

Impact of the Public Policy on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women in Manabí Province, Ecuador

Impacto de la política pública para la prevención y erradicación de la violencia contra mujeres, provincia de Manabí-Ecuador

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Abstract

The present study analyzes the impact of the Public Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in the province of Manabí, Ecuador. It is based on its implementation from the perspective of citizens, the regulatory framework, and government actions. Using a mixed methodology, the study included surveys of women in the province, interviews with government officials, and a documentary analysis of current regulations. The results reflect a decline in the incidence of gender-based violence, with 80% of respondents stating that they had not experienced aggression since the policy was implemented. In addition, 90% indicated that they were aware of the available support services, which demonstrates that information about these resources has been effectively disseminated. However, challenges remain, such as insufficient coverage in rural areas and the need to strengthen inter-institutional coordination. The documentary analysis confirmed that the public policy has a solid regulatory framework aligned with international treaties and national legislation. However, its implementation still faces obstacles related to the availability of resources and the monitoring of the actions taken. It is concluded that public policy has generated significant progress in raising awareness and preventing gender-based violence in Manabí. However, it is essential to ensure sustainable funding, improve service coverage in rural communities, and strengthen gender-sensitive educational programs to consolidate an effective response and guarantee women's right to a life free from violence.

Key words: Gender-based violence; Public policy; Prevention; Women's rights.

Resumen

El presente estudio analiza el impacto de la Política Pública para la Prevención y Erradicación de la Violencia contra las Mujeres en la provincia de Manabí, se basa en su implementación desde la percepción ciudadana, el marco normativo y las acciones gubernamentales. A través de una metodología mixta, se aplicaron encuestas a mujeres de la provincia, entrevistas a funcionarios y un análisis documental de la normativa vigente. Los resultados reflejan una disminución en la incidencia de violencia de género, con un 80% de las encuestadas afirmando no haber experimentado agresiones desde la implementación de la política. Además, un 90% indicó conocer los servicios de apoyo disponibles, lo que evidencia una adecuada difusión de los recursos de atención. Sin embargo, persisten desafíos como la insuficiente cobertura en zonas rurales y la necesidad de fortalecer la articulación interinstitucional. El análisis documental confirmó que la política pública cuenta con un marco normativo sólido, alineado con tratados internacionales y legislación nacional. No obstante, su ejecución aún enfrenta obstáculos relacionados con la disponibilidad de recursos y el seguimiento de las acciones implementadas. Se concluye que la política pública ha generado avances significativos en la sensibilización y prevención de la violencia de género en Manabí. Sin embargo, es fundamental garantizar un financiamiento sostenible, mejorar la cobertura de servicios en comunidades rurales y fortalecer los programas educativos con enfoque de género para consolidar una respuesta efectiva y garantizar el derecho de las mujeres a una vida libre de violencia.

Palabras clave: Violencia de género; política pública; prevención; derechos de las mujeres.

INTRODUCTION

The indicators of violence against women have become a global issue that negatively impacts societies, regardless of age, educational level, race, or economic status. It is an extreme manifestation of gender inequality and a flagrant violation of fundamental human rights (Aceves de la Rosa, 2021; Gil Ruiz, 2022). Therefore, it is imperative to promote a change in the attitudes and values deeply rooted in our nations. In this regard, the implementation and prioritization of public policies are essential to raise awareness, provide early warning, and eliminate this type of violence through a broad and collaborative effort involving both the responsible authorities and society as a whole. (Lídice, 2021).

In Ecuador (Manabí Province), this issue remains a pressing concern; despite efforts and progress in legislation and public policies aimed at combating gender-based violence, significant challenges persist that require a thorough assessment and an effective response. In addition, Moreira Pinargote *et al.* (2022), in their study, note that in the aforementioned province, 6,654 cases were recognized by the State Attorney General's Office in Manabí, while police authorities reported only 5,189 cases, reflecting the severity of the problem.

As can be inferred, Manabí faces a complex reality regarding gender-based violence. Year after year, there has been an increase in gender-based violence in its various forms, ranging from domestic violence to sexual exploitation and harassment in public spaces. These figures not only pose a challenge to the safety and well-being of women but also raise urgent questions about the effectiveness of public policies that are vital to address this situation.

Gender-based violence is not just a women's issue; it is also a social problem in which cultural norms and traditional values play a role (Semahegn *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, this type of violence has a profound impact on women's physical and mental health (Sánchez *et al.*, 2020), on their ability to access educational and economic opportunities, and on social cohesion in general (Ramírez Velásquez *et al.*, 2020). Addressing this issue is essential to promote gender equity and ensure a safe and equitable environment for all people. According to Sánchez *et al.* (2020), "The scientific community must conduct original

studies to generate evidence on the dynamics of violence at this stage and design strategies to prevent and address violence against women" (p.185).

In response to this, Ecuador has established a series of legal and regulatory frameworks to combat this problem (Ramírez Velásquez *et al.*, 2020). For example, the 2008 Constitution and the Comprehensive Organic Law to Prevent and Eradicate Gender Violence against Women (2018) establish a solid legal framework for the protection of women's rights, as well as for preventing all types of violence against them, including gender-based violence. However, the effective implementation of these policies is a challenge in itself (National Assembly of Ecuador, 2018).

This research aimed to analyze the impact of the Public Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in the province of Manabí. To achieve this, two specific objectives were established: (1) to analyze women's perceptions and experiences regarding gender-based violence in Manabí following the implementation of the Public Policy; (2) to evaluate the implementation of the Public Policy, identifying allocated resources, actions taken, and results achieved.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach. It also had both descriptive and analytical components. The descriptive component was used to evaluate the implementation of public policy, while the analytical component was used to analyze women's perceptions and experiences. According to Hurtado (2000), analytical research focuses on the analysis and interrelationships established among the less obvious aspects of the phenomenon under study.

Likewise, this study employs a non-experimental, field-based, cross-sectional design, as it required collecting data directly from the province of Manabí, no variables were manipulated, and the phenomenon is described solely through observation. Field research is defined as: "the systematic analysis of real-world problems, with the aim of describing, interpreting, and understanding their nature and constituent factors..." (Universi-

dad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador [UPEL], 2016, p. 18). In this same vein, Contreras (2013) points out that: "...it allows for the real participation of the researcher or researchers, from the very place where the events, the problem, the phenomenology under consideration occur. Similarly, Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza Torres (2018) define non-experimental research as involving the observation of phenomena as they occur in their natural environment without intentionally manipulating the independent variables.

The techniques and instruments for collecting information facilitated the answer to the research questions and were designed based on the scientific problem and objectives defined for the research; these refer to specific procedures or methods for obtaining data or information, and thus serve as a complement to the scientific method, which has general applicability (Arias, 2012, p. 67).

With regard to the literature review, the Public Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in Manabí was examined in order to assess its implementation. This included allocated budgets, activity reports, and results. In addition, a semi-structured interview was designed and administered to the head of the Technical Unit for the Prevention and Eradication of Gender-Based Violence Against Women, Human Mobility, and Mental Health—Manabí Prefecture. This interview included questions about allocated resources, actions taken, and results achieved. Additionally, surveys were administered to 200 women residing in the province of Manabí to explore their perceptions and experiences regarding gender-based violence following the implementation of the public policy. Participants were selected using non-probability convenience sampling. The inclusion criteria established that participants were women over 18 years of age, residing in the province of Manabí, Ecuador, at the time of the study, and that they gave their informed consent to participate voluntarily, with a guarantee of confidentiality and the exclusively academic use of the information collected.

Three experts were selected to review and evaluate the questionnaire and interview guide to ensure that the questions were relevant and appropriate. The Expert Validation Form (Adventist University of Chile, 2017) was used. Once the instruments were validated, they were administered to a population consisting of 200

women who had been victims of violence in the province of Manabí, Ecuador. The sample was determined using non-probabilistic convenience sampling and theoretical saturation, including women of different ages, educational levels, and geographic locations within the province, provided they voluntarily expressed their willingness to participate in the study.

Analysis and interpretation of information

The quantitative data collected through surveys were analyzed using statistical tools, such as descriptive and inferential analysis, to evaluate the implementation of the public policy. The qualitative data obtained from interviews and the literature review were analyzed using content analysis to identify patterns, themes, and trends. The results were interpreted collectively, which allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the public policy under study.

RESULTS

Results obtained from administering the questionnaire on the impact of the Public Policy on gender-based violence to women in Manabí.

Table 1. Responses provided by women in the section: "Perceptions and Experiences of Gender-Based Violence"

Question	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
Have you experienced any form of gender-based violence since the Public Policy was implemented?	40	20	160	80
Are you aware of the support services available to victims of gender-based violence in your community?	180	90	20	10

Have you sought support or assistance from any organization or government agency due to situations of gender-based violence?	140	70	60	30
Have you noticed any change in people's attitudes toward gender-based violence in your community since the Public Policy was implemented?	160	80	40	20
Have you participated in empowerment or gender-based violence prevention programs?	152	76	48	24

Table 1 shows that the public policy has had a positive impact in the province of Manabí. Only 20% of the women surveyed reported having experienced gender-based violence since the policy was implemented, while 80% indicated they had not. This result suggests that the measures implemented have succeeded in reducing the incidence of gender-based violence. Furthermore, 90% of the women surveyed are aware of the available support services, indicating adequate dissemination and accessibility of these resources. Seventy percent have sought support from organizations or government agencies, indicating greater trust in the institutions responsible for addressing cases of gender-based violence. Additionally, 80% of those surveyed have noticed positive changes in the community's attitude toward gender-based violence, demonstrating an impact on public awareness and social condemnation of such behavior. 76% have participated in empowerment or prevention programs, demonstrating an active commitment to eradicating this problem.

Table 2.

Responses provided by women in the section: "Awareness and Attitudes"

Question	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
Do you think there has been an increase in public awareness of gender-based violence since the Public Policy was implemented?	176	88	24	12
Have you participated in education or awareness-raising programs on gender-based violence since the Public Policy was implemented?	168	84	32	16

The results in Table 2 reveal a high level of awareness within the community. 88% of women believe there has been an increase in public awareness of gender-based violence since the implementation of the public policy, indicating that awareness campaigns have been effective. Furthermore, 84% of respondents have participated in education or awareness programs on gender-based violence, reinforcing the idea that the community is willing to get involved in eradicating this problem. This data reflects a significant cultural shift that can contribute to the sustainability of progress in the fight against gender-based violence.

Table 3.

Responses provided by women in the section: "Knowledge about Public Policy"

Question	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
Are you familiar with the Public Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in Manabí?	188	94	12	6

What is your opinion on the effectiveness of the Public Policy in preventing and addressing gender-based violence in our province?	160	80	40	20
What aspects of the Public Policy do you think could be improved to make it more effective in preventing and eradicating gender-based violence?	140	70	60	30

Table 2 shows that 94% of respondents are aware of the Public Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in Manabí, indicating a successful outreach strategy. This high level of awareness is essential for the population to access the services and benefits offered by the policy. In addition, 80% of respondents have a favorable opinion of the policy's effectiveness, indicating that most perceive the implemented actions as having had a positive impact on preventing and addressing gender-based violence. However, 20% believe the policy has not been fully effective, suggesting there is still room for improvement. Regarding opportunities for improvement, 70% of respondents identified aspects that could be optimized to make the public policy more effective.

On the other hand, the Public Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in Manabí has brought about significant changes in the community. There is a positive trend toward a reduction in gender-based violence, greater access to information and support resources, and increased public awareness of this issue. Furthermore, high levels of participation in prevention and awareness-raising programs demonstrate that the community is committed to eliminating this scourge. It is also vital to note that widespread knowledge of the public policy and confidence in its effectiveness reinforce the idea that these measures have been well received and valued by the public. Although the results are encouraging, challenges remain. 20% of respondents believe that the policy is not yet fully effective, and 30% identify areas for improvement. This highlights the need to continue strengthening these initiatives, continuously assess their impact, and make adjustments to

optimize their reach and effectiveness. It is worth noting that the public policy has had a positive impact, but it is essential to continue working on its consolidation and improvement to ensure the effective prevention and eradication of violence against women in Manabí.

Results of the literature review on the Public Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in Manabí

Table 4.

Legal framework on which the Public Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in Manabí is based

Legal framework	Principles
Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador	It guarantees women's right to a life free from violence and requires the State to take the necessary measures to eradicate it.
Integral Organic Law to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women (National Assembly of Ecuador, 2018)	It establishes mechanisms for prevention, response, and punishment, with inter-institutional coordination to ensure compliance.
International Conventions	Ecuador has ratified treaties such as the Belém do Pará Convention and CEDAW, committing itself to adopting effective policies against gender-based violence.
Ordinance for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women in Manabí	Local regulatory instrument that governs and guides actions in the province to ensure equality, inclusion, and the right to a life free from violence.

The Public Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in Manabí is grounded in a robust legal framework that aligns with international human rights instruments and Ecuadorian law. This regulatory framework has made it possible to develop a public policy with

a gender perspective, grounded in human rights and based on the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and compensation for victims (Table 4).

Activities and plans of action

The Public Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in Manabí establishes four strategic areas of intervention:

- A culture of peace and freedom from violence: Awareness and education campaigns have been implemented to change sexist sociocultural patterns.
- Rights protection networks: Inter-institutional coordination has been strengthened to provide comprehensive care for victims.

- Comprehensive development and women’s empowerment: Training and entrepreneurship programs have been developed for women in vulnerable situations.

- Building institutional capacity with a gender perspective: Efforts have been made to incorporate a gender perspective into provincial development policies.

It is worth noting the implementation of training sessions and awareness-raising workshops in rural and urban communities. Efforts have also been made to establish shelters for victims of violence. Table 5, taken from the Voluntary Local Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals issued by the Prefecture of Manabí, confirms the findings discussed above (Almeida *et al.*, 2023).

Table 5.
Gender Equality: Situation of Indicators in Manabí (2023)

Indicator	Compliance 2022	Result 2023	Scheduled 2023	Compliance 2023
Percentage of women served who seek assistance and support because they are victims of gender-based violence.	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of women trained in prevention and the promotion of productive initiatives and entrepreneurship among victims of gender-based violence.	4519	4519	800	100%
Women who have benefited from entrepreneurship and training programs	565	565	500	100%

As shown in Table 5, the implementation of SDG 5—Gender Equality—has had a transformative impact by promoting the equal participation of women and girls in all areas, thereby contributing to the reduction of poverty, inequality, and gender-based violence. Within this framework, the Manabí Prefecture promoted initiatives such as the “Training School for Community Health Promoters,” aimed at empowering women who are victims of violence through training in

community health, thereby strengthening their resilience and quality of life. In the same way, through the project developed in partnership with the Santa Marta Foundation, community support networks were strengthened, and training in various trades was offered to women at risk, promoting their economic autonomy, self-esteem, and the restoration of their rights in 14 rural communities across the province.

Allocated budget and execution

An analysis of the official document from the Provincial Government of Manabí shows that between 2019 and 2023, \$286,550 was allocated to the project for raising awareness and preventing domestic violence. For 2024, the total budget amounted to \$472,246. This funding, through the Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention Project targeting priority groups (POA code: 2023.5.3.J90.4.03.004), enabled the implementation of prevention, assistance, and victim protection programs, although the detailed breakdown of the budget is not specified. It is important to assess whether these resources have been sufficient to meet the actual demand for services.

Results of the interview with the person in charge of the Technical Unit for the Prevention and Eradication of Gender-Based Violence Against Women, Human Mobility, and Mental Health – Manabí Prefecture

This section provides a detailed analysis of the implementation and impact of the public policy, based on the interview with the official mentioned above. The interview allowed for an exploration of the budget, actions taken and their follow-up, impacts, challenges, and prospects. It began by asking the interviewee about her role and responsibilities in the implementation of the Public Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in Manabí.

The role of the person in charge of the Technical Unit for the Prevention and Eradication of Gender-Based Violence against Women in the Manabí Prefecture is to coordinate and implement strategies that contribute to reducing gender-based violence. Responsibilities include planning and executing prevention programs, providing support to victims, raising community awareness, and strengthening institutions to ensure an effective response to the issue. The role also focuses on coordinating efforts with other government entities, civil society organizations, and international agencies to improve mechanisms for addressing and eradicating violence against women in the province.

Upon requesting information regarding the allocated budget and available resources for this policy in the province, it was found that from 2019 to 2023, a budget of approximately \$286,550 has been allocated for the development of awareness and prevention projects targeting

domestic violence, aimed at priority groups. For 2024, the allocated budget saw a significant increase compared to previous years. These funds have made it possible to finance awareness campaigns, training for public officials, support for shelters for victims, and the strengthening of protection mechanisms. However, we still face budgetary constraints that prevent full coverage in all rural areas of the province.

Among the most significant measures implemented as part of this public policy, community awareness and education campaigns stand out. These campaigns have been directed at citizens to promote a culture of respect and the prevention of gender-based violence, with a focus on dismantling sexist stereotypes and fostering egalitarian relationships. Questions were also raised regarding training and capacity-building for officials and protection agents. In this regard, it is acknowledged that efforts have been made in collaboration with the National Police, the Prosecutor's Office, Human Rights Protection Boards, and other entities to improve the response capacity in cases of gender-based violence.

The establishment of protection and support networks for victims was another topic addressed; in this regard, it was noted that services such as shelters and free psychological and legal assistance for victims of violence have been strengthened. Fourteen initial care centers for victims of violence have been established in nine cantons, in partnership with the Santa Martha Women's Association. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on economic empowerment programs, as partnerships with public and private institutions have driven initiatives that promote the economic well-being of women experiencing gender-based violence.

Activities are monitored through various mechanisms, such as impact and coverage indicators, which measure aspects such as the number of people trained, the reach of awareness campaigns, and the number of women served in shelters. Periodic management reports are also prepared, and quarterly reports are issued detailing the status of program and project implementation, which are reviewed by the Provincial Government and other control entities.

Another key area is inter-institutional coordination, for which regular meetings are held with key institutions to assess progress toward objectives and adjust strategies as needed.

Surveys and perception studies are recognized as effective tools and have focused on assessing the impact of public policy, revealing increased awareness of gender-based violence and greater trust in reporting mechanisms.

Upon examining the positive impacts more closely, it is evident that the implementation of the policy in the province has led to an increase in awareness and understanding of gender-based violence; the public is now better informed about the different forms of violence and women’s rights. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of reports filed and in access to justice. There has been an increase in the number of women seeking help from government agencies, indicating greater trust in protection systems. The reduction in violence is also evident; thanks to educational campaigns, there has been a shift in social attitudes toward gender-based violence. Furthermore, women are becoming more empowered through initiatives promoting economic independence, which have enabled more women in vulnerable situations to break free from cycles of violence and build a safer future.

Table 6.
Main challenges

Challenges	Manifestation
Limited budgets	Although there has been an increase in resource allocation, it remains insufficient to meet the demand for specialized services throughout the province
Insufficient coverage in rural areas	In remote communities, women have less access to protection services and psychological care
Persistent sexist cultural patterns	Despite progress in raising awareness, some communities continue to view gender-based violence as a private matter

Lack of inter-institutional coordination	While there are joint efforts among various organizations, coordination still needs to be improved to ensure a more effective response
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According to Table 6, to address the challenges outlined above, various strategies have been implemented, such as securing additional funding, which involves seeking partnerships with international organizations and NGOs to supplement the budget allocated to public policy. Another important element is training and institutional strengthening; officials and civil servants continue to receive training to improve services for victims. It is worth highlighting the use of technology to expand coverage and community-based work with local leaders. Under the first strategy, hotlines and digital platforms have been implemented to facilitate access to information and counseling; under the second, support networks have been established in rural communities to facilitate the detection and prevention of cases of violence. The interviewee’s perspective on public awareness and attitudes toward gender-based violence in Manabí is that progress has been made in raising public awareness, but there is still a long way to go. The public is better informed and increasingly rejects gender-based violence; however, cultural barriers persist that hinder the complete eradication of the problem. It is essential to continue working on education and awareness-raising to definitively transform the structures that perpetuate gender inequality.

DISCUSSION

This study has made it possible to assess the impact of the Public Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in the province of Manabí, examining its implementation from three perspectives: public perception, the regulatory framework, and government actions. By triangulating the results obtained through surveys, document analysis, and an interview with a key official, significant progress was identified, as well as persistent challenges in the implementation of this public policy.

First, there is a positive trend in the public's perception of the impact of public policy. This finding is consistent with that of Mancedo (2022), who notes that the level of knowledge and perception regarding public policies is high, while their effectiveness in preventing gender-based violence is at an intermediate level.

Eighty percent of the women surveyed stated that they had not experienced gender-based violence since the policy's implementation, suggesting a reduction in the incidence of such cases. In addition, 90% of the women surveyed indicated that they were aware of the available support services, reflecting adequate dissemination of these resources and greater access to protection mechanisms. Despite these advances, 20% of respondents believe the policy is not yet fully effective, while 30% identify areas requiring improvement. This disparity between positive perceptions and areas for improvement highlights the need to continue strengthening inter-institutional coordination and service coverage, especially in rural areas.

The literature review shows that public policy in Manabí has a solid regulatory and strategic foundation. It is aligned with international instruments such as the Belém do Pará Convention and CEDAW, as well as with the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (2008) and the Integral Organic Law to Prevent and Eradicate Violence Against Women. Likewise, the Provincial Ordinance for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women in Manabí establishes specific guidelines for its implementation at the local level (National Assembly of Ecuador, 2018). Among the main areas of action identified in official documents are: the promotion of a culture of peace, the strengthening of protection networks, the economic empowerment of women, and the institutionalization of a gender perspective in public administration. These factors have been key to the consolidation of prevention programs and strategies, although challenges remain regarding financial sustainability and the implementation of more efficient monitoring mechanisms. In this regard, Kaplún Asensio (2022) emphasizes the importance of aligning public policy and its obligations with international instruments.

From the perspective of government administration, the interview with the person in charge of the Technical Unit for the Prevention and Eradication of Gender-Based Violence in the

Manabí Prefecture provides a detailed overview of the implementation of public policy and its operational challenges. The increase in the budget allocation was highlighted, reflecting a greater institutional commitment, although the interviewee noted that it is still insufficient to ensure full coverage in all localities of the province. Efforts to carry out awareness campaigns, inter-institutional training, the strengthening of shelters, and economic empowerment programs were highlighted as part of the government's response to gender-based violence. This scourge affects all of Latin America, according to Calsin et al. (2022): "This factor has been caused by the way governments design, formulate, implement, and evaluate their policies regarding the care, prevention, punishment, and compensation for cases of violence against women..." (p. 165).

It should be noted that the implementation of these public policies has not been without obstacles. One of the main challenges identified was the deep-rooted nature of sexist cultural patterns, which continue to fuel gender-based violence in certain segments of the population. Despite progress in raising awareness—as evidenced by the survey, in which 88% of women indicated that there has been an increase in public awareness of gender-based violence—deep-rooted discriminatory sociocultural norms continue to pose a barrier to the complete eradication of this problem. Additionally, limited coverage in rural areas is a critical issue, as women living in these areas face multiple challenges that hinder their access to care and protection services.

From an institutional perspective, cross-sectoral coordination is another challenge. The interview highlighted that, although there are coordinated efforts among the Prefecture, the National Police, the Ministry of Health, the Attorney General's Office, and other institutions, the response is not yet consistent across all regions. The lack of an efficient monitoring and evaluation system makes it difficult to measure the actual impact of the actions implemented, which prevents the identification of opportunities for improvement in real time. In this regard, Erazo-Patiño et al. (2024) note that they were also able to observe how the effectiveness of territorial policies is limited by the lack of inter-institutional consensus.

In terms of opportunities for improvement, the official interviewed emphasized the need to ensure sustainable funding for public policy, as

well as to strengthen gender-sensitive education strategies in schools to eradicate violence from an early age. She also suggested developing strategic partnerships with international organizations to optimize the use of resources and expand the reach of prevention programs.

The findings suggest that the Public Policy for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in Manabí has had positive impacts, as evidenced by increased social awareness, improved access to protection services, and a reduction in the normalization of gender-based violence. However, challenges remain in terms of funding, rural coverage, inter-institutional coordination, and changing cultural patterns. For public policy to reach its full potential, it will be essential to continue monitoring and evaluating it, strengthen strategic partnerships, and ensure the sustainability of the programs implemented. Only through comprehensive, multisectoral, and sustained action will it be possible to eradicate gender-based violence in the province of Manabí and guarantee women's right to a life free from violence.

Contribution to knowledge

This study provides empirical evidence at the regional level regarding the effectiveness of gender-sensitive public policy, using a mixed-methods design that integrates public perception, policy analysis, and institutional management evaluation. It contributes to the field by proposing an evaluation framework that can be replicated in Latin American contexts and by identifying structural gaps that guide the optimization, sustainability, and strengthening of strategies for the prevention and eradication of gender-based violence.

Recommendations

Key recommendations for improving the effectiveness of this policy in the future include: ensuring sustainable and adequate funding to strengthen prevention and victim support programs; expanding service coverage in rural areas through mobile care and legal counseling centers; and incorporating gender-sensitive education in schools to prevent violence from an early age. It is also suggested that inter-institutional coordination be strengthened to improve collaboration among different stakeholders, and that continuous monitoring and evaluation be implemented to measure the actual impact of the actions taken and make strategic adjustments.

Limitations

The non-probabilistic, convenience sample may limit the full generalization of the results; however, it provided access to relevant and pertinent information about the provincial context. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the study offers a snapshot of the period under analysis, although it does not allow for the assessment of longitudinal effects. Finally, the lack of disaggregated budget data limited a more in-depth examination of financial efficiency, which opens up opportunities for future complementary research.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings show significant progress in reducing gender-based violence, improving access to support services, and raising public awareness about this issue. Survey results reflect a decrease in the incidence of gender-based violence since the implementation of the public policy, suggesting greater effectiveness in prevention and response strategies. The widespread dissemination of support services has helped ensure that a high percentage of women are aware of their rights and the legal protection strategies in force in the province. However, cases persist that require more effective and timely responses.

From a regulatory perspective, it was found that the public policy has a solid legal foundation, aligned with international standards and national legislation. This regulatory framework has made it possible to develop strategies based on fostering a culture of peace, as well as strengthening safety nets and empowering women. However, the policy's effectiveness still faces challenges in terms of resource allocation and coverage in rural areas, where gaps in access to services remain evident. An analysis of the implementation of public policy in the municipality highlighted the need for and importance of community awareness and education campaigns as key tools in eradicating cultural patterns that still perpetuate gender-based violence. Despite progress in raising public awareness, structural barriers were identified that hinder the complete eradication of this problem, especially in contexts where deeply entrenched patriarchal ideologies still persist.

Inter-institutional coordination was identified as an area for improvement, since, although there are coordinated efforts among the various government entities, the implementation of actions is not uniform across the entire territory. The lack of an efficient monitoring and evaluation system makes it impossible to accurately measure how the strategies and decision-making implemented by the municipality impact women's happiness.

Finally, public policy has had a positive impact in the province of Manabí, but it is essential to continue monitoring and strengthening it. It is recommended to ensure sustainable budget allocation, expand service coverage in rural areas, improve inter-institutional coordination, and strengthen gender-sensitive educational programs. Only through a comprehensive and sustained intervention over time will it be possible to consolidate an effective response that guarantees the right of all women to enjoy a life free from violence and in complete freedom.

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence tools were used only as technical support for checking the manuscript's grammar, spelling, and academic style, as well as for translating the title, abstract, and keywords.

Authors' contribution:

Jeniffer Adriana Burgos Barreiro: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Research, Methodology, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.

Andrea Sofía Mendoza Zambrano: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Research, Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.

Statement of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with the publication of the present manuscript.

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