How does intersectionality of ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status impact the experience and vulnerability of Indigenous women to femicide and violence in Mexico?

Sakura Radscheit

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Abstract

Gender based violence (GBV) and femicide is common in Mexican society especially affecting the most marginalised such as Indigenous women. This qualitative research will explore the intersecting forms of gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status that make Indigenous women so very vulnerable. By reviewing previous studies and conducting semi structured interviews with Mexican NGOs that work with Indigenous communities as well as Indigenous women themselves, this study highlights that historical colonial legacies continue to discriminate Indigenous women in a systematic way preventing them to enjoy and practise their human rights. Indigenous women are more vulnerable to violence in their homes due to the community's strong traditional customs such as machismo attitudes, patriarchal gender norms and lack of autonomy. The study sheds light on the ways that Indigenous women deal with multiple forms of oppression that are connected to their identities. Using an intersectional approach is crucial to break down the system that allows for GBV against the communities. Future research should expand the scope of intersectional analysis to encompass facets that go beyond gender, ethnicity and class.

Acknowledgment

I am extremely grateful to Dr. Meghan Muldoon, my supervisor at the University of Groningen, for her consistent support and guidance during my research. Her valuable feedback and motivation have been essential in enabling me to pursue my research with enthusiasm and commitment. Furthermore I would like to express appreciation to the individuals who have participated in my research. As Indigenous women and representatives Their insights as representatives of NGOs that work closely with Indigenous communities, their insights related to femicide and GBV were tremendously valuable. Their perspectives provided me a deeper understanding of the complex issues strengthening my research that go well beyond academic literature statistics.

Introduction

Violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive human rights abuses in the world. In numbers, approximately 737 million worldwide, which is roughly almost one in three, have experienced sexual violence in their lives. Especially in Mexico, this form of abuse has put the country in national and worldwide news due to an overall rise in the number of femicides and in the levels of gender-based violence (GBV) against women. Statistics report that in the country, approximately ten women are murdered every day (Al Jazeera, 2024). According to the data from the National Public Security System's Executive Secretariat, 3754 women and girls were intentionally killed in the year 2022 because of their gender. Shockingly, only 947 of these cases were investigated as femicides, which are defined as the intentional killing of a woman due to her gender (Kloppe-Santamaría & Zulver, 2023). However, a problem in the current research on violence against women in Mexico is that it tends to essentialise the category "Female" because it does not differentiate among those that might face additional vulnerabilities such as age and race/ethnicity. 21.5 % of people in Mexico identify as Indigenous based on customs, culture and common history and 6.5% of people speak one of the 68 Indigenous languages that are currently spoken there. Primarily residing in rural areas, the Indigenous people face poverty, prejudice and disparities in access to healthcare, education and other social services. Compared to Indigenous men, Indigenous women have even greater societal disadvantages. When compared to non-Indigenous women, they are also more likely to encounter GBV during childhood and adolescence, including partner violence and some forms of sexual abuse (Frías, 2021).

Unfortunately, there is little reporting of any form of violence against Indigenous women, and those subjects who commit the crimes do not get penalised for doing so. Despite the higher risks of violence that Indigenous women and girls face, they confront major obstacles in

obtaining justice (UN, 2022). Language barriers, racism, prejudice, fear of stigmatisation, and the potential for retaliation are some of these impediments. This suggests that patriarchal institutions, racial and ethnic prejudice, and socioeconomic position are all connected to complex and intersectional types of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls (UN, 2022).

Research question, aim and objective

The main objective of this analysis is to explore the heightened vulnerability of Indigenous women in Mexico to GBV and femicide. In doing so, I will take into account the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. The ultimate goal is to advocate for specialised interventions and policies that address the specific needs of Indigenous women. To accomplish this, I created a research question:

"How does the intersectionality of ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status affect the susceptibility and experiences of Indigenous women to femicide and violence in Mexico?"

The research question will be addressed in two steps. To begin, I will do a full literature research to obtain a deep understanding of the topic area. Second, I will examine Indigenous women's experiences by conducting interviews with NGOs and Indigenous women in Mexico. Finally, I will utilise the information gathered to conduct a discussion and analysis. I will provide a detailed explanation of the methodology later in the research.

Some of my limitations include the fact that my study only focuses on three components of intersectionality and cannot be generalised to every Indigenous group in Mexico. Similar to my methodology, I will elaborate on this and on future research later on.

Disclaimer

The term "Indigenous" is capitalised throughout this work to consciously acknowledge and validate the historical background and cultural significance of Indigenous peoples. With a capitalised form of "Indigenous," this paper seeks to recognise the many identities, customs, and difficulties that Indigenous people face worldwide. It is a deliberate decision that shows a commitment to recognising their underlying sovereignty, determination, and contributions to society. This judgement highlights the importance of linguistic sensitivity and cultural inclusivity in academic discourse, which is consistent with current scholarly norms and ethical considerations.

Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is the study of "overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination" (Miller & Bassett, 2020). According to the theory, there are numerous and frequently simultaneous interactions between different biological, social, and cultural categories, including gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, age, nationality, and other particular axes of identification. The theory also aims to investigate these interactions.

According to Pierucci (1999) there are three historical phases in the process of intersectionality which are described in the following (Pierucci, 1990):

1. Feminism, up to the 1980s, focused on the realities of white, middle-class Western women and presented the "female experience" as a universal experience, principally defined as the male experience. Racial and ethnic distinctions were overlooked at this time since it was thought that white women would be the movement's primary focus.

2. In 1989 American civil rights activist Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the concept of *intersectionality* in her article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics", marking the start of the second phase. This concept makes it possible to see intricate linkages that go beyond categories of discrimination. It had shifted from being

about gender. Rather, the emphasis in feminism was on the intersectional oppressions Black women confront and racial inequality (Samie, 2023).

3. In the third phase of intersectionality, a wider range of identities and experiences were included, going beyond gender and race. It highlights the connections between many social categories and acknowledges the variety among disadvantaged populations (Olivares Ferreto et al., 2017).

Today, it covers a broad range of social categories, including age, sexual orientation, economic standing, physical or intellectual disability, and other aspects of personal identity. The concept of intersectionality highlights the fact that various aspects of identity are not mutually exclusive but rather deeply interrelated and overlapping, producing distinct advantages and disadvantages (Samie, 2023).

GBV against Indigenous women

Despite its magnitude, the issue of GBV against Indigenous women has not been given enough attention. With its increasing awareness, a comprehensive and sufficient documentation is still lacking. This is brought about by a set of variables that include racism and bias against Indigenous women within and outside of their communities and poverty. This marginalisation is deepened by the lack of effective processes in Indigenous systems of government for the investigation, prosecution and resolution of cases of violence against women (ONU Mujeres, 2023)

Violence against women occurs between different groups, as well as within Indigenous women. This is because they are more vulnerable to human rights violations, specifically GBV, due to their little access to traditional legal systems and depending heavily on conventional normative systems, according to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The UN cites the complex interaction of historical injustices that include colonialism, militarism, racism, social exclusion, and poverty in its insistence on an Indigenous framing of GBV. It shows that a human rights analysis requires a detailed analysis that accounts for the multifaceted ways that gender, ethnicity and rurality intersect in Indigenous communities. The report enumerates acts of violence against Indigenous women as those that occur in the name of custom, state-sanctioned violence, militarism, neoliberal measures and armed conflict. An ethnic, multicultural rights-based approach that recognizes the diversity and inequality among Indigenous peoples is required to confront these issues. Cultural and traditional practices are often cited as excuses for the maltreatment of Indigenous women. This silences the victims within their families and communities, leaving them unable to lodge a complaint. Economic considerations, lack of access to legal information, as well as cultural and linguistic differences may be hindrances to the pursuit of justice (UNIFEM, 2009).

Moreover, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples says in Art. 34 that "Indigenous peoples have the right to promote, develop and maintain their institutional structures and their own customs, spirituality, traditions, procedures, practices and, where applicable, customs and practices\" in addressing these issues. This proves how the international community recognizes the value that Indigenous knowledge systems have and the importance of diversity in culture in the world today. Respecting and preserving Indigenous

cultures and knowledge systems is seen to be very important in dealing with the issue of femicide and violence against Indigenous women in Mexico. International recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples underlines the importance and provides solid ground for the development of culturally sensitive interventions and policies. This, in turn, may lead to reducing violence against Indigenous women.
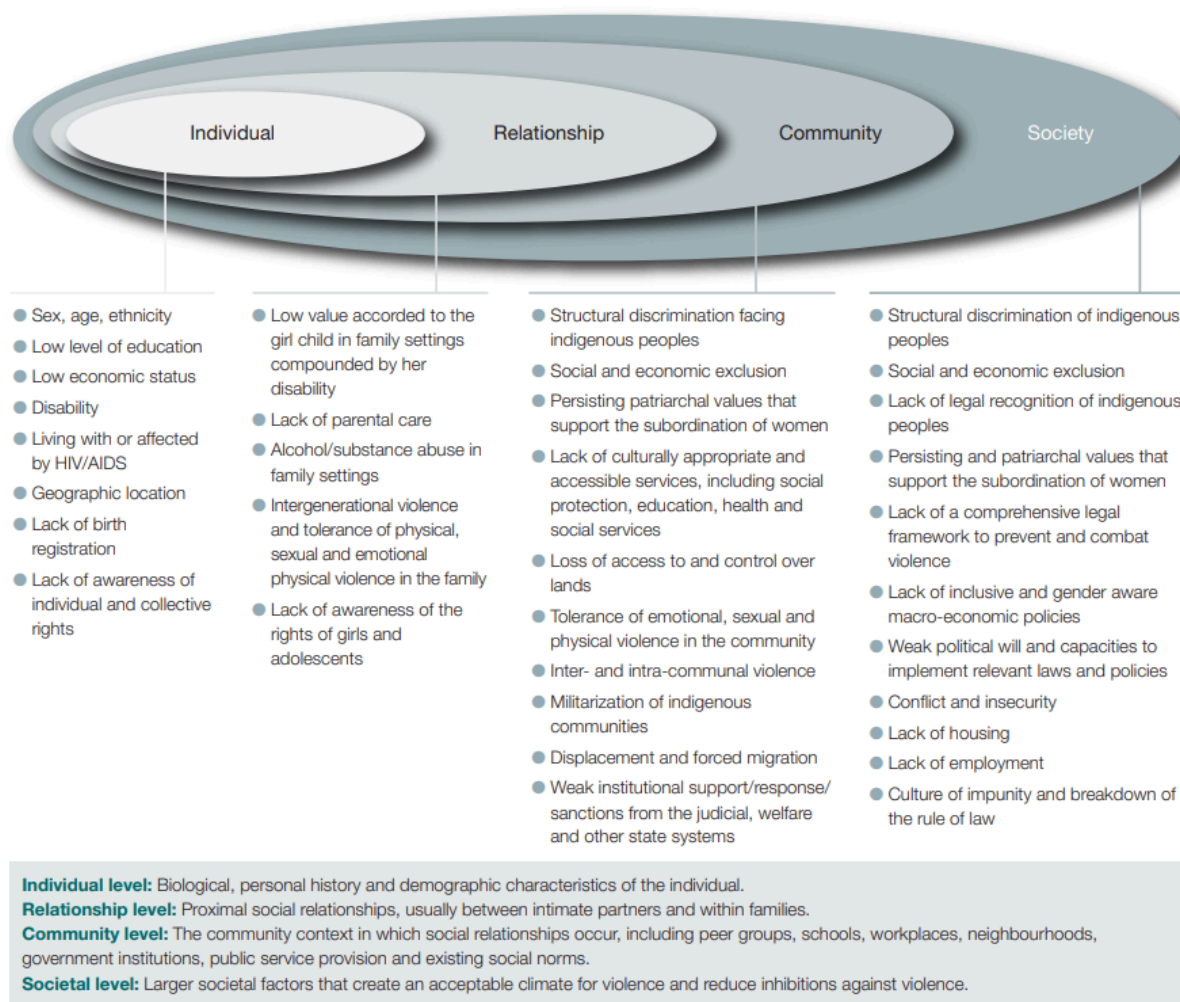
Ecological Model

It is the conclusion of the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on violence against women, its causes and consequences, that the phenomenon of violence may be conceived as "multiple concentric circles, each intersecting with the other". These circles include individual, interpersonal, structural, and underlying variables that have the potential to incite violence.

This research best fits with the ecological model—the most adopted conceptual framework applied by various institutions to improve the understanding of the multifaceted nature of violence and the complex and intersectional interaction of risk variables that increase the likelihood of violence occurring (Sterling, 2018). According to the model, the risk of violence is attributed to various factors: (1) biological, economic, social, and demographic traits, such as one's ability to respond to violence; (2) relationships, including those with friends and family; (3) community contexts, including those within which social networks and relationships are located; and (4) broader societal factors, particularly those that are widespread at the level of national decision-making processes, such as macroeconomic planning, laws, and policies.

Figure 1 below, based on a four-cluster ecological model, attempts to provide a comprehensive perspective on the structural, underlying causes and risk factors of violence against Indigenous girls and women. It illustrates the way in which multiple determinants interconnect across, between, and within different determinants to create layered levels of disadvantage for Indigenous women and girls. These layers of disadvantage may possibly diminish protective factors that either prevent or reduce the risk of violence occurring, in addition to contributing to the underlying causes of violence. If Indigenous women and girls are to be free from all types of violence and discrimination, then the complex intersectionality and accumulation of risk factors at all levels must be addressed.

The ecological model of explanation allows one to take into account the complex interaction of many factors that contribute to violence against Indigenous women and thus provides an explanation for intersectionality. It acknowledges that larger social, community, and interpersonal issues impact violence and that it is not simply the product of individual actions. It highlights that violence is an experience that is brought about due to the interplay of intersectional determinants like gender, ethnicity, socio-economic class, and cultural norms. It, therefore means that the ecological model can help one trace the deeper cause of violence and, therefore, be able to come up with holistic intervention that looks at it in its interlocking layeredness when addressing the unique predicament of Indigenous women.

Figure 1: Risk factors for violence against Indigenous women and girls

Individual	Relationship	Community	Society
● Sex, age, ethnicity ● Low level of education ● Low economic status ● Disability ● Living with or affected by HIV/AIDS ● Geographic location ● Lack of birth registration ● Lack of awareness of individual and collective rights	● Low value accorded to the girl child in family settings compounded by her disability ● Lack of parental care ● Alcohol/substance abuse in family settings ● Intergenerational violence and tolerance of physical, sexual and emotional physical violence in the family ● Lack of awareness of the rights of girls and adolescents	● Structural discrimination facing indigenous peoples ● Social and economic exclusion ● Persisting patriarchal values that support the subordination of women ● Lack of culturally appropriate and accessible services, including social protection, education, health and social services ● Loss of access to and control over lands ● Tolerance of emotional, sexual and physical violence in the community ● Inter- and intra-communal violence ● Militarization of indigenous communities ● Displacement and forced migration ● Weak institutional support/response/ sanctions from the judicial, welfare and other state systems	● Structural discrimination of indigenous peoples ● Social and economic exclusion ● Lack of legal recognition of indigenous peoples ● Persisting and patriarchal values that support the subordination of women ● Lack of a comprehensive legal framework to prevent and combat violence ● Lack of inclusive and gender aware macro-economic policies ● Weak political will and capacities to implement relevant laws and policies ● Conflict and insecurity ● Lack of housing ● Lack of employment ● Culture of impunity and breakdown of the rule of law

Individual level: Biological, personal history and demographic characteristics of the individual.
Relationship level: Proximal social relationships, usually between intimate partners and within families.
Community level: The community context in which social relationships occur, including peer groups, schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods, government institutions, public service provision and existing social norms.
Societal level: Larger societal factors that create an acceptable climate for violence and reduce inhibitions against violence.

Sources: UNICEF.   (2013a, May).   Breaking   the   silence   on   violence   against   Indigenous   Girls, ...
https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/VAIWG_FINAL.pdf

Preventative tactics designed based on community awareness campaigns, universal human rights policies, and cultural recognition need to be considered from an interculturality and intersectionality perspective for effective combating against GBV on Indigenous women. Legal

structures and actions will also fill some gaps on addressing issues of justice against Indigenous women by taking these strategies into account (Olivares Ferreto et al., 2017). In this way, by implementing these strategies, interethnic relations can be promoted to achieve understanding and collaboration and construct a better social fabric in which discrimination and abuse of Indigenous women are eradicated (Salgado Álvarez, 2017).

Literature review

In this section, a general overview of the topic of gender based violence and femicide will be provided. First I will discuss the prevalence of the topic as a global issue. I will also provide insights into the situation of gender based violence and femicide in Mexico and especially in the Indigenous communities´ context.

Gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide as a global issue

According to the UN, GBV is considered "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (Thongking, 2024). This is considered a violation of human rights and a "global problem of epidemic proportions" (Word Vision, 2022). Over 736 million women worldwide, one in every three, have experienced intimate relationship violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at some point in their lives, accounting for 30% of women aged 15 and up; the figures do not include sexual harassment (UN, 2023). Based on UN Women, GBV is based on traditional concepts which make women a subservient sex to men and is often the root of violent customs such as forced marriages, dowry deaths, female genital mutilation, and harmful gender stereotyping (World Vision, 2022).

The most brutal and extreme form of violence against women and girls is femicide or the "intentional murder of women because they are women " (WHO, 2012). Approximately 480,000 women and girls were murdered in 2022 by intimate partners or other family members, which

translates to more than 133 women and girls being murdered by members of their own family on a daily average. Though startlingly high, the statistics just represent the very beginning. Due to regional differences in criminal justice recording and investigative procedures, such as those in Mexico, too many victims of femicide remain uncounted (UN, 2023).

GBV and femicide in Mexico

Violence against women and public safety are among Mexico's most pressing problems. According to data, over two-thirds (66.1%) of girls and women aged 15 and over had experienced GBV at least once in their lifetimes, and over half (43.5%) had experienced violence from their relationships (Gordon, 2018). The government has exposed the shocking reality that about 10 women and girls have been killed by family members or intimate partners every day (UN, 2023). This alarming scenario has spurred a lot of demonstrations and put gender violence to the centre of Mexican politics. Furthermore, femicide has skyrocketed by 137% from 2015(Ordóñez, 2020). In Mexico alone, when the isolation was implemented because of the pandemic, a survey shows that 6% were subjected to GBV. And had been "victims of some kind of violence before the pandemic."Between 2020 to 2021, and when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, 43% of these incidents happened and 11% of women reported abuse in their home (Rivera et al., 2023).

GBV and femicide are deeply rooted in the Mexican tradition and way of life, including the machismo attitude, which embodies more traditional masculine gender roles, so it will not diminish over time. Since Mexican men view violence as a form of authority, they may exert physical power over others and feel a strong need to provide for and protect their families, many

using physical force to control others; thus, most Mexican men use it as a form of expression to assert control over others. The probability of physical assault against a woman is higher because of a machismo culture against women. The risk of femicide as a result of the abuse increases as the situation escalates (Eagan, 2020).

Femicide and GBV against Indigenous women globally

Indigenous girls and women are victims of violence, and this issue is inextricably linked to the larger settings of exclusion and discrimination that they face in social, political, economic, and cultural lives (UNICEF, 2013). A number of obstacles, including the loss of their land, violence, insecurity, displacement, low birth registration rates, restricted access to sexual and reproductive health services and culturally appropriate education, and difficulty accessing the justice system and other basic services like social services, affect their ability to develop, feel safe, and exercise their human rights. Indigenous women and girls face additional risks of violence in communities where there have been intra- and inter-communal conflicts as well as in communities that uphold deeply ingrained patriarchal systems and practices that marginalise women and girls to subservient roles in society (UNICEF, 2013).

Indigenous people in the US are twice as likely as people of other races to be victims of sexual assault. The incidence of killings and sexual assaults against Native American women on reservations and in neighbouring communities are higher than those for other American women (RAINN, 2023). In addition, 5,712 American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls were reported missing, sometimes never to be found, in 2016; this group is known as missing and murdered Indigenous women (RAINN, 2023). Similarly, in Canada, 54% of the reported family

violent cases involved severe forms of family violence, such as beating, choking, gun, knife, or sexual assault, against them compared to 37% in non-Indigenous women (NWAC, 2022).

The cycle of poverty disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable women and young people, including single mothers, child brides, widows, orphans, LGBTQ+ women, and women with disabilities. This cycle tends to be passed down from generation to generation (IWGIA, 2024). This puts them at the bottom of society, where violence against women and children is even more common. When exercising their rights to economic, social, and cultural advancement, Indigenous women encounter violence and discrimination. While many Indigenous communities are isolated and need extensive travel times to get to school or employment, Indigenous girls are more likely to experience sexual abuse when they are travelling to and from school or when they travel away from their villages to study or work (IWGIA, 2024).

Indigenous communities, and Indigenous women in particular, sometimes find themselves "caught in the crossfire of conflict situations and subjected to militarised violence" because their territories are frequently wanted by varied parties for the natural riches they contain or for their development potential (Portela, 2022). Gang-rape, sexual enslavement, and murder of Indigenous women and girls have occurred as a result of the militarisation of Indigenous lands in a number of countries, including Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Kenya, the Philippines, Thailand, and Timor-Leste. Their lands have been militarised, leaving them very vulnerable to forced labour and human trafficking. Indigenous women and girls are particularly vulnerable to human trafficking, which includes severe economic and sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, when they flee from their family and communities in response to poor socioeconomic

circumstances or violent conflicts (Portela, 2022). In Nepal, for example, despite the official proportion of Indigenous Peoples in Nepal being only 37%, Indigenous women and girls make up about 80% of all trafficking victims (Portela, 2022).

Indigenous communities in Mexico

Throughout Latin America, Mexico is home to one of the biggest and most varied Indigenous communities. 7.36 million people, or 6.1% of the population over three, were counted as speaking an Indigenous language in the 2020 Census (IWGIA, 2024). In Mexico, the south and south-central regions are home to the majority of the Indigenous people. Oaxaca, Yucatán, and Chiapas are three of the thirty-one states in Mexico where more than two fifths (42.6%) of people who speak an Indigenous language reside (Minority Rights Group, 2024). Náhuatl is the most widely spoken language among Indigenous people (22.5% of Indigenous language speakers (IWGIA, 2024), followed by Otomí, Maya, Tzeltal, Mixteco, Tzotzil, and Zapoteco (Minority Rights Group, 2024).

Challenges

Lack of acknowledgement is one of the biggest issues that Indigenous Peoples in Mexico confront. Following a mobilisation of Indigenous Peoples in 2001, who demanded legislation based on the "Acuerdos de San Andrés," which was the outcome of negotiations between the Government and the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in 1996, Articles 1, 2, 4, 18, and 115 of the Mexican Constitution were amended (IWGIA, NA). Especially Article 2, which is shortly summarised in the following, is dedicated to the Indigenous communities in Mexico:

Based on the upholding of its Indigenous peoples' social, economic, cultural, and political systems, the Mexican country is distinct and indivisible. The right of Indigenous peoples to self-determination and autonomy is acknowledged and safeguarded by the Constitution. This includes the ability to choose their own internal coexistence strategies, implement their own legal frameworks to resolve disputes within their communities, choose their own leaders, conserve and enhance their languages, customs, environments, and territories, and enjoy complete access to state jurisdiction. It is their right to get assistance from translators and lawyers who are conversant in their native tongue. To provide equal rights for Indigenous peoples in every State, the constitutions and legislation of the States and Federal District must have provisions for self-determination and autonomy that most accurately reflect their circumstances and objectives (Constitute , 2015). Despite being included in the constitution, Indigenous legal systems are still not entirely accepted (IWGIA, 2024) .

The health of Mexico's Indigenous people presents another difficulty. With higher rates of acute and chronic malnutrition than the national average, lower life expectancy, severe access restrictions to health care, and the highest rates of maternal and infantile mortality, Indigenous Peoples are thought to be the most vulnerable segment of the population in this regard (IWGIA, NA).

Femicide and GBV against Indigenous women in Mexico

Historical context and current challenges

Violence against native American women in Latin America dates back to the continent's invasion and colonisation (15-16th century) (Britannica, 2021). This past has permanently

affected the life of indigenous peoples, particularly women. The original peoples' lands were taken, their populations were massively and methodically wiped out, their cultures were destroyed, and their lands were appropriated as a result of the violence and cruelty with which Western dominance was imposed on their territories. Specifically, sexual violence against Indigenous women has resulted in the invasion of their bodies. This is a historical practice that has been carried out by a number of actors, including the state, but it continues to be routinely overlooked and goes unpunished. States have not made any notable efforts to address these past events that defined the formation of societies across time. Instead, Indigenous peoples have experienced marginalisation, invisibility, and disrespect of their cultures. Over time, the existence of racism and various types of discrimination has been integrated (CHIRAPAQ, 2013).

Notably, religion, particularly the Catholic Church, was important in shaping gender roles during colonial Spain. The ideal of *marianismo*, implying the traditional role of women in the Latin community, was an idea that was heavily influenced by the teachings of the Church (Sotelo, 2023). Women were supposed to imitate Mary, who was portrayed as the ultimate role model, to substantiate their subordination to men. The Church's teachings enforced in females that they should accept their subordinate status. By making Mary a divinity, religion facilitated the conversion of the Indigenous people and played a role in the establishment of female submission and purity while erasing former ideologies. Religion further strengthened the notion of male ascendancy and continued further a social order that was patriarchal in nature and deeply affected contemporary societies that were based on Catholic traditions (Buchanan, 2016).

Indigenous peoples are currently confronted with armed conflict, displacement, and migration once more, and ideas like progress and development are challenging traditional worldviews. In the limited remaining lands, they are now safeguarding not just the natural world but also their way of life. Women are leading the charge in this war for respect for their culture, rights, and resistance to marginalisation (CHIRAPAQ, 2013). In the midst of internal violent conflicts, Indigenous women—particularly those who reside in rural areas characterised by injustice, isolation, and extreme poverty—are responsible for providing for their family. Similar to the experiences of their ancestors, they have frequently lost not only their belongings but also their partners, children, and even themselves to acts of sexual assault and violence. In these wars, women and girls are treated as "botines de guerra" (spoils of war) (CHIRAPAQ, 2013). For many Indigenous women on the continent, this is an agonising reality because it is frequently ignored and the offenders seldom face penalties (CHIRAPAQ, 2013).

GBV and its impact

GBV is a type of social connection that impedes women's rights simply because they are women. As such, it stands in the way of women's complete exercise of their rights and the holistic development of individuals and society. GBV cannot be separated from the social contexts in which it takes place because it is a form of interaction, and in the case of the Indigenous female population, the community sphere is the arena in which the phenomenon's specific expressions are exhibited. GBV is a serious issue for both Indigenous peoples and the general public. It is made worse by a lack of institutional coverage and attention, the normalisation of violent relationships, and a lack of systems in place within Indigenous authority and government structures to address the issue. Indigenous women experience multiple forms of

oppression, particularly related to their gender and financial status, which increases their vulnerability to violent crimes like femicide. Roughly eighty percent of Indigenous Mexicans live in extreme need (Eagan, 2020). Particularly affected by this poverty are Oaxaca, Chiapas, and Guerrero, the three states with the lowest levels of socioeconomic development (Eagan, 2020). These states are all found in southern Mexico, home to a significant Indigenous population. Many Indigenous women in impoverished places find themselves trapped in dangerous situations since they have less access to resources and economic possibilities than other Mexican women (Eagan, 2020). Additionally, as previously stated, racial and ethnic discrimination, social position, and patriarchal structures are all connected to the diverse and intersectional kinds of violence that Indigenous women and girls experience (UN, 2022).

Statistical Insights

According to the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, "Indigenous women are subject to GBV, both in collective and interpersonal spaces and given their limited access to state jurisdiction and the mediation of their own normative systems, they are in a situation of particular vulnerability with regard to their human rights in general, and to GBV in particular" (UN, 2022). Currently available data indicates that Indigenous women are often victims of GBV, and even more so of sexual violence, within their families and communities. The 2006 National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relationships (ENDIREH) reported that 70.1% of Indigenous women aged 15 years and over declare that they have experienced some type of violence throughout their lives. Nevertheless, this must be an underestimation,

because the conduction of surveys among Indigenous populations is rather complicated, and because the cultural definition of GBV is another cross-cultural phenomenon. Additionally, the issue of violence against Mexican Indigenous women in the rural area has been less investigated by researchers and policymakers compared to issues related to the urban area. However, albeit important advances, there still remains a lack of statistical data that places the problems of Indigenous women in context. This implies that their problems are not seen, since institutional interventions and public policies are not sensitive to diversity and cultural differences (Sanchez et al., 2017).

Vulnerability

As a result of the long-standing patriarchal gender hierarchies in Indigenous communities, prejudice against them, and ethnic stereotypes (Ertürk, 2006), studies have revealed that authorities within these communities tend to normalise domestic abuse by leveraging customs and social norms. This, in turn, further marginalised Indigenous women in Mexico, as highlighted by the research done by Gordon in 2018. Similarly, there is a strong element of machismo culture due to the low level of education and traditional roles (Salgado Álvarez, 2017). Reports also suggest that the issue of GBV in the Indigenous population remains primarily contained within the public and private sphere in the communities; that is, in this area near and accessible to the Indigenous female population, conflicts and agreements resulting from violent acts against them are settled and resolved, or not. Family members, strangers, public/private officials, armed services and illegal criminal organisations are among those who commit it. Among other places, the workplace, media, social situations and places of education all accept this violence. In the end, no social environment or society is free from

violence against women in any of its manifestations, including symbolic, psychological, physical and obstetric abuse (CHIRAPAQ, 2013). There has not been any institutional coverage or protection for Indigenous women's right to live without violence in this community (Sanchez et al., 2017). Violence against Indigenous women includes various types of "mistreatment, exclusion, discrimination and aggression recognised in human and collective rights frameworks and is expressed in a multidimensional and simultaneous manner, violating the rights, security, dignity and heritage of Indigenous women, under situations that can only be reversed with the full exercise of the rights of the peoples to which they belong (Sanchez et al., 2017). These gender disparities in social positions subsequently carry over into sexual roles, where disparities are immediately interpreted adversely against women. This includes widespread but frequently concealed and suppressed behaviours found in most Indigenous groups in Mexico, such as rape, incest, and the sexual abuse of teenage girls by family members and neighbours (CHIRAPAQ, 2013). Not to mention, Indigenous women have also been harmed by cartels. After the trafficking of drugs and weapons, human trafficking is the third-largest criminal enterprise in Mexico, with numerous gangs participating. Indigenous women make about 70% of victims of human trafficking, a number that will rise as cartels find greater profit in the sector (Eagan, 2020).

Femicide

Femicide is often a result when socio-political tensions and systemic gender inequality collide in Indigenous communities of Mexico. Femicide frequently takes place in relation to the protection of common property, conflicts between communities, and mass executions connected to the militarization of rural areas and the existence of paramilitary organisations. Even though it

is apparent that women are the target of these crimes, they are not typically classified as femicide because of other reasons that do not properly fit the legal standards. The gravity of the problem is highlighted by statistics showing a higher rate of femicide in Indigenous communities than in non-Indigenous areas (2001-2017:1.45 vs 1.26 per 100.000 females) These higher rates are also caused by a number of structural and sociopolitical causes, including as "poverty, marginalisation, insecurity, progressive disintegration of the peasant economy, militarization of Indigenous regions, forced displacement, resistance to land dispossession, historical racism and the war against drugs" (De Marinis, 2016). These intricate circumstances have made women's bodies into "territories to be invaded, mutilated and discarded"(Frías, 2021).

Indigenous women are more vulnerable to violence because of all of these circumstances.

Methodology

Ethical consideration

I was fully aware that it is important to take into account and do everything within my power to minimise or eliminate any potential harms, revictimization, traumatization, etc. that may result from participation in this study.

These harms could potentially result from asking participants sensitive questions in a manner that violates their right to privacy from relating confidential information that participants would have preferred to keep personal and from failing to uphold certain cultural values and traditions

that the participants value. Additionally, I wish to acknowledge that I come from a society in which many of the issues mentioned below are barely or not at all present. I am aware that I come from a privileged background in which I have been given the opportunity to do this research regarding those who have not had these opportunities. During this process, I am keeping in mind how easy it may be to forget that some things that seem self-evident to me, like seeking help when I experience sexual violence, may not be the case for others.

Therefore, in order to avoid the harm that could result from this process, I asked all participants to sign a form of consent for them, which will also remind them of their right to subtract their statement at any given moment and I ensured anonymity and confidentiality of all information that was received. I also kept my own biases and positionality in mind to ensure that the effects of them will be minimal. During the interviews, I was attentive to any signs of discomfort or anxiety from the participants, and if I had perceived any distress, I would have offered to postpone or cancel the interview.

This research has been approved by the ethical board of Campus Fryslan, Faculty of the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.

Research

Using the qualitative research approach, this study examines disparities in femicide and violence against Indigenous women in Mexico based on socioeconomic status, gender, and ethnicity. Qualitative research, by allowing for fuller and more contextualised accounts of people's

experiences and opinions, proves useful in capturing the complexities and nuances of violence and vulnerability.

Research design: This study examines the experience of Indigenous women in femicide and violence in Mexico according to socioeconomic position, gender, and ethnicity using the method of qualitative research. Qualitative research which enables a better knowledge of people's lived experiences and views is especially valuable in capturing the nuanced dynamics of violence and vulnerability.

Recruitmentment: Initially, I would contact Mexican NGOs that work closely with Indigenous peoples because, through them, I did not yet have a direct way of contacting Indigenous women. I searched online through Google for related organisations, both local and international. I used both email and WhatsApp to contact the organisations, trying to build some networks for interviews. For interviews, I used the snowball sampling technique, where referrals are obtained from one respondent to another. Snowball sampling is "a non-probability sampling method that is commonly used in social science research to identify and recruit hard-to-reach populations" (InnovateMR, 2023). This method was particularly helpful in my research as it would have been rather challenging to gain access to Indigenous women. This allowed me to connect with Indigenous women either directly involved in these NGOs or closely affiliated with them. This approach created a way for the access to the people of the First Nation themselves and provided firsthand experiences and insights that could be gathered from inside the First Nation. I have interviewed six persons in all, five women and one man, through the semi-structured approach, where there is a balance between prepared questions and free-flowing

conversation. Semi-structured interviews are particularly useful since they allow for flexibility (Tegan, 2023). Though I prepared an interview guide (see appendix), I was able to delve deeper into issues that arose during the conversations that were not originally planned in my guide but were nonetheless very fascinating for my research. The bulk of sessions were conducted individually and lasted about 45 minutes. However, one interview was conducted with two people in a group setting. All interviews were conducted in Spanish and facilitated using the Google Meet platform. During one interview session, an NGO translator was present to assist the Indigenous participant, who chose to answer questions in her native language.

Data collection: A literature review of prior studies, a semi structured individual interview, and interpretation was used. A literature review was undertaken to obtain specific theories and information about current situations and practises before constructing the interview guide. In order to find relevant information, Google Scholar and SmartCat were utilised. It was apparent that a significant proportion of the literature was derived from Spanish sources, which is indicative of the greater importance of Mexican and Spanish-speaking researchers in this field relative to their English-speaking colleagues. For my analysis of the interviews, I listened to the recordings and carefully studied them by categorising the information. Categorising in qualitative research is an important step because it ensures that the information is reliable and accurate (Medelyan, 2024). I grouped similar information together and identified the most common themes. These themes were then emphasised in the results section. In the discussion section, I was able to clarify these results by comparing the existing literature with my interview findings, finding similarities and differences in both. This method allowed me to critically understand the topic of the research and confirm the main points.

Results

The next section will feature the highlights from my semi-structured interviews. Many themes arose, nevertheless the five prevalent codes: Traditions/ Gender Role; Machismo; Gender Violence, Resource & Money and Community best capture the complex dynamics found in Indigenous communities. The explanation of these codes will follow.

Tradition/ Gender Role

The interviews revealed the narrow adherence to stereotypical gendered roles that followed the line of expectation in some communities. Women are expected to perform roles that focus on getting married, giving birth and being subservient to men. The respondents mentioned that girls are socialised with the knowledge that they will marry and give birth. So, from a young age, they learn domestic roles. As one participant put it, "Una esposa también es madre, y aprenden a trabajar en la casa con sus responsabilidades" (A wife is also a mother, and then they learn how to work in the house with their responsibilities). Another woman mentioned that she dedicates herself totally to her house and her family where she works more than 15 hours per day (me dedico totalmente a mi casa y a mi familia). Further, participants expressed how women are discouraged from pursuing education or employment outside the home, as highlighted by the statement, " la mujer Indígena no puede estudiar, por lo que no tiene mucha información, no puede trabajar" (The Indigenous woman cannot study, so she doesn't have much information, she cannot work). This lack of education and economic independence makes women vulnerable to men, who have power over them, as they are conditioned at birth to believe that their value only comes from meeting 'standards'. Land and property inheritance also favours men within the

communities that were studied, thereby further entrenching the gender inequalities and cementing an overall status quo that enables male dominance. As one participant mused, "El machista no la dejará trabajar, así que te están educando para casarte, para obedecer", (The macho man will not let her work, so you are being educated to marry, to obey) and this being just one example of how traditional standards operate in society to limit the autonomy and the agency of women within their homes. The participants further mentioned stigmatising men who do not conform to traditional gender roles. A participant elaborated further, "porque si un hombre quizás está dispuesto a ayudar a su mujer con las tareas domésticas, está mal visto tanto por las mujeres como por los hombres y será objeto de burlas y críticas, porque su papel no es ser el hombre de la casa y no ayudar" (because if a man is perhaps willing to help his wife with the housework, he is frowned upon by both women and men and will be mocked and criticised, because his role is not to be the man of the house and not to help). What this participant is saying is that men are criticised and made fun of when they do things like housework because these activities do not benefit their status as men.

Machismo

Finally, following tradition and gender theme code, I have placed machismo in its own theme since it is so thoroughly embedded with the intention of maintaining unequal power dynamics between the genders. While machismo has historic roots in Indigenous cultures and is deeply embedded in the tradition, drawing it out allows for a much clearer view of how it works to perpetuate gendered power.

Participants explained that men are viewed as the authoritative figure in the household, similar to a second father. Women should always let the men take charge in daily interactions

within the house. One participant described this as follows: "Es tu segundo papá, por así decirlo. Cuando llega a casa, necesita comer enseguida y si metes la pata, te grita o te pega, es normal". This is a woman's attitude towards men, whereby they have the mandate to take charge even in the simplest daily activities. Another mentioned the expectation for women to ask for permission for everything: "A mujer tiene que pedir permiso para todo". This is a quote that reflects the male power of machismo, by which women are expected to follow the gender expectations that are laid down for them. Amidst these challenges, some women expressed a desire to fight back against machismo and bring equality to their households. One of the participants shared with me from when she began her fight against machismo and for the promotion of equality: "Pero cuando nació mi hija, mi primera hija, decidí y dije no, no puedo seguir siendo una mujer machista". This is a conscious decision to break away from patriarchal norms that have been perpetuated and which need changing for the betterment of humanity in the next generations.

Gender violence

The interviews highlighted the shocking prevalence of gender violence within their communities. One woman cited suggested that between "El 60-70% de las mujeres sufren malos tratos a manos de sus cónyuges" (60-70% of women experience abuse at the hands of their spouses). This violence takes various forms. Including domestic violence, sexual abuse within families, and other forms that are normalized within their cultural contexts. The participants of the study have emphasised the normalised character of violence in intimate relationships – the abusive behaviour many times is considered normal for such relationships due to the deep-rooted social norms. Another woman spoke of the violence cycle: " La violencia engendra violencia. Si

hay reconciliación, la mujer suele ser maltratada aún más que antes, hasta el punto de ser incluso asesinada" (Violence begets violence. If there is reconciliation, the woman is often mistreated even more than before, to the point of even being killed). The interviews have also pointed at the high prevalence of intrafamilial violence – many cases of abuse are found within the same family. One of the participants commented: "Se ha observado que la mayoría de los abusos se producen dentro de la misma familia" (It has been observed that the majority of abuses occur within the same family). It points to the complex dynamics of violence that gets perpetuated within structures of the family. The most common thing is that due to a lack of resources or viable alternatives, women find themselves staying in such abusive situations. One of the participants said: "Prefiere quedarse porque no tiene recursos ni un lugar adonde ir" (She prefers to stay because she doesn't have a resource or a place to go). This only underpins the systemic obstacles and lack of choices in front of the victims of gender violence within Indigenous communities.

Resource and Money

The interviewees showed complex household financial dynamics that strongly influence their ability to get out of the violence situation and seek economic freedom. A majority of the interviewees reported a common practice whereby husbands gave money to their wives to cater to the family expenses, but were keeping some for themselves to spend on alcohol. One participant reflected, "Mi marido me da 500 pesos a la semana para alimentar a los niños, eso no es nada. El resto de su dinero lo utiliza para él, para el alcohol. El dinero que me da es nuestro (de la familia) y el suyo es para divertirse". (My husband gives me 500 pesos per week to feed the children, that's nothing. He uses the rest of the money for himself for alcohol. The money

that he gives me is ours—the family's—and his is for fun). This explains much about the financial strain on women as they are put in a situation whereby they look for means to manage family expenses on the little income provided. Further, women who are not independent financially would go through significant barriers to leaving abusive situations. One participant stated, "Es más difícil para una mujer sin recursos salir de ese entorno de violencia que si una mujer tiene algunos recursos". (It's more difficult for a woman without resources to leave that environment of violence than if a woman has some resources"). The result of this lack of economic independence is that women are left vulnerable and dependent on their abusive partners, a situation that makes it almost impossible for them to break free from the cycle of violence.

Community

Interviews under the theme of "Community" revealed a number of aspects of the complexity of dynamics within Indigenous communities. One major theme that seemed to be consistent with the interviews was the importance of having a good reputation and obeying gender roles. For instance, one of the informants stated, "Una mujer siempre debe gozar de buena reputación en su comunidad; de lo contrario, pueden darle la espalda" (A woman must always have a good reputation in her community; otherwise, they can turn their back towards her). Societal expectations that dictate the roles of an Indigenous woman are also portrayed. Seeking support outside the family home was perceived to be a sign of weakness, as one interviewee said: "Es anormal que una mujer indígena busque ayuda; nadie la ayudará. Se supone que debe estar en casa y cuidar de sus hijos y de su marido" (It is abnormal if an Indigenous woman seeks for help; no one will help you know. She is meant to be at home and look after her children and her

husband). Similarly, women lamented the lack of opportunity granted to them within their communities: "Los indígenas no tienen muchos derechos, así que si eres mujer, tienes aún menos" (Indigenous people do not have many rights, so if you are a woman, you have even fewer). This tight link highlights the numerous discriminations that Indigenous women face, exacerbating their vulnerability and marginalisation. This demonstrates a strongly established culture of chisme (gossip) and judgement surrounding women's decisions, such as "Si quiere trabajar, la gente, incluso otras mujeres, la mirarán y dirán que estás descuidando a tu familia, que eres una mala madre y una mala mujer". (If she wants to work, others, including other women, will look at her and say, "You are neglecting your family; you are a bad mother and woman."). Indigenous women also criticised the limited rights they had inside their communities. This societal surveillance maintains the regulation of women's conduct and enforces traditional gender norms.

In conclusion, I have noticed a multitude of factors, including gender dynamics, contribute to inequality when analysing the conducted interviews. While there are a number of themes that I have found, including resource allocation, machismo, gender violence, tradition and gender roles, and community, it is crucial to remember that these elements intersect with each other and are difficult to isolate from one another. Uneven power dynamics result from machismo reinforcing standards and norms established by gender roles and traditions. This then contributes to gender violence, which is made worse by a lack of resources and social constraints.

Discussion

This discussion will explore how ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status impact Indigenous women, as revealed by a literature review. It will also uncover new insights into the challenges these women face while emphasising how important it is to find intersectional solutions to these challenges.

Ethnicity

Firstly, from the most part of my literature research on ethnicity, there was consistent concurrence between the academic sources reviewed and the stories shared by the participants during the interviews. However, it was during this process that participants also gave additional important information that adds to the complexity of the issues.

Racism and discrimination have been deeply rooted in Mexican society for years, according to CHIRAPAQ (2013). Since colonial times, when white people invaded and conquered Mexico, they "instilled their own culture of racism" (Ortiz-Briones, 2023) against the Indigenous communities. According to recent figures from the Mexican Institute of Statistics and Geography, 24% of Indigenous people felt discriminated against, while an astounding 75.6% felt undervalued (INEGI, 2024). This sense of being discriminated against was discovered to be highly pervasive among Indigenous communities, as a few encouraged, such as a lady participant who mentioned that she was turned down in schools and that "mucha discriminación". Discriminated based on language, culture, physical appearance, and traditional attire. One

member articulated well the cases of racism by the language, the dress, the way of life, and the negligence and discrimination of Indigenous traditions: "Nos infunden mucho odio por lo que somos: por la lengua que hablamos, la forma de vestir, nuestro estilo de vida y se burlan de nuestras tradiciones" (They give us so much hatred for who we are: for our language that we speak, the way we dress, our lifestyle and mock our traditions). Significantly, the skin colour was pinpointed as a significant indicator during the interviews, not sufficiently mentioned in the literature. Indigenous with a darker shade of the skin are usually seen to be treated worse than the fairer. This problem can be seen to be part of the larger context of exclusion and discrimination that characterises the social, political, economic, and cultural life of Indigenous peoples, as already pointed above. Additional factors that place Indigenous communities at greater disadvantage are the fact that they mainly reside in rural areas and have difficulties in reaching support and information. An Indigenous woman further elaborates that they face "barreras lingüísticas, y las poblaciones urbanas suelen pasarlos por alto, lo que dificulta su integración en el sistema jurídico" (language barriers, and urban populations often overlook them, which hampers their integration into the legal system). Despite efforts, Indigenous legal systems continue to be marginalised and inadequately acknowledged, perpetuating a cycle of injustice, as cited by IWGIA (2024).

Gender

Secondly, my research discusses gender roles, behaviours, such as machismo, and submissiveness dynamics within patriarchal communities. These topics ran through the interviews I did, and the results are in my list of categories of codes. Contrasting the responses of

the participants with those in the literature review can reveal patterns of similarities and differences, hence bringing out new or previously overlooked insights.

Reports by Eagan GBV and UNICEF state that GBV and femicide are products of patriarchal systems and machismo ideology. All the interview participants agree with this statement. The literature review also points out the subservient roles of women, which all the interviewees agreed with.   Two interviewees pointed out the expectation of women to be submissive to the authority of their husbands, that the women are their "second father". This is because men feel that they have the right to control women because they are the providers. Although it has been previous findings that cartels are an injury to Indigenous women, this issue was not stated in the interviews. The findings were that violence comes from within the family, where husbands abuse wives, fathers abuse daughters, uncles abuse nieces, and brothers abuse sisters. As already pointed out earlier, sexual violence is coupled with the machismo and submissiveness behaviour. One interviewee relayed one incident where a man raped and killed his wife and children then killed himself. This is how the behaviours of men get so out of proportion and how common such behaviours are in the communities of Indigenous people. In my interviews, I came to an important understanding that I did not have when I conducted my research initially. It is more appropriate to blame the machismo concept on the systemic structures that exist rather than blaming the individual men for their behaviour. Even though it is defined by Cambridge dictionary to mean, "male behaviour that is strong and forceful, and shows very traditional ideas about how men and women should behave." (Cambridge dictionary , 2024), two women pointed out the same thing when they drew attention to the "mamá machista" behaviour, where a macho mother gives and allows more to her sons than to her daughters,

simply because of their gender. This is something that people who live in "familia machista" do without realising it. Even mothers contribute to gender inequality by sustaining machismo. This is important to realise because it shows how unconscious, ingrained behaviours can contribute to gender inequality.

Socioeconomic Status

Finally, socioeconomic status also leads to the vulnerability to femicide and GBV of Indigenous women. This topic was also prevalent in the interviews I conducted.

According to the literature review, 80% of Mexicans live in poverty, with rural residents being disproportionately affected by this economic matter. One participant said, \"se ve la pobreza\" (poverty is visible), because this situation makes women more vulnerable and fleeing violence circumstances almost impossible. All participants stated that assuming household roles increases these discrepancies. Frias' (2021) study also presents a similar discussion on the increased social disparities that women experience, more so the Indigenous woman who is economically incapacitated, has no education background and is illiterate. Oxfam statistics estimate that two-thirds of the 781 million adults worldwide who are illiterate are Indigenous women (Oxfam, 2024).

Nevertheless what is notably omitted in the scholarly arguments in the area of academic discourse is the overwhelming psychological suffering that Indigenous women have to face. Their voices are filled in the interviews with a deep sense of hopelessness and inadequacy, emotions that fade statistics. With words such as "invaluable", "insignificant" and "stupid" they try to give an account of their feelings of despair. One respondent mentioned how feeling

worthless and useless comes from not knowing what one can accomplish and how much one is worth due to lack of education. Similar to this, another respondent highlighted the fact that a lot of women feel "ignorant" about using their rights or are ignorant of them. Hence, she underlined, women might be empowered by education in human rights that show the way to improve their status and feeling of agency. Similarly, another respondent stated that women don't know what rights they have or are "ignorantes" (ignorant) to practise those. Therefore what she emphases is that if they know what human rights they have by being educated their position will be empowered. The most striking of all may have been this reflexive insight that was afforded by speaking to the women themselves: it depicted the emotional reality of their lives in all its rawness and underscored the imperative of understanding the true extent of their victimisation. Also, the interviewees reported that the inability to leave the violence is supported by factors not just related to the lack of financial resources. This presupposes dealing with social rejection and criticism. On the contrary to common belief, asking for community support often gives chisme (rumours) and criticism. Women are quickly stigmatised as "mala mujer" (bad woman) and "mala madre" (bad mother) for being able to prioritise their safety over the family. This stigma, in conjunction with linguistic barriers and social isolation, keeps women in a perpetual state of vulnerability, feeding a vicious cycle of silence and submission. This contributes to the larger issue of machismo culture because of the way such difficulties are not just a product of individual decisions but are also endemic to deeply ingrained systemic cultural standards.

Intersectionality

The ecological model illustrates how individual, interpersonal, community and societal factors interact to heighten the likelihood of violent incidents of Indigenous women. The theoretical framework of intersectionality is consistent with my research, which looks at socioeconomic status, gender, and ethnicity.

The UN has previously emphasised that the historical injustices of colonisation are the source of these interconnected forms of oppression. Indigenous communities have been marginalised as a result, and they are now marked by poverty, social exclusion, and a lack of legal recognition. These problems are not specific to Mexico; Indigenous groups around the world constantly endure prejudice and fall to the bottom of society. The lack of recognition is the main problem their ethnicity faces. Sanchez et al. have observed that although the Mexican constitution protects their rights and customs, there is a notable lack of study, assistance, and interventions. Participants have noted that living in poverty has a big impact on their day-to-day existence. As Salgado and IWGIA highlight, poverty is cyclical and is passed down through generations, aggravating low levels of education and GBV. GBV and femicide are still pervasive human rights abuses worldwide, as my research study as well as the participants demonstrated. The impact is disproportionately felt by Indigenous women, who are especially vulnerable. According to UNIFEM, in societies where machismo customs are thoroughly embedded, these behaviours frequently function as justifications for the mistreatment of women, leading to their continuing silence.

The moving statement made by a participant captures the intersectionality that Indigenous women who are vulnerable to violence and femicide face: "En primer lugar, muchas mujeres han sufrido violencia, como por ejemplo una violación, y no tienen recursos para poder ir a un lugar donde las atiendan. En segundo lugar, si eres una mujer indígena, tienes todas las de perder porque no se te trata con respeto en ningún sitio. Y siendo mujer, pues sí, donde con demasiada frecuencia tu voz es silenciada o ignorada" (Firstly, many women have faced violence such as being raped and do not have the resources to be able to go to a place where they can be attended to. Secondly, if you are an Indigenous woman, you have everything to lose because you are not treated with respect anywhere. And being a woman, well, yes, where your voice is too frequently silenced or ignored). This emphasises the interconnectedness of the oppression that Indigenous women experience and the pressing need for intersectional and comprehensive approaches to alleviate their situation.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

There are several limitations that must be taken into consideration in research on Indigenous women's experiences in Mexico using the intersectionality lens. First, the findings could not be generalised everywhere, as the differentiation of Indigenous communities in Mexico is immense. Every community has its own societal dynamics, cultural traditions, and unique languages, all of which may have substantial effects on the needs and experiences of women. This is not to mention the fact that generating an understanding of the subtleties and complexity of people's experiences in particular circumstances is the goal of qualitative research, not generalisation. Hence, more detailed research, community-specific, is required to understand well the complexities at play. Second, my lack of native fluency in Spanish might have disrupted the conversational flow and naturalness of the interview. The work of a translator between the Spanish (by me) and the Indigenous (by the participants) adds further difficulty. Third, the fact that interviews have been conducted online could create a barrier between me and participants, which could have reduced the quantity of the information shared and rapport development. The last of these aspects is that the study focused on an aspect of the intersectionality framework, and it is important to note that further research is required to have a comprehensive understanding of the ways that oppression and identity cross the lives of Indigenous women.

In the future, more community-based studies are needed to address these research shortcomings. These researches need to be as in-depth as this study is while addressing the multiple cultural contexts that Mexican Indigenous peoples occupy. To fully understand the different types of oppressions that Indigenous women face, it would also have to address other

issues in relation to intersectionality, such as age, disability, and sexual orientation. Also, of primary importance is the fact that, although education was not the focal point of this research, it kept cropping up as an issue for most of the women who were attempting to leave violence. Thus, the issue of education needs to be researched in more depth to identify some concrete solutions that can lessen the vulnerability of these women. Lastly, some of the language and relationship issues that emerged with this research could have been resolved by using researchers—preferably someone who can speak the communities' traditional languages.

Conclusion

The challenges that Indigenous women in Mexico face reveal how gender, ethnicity, and social class are fundamentally interconnected, making them more vulnerable to GBV and femicide. This research has brought to light the numerous forms of oppressions faced by Indigenous women daily, including racism, marginalisation of the culture and legal systems, and a lack of access to social services. Furthermore, strict gender roles, machismo attitudes that condone violence against women, and long-standing patriarchy contribute to deepening the gender inequalities. Poverty and lack of job opportunities further exacerbate the problems and leave these women with few choices to exit a violent relationship or seek justice. Semi-structured interviews with Indigenous women provided firsthand accounts of the normalisation of violence within their communities. When combined with the traditional norms and values of Indigenous societies, GBV becomes an inevitable reality for most Indigenous women. Because of institutional barriers and discrimination, their voices are continually silenced, their experiences often ignored, and the crimes against them never punished. It is important to acknowledge that there are limitations to this study. Due to the great diversity of Indigenous groups in Mexico, the results might not apply to every community based on their unique cultural origins. Moreover, the usage of online interviews and interpreters could have inhibited the natural flow of the conversation and the establishment of rapport. The implementation of complex intervention networks of oppressions faced by Indigenous women in Mexico needs to consider approaches that are comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and address these interlocking causes. These include requirements and circumstances of Indigenous communities in the implementation of legal reforms, community advocacy, educational initiatives, and economic empowerment programs, while respecting their traditional identity. The findings from the study do explain the need for an

analytical intersectional approach to identifying and addressing the compounding impacts of gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class in dismantling the oppressive structures that allow pervasive violence against Indigenous women in Mexico.

Appendix

Interview Guide in Spanish

Introducción

- (¿Cuál es su papel en la ONG x?)
- ¿A qué comunidad indígena apoya?
- He leído que la violencia contra las mujeres y el feminicidio es un gran tema en México? ¿Es cierto?
- ¿Cuáles son algunos de los problemas a los que se enfrentan las comunidades / mujeres indígenas hoy en día?
- He encontrado información de que faltan estadísticas sobre el feminicidio, especialmente dentro de las comunidades indígenas. ¿Es cierto? ¿Por qué?

1. **Vulnerabilidad**
   - Según su conocimiento y experiencia, ¿qué tipos de violencia de género son particularmente comunes entre las mujeres indígenas?
   - ¿Existen formas específicas de violencia de género y, en caso afirmativo, a qué cree que se debe?
   - Según su experiencia, ¿qué factores contribuyen a la vulnerabilidad de las mujeres indígenas a la violencia y el feminicidio? (¿Enfrentan dificultades específicas que son diferentes a las de otros grupos de mujeres?

2. **Etnia y violencia**
   - ¿Crees que la etnia juega un papel crucial en relación con este tema?
   - Cómo afecta el hecho de ser indígena a la forma en que las mujeres experimentan la violencia y el feminicidio? → ¿Es más probable que lo sufran que las no indígenas?

3. **Género**
   - ¿Existen roles de género en las comunidades indígenas?
   - ¿Está presente la cultura machista?
   - ¿Existen ciertos roles / responsabilidades asignados a las mujeres que las hagan más vulnerables?

4. **Factores socioeconómicos**
   - ¿Las comunidades indígenas suelen tener menos dinero? ¿Las consideraría pobres?

- ¿Cómo afecta a la seguridad y al bienestar el hecho de tener más o menos dinero/recursos?
- ¿Tienen las mujeres más o menos recursos que los hombres?

5. **Experiencias interseccionales**
   - ¿Crees que ser mujer, pertenecer a una comunidad indígena específica y la situación económica afectan a las experiencias de violencia y feminicidio?
   - ¿Influye esto también en el tipo de apoyo y recursos disponibles para ti?

6. **Apoyo**
   - ¿Qué tipo de programas de apoyo considera eficaces para hacer frente a la situación?
   - ¿Cómo apoya su ONG?
   - ¿Cree que el empoderamiento de las comunidades indígenas reducirá la violencia y el feminicidio?

7. **Retos y barreras**
   - ¿Le resulta difícil defender los derechos y la seguridad de las mujeres indígenas en México?

Final
- ¿Hay algo que le gustaría mencionar? ¿No hemos hablado aún de ello y cree que es importante?

Interview Guide (translated)

Introduction
- What is your role in the NGO x?
- What Indigenous community do you support ?
- I have read that violence against women and femicide is a big topic in Mexico ? Is it true?
- What are some issues that Indigenous communities / women face today?
- I have come across information that statistics on femicide, especially within Indigenous communities are lacking. Is it true ? Why ?

1. **Vulnerability**
   - From your knowledge and experience, what types of gender based violence are particularly common among Indigenous women
   - Are there specific forms of gender based violence and if so, why do you think that is ?
   - In your experience, what factors contribute to the vulnerability of Indigenous women to violence and femicide ? (Face specific difficulties that are different to other groups of women ?

2. **Ethnicity & Violence**
   - Do you believe ethnicity plays a crucial role in regard to this topic?
   - How does being Indigenous affect the way women experience violence and femicide ? → Is it more likely than those of non-Indigenous ?

3. **Gender**
   - Are there any gender roles in Indigenous communities ?
   - Is machismo culture present ?
   - Are there any certain roles / responsibilities assigned to women that make them more vulnerable ? → discrimination ?

4. **Socioeconomic Factors**
   - Do Indigenous communities generally have less money ? Would you consider them as poor ?
   - How does having more or less money/ resources affect the safety and wellbeing ?
   - Do women have more or less resources than men?
   - Is it easy to seek help from someone outside the community ?
   - Are there difficulties of Indigenous women if they seek help / support ?

5. **Intersectional Experiences**
    - Do you think being a woman, belonging to a specific Indigenous community and financial situation affect experiences with violence and femicide ?
    - Does this also affect the kind of support and resources available to you?

6. **Support**
    - What kinds of support programs do you think are effective in addressing the situation ?
    - How does your NGO support ?
    - Do you think empowering Indigenous communities will reduce violence and femicide ?

7. **Challenges & Barriers**
    - Do you find it challenging to advocate for the rights and safety of Indigenous women in Mexico

Final
    - Is there something you would like to mention ? We have not discussed yet what you believe is important ?

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