critically considered the position of a female western researcher working in Uganda.

Additionally, neutral language was systematically used throughout the research, particularly in the result section, to maintain a focus solely on the data rather than the researcher's interpretations. This is crucial for maintaining confirmability, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the participants' experiences without being colored by the researcher's biases.

4. Results

In this chapter, the results of the thematic analysis are presented. Thematic maps are included in every subchapter to visually present the coding process, allowing readers to trace the various stages by moving from right to left on each map. Since both inductive and deductive coding methods were used, this distinction is visually represented in the thematic maps by marking the inductive codes with an asterisk (*) while leaving the deductive codes without. The themes will be detailed in the following sections, presented in a narrative format, supplemented by quotes from the participants for illustration.

4.1 Cultural Assessment of Value

The first subchapter encompasses an examination of how survivors are devalued within their communities and how this devaluation is reinforced through the daily indignities they endure. Building on this cultural assessment, the concerns of 'staying in', 'being kept away', and 'being kept down' will be further explored in the rest of the results section.

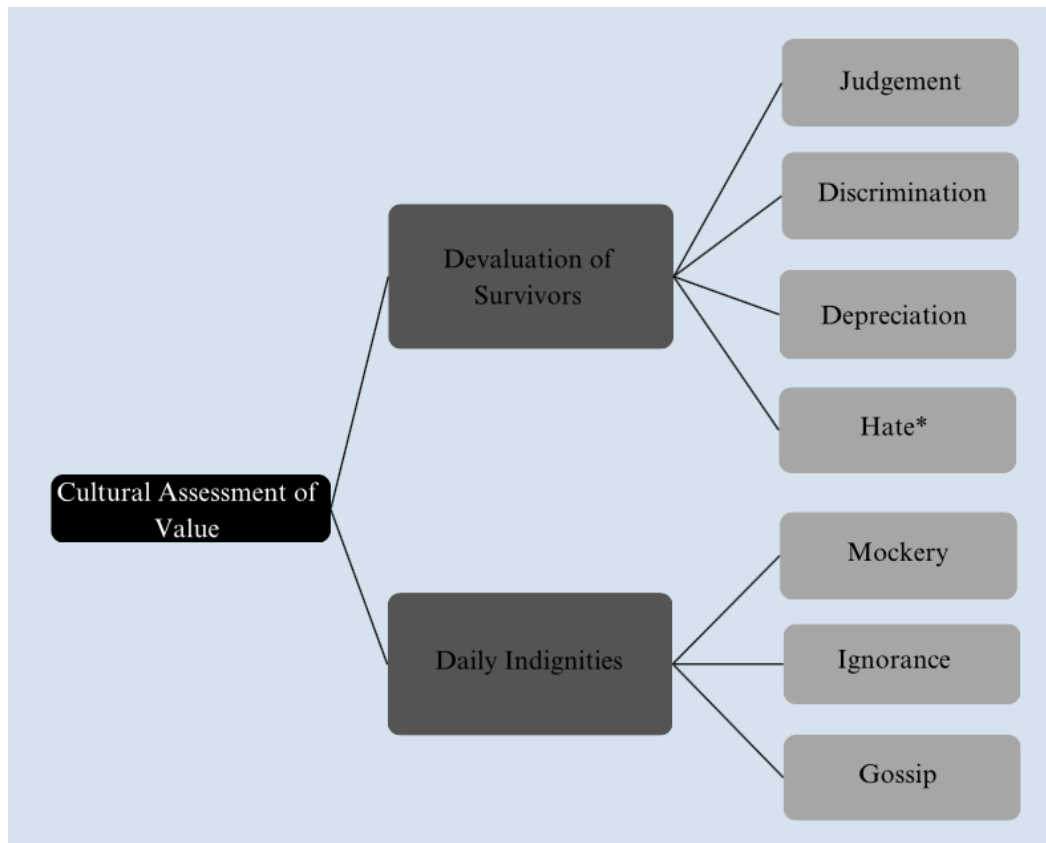


Figure 3: Thematic Map – Cultural Assessment of Value

4.1.1 Devaluation of Survivors

Examination of participants' responses reveals that survivors of sexual violence are devalued and perceived as inferior by their community members within the context of Mpigi District, Uganda. This diminished view of survivors of sexual violence finds expression in several ways. First of all, it is frequently mentioned that survivors face **judgment** and **discrimination** by their community members.

'Maybe they say that that girl is a prostitute. That is what they maybe call them. But they are no prostitutes, they are just raped, but for them they say those are prostitutes. And that hurts.' (CW4)

The broader community views survivors as outcasts who are wasted because of their experiences, or even perceives them as prostitutes, consequently treating them with a sense of **depreciation** (CW3; CW4). Moreover, survivors provoke feelings of **hate** within their direct family atmosphere as well as in the broader community, further highlighting their marginalized status (PO1).

'People look at them like they are spoiled. For them they are spoiled, they cannot do anything else, just because of what happened to them.' (CW7)

Thus, after analyzing the participant responses, it becomes evident that survivors of sexual violence face devaluation, stigma, and inferiority within their communities in the Mpigi District. This lower societal appraisal of survivors manifests itself in various ways.

4.1.2 Daily Indignities

Survivors endure daily mistreatment as a result of their lowered status as survivors of sexual violence. Survivors face *mockery*, which sometimes even leads them to relocate to different villages (CW7). Moreover, when survivors are still young, this mockery might discourage them from returning to school (CW1; CW3). Besides mocking the survivors, participants frequently mention that the community does not bother about them, leaving the survivors to face the indignity of *ignorance*. Furthermore, several interviews reveal that survivors are over-talked about by their community members, subjecting them to the indignity of *gossip*. These daily indignities reinforce the cultural devaluation faced by survivors of sexual violence in the Mpigi District of Uganda.

4.2 Staying In

This subchapter delves into the participants' perspectives regarding the issue of 'staying in' and discusses the influence Totya has in addressing these concerns. The theme of 'staying in' encompasses two sub-themes, which will be explored in detail in the subsequent sections. For the remainder of the subchapters, each theme will start with an exploration of why Totya's interventions are necessary (*light blue*), followed by an elaboration on how Totya contributes (*dark blue*).

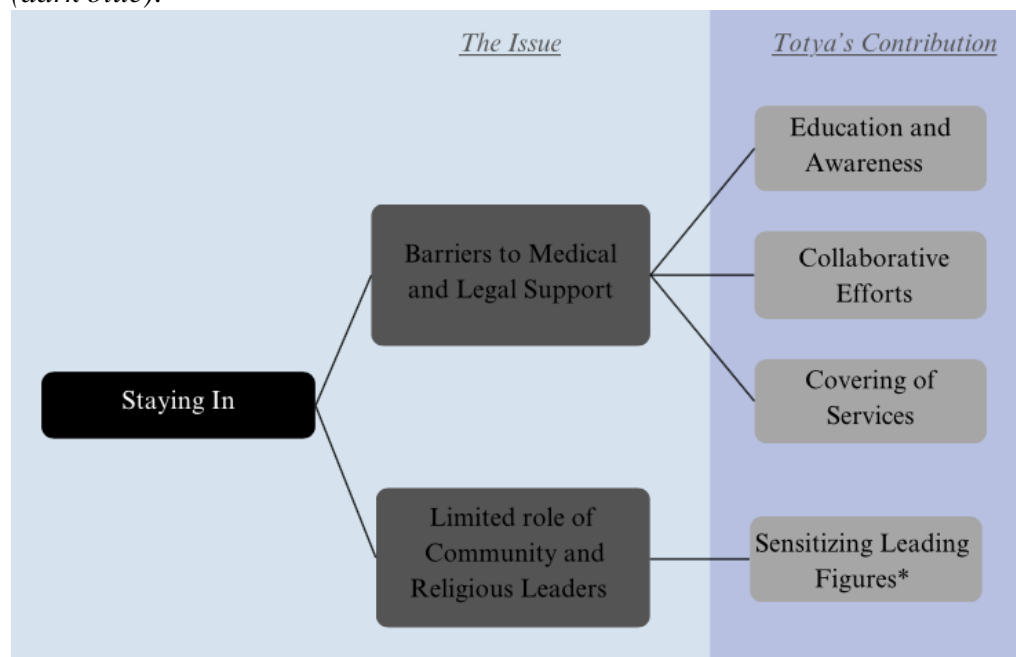


Figure 4: Thematic Map – Staying In

4.2.1 Overcoming Barriers to Medical and Legal Support

Barriers to Medical and Legal Support

Before Totya's involvement in the communities, survivors faced significant challenges in accessing essential medical and legal support due to a variety of obstacles. Participants frequently highlight barriers related to anticipated stigma; individuals feared judgment from healthcare providers and the broader community, which often deterred them from reporting incidents (S3; CW5). Additionally, in instances of sexual violence within the family atmosphere, participants refer to the desire to protect family members (CW1; PO1). This often led them to resolve these issues internally within the community rather than reporting cases and seeking formal justice (CW5; PO2). Another significant barrier frequently cited is the practical limitation of access. Due to widespread poverty, many individuals cannot afford

support services, and even transportation costs to reach assistance facilities are hard to afford (CW6; CW7).

Totya's Contribution

Further examination of participant responses reveals Totya's significant impact on improving accessibility to legal and medical services for survivors of sexual violence. They ensure this accessibility through various means. While not all of Totya's service-related efforts directly address stigma-induced barriers, the increased reporting by survivors contributes to 'breaking the silence' around sexual violence and consequently reducing stigma. Therefore, practical initiatives to enhance service accessibility for survivors are also crucial and will be incorporated into this section.

Participants emphasize the valuable impact of Totya's **education and awareness** programs. By sensitizing the communities, these initiatives lessened the stigma associated with reporting incidents and have enhanced people's understanding of the steps to take if sexual violence occurs. This education is critical, as without this knowledge, survivors often do not know how to begin seeking help.

'In my community, there are some young girls, 6 years or 8 years, some are being raped and we do not know where to report to. So, when Totya came they taught us what to do, so now we know what to do.' (CW4)

In addition to creating awareness among community members, Totya's **collaborative efforts** also facilitate the reporting process. Several participants highlight that the collaboration between Totya and local parasocial workers significantly reduced barriers to reporting sexual violence by providing a reliable contact point for survivors and someone who assists in following up on the cases.

'Totya right now has helped survivors by creating a reception where these people can go and report.' (CW1)

Moreover, out of the participants responding's', it becomes clear that Totya's partnership with the gender department of the Katonga Regional Police Headquarters has contributed to securing justice for a greater number of survivors. Thereby, these strategic collaborations have proven effective in increasing reporting rates among survivors, contributing to a more open environment regarding sexual violence and thus reducing the stigma.

Furthermore, Totya's **covering of services** is essential as the majority of Ugandans live below the poverty line and often lack the financial means to cover services when seeking support in cases of sexual abuse. Even if people are well-sensitized and aware of how to report incidents, the absence of resources can prevent action. As highlighted by several participant responses, Totya addresses this issue by bearing the financial burden of these costs, including medical and legal expenses, as well as transportation costs to nearby health facilities and the police station. By removing the financial barriers to obtaining services, Totya encourages more survivors to come forward and seek help.

'Survivors get free services, medication for free, police for free, and also follow-up for free. Also, by arresting the perpetrators for free of charge and by providing the counselling.' (CW1)

Briefly, Totya's interventions have proven effective in reducing barriers to medical and legal support for individuals experiencing sexual violence. Their efforts, both directly aimed at reducing stigma as well as more practical-orientated, contribute to a more open environment for addressing sexual violence and reduce the anticipated stigma that manifests at the structural level, preventing survivors from seeking care.

4.2.2 Guiding the Role of Community and Religious leaders

Limited role of Community and Religious Leaders

The role of community and religious leaders in addressing perceived stigma varies according to participant responses, reflecting the diversity of leadership in different communities. This variation can be attributed to participants coming from various communities within Mpigi District, each with its own distinct leaders.

Some participants express positive views on how these leading figures help reduce the stigma faced by survivors of sexual violence. For instance, the participants report the influence religious leaders play in individual cases by helping overcome social exclusion imposed by their partners and families (S3; PO1). Others describe how these leading figures can influence the attitudes and perceptions of the community, reflecting their broader efforts to address stigma (CW3; CW5). However, there are also participants that point out that their community and religious leaders show a lack of involvement and awareness regarding issues of sexual violence and the stigma surrounding it (CW1; CW7).

Totya's Contribution

Further analyzing participant responses, it becomes evident that Totya has helped enhance the influence of the leading figures in guiding community members, thereby attempting to reduce the stigma and blame targeting survivors. Totya has raised awareness about sexual violence and the associated stigma among both community and religious leaders, thereby *sensitizing leading figures* and empowering them to enact change within their communities.

'Totya has done a good job, because they do call them, they sensitize them, they empower them with materials and knowledge. And then they go back out sensitize their communities.' (CW5)

Moreover, the sensitization of leading figures contributes in another, more indirect way to reducing the stigma and blame toward survivors of sexual violence. It is namely through the permission of these leaders that Totya is welcomed into communities to carry out their work. According to participants' responses, it varies per situation whether Totya is in direct contact with these leading figures or whether this contact goes through the locally involved parasocial worker (CW5).

To sum up, while Totya's efforts to sensitize and empower leading figures have been effective to a certain extent, not all participants report positive contributions from their leaders in reducing the stigma and blame placed on survivors. Consequently, Totya's impact remains confined to specific communities, leaving potential for expansion in the future by engaging with more leading figures within the Mpigi District.

4.3 Being Kept Away

This chapter examines the viewpoints of the participants regarding the issue of 'being kept away' and explores Totya's influence in addressing these concerns. The theme of 'being kept away' comprises two sub-themes, which will be further explored in subsequent sections.

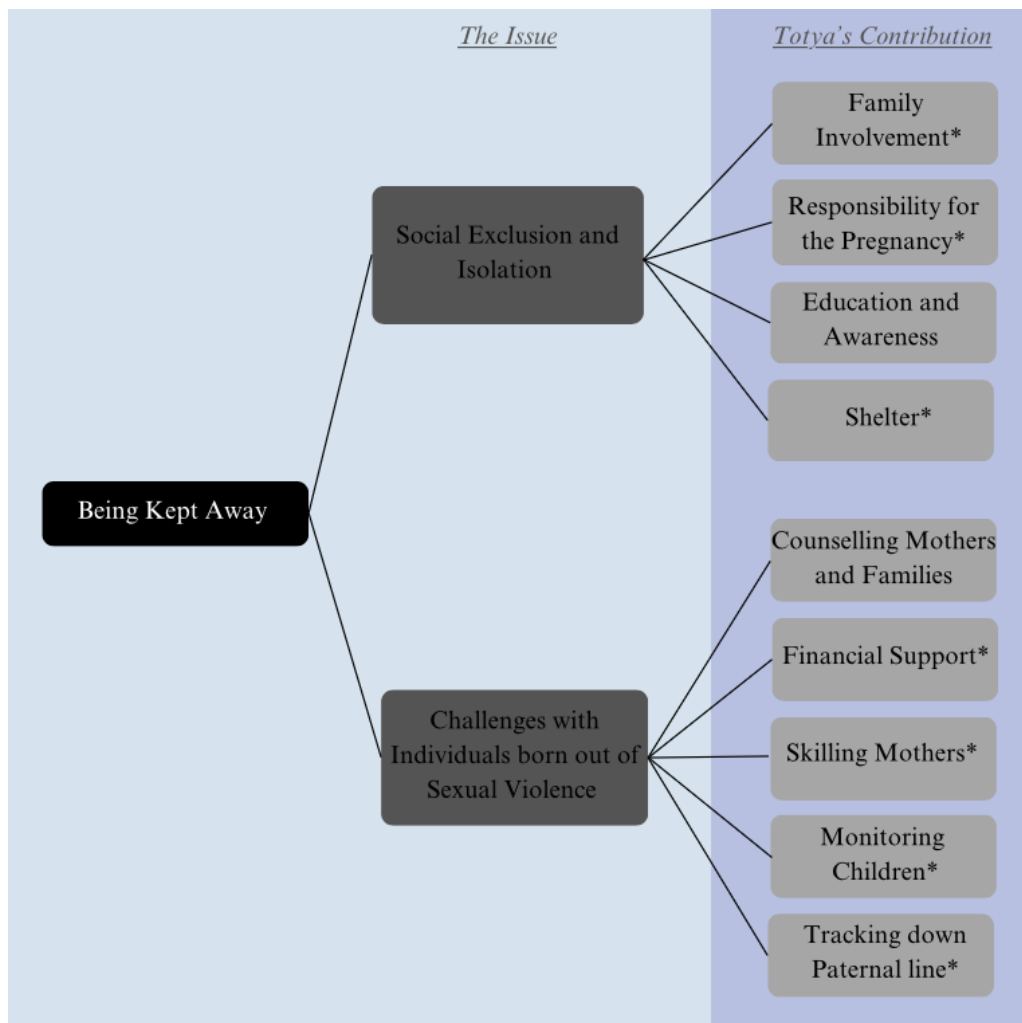


Figure 5: Thematic Map – Being Kept Away

4.3.1 Overcoming Social Exclusion and Isolation

Social Exclusion and Isolation

Participants' responses reveal that prior to Totya's intervention, survivors faced challenges of social exclusion and isolation, underscoring the presence of both internalized and enacted stigma. Survivors express feelings of isolation and a lack of welcome within the community (S1). These feelings are compounded by the societal processes that exclude and isolate them. For instance, as they fear mockery at school, survivors tend to not go back unless they are able to switch schools (CW1; CW2). Moreover, boys are dictated not to marry survivors (CW1). In addition to these societal processes, survivors often isolate themselves due to their personal experiences, which can lead to a dislike for others and a tendency to overthink situations (CW7; S3).

Furthermore, participant responses reveal that in the most severe cases, families disown and chase away survivors, leaving them to sleep outside without food and eventually shifting villages (CW7; S1). One significant reason for this social exclusion is rooted in the cultural belief that you cannot get pregnant and raise a pregnancy on family grounds; you first have to get married and go to your husband's place. Consequently, families often reject and chase away survivors upon discovering their pregnancy (S4; S1).

Totya's Contribution

Further examination of the participants' responses significantly underscores Totya's role in addressing and resolving the aforementioned challenges. In the most severe cases where

survivors are chased away by their families, Totya's approach to *family involvement* helps to reintegrate survivors into their familial and communal contexts, thereby overcoming practices of enacted stigma. In instances where the survivor becomes pregnant, reaching out to the families is not enough to achieve reintegration. Therefore, to overcome the rejection of family members, Totya takes *responsibility for the pregnancy* so that the survivors are welcomed again by their family members.

'Totya came out and spoke to my family. My family wanted the boy who made me pregnant to take care of me and my child, yet he had run away. So, Totya came up and took the responsibility for me and the child that I produced. They took all that responsibility and made sure that the family came back to me.' (S4)

Moreover, Totya's approach to *education and awareness* appears to be effective in communicating to the community the importance of welcoming survivors rather than isolating or excluding them. By increasing community understanding, Totya plays a crucial role in diminishing stigmatizing behaviors.

'They have really thought this villages and our areas how to welcome them. That it is a community where when someone is raped, or your sun raped their daughter, you just have to welcome them, you have to talk them.' (CW3)

In situations where survivors cannot return home, such as when they have been assaulted by a family member who may harass them for taking legal action, Totya offers *shelter* (PO1). This provision allows survivors to reside in a non-stigmatizing environment, consequently addressing internalized stigma.

In summary, Totya's multifaceted approach has proven effective in addressing the complex challenges of social exclusion and isolation faced by survivors of sexual violence. Through their interventions, Totya combats stigma and contributes to the reintegration of survivors into their communities in cases where the circumstances allow it.

4.3.2 Overcoming the Challenges with Individuals born out of Sexual Violence

Challenges with Individuals Born out of Sexual Violence

According to the participant responses, children born out of sexual violence are not directly stigmatized and treated in the same manner as other children within the broader community (CW4; CW6). However, these children and their mothers face challenges that may put them in an inferior and marginalized position that deviates from societal norms, potentially leading to their social exclusion and isolation, and thus stigmatizing practices.

The challenge that some children face is that they are not being loved by their mothers and broader families (CW1). Their parents do not want them and hate them (CW3). Moreover, the children lack paternal support and often do not go to school (CW7). Furthermore, the children might not know their paternal side of the family, which can be a challenge in Uganda when it comes to diseases that can be only treated by this side of the family (CW7).

Moreover, the mothers of children born out of sexual violence face challenges, such as difficulties in raising their children due to a lack of support. (S4) Additionally, they drop-out of school and cannot go to university (CW3; CW4). Lastly, as described in the previous chapter, they might face the challenge of being rejected by their families.

Totya's Contribution

To prevent the potential social exclusion and isolation of the children born out of sexual violence and their mothers, Totya has implemented multiple strategies, reportedly successful according to participants. Among these strategies is the provision of **counselling for mothers and families**, aimed at fostering love and nurturing relationships with the children, thereby recognizing the critical role of a healthy maternal-child relationship in the child's development (see chapter 2.6.4).

'Totya also tries to counsel the mother to love the child, because it is not the fault of the child to be born out of sexual violence. Totya tries to show them that the child they have is a gift from god. There are people who do not give birth at all, maybe this was the only egg you had in your body and womb, so you have to love them.' (CW1)

Furthermore, Totya offers practical support to both the children and their mothers, aiming to prevent their marginalized and disadvantaged status. Participants frequently mention Totya's **financial support**, which covers essential expenses such as food, materials, and medical fees for the mother and child. Additionally, Totya focuses on empowerment by **skilling the mothers**, recognizing it as a more sustainable approach to ensuring access to basic needs for both the mother and child.

'Totya supports by supporting the mother by handing on skills. By supporting the mother, the mother supports the baby after getting some income and she can take care of the baby at a certain point.' (CW7)

In addition, Totya provides direct support to the children in two ways. Recognizing that these children often lack support from one parent, Totya is **monitoring the children** and their well-being and steps in to provide guidance and advice as needed. Moreover, understanding the cultural importance of knowing one's paternal lineage in Uganda, Totya assists the children in **tracking down the paternal line**. Through these efforts, Totya attempts to ensure that these children do not face any disadvantages compared to those not born out of sexual violence.

'They also gave me some money to go and track out the origin where the boyfriend is coming from, so that my girl knows her grandmother and other family.' (S2)

Briefly, the challenges faced by children born out of sexual violence and their mothers are multifaceted and encompass social, emotional and practical difficulties. Totya's holistic approach contributes to addressing these challenges and prevents both the children and their mothers from becoming, marginalized, inferior and deviating from societal norms. As a result, Totya prevents these individuals from experiencing social exclusion and isolation and avoids that they are being stigmatized by their community members.

4.4 Being Kept Down

This chapter delves into the perspectives of the participants concerning the issue of 'being kept down' and investigates Totya's impact in tackling these issues. Within the theme of 'being kept down,' three sub-themes are identified, which will be examined in more detail in the following sections.

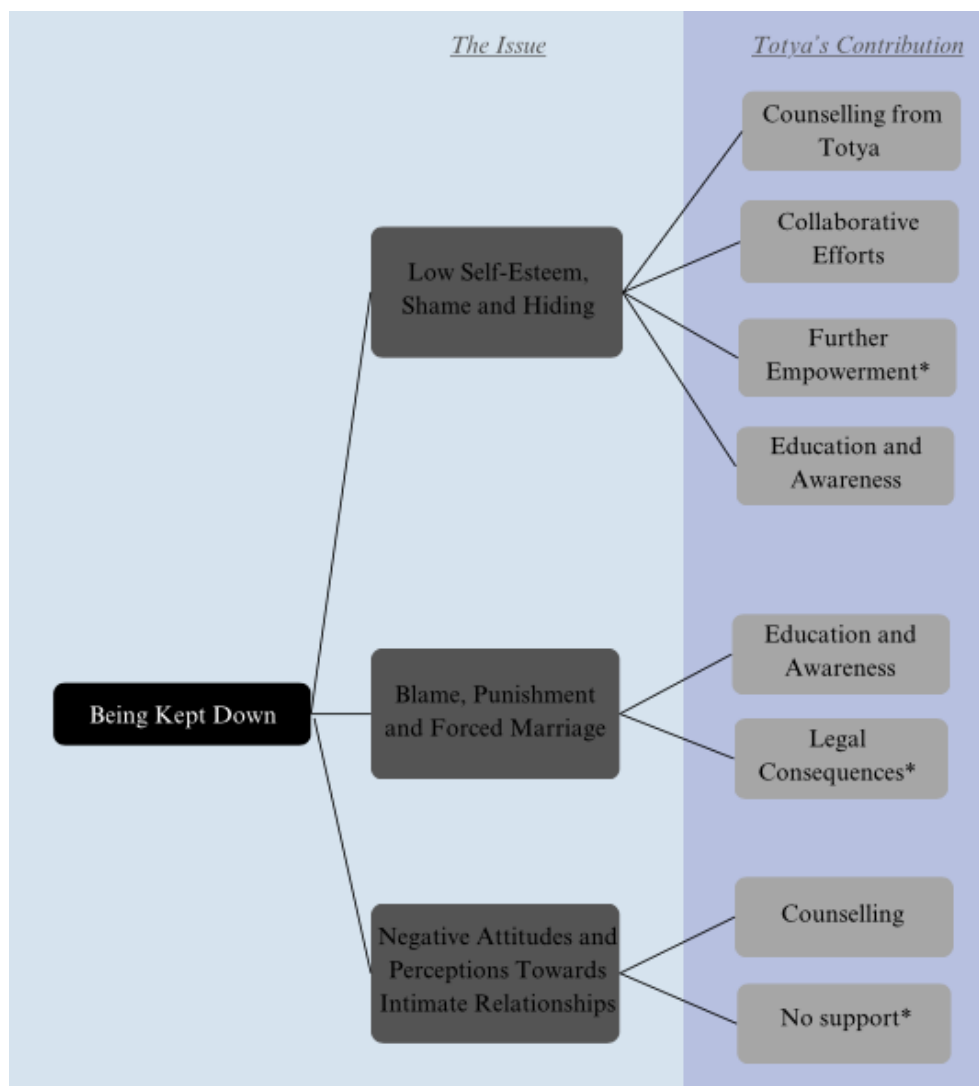


Figure 6: Thematic Map – Being Kept Down

4.4.1 Overcoming Low Self-Esteem, Shame and Hiding

Low Self-Esteem, Shame and Hiding

Analyzing participants' responses reveals that survivors develop feelings of low self-esteem and shame and tend to hide their experiences from the outside world, reflecting the internalizing behavior stemming from internalized stigma. Survivors tend to lose trust in themselves; they do not love themselves and feel like a burden to everyone (CW1). One survivor expresses that she feels like she made a great mistake (S4). Moreover, participants mention several times that survivors might feel so bad that they want to commit suicide. They feel like their best decision is to end their lives because they feel like their lives have already ended (CW7; S1).

'They get wounds on the heart, while they start blaming themselves: 'Why me? Why am I the one who was sexually abused?' They get heartbroken most of the time. Most time they do not believe in themselves. They see it as their final destination. They take life as if it has ended in that period.' (CW1)

Additionally, survivors feel ashamed in the community, even in front of their own friends (S1; CW2). They tend to keep quiet because they know that if they come forward, people's eyes will always be on them (CW3). In cases where a survivor is assaulted by a relative, they

remain silent to prevent their parents from hating them (PO1). When the survivor is a child, the family tends to keep quiet out of fear that the community will learn about the child's sexual abuse (CW1). To emphasize the extent to which survivors keep quiet about their experiences, one of the participants mentions that she is sharing part of her story for the first time with the researcher. Survivors only want to share their experiences if they know that the other person will understand, as they fear being judged by others (S3).

Totya's Contribution

Further examination of participants' responses unveils how Totya contributes to the empowerment of survivors, thereby helping them to overcome low self-esteem, shame, and hiding. First, survivors receive **counselling from Totya**, which can be provided over the telephone or during monitoring visits. As participants frequently mention the tremendous impact this counselling has on their well-being, this intervention by Totya can be seen as highly effective in reducing internalized stigma.

'I am just healing. The other time I could just cry, but I appreciate the fact that even when I talk about it, I no longer cry. I am strong, because of Totya.' (S3)

As mentioned before, Totya collaborates closely with the gender department of the Katonga Regional Police Headquarters and parasocial workers. Totya equipped their collaborative partners with the necessary skills and knowledge to counsel survivors. Consequently, survivors not only receive counselling from Totya but also from police officers and parasocial workers. Thereby, Totya's **collaborative efforts** contribute to further reducing internalized stigma as these collaborative parties contribute to the empowerment of survivors by providing them with counselling as well.

'The way they leave the police is not the same way as they come to the police. According to me, when they go back to the community, the victims feel free.' (PO2)

In addition to counselling, Totya contributes to the **further empowerment** of survivors in several ways. Firstly, Totya provides survivors with basic needs if necessary (PO1), and sometimes even with bonuses for enjoyment (CW2). Thereby, Totya recognizes survivors' worth and value as individuals deserving of care and support, which might counteract negative self-perceptions such as low self-esteem and shame. Moreover, meeting basic needs can alleviate stressors and worries for survivors, allowing them to focus on healing and rebuilding their lives.

Furthermore, Totya empowers survivors by providing them with skills such as tailoring and hairdressing (S2), which gives them the agency to meet their immediate needs and improve their quality of life. This empowerment can boost self-esteem and self-confidence as survivors regain a sense of control and autonomy over their lives.

Moreover, Totya organizes survivor gatherings, providing them with the chance to connect with others who have shared similar experiences, fostering a sense of belonging (CW4; CW7). These gatherings also offer a safe environment where survivors can share their stories without fear of judgment or stigma, empowering them to reclaim their voices. Additionally, these gatherings serve as opportunities for survivors to learn and exchange coping strategies for managing the effects of trauma. Therefore, Totya's efforts to organize survivor gatherings are effective in overcoming issues such as low self-esteem, shame, and hiding.

On top of directly empowering survivors, participants underscore that Totya provides the broader community with *education and awareness* on how survivors are negatively affected by their traumatic experiences, as well as how survivors can overcome these challenges and return to their normal lives. When community members have accurate knowledge of the effects of trauma, they are less likely to blame and stigmatize survivors, leading to a reduction in perceived stigma. Moreover, community members are better able to understand the challenges survivors face and can therefore support them more effectively, contributing to their well-being and reducing feelings of low self-esteem, shame, and hiding.

'One of the things Totya has done and should continue doing is the creation of awareness; showing the people in the community what these people can do and that they can change their life.' (CW7)

In short, Totya's multifaceted and holistic approach to survivor empowerment appears to be effective in addressing feelings of low self-esteem, shame, and the tendency to hide, thereby contributing to a reduction in internalized stigma. The direct empowerment of the survivors, reinforced by providing the broader community with knowledge, creates an environment where survivors feel valued, supported, and empowered to reclaim their voices and rebuild their lives.

4.4.2 Overcoming Blame, Punishment and Forced Marriage

Blame, Punishment and Forced Marriage

Participants' responses reveal instances in which survivors face blame, punishment, or forced marriage, all expressions of enacted stigma. The family and broader community often blame survivors for their abuse without listening to their perspective. Statements such as *'Why did you move at night?'*, and assumptions that the survivor wanted it herself contribute to the belief that the survivor is at fault for the rape, intensifying their trauma (CW1; S4). Moreover, after sexual abuse, survivors often endure physical violence such as beatings from their families (CW1). In the most severe cases, the families even want to kill the survivors. (CW7) As a result, the survivors might run away from their homes (S5; CW4). Additionally, survivors might face the destiny of forced marriage to their rapist (CW1; CW4).

'They made me marry to that man. But without my willing, but I had nothing that I could do.' (CW4)

On another note, several participants underscore that survivors are not being punished for their experiences (CW5; CW6). One participant mentions that she never saw the communities doing anything to the survivors (S2).

Totya's Contribution

Further examination of participants' responses reveals the ways in which Totya aims to reduce instances of blame, punishment, and forced marriage among survivors. Firstly, by enriching communities with *education and awareness*, Totya attempts to challenge the harmful beliefs and attitudes that lead to mistreating survivors. Providing the community with knowledge creates a more understanding, compassionate, and less judgmental environment for survivors.

'But after getting the knowledge, it is clear that is not the fault of survivor, and the community tries to support them.' (CW1)

Additionally, Totya tries to create fear around mistreating survivors by ensuring *legal consequences* for the offenders. As it is against the Ugandan law to mistreat survivors, bringing in police officers instills fear in the community, deterring them from blaming and punishing survivors (CW1).

In conclusion, through education and awareness initiatives and by reinforcing legal consequences, Totya effectively addresses instances of blame, punishment, and forced marriage, thereby combating enacted stigma and fostering a more supportive and less suppressive environment for survivors.

4.4.3 Improving Attitudes and Perceptions Towards Intimate Relationships

Negative Attitudes and Perceptions Towards Intimate Relationships

Participants responses reveal that survivors of sexual violence often develop negative attitudes and perceptions towards intimate relationships due to their traumatic experiences and the internalization of negative beliefs, which reflect internalized stigma. They might hate and fear each and every man, and encounters with men serve as constant reminders of their traumas (C4; CW5). Especially when a survivor is abused at a young age, they might feel like all men are inherently bad and end up not getting married (CW1). Moreover, survivors who have experienced abuse-related pregnancies fear the possibility of becoming pregnant again, prompting them to prioritize financial stability to manage potential pregnancies before entering new relationships (S1).

On another note, although it might take a long time, if the survivor is counselled well, she might be able to move on and get married (CW5). Especially when survivors are young children, they might forget about the trauma of sexual violence, returning to a sense of normalcy by the time they are ready for marriage (PO1). However, these relationships may present challenges as survivors may continue to fear men or not take the relationship seriously (CW1; CW3). Moreover, survivors often refrain from sharing their past experiences with their partners out of fear that their they will stop loving them, use their past experiences against them in misunderstandings, or even end the relationships, reflecting anticipated stigma (CW1). Consequently, survivors may find it easier to pursue relationships with individuals from distant villages, where their past trauma is less likely to impact their relationships (CW5).

Totya's Contribution

According to the participants, Totya endeavors to assist survivors in overcoming their negative perceptions and attitudes towards intimate relationships through *counselling*. This support entails giving advice, providing ongoing follow-up, and encouraging survivors to start relationships.

'When they decide to enter into a relationship, we just encourage them, we tell them how they can handle the relationships they are going in.' (CW7)

However, although Totya's counselling efforts are potentially effective in addressing the survivors' personal perceptions and internalized stigma, the survivors may still harbor concerns about being mistreated by their partners when they start new relationships, leading to a lack of interest. Consequently, there is a need to change male attitudes and behaviors towards intimate relationships with survivors. Failure to do so may result in survivors remaining hesitant to initiate new relationships, or if they do, refraining them from sharing their experiences.

Moreover, further examination of participants' responses reveals that Totya is currently offering *no support* to all survivors when it comes to intimate relationships. This lack of support can be attributed to Totya's limited resources, but it may also stem from survivors' reluctance to accept support out of fear that Totya will disclose their experiences to their partners.

'No, they will let the boyfriend now that I was raped. I have the feeling that in the process of supporting me, the boyfriend will get to know that I was raped. I do not know whether it is right to share it with him, but I feel like my heart is not ready.' (S3)

To summarize, as Totya's support in improving attitudes and perceptions towards relationships remains limited to counselling, there is room for improvement in Totya's interventions in this regard. Engaging the broader community to change wider perspectives on intimate relationships with survivors of sexual violence could effectively address the anticipated stigma faced by survivors. Furthermore, expanding their counselling services would contribute to further reducing internalized stigma.

5. Discussion

This chapter will provide a critical reflection on the key findings of the study and answer the main research question: *'How does the Totya platform address the stigma surrounding sexual violence against women in the Mpigi District of Uganda?'* The results will be contextualized within the existing literature and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework.

Additionally, the chapter will examine the strengths and limitations of the study and identify potential areas for future research.

5.1 Findings

In this section, the key findings will be detailed by addressing each sub-question individually to provide a comprehensive response to the main research question.

5.1.1 Cultural Assessment of Value

In the Mpigi District of Uganda, female survivors of sexual violence are profoundly devalued and mistreated by their communities. They are often perceived as inferior, facing widespread judgment, discrimination, depreciation and hate. Additionally, survivors endure daily indignities such as mockery, gossip and ignorance, which reinforces their devaluation. This cultural devaluation and the accompanying stigma significantly affect survivors' social standing and daily interactions within their community.

5.1.2 Totya's Contribution: Staying In

Totya's interventions in the Mpigi District of Uganda effectively address the stigma-induced concerns of 'staying in' among female survivors of sexual violence. By enhancing access to medical and legal support and educating communities, Totya fosters a more open environment for addressing sexual violence, thereby breaking down the barriers of anticipated stigma and fear of judgment. Furthermore, although Totya's collaboration with community and religious leaders is confined to certain areas, it generally contributes to shifting local perceptions. With Totya's guidance, these leaders effectively address the blame and immorality directed at survivors, creating a less stigmatizing environment. Thus, Totya's efforts collectively tackle the negative cultural climate that fosters avoidance behavior, reducing survivors' inclination to distance themselves from stigmatized labels. However, since Totya's collaboration with leading figures varies between communities, there is still room for expansion by engaging with more leaders.

5.1.3 Totya's Contribution: Being Kept Away

Totya effectively addresses the stigma-induced concern of 'being kept away' through a multifaceted approach that facilitates social inclusion and combats isolation for both survivors and children born out of sexual violence. Through their interventions, Totya challenges the negative cultural context that leads survivors to isolate themselves and contributes to their reintegration into their communities. Moreover, Totya's interventions empower both survivors and children born from sexual violence, preventing them from becoming marginalized or deviating from societal norms. Consequently, Totya prevents these individuals from stigmatization that could lead to their social exclusion and isolation.

5.1.4 Totya's Contribution: Being Kept Down

Totya offers a multifaceted and holistic approach that significantly addresses the stigma-induced concern of 'being kept down', thereby resolving the oppression of survivors. By effectively addressing instances of blame, punishment, and forced marriage, Totya combats enacted stigma, fostering a more supportive and less suppressive environment for survivors. Moreover, the direct empowerment of survivors, reinforced by providing the broader community with knowledge, creates an environment where survivors can overcome feelings of low self-esteem, shame, and the tendency to hide, thereby tackling internalized stigma. Furthermore, while Totya aims to improve attitudes and perceptions towards relationships, there is room for improvement in Totya's interventions, as not all survivors receive

counselling on this topic. Additionally, effectively addressing the anticipated stigma that prevents survivors from pursuing new relationships requires broader community engagement to change societal perspectives on intimate relationships with survivors.

5.1.5 Conclusive Remarks

Reflecting on the key findings detailed above provides a comprehensive answer to the main research question: Totya's interventions have significantly contributed to addressing the stigma surrounding sexual violence by effectively addressing the stigma-induced concerns of 'staying in,' 'being kept away,' and 'being kept down'. In the Mpigi District, located in Central Uganda, female survivors of sexual violence are stigmatized and profoundly devalued, facing discrimination, judgment, and daily indignities that diminish their social standing and negatively impact their interactions within the community. The Totya platform provides a safe space for survivors of sexual violence, offering multi-layered interventions to share their experiences without fear of judgment and actively working to break the silence around sexual violence. Totya's initiatives have effectively addressed various aspects of stigma, such as anticipated, internalized, perceived and enacted stigma, thereby preventing societal processes to keep survivors 'in', 'down', or 'away' from societal order. However, despite Totya's significant and highly valuable contributions to addressing stigma surrounding sexual violence, there is room for improvement in their interventions. Specifically, increased guidance for leading figures and the expansion of interventions aimed at improving attitudes and perceptions towards new intimate relationships could further address stigma.

5.2 Theoretical Reflection

5.2.1 Stigma Power Process Framework

By utilizing the tailored and specified version of the 'Stigma Power Process Framework' the study builds upon a robust theoretical foundation to understand the complexities of sexual violence stigma. This ensures that the research is not merely a collection of data but is interpreted coherently with a well-supported theory, allowing for a deeper understanding of the findings. The framework's concerns of 'staying in', 'being kept away', and 'being kept down' are broadly interpretable, enabling this research to incorporate all relevant aspects of stigmatizing practices in the local context. Thereby, this research incorporates two additional themes in the framework, which are identified in the article by Woldetsadik et al. (2022). These themes include the challenges with regards to new intimate relationships (categorized under 'being kept down') and the challenges with individuals born out of sexual violence (categorized under 'being kept away') (Woldetsadik et al., 2022). Incorporating these dimensions, the research offers an innovative, holistic and comprehensive overview of the stigmatizing practices in the community and assesses Totya's contributions to the effectively addressing stigma.

Additionally, the framework's adaptability to different cultural contexts is crucial, as stigma and its impacts can vary significantly across cultures. The framework's flexibility allows for the incorporation of local beliefs, practices, and challenges into the analysis. This adaptability makes it particularly effective in examining how Totya's culturally sensitive approaches are functioning within this specific community. Furthermore, the use of this culturally adaptable framework enhances the study's replicability across various contexts.

5.2.2 Comparison key Findings with Existing Literature

This research aligns closely with previous studies on the mechanisms and expressions of stigmatization, such as those described by Logie et al. (2023), which addresses how survivors are often 'kept in', 'kept away', and 'kept down' (Logie et al., 2023). Moreover, it confirms the

cultural devaluation and mistreatment of survivors as described in the bulk of relevant literature.

Despite the high alignment with the existing literature, this research also presents notable divergences. Unlike the findings by Logie et al. (2023) in Northern Uganda, this study does not identify confidentiality breaches and mistreatment by healthcare professionals as barriers to accessing medical support (Logie et al., 2023). Additionally, while research by Woldetsadik et al. (2022) highlights barriers such as inheritance rights for children born out of sexual violence in Northern Uganda, this study finds no such barriers (Woldetsadik et al., 2022). Moreover, the current study reveals that these children are not stigmatized but are welcomed by their communities, contrasting with findings from Rouhani et al. (2015) in the Congolese context (Rouhani et al., 2015). Furthermore, this research diverges on the accountability of perpetrators; unlike findings from Northern Uganda by Logie et al. (2023) where men and boys are rarely held accountable, this study shows that Totya's influence has led to legal consequences for perpetrators (Logie et al., 2023). Despite these differences, the overall patterns of stigmatization observed are consistent with other research conducted across various regions of Uganda and other African countries.

5.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Research

5.3.1 Strengths

This research demonstrates significant strengths in its comprehensive and detailed examination of Totya's interventions in combating stigma. Notably, it incorporates three different perspectives by including female survivors, parasocial workers, and police officers. This approach enhances the credibility of the study by reducing the risk of bias and ensuring a more holistic understanding of the issues at hand. Furthermore, the inclusion of diverse stakeholders increases the relevance and applicability of the findings, as each group may highlight different needs and issues specific to their experiences.

Another strength is the research's culturally sensitive methodology, which employs local languages and respects customs to gather honest and relevant insights from participants. This approach increases the accuracy and relevance of the data by avoiding biases that might skew data interpretation, ensuring that the findings are valid within the cultural framework of the participants. Moreover, research that is culturally sensitive is more likely to produce findings and recommendations that are applicable to the local context. This relevance can enhance the practical impact of the research, as solutions based on the findings are more likely to be accepted and effectively implemented within the community.

Moreover, the identification of Totya's effective practices is a strength of the research, as it demonstrates real-world applications and benefits. Thereby, the research offers actionable insights that other organizations can adapt or replicate. This transferability of strategies enhances the practical impact of the research, extending its benefits beyond the immediate context of Totya and potentially improving interventions across similar organizations globally.

Lastly, the research fills a significant gap in the literature by focusing on the stigma surrounding sexual violence against women in the Mpigi District, a region less studied compared to other parts of Uganda. This exploration introduces novel insights that not only enrich the existing literature but also raise awareness about often-overlooked issues. Additionally, it lays the groundwork for further research in this region and similar studies in

comparable contexts, paving the way for deeper understanding and more targeted interventions.

5.3.2 Limitations

Despite its strengths, this research is limited by several factors. First, practical barriers may have impacted the data collection process. Language and communication obstacles were evident, as some interviews required translation by individuals who were not officially qualified. Moreover, the local context posed challenges in arranging flexible interview environments, leading to interruptions and a sense of time pressure. These interruptions might have distracted participants, translators, and the researcher. Additionally, cultural differences sometimes led to misunderstandings or further distractions. These practical barriers complicated the data collection process and potentially introduced biases, thereby affecting the overall integrity of the research findings.

In addition to these practical challenges, there are other factors that potentially affected the integrity of the research. The study's reliance on participant accounts, especially concerning past experiences of sexual violence, introduces the possibility of recall bias, as memories can be incomplete or distorted over time. Moreover, the risk of researcher bias is significant, given that the study was primarily conducted by a single researcher from a different cultural context. This could lead to subjective interpretations of the data, with personal perspectives potentially influencing both the analysis and the outcomes.

Another limitation of the research is that its generalizability might be limited due to its narrow participant pool—only individuals willing to discuss the sensitive issue of sexual violence—and its geographic specificity to the Mpigi District. Consequently, the results may not reflect the broader population's experiences, thus constraining the applicability of the findings to other regions or contexts.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Future Research

This research has identified several avenues for future studies to build upon. Future research could further investigate how Totya can enhance its interventions to more effectively address stigma, for example, by exploring the role of technology and innovative approaches or by identifying barriers to accessing and engaging with Totya. Moreover, it would be valuable to explore the scalability of Totya's model to other regions and its effectiveness in diverse cultural contexts. Additionally, conducting longitudinal studies to track the long-term impact of Totya on survivors' socio-economic status and psychological well-being could provide valuable data on the sustainability of its interventions. This would aid in understanding how changes in stigma and survivors' well-being evolve over time.

Furthermore, expanding the research focus to include different stakeholder groups would be of high value. Investigating the experiences of male survivors of sexual violence would be relevant, acknowledging Totya's mandate against sexual violence for all genders. Moreover, the role of traditional healers in treating survivors, a common practice in Uganda alongside conventional healthcare, warrants further exploration. Further studies should also assess Totya's influence on perpetrators of sexual violence to determine if its activities contribute to a reduced incidence of such crimes.

5.4.2 Practical Implications

As mentioned before, practical implications to enhance Totya's interventions include expanding engagement with leading figures across the Mpigi District and focusing on intimate relationships and societal perceptions through extended counselling and targeted community education programs. It is also crucial to monitor and adapt interventions based on continuous feedback from survivors and community members to maintain their relevance and effectiveness.

Additionally, expanding the use of digital tools could have added value in providing safe spaces for survivors to share their stories, access resources, and receive support anonymously or discreetly. Moreover, creating specialized support programs tailored to the diverse needs of different survivor groups—such as adolescents, elderly women, or those from specific ethnic backgrounds—could address their unique challenges and the stigma they face. Finally, implementing survivor-led initiatives, such as training survivors as peer educators, can empower them and enhance community outreach efforts.

6. Conclusion

This research has untangled how the Totya platform combats the pervasive stigma associated with sexual violence in the Mpigi District. Their multifaceted interventions have proven effective in addressing stigma by tackling societal processes that keep survivors 'in,' 'down,' or 'away' from societal order. Despite Totya's considerable impact, opportunities for enhancement remain and have been identified. Thus, this comprehensive research provides Totya with practical suggestions to enhance their efforts in addressing stigma and underscores the importance of continuously monitoring and adapting their interventions based on feedback from those involved, ensuring their interventions remain effective and relevant. Furthermore, this study has identified knowledge gaps, highlighting the need for additional research that could enhance current understanding and contribute to the development of more effective strategies for combating sexual violence and supporting survivors.

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8. Appendices

Appendix A: Totya

Founders Story

Janet Aguti, the Executive Director of the Totya Platform, founded Totya in 2019. As a survivor of childhood sexual violence, she uses her experience to encourage other survivors of sexual violence to speak up about their abuse, thereby breaking the silence around sexual violence (Totya Platform, 2024).

At the age of 8, on the day of her mother's funeral, a close family friend sexually violated Janet. She did not share this with anyone, not even her sister whom she was very close to at the time: *'I did not know how wrong it was, but I feared I would be beaten anyway, and my sister would not believe me because this was her friend whom they sung together with in the church choir.'* As a survivor of childhood sexual violence, Janet was affected mentally for seventeen years: *'I remember always doubting my self-worth and believing that no one would love me because I was not too beautiful anyway.'* (Totya Platform, 2024). Moreover, she faced several challenges related to her abuse: *'It was affecting my social life and my education, because I was more isolated than willing to participate.'* (J. Aguti, personal communication, March 4, 2024).

After receiving counselling herself and knowing that there was no platform in Uganda yet where sexual violence could be reported anonymously or for people to get psychosocial support, Janet found the motivation and inspiration to establish Totya: *'I saw the difference I could make using this same mechanism to help other girls in my community who might be going through the same struggles without actually revealing their identity.'* (Totya Platform, 2024). The high prevalence of sexual violence cases in Uganda underscored the urgent necessity for an organization such as Totya: *'I thought it is a challenge that many other people are facing here in Uganda.'* (J. Aguti, personal communication, March 4, 2024).

Janet completed her university degree in social work and social administration in 2015 and got into employment. Her career was not working out as planned so she decided to join the Social Innovation Academy (SINA), from which Totya was founded. Totya came into existence in 2019, when the first donations came in to build up the toll-free line to offer psychosocial support anonymously. Janet started alone but soon expanded Totya by bringing in other people. When Totya went out in the communities advertising the toll-free number, it became clear that there were other needs, like medical attention, sensitization, and justice. Consequently, Totya persisted in its fundraising efforts to broaden their services based on the identified needs, leading to the three layers of interventions they are currently providing to survivors of sexual violence (J. Aguti, personal communication, March 4, 2024).

The Social Innovation Academy

Totya was founded by Janet when she was participating in the Social Innovation Academy (SINA). Even though Janet and her colleagues from Totya, who were scholars at SINA, have finished their program and Totya is now functioning independently from SINA's support, its main office is still situated at 'Jangu International', which is among the twelve communities of SINA. On short notice, Totya plans to relocate from Jangu International (Social Innovation Academy, 2023).

SINA is a transformative initiative dedicated to reshaping the educational landscape in Africa, targeting disadvantaged youth and refugees. By recognizing the lack of opportunities for these groups to lead dignified lives and escape poverty, SINA fosters an environment where marginalized communities can create their own solutions and social enterprises. These enterprises aim to address the root causes of social issues in a responsible and regenerative way, striving for an inclusive and beneficial world for all. SINA's model is centered on unleashing the untapped potential of these individuals, transforming their personal adversities into opportunities. Through a five-step empowerment process, participants, referred to as 'scholars', are equipped with the necessary personal and professional skills to establish their own social enterprises (Social Innovation Academy, 2023).

The impact of SINA is profound, with over 70 social enterprises originating from the academy that are still operational today, directly affecting more than 1 million lives through their innovative products and services. Moreover, SINA Scholars have gained international recognition, securing numerous awards for their achievements (Social Innovation Academy, 2023).

Organizational structure

Departments

Totyia is organized into four key departments, employing a total of seven staff members. The first department is the administration department, which employs one staff member. This department encompasses both administrative and financial responsibilities, thereby basically merging two departments into one. Secondly, there is the psychosocial support department, currently staffed by two individuals. Thirdly, there is the advocacy department, also staffed by two individuals. Lastly, there is the communication and dissemination department, which is handled by one person. Fundraising initiatives are handled by Janet, the founder of Totyia, who also oversees the final decision-making processes within the organization (J. Aguti, personal communication, March 4, 2024).

Funding

Totyia serves a population where the majority live below the poverty line, prioritizing basic needs such as food. This reality makes it challenging to transform Totyia into a self-sustaining 'business', leaving it an entirely charity-based organization that is fully dependent on external funding. Janet, who is responsible for the fundraising states: *'Funding is one of the biggest challenges that we still face up to today'*. It is especially hard to find funds for the awareness and education outreaches in the community since it is hard to measure tangible impact: *'I can come into the community and offer as much education about sexual violence as I can, but we can never tell how many lives are being changed by that'*. As an organization reliant on donations, Totyia is dedicated to maximizing its fundraising efforts in order to achieve the greatest possible impact (J. Aguti, personal communication, March 4, 2024).

Future Directions

Totyia's future objectives include extending its services to various regions across Uganda, with the aim of reaching beyond the Mpigi district. Furthermore, Totyia is dedicated to reforming some policies, drawing on their practical experience in the field. As Janet explains: *'We are more in the practice area, we do practical work, and we see a lot compared to just someone sitting and writing the policy because they have the skill to write.'* In addition, Totyia has acquired land and is in the process of constructing a rehabilitation center. This facility is designed to provide a safe space for survivors, facilitating a quicker healing journey (J. Aguti, personal communication, March 4, 2024).

While Totya is actively working towards these aforementioned directions, Janet envisions a final existence for the organization: *'I personally as a founder of Totya, do not see us working in Totya forever, because I believe the challenge can be solved and one day sexual violence will be history, so there will not be any need for Totya to be in existence.'* (J. Aguti, personal communication, March 4, 2024).

Appendix B: Interview Topic Guide

Introduction and Informed Consent

- > Introduction
- > Informed consent
- > Appropriateness of interview environment
- > Questions
- > Start of the interview

Demographic Information

- > Age
- > Education/Occupation
- > Geographic location
- > Marital status
- > Children
- > Religion

Personal Background

- > Get to know the participant and their community
- > Relationship to SINA

Part 1: Cultural Assessment of Value

- > Situation of sexual violence; prevalence, causes, vulnerable population
- > Community attitudes
 - PROBE: devaluation, shame, inferior position
- > Challenges/daily indignities
 - PROBE: physical, psychological, social
- > Coping strategies, community responses

Part 2: Story sharing

Part 3: Staying in

- > Medical and legal services: experiences, accessibility, barriers, traditional practices, Totya
- > Role of community/faith leaders: origin and guidance of community attitudes, Totya

Part 4: Being kept away

- > Social exclusion; experiences, consequences, Totya
 - PROBE: feelings of isolation, failing education, financial problems
- > Children born out sexual violence; experiences, challenges, Totya

Part 5: Being kept down

- > Self-perspectives: self-believes, empowerment by Totya
 - PROBE: low self-esteem, hiding
- > Perceptions new/current intimate relationships; experiences, challenges, Totya
- > Community punishment and blame: experiences, causes, Totya
 - PROBE: forced marriage, family silence

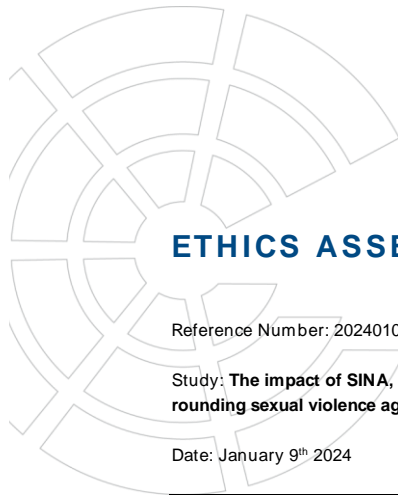
Part 6: The future

- > Vision, contribution Totya
- > Support ideas; verbal support, healthcare providers, specific services
- > Improvements Totya

Closing

- > Open space to share additional information
- > Room for questions
- > Thanking, relevance
- > Ensure confidentiality and availability
- > Refer to follow-up possibility by Totya

Appendix C: Ethical Approval MCI



ETHICS ASSESSMENT REVIEW

Reference Number: 20240107

Study: **The impact of SINA, in conjunction with the Totya platform, on reducing the stigma surrounding sexual violence against women in Mpigi, Uganda**

Date: January 9th 2024

Author: **Elwine Roell**
Department: European Master's in Health Economics and Management
Supervisor: Ayman Fouda, PhD

COMMENT

After having carefully reviewed the submitted Ethics Assessment Document, the MCI Ethics Committee has concluded that the author has **sufficiently reflected the ethical effects** of his/her proposed research agenda and consequently **proposed adequate precautions** in order to deal with potential ethical issues.

In addition, the committee recommends the following measures:

- Quotes** which may **allow for the identification of study participants MUST NOT be published!**
- The author is advised to **critically reflect his/her impact on the generated research findings** particularly regarding **a potential personal relationship to study participants**, which may have been built up throughout the course of the study.

The author is advised to consider the above outlined recommendations when conducting his/her research. The supervisor is encouraged to demand the corresponding compliance.

FOR THE MCI ETHICS COMMITTEE



Prof. Dr. Stephan Schlögl
(Chair MCI Ethics Committee)



Appendix D: Informed Consent Sheet

MCI Ethics Assessment

Participant Information Sheet

TO BE PROVIDED TO STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Title of research project

The impact of the Totya platform on reducing stigma surrounding sexual violence against women in Mpigi, Uganda

Invitation paragraph

Thank you for considering my invitation for the interview. My name is Elwine Röell and I am a student of the 'European Master in Health Economics and Management', in which I follow the 'Population Health Management' track. I would like to invite you to take part in my research project, which I conduct in collaboration with the MCI Innsbruck. If you decide to take part, this will involve that you participate in an interview which will take approximately 1 hour of your time.

Before you decide if you wish to take part **it is important that you understand** why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take the time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Aim of the project

This research project aims to determine the impact of Totya on reducing stigma surrounding sexual violence against women in Mpigi, Uganda. The research intends to investigate how stigma impacts the lives of survivors of sexual violence and how the efforts of Totya have an impact on addressing the stigma surrounding sexual violence. The results will serve SINA/Jangu International to evaluate the impact of Totya. Next to that, the results can be used by Totya itself to achieve even better results in the future. Moreover, the outcomes can be used as a means to demonstrate to donors and sponsors certain aspects of Totyas' impact.

Why have you been asked to take part?

You have been approached because you are a survivor of sexual violence/community worker who is working together with survivors of sexual violence. It is of high relevance to gather information about your personal experiences, because you can help understand the complexities of stigma surrounding sexual violence. It is especially important to involve those affected by sexual violence/working close together with survivors, so that the lived experiences of survivors can be shared accurately and will not remain ignored.

What if you do not want to take part, or if you change your mind?

Participating in the research project is entirely voluntary. If you decide to withdraw after initially agreeing to take part, you can still do so up to two weeks after the interview. Please inform the researcher about this as soon as you reach this decision.

During the interview, if you wish to stop at any point, simply let the interviewer know, and your data will not be included in the research project. You may find after the interview that you are no longer comfortable with your story being used. You have the option to withdraw from the research project within two weeks after the interview. In this case, please contact the researcher within this frame, and your data will be destroyed and not used.

Once this two-week period has passed, data analysis for the research will have begun, and your data

will remain part of the project. Choosing not to participate or changing your mind and withdrawing from the research project will not result in any penalty or disadvantage for you!

What are the advantages/disadvantages of taking part?

Possible advantages:

- Participation may provide you with a sense of empowerment by sharing your experiences and contributing to efforts aimed at reducing stigma
- Sharing your experiences in a research context may help to validate your experiences and feelings, potentially reducing feelings of isolation
- You will have the opportunity to gain access to the research outcomes when completed.
- You will be able to put forward your own point of view, and your voice will be heard as an important aspect of the research project

Possible disadvantages:

- Participating in an interview will require some time and effort on your part.
- You may be asked about sensitive or personal topics, which may be emotionally taxing for you.

How will your information be stored and who will have access to it?

The interviews will be recorded, and the data generated from them will be indirectly incorporated into solely the thesis through transcription (transcript) or selected direct quotes. Audio files will be deleted after having been transcribed. Your data will be anonymized. Personal information will not be passed on to persons outside the project. All raw data and personal information collected from you will be stored in a password-protected computer and will only be accessible to the researcher and her supervisor

All information generated by the project will be stored in line with the requirements of the General Data protection regulation (GDPR) and MCI's Research Ethics Committee requirements. Any publications or presentations arising from this project will not identify you by name, with pseudonyms being used instead.

What happens now?

Please ensure you have read this sheet fully and are sure you understand all parts of the research project. If you have no remaining questions and are happy to take part, please fill in the attached consent form.

Who can you contact if you have questions about the project?

Student/Researcher:

Name: Elwine Röell

Tel.: +31643584854

email address: elwineroell@hotmail.com

Supervisor:

Name: Ayman Fouda

email address: ayman.fouda@mci.edu



MCI Ethics Assessment

Consent Form

TO BE SIGNED/ACCEPTED BY RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Please read and then tick each box		Tick Box
1.	I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above research project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in this research project and within 2 weeks after I took part in the research project, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within 2 weeks of taking part in the research project, my data will be removed.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information will not be included, and I will not be identifiable.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand that my name/any information that can identify me will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	I understand that the data from any interviews that are audio-recorded and/or transcribed, will be protected on password-protected devices and kept secure.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	I understand that I can make subsequent contact with the researcher if I wish to obtain a copy of any publications derived from the research.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	I understand that data will be kept safe according to MCI guidelines.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I consent to the anonymized data being used in potential future research projects (optional)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant.....

Date.....

Signature.....

Appendix E: Codebook

This table presents the final coding book, including sub-themes, codes, and associated sub-codes if present. Definitions are provided to ensure transparency and clarify content. An anchor example from the qualitative data illustrates each topic, and the frequency of quotes for each (sub)code is noted to indicate groundedness. The different themes are colored: green for cultural assessment of value, yellow for 'staying in', red for 'being kept away', and blue for 'being kept down'. Inductive codes are marked with an asterisk (*) and deductive codes are unmarked, reflecting the use of both coding methods.

Sub-themes	Codes	Subcodes	Definition	Anchor Example	Groundness
Devaluation of	Judgement	-	The act of forming an	<i>The biggest challenge if people</i>	15

Survivors			opinion about survivors	<i>are sexually abused is that people give them judgements without hearing from them.</i> (CW1)	
	Discrimination	-	The unjust or prejudicial treatment of survivors	<i>'Maybe they say that that girl is a prostitute. That is what they maybe call them. But they are no prostitutes, they are just raped, but for them they say those are prostitutes. And that hurts.'</i> (CW4)	8
	Depreciation	-	Decrease in social value or dignity of survivors	<i>'People look at them like they are spoiled. For them they are spoiled, they cannot do anything else, just because of what happened to them.'</i> (CW7)	4
	Hate*	-	Intense hostility directed at survivors	<i>'Parents are hating those children. They hate them for involving in sexual activities and they are not going back to their parents.'</i> (PO1)	2
Daily Indignities	Mockery	-	Ridiculing survivors	<i>'The community laughs at most of them. They abuse them also. They mock them. They are not treated in a mannered way.'</i> (S5)	11
	Ignorance	-	Overlooking or disregarding the experiences of survivors	<i>'The community just ignores it and leaves it there. They do not do anything.'</i> (S1)	17
	Gossip	-	Spreading unverified information about survivors	<i>'The community did badly over-talk about me. At a certain point I felt so bad and I feared.'</i> (S1)	10
Barriers to Medical and Legal Support	Education and Awareness	-	Sensitizing communities to reduce stigma related to reporting and to educate on responses to sexual violence	<i>'In my community, there are some young girls, 6 years or 8 years, some are being raped and we do not know where to report to. So, when Totya came they taught us what to do, so now we know what to do.'</i> (CW4)	14
	Collaborative Efforts	Parasocial Workers	Collaborating with local community workers to offer survivors reliable contact points and case follow-up assistance	<i>'Totya right now has helped survivors by creating a reception where these people can go and report.'</i> (CW1)	20
		Police Headquarters	Collaborating with the Katonga Regional Police Headquarters to increase report rates and ensure that perpetrators are held responsible for their deeds	<i>'[...] we got Totya if we have challenges with some cases. We tell Totya to come in, we have this case, please assist. They come in. Most especially too far places.'</i> (PO2)	9
	Covering of Services	Medical fees	Covering medical costs for both	<i>'Maybe if there is no money for treatment, for medical check-up,</i>	17

			preventive (HIV, pregnancy) and therapeutic (physical injuries) care for survivors	<i>Totya sends you the money.</i> (CW4)	
		Legal Costs	Covering the financial burden of seeking justice for survivors	<i>'If the police say: 'We do not have petrol to transfer him from here, we do not have petrol to go and get him where he committed the crime from', then Totya always comes in and they assist. They always give out money, to carry out all that.'</i> (CW3)	16
		Transportation Costs	Covering of transportation costs to nearby health facilities and the police station	<i>'Totya always gives us money, even if it is for transport.'</i> (CW4)	11
Limited Role of Community and Religious Leaders	Sensitizing Leading Figures*	-	Raising awareness about sexual violence and the associated stigma among leaders to empower change	<i>'Totya has done a good job, because they do call them, they sensitize them, they empower them with materials and knowledge. And then they go back out sensitize their communities.'</i> (CW5)	13
Social Exclusion and Isolation	Family Involvement*	-	Engaging with families to reintegrate survivors into their familial and communal contexts	<i>'Totya can assist and convince the parents. They talk to the parents, they convince them, so that the girls can go back to their homes.'</i> (PO1)	6
	Responsibility for the Pregnancy*	-	Taking over the responsibility for the pregnancy and support both mother and child to overcome the rejection of family members	<i>'Totya came out and spoke to my family. My family wanted the boy who made me pregnant to take care of me and my child, yet he had run away. So, Totya came up and took the responsibility for me and the child that I produced. They took all that responsibility and made sure that the family came back to me.'</i> (S4)	1
	Education and Awareness	-	Sensitizing the community about the importance of welcoming survivors instead of isolating or excluding them	<i>'They have really thought this villages and our areas how to welcome them. That it is a community where when someone is raped, or your sun raped their daughter, you just have to welcome them, you have to talk them.'</i> (CW3)	9
	Shelter*	-	Providing survivors with accommodation to reside in a non-stigmatizing environment	<i>'Some victims who are hated by parents, Totya can get for them shelter. By the help of probation officers, some victims are put in shelters for protection.'</i> (PO1)	1
Challenges with	Counselling Mothers and	-	Supporting survivors to foster love and	<i>'Totya also tries to counsel the mother to love the child, because</i>	5

Individuals born out of Sexual Violence	Families		nurturing relationships with the children born out of sexual violence	<i>it is not the fault of the child to be born out of sexual violence. Totya tries to show them that the child they have is a gift from god. There are people who do not give birth at all, maybe this was the only egg you had in your body and womb, so you have to love them.</i> (CW1)	
	Financial Support*	Food*	Providing food for mother and child	<i>'Right now, he is not breastfeeding, but I get some support from Totya to take care of him when it comes to eating.'</i> (S5)	11
		Materials*	Providing essential materials for mother and child	<i>'They are giving sanitary pads, whatever. Things a mother or father would have given to the young ones, they get it from Totya.'</i> (CW4)	16
		Medical Fees*	Covering medical costs for mother and child	<i>'Even when I gave birth, Totya gave me money to take care of all the expenses. Even when my child reached a point of death, Totya was there to intervene and make sure that the kid was taken to the hospital. Until now they are helping me.'</i> (S4)	7
	Skilling Mothers*	-	Empowering mothers with skills for financial sustainability	<i>'Totya supports by supporting the mother by handing on skills. By supporting the mother, the mother supports the baby after getting some income and she can take care of the baby at a certain point.'</i> (CW7)	3
	Monitoring Children*	-	Keeping an eye on the children born out of sexual violence and provide guidance and advice when needed	<i>'But their father now is Totya, because they come and talk with them: 'Do not do this, be clean, use this.'</i> (CW4)	7
	Tracking down Paternal line*	-	Assisting children born out of sexual violence in learning about their paternal lineage	<i>'They also gave me some money to go and track out the origin where the boyfriend is coming from, so that my girl knows her grandmother and other family.'</i> (S2)	1
Low Self-Esteem, Shame and Hiding	Counselling from Totya	-	'Walking' survivors through the healing process, either through telephone or during monitoring visits	<i>'I am just healing. The other time I could just cry, but I appreciate the fact that even when I talk about it, I no longer cry. I am strong, because of Totya.'</i> (S3)	23
	Collaborative Efforts	Parasocial Workers	Equipping the parasocial workers with the necessary skills and knowledge to counsel survivors	<i>'When Totya came, they told us how to handle those women and young girls. They were thought about trauma healing, how they should talk to them, how they should behave, and learn how to</i>	5

				<i>forgive.</i> (CW4)	
		Police Headquarters	Equipping the police officers with the necessary skills and knowledge to counsel survivors	<i>'The way they leave the police is not the same way as they come to the police. According to me, when they go back to the community, the victims feel free. (PO2)</i>	9
	Further Empowerment *	Bonuses*	Providing survivors with bonuses for enjoyment	<i>'Last Christmas, they gave them some bonuses, so that those victims can enjoy Christmas.'</i> (CW2)	1
		Providing Basic Needs*	Providing survivors with basic needs to alleviate stressors and worries	<i>'When they are going back to school, they can provide them some books, some food.'</i> (PO1)	1
		Providing Skills*	Providing survivors with the skills give them agency of their immediate needs	<i>'Totya has promised to take me for training and I would like to learn how to do tailoring and take co-work and do hairdressing.'</i> (S2)	3
		Survivor Gatherings*	Organizing survivor gatherings to provide them with the chance to connect to others with similar experiences	<i>'Sometimes, they make parties come together, they come and collect them and take them too Totya platform. They play games, they do things, they eat. Then they come back when they are all happy. Because they collect all of them who are being raped. They come back with books. They come back when they are very very happy.'</i> (CW4)	3
	Education and Awareness	-	Providing the community with accurate knowledge of survivors' challenges to better support them	<i>'One of the things Totya has done and should continue doing is the creation of awareness; showing the people in the community what these people can do and that they can change their life.'</i> (CW7)	3
Blame, Punishment and Forced Marriage	Education and Awareness	-	Providing the community with accurate knowledge to counter harmful beliefs and attitudes that lead to mistreating survivors	<i>'But after getting the knowledge, it is clear that is not the fault of survivor, and the community tries to support them.'</i> (CW1)	8
	Legal Consequences *	-	Bringing in police officers to create fear around mistreating survivors	<i>'Totya has helped to bring the people who work in legal, police officers, to show them that this person is discriminating a survivor. This is also against the law, so people start to fear.'</i> (CW1)	1
Negative Attitudes and Perceptions Towards	Counselling	Encouragement*	Stimulating survivors to initiate intimate relationships	<i>'When they decide to enter into a relationship, we just encourage them.'</i> (CW7)	3
		Advice*	Providing guidance on	<i>'We tell them how they can handle</i>	3

Intimate Relationships			handling intimate relationships	<i>the relationships they are going in.</i> (CW7)	
		Follow-up*	Monitoring survivors and their intimate relationships	<i>'Totya makes follow-up. They do continue to make follow-up on the survivor, stage by stage, year by year, time by time. To counsel that person. To see that he or she moves on. That is the most support they do give.'</i> (CW5)	1
	No Support	Fear of Survivors*	Reluctance to accept support due to fear that Totya will expose the survivor's experiences of sexual violence	<i>'No, they will let the boyfriend now that I was raped. I have the feeling that in the process of supporting me, the boyfriend will get to know that I was raped. I do not know whether it is right to share it with him, but I feel like my heart is not ready.'</i> (S3)	2
		Lack of Resources*	The limited availability of resources to support survivors with their intimate relationships	<i>'I have not experienced that Totya supports with this. I do not think Totya has the money to enter into people's relationships.'</i> (CW1)	1

Appendix F: Declaration of AI-Utilization

Declaration of the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies/tools:

‘The author(s) declare the utilization of AI-enabled tools to develop the academic work submitted together with this disclaimer and the proof/documentation of use in the appendix. The author(s) assume full responsibility for the content of the said submission and have done due diligence to verify the credibility, authenticity, factuality (or equivalent) of the content. All arguments, findings, interpretations, and conclusions etc. presented in the academic work are those of the author(s). The author(s) will be able to supplement his/her/their submission with earlier/original drafts developed prior to the application of the relevant AI-tool(s) upon requested.’

Elwine Röell
Utrecht, 30 May 2024



Appendix G: Documentation of AI-utilization

Use of AI-enabled tools

A detailed record of how AI-enabled tools were used for the respective purpose and how they contributed to the development of the submitted work.

AI-enabled tools	Purpose of use/type of support	Contribution of the AI-enabled tool to submitted work
ChatGPT	Used for grammatically improving sentences	ChatGPT assisted the researcher in creating fluent, concise, and grammatically correct sentences

Evidence of AI-utilization

Detailed evidence of the use of tools as described in the disclaimer statement and explanation of the interaction with the tools, e.g., questions asked by the author(s), the task assigned to the tool, and the search strings used. This may include—but is not limited to—complete chat protocols and/or screenshots.

Examples of search strings or inputs/prompts/questions or tasks assigned to AI-enabled tool	Examples of originally generated/suggested content by AI-enabled tool	Examples of authoramended/edited AI-generated content in submitted work	Examples of section/page/paragraph or line numbers/titles/subtitle in submitted work
ChatGPT: Can you improve this grammatically?	Sexual violence has far-reaching effects on the health of populations, impacting both physical and mental health and the social well-being of survivors.	Sexual violence has far-reaching effects on population health, impacting both the physical and mental health and social well-being of survivors	This example can be found in section 2.3.3.
ChatGPT: Can you make more concise?	Providing the community with accurate knowledge on the challenges of survivors so that they are better able to support them	Providing the community with accurate knowledge of survivors' challenges to better support them	This example can be found in the codebook (appendix E)