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## The Masculine Discursive Construction of Rape in the Kenyan Press

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Rape is an act where the victim is violently forced into sexual activity against his or her will. In this study, rape is viewed as an act of brutal sexual domination by men over women. Broadly speaking, it can be vaginal, anal, oral or penetration with an object, and rape can take place even when the victim is asleep or in a trance (see <http://www.rapecrisisonline.com/articles.htm>). Because of the violence that is associated with rape, it can have tragic consequences. Although we are aware that rape can be perpetrated by women on men, in Kenya the overwhelming number of rape cases are perpetrated by men on women. Indeed, it is this type of rape that falls within our study because it is rooted in societal power and ideological structures that are related to hegemonic masculinity.

In Kenya, rape against women has increased remarkably in the last fifteen years or more. Analysis of the cases over these years reveals that all types of men are involved: fathers, brothers, cousins, schoolmates, teachers, policemen, top government officials and so on. Apart from rape on women, rape on children (defilement) is common. The 1 July 2005 edition of *Daily Nation* carried statistics showing that fathers take the lead when it comes to defiling their girl children. Police reports in the press in July 2005 also indicate that rape against women is the number one crime in Kenya. Table 1 shows how rape has steadily grown since 1990.

**Table 1:** Number of Reported Rape Cases in Kenya, 1990–2004

Year	Number of Reported Rape Cases on Women
1990	515
1991	943
1992	590
1993	989
1994	1050
1995	958
1996	1368
1997	1050
1998	1329
1999	1465
2000	1675
2001	1987
2002	2013
2003	2308
2004 (July)	1653

Source: Kenya Police Headquarters. Reported in *East African Standard*, 30 April 2000 (for 1991–2000) and *Daily Nation*, 27 July 2005 (for 2000–2004).

The table, disregarding fluctuations, shows how the number of rape cases on women in Kenya grew fourfold in fifteen years. It is even more disturbing when one takes into account the fact that because of the stigma and the secrecy attached to sex matters in general, and rape in particular, the reported cases do not reflect the true record. Further, as Wachira (1994) correctly observes, the law concerning rape in Kenya is weighed down by masculine overtones. The whole process of rape trials is tantamount to the victim going through a rape ordeal for a second time. Thus, very few women actively want to report a rape case. At present, extremely few women can talk about their rape ordeal in public.

The remarkable increase in the number of cases of women raped in Kenya has resulted in the emergence of pressure groups, human rights groups and groups against torture and rape victims, who have come up strongly against such acts of injustice. Moreover, defilement and rape have attracted remarkable debate in

public discourse. In terms of positive action, the most resounding step has come in the form of the proposed sex crimes' bill, which has far-reaching recommendations such as castration for rapists. Despite this, however, the number of cases of raped women remains on the increase and men's talk on rape in public ignores the issues at stake.

Despite the spirited efforts of gender activists in Kenya in the past three and a half decades, masculine ideologies that enhance the domination of men over women in Kenya remain strong. Apart from the fact that the number of rape crimes perpetrated by men in Kenya is dismayingly persistent and on the increase, male public utterances on rape are little changed. Seemingly, since many communities in Kenya are overwhelmingly patriarchal, the masculine discursive construction of rape in the press appears to be a projection of the dominant ideology and the power structures in those communities that place a premium on hegemonic masculinity.

The present study has three objectives. The first is to discuss the masculine construction of the word 'woman' in the Kenyan press. The second is to examine ideologies and power structures behind masculine discursive utterances on rape in the Kenyan press. The final one is to discursively construct the form of argument and the argumentation strategies used in masculine utterances on rape in the Kenyan press.

The advent of serious gender studies in Africa, in the last three and a half decades, has triggered off discussions over unequal power relations between men and women, the domination of men over women and ideologies that reflect male points of view (Mama 1996). One theme that has attracted serious attention is gendered violence (for example, Abane 2000; Muchera 2000; Bammeke 2000; Atinmo 2000; Nwagbara 2000, and Adjekophori 2000). Issues on gender violence are diverse. They range from wife-beating and the cultural underpinnings thereof (Abane 2000) to violence against women in conflicts (Nwagbara 2000) and rape (Griffen 1999; Tibatemwa-Ekirikubinza 1999). Gendered violence takes various forms, including men against women, women against women, and youth against the old (Muchera 2000). Although it is true that both men and women are involved in gendered violence, women are usually on the receiving end.

Rape is an extreme edge of gendered violence, and is much more a male crime than a female crime. Masculine stereotypes still appear in masculine discourse such as: 'the woman who is raped asked for it', and 'it is the bad girls who are raped' (Griffen 1999). This underlines the masculine ideology characteristic of patriarchal societies in many parts of the world.

Gendered violence is a dominant preoccupation in masculinities studies, and it seems incontestable that violence is more common to men than women (Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman 2004; Luyt 2005). One area that is emerging in connection with masculine violence is sexual violence against women. It has been argued that

the male genitalia have far-reaching ramifications on the conceptualization of masculinities in the context of sexual violence (Izugbara 2005; Plummer 2005). In this connection, Plummer says about men:

They are much more likely to feel that they can assert themselves to take sex when they want it, not just in obvious rape situations, but more routinely with their wives (wife rape), girl friends (date rape), children (son or daughter rape) and other men (homosexual rape). They are much more likely than women to feel they have a *specific turn on* – a little out of the ordinary – which must be met (Plummer 2005: 179).

Plummer argues that a man is inherently more likely to rape because of the inclination to want to assert himself through sex. Thus, sexual activity is an important feature in masculinities, particularly in the prism of domination. It is in this context that Izugbara (2005) has theorized that the erect penis is central to any attempt at hypothesizing on hegemonic masculinity. In many Kenyan societies, when a man impregnates a woman, he boasts that he has broken her leg. In other words, he is saying that he has disabled her to some extent, hence indicating his ability to dominate.

While the theme of gendered violence has been meaningfully addressed in gender studies, the question of discursive construction of violence has been relatively neglected. This implies that the role of language in perpetuating the myriad forms of violence such as rape requires further analysis.

Since the advent of Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter CDA) it has been correctly observed that language embeds practices of domination and discrimination and aspects of power. Indeed, CDA has been used in a number of research topics, for example on racism, discrimination and xenophobia in Europe (Wodak 2001c). Here, the goal has been to make transparent discursive practices that are racist, discriminatory and xenophobic. It is in this prism that CDA is important in analysing the male discourse on rape, with a view to exposing the dominant masculine ideologies and the masculine argumentation strategies embedded in such utterances.

The importance of CDA in the study of power and discriminative discursive practices is well explained by Wodak. She rightly says:

Power is about relations in difference, and particularly about the effects of differences in social structures. The constant unity of language and other social matters ensures that language is entwined in social power in a number of ways: language indexes power, expresses power, is involved where there is contention over and a challenge to power. Power does not derive from language, but language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power in the short and the long term. Language provides a finely articulated means for differences in power in social

hierarchical structures. Very few linguistic forms have not at some stage been pressed into the service of the expression of power by a process of syntactic or textual metaphor. CDA takes an interest in the ways in which linguistic forms are used in various expressions and manipulations of power. Power is signalled, not only by grammatical forms within a text, but also by a person's control of a social occasion by means of the genre of a text. (Wodak 2001b: 11)

Language is definitely entwined with societal structures that embed unequal power relations such as those of sexual violence. Thus, an utterance can be analysed to reveal its discriminatory import and the ideological base. This is what has made CDA a versatile conceptual framework in the analysis of discrimination in racist utterances.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Critical Discourse Analysis and the Hegemonic Masculinity Hypothesis offer insightful approaches to our topic. An offshoot of CDA, known as the Discourse-Historical Approach (Wodak 2001c), enables men's utterances to be critically analysed to expose the dominating masculine ideologies and male point of view in argumentation strategies. The Hegemonic Masculinity Hypothesis highlights the importance of the penis in the question of male domination over women, examining how men use a penis physically as well as the symbolic value attached to it as literally a tool of domination. The leading proponents of CDA are Ruth Wodak, Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, while the literature of CDA shows how it has become a highly versatile theory for analysing discourse (e.g. Wodak 1989, 1996a, 1996b, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001a, 2000b, 2001c; Wodak and de Cillia 1998; Wodak and van Dijk 2000; Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart 1999, and Fairclough 1989).

CDA rests on certain assumptions. For the sake of this research, the following are underscored:

- Language is a social phenomenon.
- Not only individuals, but also institutions and social groupings, have specific meanings and values that are expressed through language in systematic ways.
- Texts are the relevant units of language in communication.
- Readers/hearers are not passive recipients in their relationship to texts. (Kress, in Wodak 2001b: 6)

CDA maintains that language is not merely an instrument of communication, but ideologies and power are indexed in language. CDA draws attention to the three elements of criticality, ideology, and power. Criticality basically entails distancing

from the data. So, when we have an utterance on rape, the important task at hand is not activism but rather to uncover as critically as possible the unequal power connotations of the utterance.

Ideology, which can be defined as the way meaning is constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms of various kinds (Wodak 2001b), in the realm of CDA is seen as implicit in establishing and maintaining unequal power relations. The importance of ideology in shaping a people's worldview is emphasized by Mumby:

Ideology does not simply provide people with a belief system through which they orient themselves to the world, but instead, it plays a much more fundamental role in the process by which social actors create reality of the world in which they live. (Mumby 1988: 71)

On power, in the context of a male-dominated society, CDA critically analyses the language of men as it unfairly refers to women. So, CDA has its focus on enhancing the position of women who are in a disadvantaged position. Thus, here CDA is interested in improving the condition of women. In the case of rape, after revealing the negative male power embedded in utterances, CDA also becomes an important means of exposing the ideological orientation that is embedded in the utterances.

The Hegemonic Masculinity Hypothesis (HMH) underscores the centrality of the penis and the cultural attachments thereof in questions revolving around men's desire to dominate women (Friedman, in Izugbara 2005; Izugbara 2005). According to Izugbara (2005: 13–14), HMH has its beginnings in the primitive background (in relation to men) where a penis gained cultural significance, such that those who possess one ought to behave, that is, they are supposed to accomplish certain things with the penis. Succinctly, Izugbara delineates two understandings about the penis that have relevant ramifications on the question of power, as attached to masculinity: the physical activities of the penis and its symbolic functions. In physical or expressive terms, Izugbara says that to a primitive mind (real male mind) the erect penis has power: it is hard, bold and strong; it is also an element of domination. In Izugbara's words:

The invasive nature of the penis derived from primitive understanding of the meaning of penetration. The liquid (semen), which it emits during ejaculation, was also viewed as a sort of venom which weakened women. It registered as a tool with which to demobilise, invade and disvalue women. (Izugbara 2005: 14)

Although Izugbara contends that it is a primitive understanding that bestows the penis with such accolades, certain men are still socialized to believe these accolades, as implied in the Gikuyu myth, which we are going to discuss later. In terms of what the penis signifies, Izugbara explains that it has been bestowed with the significance of life and death: '... the major outcomes associated with the penile

activity and penetration centred on loss of virginity and pregnancy, thereby inscribing on the penis the power of life and death' (ibid.).

It is apparent that to many men who place a special premium on the penis, it is the most important means of enhancing the domination of men over women. This perception of the penis has dangerous consequences in terms of hegemonic masculinity (mainly symbolized by the penis), because as Izugbara (ibid.) rightly observes, this type of masculinity is the cultural ideology that 'inscribes superiority, power, vigour, strength and brutality to men'. It is in this context that we can vividly locate discursive violence, such as when a man warns men from a different community that if they continue supporting multiparty politics, their women will be raped (because his community is the ruling class and multiparty politics is a threat to its privilege). We shall discuss this utterance later. Implicit here is the desire to protect privileges and enhance domination through the penis. It is also the kind of hegemony that encourages men to mete out sexual violence on women, in what some men value as vigorous sexual intercourse.

Using the principled criteria of CDA and HMH, we analysed the masculine ideological and power base of the Kenyan society. We also looked at the masculine connotations of the term rape in selected Kenyan communities. Thirdly, we collected and analysed samples of male public utterances on women and rape in the Kenyan press.

On the analysis of male utterances, we were interested in answering the following questions:

- How are women named and referred to linguistically?
- What traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to them?
- By means of what arguments and argumentation do men justify and legitimise rape in their utterances in the Kenyan press?
- From what point of view are arguments, labels and attributions expressed?  
(adapted from Wodak 2001c: 72)

### **Ideology, Power and Sexual Violence**

The forty to forty-five Kenyan communities are predominantly patriarchal societies. In these societies, the male worldview is predominant and decisive. Such idioms as 'if you are man enough...' (from almost all Kenyan societies) and *mkono wa kiume* (a Kiswahili term meaning the right hand) are a few examples that explain this.

In terms of social psychology, the masculine element has been highly pervasive. Kenya's national symbols are the cock and the bull. The former ruling party had, and still has, its eulogised symbol in the cock. The symbol of the bull is very popular in many Kenyan communities. Thus, among the Luhya community (Samia

dialect) of Western Kenya, a revered man is called *esurusi* (the bull). Similarly, among the Luo (Nyanza Province), *ruath* (the bull) is a respected reference. Even in the widely used Kiswahili language, a tough man is called *dume* (a male animal). The bull, the cock and *dume* have one obvious thing in common: they are symbols of virility. It is instructive to note that there are no revered female sexual symbols in Kenya.

The male genitalia have been portrayed as a symbol of domination in Kenya. As earlier mentioned with regard to a number of communities, impregnating a woman is metaphorically expressed as breaking her leg. In other words, the man who impregnates a lady has somewhat disabled her. A Gikuyu myth (Central Province) illustrates this. The myth claims that at one time women were very powerful in the community. One day, men conspired to reduce the women's power, and all agreed to impregnate them. From that day, their women were regarded as being disabled by pregnancy. The strong message in this myth is that a man's penis can be an important instrument of enhancing a man's domination over a woman or invariably of bringing women under subjection (cf. Izugbara 2005). In sum, in Kenya, female sexuality invites scorn and male sexuality invites celebrity.

Against this backdrop of placing a premium on the male genitalia, rape has been common in many Kenyan communities for a very long time. In the many pre-colonial communal clashes, one of the common punishments inflicted on a vanquished community by the victorious army was abduction of their women who were savagely raped. During colonialism, one of the excesses of colonial rule was the rape of women by Europeans. Writing on the crimes of colonial rule in Kenya, Elkins (2005) identifies rape. Moreover, the process of marriage in some communities concealed what was in actual fact rape. Apart from marriage that was procedural where the bride was peacefully released after agreement between both parties, the other form, no less popular, was that of abduction. In this case, the wife-to-be was abducted and forced into marriage. She was raped but this rape was made to look normal after she had become a 'wife'. The import of this example is that a woman was there for the purpose of fulfilling a man's sexuality, whether she liked it or not.

Accruing from this ideology, rape for a long time passed as a 'normal' happening in Kenya. This is particularly evident when we critically look at many of the words that describe rape in selected communities as shown in Table 2 below:



**Table 2:** Translations of the Term Rape in Selected Kenyan Languages

Language	Meaning <sup>1</sup>
Gikuyu	<i>Kunyita na binya</i> : to get by force
Luhya	<i>Okbukwabo</i> : to catch by force
Luo	<i>Diyo</i> : grabbing and pinning down
Ekegusii	<i>Gotachera inse</i> : to pin down.
Kidabida	<i>Kudidika</i> : to catch by force
Kalenjin	<i>Koborien kwondo</i> : to fight with a woman
Turkana	<i>Atikonor</i> : to push somebody when she does not want it

Source: Field Data, 2005

If we subject the above translations of rape to PEGITOSCA (a good yardstick of translation) – namely, precision, economy, generativity, internationality, anti-obscenity, systemacity, consistency and appropriateness (Kiingi, in Mwaro 2000)<sup>2</sup> – what becomes clear is that they are not precise equivalents. They are low on economy, transparency and appropriateness. This in itself points to one thing: these societies do not have an appropriate term for rape. The reason for this is not hard to find. Rape was taken for granted or simply treated as ‘normal’. Serious reporting of rape in the press is just a few decades old in Kenya. For a long time, it was the abnormal and extreme cases, considered beyond social norms, that were reported. The rest were treated as normal.

### The Masculine Construction of a Woman in the Press

At the height of the multiparty politics agitation in Kenya, at the beginning of the last decade, men went for each other by using metaphors of women. We look at a few of them listed below. A Kenya African National Union (KANU) minister of the then ruling party accused Members of Forum for Restoration of Democracy (FORD) of groping:

- 1) ‘like women rejected by men and have been going to Chester House like prostitutes trying to attract men clients.’ (*Daily Nation*, 18 October 1991)

In another statement, the speaker compared people who decamped from KANU to a wife estranged from her husband:

- 2) ‘If she does not want you and you do not want her, you let her go... there is a name we use for such women which I can not say here...’ (uttered by a KANU politician, *Daily Nation*, 18 October 1991)

An individual supposedly speaking positively about women said:

- 3) 'women are the flowers in our lives. They bear us, they feed us, give us comfort and tender love, so when some of us turn around and abuse them something must be wrong,' (uttered by a pastor, reacting to the first two comments, *Daily Nation*, 18 October 1991)

The first utterance starts with a masculine presupposition, that it is men who reject women. The converse is that women do not reject men. Secondly, it refers to women as prostitutes and men as clients. In terms of power, the opening masculine presupposition bestows power to a man for it is a man who has the power to reject a woman. On the question of prostitution, it is vividly a case of positive self-image presentation and negative 'other' representation. The *topos* (plural *topoi*),<sup>3</sup> presented here is that of definition, name or interpretation. The explanation of this *topos* goes like this: 'if an action, a thing or person (group of persons) is named/designated (as) X, the action, thing or person (group of persons) carries or should carry the qualities /traits/attributes contained in the (literal) meaning of X' (Wodak 2001c: 75). Prostitution is derided in Kenyan society, and in moral terms a prostitute is one who goes against the straight moral fabric of society. On the other hand, the label 'client' in reference to men is positive. It can be used in a number of positive contexts, including those in which normal business is involved.

The idea of discursively constructing women in negative terms and men in positive images can be traced to the dominating masculine ideologies in many Kenyan societies. In line with this, a man who engages in prostitution is a hero (as very virile). One who engages in multiple sexual relationships is seen as a worthwhile bull, cock or *dume*. Conversely, a woman who engages in multiple sex relationships is seen as a prostitute! In reality both men and women who are involved in serious sexual promiscuity, either for commercial gain or otherwise, are actually prostitutes. But the male-dominated society still sees women as prostitutes and excludes men. This ideology has held sway in East African society for a considerable time. In 1967, one critical Tanzanian poet condemned the idea of labelling only women as prostitutes. In the last stanza of one of his poems he wrote:

*Tungesema na kupima mwanzo wa hii hekaya*  
*Nani mbele na wa nyuma, katika hiyo himaya?*  
*Ni yule mtoa vyuma, katika hiyo himaya*  
*Wanaume ndiyo malaya watoaji wa milungura.*

(Mnyampala 1967: 142)

If we were to critically look at this fable,  
 Who is at the forefront and who is in the backyard?  
 It is the one who gives silver who is at the forefront

Men are the prostitutes, they are the ones who bribe their way.

As this poet correctly observes, when a tree withers, you look for the reasons in the roots and not in the leaves. Men initiate prostitution. They are the ones who pay for the services, so they share as much of the blame as women. It is important to note that the question of prostitution has implications for rape. Kenyan society believes less in the rape of a woman who is considered a prostitute. The assumption is: she is used to violent sex and therefore can only be seen to be acting if she says she has been raped. This is actually implied in the Kenyan law on rape (Wachira 1994).

In the second utterance involving the image of the estranged woman, the male speaker did not give the exact label. But the implication is there: that such a label cannot be said in public. What cannot be said in public must be negative or horrible. Once again in this utterance, the male point of view is projected. The baseline is that both the man and the woman are in mutual agreement that they do not need each other. However, out of masculine socialisation, the male speaker believes it is the woman who should carry a very bad label that he cannot dare utter in public.

When men portray women as prostitutes or other things that they cannot say in public, they are simply laying grounds to justify their excesses against them. It is plausible to observe that such negatively skewed ideological images of women constructed by men are the precursors to gendered violence against women by men.

At first glance, the third utterance about women may look positive. However, it still reflects that archetype that regards a woman as the source of a man's pleasure. When women are referred to as flowers, it is again a case of the *topos* of definition, name and interpretation. A flower is a fancy symbol that is colourful and picturesque. In terms of function, it is the ultimate other to thorns. In this context, a woman is seen as one who is supposed to give colour to the world of a man.

The sentiment about women bearing men, feeding them and giving them comfort and tender love bring to the fore the *topos* of burden. Why should a woman be so burdened with all the above for the sake of a man? However, this type of utterance does have a background in Kenya. For example, in Kenyan music and oral and written literature, prior to the advent of gender consciousness, a woman was traditionally seen as a good mother, a man's subservient sexual object and a man's property (see Matteru 1982). Thus, songs about the woman

with 'secretary bird's legs', 'sexy lips', 'attractive eyes', 'sharp neck' and so on are not a rarity. The relevant question is, why these properties? To go back to our original statement, why should women be so distinctly identified with tender love and comfort? The unfortunate thing in this context is that this tender love and comfort has to be given to men, but it does not matter if they do not give it back. Actually it is this type of argument that has been the background of the image of a woman as an object of a man's pleasure, implying mainly sexual pleasure.

The first two utterances have something in common: when we make a tacit actor analysis, we see the positively constructed man and the negatively constructed woman. And in the third utterance, the woman is seen in decorative terms, meant to beautify a man's life. A woman is not seen as an equal partner. The negative image of a woman constructed by a man is not logical, but all the same can be understood in terms of the dominant belief system of Kenyan society; for, in the case of a female prostitute, how does she become a prostitute without interacting with a male prostitute? In simple terms, no male prostitutes, no female prostitutes; or to leave it in its original ironic form, no male clients, no female prostitutes.

### **The Masculine Discursive Construction of Rape in the Press**

After looking at the ideological and power positions of men as a necessary background, we now move on to the masculine construction of rape. The following utterances explain this:

1)All Kikuyu women will be raped if the community continues to support multiparty advocates.' (by a KANU male politician and quoted in *Daily Nation*, 18 October 1991)

This statement was later disowned by the person who uttered it (a very common happening among Kenyan politicians and one of the reasons why reporters use tape recorders these days), but was only after a spirited response by other leaders.

As disturbing as it is, and leaving aside the politics of whether the statement was made or not, the truth is that this statement has been actualized many times in Kenya. What is important here is that rape is clearly portrayed as an important angle in the domination of men over women. And even more absurd is that if a man wants to vanquish another man, then raping his woman is the ultimate sanction. This happened in many inter-tribal wars before colonialism, in the colonial punitive expeditions and more recently in the massacre in the Marsabit district, in Eastern Kenya, where rival clans were involved (*Daily Nation*, 15 July 2005).

In this context, rape is portrayed as an extreme edge of tragic domination. It means that, first, a man knocks out another man, before he gets down to rape the women of the vanquished man. At the heart of this is hegemonic masculinity that eulogizes the penis. Here, the penis is depicted as the ultimate instrument for perpetuating humiliation.

The picture of masculine ideology in the construction of rape in the Kenyan press continues to be painted in the two next statements. The first is:

2) 'Donors are behaving like people raping a woman who is already too willing.' (*Daily Nation*, 10 February 2003)

It is important to be aware of the context. This sentence was uttered by the Kenyan minister in charge of justice. The press reported that he also laughed at his 'joke'. Judging from the ideological and power network that we have traced above, many men in Kenya would have said the same thing. The outrage that this statement attracted for three days, before an apology was tendered, was overwhelmingly expressed by women groups. Male leaders did not come out convincingly in condemning the comment.

Let us get back to the statement. In the utterance, the 'people' (men) who are raping are many. This implies gang-rape. Even among die-hard male chauvinists in Kenya, this is not very popular. But in the minister's statement 'people' was used in the plural, suggesting gang-rape. This is absurd. What is commonplace in Kenya is the assumption in the last part of the statement, that a victim of rape can be willing but pretends she is in pain. The addition 'too willing' is indeed the absurd gloss on the ideological position.

There is an explanation behind this. There are some men in Kenyan communities who think this way. For example, among the Luhya of Western Kenya, it is held that when a woman says no she is actually willing. This was the reason behind the 'willingness' as expressed by the cabinet minister (a Meru from Eastern Kenya). In other words, it is implied that women never say yes openly to matters of sex. If there is any substance in this, then the answer is found in the brutal way men have dominated women in such societies. It is in this context that we locate acts of sexuality where a woman's pain is a man's pleasure, as seen, for example, in the various forms of female genital mutilation common among many Kenyan communities. Genital mutilation is a brutal and painful act, with at best agonising repercussions and at worst tragic consequences, and yet because of deep-seated masculine ideological connotations, it is still practised despite spirited campaigns against it.

In a community like the Luhya, a woman is supposed to feign pain in sexual activity. Admittedly, this is a truism for a less educated rural woman, but again she is in the category of the majority. If she openly shows that she is genuinely enjoying it, she is dubbed an unsuitable wife. Alongside this, many patriarchal societies socialize women to pretend that they are being hurt during sexual intercourse just to reinforce the sexual ego of a man. In such societies women pretend they are getting hurt to make a man reach the peak of his love-making.

Going back to the statement above, the press that reported it was not totally free from portraying the masculine viewpoint. After reporting what the cabinet

minister said, the reporter added that ‘he laughed at his own “joke”’. Seriously speaking, what the minister said can never pass as a joke, particularly in the eyes of a woman who has undergone the trauma of rape.

In some patriarchal societies, men are socialized to think that when they need sex from a woman, regardless of the feelings of the woman, they can have it, and that this is not terribly wrong because it is ‘normal’. But, as one of the placards of women demonstrators in Nairobi on the above minister’s utterance read, ‘Rape is not about sex, it is about torture’. The relevant question to ask here is: how can men be so insensitive about rape? The truth is that it looks normal when it is a distant occurrence, when it involves somebody not closely related to them. When a sister, a wife or a mother is the victim the pain is discernible to all. There can never be anything laughable about rape. No matter the circumstance, it can never be a joke.

After three days of intense pressure from demonstrations by women’s groups and anti-rape organizations, the cabinet minister was forced to tender an apology thus: ‘I unreservedly and sincerely apologise to all women who were offended by the remarks. I withdraw the remarks to the extent to which they referred to rape and willingness ...’ (*Daily Nation*, 12 February 2005).

In spite of the apology, one is left wondering why it took three days to come. Could it be a popular belief that men are not supposed to give in very quickly to women? Or more importantly, was the minister just like a host of other men who said nothing about this utterance, initially blinded by the dominant belief system on what he had said and, therefore, only offered an apology after persistent and intense pressure from women’s groups? I would suggest the latter; for the truth is that, even if the utterance was made in the spirit of the dominant male ideology, after the immediate reaction it is to be expected that the minister in charge of justice and constitutional affairs should have immediately realized his mistake and apologized promptly.

The press also referred to the cabinet minister’s utterance as ‘remarks’. This looks like an understatement. The remarks were unfortunate, embarrassing and profoundly an ideological standpoint of men on women’s sexuality. To lend credence to the fact that the dominant masculine ideological and power standpoint still continues to take for granted the pain of female victims of rape, a few months after this minister’s comeuppance, a man convicted of one of the worst rape crimes in Kenyan history made another shocking utterance on rape in Kenya. He said:

3) ‘Perhaps if it was rape, then rape was normal. But really I do not think that they needed to kill any one. I mean how could they? They were mere boys.’ (*Daily Nation*, 13 July 2005)

This statement was from a man convicted of participation in gang-rape at St Kizito mixed secondary school on 19 July 1991. In just one night, seventy-one girls were raped and nineteen girls died under the rage of the marauding boys. Fourteen years later, a released convict, implicated in the most vicious recorded gang-rape in Kenya's history, in an interview on what happened in the school, told a reporter that rape was normal. He meant 'normal' in this case because of the way Kenyan society views rape. As we have seen, often women are raped and suffer in silence; rape cases are only reported by very daring women. According to this rapist, it was only murder that was not normal. This is an argumentation masked in very thick masculinity.

The other aspect is the *topos* that is employed: the boys should be excused for their tragic excesses because they were just boys. This euphemism implies that the fact that they were boys means they were harmless. This is ironic because those whom the interviewee calls 'mere boys' acted in a vicious enough way to kill nineteen girls after raping seventy-one.

Again, we recall the reference on rape as normal. If at all normal, it is normal to the male perpetrator. That is why he can execute such a barbaric act without a second thought and without thinking of the pain he has caused his victims. The idea that it is normal suggests that the woman is a willing partner. This largely comes from the way boys are socialized in almost all Kenyan societies to the intent that women should engage in sex on a man's terms.

As the reporter who covered the proceedings of this tragic case observed:

I have no doubt that the boys *had sex on their minds*. The boys who broke the door to the dormitory were intent on *having sexual fun and many thought the girls should happily join in. That is why some of them were calling out some girls by their names as they forcibly grabbed and flushed them out of the hostel. St Kizito should be a lesson to every man that rape is the worst crime against women.* (emphasis mine) (*Daily Nation*, 13 July 2005)

The words of the *Daily Nation* reporter help to illuminate important theoretical points put forward in this study. A man in Kenya is socialized explicitly or otherwise to engage a woman in sex for his own pleasure. There is the assumption that a woman is also always ready to join in the act otherwise regarded as fun by the man. For if the boys had thought it was such a bad crime, they would not have dared call out the innocent victims by name as they did during the assault. Lastly, the question of force is vividly captured. This is what completes the cycle of brutal domination. The bold call on all men in the reporter's observation is because of the tragic repercussions that were the end-result, and the emotions and the anger that gripped the nation in the wake of this calamity. But unfortunately, this call was never heeded.

Fourteen years later, one of the perpetrators of the crime still believes that rape was, and rape is, a normal thing. Knowledgeable Kenyans still believe women

enjoy rape! This simply shows that little has changed in this regard and that such a ghoulish rape is still far from being unrepeatable. No matter the argument, rape can never be normal for any woman. The same reporter again emphasizes:

St Kizito made me understand that, for women, the fear of rape is just as bad as the fear of death. But women would rather die than face the humiliation of rape – one of the worst crimes any one would visit on a woman. (*Daily Nation*, 13 July 2005)

In all senses, rape is the worst crime a man can visit on a woman. A woman can never willingly welcome it. It is only a man using brutal force, socialized by very unfair masculine ideologies who may think she is pretending to be in pain. Rape is a violent crime, no more and no less.

### Conclusion

It has emerged in this study that rape perpetrated by men is on the increase in Kenya. This study has necessarily relied on rape cases reported to the police. However, by the very nature of Kenyan society, where matters dealing with sex are treated with utmost secrecy and rape is seen as a stigma, we can conclude that the numbers of women raped by men are actually far higher than what is reported. Related to this is the male view on rape neutrally expressed in the press. It is also abundantly clear that the *topoi* depicted in all the utterances on rape considered in this study are lopsided and conveniently portray men's perspectives: these include sentiments such as 'rape is normal' and the people who rape are 'mere boys'. The other unjustifiable argumentation is that women enjoy rape, and that the ones who say they are in pain are just pretending.

We have traced the reasons behind the male utterances on rape to the ideologies and the power structures that are intertwined with them. First some men view women in derogatory terms as prostitutes. This acts as the basis for unfair treatment such as sexual violence on a person who is not in tandem with the desired moral fabric of society. We also discussed labels that perpetuate a woman as an object of a man's comfort.

Unfortunately, in connection with rape, the Kenyan law that is supposed to protect women is still overwhelmingly dominated by a masculine point of view. Thus, when a female victim of rape comes up to defend herself in a Kenyan court of law, because of the masculine connotations in the existing law against rape, she ends up going through another form of traumatizing psychological rape in the courtrooms. In this way, the negative masculine ideological standpoints on rape are likely to be perpetuated. It is only fair that the law on rape should be fairer to the victim than is currently the case.

In the light of the statements that have been analysed, it is important to put in place a mechanism that will expose the negative ideological structures that occur



in day-to-day talk in public. Verbal exorcism and radical verbal hygiene are necessary. And more importantly, just as the laws of Kenya allow somebody who incites the public to be charged in a court of law for incitement, so should the law severely punish those who make insensitive public utterances on rape. This will help to eliminate discursive violence related to rape. Also, perpetrators of rape crimes on women should be meaningfully punished as a deterrent to others. Currently there is the sex crimes' bill that, interestingly, has led to considerable debate particularly from male circles because of the suggestion that male rapists should be castrated. The kernel of the matter is simple. Rape is cruel, absurd and the worst form of intrusion on a woman's self (other forms of violence are not in any way slighted). If it is proved beyond any reasonable doubt that a man has perpetrated rape, very severe punishment such as life imprisonment is not unfair, especially in a society that eulogises all forms of male domination of women. The court is an important starting point in dismantling both the brutal exercise of hegemonic masculinity and its discursive expression as well.

### Notes

1. The respondents who gave us meanings were native speakers and, where possible, linguists.
2. PEGITOSCA is an acronym or a terminology model developed by Kiingi that is realized as follows in full. P stands for Precision, a term that should not be problematic to the user. E stands for Economy, the brevity of the conglomerates of the term. G is for Generativity, the generative ability of the term. I is for Internationality, and T for Transparency, where the term should reflect the meaning. O stands for Anti-Obscenity. S is for Systemicity, meaning that terms should not be developed with some pattern, e.g. phonemics, phonemic analysis, phonemic notation, phonemic transcription and phonemic overlapping. C stands for Consistency, so that the term should have an acceptable flow, e.g. epicarp and endocarp. A is for Appropriateness, the term being used relative to the culture, ecology, social structure, linguistics and phonetics of language in question (Mwaro 2000).
3. *Topos* refer to 'parts of argumentation which belong to the obligatory, either explicit or inferable premises. They are content-related warrants or "conclusion rules" which connect the argument or arguments to the conclusion' (Kienpointner, in Wodak 2001c: 74).

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