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Femicide Risk Factors and Local Governance Challenges in Rural Panama: A Gender-Based Violence Prevention Approach

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Abstract

This research analyzes femicide as the most extreme manifestation of gender-based violence (GBV) within the specific socio-spatial dynamics of rural Panama. Utilizing a comprehensive qualitative and participatory research design, the study examines the structural, institutional, cultural, and community-based risk factors that exacerbate women's vulnerability to lethal violence in underserved regions. The empirical fieldwork was conducted across four distinct rural communities in the province of Chiriquí, employing participatory diagnostics, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and systematic field observation. This methodology ensured the active involvement of grassroots female leaders, local authorities, and institutional stakeholders, providing a nuanced understanding of the territory.

Grounded in the ecological model of violence and feminist human rights frameworks, the findings demonstrate how multidimensional poverty, extreme geographic isolation, and the fragility of local governance structures converge with the normalization of govern norms to significantly heighten femicide risk. Furthermore, the study identifies critical barriers to accessing justice that often leave rural women in a state of institutional abandonment. Recent national data reinforce these qualitative results, highlighting persistent patterns of lethal violence that prevail despite the existence of formal legal frameworks. Consequently, the paper proposes an integrated prevention model rooted in local governance. This framework is structured into primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention levels, placing a strategic emphasis on inter-institutional coordination and the empowerment of community-based participation. Ultimately, this research offers a roadmap for developing public policies that are territorially sensitive and capable of effectively addressing the systemic roots of violence in rural contexts.

Keywords: Access To Justice; Ecological Model; Human Rights; Participatory Research; Patriarchal Norms