


CITIZENSHIP ISSUE: PUBLIC POLICIES FOR WOMEN VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is a persistent and serious problem in Brazil, affecting women from different social classes, races, and regions. Gender inequality is a structural factor that contributes to the perpetuation of this violence, often keeping women in abusive relationships due to economic dependence. This article was developed as part of the studies of the PhD in Applied Social Sciences, of the State University of Ponta Grossa-PR and NPJUS Research Center. It analyzes the issue of domestic violence and the contribution of public policies to women's economic autonomy and to the fight against domestic violence and gender inequality. Through a literature review and documentary analysis, the objective is to point out the main barriers faced by women and the necessary improvement of public policies to achieve their objective.

Keywords: Public policies, Gender inequality, Domestic violence.

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INTRODUCTION

Cases of domestic violence directly or indirectly affect the whole of society. With complex and multifaceted characteristics, it constitutes one of the serious problems of the conjuncture. According to a survey released by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in 2019, approximately 17 million women suffered some type of violence in Brazil, with most cases occurring at home and practiced by intimate partners or ex-partners. In 2023, according to the 10th edition of the National Survey on Violence against Women, carried out by DataSenado, this rate reached 30% of Brazilian women who reported having suffered some type of domestic or family violence caused by a man at some point in their lives. Of these, 22% stated that these episodes occurred in the last 12 months. This scenario reveals the seriousness of the problem and the need for effective actions to face it.

Gender inequality is a structural factor that contributes significantly to the perpetuation of violence against women. As Saffioti (2004) points out, patriarchy and unequal power relations between men and women are the basis of gender violence, which manifests itself in both private and public spheres.

The lack of access to educational and professional opportunities limits women's autonomy, reinforcing economic and emotional dependence on aggressors. Many women remain in abusive relationships due to economic dependence and a lack of viable alternatives to support themselves and their children. The lack of access to quality education, professional qualification and opportunities in the labor market make it difficult to enter the labor market and achieve the autonomy necessary to break the cycle of violence.

In addition to the many educational campaigns carried out by the federal government, the existence of programs such as the "Women's Program, living without violence", "Casa da Mulher Brasileira", the "Reference Centers for Assistance to Women in Situations of Violence" (CRAM), and the "Empower to Liberate" Program stand out. One cannot fail to refer to the Maria da Penha Law (Law No. 11,340/2006), considered the main legal framework in the fight against violence against women in the country.

Understanding how policies can lead women victims of violence to economic autonomy is fundamental because it is through them that victims can break the cycle of domestic violence. In addition, identifying the difficulties faced on this path can lead to strategies that promote labor inclusion and gender equality.

In this context, this article seeks to reflect on the scope of these policies and actions in the fight against violence and gender inequality, identifying the main difficulties for the liberation of these women from the violent environment and what are the gaps in these initiatives. Within the limitations of analysis, it is also necessary to point out ways to improve policies aimed at victimized women. To this end, a bibliographic review and documentary analysis were used, based on legislation, federal government websites and public documents.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND GENDER INEQUALITY

Domestic violence is a manifestation of unequal power relations between men and women, rooted in a patriarchal structure that perpetuates male domination (Saffioti, 2004). According to Bourdieu (2002), the concept of symbolic violence explains how social and cultural structures legitimize and reproduce gender inequality, naturalizing female subordination.

This violence manifests itself in different ways: physical, psychological, sexual, patrimonial and moral, affecting not only the physical integrity of women, but also their self-esteem, autonomy and social participation. Understanding domestic violence as a multidimensional manifestation is essential for the development of effective public policies.

The greatest difficulty for studies on domestic violence is obtaining real data. Underreporting is still a problem. Led, perhaps, by the aggressor's embarrassment and threats or by the shame of exposure in society, the victims fail to report the occurrence of the aggression to the competent bodies. This leads us to believe that the number of women victims of domestic violence is much higher than those disclosed. Unreported cases are on the margins of the statistics.

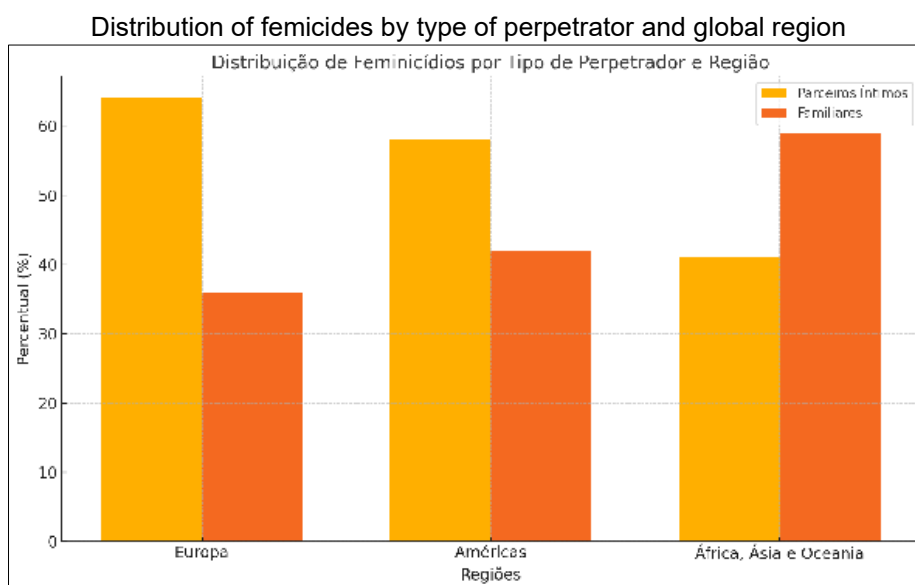
To mark the indexes, it is possible to observe the numbers related to femicides that occurred. According to the IBGE, in relation to the place where the homicide occurred, men were 88.8% of the occurrences outside the home, while women were 69.6% in the occurrences inside the home.

For Puleo, when talking about gender, we use the concept coined by sociology, which defines the gender system, called patriarchy, a theory in which the presence of "discourses of sexual legitimation or sexual ideology" is highlighted. These support the justifications for having the masculine versus the feminine due to their possibilities and characteristics, placing the masculine hierarchically above the feminine, establishing the

place of each one and legitimizing beliefs. In this line, the author highlights curiosity (we would say the difficulty in making the right decisions), considered to be typical of women, portrayed in Pandora, which opens the box of the world's evils and propagates misfortune; or Eve, who causes expulsion from Paradise. But also in science, where the "theory of women's brain weakness" was evoked to prohibit them from voting and the "condition of hygiene", which defined motherhood as its exclusive mission.

It must be admitted that, although times are different, beliefs continue to hover over society, hidden or disguised, but present in attitudes, both male and female. There is a discreet tolerance, permeated by patriarchal judgment. This way of seeing people and themselves, divided according to gender, produces the concepts of right and wrong, decent or not, appropriate or not, and even what is a right or not. Moved by the belief that he has rights over the other person, some understand that he also has the right to punish and even eliminate the other life. For them, there is a serious transgression of what is set for the feminine, which would justify violence against women.

According to data released by UN Women on November 25, 2024, about 51,100 women and girls around the world lost their lives at the hands of an intimate partner or other family member in 2023. There are 64% homicides committed by intimate partners in Europe and 58% in the Americas, while in Africa, Asia and Oceania, victims of femicide by intimate partners accounted for 41% and committed by family members were 59%.



*Graph generated from the data mentioned above. Source: UNODC and UN Women

Statistics are of paramount importance for the monitoring and development of public policies for the prevention of violence, appropriate punishments to combat impunity and for the knowledge and education of the population. It is the data that demonstrates the points of improvement.

Data from the National Household Survey of Peru, for example, denounce the existing wage disparity between men and women. According to Ortogorin (2024), when analyzing the data together with the violence report of the Demographic and Health Survey, it is possible to see that this large wage disparity or the absence of remuneration is closely associated with the rates of physical and emotional violence. Those women who have pay and greater equality in the labor market have their bargaining power increased at home. (Ortogorin, 2024).

The issues related to women pointed out as most pressing by Amartya Sen (2000) are: the persistence of poverty, with unmet elementary needs; hunger and malnutrition; violation of freedoms; contempt for women's interests and activities; threats to the environment and the sustainability of human and social life. Only by overcoming these problems is it possible to achieve development, which, according to the author, is a process of expansion of people's real freedoms, a freedom that is basic for people to have the individual capacity to make choices and pursue their goals. To this end, considering the society in which we live, economic autonomy is essential. In order to make decisions and break with situations of violence, women need to have economic independence. One should not lose sight of the fact that violence against women is crossed by other markers of social inequality, with intersections that are added to the forms of violence practiced.

For the concreteness of this freedom, anchored in economic autonomy, employment is, objectively, the necessary path. However, for inclusion in the job market there are requirements ranging from professional training to experience and profile for the performance of the function. Nancy Frase (2019) cites symbolic injustices alongside material inequalities that affect women.

Thus, since access to income and employment is not always possible, it is necessary that the State be present, in its primary function of protecting citizens. There is a need to combine policies of economic redistribution with the recognition of cultural and social differences to promote gender justice for women, allowing for a more comprehensive and effective approach to combating domestic violence.

PUBLIC POLICIES AND GENDER EQUALITY

For the process of forming Public Policies, several formats are identified, dividing the stages of creation in different ways. Of these, those that are understood to present a more complete form stand out, although Secchi (2012) clarifies that not all phases occur and these phases do not always follow the order. The Public Policy Cycle is divided into five stages, divided into: agenda formation, formulation, adoption, implementation and evaluation, formalized by Howlett and Ramesh (2014). There is the Cycle with seven stages (Secchi, 2012): identification of the problem, formation of an agenda, formulation of alternatives, decision making, implementation, evaluation and extinction.

Whatever the flow, it is perceived that it must be in a favorable conjuncture for its birth, what Kingdon calls the "window of opportunity", that is, the convergence of the detected problem with the political agenda and the political context.

In this context, public policies aimed at gender equality necessarily need to consider these flows and seek to bring the issue of domestic violence to the discussion as a priority to address the problem more comprehensively and be effective in proposals to confront it. As already mentioned, the element of "political will" is indispensable supported by the mobilization of society to establish and implement policies.

Contrary to what critics may claim, policies are not limited to benefits and privileges. Far from it, they have a fundamental role for social justice. In the case of women, a reparation for historical discriminatory treatment. Viganò (2019), defines it as follows:

Affirmative action for women comes from the recognition of discriminatory and violent suffering suffered over time by this social group, resulting in a special type of violence structured in the gender hierarchy, coined along the lines of patriarchy. Such a context caused women to be reduced to a culturally appropriate fragility that made them dependent on men and, thus, destined to be physically and psychologically violated.

For the author, the primary objective of affirmative action is to make the structural inequalities produced by socioeconomic development smaller.

One of the most important milestones for gender and domestic violence issues in Brazil is the Maria da Penha Law. Enacted with the objective of preventing violence against women and establishing measures to assist victims, it also provides for the implementation of public policies in a multidisciplinary manner and combining the participation of different actors.

Implemented through public policies coordinated by the National Secretariat for Women's Policies, in partnership with other ministries, state and municipal agencies, as well as civil society organizations, the National Plan for Women's Policies also supports monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure compliance with the goals. It is a reference for actions that ensure rights and promote gender equality, carried out by states and municipalities. The Plan ensures the connection between Brazil's initiatives and commitments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Among the public policies, programs and initiatives to promote women's rights and gender equality, the following stand out: "Women, Living without Violence" Program; "Casa da Mulher Brasileira"; "Women's Reference Centers"; "National Pact for the Prevention of Femicide"; "Citizen Woman Program"; "National Care Policy". It should be noted that the link between this policy and the situation of women is the result of the (patriarchal) interpretation that people in care activities are always female. It is noted that this association contributes to the perpetuation of the sexual division of labor based on the suggestion that the activity of care is work for women.

Many of the actions are carried out through public-private partnerships. Also aiming at the economic autonomy of victims and expanding employment opportunities, the Corporate Social Responsibility Programs encourage companies to hire women victims of violence, offering adequate conditions and safe work environments, in addition to promoting awareness on the subject in the corporate environment;

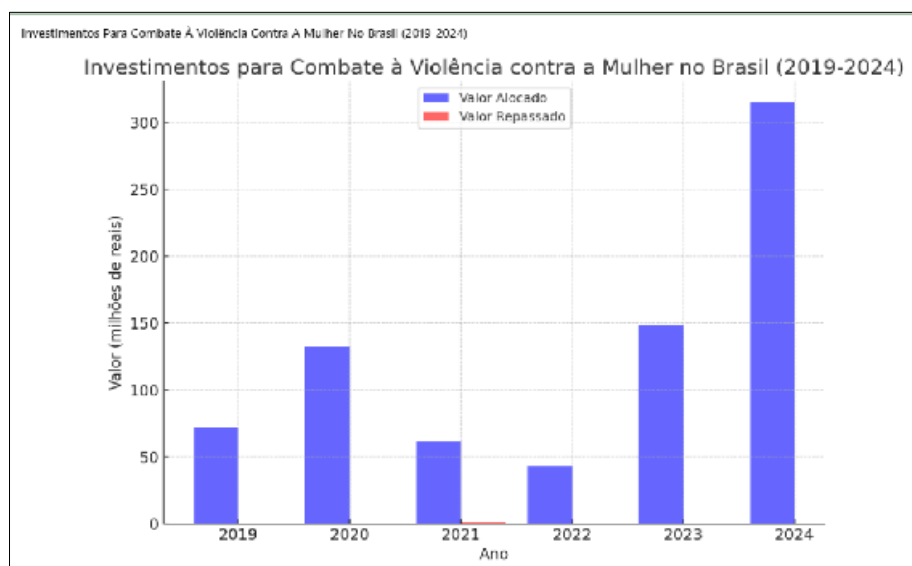
The participation of the private sector in collaboration with public proposals is extremely important, as they bring together society as a whole around issues relevant to the entire country. In 2021, with the New Bidding Law, the legislation innovated by including in its article 25, paragraph 9 the possibility of "requiring that a minimum percentage of the workforce responsible for the execution of the object of contracting be made up of women victims of domestic violence". With the regulation of the law by Decree 11430, of March 8, 2023, this possibility became a requirement, as the minimum participation of women victims of violence in the staff of bidding companies was provided.

THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTATION

Although there are already very robust options between public policies and actions aimed at supporting victims of domestic violence, the challenges for their implementation

have not yet been overcome. Many of these initiatives depend on financial and human support. Specialized care (psychological and social support, training and qualification) requires investment, as well as maintenance, housing, aid, benefits, among others.

Below, we have a graph summarizing investments to combat violence against women in Brazil between 2019 and 2024.



Source: Siga Brasil

*In 2019, R\$ 71.9 million were allocated; in 2020, the amount was R\$ 132.5 million, due to extraordinary credits related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, R\$ 61.4 million were allocated. Of the R\$ 21.8 million authorized for the Brazilian Women's House, only R\$ 1 million were spent. In 2022, the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights allocated the lowest resource in the last four years to combat violence against women in Brazil, with a forecast of R\$ 43.28 million. The data for 2023 indicate that the amount allocated was R\$ 149.01 million, and for 2024, a budget of R\$ 315 million is planned.

Despite the efforts, the budget execution did not always correspond to the amount allocated. This discrepancy between budget and execution highlights the need to improve the implementation and monitoring of public policies aimed at combating violence against women in Brazil. The bases indicate resources coming from unspecific sources, leaving the Union budget with the most substantial part for execution. The Care Policy, as an example, provides for the use of budgets from agencies and entities of the federal administration, from federated entities, donations and from other sources, national or international. In other words, there is no provision guaranteeing that there will be an appeal. There is no guarantee that the expenses necessary to articulate the proper functioning of the project will be covered. On the other hand, in relation to the public administration, complementary actions are necessary for the allocation of funds, observing the current legislation. The state bureaucracy.

As well as limited resources, cultural and social barriers compromise the proper development of policies. The persistence of the permanence of prejudices about the feminine demonstrates a deep-rooted culture, which limits the space occupied by women in society, hinders professional growth and naturalizes violence. Lüchmann and Almeida (2010) describe the limitation of the public space of power, stating that, although there is a significant presence of women in the Public Policy Management Councils in Brazil, there is still no effective political representation and influence on the decisions made in these spaces. For the authors, this is due to the "supposed intrinsic competence for the themes framed as social and their ethics based on the principles of "solidarity" and "sensitivity" and not for decision-making and leadership, which, once again, evidences a discriminatory culture.

In relation to women victims of violence, it is necessary to pay attention to their personal conditions. In her research, DURAND (2021) points out that women in situations of social vulnerability face additional challenges to empowerment due to cultural barriers that restrict their active participation in decision-making processes and access to public policies that promote gender equality. These barriers are low education, lack of professional experience, psychological trauma, among others. This can all affect your ability to seek and keep a job. DURAND (2021) points out the need to care for women's physical (resistance) and psychological health so that they can work on their beliefs, transform their personal reality and be able to conquer freedom and independence and overcome the state of subordination.

The way of thinking about the feminine needs to be permeated by education so that effective changes can be made. Through education and critical thinking, it is possible to transform the way society sees the roles of men and women, adding new ideas, new ways of interpreting reality. For LOURO (2018), the effectiveness of public policies to combat gender inequality requires awareness and education actions so that it can reflect on cultural changes.

However, public policies must also address the need for practical support, such as daycare centers and comprehensive schools so that workers can attend work or train for a job. Many of these opportunities are not yet present in all regions. For the sustainability of the actions, it is necessary to expand the programs to provide access to the largest possible number of people. And not only access, but ensuring the continuity of participation and care until the objectives are completely achieved.

CONCLUSION

Public policies for women's labor insertion in the labor market are fundamental, especially for victims of domestic violence, as well as income generation policies. This presence in the labor market causes direct effects, such as poverty reduction, economic growth, promotion of gender equality, and tackling social and gender inequality. The injection and circulation of money in the market contributes to local growth and benefits the entire community and future generations. Economically active women tend to invest in the health, education, and well-being of their families, generating positive impacts on future generations and society as a whole.

Beyond the economy, economic independence brings victims the ability to leave the place of violence and abusive relationships. In turn, breaking the cycle of violence opens up new possibilities for the family group.

To obtain the expected results in relation to violence and gender inequality, it is necessary that there is articulation between state agencies and between them and the private sector. It is necessary to form a comprehensive support network, with the sum of efforts, cooperation and mutual support to increase the efficiency of policies and avoid gaps in care. Also, to be committed to the actions to support the policy, such as training for work, developing technological skills, entrepreneurship, financial education, as well as providing social and psychological support to women.

As seen, a look at Brazilian public policies reveals innovative advances in the promotion of women victims of domestic violence, but there are still challenges to be overcome. Economic autonomy is essential for women to break the cycle of violence and policies must be improved to meet the specific needs of these women, being a source of social transformation.

It is essential to advance public policies for women, especially for women who are victims of domestic violence. Investment in the expansion of training programs for labor insertion is essential, as much as it is necessary to invest in existing actions and programs that promote autonomy and equal opportunities, combat prejudice and educate for peace.

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