STATISTICAL USE OF ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS: THE SINGLE REGISTER OF CASES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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Abstract

Violence against women is, in its social dimension, a topic that demands official, reliable and timely information as an input for the design and screening of public policies destined to eradicate this problem.

This paper describes the challenges associated with the building of a Single Register of Cases of Violence against Women ("RUCVM", according to its acronym in Spanish) based upon administrative records originated within different public organizations at national, regional and local levels.

The main goal of the RUCVM is to centralize all the available information on violence against women with the purpose of designing indicators conceptually and methodologically harmonized. They will provide a socio-demographic description of the victims and the aggressors, as well as features related to the violence exerted on women.

The RUCVM adds value to the following actions:

1. Optimizing the official resources used for providing statistical data on systematic and ongoing bases, and thus, contributing to the design of indicators that can account the magnitude of the phenomenon and its variation registered over time.

2. Understanding the path undertaken by women through various agencies in search for official assistance and for justice. The Record also helps to identify weak caring points for the victims and, therefore, strengthens the struggling against their re-victimization.

3. Visualizing and denaturing the phenomenon of violence against women by transforming the initial legal complaint in data that could be useful for analyzing and allowing the State and its institutions to take actions against the problem.

The statistical use of administrative records from external sources requires a sound institutional coordination among the data suppliers, as well as a methodological procedure for the formal and conceptual harmonization and the "optimization of the methods and processes related to the administrative data".[1]

The methodology applied within the RUCVM [2] has different steps such as: the regular data transfer to an authorized server, the data validation and the harmonization of variables, the processing and the estimation of indicators and the dissemination of results.

Until now, 18 formal agreements with different official organizations have been signed. Currently more than 18,000 records have been effectively received from the suppliers in connection with the period starting from January of 2013 to December of 2014. Also, several methodological reports have been written upon receiving each database.

Keywords: : integrate data collection, administrative register, violence against women, data harmonization.

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[1] "Utilización de datos administrativos en Statistics Canada", Eric Rancourt. Exposed at the 13th Executive Committee of the ECLAC-ASC, Santiago de Chile, Chile, August 12th-14th, 2014.

[2] Actions negotiated previously the official data suppliers.

1. Introduction

The definitions of gender based on violence vary according to different theoretical approaches, thus conditioning both the scope of its understanding and the proposals for its eradication. In that sense, in the various studies on this subject, there is no consensus regarding the ways of conceptualizing the terms "violence" and "gender".

As defined by Butler (2001, p.35), "gender is not always consistently established within different historical contexts, because it intersects with race, class, ethnic, sexual and regional rules of discursively constituted identities. So it is impossible to separate the "gender" of the political and cultural intersections in which invariably it is produced and maintained".

The theoretical approach proposed by Scott (1999, p.30) in her consideration for the term gender, rescues the social aspect of sex based on differences rejecting biological determinism of gender or sexual difference. In her analysis, that incorporates relational aspects, "men and women are defined in relation to each other and none of them could be understood if studied in a separate way".

Understanding the problem of gender violence refers to taking into account the social dimension, which means, as sustained by Riquer and Castro (2012, p. 21), "that its explanation is not in the genes nor in the male psyche, but in the social mechanisms that take gender differences to support women's subordination".

In that sense, also Amir (1971, in Segato 2003, p.319) understands violence against women "not only as a result of individual motivations but variations between groups, norms, cultures and social conditions". Societies with greater presence of patriarchal structures and stereotypes of women have higher tolerance for violent practices. These cultural frameworks recreate the spaces where violence against women is possible. According to Bidaseca (2012) it is even more common if the woman is poor, peasant, indigenous, afro or transsexual.

This paper describes the start up process of the Single Register of Cases of Violence against Women (RUCVM) following the Agreement signed by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) and the National Council for Women (CNM) within the framework provided by National Law N° 26485 ("Integral Protection of Women").

The mentioned Law establishes the implementation of records on violence against women both in an inter-jurisdictional manner and in an inter-institutional one. It is important to accomplish these aims to have official statistical data; this enables the development and monitoring of public policies that will provide an appropriate response to society as a whole and especially to women who are suffering violence.

2. Institutional Strategy

During an initial stage, the topic of violence against women was studied within the academic field as well as in the international organization. The advantages and disadvantages of data sources for the production of statistical information were considered (surveys and administrative records), taking into account the characteristics of the phenomena, the recipients of information (official organizations that develop public policies) as well as the recommendations of international organizations and of the United Nations.

3. Advantages and disadvantages of data sources: surveys and administrative records

Surveys allow a greater depth in the thematic approach, allowing the extrapolating of their results to the whole population residing in the area of sample collection. Among the disadvantages, it is worth mentioning the skyrocketing costs and training requirements. Moreover, carrying out the survey in the home of the respondent does not guarantee the necessary privacy and this may jeopardize the accuracy of the answers.

Administrative records for generating statistics allow to reduce costs and minimize the burden on respondents, being this one of the major tasks statistical services must focus on (Wallgren, 2012).

Furthermore, data can be obtained continuously and optimize official resources. Although it is important to be aware that administrative records may lack the quality criteria that official statistics require such as: completeness, internal consistency, accuracy and clarity.

The decision to work with official administrative records, resulting of complaints or requests for assistance carried out by women before official agencies and institutions, was taken and also considered. It is important to notice that the continuous collection of primary data will allow the development of indicators to assess the intervention of the State, allowing it to make corrective measures into specific active policies.

A Diagnostic Report was produced, including the characterization of the available administrative records coming from multiple sources (hospitals, courts, women precincts, police stations, assistance centers and telephonic services for the victim) and the identification of obstacles and challenges for its statistical use.

The analyzed records showed a wide conceptual and formal heterogeneity between organizations, as each institution designs its own collection instrument, incorporates variables according to its specific functions and applies its own protocols. Besides, in many cases, data collection is done in emergency situations and these impacts on the quality or the completeness of the data.

According to the results, the INDEC as the Governing Organization of the National Statistical System, and based in the results obtained from the Diagnostic Report, decided to:

- coordinate inter-institutional relations with official organizations (national, provincial, municipal) formalizing the Statistical National Program by signing Agreements and pertinent Supplementary Instruments;
- define the conceptual, technical and methodological guidelines on how to process the information obtained from the administrative records;
- design and calculate the indicators of violence against women; and
- disseminate the information to make this phenomenon socially visible.

In order to obtain available official information from multiple institutional sources that deal with this topic, it is required to contact the organizations involved and invite them to take part of the RUCMV with their own data. Agreements were signed with the areas interested in participating of this project. As well, they were requested to fill an "input file" in order to know the main features of the available records. Also, each agency was asked to designate both an institutional and a technical reference.

4. Conceptual and Methodological Design

The target population was defined as women older than 14 years, victims of gender violence, who have been recorded for reporting the incident and /or requesting some kind of assistance. This decision of taking this age range threshold is linked with the criteria used for the National Population, Household and Living Census that INDEC conducted in 2010 for recollecting data on women's sexual and reproductive health[3].

The micro data base of the RUCVM consists of 25 fields, a unique identification code and 24 selected variables, selected from the review and analysis of available data, in accordance with the recommendations of the UN.

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[3] International recommendations propose the age of 15 years to measure violence against women indicators..

The micro data base includes three types of data:

Identification data of the record			
unique identification code of the victim*	type of document	institution providing the data	date of query

Socio-demographic and socioeconomic data of the victim										
type of document	sex	trans population**	age	place of residence	education level	education level completed	working activity	other non working activity	link with the aggressor	coexistence with the aggressor

Socio-demographic and socioeconomic data of the aggressor					
Sex	Age	education level	education level completed	working activity	other non working activity

Violence features			
kind of violence	modality of violence	frequency of violence	periodicity of violence

With the data collected, the following indicators will be defined:
Number of women victims of violence assisted by different services and by jurisdiction within one year.
Percentage distribution of women victims of violence by age group, education level, working activity, and link to the aggressor.
Percentage distribution of women victims by kind and modality of violence.
Percentage distribution of women victims by periodicity and frequency of aggression.
Percentage distribution of women victims of violence by level of education, age group and working activity of the aggressor.

5. Working Methodology

Currently the Register is at the stage of data reception, conceptual harmonization and standardization of formats for data entry. The current working dynamic establishes that files or databases are sent via a special server transfer upon delivery, as aforementioned, of the technical reference key personnel of the data providing agencies.
The information sent to INDEC by the agencies can be classified into three types:
• Informant with its own classification (numerical) of the variables and categories.
• Informant that uses a description (free text) of the categories that variables assume.
• Informant that uses the "Digital Sheet" created by INDEC.
The initial reception of the files is monitored by the IT area that controls the observance of periodicity for information exchanges and screens the received files if they are not damaged. Once the files are accepted, they are transformed into Tables (known as "Mirrors") and are introduced into the Consulting System. The Mirror Tables are a copy of what is received, respecting the different names, amount and content of the variables of the original files in a format that allows its subsequent handling into the management software of statistical data "STATA". At this stage, a criterion of masking personal data of identification of the victim is applied as well as the unambiguous encoding of territorial jurisdiction.
All the data received is harmonized with the variables and categories defined in the micro-database and the open fields and alphabetical fields are processed. The product converts the Mirror Tables into Homogenized Tables according to the requirements of the RUCVM database.
The selected criteria to homogenize the variables and categories that do not correspond with the RUCVM require two programs:
a) The Program "Diccionario" (*Dictionary*) which aims to normalize the texts to facilitate its subsequent codification; and

b) The Program "Codifico" (*Encode*) allows converting the original variables into variables that can be loaded into the RUCVM accordingly to the criteria defined in the Program "Diccionario".

The Homogenized Tables of each organization are added to the Database of the RUCVM periodically and sequentially to attain the necessary consistency allowing the calculation of the indicators of violence against women.

The high heterogeneity of the data collected through Administrative records is one of the main challenges faced by the Register. This requires an ongoing technical assistance so as to harmonize the variables that the RUCVM requires.

Variables[4] completeness percentage according to total suppliers

Variables	Total Institutions	
	2013	**2014**
Total	**10.589**	**8.395**
	%	%
Victim		
Type of document	46,4	53,9
Sex	100,0	100,0
Age	100,0	100,0
Education level	35,1	32,1
Education level completed	35,0	32,1
Work activity	50,3	47,0
Other non working activity	50,0	44,9
Link with the agressor	97,8	78,0
Coexistence with the agressor	38,6	18,2
Agressor		
Sex	99,0	97,7
Age	77,9	64,8
Education level	25,7	23,1
Education level completed	25,6	23,0
Work activity	46,9	36,9
Other non working activity	47,5	36,3
Violence		
Modality	93,5	83,3
Frequency	25,9	20,0
Periodicity	44,6	33,6

Source: Single Register of Cases of Violence against Women (RUCUM)

6. IT tools

A "Digital Sheet" was designed in order to facilitate the incorporation of data by the suppliers. This allows the automatic generation of a file which is later transferred to INDEC.

A System of Transference was generated for the sending of the data bases that allows the exchange peer-to-peer in order to preserve the confidentiality of personal data established by the strict norms of statistical secret (Law N° 17.622) and Law N° 25.326 of Personal Data Protection.

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[4] The variables "kind/type of violence" and "place of residence" were not entered in this analysis because they are in a processing stage.

An internal Query System was designed. Its main objective is the management and on-line consultation of the RUCVM base and its link to the original bases, this allows identifying the source, the period of reference and the number and quality of the data contained in the base.

7. Results to date

So far, nation wide, Cooperation Agreements have been signed with the Ministry of Security, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the Public Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Health.

Of all the 23 provinces that constitute our federal country together with the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, agreements have been signed with 11 of them and with the Municipality of Ushuaia of the Province of Tierra del Fuego, Antártida e Islas del Atlántico Sur, representing more than 75% of the total population of Argentina. Currently four new agreements are being processed and hard work is being done in order to include all the other provinces, as well as the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires.

More than 18,000 records have effectively been received from the suppliers corresponding to the period January 2013 to June 2014, methodological reports have been done from each received database and also, technical assistance was provided for the use of the input file and/or to improve the criteria of data digitization.

From this experience the INDEC is implementing awareness-raising, training and technical assistance to improve the coverage of the data contained in each data base received.

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