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THE FEMICIDE EPIDEMIC: A Case Study Analysis of Governmental Response and
Recommendations for Combatting Femicide in El Salvador

By
Chloe Rizk

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford, MS
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Approved By

Advisor: Dr. Melissa Bass

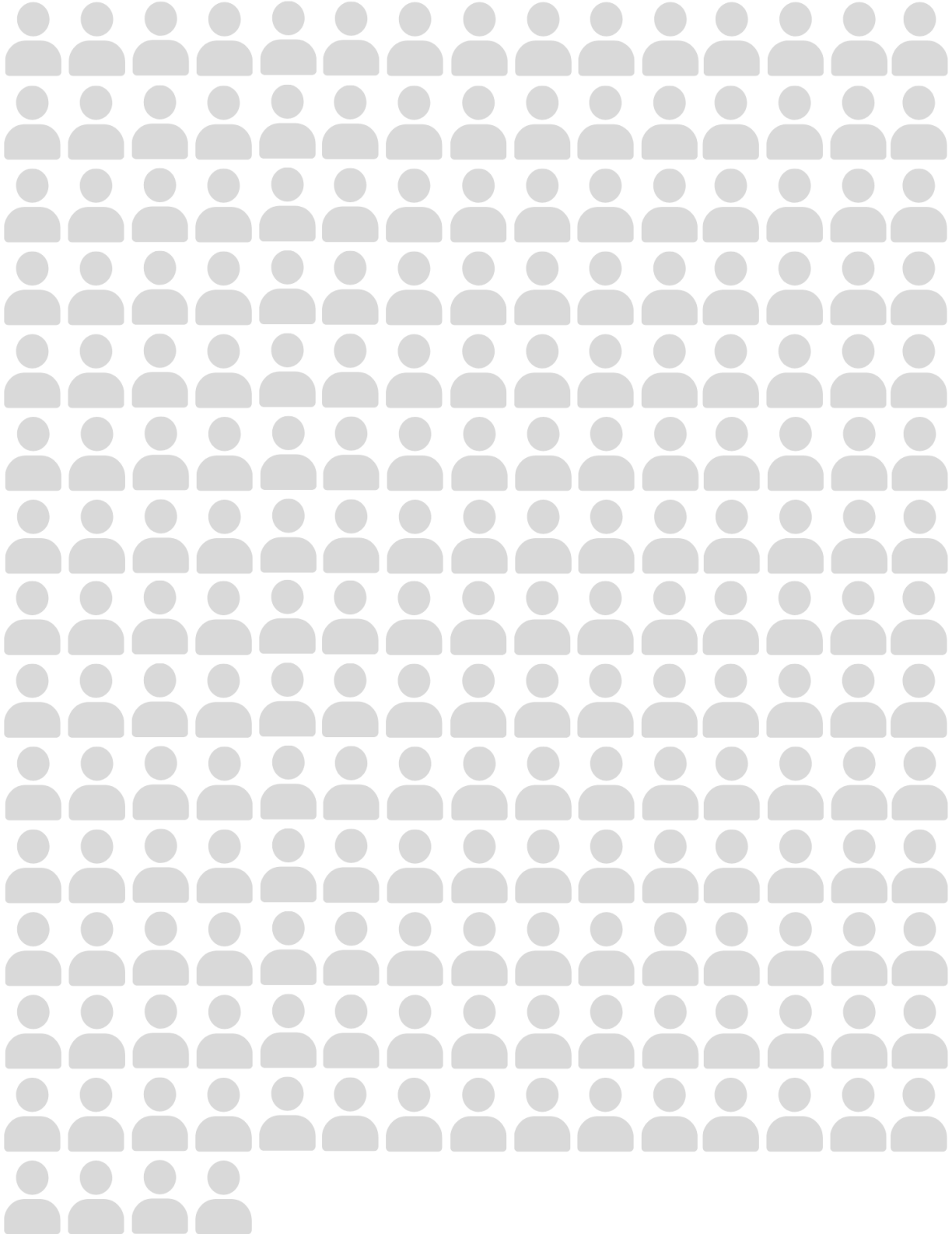
Reader: Dr. Gregory Love

Reader: Dr. Emily Fransee

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to and in honor of every victim of gender-based violence and homicide.
The following figures reflect the known femicide victims in El Salvador in 2021.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many key figures in this process that I would like to acknowledge. I could not have done it without the help and support of each and every one of them. First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my advisor, Dr. Melissa Bass, for her endless support and work throughout this thesis process. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Nidhi Vij Mali for her assistance in the preliminary stages of my research, along with my readers, Dr. Gregory Love and Dr. Emily Fransee, for helping me further improve this work. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their unwavering love and support. I am incredibly thankful to have family, especially my mother, Tania, and grandmother, Liliane, who empower and inspire me every day.

Thank you to the University of Mississippi, specifically the Trent Lott Leadership Institute and the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, for an unforgettable four years.

ABSTRACT

Chloe Rizk: FEMICIDE IN EL SALVADOR, A Case Study Analysis of Governmental Response and Recommendations for Combatting Femicide
(Under the Direction of Dr. Bass)

Femicide refers to the misogynistic killing of women by men. Globally, femicide is the leading cause of premature deaths for women. El Salvador notoriously has one of the highest femicide rates in the world. This thesis analyzes the effectiveness of current Salvadoran governmental responses to femicide using quantitative and qualitative analysis. This research found that, despite a lack of enforcement, there was a relative reduction in femicide rates following major governmental responses. Most notably, following the passage of VAW-focused laws from 2011 to 2012 and the appointment of a particular unit to investigate gender-based violence, femicides in El Salvador decreased dramatically. If implemented properly, the positive impact of these responses could be even more significant. Based on this research and the ecological framework in which it is rooted, El Salvador should enforce current laws much more fully and develop initiatives that counteract the risk factors women face on the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels. These initiatives should include promoting use of the danger assessment in public resource centers, conducting a femicide census, and incorporating gender-equality education into the school curriculum.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (*in alphabetical order*)

CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CPI	Corruption perceptions index
FMLN	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front
GBV	Gender-based violence
LEIV	Comprehensive Special Law for a Life Free of Violence for Women
MS-13	Mara Salvatrucha
NTCA	The Northern Triangle of Central America
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAW	Violence against women
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Background

Statistically, El Salvador is one of the most dangerous countries to be a woman (Dennis, 2020). On October 7, 2016, María was shot by her boyfriend. A few months later, in December, Sandra was shot by her partner. Days later, Margarita and Beatriz were murdered by their husband and ex-boyfriend, respectively. On January 23, 2017, Carla's partner stabbed her to death in front of her children. On that same day, a woman was stabbed by a group of men after an argument in a bar. This thesis will explore femicide as it occurs in El Salvador, analyze significant governmental responses, and recommend policy actions. More specifically, this research will answer why femicide occurs as dramatically as it does in El Salvador, what the government has done to prevent it, and what is likely to be most effective moving forward. This topic and research are essential because they provide recent information necessary for combating femicide, the gendered killing of women, in a country with the highest prevalence rate.

Diana Russell first defined femicide as “the misogynistic killing of women by men” in her 1976 speech at the first International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women in Brussels, Belgium. (Russell, 2011). Femicide, the gender-based killing of women, is different from male homicide because of the “power differentials that underline femicide (Level, 2022). Overall, femicide is a consequence of a more extensive problem: patriarchal norms. Most commonly, femicide is committed by intimate partners and usually arises from a history of abuse, control, and gender inequality. 58 percent of female homicide victims worldwide are killed by an intimate partner or family member. In four of five regions of the world, home is the most likely place for a woman to be killed (Global Study on Homicide, 2018). Studies show that this risk

increases even more during times of crisis as in-person health and support services close and children lose access to refuge provided by their schools (Levell, 2022).

Globally, femicide is the leading cause of premature death for women. In 2017, the global rate of female homicide was an estimated 2.3 per 100,000 women. The Northern Triangle of Central America of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (NTCA) has some of the highest overall homicide rates and is considered one of the most violent regions globally (Verité, 2014). More specifically, El Salvador's and Honduras's femicide rates in 2021 were 3.3 per 100,000 women and 6.2 per 100,000 women, respectively, while Guatemala's femicide rate was 7.0 per 100,000 women from 2010 to 2015 (Global Study on Homicide, 2018).

The first legally binding international treaty to specifically address violence against women, the Convention of Belém do Pará, utilized the phrase "gender-based violence." This phrase was used to describe the violence women experience due to their subordinate status in social, economic, and legal settings. The treaty established that women are more vulnerable to gender-based violence because of gender inequality (Bott et al., 2012).

Another significant global action against femicide occurred in 2013 when the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution urging member states to take steps to address the killing of women and girls. Today, over 100 countries have conducted at least one survey on femicide. The UN ambassadors call on member states to enhance their current data publications and analyses of these murders and improve future data collection ("General Assembly - UNODC," 2013). Today, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, commonly known as "UN Women," conducts a majority of the world's research on femicide. Further, historically, hate crimes against women have not had specific enforcement protocols,

creating inconsistent standards and procedures. To address this problem, the United Nations created a Women Model Protocol to assist all actors, from police officers to forensic scientists, investigating femicide.

Currently, seventeen out of the thirty-three countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region have laws explicitly addressing femicide and gender-based violence; however, each country has different standards for what constitutes femicide, resulting in many unaccounted cases (*The pandemic in the shadows*, 2021). For example, Colombian laws do not consider murders committed by strangers as femicide, and vague Mexican laws require a history of abuse or sexual assault for a murder to be considered femicide. Additionally, laws and their implementation across the region remain weak, allowing a patriarchal system of inequality to prevail. Roughly 98% of gender-based murders are never prosecuted. The living victims of femicide, such as children, are left behind with few resources to aid them (Femicide and International Women's Rights, 2017).

The COVID-19 pandemic is also important to note for this topic as emerging data indicates that violence against women and girls (VAWG) has only increased during the pandemic. At the pandemic's peak, CDC guidelines for quarantining and social distancing left many without access to essential VAWG services and resources. Furthermore, many women experienced a loss of earnings due to the pandemic. As women were confined to their homes with potential aggressors in high-stress situations, escaping their situations or getting help from friends, family, or professionals became more difficult. Some reports indicate that calls to helplines and police stations from women experiencing domestic violence increased during the

pandemic. In contrast, others report decreasing numbers because women cannot leave their homes or call for help out of fear that their partners will find out (Nóchez & Guzmán, 2020).

During crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection is exceedingly difficult as traditional face-to-face data collection is infeasible, and remote data collection is never entirely confidential or private. During COVID was riskier for women to share or report their experiences because of their increased interaction and dependence on potential aggressors. The highly-isolated nature of COVID-19 regulations also made it easier for perpetrators to harm women (Nóchez & Guzmán, 2020).

In terms of help-seeking behaviors, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that most women do not seek help after experiencing violence. In El Salvador in 2008, surveys of women who sought help found that around 65.5% sought help from family and friends, while 36.0% sought help from formal institutions, like the police, the judiciary, health care institutions, and schools (Bott et al., 2012). Overall, the reasons for not formally reporting violence included fear, shame, unawareness of resources, and the belief that no one would believe them or do anything (Global Study on Homicide, 2018).

Gender-based violence is globally recognized as a violation of human rights, and it is the leading cause of death in many parts of the world. There are intergenerational health, developmental, and well-being consequences when women are abused and mistreated. Violence against women creates barriers to economic development and impacts society negatively. Overall, this thesis hopes to raise awareness to what many activists have called the "femicide epidemic" and provide ways to end it. More specifically, chapter two surveys current literature

available regarding victims and perpetrators of femicide, data collection processes, and various programs and initiatives. Chapter three describes the research design utilized for the case study analysis and policy recommendations and elaborates on research rationale and limitations. Next, chapter four presents a case study analysis of El Salvador and the effectiveness of current governmental response. In addition to analyzing why femicide occurs in El Salvador and how the government has responded, chapter four considers historical implications. Lastly, chapter five expands upon the literature surveyed in the chapter two review and discusses recommendations likely to ameliorate the femicide rate in El Salvador.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

Current research regarding femicide and gender-based violence generally focuses on identifying common risk factors and developing comprehensive data collection processes to aid authorities and policymakers. This literature review will present studies and surveys that identify common trends, links, and factors in global femicide. Additionally, it includes analyses of current data sources and discusses the promising potential of different preventative actions. This review will be used to supplement the findings from the case study to recommend effective policy interventions for El Salvador's femicide crisis.

Perpetrators and Victims of Femicide

A global study from 2018 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime sought to identify the scope of gender-based killings. Using homicide statistics from national statistical systems, the study conducted an in-depth analysis of killings perpetrated inside and outside the family sphere. The study found the main culprits of gender-related killings of women and girls to be the victims' husbands and families. These murders were generally preceded by prior violence and associated with gender stereotypes and inequality in society. Furthermore, 82 percent of victims of intimate partner murder were female. The study also found that in 2012, out of total female homicides (102,127), 47 percent (48,000) were committed by an intimate partner or family member. In 2017, out of total female homicides (87,000), 58 percent (50,000 women) were committed by an intimate partner or family member. These findings indicate that from 2012 to 2017, total female homicides decreased, while intimate partner homicides increased. ("Ending violence against women is possible and urgent," 2018).

In 2012, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducted a comparative reanalysis of data on violence against women. The reanalysis utilized thirteen nationally representative household demographic and health surveys (DHS) and reproductive and health surveys (RHS) from twelve Latin American and Caribbean countries. The surveys consisted of population-based data from face-to-face interviews with women aged 15-49. The number of interviews conducted in each country varied, ranging from 3,568 in Haiti to 37,597 in Columbia (Bott et al., 2012).

The study found that between one-fourth to one-half of women in all twelve countries had experienced intimate partner violence. There was also a consistent finding that the region's social norms exacerbated gender inequality and discouraged women from reporting, seeking help, or intervening. While women with wealth and education in this study experienced the lowest levels of intimate partner violence, the study found no actual or statistical link between education and wealth and decreasing risk of violence. Women of all socioeconomic statuses equally experienced intimate partner violence in the countries studied. The study also found alcohol use, a history of intimate partner violence in the perpetrator's family, divorce, and family size to be significant contributors of gender-based violence. The most consistent and common perpetrator-related factor throughout the region was a history of "father beat mother" (Bott et al., 2012).

The information found in both of these studies is essential to this research as they both identified characteristics of perpetrators and victims of gender-based violence. Both studies found that women most commonly experience violence from people whose lives are significantly intertwined with their own. Based on these findings, possible actions to combat femicide could

be centered on creating paths for women to realistically and safely escape their violent situations before they escalate to murder and educating men and boys on gender equality (Bott et al., 2012).

Data collection and Analysis

In 2020, UN Women synthesized evidence to offer global guidance for data collection, particularly concerning administrative data collection. The synthesis consists of a review of over 250 documents, interviews with VAW experts, and interviews with thirteen key administrative informants. Additionally, 23 UN Women Regional and Country Offices from all six world regions completed a questionnaire to help orient this synthesis. Its purpose is to consider how administrative data can advance perpetrator accountability, aid victims, and help eliminate gender-based violence (“A synthesis of evidence,” 2020).

The synthesis found that, in addition to independent research and surveys, data collection should include administrative data generated through routine operations and internal administration of organizations. This data provides information that cannot be found by everyday people or through surveys. Administrative data can be gathered from many different institutions such as the different sectors of the justice system (police, prosecutors, and courts), social welfare and service agencies, women's shelters, violence hotlines, and the health system. VAW administrative data information can be used to 1) monitor the use, demand, and quality of services offered to VAW victims, 2) manage cases of VAW, especially in the criminal justice system, 3) gauge the capacity of VAW resources, costs, and response, and 4) increase awareness and improve advocacy efforts. Additionally, administrative data and subsequent case

management give victims the chance to tell their stories once instead of repeatedly for each service provider ("A synthesis of evidence," 2020).

This synthesis found that improving and utilizing administrative data is essential for addressing and preventing femicide; however, it should supplement and not replace other current data as there is information it cannot accurately provide. Most notably, administrative data cannot provide information on VAW severity or prevalence. The study found that less than forty percent of victims seek help. Of the victims who seek help, it usually is from friends and family rather than from the police; less than ten percent of female victims of violence go to the police. Seeing as though administrative data is limited to survivors who utilize support services and allow their data to be recorded and preserved, it cannot be used to accurately gauge severity or prevalence of VAW.

The following studies are based on comprehensive data collection and analysis. An eleven-city study conducted in the United States sought to identify risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships. The study consisted of 220 interviews with informants from each femicide case who were deemed most knowledgeable about the given victim's relationship with her respective perpetrator. The control group consisted of 343 randomly selected women with experiences of abuse. The study also utilized administrative data from domestic violence advocacy firms, law enforcement, and medical examiners (Campbell et al., 2003).

The study found that most cases of femicide were preceded by other acts of violence by the perpetrator against the victim. Previous intimate partner violence proved to be the highest risk factor for femicide, as 70% of femicide victims in the study were physically abused by the same perpetrator who killed them. Furthermore, the perpetrator using a gun in the most violent

incident of previous abuse led to a 41-fold increase in risk followed. A 5-fold increase in risk was identified after the victim left the perpetrator for any reason, but especially for another partner. Additionally, the perpetrator's jealousy also created a substantial risk of femicide. Other high-risk factors included 1) the perpetrator having access to a gun, 2) the perpetrator having previously threatened with a weapon, 3) the perpetrator's stepchild living in the home, 4) the perpetrator feeling estrangement in the relationship, and 5) the perpetrator abusing alcohol and drugs (Campbell et al., 2003).

The study identified 1) stalking, 2) forced sex, 3) abuse during pregnancy, 4) strangulation, and 5) threats of harm to children and other family members as bivariate-level risk factors for femicide as these factors were associated with previous threats and the use of weapons. Lower risk factors found in the study were 1) the couple not living together and 2) the perpetrator previously being arrested for domestic violence. Separating from the perpetrator after once living together or asking the partner to move out of the home are both associated with a higher risk of femicide. Only couples who never lived together experienced lower risk (Campbell et al., 2003).

Another study using administrative data is the UK's "femicide census," a ten-year report analyzing femicide in the UK from 2009 to 2020. The census gathered data from hundreds of femicide cases to debunk the common notion that femicides are isolated incidents not worthy of broader public concern. The most recent report from 2020 found that men had killed 1,425 women: in other words, a man killed a woman every three days from 2009 to 2018 in the UK.

Most femicide cases involved similar weapons, settings, and relationships (Long, 2020). As shown in the other research, the census found that femicide perpetrators typically had a

history of violence towards the victim that escalated to the victim's murder. In terms of yearly and monthly trends, the number of femicides varied, with no trends of decline. The study found that femicides in the UK occurred most often on the weekends, specifically Friday and Sunday. Additionally, many femicides occurred on holidays such as Christmas Day and New Year's Day (Long, 2020).

These studies are helpful because they offer insight into how valuable data collection and analysis can be for combating femicide. More specifically, policymakers and authorities can tailor their responses and resources according to the findings. For example, based on the UK's femicide census findings, authorities now know to emphasize or increase resources and preventative measures leading up to and on holidays. These comprehensive data collections and analyses offer information that can significantly reduce the femicide crisis if applied correctly.

Recommendation and Prevention Tools

Current literature for preventing femicide emphasizes countering each risk factor with a protective factor. Developed by WHO and UN Women in 2019, the RESPECT: Preventing Violence Against Women framework provides evidence-based recommendations. This research has been endorsed by the Australian government, the Netherlands Foreign Affairs Agency, USAID, UKAID, Sida, the World Bank Group, and numerous United Nations agencies. This framework aims to support VAW programming and evaluate which preventative practices show promise and which require more research. This analysis is based on global evidence and expert recommendations. It is intended to aid policymakers and authorities in developing evidence-based and effective VAW programming. In this collaborative study, the involved organizations created a list of protective factors and strategies for each risk factor summarized by

the acronym, 'RESPECT.' For each strategy, the research identified a particular program or action that has shown promise against the femicide crisis (RESPECT, 2019).

Relationship Skills Strengthened:

In terms of strengthening relationship skills, group-based workshops and couples counseling were found to be most promising. For example, in a study conducted in South Africa, men who participated in group-based workshops centered on fostering egalitarian attitudes were less likely to perpetrate violence against women.

Empowerment of Women

This research found microfinancing and gender and power training to be extremely promising for reducing VAWG. In South Africa, studies showed a 50% decrease in domestic violence in participants over two years with a 244 microfinance payment.

Services Ensured

In terms of providing services, empowerment counseling and psychological support were found to be most promising. For example, in the United States, these interventions lowered recurrences of violence and mental health illnesses in victims of gender-based violence. Other services, specifically hotlines and shelters require more evidence to effectively analyze their impact.

Poverty Reduced

Reducing poverty is necessary to prevent gender-based violence and femicide and produces excellent results. For example, in Ecuador, a food program for women in poverty showed a decrease in women's experience of controlling behaviors and violence by 19 - 30%.

Each household received \$40 monthly, reportedly relieving many poverty-related tensions and stresses.

Environments Made Safe and Child and Adolescent Abuse Prevented.

Offering psychological support and home visits showed promise for this aspect of prevention. In Pakistan, an intervention program offered forty public schools training in confidence, conflict resolution, gender discrimination, and violence. This program led to decreases in peer victimization (33% among boys, 59% among girls), corporal punishment (45% among boys, 66% among girls), and witnessing domestic violence (65% among boys, 70% among girls).

Transformed Attitudes, Beliefs, and Norms

Educational programs, especially those offered at a young age, show promise for transforming attitudes and norms. In Uganda, a community intervention shifted the power balance between men and women. Of those who participated in the program, 76% believe physical violence in a relationship is never acceptable, while only 26% of the control group believe the same.

In Honduras, Cure Violence, a nongovernmental organization, made significant progress after implementing its program in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. In 2014, the city saw a 73% decrease in total homicides compared to the same period in 2013. In this program, violence is treated like a contagious disease that spreads quickly through exposure. Cure Violence predicts sites of violence, also known as "transmitter sites," intervening to change its social norms. While this program focuses on combating widespread violence and homicides overall, the program's

results and preventive theory can potentially be adapted to combat femicide and decrease gender-based violence in the NTCA.

While the aforementioned strategies and programs cannot apply to every country, the RESPECT acronym provides a practical supplemental framework for combating femicide and accounts for many causes and contributors of femicide. Countries can use the findings to produce better policies that fit their particular femicide context. Policymakers can also refer to the RESPECT framework to ensure that recommendations adhere to the protective factor RESPECT suggests. This study also shows which recommendations and strategies need more research and where data is lacking for future researchers to fill.

Another tool for assessing risk and preventing gender-based violence is the Danger Assessment. The DA is meant to inspire collaboration between domestic violence advocates, health care providers, criminal justice professionals, and the victim herself. Only half of the abuse victims in the study could independently assess whether they were likely to be killed by a loved one, even using the tool. However, when using the tool with the assistance of professionals, they were able to assess risk more accurately.

The original Danger Assessment (DA) was an instrument created by researcher Jacquelyn Campbell in 1985 to determine the likelihood of death or near death in a case of intimate partner violence. The DA was developed with administrative data from shelters and law enforcement and surveys of battered women and clinical experts. It was originally designed using 15 factors to assess the risk of women killing their abusive male partner and the risk of being murdered by their intimate male partner. These questions explore the nature of the relationship and specific characteristics of the potential femicide perpetrator.

More recently, Campbell sought to analyze the use and effectiveness of the DA (Campbell et al., 2008). This study covered 11 cities and used multivariate analysis to test the DA's predictive validity. Campbell used data from an independent sample of women who were victims of attempted femicide to determine the validity of a revised 20-item version of the DA. In addition to adding items, the new DA was reworded for clarity and given a weighted scoring (Campbell et al. 2008).

The results of this study offer important validation for this new and improved DA as it proved to identify risk more accurately compared to the previous DA assessment. Campbell found that eighty-three percent of homicide victims scored the cut-off of four or higher. Furthermore, the average score for female homicide victims was just under eight, and the score for abuse victims was just over three. However it is important to note that out of the women who were *not* killed, 40% of them had also scored the cut-off score, four. These results indicate that while the Danger Assessment cannot be used as a precise actuarial tool, it does give a relatively accurate risk prediction for practitioners to use in identifying and intervening before it is too late. Additionally, the study found that half of the women could not accurately predict their danger on their own. Therefore, DA results can show many women and practitioners the reality of the given situation (Campbell et al., 2008).

This study is helpful for my research because of its preventative potential in countries like El Salvador, where many women do not realize violence in relationships is potentially lethal or even socially unacceptable. An objective assessment could make a great impact on women realizing the risks they face. Additionally, the study found that women threatened or abused with a gun experienced a 20-fold increase in risk. Women threatened with murder also experienced a

15-fold increase in risk. This assessment could urge women, especially those this particular case study research focuses on, to escape their dangerous situations before they become lethal.

Practitioners can use this tool to recognize the risk women and effectively respond. A copy of the revised DA can be found in Appendix A (Campbell et al., 2008).

CHAPTER 3: Research Design

This research consists of a comprehensive study of femicide with a single-case analysis of El Salvador to recommend actions for prevention. The research is centered on answering the following questions: why is femicide occurring in El Salvador at such high rates and what is most effective for combating it? The design for this research consists of data collection and analysis from various sources. The primary sources are journal articles and studies, official government reports and figures, news and media releases, reports from the World Health Organization, and reports from the United Nations. More specifically, this research utilizes research, studies, and recommendations from UN Women, a UN entity dedicated to gender equality and empowerment. I use these sources to conduct both qualitative and quantitative analyses of femicide in El Salvador. Gender-based violence against women is at the core of this research as femicides are normally committed after a history of gender-based violence. Given the highly personal nature of femicide, real stories and instances of femicide are cited and incorporated into the research. This particular design choice aims to bring awareness and remembrance to the victims of femicide.

Choosing a Country for Case-Study Analysis

I chose my country based on its femicide rate and the prevalence of violence and gender-based discrimination. Additionally, I wanted to study a country that had enacted laws or initiatives specifically against femicide to analyze whether legislative responses are effective in combating femicide. I analyze only one country in this research due to time constraints; however, I initially planned to study ten countries from different regions and cultures. I chose El Salvador as it has consistently had one of the highest femicide rates in the world. El Salvador also had the

most research available among countries with consistently high femicide rates. Finally, the Salvadoran government has implemented laws and initiatives specifically against femicide; therefore, I could conduct an analysis of the effectiveness of these actions.

My research design for analyzing El Salvador as a case study consisted of general data collection and analysis of the scope, potential causes, cultural attitudes and norms, and actions taken by the government. Next, I collected quantitative data to examine trends in femicide, if any were present. For example, I analyzed femicides following implementation of femicide-specific laws to see if there are any relationships between implemented policy action and the number of femicides.

Recommendations Framework

Preventing femicide requires understanding the risks women and girls face on numerous societal levels, as no single factor accounts for all the risk of femicide. Instead, the interaction among the different levels of society creates the risk women and girls face every day. As seen in the literature review, there are many evidence-based frameworks for preventing femicide. My research specifically utilizes the ecological framework by WHO and UN Women to recommend preventative policy actions for El Salvador, based on my personal preference. The ecological framework concisely analyzes risk factors women encounter at four levels: individual, relationship, community, and societal (Preventing femicide, n.d.).

Factors at the individual level refer to personal and biological characteristics such as a history of violence, alcohol abuse, and substance abuse. Factors at the individual level that most contribute to a risk of femicide are 1) a history of domestic violence and 2) a pending or current separation. Relationship-level risk factors can also be found at the communal and societal levels.

Relationships can build environments of violence and negativity towards women, or the opposite. For example, in workplaces with established power levels, building relationships of mutual respect can ensure that women in lower positions are not mistreated or endangered. On a community level, women are at a higher risk of gender-based violence in cultures of violence. Violent schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and hospitals increase the risks of gender-based violence. Societal-level factors include factors from the "overarching institutional patterns of the culture or subculture, such as the economic, social, educational, legal, and political systems." More specifically, patriarchal structures and supporting a male supremacy societal mentality produce significant risks for women.

Rationale for Research

This research is necessary because it analyzes the most recent research on femicide in El Salvador. Specifically, there is a lack of analysis on data that emerged following the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, this is one of the few research studies to comprehensively analyze news articles, journals, surveys, governmental reports, legislation, and UN reports to analyze femicide and gender-based violence in El Salvador. Finally, this research analyzes potential solutions to recommend the most effective actions for combating femicide in El Salvador.

Research Limitations

Overall, a significant limitation of this research is its one-case study design. A one case study analysis is not comprehensive enough to make general recommendations regarding femicide. Because of this, this research can most effectively be used only for El Salvador. Other countries can use this research to supplement their own; however, it only specifically applies to El Salvador.

Another research limitation is a lack of definite statistics. In Salvadoran law specifically, *femicide* is defined as a murder where the motives are attributed to a victim's status as a woman and arise from hatred or contempt because of said gender, making identifying this crime difficult. While it is challenging to identify homicides based on gender-based motives, previous research identifies factors that usually suggest gender-based violence. For example, the killer's identity, especially as a domestic partner, can give authorities information on the crime's motive. Other characteristics include but are not limited to: how the woman was murdered, whether she was sexually assaulted, and how her body was left. Nevertheless, because of the difficulty and ambiguity of categorizing murders as femicides, numbers are most likely underestimated and therefore do not fully represent the scope of the problem (Huttner, 2018).

Lastly, many families and friends of victims do not report femicide out of fear of violent retaliation or due to the discouraging impunity in the criminal justice system. Further, femicide statistics do not account for female disappearances and missing cases, which could be gender-based. Because of this, statistics could be skewed and underreported. Finally, many nonprofits warn that government data can be manipulated or misrepresented to advance political interests. For example, the recent decrease in femicide might be attributed to fewer efforts from the government in investigating and categorizing cases.

CHAPTER FOUR: Case Study Analysis of Gender-Based Violence in El Salvador

While femicide and gender-related violence are prevalent worldwide, it occurs more dramatically in El Salvador. Despite being a country of just six million people, El Salvador has one of the worst femicide rates in the world (Nugent, 2019). In 2021, El Salvador had one of the highest femicide rates at 3.3 per 100,000 women (ECLAC, 2021). A survey conducted in 2017 found that 67 percent of women in El Salvador have experienced some violence. In 2018, one woman every 24 hours was murdered in El Salvador (Zanzinger, 2021). Research points to many causes and contributors to the high femicide rate and the domestic violence that leads to it in El Salvador. While some positive efforts have been made to combat femicide in El Salvador, many contributors continue to hinder greater progress. The country's grant of impunity to perpetrators of gender-based violence, machismo, gang violence, and the COVID-19 pandemic all contribute to the concerning femicide rate the country has today.

Context and History

The Democratic Republic of El Salvador is the smallest yet most densely populated country in Central America. The country has a history of gangs, violence, and corruption. After years of military-dominated rule and social inequalities, five guerilla groups formed a left-wing insurgency, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), and fought against the U.S.-backed Salvadoran Armed Forces in the country's most significant war. This war lasted almost 13 years, from 1979 to 1992, killing 70,000 people. (Congressional Research Service, 2018). It continues to affect Salvadoran society today, especially regarding how violence against women was used as a military strategy. In the Salvadoran Civil War, civilian women were brutally raped and tortured by men fighting against the FMLN. In a 1981 massacre, women were

taken to the hills and raped before everyone in the community was systematically executed.

These atrocities reflect how military strategy became a violence against women (Huttner, 2018).

Additionally, the country has not confronted its history of gender-based violence, only exacerbating the negative consequences of its past. In 2020, El Salvador passed the "National Reconciliation Law, " implicitly granting impunity for crimes committed during conflict or wartime. Most perpetrators or witnesses of war crimes against women remain free in El Salvador today. These facts reflect the role gender-based violence played in El Salvadoran military strategy and how the country's history still contributes to its treatment of women today (Huttner, 2018).

Corruption is also highly prevalent in El Salvador's society. In the 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), El Salvador scored 34 out of 100, with 0 being most corrupt and 100 being least corrupt. A score of 34 places the country 115th out of 180 countries in terms of perceived corruption. The CPI score covers instances of bribery and nepotism, conflicts of interest, and diversions of public funds. Additionally, a government's transparency of information, tolerance of corruption, and protections for those who report corruption are also incorporated into a country's score. Societal perceptions of corruption, instances of money laundering and tax fraud, and private sector corruption are not included in a country's CPI score (The ABCs of CPI, 2021).

Lastly, El Salvador's widespread gang participation also greatly contributes to violence in Salvadoran society. During the war in the 1980s, many Salvadoran families found safety in Southern California. While there some children of Salvadoran refugees formed gangs, known as *maras*: the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Barrio 18. Following the end of the Salvadoran Civil

War, the United States's immigration policies shifted toward deporting Salvadoran men with criminal records, specifically gang-related records, leading to roughly 4000 deportations.. At this time, El Salvador was still weak from the violent civil war and the influx of gang members only exacerbated the ubiquity of violence, crime, and gang culture as the country was unable to control it (Martínez, n.d.). Experts believe that the 4000 deportees from 1989 evolved into 60,000 gang members spread across all of El Salvador.

Possible Causes and Contributors in El Salvador

Impunity and Discrimination in the Criminal Justice System

One of the significant causes of femicide and gender-based violence in El Salvador is the impunity courts grant to perpetrators in femicide cases. *Impunity* is commonly defined as an “exemption or freedom from punishment, harm, or loss” (Mobilia, 2021). The current femicide laws and efforts do not adequately deter the crime, in part because of the way the court exempts offenders from punishment. This impunity encourages more femicide crimes as perpetrators realize they can commit them without serious consequences (Mobilia, 2021).

In 2013, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that El Salvador had a 77% impunity rate for femicide crimes (Advocates for Human Rights, n.d.). A study from 2009 concluded that few cases ever even make it to trial. A study by the United Nations analyzed 164 femicides covered in major national newspapers. The study found that only 14 cases had identified perpetrators, even though there were witnesses at the crime scenes in 67 cases. Furthermore, a 2018 study concluded that in only 5% of femicide cases end is someone charged and only 3% end with a guilty verdict, reflecting the fact that very few femicide cases make it to trial, and those that do rarely end with guilty verdicts or sentences (Huttner, 2020).

This impunity in El Salvador has many negative consequences. Most importantly, many women do not have faith or confidence in the justice system. This lack of confidence leads to underreporting. Underreporting creates inaccurate data and, therefore, can significantly affect government response and actions (Mobilia, 2021). In a 2017 national survey, 67% of Salvadoran women reported that they had experienced some form of violence in their lifetime; however, only 6% of these women had reported the abuse to authorities. The National Survey of Violence Against Women reported that 15% of women did not believe the police would listen to them or help them, 11.5% did not report out of fear from threats they had received, and 9% of women did not know where to go or whom to talk to (Tackling Violence Against Women in NTCA, 2021).

Machismo and Male Supremacy

Along with impunity in the justice system, experts on gender violence in El Salvador contend that the country's culture and societal norms have normalized and desensitized the country to violence against women. In terms of gender equality, El Salvador ranks 137th globally for gender equality (United Nations data, n.d.). Many factors have molded the culture to be this way.

First, El Salvador has a patriarchal social structure that gives men more power in the household. Because of this, many women do not view gender-based violence as life-threatening or even as wrong. Experts state that many women view their violent situations as men simply assuming their dominant position in the family; these women believe they must accept the consequence (Huttner, 2020). A 2018 survey concluded that more than 50% of young men (aged 15-19) believe the following statement to be true: "women endure violent relationships because they believe violence in a relationship with a man is normal." Furthermore, more than 50%

believed that, “when women say NO, they actually mean YES – it is normal for men to have sexual relations with more than one woman, but wrong for women to do the same.” Lastly, 85% of the percent of young men affirmed the following statement: "a decent woman should not dress provocatively, nor be out on the streets late at night." (“Young people in Latin America”, 2018) These findings show that machismo and gender-based violence are still being passed down to the next generation, creating a dangerous cycle.

The Salvadoran patriarchal social structure fuels cultural machismo and perpetuates gender-based violence. Women are under-represented in El Salvador's workforce and are often economically dependent on their intimate partners. This causes logistical problems for escaping dangerous situations and complicates criminal justice efforts against anti-women violence. Judge Glenda Baires, a tribunal court judge in El Salvador, states that women who are economically dependent on their partners are often scared or hesitant to testify against them in court. Furthermore, due to gender inequality, nearly 15 percent of Salvadoran women are illiterate, impacting job opportunities and fair trials in court (Brigida, 2018).

Gang Violence

Another contributor to the femicide-perpetuating culture in El Salvador is the prevalence of gang violence. In 2021, there were approximately 60,000 active maras in El Salvador (Human Rights Watch, 2021). The aforementioned attitudes of male supremacy and machismo are only heightened in gangs. Salvadoran gangs are overwhelmingly male-dominated, and women are treated as objects to control. Because of this, women often experience great violence in relationships with gang members. Women face violent retribution for leaving their partner or acting in a way the gang member does not want (Huttner, 2018). Melida Guevara, an Oxfam

program manager in El Salvador, explains that “Gang violence exercises power over women by means of violence over their bodies. To resist is to die. So girls and young boys, some just eight years old, are recruited to work for gangs or be girlfriends of gang members, and they are trying to survive in this complex and violent context” (Oxfam America, 2018).

Many politicians in El Salvador attribute gender-based violence to the gangs. While the maras contribute to the femicide rate, it is hard to know exactly how much. The previously mentioned study from 2009 found that only 7 of the 164 cases analyzed were associated with gang members (Huttner, 2018). However, these gangs are notorious for their intimidation tactics with prosecutors, police, victims, and anyone who could expose their crimes (Mobilia, 2021). Many reports indicate that victims are scared to report gang-related violence out of fear of gang retaliation against themselves or their loved ones. Because of this, gang-related crimes often remain underreported and unprosecuted (“Tackling Violence Against Women in NTCA,” 2021).

COVID-19 Pandemic

A more recent contributor to gender violence and femicide rates in El Salvador is the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the highly contagious nature of COVID-19, most countries, – including El Salvador – responded by implementing quarantines and lockdowns. Because of this, many women were exposed to increased periods of isolation with their aggressors. In 2020, 67% of femicides that year occurred from April to August when El Salvador was under quarantine. Colectiva Feminista, a politics-based nonprofit in San Salvador, reportedly received more gender-based cases in the first six months of the pandemic than in all of 2019 (Zanzinger, 2021). There was also an overall increase in calls to the police. During this time, enforcement of the Special Comprehensive Act for a Violence-Free Life for Women weakened, and fewer resources

were available to women. As the nation locked down to minimize the spread of the virus, courts closed, directly impacting femicide reporting and prosecution. The government first addressed the situation with a mass text 45 days after the start of the nationwide quarantine. Between March 11 and April 27, there was a 30 percent increase in calls on domestic violence hotlines compared to the year before; however, the hotline to the Salvadoran Institute for the Advancement of Women did not extend its hours until May 11 (Nóchez & Guzmán, 2020).

Additionally, fewer people were commuting to work or out in the streets, making any travel more dangerous for women. A 25-year-old woman named Silvia was one victim. Silvia would walk 40 minutes each way to work, but she never made it back one day during the quarantine. The community has speaker systems for alarms, Whatsapp groups, and other communication systems for emergencies, but no one was around to help Silvia. The next day, Silvia's body was found in a ravine with signs of sexual violence. A worker in Nueva Trinidad's Mayor's Office was arrested for femicide (Nóchez & Guzmán, 2020)

Given conflicting data, it is difficult to determine the exact scale and trend of femicide during the unprecedented years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most VAW data is based on reports to the police, cases in the justice system, and information from resource centers. Seeing as though women had little to no access to these institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic, it can be reasonably assumed that VAW data from the COVID-19 era is most likely unrepresentative.

Significant Governmental Responses

Legal Framework

El Salvador's legal framework regarding violence against women consists of four laws, one of which explicitly addresses femicide. First, the Penal Code, created in 1904, establishes

sentences for different crimes in El Salvador. Article 200 of the Penal Code criminalizes domestic violence and establishes a prison sentence of one to three years. However, the Penal Code does not explicitly address femicide.

The Law Against Intra-Familial Violence characterizes intrafamilial violence as "any action or omission, direct or indirect, that causes harm, physical, sexual, psychological suffering or death to the members of the family." Passed in 1996, El Salvador's Intrafamilial Law seeks to "establish appropriate mechanisms to prevent, punish and eradicate domestic violence." More specifically, the law states that it is the government's responsibility to prevent domestic violence by creating specialized units within the police to respond to reports of domestic violence. Additionally, authorities and judges should be trained on the unequal power dynamics present in domestic violence cases (Mobilieria, 2021). Passed in 2011, the Law of Equality, Equity, and Eradication of Discrimination against Women specifically addresses equality of the sexes in state institutions, but does not apply to private individuals. Commonly known as the "Law of Equality," this law urges state institutions to eradicate all forms of discrimination, especially those against women (Mobilieria, 2021).

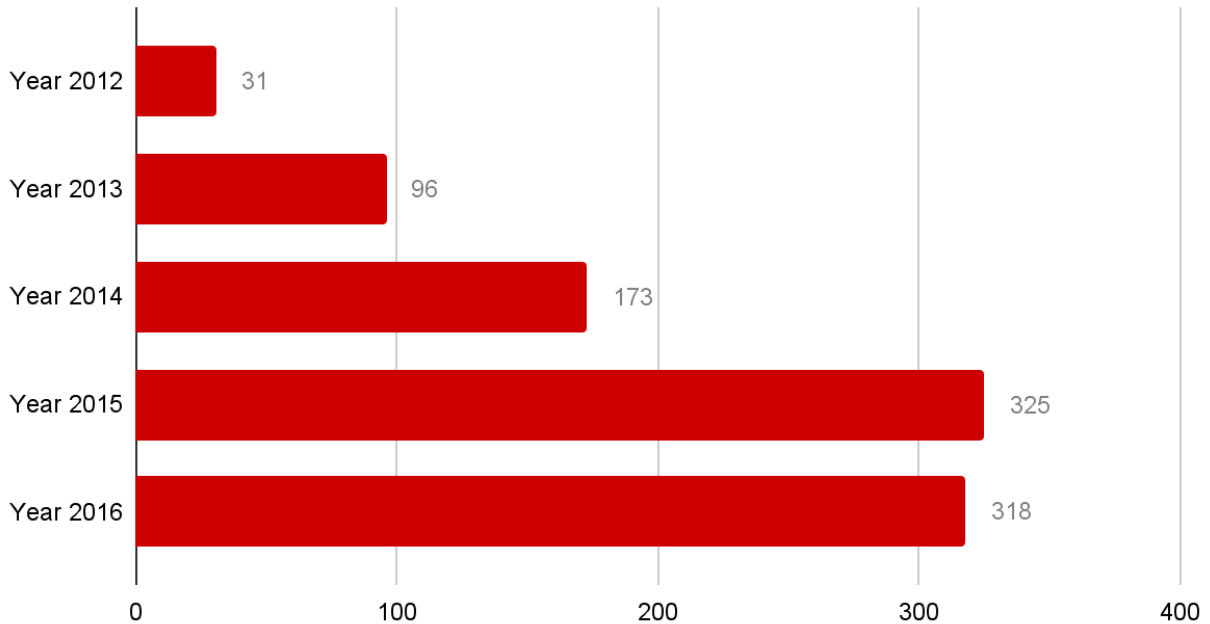
Most importantly for this research, the Special Comprehensive Law for a Violence-Free Life for Women (LEIV) explicitly addresses femicide and guarantees women a life free of violence through the "detection, prevention, care, protection, reparation, and punishment of violence against women," (Mobilieria, 2021). Prior to LEIV's enactment in 2012, femicides amounted to 568 and 629 deaths in 2010 and 2011, respectively (Aguirre, 2017). LEIV recognized and criminalized two types of femicide, general and aggravated, and established

punishments of up to 50 years in prison. In addition to these punishments, LEIV also created responsibilities for the Salvadoran media and authorities to prevent femicide.

Article 45 of LEIV defines *general femicide* as the murder of a woman based on "hatred or contempt for her status as a woman," as punishable by 20-35 years in prison. Article 46 establishes femicide as aggravated when committed by a public official or state employee, when committed by two or more people, or when the victim is under age eighteen. Aggravated femicide is punishable by 30-50 years in prison. Article 47 addresses impunity by establishing a 2-4 year prison sentence for anyone who obstructs or denies victims access to justice (Mobilia, 2021). While activists view LEIV as significant, it does have some weaknesses. Specifically, the United Nations found that LEIV only applies when femicide is committed by an intimate male partner. While most femicides result from domestic violence of this type, there is a sizable number of gender-based homicides, especially in gangs, that are not romantically rooted, that this law does not cover (Mobilia, 2021).

Experts dedicated to advancing women in El Salvador state that the creation of LEIV allows researchers to implement human rights regulations and expose crime, paving the way for an anti-discrimination framework. Femicide-specific laws also give women legitimacy when reporting and encourage them to come forward. This can best be seen in the reporting numbers that followed the law's enactment. From 2012 to 2016, reported cases rose from 31 to 318 per year (Aguirre, 2017).

Reported Femicides in El Salvador



Source: Adapted from data from the office of the Attorney General of the Republic of El Salvador

Femicide Landmark Conviction

The conviction of Mario Huezo in Karla Turcios’s death sparked even more action from the Salvadoran government regarding femicides. In April of 2018, Karla Turcios, a reporter in El Salvador, was brutally murdered by her boyfriend and child’s father, Mario Huezo. Karla’s mother, Dolores Turcios, said her daughter was unrecognizable due to the physical abuse she sustained. The femicide and conviction made national headlines and attracted significant attention, especially from activists. Turcios’s perpetrator received the maximum sentence of 50 years for femicide.

Shortly after Karla’s death, the 152nd female killing that year, the government stated that dealing with femicide was now a matter of urgency. The government appointed Ana Graciela Sagastume as Special Prosecutor of Gender-based Killings. “This [conviction] is to make it clear

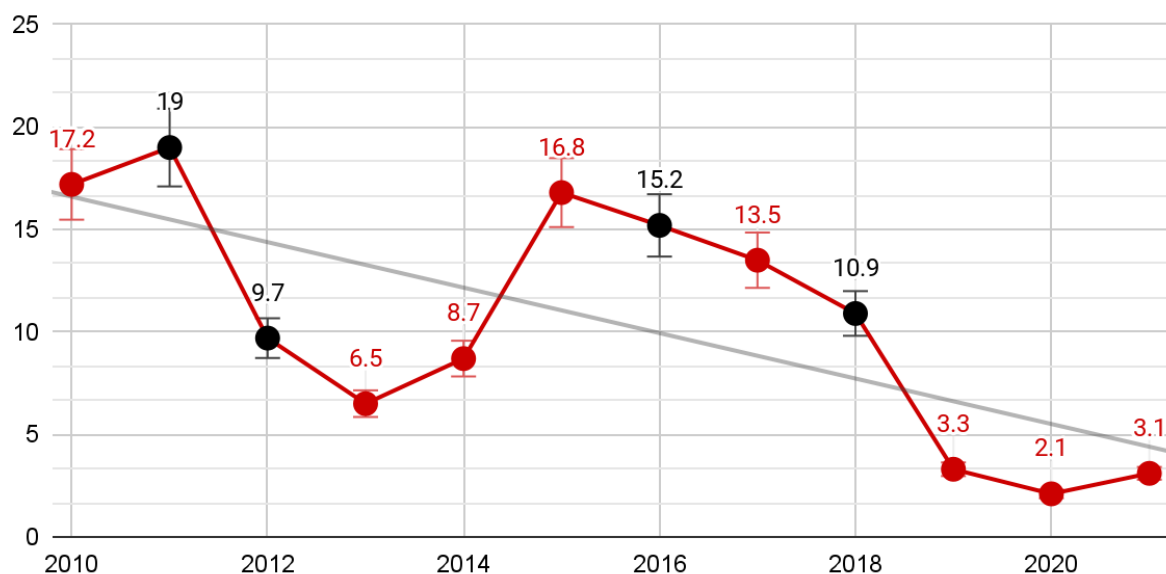
that in this country, it will not be allowed to continue killing women because of their condition of being a woman,” said Graciela Sagastume. Police figures show that at least 150 women were killed in El Salvador after Karla's death in April of 2018. However, the overall numbers from 2018 were still lower than in 2017 and continued to trend downward in 2019. Furthermore, official figures show that prosecutors opened 148 investigations in 2019 (“How the killing of Karla Turcios changed El Salvador,” 2018).

Special Unit for Women, Girls, and LGBTQI+ Community

Following the death of Karla Turcios and the vast public attention it received in 2018, the Salvadoran government created a unit to oversee groups, including but not limited to: women, girls, and the LGBTQI+ community. Total femicides decreased by 20% from 2017 to 2018, to a total of 383. Additionally, 30% fewer women died by femicide in the first four months of 2019 than in the first four months of 2018. The creation of the unit did not entirely eradicate femicide, as 76 women died in 4 months just for being female; however, the country did see a positive decreasing trend that year following the unit’s creation (Castenada, 2018)

While it is unknown whether or to what extent any particular action taken by organizations or the Salvadoran government caused the decline, there is an overall decreasing trend of femicides in El Salvador. The following figure shows femicide rates from 2010 to 2020 in relation to governmental responses. Black data points represent years with major governmental actions and responses.

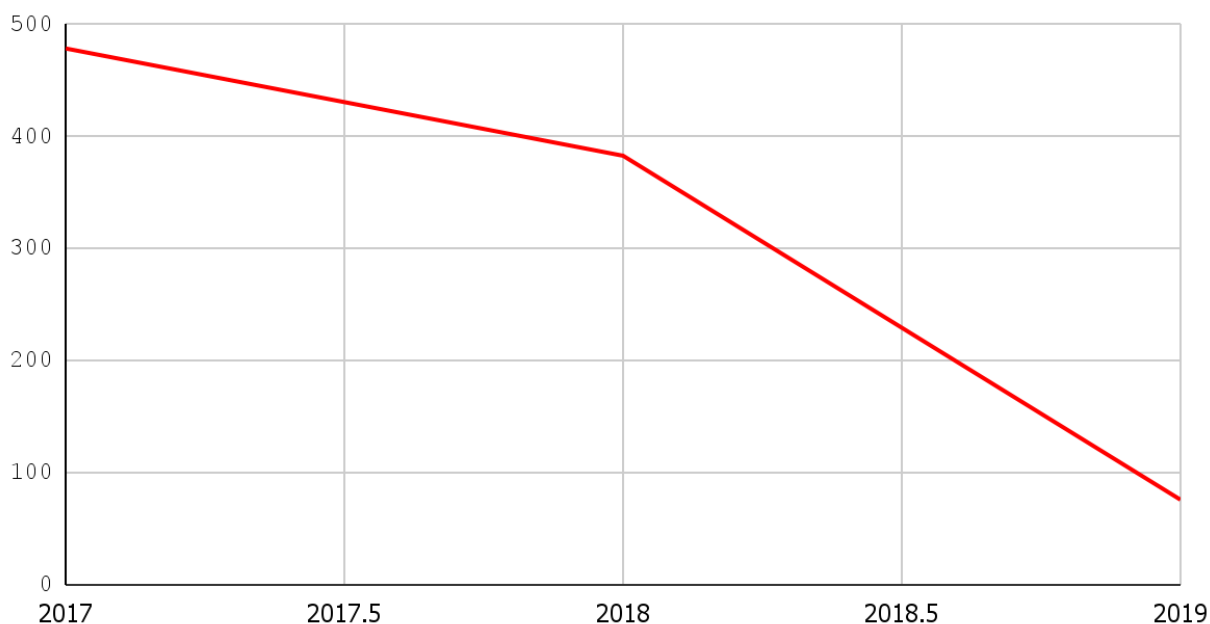
Femicide Rates per 100,000 women from 2010-2020 in relation to major governmental responses



Source: Adapted from UNDP (2020) and UNECLAC (2021) data

Based on the above figure, the nation saw a decline in the femicide rate after each major governmental response, especially following the “Law of Equality” and LEIV in 2011 and 2012, respectively. Another major drop in the rate can be seen from 2018 to 2019 following Karla Turcio’s murder, after the government appointed Special Prosecutor Sagastume and created a unit for prosecuting and preventing femicide crimes. From 2019 to 2020, El Salvador’s femicide rate fell from 3.3 femicides per 100,000 women to 2.1 (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2022). The figure below displays femicide occurrences in more detail from 2017 to 2019.

Femicide Occurrences in El Salvador from 2017-2019



Source: Adapted from data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Activists' Recommendations

Educational Initiatives

Activists and experts recommend expanding upon education initiatives like "Una Vie Diferente" and 'La Colectiva' for creating change in El Salvador. Furthermore, activists recommend educating future generations to stop the cycle of misogyny and violence towards women (Oxfam, n.d.).

Spanish for "a different life," the 'Una Vie Diferente' program is a campaign launched in 2005 by nine groups, including Oxfam America, to reduce gender-based violence. The Una Vie Diferente campaign has reached two million people using billboards, bus ads, and public events. The Una Vie Diferente campaign accomplished the following:

- The campaign trained civilian men and women, students, and 165 government officials on women's rights and how to prevent violence. Following the training, 45 women legislators drafted the Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Eradication bill that was later implemented into law.
- The mayor of a city outside San Salvador publicly committed to reducing violence against women in the city's budget, establishing a shelter for women.
- The Shaira Ali Cultural Center was created as part of 'Una Vie Diferente.' The Center operates in twenty-nine different communities in Ahuachapan, El Salvador. The Center has implemented educational and training programs in schools across El Salvador about women's rights and resolving and preventing violence. The Center also trains other activism organizations to offer it in their respective communities (Hufstader, 2018).

La Colectiva's work is also highly recommended by activists as it operates throughout the country and focuses more on educating youth in hopes of preventing sexual violence against women. This group of female activists believes change begins from the ground up and from empowering women to own their reproductive and civil rights. La Colectiva is present in both urban and rural schools to give sexual education programs to students, especially girls. They contend that there has been pushback from administrators and policymakers about the appropriate age for these programs; however, they state that ten to fourteen-year-olds are getting pregnant in El Salvador today (Ríos, 2018).

Resource Accessibility

In the 2017 National Survey of Violence Against Women, 48% of incidents were never reported because of difficulty accessing public services. Because of this, activists call for greater

accessibility of resources for women experiencing gender-based violence like that of the Ciudad Mujer centers. Located in the most populous areas of El Salvador, the Ciudad Mujer centers have centralized over eighteen government agencies in one building. The eighteen agencies provide twenty different public services, such as legal help, free childcare, police services, entrepreneur training, and counseling. In 2017, the six Ciudad Mujer sites served half of the female population, around 1,568,377 women, more than four million public services. In a study conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank, Ciudad Mujer users accessed 43% more services than non-users (Planning for equality and women's autonomy, 2017).

Encouraging Reporting

Another notable recommendation from activists in El Salvador is to encourage reporting of gender-based violence. Incidents remain heavily underreported because many women do not feel comfortable or safe coming forward. The Shaira Ali Cultural Center focuses on helping survivors navigate the justice system, and activities. The center documents each case's date, attacker, and number of occurrences. Based on that information, they refer the survivor to the appropriate institution for further help, accompanying them to offer support and ensure officials treat them appropriately. Afterward, the Center stays up-to-date on the case and ensures that the authorities take the case seriously (Hufstader, 2018).

CHAPTER 5: Policy Recommendations

In addition to the general improvements mentioned above, there are specific policies and actions that El Salvador can implement to supplement its current response. Overall, I recommend nationwide data collection, providing and promoting the Danger Assessment to women and girls, and implementing gender-equality educational programs in school curricula. I developed these recommendations using the ecological framework for prevention as it communicates the risks women experience on the individual, relationship, communal, and societal levels in El Salvador. The ecological model identifies a protective factor for every risk factor of femicide women face. This model is invaluable for policy making, and I urge policymakers to use it in their decisions as well.

Femicide Census

One major issue with the femicide crisis in El Salvador is the lack of data and research. Without accurate data, it is difficult to determine the prevalence of this problem and raise awareness and support for ending it. Simply put, it is difficult to combat a problem you do not fully understand. The general public, but especially policymakers and resource centers, needs more data and statistics on femicide to prevent it effectively. As discussed in the literature review, the Femicide Census conducted by the UK collects data on femicide and analyzes and publishes it for public use. I recommend that El Salvador conduct a Femicide Census similar to that done by the UK so we can know more about the problem to prevent it effectively. A common misconception with the femicide epidemic is that each murder is an isolated incident. However, the UK Femicide Census has found that when compared, these killings usually have repeated characteristics and patterns. This finding is invaluable for preventing femicide because

of the information it gives to target these patterns. A femicide census offers comprehensive insight into a problem by identifying trends and factors, discovering what is working, what is not working, and what should be done.

As stated in the literature review, the UK Femicide Census found that many femicides occur on holidays. This information may not seem entirely helpful, but its implications are grand. Because of this information, the UK can push more educational campaigns leading up to holidays or publicize resources available. In other words, the UK now has more information to aid its response. I believe the lack of data in El Salvador provides a great challenge for policymakers, authorities, and activists. This challenge can be solved by creating a femicide census.

Danger Assessment

Resources like the Danger Assessment are invaluable for intervening before women experience violence; Nationwide use could greatly help the femicide epidemic in El Salvador. As discussed in the literature review, the Danger Assessment helps predict the risks of violence women face in their homes. The evaluation the Danger Assessment offers is proven to be accurate and objective. Furthermore, the information it offers may be more digestible for women compared to family and friends' opinions. Given this, the government should market the Danger Assessment and urge hospitals, schools, and resource centers to offer it to women and men alike. This information could help women understand the risk they face and get help. Furthermore, the assessment could show men which actions or practices put women at risk for violence. Overall, I believe the Danger Assessment to be an excellent tool for women and girls. Statistically, most victims of femicide endure their violence alone, keep it a secret, and do not seek help. This

evaluation offers information at no risk or cost to women as it can even be uploaded to social media or government websites. Women can take this assessment, understand the gravity of their situation, and get the help they need before it is too late.

Educational Programs in School Curriculum

Salvadoran culture has historically viewed men as superior to women. The strong machismo and male supremacist beliefs from El Salvador's past continue to affect society's growth today as these beliefs are passed down to future generations. The dangerous cycle of ingrained misogyny must be broken to see a real, long-lasting change in El Salvador. To change how a group of people behave and think, education is the most powerful tool, especially youth education.

The last recommendation I have for El Salvador is to incorporate education on gender equality and violence against girls in all schools. Teaching the current generation of children moving forward that violence is never okay can help break down the cultural norms in El Salvador. Specifically involving boys in discussing gender equality from a young age can also further combat the strong machismo ingrained in society. While the results will not appear instantly, breaking the cycle and educating youth on treating women with equal respect will offer long-term positive results.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

My research sought to determine what is causing and contributing to femicide in El Salvador, whether current efforts are effective, and what should be done to improve further. Through quantitative and qualitative analysis, I found that the patriarchal social structure intertwined with a history of machismo and male supremacist beliefs are primarily responsible for femicide in El Salvador. Historically, El Salvador has allowed women to be treated poorly by men both in war and everyday life. Unfortunately, impunity cripples the nation as most VAW crimes remain unprosecuted. In addition to these factors, resources and accountability efforts have decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic due to nationwide lockdowns.

In terms of governmental responses, there are currently four VAW-related laws, including one that explicitly addresses femicide. Additionally, the Salvadoran government has created special units with prosecutors for the femicide epidemic. Hotlines, shelters, and resources are also available for women, especially those living in the major cities with Ciudad Mujeres centers. Despite poor enforcement, these governmental responses have produced positive responses. As the data show, El Salvador has experienced an overall decreasing trend in gender-based female homicides from 2010 to 2021. Data also shows that the country's femicide rates and general homicide rates trend similarly.

Despite these positive results, there is still much room for improvement, especially regarding impunity in the justice system, which cripples the potential impact that governmental responses like LEIV could have. Hundreds of women are still being murdered each year because of their gender, and most of the perpetrators of VAW crimes remain unpunished. If adequately enforced, these laws could have extremely positive results. Additionally, the nation struggles

with data collection and analysis. Incidents are underreported and these data do not accurately reflect the problem because many women feel unheard and unsafe when reporting VAW crimes. In order to combat femicide, El Salvador must improve its data collection and analysis, enforcement and prosecution of VAW crimes, resource accessibility, and awareness efforts. As the research shows, actions, even those actions as seemingly minor as appointing one prosecutor, provide positive results.

I hope this research inspires actors to contribute to eradicating femicide through programs, resource distribution, policies, or more research. This research has the opportunity to expand and develop as new data arises regarding femicide in El Salvador. Furthermore, this research and methodology can be applied globally to other regions or countries. Future research can use this analysis model to conduct a global-case study and offer more universal recommendations to combat femicide. There is still pertinent data missing that is not readily available to the general public. If expanded upon, this research requires more data accessibility and funding as I had to mostly rely on publicly reported UN reports. This is an issue that requires collaboration from many actors, both national and international. With assistance from the government and NGOs around the world, I believe this research and others like it can aid in ending the “femicide epidemic.”

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Appendix A

DANGER ASSESSMENT	
Jacquelyn C. Campbell, PhD, RN Copyright 2004 Johns Hopkins University, School of Nursing www.dangerassessment.com	
<p>Several risk factors have been associated with increased risk of homicides (murders) of women and men in violent relationships. We cannot predict what will happen in your case, but we would like you to be aware of the danger of homicide in situations of abuse and for you to see how many of the risk factors apply to your situation.</p> <p>Using the calendar, please mark the approximate dates during the past year when you were abused by your partner or ex partner. Write on that date how bad the incident was according to the following scale:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slapping, pushing; no injuries and/or lasting pain 2. Punching, kicking; bruises, cuts, and/or continuing pain 3. "Beating up"; severe contusions, burns, broken bones, miscarriage 4. Threat to use weapon; head injury, internal injury, permanent injury, miscarriage 5. Use of weapon; wounds from weapon <p>(If any of the descriptions for the higher number apply, use the higher number.)</p>	
<p>Mark Yes or No for each of the following. ("He" refers to your husband, partner, ex-husband, ex-partner, or whoever is currently physically hurting you.)</p>	
Yes	No
	1. Has the physical violence increased in severity or frequency over the past year?
	2. Does he own a gun?
	3. Have you left him after living together during the past year?
	3a. (If have <i>never</i> lived with him, check here ___)
	4. Is he unemployed?
	5. Has he ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a lethal weapon?
	5a. (If yes, was the weapon a gun? ___)
	6. Does he threaten to kill you?
	7. Has he avoided being arrested for domestic violence?
	8. Do you have a child that is not his?
	9. Has he ever forced you to have sex when you did not wish to do so?
	10. Does he ever try to choke you?
	11. Does he use illegal drugs? By drugs, I mean "uppers" or amphetamines, "meth", speed, angel dust, cocaine, "crack", street drugs or mixtures.
	12. Is he an alcoholic or problem drinker?
	13. Does he control most or all of your daily activities? (For instance: does he tell you who you can be friends with, when you can see your family, how much money you can use, or when you can take the car?)
	(If he tries, but you do not let him, check here: ___)
	14. Is he violently and constantly jealous of you?
	(For instance, does he say "If I can't have you, no one can.")
	15. Have you ever been beaten by him while you were pregnant?
	(If you have never been pregnant by him, check here: ___)
	16. Has he ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
	17. Does he threaten to harm your children?
	18. Do you believe he is capable of killing you?
	19. Does he follow or spy on you, leave threatening notes or messages on answering machine, destroy your property, or call you when you don't want him to?
	20. Have you ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
Total "Yes" Answers	
<p>Thank you. Please talk to your nurse, advocate or counselor about what the Danger Assessment means in terms of your situation.</p>	