

# Helplessness: On Depression, Development, and Death (Series of Books in Psychology)

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## Genocide Rape Trauma: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding the Psychological Suffering of Rwandan Survivors

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In 1994, the Rwandan genocide claimed the lives of approximately 1 million Tutsi and moderate Hutu citizens. Systematic rape was a strategic component of the Hutu extremist plan to eradicate the Tutsi minority population. This involved collective and repeated sexual assaults with brutal violence, public humiliation, and torture. This article maps the ongoing psychological impact on Rwandan genocide rape survivors and identifies implications for international nursing practice. The research formalizes their narratives, identifying a number of interconnected elements that combine to produce myriad forms of chronic psychological suffering in the Rwandan context. This work in turn reveals the specific needs of these survivors that may be addressed by nursing. It allows nurses, as experts in managing the human responses to health and illness, to develop a more complete understanding of psychological suffering as it pertains to vulnerable populations during and in the wake of extreme social conflict. This clarifies the roles of nurse educators, clinicians, and policy advocates as key agents in providing genocide rape survivors with the resources and expertise needed to effectively manage their ongoing trauma.

**Keywords:** genocide; wartime rape; Rwanda; trauma; psychological suffering; global nursing

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125

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