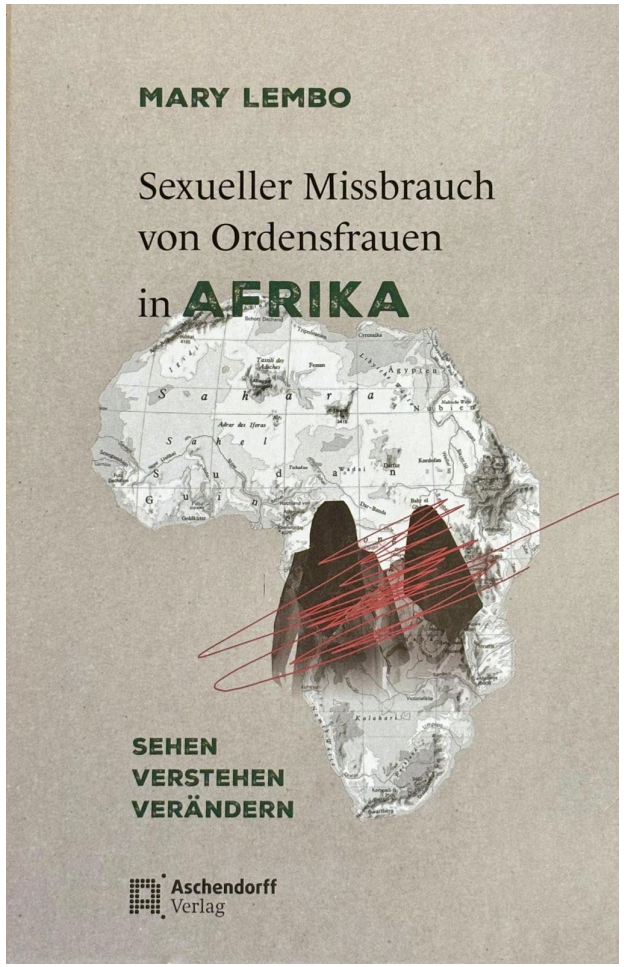
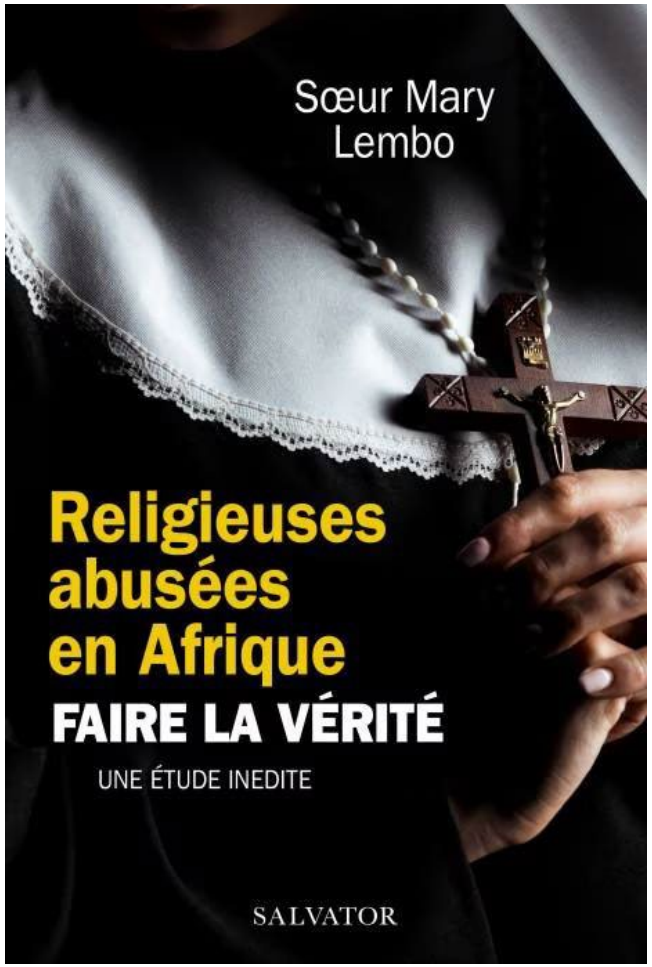
Research (2014-2019)-In French

ORIGINAL TITLE: "MATURE AND HEALTHY PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS: EMOTIONAL AND SEXUAL MATURITY FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN PRIESTS AND CONSECRATED WOMEN, A WITNESS TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD".

PUBLICATIONS





1. Approaches

- Interdiscplinary Approach
- Theoretical framework:

- Narrative theory (Finding, constructing meaning by narrating)

1. Philosophical-hermeneutical perspective of Ricœur, P. (1913-2005)
2. Anthropological perspective of MacIntyre, A. C. (1929-2025)
3. Christian Anthropological perspective of Rulla, M. L. (1922-2002)
4. Social constructionism perspective of Gergen, K.J. (1934-)
5. Psychological and developmental perspective of Imoda, F (1998)

2. Methodology

- Qualitative
- Data collection and analyses and interpetation…

The methodology based on narrative approach, a qualitative research using the *Constructing Grounded Theory* by Charmaz (2006, 2014).

Data collection is with a semi-structured interviews, guided by me and professionals (psychologists, psychiatrist, spiritual guider).

Stories recorded, coded, analyzed and interpreted, compared …

3.OBJECTIVE

In the context of pastoral relationship, with evidence of imbalance of power or collaborative relationship for pastoral activities…, understand the dynamic of the sexual abuse.

4. Aim-preventive

- The aim was to analyze the relational dynamics underlying sexual abuse in the pastoral or collaborative relationships between priests and consecrated women or novices. How/why does this happen? How to project the formation process?

5. Participants of study

- What can we say about the Religious women in the study)?

- They are religious women from different congregations
- The geographical area is five (5) countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. The participants belong to these countries.
- They leave in **communities** with other religious women of their institute.

Sample

- They are **12** who responded, among around more than 100, who were invited to participate to the research, receiving personal letter or an explanation and invitation in presence.
- The stories told of **9** fit more to the objective of the research.

- 5 religious women who did their first or final vows
- 4 novices
- aged between **21-45** years old.
- Most of them **finish high school**. Some studied at university.

5. The results revealed abuses

Abuse of power (deciding at the place of Superiors)

Abuse of trust (familiarity and making them depending)

Physical abuse (hitting)

Emotional, psychological abuse

Spiritual abuse

Sexual violence

Rape,

Attempted rape,
Not wanting sexual intercourse

Sexual and emotional harassment

Sexual solicitation with insistence, threats

Consequences

Physical integrity:

- e.g. non-describable pain, pregnancies followed by abortions,

Psychological integrity :

- e.g. feeling of shame, unworthy, guilt, depression, PTSD
- "being broken from head to toe",

Consequences

Community integrity :

- e.g. feeling inconsistent in her community;

- fear of judgement from the other sisters;

- fear that the novices or the other sisters will be involved in the sexual abuse by the same priest;

-quarrels, jealousy, suspicions, revictimization by the sisters who place the burden of sexual abuse on the survivor woman religious.

Consequences

- **Social integrity**: e.g. the priest controls the relationship of the consecrated woman, threatens other people who approach her out of jealousy, suspects her…

- **Spiritual integrity**: e.g. the image of God changes, praying, participating to Eucharist but losing inner joy of the presence of Jesus Christ, abandoning one's vocation.

Dynamic/Risk factors or vulnerable conditions

- Naivety : e.g. having blind confidence in the priest,
- inattention to compliments, incorrect gestures, gifts …
- idealising the priest and his attitude…
-Fear to open up about the abuse…
-Confusion / ambiguity / ambivalence in facing sexual solicitations with confusion, anxiety, worry, hesitation …)
- Difficulty to disclose the abuse (sexuality is as taboo, untold stories…) and seek help, and justice…

II. Perpetrators

What can we say about the perpetrators?

The priest involved with the religious women were 11.

The older was 58.

In charge of parishes, schools, caritas organisation, formators, spiritual guide, in different dioceses …

They where protected by the victims and survivors, because of fear, reprisals, threats…

Priest's tactics in grooming the religious women (Dynamics)

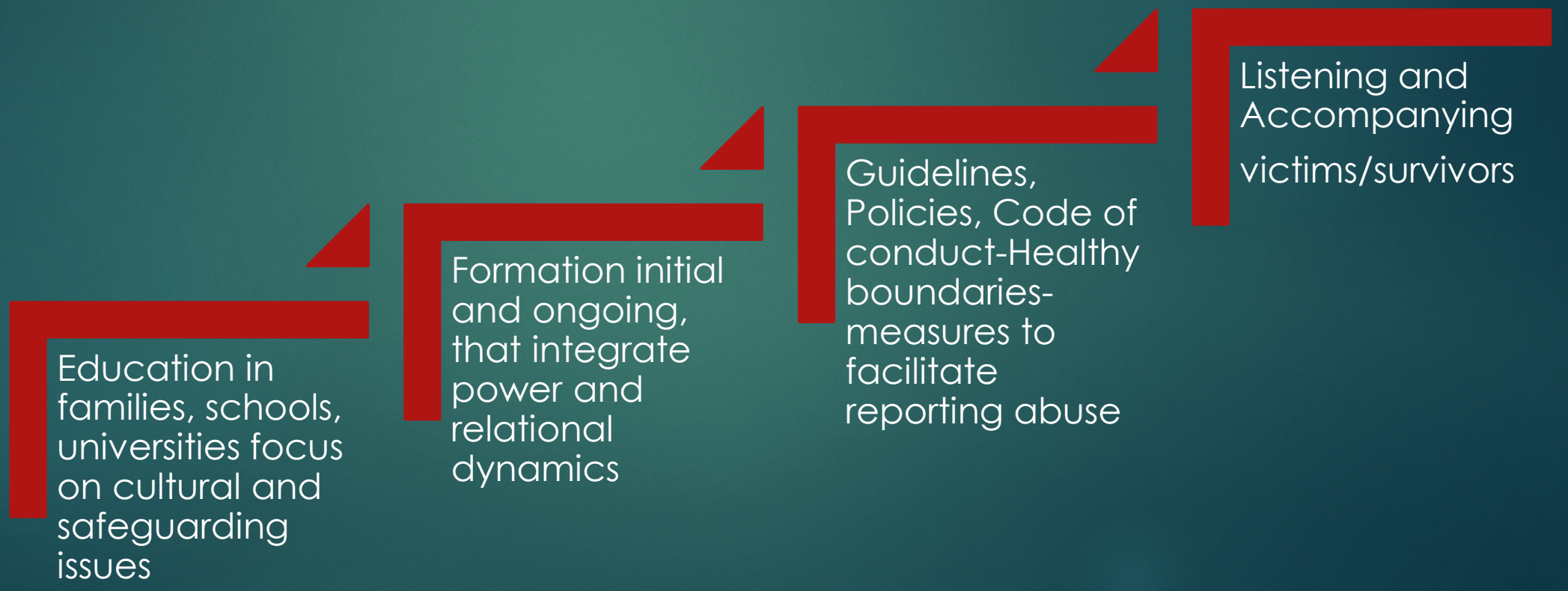
1. Neutralizing the vigilance
2. Isolating in order to control
3. Creating dependence
4. Creating confusion

Cultural particolarities

Comparing with the findings of Barbara Haslbeck (2025), it may be argued that in my research, the priest's grooming process was facilitated by specific cultural norms and forms of socialization.These included

-an emphasis on respect for adults and, in particular, for men occupying positions of trust and authority;

-the expectation of gratitude for gifts, services, and favours; and patterns of familiarity that lacked clearly defined interpersonal boundaries.

Furthermore, the relationship of dependency was reinforced through the provision of financial assistance, which contributed to an imbalance of power and increased the individual's vulnerability to manipulation.

Recommendations