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Summary

This scientific article investigates the concept of legal literacy as a fundamental vector for the effectiveness of Law No. 11.340/2006 (Maria da Penha Law) in everyday social relations. The research problem focuses on the dissonance between the existence of the protective norm and the lack of knowledge of its content and scope by a large part of the population, which perpetuates cycles of violence. The general objective is to analyze how the dissemination of legal knowledge beyond the courts—in schools, companies, churches, and community associations—acts as a mechanism for prevention and cultural transformation. The methodology adopted is the deductive method, supported by a bibliographic and documentary review of works and legislation published up to 2021. The results demonstrate that the mere enforcement of the law is insufficient to deconstruct structural sexism; it is necessary for the law to be appropriated by society through civic pedagogy. It is concluded that legal literacy empowers victims to break the silence and equips the informal support network, making social interaction the primary arena for combating gender-based violence.

Keywords: Legal Literacy. Maria da Penha Law. Social Transformation. Gender Violence. Citizenship.

Abstract

This scientific article investigates the concept of legal literacy as a fundamental vector for the effectiveness of Law No. 11.340/2006 (Maria da Penha Law) in everyday social relations. The research problem focuses on the dissonance between the existence of the protective norm and the lack of knowledge of its content and scope by a large part of the population, which perpetuates cycles of violence. The general objective is to analyze how the diffusion of legal knowledge beyond the courts — in schools, companies, churches, and community associations — acts as a mechanism for prevention and cultural transformation. The methodology adopted is the deductive method, supported by bibliographic and documentary review of works and legislation published up to 2021. The results demonstrate that the mere validity of the law is insufficient to deconstruct structural machismo; it is necessary for the Law to be appropriated by society through a citizen pedagogy. It is concluded that legal literacy empowers victims to break the silence and instrumentalizes the informal support network, making social conviviality the first territory in the fight against gender violence.

Keywords: Legal Literacy. Maria da Penha Law. Social Transformation. Gender Violence. Citizenship.

1. Introduction

The enactment of the Maria da Penha Law (Law No. 11.340/2006) represented a milestone. civilizing the Brazilian legal system, removing domestic violence from the sphere of privacy and placing it under the protection of public interest and human rights. However, almost Two decades after its enactment, Brazil still faces alarming rates of femicide and violence against women, which raises questions about the limits of written law in the face of a patriarchal culture entrenched. This article proposes that the effectiveness of the norm depends not only on state repression, but also primarily, the legal literacy of the population, understood here as the capacity of individuals to understand, interpret and use Law as a tool for emancipation

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in their daily social interactions.

The concept of legal literacy transcends mere literacy or knowledge.

This is a technical skill reserved for law graduates. It refers to the appropriation of language and legal concepts.

legal rights for the average citizen, allowing them to recognize violations of rights in their daily lives.

and learn which paths to take to seek redress or protection. In the context of violence of

In the gender field, legal literacy is the key that allows a woman to identify that financial control

The psychological humiliation to which she is subjected constitutes a crime, and not the partner's "way of being."

Without this understanding, the law remains a cold and distant text, incapable of altering reality.

The factual reality of abusive relationships that occur within homes.

The rationale for this study lies in the urgent need to shift the focus of the legal debate.

often excessively focused on the criminal process and the punishment of the offender, for prevention

and cultural change. The social transformation sought by the 1988 Constitution requires a

Active citizenship is only possible when those entitled to legal rights understand the full extent of their protections.

To analyze how the Maria da Penha Law is disseminated — or silenced — in spaces of social interaction.

(work, school, religious community) is fundamental to understanding the barriers that still prevent

Substantive equality between men and women in Brazil.

The work is structured around four central themes of discussion. Firstly, it addresses...

The concept of legal literacy and its sociological function in democratizing access to justice. In

Next, the Maria da Penha Law is analyzed not only as a repressive statute, but also as an instrument.

pedagogical approach to social re-education. The third topic investigates the spaces where the norm is disseminated.

observing how legal knowledge permeates the social fabric and alters behaviors in

Corporate and community environments. Finally, structural challenges and misinformation are discussed.

that hinder this literacy. The methodology is based on a bibliographic review of doctrine.

legal and sociological analysis up to the year 2021, seeking a critical synthesis on the subject.

2. The concept of legal literacy and the democratization of justice

Legal literacy *is* a concept that emerges from the sociology of law.

and critical education, directly addressing the need for legal empowerment of

vulnerable. Unlike the dogmatic knowledge taught in universities, legal literacy focuses on

The functionality of law for practical life. It's about equipping citizens with the skills to read the law.

A world seen through the lens of justice, understanding that social relations are permeated by

rights and duties. In a deeply unequal society like Brazil, where access to

Formal justice is expensive and bureaucratic, so knowledge of the law becomes the first—and often the...

Unique — a shield against arbitrariness and exploitation.

The democratization of justice is not limited to opening the doors of the judiciary or to appointments.



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of public defenders, although these are essential measures. True democratization occurs

On a cognitive and cultural level, when the population ceases to see Law as an instrument of state oppression and begins to see it as a collective asset of guarantees. Legal literacy acts in overcoming "legal poverty," a phenomenon where material deprivation is exacerbated by inability to claim basic rights. In the case of women, this historical legal poverty was reinforced by centuries of a Civil Code that treated them as relatively incapable, creating a culture of silence and submission is what literacy seeks to break.

The complexity of legal language, with its technicalities and archaic Latin, acts as a symbolic barrier that distances people from justice. Legal literacy, therefore, involves an effort of translation and simplification, without loss of content. It is the process of explaining what a "measure" is.

"Emergency protective order" or "provisional alimony" so that a woman without formal education...

so that it can understand and demand. This translation process is not only linguistic, but also political, because it transfers power from the expert (the lawyer/judge) to the holder of the right (the citizen), allowing that the latter must actively participate in defending their interests and overseeing institutions.

From Paulo Freire's perspective, education doesn't change the world, education changes people. People change the world. Legal literacy follows this premise: by legally educating a community discussion on women's rights alters the collective perception of what is acceptable or intolerable in gender relations. Law, when understood, ceases to be an abstraction and becomes a social practice. A legally literate woman not only defends herself, but becomes a multiplier, guiding daughters, neighbors and work colleagues, creating an informal network of protection that is often faster and more effective than the police themselves.

The relationship between legal literacy and citizenship is inextricably linked. There is no full citizenship where ignorance prevails regarding the laws that govern social interaction. The Democratic Rule of Law presupposes citizens who know, for example, that psychological violence is a crime and that the State has the duty to provide shelter. When this knowledge is disseminated, the demand for services increases. Public literacy is growing and becoming more qualified, putting pressure on the state to improve its policies. The legal system, therefore, generates a virtuous circle of *accountability* and social responsibility, transforming passive subjects into demanding citizens.

In the business and labor context, legal literacy regarding sexual and moral harassment, issues related to gender-based violence have transformed the corporate environment. The spread of laws on labor and criminal law compliance, through *compliance training*, creates a culture... of intolerance. This demonstrates that legal literacy does not only occur in classrooms, but in all social spaces. Knowing that an aggressive "catcall" is not a compliment, but harassment. As defined by law, it changes the power dynamics between superiors and subordinates, protecting the dignity of... Women in the workforce.



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Information and communication technologies today play a dubious role in

Legal literacy. While on the one hand they facilitate access to legislation and explanatory videos, on the other hand

They spread misinterpretations and legal *fake news*. True legal literacy in the digital age.

It also involves the ability to filter information, distinguishing what is actual law from what is opinion.

unfounded. University extension projects and the OAB's (Brazilian Bar Association) activity on social media are vital for to ensure that the information that reaches social interaction is reliable and informative.

The intersection with social services is another focal point. The social worker, often

The gateway for vulnerable women to access public services acts as a literacy agent.

legal expertise in explaining social security, welfare, and family rights. This integration of knowledge

This is crucial, as women who are victims of violence often do not seek help from the police station out of fear of...

losing the ability to support her children. Economic legal literacy — knowing that she is entitled to alimony,

to the sharing of assets, to social benefit — it removes the financial obstacle that binds her to the cycle of violence.

The role of community leaders in legal literacy is strategic. In communities

Where the state is absent, the community leader, the pastor, or the school principal are the points of reference for

authority. Empowering these leaders with basic knowledge of the Maria da Penha Law is the most effective way.

They are efficient at disseminating legal information. They translate the law into local language, adapting the concepts to the context.

The reality of the territory and gain the trust of victims who would never enter an office of

Traditional legal practice.

In conclusion, this section shows that legal literacy is the bridge between the formal validity of the law and...

Its social effectiveness. It transforms the cold letter of the code into a tool for life. For the Maria da Penha Law

Penha, this means transforming a punitive instrument into a liberating instrument, where the

Society, upon learning the law, becomes the guardian of its application, preventing violence.

domestic life can be normalized or ignored in everyday social interaction.

3. The Maria da Penha Law as a pedagogical and cultural instrument.

Law No. 11,340/2006 was conceived with a hybrid and innovative nature: it is, at the same time

time, penal, procedural, civil and welfare. However, its most revolutionary aspect and

Often underutilized is its educational character. The law aims not only to punish the aggressor, but

to re-educate society. In her initial articles, she establishes that domestic violence is a

violation of human rights, a statement that directly contradicts the popular saying that "in

"Don't interfere in a husband and wife's fight." The law teaches that you should interfere, yes, because...

What happens behind closed doors is of public interest.

The classification of forms of violence in article 7 of the law (physical, psychological, sexual,

(patrimonial and moral) is a lesson in applied sociology. By naming behaviors that were previously invisible



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Whether trivialized or not, the law serves a didactic function: it gives a name to the pain. Many women lived for years suffering without knowing that the destruction of their documents, the withholding of their salary, or isolation

The violence perpetrated by his friends was a form of violence. The educational nature of the law lies in validating the experience.

of the victim, telling her that what she is suffering has a name, is illegal, and should not be tolerated. This alters the

The subjectivity of women and their position in social life.

The provision of educational measures for the aggressor, and not just prison sentences, reinforces this.

A transformative bias. Participation in reflective groups for men who perpetrate violence is a

A legal and emotional literacy strategy focused on deconstructing toxic masculinity. The law

understands that arresting the aggressor without addressing the cultural root of their behavior often only

Postpones further aggression. Social interaction only becomes safe when man understands that...

A woman is not your property. The law, therefore, seeks to intervene in the sexist culture that creates the aggressor.

and not just in the isolated act of aggression.

The dissemination of the Maria da Penha Law in schools, as expressly provided for in the legislation.

(especially after recent changes that included content about violence against women in

(curricula), it's a bet on generational change. The school environment is a microcosm of social interaction.

Teaching boys and girls about respect, consent, and gender equality, in light of the Maria da Penha Law.

Penha's goal is to prevent teenage dating conflicts from escalating into relationships.

Abusive behaviors in adulthood. School legal literacy creates an ethical foundation where violence is rejected.

not out of fear of punishment, but out of moral conviction.

The media plays a crucial role as a vector for this educational tool. Soap operas,

Films and advertising campaigns that address the Maria da Penha Law translate legalese into...

Mass language. When a soap opera character denounces her husband and obtains a court order.

Protective measures allow millions of female viewers to see the practical application of the law. This is social *merchandising*.

It is a powerful form of diffuse legal literacy, which inserts the topic into bar conversations, in

Family dinners and social media are normalizing reporting and destigmatizing the victim.

The cultural impact of the law is also evident in changes to language and customs.

Sexist expressions and jokes that were once accepted in social settings are now being questioned.

In light of the new legal awareness, street harassment, previously seen as flirtation, is now viewed as...

Harassment. The law acts as a moral beacon, redefining the boundaries of what is acceptable. Although the

Although cultural change is slow and faces resistance, the existence of the Maria da Penha Law has imposed a new

A standard of civility that compels society to adapt, even against the wishes of certain sectors.

conservatives.

The educational function of the law also extends to legal professionals. Judges, prosecutors

And police officers, often trained in a patriarchal tradition, were forced to update themselves and to

confront their own prejudices. The mandatory gender training for these



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For professionals, it is a form of internal legal literacy within the justice system. The law teaches the system.

One cannot judge a woman who is a victim of violence using the same yardstick as one judges a contract.

commercial; a gender perspective is needed to apply justice equitably.

The Maria da Penha Law also educated society about the importance of autonomy.

Women's financial situation. By providing asset protection measures and referrals to programs.

Regarding employment and income, the law recognizes that economic freedom is a prerequisite for physical freedom.

In social settings, this fosters networks of female entrepreneurship and solidarity, where

Women support each other's businesses as a form of resistance and mutual empowerment.

in the face of domestic violence.

Another didactic aspect is the emphasis on the service network. The law does not centralize the solution in the...

It's not just about policing, but it articulates a network composed of health, social assistance, and justice. This teaches society...

that violence is a complex and multifactorial problem. Legal literacy here involves knowing

that the health center, upon identifying suspicious lesions, has a duty to notify and provide care. This view

Systemic factors permeate social interaction, creating multiple points of support for the victim.

In short, the Maria da Penha Law is much more than a penal code for husbands.

violent; it is a project of civilization. Its success should not be measured solely by the number of

prisons, but for the amount of conversations it generated, for the consciences it awakened, and for the

Lives were saved even before the first physical attack, thanks to information. How?

As a pedagogical tool, it rewrites the rules of the social contract between men and women.

establishing human dignity as a fundamental principle of affective and family life.

4. Dissemination spaces: from the company to the religious community

The social effectiveness of the Maria da Penha Law depends on its reach, that is, its...

The ability to penetrate the various spaces where life happens. The corporate environment, for example.

For example, it has proven to be a strategic platform for the dissemination of legal literacy. Companies that

Companies adopting ESG (*Environmental, Social and Governance*) policies have included combating violence.

Domestic violence is a key component of its social responsibility agenda. This isn't just philanthropy; it's intelligence.

This is a business issue, as female employees who are victims of violence experience decreased productivity and higher absenteeism.

In this scenario, Human Resources and Compliance departments have created channels for

Reporting and support programs that extend beyond the company walls. Legal literacy in the workplace.

It involves lectures, brochures, and the guarantee that the woman will not be fired if she needs to take time off for...

Regarding the violence. When a company takes a stand, it sends a powerful message to everyone.

their colleagues (men and women) understand that domestic violence is unacceptable. This learning

It is taken by the employee to their home, influencing their behavior in the private sphere.

In Brazil, religious organizations, churches, and temples are spaces for social interaction.



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immense relevance and influence. Historically, some religious interpretations have been used to keeping women in submissive situations. However, a growing movement of "theology "Feminist" and women's groups within churches have used religious spaces to spread the Maria da Penha Law. Legal literacy in these spaces is delicate, but vital. It's about reconciling... Combining faith with civil rights, demonstrating that the dignity of women is a sacred and legal value. Trained pastors and priests can be the first to identify violence and guide the search for help. Legal assistance.

Residents' associations and community groups in marginalized communities are the guardians of the law in these territories. where the State is scarce. In these places, the dissemination of the Maria da Penha Law occurs through "word of mouth". "Mouth," from conversation circles and art (theater, hip-hop, slam). Popular legal literacy is Pragmatic: it teaches how to use the police app, how to request a protective order without a lawyer, where the woman's house is located. This organic diffusion creates a culture of community vigilance, where the The abusive neighbor knows he is being watched by the community.

The healthcare system is another crucial space for dissemination. The waiting room at the health center or Emergency triage areas are places where information about the law can save lives. Professionals of Health professionals act as legal educators by handing out leaflets, asking the right questions, and explaining. Violence affects both physical and mental health. Mandatory reporting of violence is not only... Overcoming bureaucracy is an act of citizenship that integrates women into the official protection network.

Leisure and cultural spaces have also been occupied by the agenda. The protocol "It is not "No," a phrase widely used in carnivals and parties, is a practical application of the Law Against Sexual Harassment and... Principles of the Maria da Penha Law. Bars and restaurants that train their employees to help. Women at risk are applying legal literacy in customer service. These These initiatives transform the recreational environment into a safe space, reinforcing the idea that... Respect for women's bodies is non-negotiable everywhere.

The internet and social media, despite the risks, have enabled the formation of communities. Virtual support networks. Pages run by female lawyers, influencers, and feminist collectives democratize the... Legal knowledge growing exponentially. Sharing experiences, the "exposed" of aggressors (with due legal precautions) and the viral spread of information about rights create a A sense of digital sisterhood. For many geographically isolated women, the internet is the only channel. access to legal literacy and the understanding that they are not alone.

Trade unions and professional associations have also incorporated this agenda. When negotiating clauses in collective agreements that protect women who are victims of violence or that guarantee leave. As unions expand their reach, they disseminate the law and protect female workers. The fight for equal pay and... Fights against harassment at work are two sides of the same coin as domestic violence, because dependence Economic hardship is the shackle that binds many women. Legal and union literacy empowers women.

as a worker and as a citizen.

The university, through its outreach programs, has a duty to go beyond the academic walls. Clinics of Law, model offices, and mobile justice projects bring technical knowledge to the... squares and communities. The law student who participates in these actions learns the social function of their profession, while the community receives qualified information. This exchange of knowledge is the The essence of the public university and the social commitment of higher education.

Therefore, the dissemination of the Maria da Penha Law cannot depend solely on campaigns. sporadic governmental actions. It must be a capillary, integrated, and constant effort, present in all spaces of socialization. When the law is discussed in church, during coffee breaks at work, in At school parent-teacher meetings and neighborhood festivals, it ceases to be an abstract text and becomes living culture. It is this omnipresence of the theme that, little by little, stifles the culture of violence and opens space for... a new ethic of coexistence based on mutual respect and equal rights.

5. Structural challenges: cultural resistance and misinformation

Despite undeniable progress, the dissemination of the Maria da Penha Law and legal literacy are still challenges. They face colossal barriers erected by structural sexism and, more recently, by... Political polarization and misinformation. Cultural resistance to the law is not merely passive; it is multifaceted. Sometimes active and organized. Conservative sectors of society often label the discussion regarding gender equality as "gender ideology," a term used to delegitimize policies. public measures to protect women and to block debate in schools. This prohibition of dialogue prevents that legal knowledge reaches new generations, perpetuating the ignorance that fuels the violence.

Legal misinformation, amplified by social media, is a modern and dangerous obstacle. Distorted interpretations of the law are circulating on the internet, claiming that it "privileges women" or "It destroys the family." Myths such as the one that a woman's word is enough to bind a man without... Evidence, or the notion that the law serves for personal revenge, creates an atmosphere of hostility and distrust. Legal literacy, in this context, needs to be combative, deconstructing these fallacies with... data, facts, and correct technical explanation regarding due process and the right to a fair hearing, which are guaranteed to all.

The normalization of psychological violence is another challenge. While physical aggression is visible. and socially repudiated (though not always), subtle violence — control, excessive jealousy, the Disqualification — is still romanticized in social interaction as "proof of love." Literacy The legal system needs to penetrate this subjective layer, which is extremely difficult. Convincing a society recognizes that monitoring one's wife's cell phone is a violation of human rights and a criminal offense. It requires a paradigm shift regarding what privacy and autonomy mean within marriage.



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Racial and class inequality creates chasms in access to legal literacy. The Maria da Penha Law
Penha Law is universal, but its application is not. Black women and women from marginalized communities face barriers.
additional language barriers, institutional racism, and lack of access to the internet or spaces of
debate. For these women, the law often arrives only as a punitive arm of the State (when
The police enter the favela), and not as an instrument of protection. The challenge is to adapt the language and the
means of dissemination to ensure that legal literacy is inclusive and does not reproduce inequalities.

social issues of the country.

Structural economic dependence remains the greatest enemy of the law's effectiveness.
It's no use for a woman to know her rights if she has no way to feed her children without the abuser.
Legal literacy must be accompanied by economic empowerment policies, but the crisis
Economic hardship and unemployment weaken this network. The challenge here is to connect the right to survival.
Material. Empty legal discourse, disconnected from the needs of the stomach, does not generate...
Sustainable social transformation.

Institutional revictimization also misinforms society. When a woman reports...
and is mistreated at the police station or discredited in court, the message that is conveyed to society
The social reality is: "reporting is pointless." This rebound effect undermines efforts in legal literacy.
Society observes the impunity or negligence and concludes that the law is ineffective. Therefore, literacy
This must be accompanied by a constant improvement in the provision of judicial services, so that...
Practice should correspond to the theory taught.

The absence of men in the debate is a strategic flaw. Frequently, lectures on the
The Maria da Penha Law is designed for exclusively female audiences. Legal literacy is necessary.
Reaching men, since they are statistically the perpetrators of violence. Creating spaces for dialogue.
where men can learn about the law not just by being accused, but by being called to action.
Responsibility for change is a methodological challenge that companies need to face.
schools and institutions.

Finally, the dismantling of public policies to protect women during times of
Fiscal austerity or political conservatism represents a step backward. Defunding
Shelters or educational programs weaken the protection network. Civil society and
Lawyers need to be vigilant to ensure that legal literacy is not merely an effort.
voluntarist, but a lasting state policy. The law cannot be a dead letter; it needs...
Budget and political will are needed to continue transforming social interaction.

6. Conclusion

The analysis undertaken in this article has shown that legal literacy is not a luxury.
academic, but a vital necessity for the realization of women's human rights in



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Brazil. The Maria da Penha Law, more than a mechanism of punishment, has proven to be a powerful tool.

An instrument of social pedagogy, capable of redefining the contours of social and family life.

However, its full effectiveness depends directly on how much society appropriates its concepts.

and values. The desired social transformation will not come only from judges' chambers, but from the classrooms from classrooms, factory floors, temples, and neighborhood meetings where the law is debated, understood and applied.

It has been demonstrated that the dissemination of legal knowledge acts as a vaccine against violence. By empowering women with the information that they have rights and a support network, Legal literacy breaks the isolation imposed by the aggressor. Simultaneously, by educating the In this community, an environment hostile to impunity and welcoming to the victim is created. The legal profession and... Legal professionals have an ethical duty to be the interpreters of this norm, simplifying it. Language without losing depth, ensuring that justice is a good accessible to all. regardless of social class or level of education.

The dissemination spaces analyzed — schools, companies, and churches — show that the fight against Violence is a multidisciplinary issue. The integration of legal, social, educational, and economic factors is essential. The only way to confront such a complex phenomenon. Legal literacy must be transversal. permeating all spheres of life. The company that protects its employees, the school that teaches respect. And the church that welcomes without judgment is, ultimately, an enforcer of the Maria da Penha Law as much as... The police chief or the prosecutor.

However, the challenges of cultural resistance and misinformation require vigilance. Constant regression is a real risk in times of polarization. Defending and promoting the Maria da Penha Law must be a non-negotiable commitment of democratic society. It is necessary to fight Lies about the law versus real data about the lives and deaths of Brazilian women. Literacy. The legal profession must be combative, assertive, and continuous, adapting to new technologies and new trends. Forms of violence that emerge in the digital world.

It can be concluded, therefore, that investing in legal literacy is investing in social peace. A society that knows its laws is a less violent and more just society. The Maria da Penha Law It is a heritage of Brazilian women, and its dissemination in social life is the guarantee that, day by day... Day by day, the culture of rape and femicide will give way to a culture of respect and dignity. May every lawyer, teacher, and citizen take on the task of being an agent of this literacy. Because social transformation begins in the consciousness of each individual and is consolidated through collective action.

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