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ARTICLE



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## The Multi-Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children in Peru: The process and its outcomes

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### ABSTRACT

This article presents the Peru results as part of the *Multi Country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children*. The article provides an overview of the Peruvian context, the methodology of the study and research results and impact attributable to both the Study's *products* and its *processes*. Results show a high prevalence of violence against children in Peru and various factors that contribute to this situation. The article also examines an action-oriented, locally led approach that served to transform decision-making (from denial to acknowledgement) to make visible how violence affects children in the country. The article concludes by examining the governance of the Study, based on the relationships built among key stakeholders and how it ultimately opened the space for open discussion of research results and change in public policy and practice to confront and prevent violence affecting children.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

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### KEYWORDS

Violence affecting children;  
Peru; partnerships

## Introduction

In August 2016, more than 50,000 women, men and children marched in Peru's capital, as well as in eight other cities to protest violence against women. Activists leading this effort focused on the indifference of the judicial system to these acts of violence. In the weeks prior to the march, hundreds of women shared their stories of violence. In most cases, women experienced violence in various forms since childhood. Although violence against children tends to be a broadly accepted norm (Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática[INEI], 2016; Anderson, 2016; Guerrero and Rojas 2016; MIMP & UNICEF 2016), the activism shed important light on the pervasive nature of violence against children in societies and how this holds not only for girls and boys, but also for the adults they become and the communities and societies in which they live and work.

Two years prior to the public demonstration, Peru had joined the Drivers Study. This article shares the impact of the Study – both its process and its outcomes – to

transform decision-making and enact legal reforms in response to a growing, *evidence-informed* demand to prioritize the prevention of violence affecting children (VAC).

## National context

Peru is home to 32 million inhabitants, of which 33% are under 18 years of age (INEI 2018). Its diversity is both geographical and cultural: according to the Ministry of Culture, there are 47 indigenous languages spoken alongside Spanish as the official national language. Its legacy as the centrepiece of Spain's South American colonies persists in the disadvantage faced by the descendants of indigenous populations and African slaves. Poverty and child malnutrition disproportionately affect indigenous children – especially those from rural Andes and Amazonia regions – with impacts on educational outcomes and livelihood opportunities (UNICEF, 2010).

By international economic standards, Peru is South America's success story in spite of a troubled past. In 1980, Peru entered two decades of violent conflict between communist and socialist groups, the State and paramilitary groups with an estimated 70,000 people killed or disappeared (CVR, 2003) and traumatic effects throughout Peruvian society (Theidon, 2013). Since 1980, a democratically elected government has led Peru, yet failures of political representation and participation remain, with the rights of rural and indigenous citizens, in particular, often overlooked.

Since 2008, Peru has held upper middle-income country status, with the economy growing steadily at a 6% average rate over the last decade, mainly due to the international demand for Peru's minerals.<sup>1</sup> However, inequity remains, urban areas are highly segregated and service delivery of education, health, and child care also reflect the class, gender and ethnic hierarchies heavily present in social practices; many services fail to address the needs of Peru's culturally diverse population. Meanwhile, the support of international donors and agencies has been reduced as a result of its current economic status.

## Research and policy context

The right of every child to live a life free of violence was high on the agenda for UNICEF Peru and its partnership with the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP). Prior to the Drivers Study, VAC data were fragmented, dispersed, anecdotal and largely under-analysed, though what was available indicated that a large proportion of Peruvian children were affected. While the State's efforts focused on criminal justice and family law mechanisms and social protection services, clearly these efforts were under-resourced.

The Drivers Study employed a human-centred design, focusing on building relationships of trust. Such design, coupled with growing national recognition of violence as a widespread problem, provided a platform to expand the political discourse based on child rights and on the strength of evidence generated locally, including contextualized narratives, fully attuned to scientific standards. Peru's National Demographic and Health Survey (ENDES) and pilot National Survey on Social Relations (ENARES)

provided data ripe for secondary analysis, as did its administrative data from the national system of social protection for children.

This opportunity for ‘recycling’ data to further unlock the stories it could tell provided the basis from which the Peruvian government (especially MIMP) as well as UNICEF Peru, national academic institutions (particularly Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú or PUCP), international academic institutions (the University of Edinburgh), and the Peruvian and UK offices of Young Lives, and Peruvian NGOs joined to collectively engage in the complex work of untangling what drives violence against Peruvian children, and what could be done about it.

## Methods

A research team from CISEPA-PUCP<sup>2</sup> with technical support from the University of Edinburgh conducted a systematic literature review in national and international databases (EBSCO, SCOPUS, JSTOR, PROQUEST, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* and *Child Abuse Review*). The literature review followed a common protocol (Maternowska & Fry, 2015) with the aim to uncover structural and institutional drivers of VAC, as well as protection and risk factors that may appear in different studies. The review was limited to research and publications produced between 2000 and 2015. It identified a total of 280 sources, including grey literature, 116 of which were theses (undergraduate, M.A. and doctoral) produced at Peruvian colleges and universities, many of them identified by visiting local universities. Most of this material was in Spanish, much of it not available online but in local libraries – reasons why such sources are often missed by international reviews and databases. Many of the references were discovered through word of mouth, especially studies produced by NGOs specializing in programs for families and children. Three people – two anthropologists and one sociologist – participated in the literature search, and most of the sources were discussed collectively with a view to evaluating the quality of the information. A fourth person reread over half of the corpus and completed a quality-control format provided by the UNICEF and Edinburgh project staff. The greatest challenge in evaluating the reliability of the research that led to the conclusions of the review was estimating the generalizability of the findings of the case studies that make up the largest part of it. Overall, it was the recurrence of certain associations and themes in different studies, from different parts of the country and segments of the population, that made it possible to derive the patterns that the results section describe. It is worth noting that most of the theses, except at the M.A. and doctoral level, were discarded in the process of quality control.

In addition, the research team conducted a secondary analysis of the ENARES survey dataset (Fry et al., 2016). UNICEF specially commissioned studies based on the Peruvian section of the Young Lives dataset (Guerrero and Rojas, 2016, Oganda & Pells, 2015). Statistic databases for secondary analysis are summarized in Table 1. The article by Maternowska and Fry (this volume) provides more details on the methods used in the whole Study.

**Table 1.** Datasets included in the secondary analyses.

Name of dataset	Organization(s)	Year	Sampling	Sample ("n" disaggregated by age/gender)	Main purpose of survey	Type of physical violence measured
ENARES (National Survey on Social Relations)	National Statistical & Informatics Institute (INEI)	2013, 2015	The sampling methods were the same for the 2013 and 2015 surveys. Urban and rural areas were identified as the main sampling strata. Educational institutions were selected in the first stage through systematic sampling probability proportional to size (PPS) according to the number of students. As a result, a list of selected educational institutions including the selection probabilities of each was obtained. The second step involved determining the level of education in these institutions. In primary institutions it was used in the 4th, 5th and 6th grade, and secondary 1st through 5th grade. In the third and final stage, using simple systematic sampling with random start, students were selected in each grade and school, and according to (primary vs. secondary) education.	<p>2013: 3,076 respondents aged 9-17 &amp; years</p> <p>1508 females 1568 males</p> <p>1,587 (51.5%) aged between 9 and 11 years 1,489 (48.5%) aged between 12 and 17 years</p> <p>2015: 3,102 respondents aged 9-17 years</p> <p>50.5% females 49.5% males in the 9-11 years segment</p> <p>47.7% females 52.3% males in the 12-17 years old segment</p>	<p>The survey aimed to determine:</p> <p>a) the prevalence of violence against children and adolescents in the family setting,</p> <p>b) the prevalence of violence amongst students at schools,</p> <p>c) causal factors (personal, family-related and socio-cultural) both within households and schools,</p> <p>d) responses from the institutions and staff, and</p> <p>e) the social acceptance of violence against children and adolescents</p>	Physical, psychological and sexual violence at home and school

*(Continued)*

Table 1. (Continued).

Name of dataset	Organization(s)	Year	Sampling	Sample ("n" disaggregated by age/gender)	Main purpose of survey	Type of physical violence measured
Young Lives	University of Oxford Funded by the Department of International Development (DFID). The Peru team is based at GRADE (Analysis Group for Development)	2002-2013	Longitudinal study following 12,000 children in Peru, Viet Nam, Ethiopia and two states in India. Children belong to two cohorts: The Older Cohort follows children born in 1994-95 and interviewed at ages 8, 12, 15 and 19. The Younger Cohort follow children born in 2001-2 and gathered information from children and their families at ages 1, 5, 8 and 12.Using a multi-stage sampling procedure, children and their households were randomly sampled within 20 sites, which were selected following a semi-purposive sampling strategy in order to oversample poor areas. Four rounds of quantitative surveys of children, households and communities have been conducted. Four rounds of in-depth qualitative interviews have also been conducted with a nested sub-sample randomly selected of YL children from both Cohorts. This takes place in 3 of the sites in Viet Nam, 4 in Peru and India and 5 in Ethiopia.	1,000 children in the Older Cohort 2,000 children in the Younger Cohort About 50 children in the qualitative sub-sample	Impacts of MDG on reducing child poverty; generate evidence to help policymakers design programmes	Corporal punishment; Bullying

## Study' governance

The Study process, in particular its governance and technical review structures, were critical to its success. Regular meetings between UNICEF and government officials were held across two successive government administrations. A national steering committee was formed at the very beginning of the study, including a multidisciplinary group of leading practitioners, researchers and policymakers and a special Working Group was formed within MIMP to guide development of the Study. Led by the Deputy Minister of Vulnerable Populations, the Working Group included three division directors, two directors of sections and the director of a national programme against violence. Institutionalizing a nationally led technical review body in this way provided stability as the Working Group remained intact through changes in high-level government officials and whole administrations.

As the Study evolved, a Scientific Committee was appointed in 2016 to provide further national advisory capacity. Led by MIMP, it is composed of Lima-based academics and practitioners working to respond to and prevent VAC. The committee met once or twice annually to discuss the Study's outcomes and identified actions and linkages between government, academic and civil society actors based on these discussions. In addition to these strategic aims, the committee also helped to ensure continuity of the Study. A participant in these committees was interviewed to take into account the process in such instances.

## Research results: what drives violence affecting Peruvian children – and what does not?

The data from both ENARES surveys (2013 and 2015) showed that violence is prevalent among both children and adolescents in Peru. From the total 2013 samples of males, 85.9% have been victims of violence, whether psychological and/or physical, at their homes; while in females, the percentage is 84.9%. Regarding psychological violence at home, 74.2% of males and 77.1% of females have been victims. Regarding physical violence in the household, 69.7% of men have been victims as compared to 68.5% of females.

The 2015 survey reports similar numbers: 58% of children aged 9–11 and 67% of adolescents aged 12–17 were victims of psychological violence; 58% of children aged 9–11 and 65% of adolescents aged 12–17 were victims of physical violence; 35% of adolescents aged 12–17 suffered sexual violence.

Thus, the analysis of surveys databases clearly showed Peruvian children experience high levels of psychological and physical violence both at home and school. Further analysis also showed that violence has negative effects in later educational outcomes (Fry et al., 2016; Oganda & Pells, 2015). Facing these numbers, the main research question of the literature review was: what drives violence affecting children in Peru, and what can be done about it? In the course of answering this question, we also uncovered some 'myths' about what *doesn't* drive violence, and found these equally important in efforts around national advocacy and actions. Here we summarize first the main findings around drivers, which the framework of the study places at the structural and institutional levels of the socioecological model

(See <https://www.unicef-irc.org/research/pdf/448-child-centered-brief.pdf>), and later we present the myths.

Structural drivers of VAC are related to demographic and migratory processes that bring about radical changes; the weakness of the Peruvian State and civil society to provide social protection; and economic and gender inequality. All of these interact with each other.

### ***Migration and displacement: widening the gap between generations***

Demographic processes driven by migration, displacement, expanding education, mass media and communication technologies have widened the gap between adults' and children's experiences. Children are also dependent for longer periods than before and have fewer siblings. With families increasingly located in cities rather than on farms, children make greater financial demands and contribute less in labour. These changes set parents and children up for conflicts over expectations and matters such as the margins of liberty to be given to children: their choice of friends, activities and places to be. Old and new styles of organizing children's lives in frameworks of time and space easily become flash points in Peruvian families. At the same time, more children move into the category of 'priceless' (Zelizer, 1994), deserving of *cariño* (affectionate treatment), a high investment of caretaking effort and protection (Anderson, 2016).

Rural to urban migration not only creates intergenerational gaps and misunderstanding between parents and children, but it also leaves many of the parents in doubt about the rules appropriate to the new context and uncertain about their own status. Many of the studies allude to parents' use of restrictions, punishment and violence in an effort to avoid being drawn by their children into situations they are unsure of being able to control: for example, conflicts with neighbours, bosses, teachers, law-enforcement, etc. Some studies suggest that urban migrants are more likely to be rigid, authoritarian and reliant on corporal punishment than their rural counterparts (Cavagnoud, 2011; Olthoff, 2006). They may be 'super-correcting' in an effort to promote conformity to what they understand to be urban norms, or they may be reacting to fear of an unchartered social environment.

### ***Economic and gender inequality***

Despite rapid economic growth, poverty and inequality are a persistent feature of Peruvian life. The extractive industries prevalent in the highland and Amazon regions bring economic gains but also create new social problems: rates of child sexual abuse are especially high in mining centres, along migration routes, at the country's internationally famous tourist attractions, and lawless zones such as gold rush towns in Puno and Madre de Dios (Mujica, 2014). Some Peruvian children are caught up in international networks of sex trafficking. Peruvian girls have been found in the sex trade in other countries and adolescent girls from other countries have been found engaged in sex work in Peru (ECPAT, 2005). Shifts in gender norms and socioeconomic stratification are also creating new stresses on families. The Peruvian gender order is elastic but contains strong elements of Catholic conservatism and Mediterranean machismo (Fuller, 2001; Pinzás, 2001). Parents' use of violence to control the behaviour of daughters reflects many of the

attitudes associated with this ideology: that boys and men are innately predatory and girls, particularly in adolescence, must be closely monitored if not restricted to their home.

### ***Social organization of care***

Process of migration and urbanization involved changes in the social organization of care in both informal and formal child protection systems: rural family and community protection mechanisms are giving way to the dynamics of large anonymous cities, where children and adolescents are exposed to new forms of violence in schools and city streets. Government policies assume civil society, philanthropic organizations and churches will provide social protection. But government has largely failed to ascertain whether this is true or even evaluate its own efforts. Many of the studies reviewed illustrated problems of government inaction where simple measures could have been taken to make urban architecture, transportation and public spaces safer for children.

Failures of formal protection – offering standardised services that do not meet the needs of a diverse cultural and ethnic population – only serve to convince parents and other caretakers that they are on their own in their efforts to educate and protect their children. Thus, a recent law that prohibits corporal punishment in schools and at home is misinterpreted by many parents as the State's depriving them of the only instrument they possess for intervening in extreme situations of children's misbehaviour. Government is seen not as an ally and resource but as a threat to parents' autonomy as they attempt to meet their long-term responsibility towards their offspring.

### ***Myths***

The research also highlighted three myths identified around VAC. The first is the belief that violence is associated with cultural traditions, and more specifically Andean culture. Indeed, Andean culture is typically represented as inexplicably violent, especially in the wake of Shining Path (a communist group party which initiated Peru's 20 years of violent conflict), but ethnographic and qualitative studies reviewed suggest a more nuanced picture. Such studies find that physical punishment is not arbitrary, but tends to be linked to children's failure to perform household duties (Bolin, 2006; Anderson, 2006; Villa Riveros, 2002). In fact, praising children and conversing with them conflicts with Andean values of modesty, humility and not wasting words. Community-based studies suggest that even though corporal punishment is common, severe violence is concentrated in a few families who are often viewed as marginal and problematic by their own neighbours and local leaders (Anderson, 2001; Ames, 2013; Del Pino, Portugal, Arones, Del Pino & Mena, 2012; Leinaweaver, 2008; Molinero, 2003).

A second myth uncovered is that children are safest at home. This idea inevitably restricts children's worlds, as parents discourage community engagement, which can include attending childcare centres. According to ENARES, 58.9% of children between 9 and 11 years of age suffered psychological violence whilst 58.4% suffered physical violence at home. For adolescents aged 12–16 years, rates were even higher, with 67.6% reporting psychological violence and 65.6% reporting physical violence at home (INEI – Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, 2016). Especially for adolescent girls, conflicts with

parents over going out – when, where and with whom – are a primary motive for interpersonal violence between adult caretakers and their children.

The third myth, often construed as a risk factor operating at the interpersonal or individual levels of the socioecological framework, and tied to structural drivers, is the idea that violence is inherited by children from their parents. While intergenerational violence appears to play a role in Peruvian society – how this manifests in children’s lives is important. Research shows how structural and institutional drivers may impact on family dynamics. For example, the work of Nóbrega (2012) identifies variables such as participation in social networks, religious affiliation, family culture and modes of communication, and dynamics between parents (including jealousy and suspicions of infidelity) that are rarely considered in analyses. In Nóbrega’s study, personal styles in dealing with problems and mental illness showed particularly direct and powerful associations with adult-on-adult and adult-on-child violence. Such factors, reflecting the deep, ongoing realities of family life, are not registered in the national surveys that provide most of the evidence for the inheritance of violence hypothesis. On the contrary, respondents are asked selectively to remember acts of violence by their caretakers but not asked about their expressions of affection and commitment. To evaluate the grain of truth that may lie behind this myth, more studies are needed along the lines of Silva (1999) that examine the process of learning violence alongside the process of learning prosocial attitudes and diverse strategies for resolving conflicts in households of varying types and composition.

### **Analysing the process of mutual collaboration: results**

Before the Study began, results from the first round of ENARES (taken in 2013) painted a bleak picture in terms of the violence in Peruvian children’s lives. Policymakers were shocked with the initial results followed by a high-level decision within the government not to go public with such results. Government officials called into question the methodology and worried that the survey’s findings would tarnish Peru’s reputation; while results showed that ‘violence was everywhere’, they doubted this could be true.

Building on the Study’s belief that existing data can effectively be ‘recycled’, Peru’s involvement in the Study was conditional on being able to reanalyse ENARES data, which was previously under an embargo. MIMP requested UNICEF to support them with the secondary analysis. This served as an opportunity to work with government statisticians and national institutions to revisit the survey data and, through a process of nationally led analysis and synthesis, build an understanding followed by acceptance around the evidence collected. The approach of the Study, notably its investment in nationally trained academics and practitioners, led by UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti was critical in facilitating such access, as was the participatory training provided to staff from MIMP and the National Institute of Statistics (INEI) by the University of Edinburgh, UNICEF’s international academic partner for the Study. UNICEF Peru and the national research team were integral to all discussions and fully supported the data analysis while conducting, in parallel, the systematic literature review described earlier.

In this way, the Study process of joint analysis and synthesis strengthened the relationship between MIMP, UNICEF Peru and the national research team at the CISEPA-PUCP. Importantly considering the multi-sectorality required for VAC prevention and

response, it also led to the inclusion of Ministries not previously addressing violence, creating new multidisciplinary perspectives on a complex social problem. As research results emerged, the opportunity to discuss and present them in public forums created further engagement, supporting a nationally owned space for co-learning and co-production around highly sensitive issues that had previously been difficult to openly discuss.

The collaborative nature of this approach and the locally led and controlled process allowed for the ultimate unlocking of the data: the launch of Peru's report describing country-specific findings from the Drivers Study. The results were presented at a strategic time, following the country's 2016 elections – ensuring that any newly appointed Ministries were handed a sustainable evidence-based plan for violence prevention. Government engagement led to the ground-breaking decision to bring what we know about violence affecting Peruvian children into the light of day – by making public both the 2013 and 2015 ENARES results, in addition to the results of the Study's literature review to offer context for the shocking statistics and to help explain how and why such violence was taking place. The launch also demonstrated to the Peruvian public, if not the region more widely, that violence prevention is an important and pressing issue the Peruvian Government is prepared to address.

Both the Study *process* and its *products* (reports, briefs, etc.) sparked crucial dialogue around the financial resources necessary for such work. For example, MIMP, along with the Ministry of Finance, has begun analysing two programmes to review public investment on child protection-related issues, and child's rights organisations have started to advocate for funds spent on violence prevention and response to be more efficiently used and distributed. The way the Study contributed to these shifts in discourses on violence at the national level was captured in an independent assessment of the Study's impact. An official from MIMP shared that:

*The Study made us see different things...and challenged our beliefs that we had about violence...It allowed us to get to know the dimensions of violence because in the past, we were aware of the types of violence that we see in the services when children come to get help or care, but we were not focusing on the day to day violence that happens...The Study has provided us the opportunity to accept things that are difficult.* (in Morton & Casey, 2017)

While another official from the Ministry of Education (Minedu) shared: 'The results have been eye-opening as we have typically focused on bullying and peer-to-peer bullying, and have been reluctant to accept violence perpetrated by teachers in schools.' The report goes on to note that, 'A UNICEF staff member stated that Minedu is interested in using the evidence generated from the study in order to improve the child protection system: "they are asking to discuss the evidence from the first phase [of the study] with us and they want to use it"' (Morton & Casey, 2017).

## Discussion

Research results showed the high prevalence of violence in the daily experience of Peruvian children, and uncovered the various drivers of such violence that emerged from different sources. Rapid cultural change amidst a context of economic and gender inequality without proper support for the social organization of care are interconnected factors accounting for the high rates of VAC detected in surveys. However, the

information alone did not seem enough to prompt changes, as the reaction to the 2013 ENARES showed: results were not open to the public. Building capacity and working among different stakeholders provided a way forward to reanalyse secondary data and give it sense. In parallel, bringing together different Ministries to tackle the multi-sectoral issue of VAC has been a key aspect of the Study's design and ultimately, its success in supporting national governments to better prevent violence.

Throughout, UNICEF Peru's role in maintaining a trusting and sustained relationship with government officials at several levels was critical, keeping open channels of communication between the research team and government and ensuring the stability of the MIMP Working Group, Multi-Sectoral Steering Committee and Scientific Committee through legal resolutions. Such a task is not feasible for researchers alone, but need a sustained engagement with all the actors involved. In a process of co-discovery, UNICEF facilitated this process at institutional and technical levels, but recognized that Peruvian government, academia and practitioners are best placed to generate context-relevant solutions.

## Conclusions

The Drivers Study's applied approach to understanding violence in Peru revealed not only the underlying structural and institutional drivers of violence, but also contributed to dismantling some of the accepted 'myths' about violence affecting children. The process made visible key national data and supported officials working within the leading government agency, MIMP, to go beyond the static idea of prevalence – 'we have a violence problem' – and focus instead on understanding the drivers in order to develop meaningful and effective violence prevention. This was an important and essential shift in Peru's approach with children demonstrating the interactive nature of social protection, health and well-being of its citizens. The process supported the government to carry out an improved survey in 2015 and make public its results; these were very similar to results of the 2013 survey, which triggered the opposite response.

While it is difficult to attribute policy actions to specific causes, we are confident of the Study's contribution to creating a context in which politicians felt better equipped to describe and face the problem. Results from independent assessment serve as powerful evidence to support this confidence. Specifically, equipping government statisticians to analyse their own data, and ensuring officials from multiple ministries could hold the data and make sense of it, were key aspects of this process. Moving from a position of national shame with hidden and unanalysed data to a position of confidence and national responsibility has been remarkable. As further testimony to this transformation, the Peruvian government has expressed interest in joining the Global Partnership to End VAC as a 'pathfinder country' yet another indication of how a research process is as valuable as its products.

## Notes

1. See <https://www.economist.com/blogs/americasview/2014/09/perus-economy>.
2. Center for Sociological, Economic, Political and Anthropological Research of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru.

## Disclosure statement

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