

VIOLENCE AGAINST RURAL WOMEN IN RIO GRANDE DO SUL, BRAZIL: CHALLENGES FOR PUBLIC POLICIES

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Abstract

A woman in Brazil suffers violence every 24 seconds, but there are women more vulnerable to violence such as rural women. 55.2% rural women revealed that they had experienced some type of domestic violence and almost 50% of them reported a lack of services for women who have been abused (Bagatini et. al., 2013 p.27). This qualitative research focuses on violence against rural women in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil and the challenges for public policies to guarantee their rights. The main objectives are: to identify the types of violence suffered by rural women; to describe their help seeking process, and to analyse if the safety network for women are able to meet their demands. The data was collected through interviews with representatives of women's rural movemen, coordinators of women's policies and rural women, and submitted to content analysis. The results demonstrate the invisibility of violence against women in rural areas, the lack of recognition of women's work; the lack of transportation to access the network of services when available. Furthermore, there is a need of actions to challenge the patriarchal culture as well as public policies directed to the promotion of women's autonomy. We conclude that rural women are more vulnerable to violence due to the lack of information about their rights and the economic dependency of their partners, as well as the more traditional gender roles. Some government initiatives is taking place such as the mobile units that will provide legal, social and psychological services to rural women.

Keywords: Violence against women; rural women; public policies.

Introduction

Violence against women is a universal phenomenon that crosses boundaries of race / ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion and countries. However, there are some groups that are more vulnerable than others and rural women have less access to public protection policies . The results of the 2010 Census indicate that 759 365 women lived in rural areas of Rio Grande do Sul, south of Brazil, accounting for 47.6 % of the rural population and 13.8 % of women compared to urban areas. According to National Survey by Household Sample Survey, conducted in 2009 by Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), about 7500 of these women aged 10 or older were victims of physical aggression. Survey conducted by the Confederation of Rural Workers (CONTAG) in 2008, revealed that rural women suffer domestic violence routinely. Education and engagement in social movements were not considered a protective factor. One factor evidenced by a study of CONTAG is that financial independence of women seems to be a relevant variable in the context of violence. Of those rural women interviewed , 81.5 % did not depend on her husband to survive , while