

Psychosocial Rehabilitation Experiences of Women Victims of Armed Conflict in Colombia.

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2 Psychosocial rehabilitation experiences of 3 women victims of armed conflict in Colombia.

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19 Abstract

20 **Background:** After nine years of the ground-breaking social policy Law 1448
21 of 2011 -Victims Law- and its extension until 2030, the Colombian State and
22 other stakeholders have made several efforts towards granting the right of
23 integral reparation for more than nine million victims that are recognized in
24 the Colombian transitional context. Psychosocial rehabilitation is a
25 reparation measure of the Victims Law's whose objective is to re-establish
26 the psychosocial, physical and mental health welfare in the individual,
27 familiar and community levels. This study aims to understand the
28 experiences of psychosocial rehabilitation of women victims of armed
29 conflict in Montes de Maria and the underlying social intervention paradigms
30 that guide the Law's implementation.

31 **Methods:** Based on a qualitative design with a phenomenological approach,
32 narrative tools and thematic network analysis permitted to give voice to the
33 women participants. Individual narrative interviews and a focus group were
34 conducted with twelve and eight women victims, respectively.

35 **Results:** Although the Victims Law is oriented by a sociopolitical intervention
36 paradigm, the stories of the women's victims of Montes de María mainly
37 evidenced non-sociopolitical interventions with humanitarian assistance
38 towards revictimization and State abandonment. As a coping mechanism
towards the State negligence encountered, women strive to overcome
psychosocial trauma by developing agency and community resources for
the resignification of the traumatic experiences and peacebuilding.

39 **Conclusions:** For the Victims Law to achieve its integrality aim, the
40 psychosocial approach should be implemented through all its measures but

41 Background

42 The Colombian armed conflict involves a significant social tissue fracture after
43 more than 60 years of violence. Victims rise to 9,005,319 million which
44 corresponds to 25% of the country's population [1]. Structural problems

39 connected with inequity and marginalization, amongst others, have been delayed
40 and unsolved by the different stakeholders [2–5]. Physical and mental health, as
41 well as psychosocial welfare affectations, including the sense of community and
42 prosocial behavior, reflect damage due to the permanent exposition to violence
43 [6–10]. Such oppression towards Colombians citizenship [11–13] constitutes
44 an urgent State intervention matter. Psychosocial rehabilitation (PR) has
45 therefore become a co-responsible process in Colombian Social policy to
46 improve public health and successfully grant the victim’s well-being towards
47 integral reparation.

48 In this order, the Victims Law (VL) 1448/11 regulated by the Decree 4800/11,
49 seeks to provide prevention, assistance and protection for the victims’ rights of
50 truth, justice and reparation based on administrative, social, judicial and
51 economic measures at individual and collective levels [2,4]. It was elaborated
52 through a collective process with more than 4000 victims, social leaders and
53 representatives of different social organizations, presented in nine congressional
54 audiences and cities. This construction process “from below” avoids the
55 decontextualized bias of dominant classes [14]. Also allows a dialogue with the
56 oppressed communities, seeking proper moral and symbolic reparation
57 measures without re-victimization practices. It follows a psychosocial approach
58 that was crucial since its elaboration, and further implementation, through

59 programs, strategies and actions that intend to regain social equilibrium
60 [2,12,15]. A process that strengthens personal and collective community
61 resources through active citizen participation for the construction of a more
62 democratic State and Peace [2,3,5,13,16–18].

63 The recognition of a participatory social intervention is fundamental from the
64 construction, implementation and monitoring of the VL. It conceives
65 humanitarian, Human Rights, differential, participatory and transformative
66 approaches, recognizing the deep historical roots of violence, inequity and
67 marginalization that produced victimization [2]. In this sense, following Corvalán's
68 [19] conception on social intervention paradigms which materialize the State's
69 social policies orientation, socio-political and non-socio-political interventions are
70 found. In this order, socio-political oriented social policies, such as the VL,
71 recognizes major societal objectives as a critic of the development model.
72 Consequently, acting on society's structural conditions require social
73 transformations in order to build sustainable interventions; as well as avoiding the
74 repetition of the violent acts, for democracy strengthening, forgiveness and
75 reconciliation [2,14,17,19–23]. In response to this necessity, in December
76 2019, was granted the extension of the VL until 2030 through the Constitutional
77 Court Sentence C-588/19 for the continuation of the reparation process [2].
78 Furthermore, as interventions in Colombia which are mainly focused on

79 psychosocial support programs lack of continuity due to the armed conflict,
80 results and effectiveness of these programs have not been evaluated, neglecting
81 victims' reparation towards well-being and quality of life [24]. Therefore, in this
82 Law's extension context, it becomes relevant to understand women victim's
83 experiences on PR to contribute to more pertinent and transformative social
84 policy intervention in Colombia.

85 **Psychosocial approach of the Victim's Law: psychosocial rehabilitation**
86 **challenges**

87 In Colombia, a complex paradigm [25] has encountered various theoretical
88 and practical aspects of the psychosocial approach. Including at its base, a
89 community mental health and human rights perspective nurtured from Latin
90 American countries [16,26,27]. This approach includes a critical social-
91 community psychology analysis since the actual societal system founded on
92 inequality and social exclusion is unsustainable for the victim's well-being [5,27-
93 30]. This sociopolitical context systematically affects the population's
94 constitutional rights demanding effective reparation. One that does not
95 exclusively rely on the non-sociopolitical or directive interventions towards
96 assistance responses that perpetuates minorities and vulnerable groups
97 marginalization and exclusion, but rather empowers them [2,3,14,16,19,27].
98 Indeed, it is through participation that the National System of Attention and
99 Integral Reparation of the Victims, SNARIV -initialisms in Spanish-, has tried to

100 grant the rights of truth, justice and reparation with material and symbolic
101 measures in a horizontal dialogue between popular and scientific knowledge
102 [6,14,31–33].

103 Regarding PR whose objective is to re-establish physical, mental,
104 psychosocial health and welfare by overcoming the victimizing acts affections in
105 the individual, familiar and community levels; address structural violence and
106 gives control to victims in the decision-making process [3,34–36]. In that sense,
107 PR includes actions focused on the victim's and communitarian resources, skills,
108 agency and capacities to overcome victimization rather than emphasizing on
109 psychopathological or deficit approaches that derive from a reductionist individual
110 analysis of armed conflict [3,15,16,35,37,38]. The latter one, objectifies victims
111 reducing their personal and collective possibilities of contributing to their
112 reparation process to mere integrative acts remaining in a re-victimizing, negative
113 feedback loop situation [14,36,39–41].

114 By intervening at structural levels, PR is founded on a differential approach
115 that prioritizes specialized intervention based on life cycle, disability, ethnicity and
116 gender [2,35]. Related with the latter, previous works [27,38,42–46]
117 emphasize in women's role in response to armed conflict to adjust rehabilitation
118 interventions that includes analysis of gender affectations. This, as a need to
119 generate changes at the structural level regarding the patriarchal order, the

120 recognition of women victim's needs and the symbolic repercussions of feminine
121 and masculine roles [27,38,46]. PR is relevant in reparation processes as it
122 has been proven in different countries, its repercussions on lessening symptoms
123 at the individual-clinical and psychosocial levels by sharing experiences and
124 agency, improving the way in which women victims relate to their community
125 [24,47]. It also allows the strengthening of skills and knowledge through
126 workshops and training that serve as tools for empowering women in their
127 contexts [15,47].

128 However, there are challenges of PR implementation related with integral
129 reparation and non-repetition rights since the armed conflict has not ceased [48],
130 showing a high complexity due to neoliberal conditions of the Colombian State
131 that prevail [49–51]. Victims encounter difficulties for the materialization of
132 fundamental rights in a human rights vulnerability framework; characterized by
133 extreme poverty, lack of access to the guarantee of their basic needs and
134 systematic social leaders homicides; as Colombian State's historical and
135 structural violence is perpetuated throughout ineffective public policies that do not
136 limit the escalation of social inequality and marginalization with a differential
137 impact on women [24,27,34,43,46,48–52]. Furthermore, despite the fact that
138 the VL is a ground-breaking social policy and includes a vast amount of
139 measures that the Colombian State has committed to, remains a gap between

140 the rights it aims to grant and the articulated, institutional and intersectoral
141 actions it assists [26,35].

142 Indeed, social intervention in the country has been much more centered in
143 the consequences that generate violence rather than on the understanding of the
144 conflict's structural roots, driven by a non-sociopolitical intervention paradigm
145 [14,16,39]. Framed on a functionalist vision of society based on the search of
146 an equilibrium system by adaptation and accommodation of the damages
147 produced. In such a way, superficially intervening problems and collectives, but
148 not mobilizing the values and socioeconomic bases in which are distributed
149 society's resources [14]. Promptness and emergency are characteristics of this
150 type of interventions mostly called as humanitarian [39,53], but they remain
151 insufficient to resolve structural precariousness and armed conflict in which
152 victims are found [26,39,53,54]. Following compassion policies, humanitarian
153 intervention relies on delayed indemnification, conceiving victims as passive
154 actors, beneficiaries or mentally ill persons [39,53]. In this context, the quest
155 towards an interventive equilibrium amongst needs satisfaction and
156 reestablishment of rights, as well as the strengthening of political and community
157 development is salient [16].

158 In relation to the above, the debate on the victim's social intervention is
159 broadened by the psychosocial perspective towards an attention that truly

160 comprehends human phenomena on a complementary approach between the
161 structural, cultural and subjective dimensions, centered in agency [3,5,27].
162 Therefore, as we recognize the victims' needs and agency, it is our interest as
163 psychologists to further contribute to the comprehension along with the
164 transformation of the negative psychosocial dynamics that characterize the
165 Colombian armed conflict [2,21,26,27]. We attempt to widen the scope of the
166 project "Women and narratives of reparation: gender category problematizing the
167 Colombian Transitional Justice", which evidenced the continuity of gender
168 regimes at times of war and peace, as well as the articulation of patriarchal
169 governance with transitional justice frameworks [46]. In this sense, this study
170 aims to understand the PR experiences of women victims towards the VL
171 implementation in Montes de Maria, as well as the coherence between the law's
172 epistemological background and its implementation, to further contribute to the
173 construction of pertinent and improved PR practices in Colombia.

174 **Method**

175 **Study design and setting**

176 A qualitative design with a phenomenological approach and an exploratory and
177 interpretive scope was conducted [55,56], enabling us to understand the
178 experiences of PR of women victims of armed conflict in the implementation of the
179 Right of Integral Reparation of the VL. The municipalities included were El Carmen
180 de Bolívar and San Juan de Nepomuceno in Montes de María, located in the

181 Caribbean region, which is one of the most violent regions in the country's history
182 due to the presence of various armed actors [57].

183 **Participants**

184 Individual narrative interviews and a focus group were conducted with twelve
185 and eight women victims, respectively. Participants were contacted by a social
186 leader gatekeeper from the Colectivo de Comunicaciones de Montes de María
187 Línea 21 and selected through a snowball method. They were all adult women
188 whose ages ranged from thirty-five to seventy. These women develop farm work
189 and social leadership, have low educational levels and socio-economic
190 vulnerability conditions derived from the armed conflict [43].

191 **Procedure**

192 At the research's early stages, women participants had a presentation of the
193 research aims as well as were informed about voluntary participation and the
194 possibility of withdrawing at any time. Participants who understood the research
195 procedures were asked to provide informed consent [64]. The research design,
196 data collection instruments and procedures received ethical approval from the
197 Social Policy program of University of Brasilia. Individual narrative interviews were
198 conducted with twelve women in 2017, and eight women participated in a focus
199 group in 2018. In both individual and collective narrative interviews, participants
200 told their stories in Spanish, placing their experience in an organizing sequence of
201 events, shaping their individual and social life [58–61]. Interviews were recorded,

202 transcribed in Spanish and translated to English. Confidentiality of women's data
203 was ensured by replacing personal information; we considered ethical criteria from
204 the Deontological and bioethical Psychology Code, as well as the Colombian
205 School of Psychologists and reflected carefully on possible ethical concerns
206 beyond informed consent during the study [64].

207 We carried out a thematic network analysis, organizing and systematizing
208 qualitative information into basic (BT), organizers (OT), and global themes (GT)
209 following Attride-Stirling [62] orientation. Triangulation of methods and researchers
210 were used [63]. Using NVivo12, the inductive analysis consisted of a permanent
211 and layered movement between data and the successive themes proposed.

212 During the in-depth analysis and triangulation stages, two (GT) emerged:
213 “Experiences of state interventions” and “Experiences of State abandonment”. In
214 this order, the organization comprehends the experiences and meanings attributed
215 by them in relation to PR.

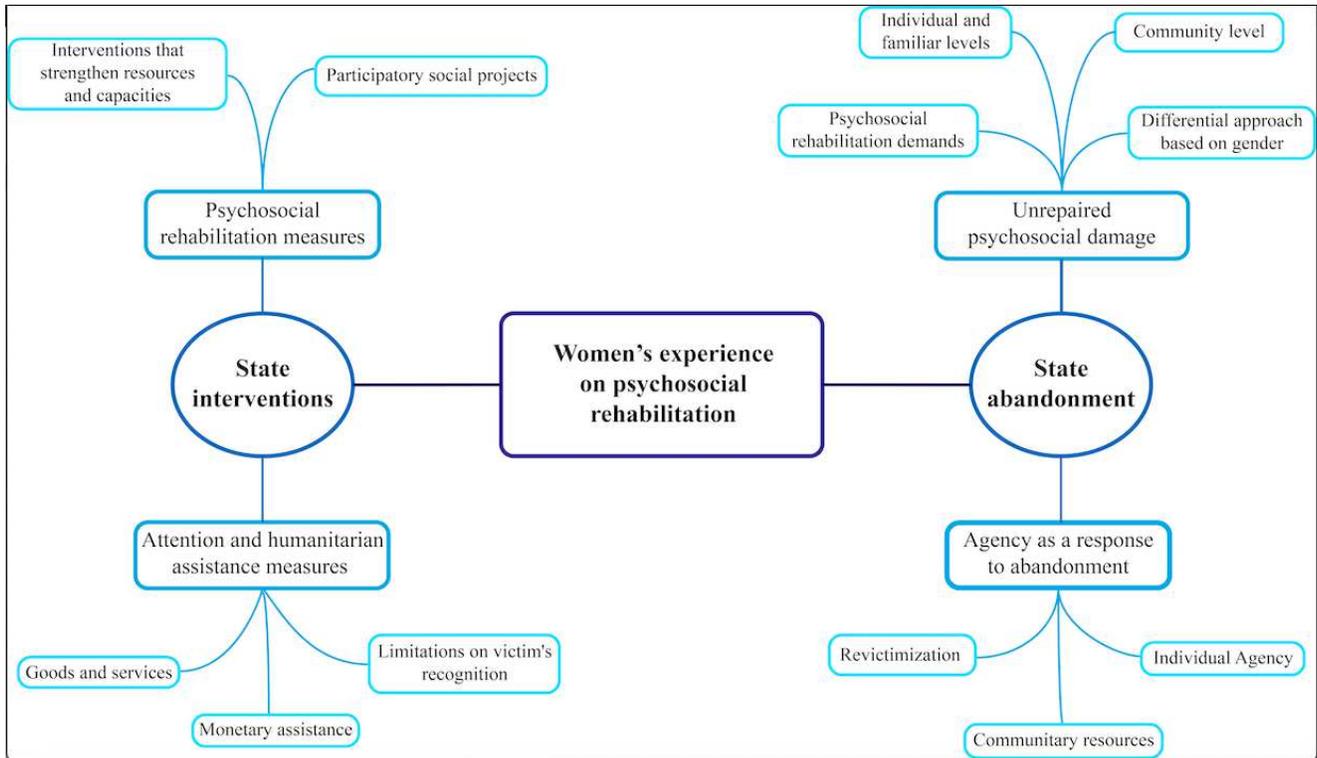
216 **Results**

217 We collected women victims' voices through narrative tools considering data
218 saturation [65] and the aspects previously described. They were codified building
219 thematic networks (Figure 1) emerging from women's shared experiences rather
220 than on individual stories [62]. In this section, we present fragments of the women
221 stories that evidence how they experience disintegrated PR intervention regarding

222

the VL implementation.

223



224

225

Figure 1: Women's experience on psychosocial rehabilitation.

226

State interventions: humanitarian assistance experiences framed in a (dis)integrated reparation

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228

Results enable us to argue that social intervention is more evidenced by

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women's narratives concerning attention and humanitarian assistance measures

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(OT) instead of integral reparation measures. As VL's humanitarian interventions

231

do not imply reparation, satisfaction and non-repetition measures through

232

restitution, indemnification or PR, they remain scarce at the implementation level.

233

In relation to reparation measures, although fewer, they are related with

234

indemnification and PR interventions in terms of material, moral and symbolic

235 dimensions. We noticed how in some cases they were beneficiaries of emergency
236 humanitarian assistance but did not experience the psychosocial support or
237 integral reparation stipulated by the law. Also, we found cases without
238 indemnification after twenty years of being forcibly displaced. Women identified
239 monetary grants and, in a few cases, alimentary or clothing aids that were once or
240 a few times received after the victimizing event; humanitarian assistance
241 interventions that do not transform their conditions in the long term [26,39]. They
242 usually do not identify the institution that provided the humanitarian assistance and
243 feel unaware about the attention and reparation route of the Victim's Unit.

244 *(...) the only thing that I received is humanitarian aid: 210.000 pesos that they*
245 *gave me one day, that's it" (Interview 1).*

246 *"There was no direct manifestation from the State. I remember that my father*
247 *once brought food, a sack, a bag, it was the only thing I remember. But I don't*
248 *remember how he got it, maybe someone in the Red Cross helped us but since*
249 *then it has been very hard for us. (Interview 9).*

250 In these cases, compassion policies, as an element of humanitarianism, is
251 mediating the institutional requirements expressed by the victims [39,53]. They
252 indicate that in order to access goods and social services related to humanitarian
253 assistance they should exhibit their suffering to be recognized as such. A situation

254 that places limitations toward the recognition of the victim's human dignity and
255 rights. In some cases, women received monetary humanitarian aids that they
256 regret accepting, as they are still waiting for material, moral and symbolic
257 reparation after many years.

258 *(...) for the State the person has to arrive very badly dressed, foul-mouthed and*
259 *everything, be like an indigent, and the problem is that one wasn't an indigent, one*
260 *didn't live under the bridge, had a family, a lifestyle (...)* (Interview 1).

261 *(...) in humanitarian aid, here in Acción Social (Government institution) they*
262 *gave me one million three hundred eighty thousand pesos in twenty years. I regret*
263 *receiving them because now I'm still waiting for them to pay my forced*
264 *displacement, but I call, and they tell me something different each time (...)*
265 (Interview 3).

266 In other cases, women received an indemnification that responds to the
267 reparation material dimension but remain feeling without integral reparation. This
268 intervention disjointed from the others, does not include a human rights approach
269 and women perceive it as dehumanized [54]. This fact leads to an objectification of
270 the victims [39,53], they describe how their subjectivities are being reduced to a
271 monetary transaction in such interventions. Something problematic in the sense
272 that reparation should be accompanied by a psychosocial approach that is absent

273 in these cases, as moral and symbolic dimensions that could have improved their
274 reparation process towards an integral one.

275 *(...) they called my husband, they gave him a reparation of ten million pesos,*
276 *because you know that it is given a check for each person, I always said that*
277 *money is not everything because when they gave me the reparation that was not a*
278 *huge amount of money. I shouted, cried, and said: until here they come [the*
279 *reparation process]; how come a human being is going to be valued for x quantity?*
280 *For seventy million pesos? Three people were repaired for that miserable thing; I*
281 *prefer them with me and don't receive a cent (Interview 11).*

282 Negative structural dimensions as socio-economic precariousness are a
283 constant; poverty conditions, marginalization, social exclusion and an institutional
284 framework that does not properly articulate processes are evidenced. Therefore, a
285 sociopolitical context of extreme vulnerability remains, and the psychosocial
286 approach is not guaranteed. Social inequality frames the unsustainability of the
287 reparation process as a recurrent fact, considering that psychosocial approach is
288 not properly entailed, referring mostly to indemnification by itself. In this sense,
289 psychosocial interventions that do not involve structural aspects can generate
290 pathologizing processes, fragmenting and reducing social phenomena into
291 individual realities [3,15,16,35,37,38].

292 In a few cases, it is noticed that some of the State Interventions (GT) in relation
293 to Measures of PR (OT) are found throughout Interventions that strengthen women
294 's capacities and resources (BT). These projects facilitate empowerment improving
295 the community's development from below and the social tissue reconstruction
296 [14,29,30].

297 *We made the workshop with women's training school in politics and peace in*
298 *2011. Now this year [2018] we also did women's training in politics and peace, to*
299 *work on women's advocacy in a political way since we are now in the special*
300 *constituency (Interview 6).*

301 *There have been meetings of care work, (...) and in the pedagogical meetings*
302 *we revise all the themes of peace pedagogy, which was quite a subject matter that*
303 *people were unaware of. (Interview 6).*

304 Women value PR that enables capacity building, as it allows them to acquire
305 and strengthen skills for political participation towards peacebuilding and new
306 comprehensions about the conditions of care work based on a differential gender
307 approach [2,35,43–45]. In relation to the scarce PR experiences that were found,
308 they permitted them to actively participate towards integral reparation, at
309 strengthening their individual and collective resources and knowledge regarding a
310 human rights approach.

311 Amongst the experiences shown on PR (OT), it was evident in isolated stories
312 the presence of Participatory Social Projects (BT) that enable collective reparation
313 to elaborate and mitigate psychosocial damages in communities. In this way,
314 eliciting memory through art was an instrument for moral and symbolic reparation
315 for peacebuilding in Montes de María. They show prosocial behavior and a strong
316 sense of community as they are compromised towards granting the members
317 needs as well as strengthening social networks in their region [6–9]. Striving to
318 work for the culture and peace, they recognize that their regions' needs have not
319 been properly addressed.

320 *(...) a community kiosk, the community kiosk has had good use, there have*
321 *been memory workshops and there we have a photograph of each of the twelve*
322 *people who were victims, photographs of the “Tamarindo tree”. That one is a place*
323 *of memory, there the village’s Campesinos meet, we do activities, there also was*
324 *created a reparations mentoring school (Interview 12).*

325 *(...) The symbolic part was phenomenal because the case was also published*
326 *in the press and in some way through the press there are many people that also*
327 *get to know. As we published on Facebook, many who didn't have any knowledge*
328 *about the massacre or that have forgotten because time had passed, they found*
329 *out what was happening, and the aim is that this don't happen ever again*

330 (Interview 12).

331 These interventions involve their citizenships and community resources in
332 order to contribute to their community empowerment. They are also developed
333 from a community-based approach are more sustainable and aids the rebuilding
334 process of the fragmented social tissue. However, most themes found in the
335 women's experiences are related to isolated humanitarian assistance measures.
336 Such interventions when unaccompanied by PR, leads to an incomplete
337 intervention. These implemented measures lack the required integrality towards
338 Human Rights access and the recognition of groups that are historically
339 conditioned by inequality and marginalization; negating protection and social
340 solidarity, which reproduces dehumanization through objectification and
341 pathologization processes [39,53,54].

342 **State abandonment: agency as a response**

343 Narratives expressed psychosocial damage caused by victimizing acts that
344 have not been overcome and repaired by the State. Women recognize that they
345 need emotional support in order to overcome psychosocial trauma, which requires
346 PR. Women still experience fear, sadness, depression, resentment, stigmatization,
347 discrimination, marginalization, social exclusion, post-traumatic stress,
348 defeatedness, difficulties to forgive and reconcile and grieving amongst other
349 negative feelings and emotions associated with the lack of opportunities and

350 psychosocial accompaniment processes. Themes as Differential approach (BT),
351 and Psychosocial rehabilitation demands (BT) are connected towards a
352 Psychosocial Unresolved Damage (OT) at the Individual, familiar and community
353 levels (BT), uncovering a negative impact in the women's experiences due to a
354 lack of Psychosocial Approach in the Law's implementation.

355 *Sometimes the reconciliation theme is very difficult, to heal that wound when*
356 *one has not overcome that type of mourning, it's so difficult at times. At least I*
357 *have capacitated myself; it's difficult for me to forgive those actors [of conflict]*
358 *because I believe that words asking for forgiveness does not heal, one must heal*
359 *with psychological help, because the damage is multiple, the damage has been*
360 *from many years (...) I haven't received that accompaniment that allows me to*
361 *approach this emotional situation with myself, maybe face that reality that I lived*
362 (Interview 8).

363 Violence continues in their territories as campesino communities are
364 threatened by illegal armed groups at claiming restitution and reparation
365 measures, aspects that establish limitations towards mitigating pain and granting
366 satisfaction and non-guarantee measures in relation to integral reparation. It is
367 evidenced that the violent social conditions are strongly present in their stories and
368 they do not have the necessary tools for reparation.

369 *When the claim process occurs with Law 1448, the land restitution unit is*
370 *created here for the first time, it was opened here. As Campesinos we began to*
371 *claim the land and then people started to threaten the Campesino people, to*
372 *threaten those of us who are at the forefront, accompanying and advising the*
373 *Campesino people to make their claim (Interview 8).*

374 It is noticed that women describe that they have received the negative
375 consequences of state abandonment; violence, discrimination, a lack of
376 opportunities, unemployment and social inequality to a greater extent than men.
377 After the victimizing events, many women struggle in order to adapt to caring tasks
378 relating to their homes and children without the masculine role, feeling
379 overwhelmed with survival duties. These realities claim for the differential
380 approach of the VL psychosocial interventions regarding women's necessities
381 towards reaching a social equilibrium upon the differential affectations of armed
382 conflict framed in gender structures [35,42–45,66]. The multiple implementation
383 limitations are shown through their narratives, as women lack PR with a gender
384 differential approach.

385 *A woman alone is very difficult, it's very difficult for a woman to arrive with three*
386 *children (...) when as a woman you have your husband, you are used to him being*
387 *the one who solves everything (...)* (Interview 2).

388 *They are threatening me, they are telling me, still continue, if I had been a man,*
389 *that person would not mess with me, because we women are always as popular*
390 *knowledge says 'the famous weak sex', but no, we are not weak, at least I am a*
391 *woman of ax and knife (Interview 2).*

392 *I have never had the opportunity to have a job, for me to help my husband, my*
393 *family, it is one of the things that I see amongst women that there is a lot of*
394 *unemployment, there are many unemployed women because they do not give us*
395 *the opportunity (Interview 10).*

396 Faced with State Abandonment (GT) is found Revictimization (BT), and
397 subsequently, Agency as a response to abandonment (OT), becoming a
398 resistance and coping mechanism. They recognize that integral reparation process
399 has exceeded the State's capacity towards implementation; they feel left on their
400 own in the quest for survival without adequate support. Also, as they experienced
401 many difficulties at accessing the Law's protection, assistance and reparation
402 measures, they even stopped trying to get access to reparation, or in other cases
403 found no answers from the State. They indicate that their humanity, dignity and
404 Human Rights should be protected through the Law's implementation, but rather
405 encounter no actions or disintegrated ones that leave a negative impact of
406 revictimization on them.

407 *I perceive that there are many needs and nobody helps us (...) They say that it*
408 *will come, that someday they will help, but until now no, nothing, nothing, we keep*
409 *struggling every day, but the government no, the government doesn't give us*
410 *anything (Interview 2).*

411 *Is going to be two thousand and twenty and there will be people who did not*
412 *receive anything (...) I am still struggling, I come and go. But I no longer have the*
413 *desire to fight... the State has not been able to attend so many people, the people*
414 *of Carmen de Bolívar, with what they suffered in here (Interview 5).*

415 *(...) as a woman, I feel re-victimized by the State (Interview 8).*

416 In this way, the general perception is of State abandonment, showing a
417 socio-economic and political intervention gap as many individuals and
418 communities have been waiting for several years and are still expecting for
419 reparation. So, instead of providing truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition
420 guarantees towards an integral reparation, it implies further re-victimization
421 processes by the State, as the conflict's roots based on social inequality and PR
422 measures are not properly addressed. Meanwhile, agency as an answer from
423 women towards State abandonment (OT) is evidenced in Self-management (BT)
424 and Community Resources (BT) resources that they strive to overcome the
425 negative impacts and limitations of armed conflict.

426 *The psychological help I had was because I financed it, the State didn't told*
427 *me: look we are going to put you here, here you have the transportation, here you*
428 *have this for you to go to your psychology aid, no (Interview 1).*

429 *We have to move forward struggling for life, for our children and for the*
430 *community, through our life story we can give an example of strength to help other*
431 *people, make them feel that they are not the only ones who lived difficult*
432 *moments(...)(Interview 12).*

433 They are certainly not passive actors, as they struggle on their own against
434 the negative socio-economic conditions, the prolongation of psychosocial trauma
435 and revictimization processes perpetuated by the State. Now, in some cases they
436 have had to finance their psychological processes, as the Law did not respond to
437 those moral and symbolic dimensions of reparation. As well as they are making
438 efforts to improve their opportunities related to the precarious socioeconomic
439 conditions. Women instead are resilient, have a proactive attitude, solidarity and
440 creativity at believing that there are many reasons to continue working for a better
441 life for themselves, their children and their communities; as well as achieving their
442 collective interests with the support of third-party organizations.

443 *(...) I still continue in this struggle, because it's a daily struggle, a struggle that*
444 *we have with the State because that is a [matter] of institution, here the only culprit*

445 *is the institution, we didn't have a reason to live all of this, but in this moment I*
446 *have kept moving forward, I have not stayed like "poor me", like the victim, the*
447 *displaced women that receive humanitarian aids or indemnification. I have*
448 *overcome it, in this moment I am in third semester of social work, I have trained*
449 *myself, it's never too late for studying and I studied customer service, and those*
450 *studies have helped me obtain some jobs and get through my life with my children*
451 (Interview 8).

452 *(...) That motivated me to come back, but also to strengthen women processes*
453 *over there because the theme is unknown, that's why we wanted to carry out our*
454 *proposal called "New voices for territorial peacebuilding" in the lower zone of*
455 *Carmen de Bolívar, because we consider that although all that we suffered in the*
456 *conflict, it is a zone that has not been properly attended; so I believe is not late,*
457 *that we can continue strengthening an interesting process with women and their*
458 *families so that they can grant their rights and organize in the collective level to*
459 *present their proposal, from the local and institutional, so that the departmental*
460 *and national institutions can take a glance towards this zone and truly start a*
461 *strengthening and participatory process for women (Interview 9).*

462 *Women are the figure that has maintained unity, and maybe we maintain peace*
463 *because we tell our children and friends: "no, that's not the pathway, maybe things*

464 *are going to happen for us”*(Interview 1).

465 A strong sense of community and political participation found in the micro-
466 systemic, meso-systemic and macro-systemic levels [15,29,30,67] are important
467 ingredients in the process of self-reparation after they recognized State
468 abandonment. They have constituted organized community work in which women
469 empower each other to demand their rights, strengthen their individual and
470 community capacities and construct peace in Montes de María. They acknowledge
471 the psychosocial approach potential and demand the reparation of their rights from
472 a Human Rights, critical and communitarian approach [2,26,35,37]. The
473 necessary participatory processes required on PR are being overtaken with their
474 own individual and collective resources, towards State absence.

475 **Discussion**

476 Based on the results, in relation to State Interventions as a first global theme, it
477 can be argued that the most recurrent type of interventions experienced by women
478 are based on the Non-sociopolitical or directive intervention paradigm which do not
479 understand the structural roots of the Colombian conflict, neither transforms those
480 victims' structural conditions; or promote their active participation in reparation
481 processes [14,19]. Therefore, as a sociopolitical context of extreme vulnerability
482 remains, and the psychosocial approach is not guaranteed [23,29,30,35,37],
483 their constitutional rights are further violated from a non-socio political paradigm in

484 contrary to the Law's spirit of Integral Reparation [2,3,16].

485 In the case of women victims in Montes de María, non-sociopolitical or directive
486 interventions per se, that do not involve structural aspects, generate pathologizing
487 processes [39,53], fragmenting and reducing social phenomena into individual
488 realities [23,28–30,38]. Interventions should include individual, micro-systemic
489 levels, as well as relational and community intervention that relate to the meso-
490 systemic and macro-systemic levels towards the systemic or holistic approach,
491 which shows vast limitations to its integrality aims [2,29,30,42,67]. Humanitarian
492 assistance and indemnification, that refers to the material dimension of reparation,
493 are disintegrated from the VL intersectoral and integral perspective. The
494 Psychosocial approach in its moral and symbolic dimensions are not properly
495 entailed and does not attend the contextual aspects of victimization, depoliticizing
496 and dehumanizing victims [39,53,54]. In order to grant an integral reparation, it is
497 important to reinforce the evaluation on the effectiveness of VL's psychosocial and
498 mental health care programs. The lack of evaluation processes is affecting the
499 restoration of their rights [24].

500 Due to illegal groups that force their presence in the territories [48] and the
501 structural violence that women encounter in their territories, they are found in
502 extreme poverty conditions, in a struggle to satisfy basic daily necessities which
503 shows the precariousness that remains in the communities without effective social

504 policies that limits a neoliberal socio-political system [29,30,34,49–51,54]. The
505 multiplicity of vulnerabilities that are configured and are not addressed by the Law
506 implementation provides an Unconstitutional State of affairs that persists, although
507 the Constitutional Court Sentence T-025 of 2004 indicated that these had to be
508 overcome by the internally displaced communities with the pertinent State
509 interventions.

510 However, a couple of cases narrated PR experiences with differential
511 approaches. These PR processes involve structural aspects in two ways. First,
512 peace pedagogy for the strengthening of political participation as essential for the
513 construction of a positive peace towards more democratic societies
514 [3,13,16,34,35,48]. Secondly, political participation situated from a gender
515 approach, articulating pedagogical processes with women's care work. Such
516 citizenship practices are shown to be essential in post-war settings and women's
517 political participation [15,38,43–45]. A mentioned case, experienced community
518 PR processes in moral and symbolic dimensions. The interviewee was emphatic
519 on how this type of intervention allowed a recognition of the sociopolitical nature of
520 the victimizing acts and helped to repair the fragmented social tissue
521 [6,14,29,30,47]. Both aspects permit us to affirm that when PR interventions
522 occur from a socio-political paradigm, favoring social transformations that
523 mobilizes victimizing acts towards community empowerment, the VL integrality aim

524 is achieved.

525 Unfortunately, since most cases have not received PR, there is unrepaired
526 psychosocial trauma that is present at the individual, familiar and community
527 levels, which reflect the second global theme: state abandonment. In this sense,
528 as an appropriate measure, the VL was extended by the Constitutional Court until
529 2030 in correspondence with the victim's needs and revictimization processes
530 found in this study. Certainly, one of the approaches on which further
531 implementation and evaluation is required is a transversal perspective of the
532 psychosocial approach to achieve the Law's goals [3,16,35,38].

533 Faced with this situation, women victims have managed individual and
534 community resources to promote political participation, psychosocial processes
535 and community development from below as a resistance to the structural violence
536 and precariousness they have encountered [42,43,45,46]. These agency
537 responses are identified by them as an intended contribution to peacebuilding in
538 their region. Throughout these collective actions it can be argued that women's
539 sense of community permits social justice and peacebuilding as well as the
540 reparation of the fragmented social tissue of Montes de María that the State is not
541 providing [3,6,16,23,34]. Furthermore, they identified this agency as a response
542 to the negative psychosocial consequences that the prolongation of armed conflict
543 implies on revictimization processes due to an absence of non-repetition

544 guarantees and satisfaction measures [48]. It is important to recognize the
545 leadership that they have developed amid the socioeconomic and political violence
546 they have faced as it has been the mechanisms by which they have guaranteed
547 the well-being of them as women, their families and communities [15,42–45,51].
548 These women initiatives and leaderships are appropriate processes to build
549 community-based PR in cooperation with psychosocial professionals from third
550 party organizations to build strategies, routes and programs that contribute to VL's
551 implementation.

552 **Conclusion**

553 Our study shows that most women have not experienced PR to accompany
554 their humanitarian assistance and indemnification measures, which does not
555 respond to an integral reparation, in contrast with the VL's principles. Most of the
556 cases have undergone humanitarian assistance without encountering integral
557 reparation measures. Although the VL orientation is based on a sociopolitical or
558 participatory paradigm, in terms of implementation, women's experience mainly
559 evidences non-socio-political interventions. Unsolved Psychosocial trauma is
560 found to be a constant for many women as revictimization and state abandonment
561 persist, on a structural violence basis.

562 However, women have responded to State abandonment with agency and
563 political participation for peacebuilding, contributing to the community's

564 development in a resilient way. As women and their communities are urgently
565 demanding PR to overcome trauma, it is important to strengthen this type of social
566 intervention and non-repetition guarantees to avoid revictimization. This, due to the
567 vulnerability that represents the continuity of armed conflict with various illegal
568 armed groups and the structural causes of victimization. Although Human Rights
569 are not granted by the VL in an Unconstitutional state of affairs, women have an
570 active role in peacebuilding, as they identified that through agency and
571 communitarian resources, the traumatic experiences can be resignified and the
572 fragmented social tissue repaired. Processes that must be accompanied by
573 psychosocial experts in appropriate working conditions and not necessarily
574 outsourced; to guarantee stable psychosocial interventions over time, to grant
575 victims their rights and dignity regarding moral and symbolic dimensions of the
576 Victims Law and avoid revictimization. In this arena, it remains to be an urgent
577 matter for the different stakeholders to collaborate towards transformative and
578 participatory psychosocial interventions based on the community's necessities and
579 resources.

580 Future research in this field may not only aim to carry out extensive studies to
581 ensure the representativeness of this population, as well as other victim
582 populations, but also to explore other VL dimensions such as individual, collective
583 reparation, or land restitution processes. Studies could also contribute to the

584 comprehension of ethnicity, on life cycle, disability or territorial differential
585 approaches. The strengthening of social policy monitoring and evaluation
586 processes by the diversity of stakeholders is a requirement towards improve public
587 health and reparation in Colombian society.

588 **Abbreviations**

589 **(PR)** Psychosocial Rehabilitation

590 **(VL)** Victims Law

591 **(GT)** Global Theme

592 **(OT)** Organizing Theme

593 **(BT)** Basic Theme

594 **Declarations**

595 **Ethics approval and consent to participate**

596 The research design, data collection instruments and subsequent procedures
597 received ethical approval from the Social Policy program of the University of
598 Brasilia.

599 **Consent for publication**

600 Not applicable.

601 **Availability of data and materials**

602 The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are not
603 publicly available due to protection and safety issues of the participating women
604 whose narratives would allow their identification but are available from the

605 corresponding author on reasonable request.

606 **Competing interests**

607 The authors declare that they have no competing interests

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613 **Authors' contributions**

614 This paper has, as a base, the Social Policy doctoral thesis of LS. In this larger

615 work, LS contributed to the research design, data collection, and first-level data

616 analysis. LS, AA, and CG contributed to the second-phase data analysis. LS and

617 AA had a significant contribution to the first draft. LS, AA, CG, and WL contribute

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Figures

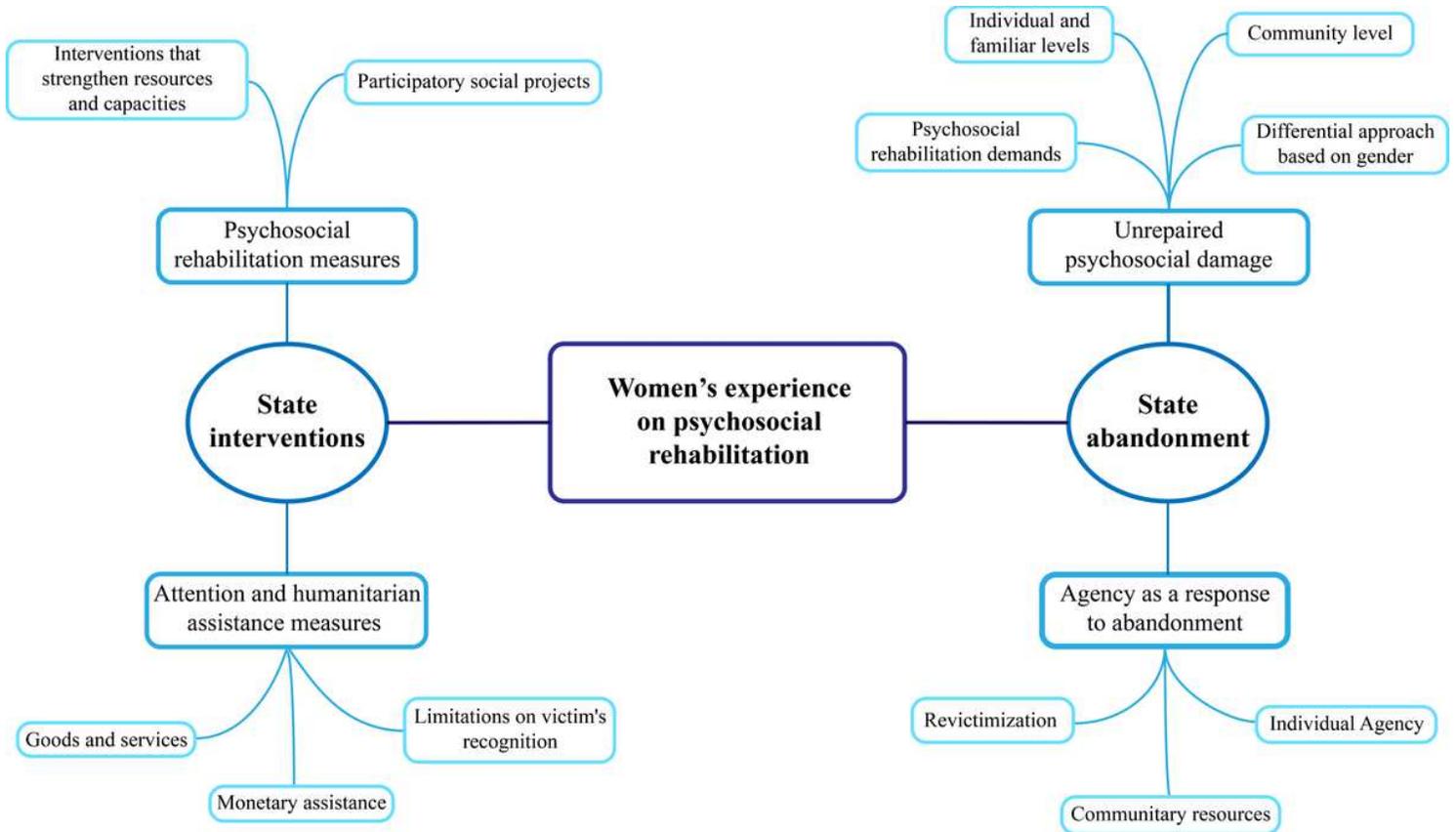


Figure 1

Women's experience on psychosocial rehabilitation.