

# Chapter 3

## Analysis of the Concept of Femicide: A Study of 102 Concepts

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### ABSTRACT

*Femicide is intrinsically part of gender-based violence, and the two are inevitably linked at all levels. Yet, despite having a common origin, there is a need to analyze femicide as a problem that must be recognized, in social and legal terms, as having its own, particular features. To achieve this, an analysis of 102 concepts was carried out through a frequency count in Google Scholar, followed by their categorization, saturating in six dimensions: economic, social, legal, political, ethical, and cultural. The methodology used a higher-order association of hierarchies by establishing a dyad-triad-tetrad model that shows only the most representative combinations extracted from the definitions of greater weight and scope. From this, it emerges that the current concept of femicide is defined on the basis of a dual social-ethical category in view of its frequency of use in Google. This highlights the distance between what, a priori, seems to implicitly allow for any definition of femicide and the existing reality that favors private or institutional interests.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Violent behavior against women is commonly accepted in daily life until it manifests in serious events that are in fact the visible extreme of the endogenous processes of violence that surround the phenomenon of femicide. These crimes emerge from a continuum of attitudes and behaviors of rising levels of violence that culminate in a woman's death (Lovera, 2006). This violence requires special attention because it is so socially normalized that even female attitudes can help to perpetuate it. Although the most general way of understanding the concept is as the death of a woman at the hands of a man (particularly one related to her intimate surroundings) as the result of a systematic process of violence, the reality is that the gravity of such an event means that it cannot merely be considered a private matter (ECLAC, 2016). In the public sphere, the institutional structures of society, be they familial, educational, religious or state, are based on patriarchal ideals in which the pre-established role of women has arisen from the idea of intellectual, biological and historical inferiority conferred on them by men. These roles help justify the aggressions against women. In this way, women become doubly victimized and escape from this ambience of violence and access to justice following an attack become impossible (Chejter et al., 2005).

From 1980 onwards<sup>1</sup>, the struggles of feminist movements succeeded in bringing this problem into the public domain, always with the aim of obtaining legal recognition of the crime. The purpose was to ensure that women's deaths were no longer treated as mere facts pertaining to the general nature of a homicide and that the motivations for these crimes were recognized, analyzed and dealt with as separate phenomena (Cortéz, 2019). However, a gradual and often uphill battle has been necessary to achieve this objective, which in itself highlights the fact that the characteristics that frame femicide have their root in the sense of inferiority and contempt that has been allotted to women in society, and that branch into the different ways in which femicide can manifest (Bourdieu, 2000). This is how the conceptualization of femicide is not limited to a single phenomenon, since it is a concept that evolves and adapts to the various forms of denigration and subjugation that women can fall victim to under the different cultural constructions of society (Medina, 2015).

Perceptions of the crime always place the man as the sole perpetrator of femicide by characterizing the problem as a private affair. However, the impunity often accorded to the man, or the ideological or cultural justification that can be derived from wider society are the crucial factors that make it impossible to eradicate this phenomenon and that perpetuate its existence (Perez & Lizárraga, 2017). Patriarchal mindsets, in which the idea prevails that women are weak or likely to end in ruin without the companionship and care of a man (Manieri, 1978), have produced repression and different forms and degrees of violence, perhaps arising from the human instinct to abuse and prey upon what is seen as inferior or fragile. Therefore, there is a need for a radical change of thought wherein the condition of women within society is not subject to retrograde and conservative ideas.

The conceptual study of this phenomenon is important from the social perspective of the recognition of the systematic violence that it derives from, both privately and institutionally, because it is within this context that femicide is engendered and from which the different motivations that make it distinct from other kinds of homicide are evident. Indeed, its eradication depends upon its being seen as a separate crime since, by not recognizing and determining the general and particular features of this phenomenon, there is a failure to respond to such crimes. What is not clearly defined can often be perceived as non-existent or nebulous, which prevents a solution from being found. Hence the need for society to become aware that violence against women is not only a problem of private relationships, but that it is inextricably linked to the social constructs, derived from the patriarchal attitudes that beset women, that lead to

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