

PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACTS OF FEMICIDE ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF SURVIVING FAMILY MEMBERS: TRAUMATIC GRIEF, STIGMATIZATION, AND SUPPORT NETWORKS <https://doi.org/10.63330/aurumpub.034-013>**Wilde Maria Clara Sousa de Oliveira¹, Francislina de Albuquerque Prestes², Maria Pompéia de Albuquerque Prestes³, Claudiane Machado Krusche⁴ and Allyne Medeiros Mota Lana Flores de Souza⁵****Abstract**

Femicide constitutes a serious human rights violation whose consequences extend beyond the direct victim, profoundly affecting surviving family members. This chapter **aims** to analyze the psychosocial impacts of femicide on the mental health of these relatives, focusing on traumatic grief, social stigmatization, and the role of support networks. The **methodology** is based on a narrative review of national and international scientific literature, analyzing studies published in recognized databases within the fields of psychology, public health, and social sciences. The **results** indicate that surviving family members experience a complex grieving process characterized by symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and persistent feelings of guilt and anger. Social stigmatization is also evident, often linked to indirect blame directed at the family, which intensifies social isolation and hinders access to psychosocial support. The **support network**, including mental health services, social assistance, the justice system, and community-based resources, plays a crucial role in facilitating grief processing and rebuilding daily life. It is **concluded** that addressing the psychosocial impacts of femicide requires

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interdisciplinary approaches, integrated public policies, and continuous care strategies aimed at surviving family members to promote mental health and reduce psychosocial vulnerabilities.

Keywords: Femicide, Mental health, Social stigmatization, Support network, Traumatic grief.

INTRODUCTION

Femicide represents the most extreme form of gender-based violence, constituting a serious social problem, a public health issue, and a human rights concern. In Brazil and other Latin American countries, the high rates of this type of crime reveal the persistence of unequal power relations between men and women, marked by structural machismo and the naturalization of violence. Beyond the loss of a woman's life, femicide produces profound and long-lasting impacts on surviving family members, particularly with regard to mental health, social relationships, and family dynamics.

In this context, the research problem of this chapter focuses on the following question: what are the main psychosocial impacts of femicide on the mental health of surviving family members, considering traumatic grief, social stigmatization, and the role of the support network? The delimitation of the study concentrates on analyzing these psychosocial dimensions, seeking to understand how lethal gender-based violence reverberates in the experience of grief and in the emotional and social conditions of family members.

The general objective of this chapter is to analyze the psychosocial impacts of femicide on the mental health of surviving family members. As specific objectives, it seeks to: (a) understand the characteristics of traumatic grief experienced by relatives; (b) identify processes of social stigmatization associated with femicide; and (c) discuss the importance of formal and informal support networks in coping with the psychological suffering resulting from this experience.

The justification for the study is grounded in the social and scientific relevance of the topic, considering the scarcity of research that approaches femicide from the perspective of surviving family members. Understanding the psychosocial impacts of this violence contributes to improving public

policies, mental health care strategies, and interdisciplinary practices aimed at protecting and welcoming these families.

From a theoretical standpoint, the chapter engages with studies on traumatic grief, gender-based violence, mental health, and social stigmatization. Authors such as Worden, Parkes, and Doka contribute to understanding complex grief, while research in the field of violence against women and social psychology highlights how stigma and social blaming exacerbate relatives' suffering. In addition, the literature on support networks underscores the importance of integrated actions among health services, social assistance, and the justice system to promote care and psychosocial resilience.

METHODOLOGY

TYPE OF RESEARCH

The present research is characterized as a qualitative study of an exploratory and descriptive nature, developed from a narrative review of the scientific literature. This type of approach enables an in-depth understanding of psychosocial phenomena related to femicide, especially with regard to the subjective experiences of traumatic grief, social stigmatization, and access to support networks by surviving family members.

The choice of a qualitative approach is justified by the complexity of the object of study, which involves emotional, social, and cultural dimensions that cannot be fully understood through quantitative methods alone.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The narrative review was conducted through a systematized bibliographic survey in recognized scientific databases such as SciELO, PubMed, PsycINFO, and the Virtual Health Library (BVS). Scientific articles, books, book chapters, dissertations, theses, and institutional documents published in Portuguese, English, and Spanish were considered.

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The time frame prioritized publications from the last 10 years, without excluding classic works considered relevant for the theoretical foundation of grief and gender-based violence.

DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND INSTRUMENTS

The technique used was documentary analysis, with the main instrument being a reading protocol designed to guide the selection, organization, and analysis of materials. This protocol included criteria such as: thematic relevance, methodological rigor, conceptual clarity, and contribution to understanding the psychosocial impacts of femicide.

Descriptors combined with Boolean operators were used, such as: femicide, traumatic grief, mental health, social stigmatization, and support network, adapted according to the specificities of each database.

STUDY SAMPLE

The sample consisted of scientific studies that addressed, directly or indirectly, the impacts of femicide or the violent death of women on surviving family members. There was no delimitation by age group or degree of kinship, considering the diversity of family ties affected by the phenomenon. The selected studies were those that presented methodological coherence, consistent theoretical grounding, and relevance to the objectives of the research.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis was carried out through thematic analysis, enabling the identification of central categories related to traumatic grief, social stigmatization, and the performance of support networks. The emergent categories were discussed in light of theoretical frameworks from grief psychology, public health, and gender studies.

The grounded discussion made it possible to articulate the findings from the literature with the proposed objectives, contributing to a critical and integrated understanding of the psychosocial impacts of femicide.

ETHICAL ASPECTS

As a literature review study, the research did not involve the direct participation of human beings, thus dispensing with submission to a Research Ethics Committee. Even so, the ethical principles of scientific production were respected, with due citation of sources and a commitment to academic integrity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the selected literature made it possible to identify three central axes related to the psychosocial impacts of femicide on the mental health of surviving family members: traumatic grief, social stigmatization, and the importance of the support network. These axes are interconnected and intensify the psychological suffering resulting from the violent loss.

TRAUMATIC GRIEF AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUFFERING

The analyzed studies show that the grief experienced by family members of femicide victims is characterized as traumatic grief, marked by the abruptness of death, extreme violence, and the intentional nature of the crime. Unlike anticipated grief, this process is permeated by intense symptoms of anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, intrusive thoughts, and difficulties in reorganizing daily life.

The literature points out that exposure to violent images disseminated by the media and the prolongation of judicial proceedings contribute to the constant reactivation of the trauma, hindering the processing of grief. These findings align with authors who argue that violent deaths rupture the sense of predictability and security, amplifying survivors' emotional suffering.

SOCIAL STIGMATIZATION AND ISOLATION

Another recurring finding concerns the social stigmatization faced by family members, especially in contexts where femicide is accompanied by discourses that blame the victim. It is observed that relatives—particularly mothers and children—are frequently exposed to moral judgments, rumors, and social silencing, which intensifies feelings of shame, guilt, and exclusion.

The literature highlights that this stigmatization functions as an aggravating factor of psychological suffering, contributing to social isolation and to resistance in seeking psychological and institutional support. Such findings reinforce social psychology studies that associate stigma with increased emotional vulnerabilities in situations of extreme violence.

SUPPORT NETWORK AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR

The results also show that the support network, both formal and informal, plays a fundamental role in coping with traumatic grief. Mental health services, social assistance, support groups, and civil society organizations appear in the literature as spaces for welcoming, qualified listening, and the reconstruction of bonds.

However, studies indicate weaknesses in the articulation among services and difficulties of access, especially for families in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability. The discussion points out that well-structured support networks function as protective factors, promoting resilience and reducing the psychosocial impact of femicide.

In general, the results align with the existing literature by showing that femicide does not end with the criminal act, but produces prolonged consequences in the lives of surviving family members, requiring integrated responses from the State and society.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the psychosocial impacts of femicide on the mental health of surviving family members, emphasizing traumatic grief, social stigmatization, and the importance of the support network. Revisiting these objectives made it possible to understand that femicide constitutes an event of extreme violence that triggers profound and lasting emotional, social, and psychological repercussions for those who remain.

The main results showed that family members experience traumatic grief characterized by intense psychological suffering, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, aggravated by the brutality of the death and by the constant reactivation of the trauma. It was also identified that social stigmatization acts as a factor that intensifies suffering, promoting isolation, silencing, and difficulties in accessing mental health care. Conversely, the presence of formal and informal support networks proved fundamental as a protective factor, assisting in grief processing and in rebuilding everyday life.

As contributions of the research, it is noteworthy that it deepens the understanding of femicide from the perspective of surviving family members, who are often rendered invisible in public policies and academic production. The study reinforces the need for intersectoral actions integrating health, social assistance, and the justice system, as well as continuous and humanized care strategies directed at these families.

Finally, it is suggested that future research advance the development of empirical studies with surviving family members, using qualitative and longitudinal approaches in order to broaden understanding of the effects of femicide over time and to support the formulation of more effective public policies to address this problem.

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