

**Protecting Childhood: Exploring Comprehensive Sexuality Education as a Tool to
Combat Sexual Violence against Girls and Adolescent Women in Peru**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Capstone Project addresses the pressing issue of sexual violence against girls and adolescent women in Peru. By examining the associated risk factors, such as the lack of education and traditional gender roles, this study underscores the need for immediate attention and comprehensive action. The devastating consequences of sexual violence on children, both in the short and long term, require improved protection measures from the Peruvian State, particularly for young girls. Urgent and concrete steps must be taken to tackle this issue, including implementing strategies to prevent incidents, supporting victims, and creating a safer environment for all children in Peru.

This study highlights Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) as a potential and effective approach to addressing sexual violence against children. CSE provides accurate information on sexuality, relationships, and consent, empowering children to make informed decisions regarding their bodies. Integrating CSE into the Peruvian education system is strongly recommended as a proactive step toward preventing sexual violence and promoting the sexual rights of children. By adopting these measures, a secure environment can be fostered for boys, girls, and adolescents, facilitating their overall well-being and development.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence against children is a serious and pervasive problem that has garnered significant attention from scholars and policymakers worldwide. This issue is particularly acute in Peru, where its complex and multifaceted nature has made it a notable challenge for the government and civil society organizations alike. On the one hand, sexual violence can have numerous negative consequences for child victims, including physical and psychological harm, hindering their ability to participate in daily activities and impacting their overall quality of life.¹ On the other hand, it can perpetuate gender inequality and harmful gender stereotypes, which can have long-lasting social and economic consequences.²

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the ongoing efforts to prevent and address sexual violence against girls and adolescent women in Peru. Through a comprehensive literature review and case studies I aim to identify the underlying causes of sexual violence, assess the effectiveness of current interventions, and provide recommendations for future policy and practice.

The practical component of my work entails the development of a report that will serve as a resource for Paz & Esperanza Peru, a local organization dedicated to combating sexual violence against children. It will be available in both Spanish and English, thereby ensuring a broader reach and accessibility. The report delves into strategies for preventing sexual violence and underscores the significance of the State's responsibility to protect children's rights. The primary objective is to foster consciousness and understanding within the governmental

¹ Emily R. Dworkin et al., "Sexual Assault Victimization and Psychopathology: A Review and Meta-Analysis," *Clinical Psychology Review* 56 (August 2017): 65–81, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2017.06.002>.

² James O. Rust and Patricia A. Troupe, "Relationships of Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse with School Achievement and Self-Concept," *The Journal of Early Adolescence* 11, no. 4 (November 1991): 420–29, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431691114002>.

institutions and associated organizations. By understanding the root causes and dynamics of sexual violence against children, I hope to help inform Peruvian standards and procedures focused at establishing a safer and more equal environment for all children and adolescents.

In this paper, I will begin by providing a review of children's sexual rights in relation to sexual violence and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). The following section will look at the relevant literature on sexual violence against girls, including its prevalence, risk factors, and consequences. There will be a particular focus on the Peruvian region of Huánuco, which is one of the areas with the highest rates of physical, psychological, and sexual violence.³ Subsequently, the paper will be examining the actions taken by the Peruvian State to address the issue of sexual violence against children. Lastly, this study will explore the potential benefits of CSE in tackling and preventing sexual violence.

This research is of significant importance to scholars, policymakers, and practitioners working in the fields of education, public health, gender studies, and most importantly, human rights. This paper exhibits an original perspective by emphasizing a human rights-based approach, which is often overlooked when discussing the topic of children's sexual rights. By shedding light on this critical issue, this study can inform policy and practice to prevent and address sexual violence against girls, ultimately improving the overall quality of education and promoting gender equality and social justice.

³ Save the Children Sweden., "Eliminating Sexual Violence Against Children in the Huánuco Region in Peru.," 2016, https://issuu.com/savethechildrenit/docs/every_last_girl_oct_11.

SEXUAL RIGHTS IN RELATION TO CHILDREN

The notion of children possessing their own rights is a relatively recent development, having only gained widespread acceptance in the 20th century.⁴ Prior to this, children were regarded as the property of their parents until they reached the age of legal majority. Consequently, the sexual rights of young people are more complex and distinct from those of adults.⁵ It is crucial to protect and empower them, challenging the erroneous assumption that young people lack the capacity to make decisions for themselves, and that parents or other adults should have complete control over matters relating to their sexuality.⁶ The task at hand, from a rights-based perspective, is to strike a balance between protecting the rights of young people and enabling them to participate and exercise their own rights.⁷

This task is indeed a formidable challenge. However, there are international treaties and conventions that serve as legally binding human rights instruments. These agreements are powerful advocacy tools that can hold countries, such as Peru, accountable.⁸ Furthermore, non-legally binding policy documents can also be influential, with governments that have signed these agreements still being held accountable to their commitments.⁹ When a government signs and ratifies a treaty, it is obliged to take all necessary measures to implement it fully. In this regard, it is imperative to examine the agreements related to children's sexual rights to determine what actions Peru should be taking.

⁴ Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues, "International and European Law," *Gemeinsam Gegen Missbrauch*, 2023, <https://beauftragte-missbrauch.de/en/themen/recht/international-and-european-law>.

⁵ International Planned Parenthood Federation, "EXCLAIM! Young People's Guide to Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration," 2011, <https://www.ippf.org/resource/exclaim-young-peoples-guide-sexual-rights-ippf-declaration>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

Relevant Frameworks

When discussing children's sexual rights, it is crucial to consider several key frameworks. These mainly encompass the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education. While these agreements and general comments may not directly focus on children's sexual rights, they offer valuable insights into protecting women and children from various forms of violence, including gender-based and sexual violence. By examining these frameworks, one can gain an understanding of the broader context within which efforts to protect children's sexual rights are situated.

General Comment No.4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) does not expressly mention sexual rights, as it focuses on juvenile justice. However, the CRC acknowledges that children have the right to access appropriate healthcare without impediment and to information and education about sexual and reproductive health.¹⁰ Concerns have been expressed over Peru's high incidence of teenage pregnancies and sexual violence as well as the lack of access to comprehensive sexual education.¹¹ The General Comment further emphasizes the necessity for State Parties, such as Peru, to take steps to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.¹² Strong legal systems, efficient law enforcement, and justice for sexual assault victims are required.

Furthermore, the revision of Joint General Comment No.18 of the CRC on harmful practices and General Recommendation No.31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination

¹⁰ General Assembly resolution 44/25, "Convention on the Rights of the Child" (United Nations Human Rights, November 20, 1989), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.

¹¹ Human Rights Watch, "Peru: Events of 2020," in *World Report 2021*, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/peru>.

¹² General Assembly resolution 44/25, "UNCRC."

against Women (CEDAW) aims to strengthen the protection of young girls and women against sexual violence. The joint general comment advises State Parties, including Peru, on how to stop harmful practices, particularly those connected to sexual assault against children, and how to react to them.¹³ To stop and confront these incidents, the document emphasizes the significance of adopting a thorough and coordinated strategy that includes law enforcement, justice, health, education, and social services.¹⁴ The combined general comment is particularly pertinent in the case of Peru because of the high prevalence of sexual violence against children. By implementing these guidelines, the country could take efforts to strengthen its legal and institutional framework and address sexual violence and other harmful practices affecting girls and women.

Moreover, General Comment No.22 on the right to sexual and reproductive health of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESC), advises State Parties on their responsibility to provide access to sexual and reproductive health services, including those linked to sexual violence prevention and treatment.¹⁵ The document emphasizes the necessity of delivering age-appropriate, scientifically accurate, and culturally sensitive sexual education to children.¹⁶ It underlines the importance of the State Parties ensuring that sexual and reproductive health services are available to all people, without discrimination, and in a confidential manner.¹⁷ As a signatory, Peru should regard this

¹³ “Revision of Joint General Comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Harmful Practices and General Recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,” OHCHR, 2023, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/revision-joint-general-comment-no-18-committee>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “General Comment No. 22 (2016) on the Right to Sexual and Reproductive Health (Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights),” 2016, <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=4slQ6QSmlBEDzFEovLCuW1a0Szab0oXTdImnsJZZVQfQejF41Tob4CvIjeTiAP6sGFQktiae1vlbbOAekmaOwDOWsUe7N8TLm%2BP3HJPzxjHySkUoHMavD%2Fpyfcp3Ylzg>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

document as a foundation for combating sexual violence against children by providing access to sexual and reproductive health services and education.

Similarly, comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is increasingly recognized as an essential component of the right to education, as noted by the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education. In his report, the Special Rapporteur highlights that CSE is crucial for promoting the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people.¹⁸ The report notes that sexual education should cover a broad range of topics, including reproductive health, sexual orientation, gender identity, consent, and relationships.¹⁹ In other words, it should provide young people with the skills and knowledge they need to make informed decisions about their sexual health and well-being.²⁰ Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur underscores the importance of respecting and promoting the sexual rights of young people, including their right to access information and services related to sexuality and reproductive health, and their right to make decisions about their own bodies and sexuality.²¹ Ultimately, it is noted that CSE should be grounded in a human rights framework, promoting the values of equality, non-discrimination, and respect for diversity.²²

Paola Guzmán Albarracín v. Ecuador

In the Latin American region, case law has played a significant role in establishing standards for the protection of children from sexual violence. An illustrative is that of Paola Guzmán Albarracín v. Ecuador.

¹⁸ Vernor Muñoz, Special Rapporteur on the right to education, “Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education,” 2010, http://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/UNSR_Sexual_Education_2010.pdf.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

Paola, who was 14 years old at the time, was a victim of sexual violence within her school. She was coerced into a non-consensual sexually abusive relationship with the school's vice president, resulting in pregnancy.²³ The school's doctor, who was also involved in the abuse, performed an abortion on her.²⁴ No measures were taken by the institution to hold the perpetrators accountable, and Paola was blamed and accused of seducing the men.²⁵ Such mistreatment led to Paola's decision to end her life. Despite the school being informed of her suicidal intentions, no actions were taken to intervene and provide her with necessary support.²⁶ Her mother rushed her to the hospital where she ultimately passed away at the age of 16.

This case serves as an important example of the State's duty to protect children. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights found Ecuador responsible for Paola's death and emphasized several key takeaways from the case that are relevant to Peru. One such takeaway is that children have a right to a safe and secure educational environment that is free from sexual violence.²⁷ As such, the Court highlighted the critical role of comprehensive sexuality and reproductive education in protecting children's rights to education.²⁸ High-quality sexuality education was seen as a preventive measure that empowers children with the knowledge and skills to identify and avoid risks and instances of sexual violence.²⁹ Finally, the Court emphasized the State's obligation to protect children from sexual violence, which includes

²³ Guzmán Albarracín Et Al. V. Ecuador, No. Series C No. 405 (Inter-American Court of Human Rights June 24, 2020), p.6, https://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_405_ing.pdf.

²⁴ Catalina Martínez Coral and Carmen Cecilia Martínez, "Sexual Violence against Girls in Schools as a Public Health Issue: A Commentary on the Case Paola Guzmán Albarracín v. Ecuador," *Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters* 29, no. 1 (January 1, 2021): 18–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/26410397.2021.1893147>, p.18.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Guzmán Albarracín v. Ecuador*, p.33.

²⁷ IJRC, "Inter-American Court Issues First Judgment on Sexual Violence in School," *International Justice Resource Center* (blog), August 26, 2020, <https://ijrcenter.org/2020/08/26/inter-american-court-issues-first-judgment-on-sexual-violence-in-school/>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ OAS, "IACHR: States and Society Must Protect Girls and Adolescents from All Forms of Violence," OAS, 2022, https://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2022/226.asp.

monitoring the situation, implementing preventive policies, and establishing simple accountability mechanisms.³⁰

Evidently, these rights are closely interlinked with the issue of sexual violence, which must be addressed through the empowerment of sexual rights by providing access to information, healthcare services, and CSE. A direct correlation exists between the prevalence of sexual violence and the quality of education, with the provision of CSE being a key measure in preventing sexual violence. Therefore, it can be inferred that increasing the number of children in Peru who receive CSE can potentially lead to a decrease in the incidence of sexual violence in schools and homes. Indicating that education is a powerful tool in combating sexual violence.

³⁰ IJRC, “Inter-American Court Issues First Judgment on Sexual Violence in School.”

LANDSCAPE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN PERU

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) sexual violence can be defined as: “Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, sexual advances, or otherwise, directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim.”³¹ Domestic abuse, sexual harassment in the workplace, and sexual violence in schools (among others) are all examples of gender-based violence recognized by the Inter-American system as great violations of human rights. When we talk about sexual violence, it is important to consider alongside the above, both the American Convention on Human Rights and the Belém do Pará Convention. The latter was the first women’s rights agreement specifically designed to address violence against women.³² It thus defines this concept as: “any act or conduct, based on gender, which causes death or physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, whether in the public or the private sphere.”³³ This can be equally applied to girls and young adolescent women.

Furthermore, instruments such as the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM),³⁴ the Rapporteurship of the Rights of Women,³⁵ and other non-profit organizations, are also used by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) to assure the protection of women’s

³¹ “Violence against Women,” World Health Organization, 2023, <https://www.who.int/health-topics/violence-against-women>.

³² Ciara O’Connell, “Women’s Rights and the Inter-American System,” in *International Human Rights of Women*, ed. Niamh Reilly, International Human Rights (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2018), 1–16, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4550-9_10-1, p.1.

³³ OAS, “Belém Do Pará Convention,” 1994, <https://www.oas.org/en/mesecvi/convention.asp> (Article 2).

³⁴ See: IACHR, “CIM Mission and Mandate,” OAS, 2022, <https://www.oas.org/en/CIM/about.asp>.

³⁵ See: IACHR, “Rapporteurship on the Rights of Women,” OAS, 2022, <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/r/dmujeres/default.asp>.

rights. Yet, despite these mechanisms and human rights agreements, sexual violence against girls continues to be a reoccurring problem in several Latin American countries.³⁶

Sexual violence, particularly against girls and adolescent women in Peru, remains a deeply concerning and multidimensional problem that demands immediate and concerted attention from legislators, educators, and the broader community. The statistics are alarming and paint a stark picture of the scale of the problem. In fact, reports indicate that as many as 21,000 Peruvian minors have been victims of abuse or rape since 2019 alone.³⁷ As a result, on average, 16 girls and adolescent women experience some form of sexual violence on a regular basis,³⁸ underlining the pervasiveness of the issue. Clearly, this is a complex problem that requires a multifaceted approach to address the root causes and implement effective solutions. Therefore, it is imperative that all stakeholders work together to tackle the broader societal issue of gender inequality and violence against women, which is at the heart of this problem. This will require a sustained and collaborative effort to create a safe and supportive environment for all children, particularly those who are most vulnerable to sexual violence.

In addition, recent reports indicate an increasing number of adolescent maternity cases among children under the age of 15, which rose from 1,158 in 2020 to 1,438 in 2021.³⁹ This sudden increase reflects broader societal issues that contribute to the prevalence of sexual violence, such as poverty, gender inequality, and inadequate access to sexual and reproductive health services. The magnitude of the issue is further highlighted by the staggering number of sexual violence complaints, with over 28,000 reported cases in 2018.⁴⁰ Alarming, 76% of these

³⁶ Equipo del Informe de Seguimiento de la Educación en el Mundo and Iniciativa de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación de las Niñas, “School-Related Gender-Based Violence is Preventing the Achievement of Quality Education for all.” (Unesco, 2015), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232107>.

³⁷ Unesco Perú, “Gender Violence and Education: Towards a School that Protects and Transforms,” Unesco, December 15, 2022, <https://www.unesco.org/es/articles/violencia-de-genero-y-educacion-hacia-una-escuela-que-protege-y-transforma>.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

victims are believed to have been children and adolescents.⁴¹ This is a clear indication of the failure of the implementation of existing policies and the need for more proactive measures to prevent and address sexual violence against girls and adolescent women.

Peru exhibits the highest prevalence of sexual violence in South America,⁴² a phenomenon that predominantly targets girls and adolescent women due to their vulnerable status. This group is often perceived as being more susceptible to sexual abuse due to their naivety and tendency to trust others.⁴³ Notably, sexual violence in Peru can be perpetuated by both state actors, such as the police, and non-state actors, such as neighbors and family members.⁴⁴ However, the latter category is the most prevalent in the country. Sexual abuse by close relatives, such as uncles and fathers on their nieces and daughters, respectively, is a pervasive occurrence that often goes unnoticed.⁴⁵ The underlying causes of this incident can be traced to factors such as the gendered dynamics of power. These are informed by socio-cultural ideas about gender and the power relationships that define them.⁴⁶ In this context, it could include family members covering up sexual violence instances or posing obstacles to denouncing it, in order to reinforce the current gender norms.

In the Spotlight: Huánuco

As it can be observed, sexual violence against girls is a serious problem that affects many regions throughout Peru, with Huánuco being among the most impacted areas. Recent statistics

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Centre for Reproductive Rights, “Peru: The Impact of Sexual Violence on Children’s Reproductive Rights,” 2015, <https://www.reproductiverights.org/sites/default/files/documents/12NOV12%20Peru's%20CRC%20submission%20brief%2071st%20Session%20FINAL.pdf>

⁴³ Save the Children, “Every Last Girl: Free to Live, to Learn, Free from Harm,” 2016, https://issuu.com/savethechildrenit/docs/every_last_girl_oct._11.

⁴⁴ World Health Organization, *Sexual Health, Human Rights, and the Law*, 2015, <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/175556>.

⁴⁵ Association Points-Coeur et al., “Universal Periodic Review 14th Session Joint Statement Situation on the Rights of the Child in Peru,” 2012.

⁴⁶ The University of Auckland, “Gender and Power Dynamics,” 2023, <https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/students/student-support/personal-support/be-well/healthy-relationships/gender-and-power-dynamics.html>.

have revealed a high incidence of physical, psychological, and sexual violence in the neighborhood, with a significant proportion of victims being girls and adolescent women.⁴⁷

The prevalence of sexual violence in the region is particularly concerning, as it has severe and long-lasting impacts on the health, wellbeing, and education of the girls and adolescent women living in the area. In fact, 23% of the cases of physical and sexual violence in Huánuco involved girls and adolescent women.⁴⁸

In addition to the already concerning prevalence of sexual violence against girls in Huánuco, the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the issue of sexual violence in schools for children and adolescents in the region.⁴⁹ With the resumption of in-person classes, there has been a marked increase in the risk of sexual violence, both at the individual and community level.⁵⁰ Children in Huánuco have returned to school without the necessary support and protection from State and educational institutions, leaving them susceptible to abuse and exploitation.⁵¹ The pandemic has disrupted normal routines and created new challenges for students, including social isolation, economic hardship, and mental health concerns.⁵² These factors have thus contributed to the heightened risk of sexual violence in schools, as girls and adolescent women may be more exposed and restricted to access the support and resources they need.

Girls and adolescent women face additional barriers to accessing education and assistance programs. In many cases, they may be forced to drop out of school due to pregnancy or early

⁴⁷ Save the Children Sweden, "Eliminating Sexual Violence Against Children in the Huánuco Region in Peru."

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Doris Godoy Cortez and Susan Ramos Figueredo, "Project for the Psychosocial Recovery of Boys, Girls and Adolescents Survivors of Sexual Violence During Covid-19 in Huánuco-Peru 2022," (Paz & Esperanza Perú, 2022).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Maria S. Plakhotnik et al., "The Perceived Impact of COVID-19 on Student Well-Being and the Mediating Role of the University Support: Evidence from France, Germany, Russia, and the UK," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (July 12, 2021): 642689, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.642689>.

marriage,⁵³ leaving them with limited opportunities for education and economic empowerment. This, in turn, can perpetuate a cycle of poverty, inequality, and gender-based violence⁵⁴ that undermines the development and progress of individuals and communities in Huánuco and beyond.

The available evidence suggests that girls and adolescent women with lower levels of education may be at a higher risk of experiencing sexual violence.⁵⁵ For instance, the illiteracy rate of people aged 15 and over in the region is 20.1%, which is 12 percentage points higher than the national average,⁵⁶ possibly contributing to the increased incidence of sexual violence against children in the area. The low literacy rate and limited access to education in the locality may be attributed to its status as the region with the lowest GDP per capita in the country.⁵⁷ This indicates significant societal issues which can contribute to a higher prevalence of sexual violence. To emphasize, 10.3% of adolescents between 15 and 19 years old in Huánuco have been pregnant at some point, commonly as the result of sexual assault, which is 2 percentage points higher than the national average.⁵⁸ Thus, highlighting a correlation between sexual violence, poverty, and education.

The State's Response to Sexual Violence in Huánuco

Peruvian State institutions appear to have shown a lack of interest in addressing the issue of sexual violence in Huánuco. It is commonly understood that survivors of sexual violence

⁵³ Jenny Birchall, "Early Marriage, Pregnancy and Girl Child School Dropout," Save the Children's Resource Centre, 2018, <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/early-marriage-pregnancy-and-girl-child-school-dropout/>.

⁵⁴ "Why It Happens," Girls Not Brides, 2023, <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/why-child-marriage-happens/>.

⁵⁵ UNICEF, "Hidden in Plain Sight: A Statistical Analysis of Violence against Children," 2014, <https://data.unicef.org/resources/hidden-in-plain-sight-a-statistical-analysis-of-violence-against-children/>.

⁵⁶ Cristian Sipión Villafana, "Situational Diagnosis of Gender Violence against Women, Girls, Adolescents and Members of the Family Group in the Huánuco Region - 2022," (Paz & Esperanza Perú, 2022).

⁵⁷ "Regional GDP Per Capita," OECD Stats, 2014, <https://stats.oecd.org/>.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

require specialized care and support to recover from their traumatic experiences.⁵⁹ However, the care provided by State institutions is often limited, with a scattered and punctual approach that falls short of meeting the needs of the survivors.⁶⁰ Moreover, these State institutions are unwilling to collaborate with private institutions that could provide additional resources and assistance.⁶¹ By working together, State and private institutions could create stronger alliances and offer comprehensive services that could help survivors recover from the effects of sexual violence.⁶² The current rigidity may hinder the provision of quality, care, and support for survivors of sexual violence in Huánuco. The region in question may be characterized by its remote and difficult-to-reach nature, which could be a contributing factor to the variance in the implementation of state-provided protection. This observation underscores the multiple factors that can contribute to the persistence of sexual violence.

Comprehending Risk Factors

To effectively address the issue of sexual violence against girls and adolescent women in Peru, it is crucial to comprehend the multifaceted risk factors and the broader societal context of this problem. These elements provide valuable insights into the underlying motivations driving perpetrators to commit acts of violence against children, as well as the societal factors that contribute to the community's reluctance to tackle and confront such acts. The risk factors contributing to sexual violence can be broadly categorized as: individual, relationship, community, and societal factors.⁶³ The aforementioned are not exclusive to Peru but can be

⁵⁹ General Assembly resolution 44/25, "UNCRC."

⁶⁰ Doris Godoy Cortez and Susan Ramos Figueredo, "Project for the Psychosocial Recovery of Boys, Girls and Adolescents Survivors of Sexual Violence During Covid-19 in Huánuco-Peru 2022," (Paz & Esperanza Perú, 2022).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Ethan Czuy Levine, "Engaging the Community: Building Effective Partnerships in Sexual Violence Prevention," *Journal of Applied Social Science* 12, no. 2 (September 2018): 82–97, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1936724418785416>.

⁶³ Injury Centre, "Risk and Protective Factors: Sexual Violence and Violence Prevention," CDC, February 11, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>.

applied to gain insights into the situation in Huánuco and other regions. The table below examines these further.

Risk Factor	Characteristics
Individual: They shape how a person feels and behaves towards women.	There is a commitment to traditional gender roles (e.g., perceiving women's bodies as the property of men), hatred against women, and hyper-masculinity.
Relationship: They affect the quality and nature of the relationship with women.	A past participation in a violent or abusive intimate relationship, a familial history of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse that has been passed down.
Community: Social and physical environments that influence the prevalence of sexual violence within a community.	Presence of poverty, a lack of institutional support from police and court systems, general tolerance of sexual assault within the community, and lax penalties for sexual violence abusers.
Societal: Conditions that influence the beliefs and behaviors of individuals towards sexual violence.	Prevalence of social norms that promote male dominance while maintaining women's inferiority and sexual submissiveness, lax laws governing sexual assault and gender equity.

Insights from Real-Life Cases

Examining a real-life case can provide insight into how these factors play out in practice. The case of a five-year-old Peruvian girl named Berenice is a notable example. Berenice fell victim to sexual violence at the hands of her fifteen-year-old cousin, whom she regarded as an older

brother.⁶⁴ The incident took place while her mother entrusted her cousin to care for her during her absence for a brief errand. The cousin invited Berenice to play a game, but she declined, prompting him to use force to commit the sexual abuse.⁶⁵ Upon learning of the incident, Berenice's mother informed her nephew's parents, who punished him by grounding him.⁶⁶ Dissatisfied with this outcome, Berenice's mother took legal action, leading to her nephew's confinement in a juvenile center for two years.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, it is important to note that not all cases have the same outcome. In many instances, the response of the Peruvian police to enforce the law is inadequate and delayed, and the prosecution of cases related to gender-based violence is often prolonged and inefficient.⁶⁸ As a result, many tend to disregard such situations.

This was the case for Tatiana, a 15-year-old girl who was subjected to sexual abuse during her journey back home. The perpetrator, a 20-year-old neighbor, abruptly approached her from behind and forcibly took her to an abandoned house located within the vicinity.⁶⁹ With significant force, he threw her to the ground and proceeded to sexually assault her. Summoning her courage, Tatiana gathered the strength to confide in her mother, who accompanied her to confront the perpetrator and his family. He denied any involvement and his father resorted to threats and expelled them from their home.⁷⁰ Desperate for justice, Tatiana's mother turned to the local authorities, seeking their intervention. However, her plea fell on deaf ears as the police disregarded her complaint.⁷¹ Furthermore, facing additional hurdles due to her Quechua-

⁶⁴ Doris María Godoy Cortez et al., "The Psychological Care of the Paz y Esperanza Association in Huánuco for Boys, Girls and Adolescents Who Suffered Sexual Violence," 2015.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ "Peru 2022 Human Rights Report," 2022, www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/415610_PERU-2022-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf.

⁶⁹ Doris María Godoy Cortez et al., "The Psychological Care of the Paz y Esperanza Association in Huánuco for Boys, Girls and Adolescents Who Suffered Sexual Violence," 2015.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

speaking background, Tatiana's mother resigned herself to the unfortunate reality and abandoned the pursuit of justice.⁷²

These factors show us how power and trust relations are exploited to commit sexual assault against girls and adolescent women. In these cases, the child is exceedingly unlikely to disclose the occurrence to the authorities. This is due to a variety of circumstances, including the trust placed in the family member, the concern of not being believed, possible repercussions, and the fear of rejection by relatives and close friends. Furthermore, the existing Peruvian legal framework strives to protect children from abuse and violence, yet abuses committed within the family are frequently concealed and challenging to prosecute.⁷³ Thus, leading to a culture of silence, where the attackers are not held accountable, and the victims are blamed. This may be worsened by the existent Machismo culture, in which men exert repressive control over women.⁷⁴ Consequently, many aggressors face impunity, which in turn, encourages more sexual violence.

Consequences

Evidently, sexual violence constitutes a severe violation of children's rights. It is a traumatic experience that can have long-term consequences on their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. According to a report by the United Nations, children who experience sexual violence are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) later in life.⁷⁵ The trauma of sexual violence can lead to a

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Association Points-Coeur et al., "Universal Periodic Review 14th Session Joint Statement Situation on the Rights of the Child in Peru."

⁷⁴ "Machismo Culture Overview & Examples| Gender Roles in Hispanic Culture - Video & Lesson Transcript," study.com, accessed December 8, 2022, <https://study.com/learn/lesson/machismo-culture-overview-examples-hispanic-gender-roles.html>.

⁷⁵ United Nations, Global status report on violence against children. Geneva: United Nations, 2014.

range of mental health problems that can affect a child's ability to form healthy relationships, perform well in school, and develop a positive sense of self-worth.

Research has shown that sexual violence against girls can lead to increased school dropout rates, lower academic achievement, and reduced economic opportunities.⁷⁶ The social stigma and shame associated with sexual violence can discourage girls from reporting incidents, perpetuating the cycle of violence and discrimination. Moreover, sexual violence can preserve gender-based violence and discrimination, which is a direct violation of girls' and women's rights.⁷⁷ For instance, girls are more likely to experience sexual violence, which can lead to a reduced access to education and increased vulnerability to poverty and exploitation.⁷⁸ Yet, we must note that boys may have a higher rate of sub-notification, which can lead to an underestimation of the prevalence of sexual abuse among boys.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Plan International, *Unsafe, and Insecure: Sexual harassment in Schools*, 2018, <https://plan-international.org/publications/unsafe-and-insecure-sexual-harassment-schools>.

⁷⁸ UNICEF, "Hidden in Plain Sight: A Statistical Analysis of Violence against Children."

THE RESPONSE OF THE PERUVIAN STATE

In early 2023, three prominent organizations, namely Out of the Shadows, Economist Impact, and CRIN, released a regional report for Latin America and the Caribbean titled “Out of the Shadows.” This report presents the findings of research conducted as part of the Out of the Shadows Index, which represents the world’s first comprehensive evaluation of how nations address sexual violence against children and adolescents.⁷⁹ The outcomes of this research will be employed to assess the Peruvian’s government response to this pressing issue.

Promising Initiatives

Peru ranked 46th worldwide and third from the bottom in Latin America.⁸⁰ However, the report does identify several positive developments in Peru’s efforts to safeguard children. Notably, the country’s national legislation on the rights of the children and adolescents is aligned with international laws,⁸¹ indicating a commitment to protecting the welfare of minors. Peru, along with a handful of other Latin American countries, criminalized non-penetrative sexual offenses in 2018.⁸² The amendment was introduced to acknowledge that non-consensual sexual acts can cause harm, thus, addressing all forms of sexual violence. In the same year, the country eliminated the statute of limitations for sexual abuse crimes against minors and established guidelines and training for professionals in fields such as social work, education, and justice, to evaluate children who have experienced sexual abuse.⁸³ The decision was made with the

⁷⁹ “Measuring Progress towards a World Free of Child Sexual Violence.,” Out of the Shadows, 2023, <https://outoftheshadows.global/>.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Out of the Shadows, Economist Impact, and CRIN, “Out of the Shadows Index Latin America and the Caribbean 2023,” 2023, https://es.scribd.com/document/630039959/OOS-Index-LatAm-2023-SP-2023-03-03-023414-wipu#from_embed.

⁸² REGIONAL OBSERVATORY, “Peru Law Creating the Crime of Sexual Harassment, Sexual Blackmail and Dissemination of Images,” *CELE* (blog), 2018, <https://observatoriolegislativocele.com/en/Peru-law-creating-the-crime-of-sexual-harassment-sexual-blackmail-and-dissemination-of-images-2018/>.

⁸³ “Law that modifies the Criminal Code and the Criminal Enforcement Code to strengthen the prevention and punishment of crimes against sexual freedom and indemnity-LAW-N° 30838,” *El Peruano*, 2023, <http://busquedas.elperuano.pe/normaslegales/ley-que-modifica-el-codigo-penal-y-el-codigo-de-ejecucion-pe-lei-n-30838-1677448-1/>.

intention of providing justice to victims of child sexual abuse, as it is common for victims to take years to come forward and report the abuse. These efforts suggest that Peru is making strides to tackle and prevent sexual violence against children.

Challenges in Practical Implementation

Nevertheless, despite the aforementioned attempts, Peru still faces challenges in implementing its plans. Although the country has demonstrated a commitment to addressing sexual violence against children and adolescents, there remain significant gaps in its practical implementation.

For instance, Peru previously had a national plan specifically targeting the sexual exploitation and abuse of children, called “The National Plan Against Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents 2012-2021.” However, this 10-year plan lapsed after reaching its end in 2021, posing a significant barrier to creating a sturdy national response to this issue.⁸⁴ Additionally, Peruvian law does not provide adequate protection for trafficked children who are forced into illegal activities like prostitution,⁸⁵ leaving them vulnerable to prosecution. Furthermore, the country received the lowest score in the region for support and recovery services, including hotlines and emergency response services.⁸⁶ For example, in the country, there does not appear to be a dedicated hotline for reporting sexual violence against children and adolescents. The one hotline that is available, called “Teléfono Anar,” is no longer in service, as reported by Child Helpline International.⁸⁷ In this respect, Peru is ranked 58th out of 60 countries globally.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, “The National Plan Against Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents 2012-2021,” 2012, https://tdh-latam.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/PNAIA_2012-2021.pdf.

⁸⁵ Out of the Shadows, Economist Impact, and CRIN, “Out of the Shadows Index Latin America and the Caribbean 2023.”

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Ronald Gamarra Herrera, “Latin American Countries Ranked Regarding Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents,” Kausa Justa, 2023, <https://kausajusta.blogspot.com/2023/03/crin-los-paises-latinoamericanos.html>.

⁸⁸ Out of the Shadows, Economist Impact, and CRIN, “Out of the Shadows Index Latin America and the Caribbean 2023.”

As it can be observed, the Peruvian State has a regulatory framework that appears to align with international standards for the protection of human rights. However, further scrutiny reveals that this framework has not been fully implemented. One way these norms could be implemented is through legal mobilization and knowledge. This will be tackled in the practical component which was done in collaboration with Paz & Esperanza Peru.

According to the report, there are no specialized services available for the care, protection, and restitution of rights for children and adolescents who have been victims of sexual violence and exploitation.⁸⁹ Additionally, there is no specific budgetary program in place to prevent and combat sexual violence against children and adolescents. Yet, it was discovered that the State invests less than 1% in addressing this issue.⁹⁰ These findings suggest that the Peruvian government has not made addressing violence against children a priority. In fact, the State is becoming the main agent of re-victimization.⁹¹

Intersection of Criminalized Abortion and Sexual Violence

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that Peru's Penal Code criminalizes abortion under Article 119, with only exceptions made to prevent death or serious injury.⁹² This means that there are no exceptions available for pregnancies resulting from non-consensual sex or sexual violence. Consequently, a woman who opts for abortion may face imprisonment for up to two years.⁹³ This legal framework exacerbates an already dire situation in Peru, where unsafe abortion is one of the leading causes of pregnancy-related death among women, girls, and adolescent women.⁹⁴ The severe restrictions on sexual and reproductive rights make it increasingly

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Ronald Gamarra Herrera, "Latin American Countries Ranked Regarding Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents".

⁹² Centre for Reproductive Rights, "Peru: The Impact of Sexual Violence on Children's Reproductive Rights."

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

challenging to combat sexual violence against women effectively. Additionally, children and adolescents lack access to essential reproductive health information and services, resulting in high rates of unplanned pregnancies and an increase likelihood that sexual violence will lead to pregnancy.⁹⁵ It is apparent that Peru has yet to make significant progresses in preventing sexual violence against children.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION (CSE)

The imperative for Peru to take more proactive measures to protect and promote children's sexual rights is evident. One viable course of action for the nation entails the integration of comprehensive sexuality education programs into its official educational curricula. CSE is a pedagogical approach aimed at promoting knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values pertaining to the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social dimensions of human sexuality.⁹⁶ Its ultimate goal is to empower children and young people to achieve their optimal health, well-being, and dignity.⁹⁷ By developing respectful social and sexual relationships and critically examining the impact of their choices on themselves and others, children and young people can acquire the skills necessary to navigate the complex landscape of sexual relationships.⁹⁸ CSE also plays an important role in promoting awareness of and ensuring the protection of human rights across their lifespan, by enabling children to better understand their rights and how they can be safeguarded in different contexts.⁹⁹

Essentially, CSE represents a valuable tool as it possesses dual potential. Firstly, this type of education enables children and adolescents to identify abusive and violent situations,¹⁰⁰ equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to protect themselves from sexually abusive relationships. Secondly, CSE plays a critical role in making other rights effective, particularly the right to autonomy.¹⁰¹ By preparing young people to become active citizens in

⁹⁶ UNAIDS et al., "International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An Evidence-Informed Approach," 2018.

⁹⁷ UNESCO, "Comprehensive Sexuality Education: A Global Review," 2015, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000235707>.

⁹⁸ UNAIDS et al., "International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education: An Evidence-Informed Approach."

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Liliana Ronconi, "Inter-American Court of Human Rights: Freedom from Sexual Violence in Educational Contexts," accessed May 8, 2023, <https://ohrh.law.ox.ac.uk/inter-american-court-of-human-rights-freedom-from-sexual-violence-in-educational-contexts/>.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

their society,¹⁰² CSE empowers them to make informed decisions regarding their sexuality, relationships, and reproductive rights.

Deficiencies in CSE Implementation in Peru

However, the provision of CSE is lacking in many countries worldwide and Peru is no exception. A notable deficiency in the country is the absence of national legislation mandating the inclusion of CSE in school curricula.¹⁰³ This gap reflects a lack of political will to implement CSE guidelines in schools, train teachers, and provide monitoring or evaluation programs.¹⁰⁴ Notably, only 9% of Peruvian students have received instruction on all topics covered by CSE,¹⁰⁵ including gender, violence, and pleasure.¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately, the situation has worsened with the passage of Law No.31498 by the Peruvian Congress in May 2022.¹⁰⁷ This law confers supervisory and veto powers over the Ministry of Education's learning materials for primary and secondary schools to publicly registered parental organizations.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, parents can limit or cancel education focused on sexual and reproductive rights if they argue that it promotes sexual promiscuity or violates their moral values. The Peruvian Human Rights Ombudsperson has publicly expressed opposition to this law,¹⁰⁹ however, as of today, no significant changes have been made.

¹⁰² IPPF, "From Evidence to Action: Advocating for Comprehensive Sexuality Education," 2009, https://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/from_evidence_to_action.pdf.

¹⁰³ Angélica Motta et al., "From Paper to Practice: Sexuality Education Policies and Their Implementation in Peru," 2017, https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/sexuality_education_policies_and_their_implementation_in_peru.pdf.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ IPPF, "From Evidence to Action: Advocating for Comprehensive Sexuality Education."

¹⁰⁷ See: "Law That Promotes the Quality of Educational Materials and Resources in Peru" (El Peruano, 2022), <https://busquedas.elperuano.pe/download/url/ley-que-impulsa-la-calidad-de-los-materiales-y-recursos-educ-ley-n-31498-2080217-1>.

¹⁰⁸ Cristian González Cabrera, "Peru Is Threatening Human Rights Education," *Human Rights Watch* (blog), January 24, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/24/peru-threatening-human-rights-education>.

¹⁰⁹ Defensoría del Pueblo, "Congress Must Archive a Bill that Conditions the Publication of Educational Materials to the Prior Consent of Parents," Defensoría del Pueblo - Perú, 2022, <https://www.defensoria.gob.pe/congreso-debe-archivar-proyecto-de-ley-que-condiciona-publicacion-de-materiales-educativos-al-consentimiento-previo-de-padres-y-madres/>.

The “Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas” movement in Peru has also exerted a significant influence on the debates surrounding CSE. Comprised predominantly of conservative and religious groups, the movement has raised apprehension about CSE, contending that it promotes explicit content and undermines parental authority.¹¹⁰ Thus, policymakers have faced heightened scrutiny and encountered resistance towards CSE policies, as they are pressured to address these concerns. The movement’s mobilization through protests and legal battles has amplified the salience of the CSE discourse, causing challenges in finding a middle ground between the positions of the movement and CSE proponents.¹¹¹ This intricate political landscape has impeded the full implementation of CSE in the country.

Would CSE be Beneficial?

The potential benefits of CSE in Peru’s fight against sexual violence towards children are visible. Sexuality education is essential to prevent and combat sexual violence and exploitation against children. Numerous studies have shown that CSE plays a crucial role in preventing gender-based violence and discrimination against women.¹¹² CSE can convey strong messages in favor of gender-equality from an early stage, promoting non-stereotyped gender roles and educating children about mutual respect and consent.¹¹³ By promoting such values, CSE can help create a safer and more equitable society for all.

¹¹⁰ Aciprensa, “#ConMisHijosNoTeMetas: Thousands will march against gender ideology in Peru,” 2018, <https://www.aciprensa.com/noticias/conmishijosnotemetas-miles-marcharan-contr-ideologia-de-genero-en-peru-41549>.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² See: Venkatraman Chandra-Mouli et al., “Twenty Years After International Conference on Population and Development: Where Are We With Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights?,” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 56, no. 1 (January 2015): S1–6, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2014.09.015>.

¹¹³ Dunja Mijatović, “Comprehensive Sexuality Education Protects Children and Helps Build a Safer, Inclusive Society,” Commissioner for Human Rights, 2020, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/comprehensive-sexuality-education-protects-children-and-helps-build-a-safer-inclusive-society>.

In the context of sexual and reproductive health and rights, schools have been identified as a crucial setting for raising awareness.¹¹⁴ The implementation of mandatory CSE programs in schools has been shown to have a significant impact on reducing the rate of teenage pregnancy. In countries where no such programs exist, the teenage birth rate tends to be much higher, according to the WHO.¹¹⁵ By integrating CSE into the curriculum, the Peruvian State could inform children about their human rights and autonomy, leading to a significant reduction in the rates of teenage pregnancies and sexual violence.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ World Health Organization, “Sexuality Education in Europe and Central Asia: State of the Art and Recent Developments,” 2018, www.bzga-whocc.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/BZgA_IPPFEN_ComprehensiveStudyReport_Online.pdf.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a clear need to strengthen CSE in Peru. This could be achieved through the enactment of current regulations into law and the establishment of mandatory national CSE programs in primary and secondary schools. Yet, given the current situation, it is also crucial to engage with a wide range of audiences and tailor messages to individual groups to persuade them to introduce CSE at national and local levels.¹¹⁶ In particular, targeting parents and caregivers is essential, as they hold significant power in promoting or suppressing CSE.

Therefore, it is important for schools and the government to promote the idea that CSE helps to prepare young people to become healthy and sexually responsible adults.¹¹⁷ This is a message that needs to be spread widely to counter the false belief that CSE promotes sexual promiscuity. In fact, research has shown that CSE can help to delay sexual activity and promote safe behaviour.¹¹⁸ By prioritizing CSE in this way, Peru could not only fulfill children's right to education, but also protect them from sexual violence. Thus, it is crucial to increase awareness and advocacy efforts to promote CSE and ensure that it is included in the national education system.

While CSE plays an important role, it is not the only tool, other factors must be considered. For instance, State institutions, the education system, and civil society must work together to create safer environments that offer a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of violence. To achieve this, it is also essential to provide specialized training to teachers and other adults who are in contact with children, to enable them to recognize and respond effectively to instances

¹¹⁶ IPPF, "From Evidence to Action: Advocating for Comprehensive Sexuality Education."

¹¹⁷ WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA, "Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe A Framework for Policy Makers, Educational and Health Authorities and Specialists" (Federal Centre for Health Education, 2016), www.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/WHOSTandards-for-Sexuality-Education-in-Europe.pdf.

¹¹⁸ IPPF, "From Evidence to Action: Advocating for Comprehensive Sexuality Education."

of violence.¹¹⁹ Moreover, survivors of sexual violence must be provided with comprehensive care and support. This care should encompass physical, psychological, and social support, with the provision of specialized medical and counselling services to help children recover from their traumatic experiences.¹²⁰ This support must be ongoing, with access to long-term care and follow-ups to ensure that children can overcome the effects of sexual violence and rebuild their lives.

Likewise, promoting gender equality and human rights is key in preventing sexual violence.¹²¹ It is essential to change societal attitudes, therefore the Peruvian State should strive to raise awareness of gender-based and sexual violence, as it can promote positive attitudes towards gender equality, and create safe spaces where children can express themselves freely without fear of harassment or discrimination.¹²² Ultimately, this could be achieved by incorporating gender equality education into school curricula and promoting respect for human rights at all levels of society. These must go hand in hand, as education or raising awareness alone will not solve the issue of sexual violence against children.

¹¹⁹ UNESCO and Otto Klineberg, eds., *Race as News* (Paris: UNESCO Press, 1974), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000011372>.

¹²⁰ ECOSOC Resolution 2005/20, “United Nations Guidelines on Justice in Matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime” (The Economic and Social Council, December 2006), <https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2005/resolution%202005-20.pdf>.

¹²¹ Leah Okenwa-Emgwa and Eva von Strauss, “Higher Education as a Platform for Capacity Building to Address Violence against Women and Promote Gender Equality: The Swedish Example,” *Public Health Reviews* 39, no. 1 (December 2018): 31, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40985-018-0108-5>.

¹²² Lourdes Villardón-Gallego et al., “Early Educational Interventions to Prevent Gender-Based Violence: A Systematic Review,” *Healthcare* 11, no. 1 (January 3, 2023): 142, <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11010142>.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is evident that sexual violence against girls and adolescent women is a significant problem in Peru that demands immediate attention. The risk factors associated with this issue, such as the lack of education and prevalence of traditional gender roles, must be addressed to make meaningful progress in preventing sexual violence. As highlighted in this paper, the consequences of sexual violence on children are devastating, both in the short and long term. As such, the Peruvian State must strive to do better when it comes to protecting children, especially young girls, from sexual violence and providing support for those who have been affected.

One promising approach to addressing this issue is the implementation of CSE in Peru. By equipping children with accurate information about sexuality, relationships, and consent, CSE can help reduce the risk of sexual violence and empower young people to make informed choices about their bodies. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the Peruvian State take action to integrate CSE into the education system as a positive step towards preventing sexual violence and promoting sexual rights for children.

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