

Analysis and perspectives of school violence in basic education in Peru

Análisis y perspectivas de la violencia escolar en la Educación Básica del Perú

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What do we know about the subject matter of this study?

Bullying is a global problem that affects the mental health and academic performance of students, especially in Peru, where an increase in reports has been observed, highlighting the need for customized preventive strategies and more research in Latin America.

What does this study contribute to what is already known?

This study analyzes the evolution and characteristics of school violence in Peru (2014-2023). It offers a quantitative-descriptive analysis using data from the SiseVe platform. The results highlight the frequency of physical and sexual violence in high schools, differentiating aggressors between schoolchildren and school personnel. It underlines the need for preventive strategies adapted to each educational level, providing a more detailed and global understanding of the problem, with implications for other international educational contexts.

Abstract

Bullying has become a global problem, affecting students around the world. **Objective:** To analyze school violence in the Basic Education system in Peru, considering the educational level, type of aggressor, type of violence and frequency of aggression, and to identify possible profiles or typologies of school violence. **Method:** Data from the Specialized System for Reports of Cases on School Violence in Peru (SiseVe) were used, carrying out a quantitative descriptive-comparative study based on secondary data. The different types of violence were analyzed: physical, psychological, and sexual; educational level: infant, primary and secondary; and profile of the aggressors: schoolchildren and staff of the educational institution. **Results:** The features identified that best define the typology of violence among schoolchildren are the continuity of the aggression, its physical violence nature, and its presence mainly at the secondary school level. Violence by school staff towards schoolchildren is ongoing, sexual in nature, and occurs mostly in secondary education. **Conclusion:** These findings emphasize the urgency of implementing strategies to prevent and address school violence adapted to each educational level.

Keywords:

Bullying;
Violence;
Schools;
Sexual Harassment;
Peru

Introduction

School bullying, or just bullying, represents a global challenge that has concerned institutions such as UNICEF¹. It is characterized by aggressive physical, verbal, or sexual behavior, which can manifest through acts of harassment, isolation, and discrimination², which is sustained over time, creating an unbalanced power relationship between the aggressor and the victim, and which seeks to inflict physical or psychological harm³. This phenomenon has spread to increasingly younger ages⁴, and as pointed out by institutions such as UNESCO or the World Anti-Bullying Forum and the International Bullying Prevention Association⁵, it can occur both among peers and by school personnel towards students, constituting a serious problem that threatens the mental health and progress of students⁶.

Regarding its incidence, UNESCO⁷ indicates that one out of three children is a victim of bullying, with physical and sexual harassment being frequent. Nations such as Russia, the United States, China, Portugal, Spain, Poland, and several Latin American countries report high incidences of school violence^{8,9}. Specifically in Peru, this type of violence is particularly acute¹⁰. Despite this, UNICEF¹¹ reveals that physical punishment is still accepted by a significant number of adults.

Several factors can be considered predictors of this phenomenon, both in the aggressor and the victim. Among them are the experience of violence at home¹², mental disorders¹³, abandonment, and different social contexts¹⁴. These factors suggest that those who experience family violence, either as victims or later as aggressors in other contexts, are at greater risk of experiencing school violence¹⁵. The consequences of bullying include difficulties in internalization, emotional distress, antisocial behavior, and mental health disorders¹⁶, affecting academic performance and increasing the risk of dropping out of school¹⁷. Likewise, victims show a greater predisposition towards criminal behavior in their adult life and suicidal behaviors^{2,18}. The aggressor or aggressor-victim usually presents high rates of psychoactive substance use^{19,20}.

The growing interest in combating school violence and fostering well-being in educational institutions²¹, together with the low effectiveness of current measures²², underscores the need to empower the educational system²³ and to value the crucial role of educators in preventing and managing these problems²⁴. Despite this, research shows inconsistencies, highlighting that educators often place more emphasis on personal bonding with students than on favoring coexistence among them²⁵. A case that illustrates this problem is found in Peru, where the Registry of the Computerized System for Monitoring Files (SIMEX) reported an increase in complaints of school violence against school

personnel between 2015 and 2017, including cases of bullying and sexual violence²⁶.

Several countries have reduced bullying and school violence through collaborations, evidence-based methodologies, teacher training, and support for affected students⁷. Initiatives such as “Safe School” in Spain, “KiVa” in Finland, and “Zero” in Norway have been implemented to address violence. These proposals have been transferred to other countries such as Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Poland, and Ireland²⁷. In Peru, several actions have been adopted to address violence in schools and safeguard children’s rights, including Laws N°27337, N°29719, and N°30403, and Supreme Decree N°021-2021-MIMP. The National Strategy *Paz Escolar* (School Peace) (2013-2016) was introduced, and guidelines for the management of school coexistence and the treatment of violence were defined in Supreme Decree N°004-2018-MINEDU²⁶.

Despite the knowledge about the forms of bullying (physical, psychological, and sexual) and its negative impact on students, there are still poorly understood aspects. The frequency and characteristics of bullying at different educational levels need more research. The scarcity of studies in Latin America, especially on the aggressor, highlights the need to encourage more research to address this problem in a comprehensive manner²⁸. Besides, any proposal must be based on detailed and holistic knowledge of the phenomenon considering not only the isolated traits of the types of violence but also the integration of these traits into profiles or typologies of violence.

The objective of this study is to analyze reports of school violence in the Peruvian Elementary Education system, with the following specific objectives: to analyze the evolution of reports of school violence at different educational levels; to describe the typology of reports considering the variables of educational level, type of aggressor, type of violence, and frequency of aggressions; and to identify possible profiles or typologies of school violence according to the type of aggressor.

Method

Study design and population

Quantitative, descriptive-comparative study, using data on school violence reported to the Specialized System for Reporting Cases of School Violence (SiseVe) platform.

Peru’s education system covers the early childhood (3 to 5 years), elementary (6 to 11 years), and high school (12 to 16 years) levels. From 2014 to 2023, the period covered by this study’s data analysis, a total of 72,185 students were enrolled in these levels, distribut-

ed approximately in the preschool (21%), elementary (52%), and high school (32%)²⁹ levels.

The SiseVe platform was launched in 2013 to combat violence at the national level in Peru and allows anonymous reporting of these cases through the website www.siseve.pe, being only available in Peru. The principal of each school is responsible for the registration to the SiseVe platform and must designate a person Responsible for School Coexistence (RSC) to enter data as established by the platform. If the school does not have an RSC, the principal assumes this responsibility²⁷. Schools included may be public, subsidized private, or private.

For this study, 70,727 complaints registered in the SiseVe platform records were analyzed within Peru's educational system, between 2014 and 2023, where full-year data was available. Two subsamples have been used, the first one (SM1) comprising 2014 to 2019 and 2022 to 2023. The period 2020-2021 has been eliminated due to the dramatic reduction in complaints resulting from confinement because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which could introduce biases in the results. In addition to the above limitation (removal of 2020 and 2021), the second subsample (SM2) is limited by the fact that the variable Frequency is only recorded until 2021. Therefore, this SM2 comprises the period 2014-2019.

Table 1 shows the details of the variables analyzed, their categories, and the percentage of cases in each one.

Procedure and statistical analysis

Microsoft Excel was used to filter the data and prepare the final data matrix. A contingency analysis was performed to study the relationship between educational level and the variables type of violence, frequency of aggression, and type of aggressor, considering a value $p < 0.05$ significant. For relevant associations, the effect size was calculated with Cramér's V, and standardized residuals were analyzed. Analyses of these standardized residuals (values in parentheses) indicate standardized differences between expected and observed values. Differences in the values of the residuals greater than ± 1.96 were considered significant ($\alpha = 0.05$).

To analyze whether violence among schoolchildren and violence perpetrated by school personnel toward schoolchildren follow different patterns according to the variables investigated, a descending sequential segmental analysis was performed with the Chi-squared Automatic Interaction Detection (CHAID) algorithm. This method segments the sample into groups with similar characteristics³⁰ with respect to the type of aggressor, which allowed us to evaluate whether the variables of type of violence, frequency, and educational

level differ according to the aggressor profile. In this analysis, the nodes represent the partitions of the data set into homogeneous groups according to the categories of the selected variables. The final nodes are the segments that cannot be further divided and each provides information on the size of the group and the characteristics of the subjects that comprise it.

All analyses were performed using the IBM-SPSS v.26 statistical package.

Results

The analysis of the cases reported in the SiseVe platform is presented with data from Preschool to High School.

Evolution of school violence reports by level of education

The analysis showed a sustained increase in cases of school violence at preschool, elementary, and high school levels from 2014 to 2019, according to the SiseVe platform. In 2019, a significant spike in reports was observed, followed by a significant decrease in 2020 and 2021, attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 2022 and 2023, reports begin to increase again, with a more pronounced growth in 2023 (figure 1).

Table 1. Distribution of variables, categories and percentages of reported cases of school violence in the SiseVe system (2014-2023) and frequency (2014-2019)

Variables	Categories	%Subjects
Year	1= 2014 to 2015	7.8
	2= 2016 to 2017	15.0
	3= 2018 to 2019	31.0
	4= 2020 to 2021	2.1
	5=2022 to 2023	44.1
Educational level	1= Pre-school	6.5
	2= Elementary school	35.7
	3= High school	57.1
Type of aggressor	1= Between Schoolchildren	57.2
	2= IE personnel to Schoolchildren	42.8
Type of Violence	1= Physical	45.7
	2= Psychological	36.9
	3= Sexual	17.3
Frequency**	1= Once	58.1
	2= More than once	41.9

Note: *For the frequency variable only data from 2014-2019 is provided. Source: SiseVe (2024). IE: Educational Institution.

Differences by educational level

This analysis shows the variations in the reports of violence, according to educational level, type of aggressor, violence, and frequency.

Table 2 shows that the relationship between educational level and type of aggressor is significant, although with a moderate effect size. The frequency of aggressions among high school students and the more equal distribution in elementary school when the type of aggressor is considered stands out.

There is a statistically significant association between educational level and type of violence, although with a smaller effect. The differences between the observed and expected values are significant in all categories,

according to the standardized residuals analysis. Even though physical aggression is predominant in the three educational levels, at the high school level it is observed that the increase in cases is more relevant in sexual violence than in physical or psychological violence.

Considering in this case the period between 2014 and 2019 (SM2), a significant relationship between educational level and frequency of aggression is observed, at the elementary and high school levels, although the effect size is small. The most reported frequency of aggression is "once" in both elementary and high school, but in elementary school, the gap with cases "more than once" is narrower than in high school.

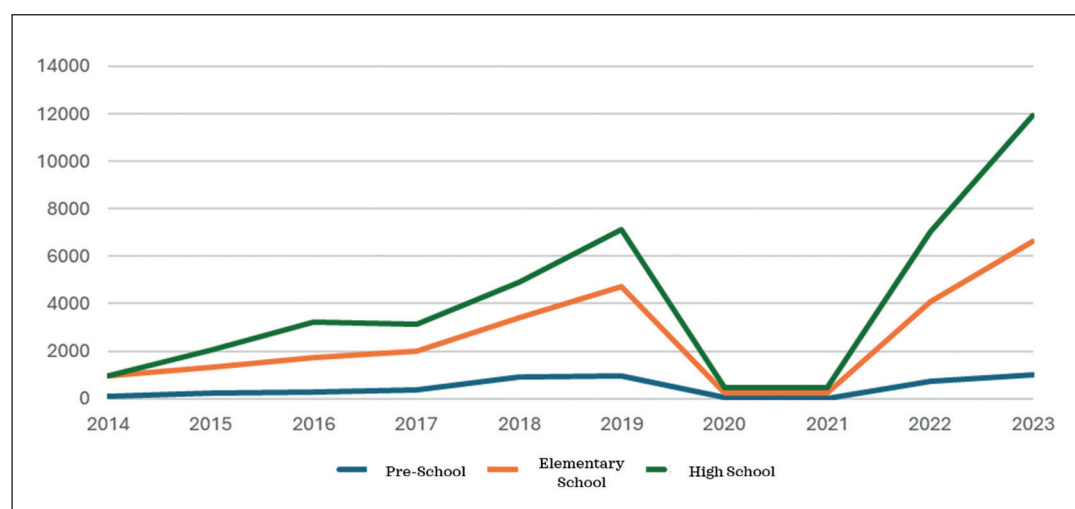


Figure 1. Evolution of school violence reports from early childhood to secondary education (2014-2023)

Table 2. Analysis of variations in reports of school violence by level of education, type of aggressor, type of violence and frequency of aggression

	Pre-school	Elementary school	High school
Aggressor			
Between Schoolchildren	2.9% (-46.1)	33.3% (-16.1)	63.8% (38.7)
IE personnel to Schoolchildren	11.4% (46.1)	39.0% (16.1)	49.6% (-38.7)
$\chi^2 = 2782.290$. $p < 0.000$; Cramer's $V = 0.193$			
Type of violence			
Physical	8.5% (20.1)	39.5% (19.7)	52.0% (-29.1)
Psychological	5.8% (-6.4)	34.5% (-5.4)	59.8% (8.4)
Sexual	2.9% (-18.3)	28.4% (-19.0)	68.6% (27.5)
$\chi^2 = 1303.485$. $p < 0.000$; Cramer's $V = 0.094$			
Frequency of aggression*			
Once	56.6% (-1.7)	53.7% (-13.5)	61.1% (14.0)
More than once	43.4% (1.7)	46.3% (13.5)	38.9% (-14.0)
$\chi^2 = 202.992$. $p < 0.005$; Cramer's $V = 0.071$			

Note: Each cell presents percentage values and, in parentheses, the adjusted standardized residuals. *For the frequency variable, data is only provided for the 2014-2019 period (SM2). Source: SiseVe (2024). IE: Educational Institution.

Intra-educational differences by type of aggressor

The results indicate differences in aggressor profiles by educational level (table 3), with significant associations between all variables ($p < 0.05$), although the magnitude of the effect size varied.

In pre-school, and with respect to the type of violence, the greatest differences according to the profile of the aggressor are found in psychological and physical violence, with a clear predominance of cases of violence coming from school personnel. In sexual violence, the cases according to the aggressor profile, tend to be equal. In elementary school, there was a change in this trend, with a greater predominance of violence

coming from school personnel in cases of psychological and sexual violence, and a higher percentage of physical violence when this occurs between schoolchildren. In high school, violence between schoolchildren is more frequent in the Physical and Psychological typologies, while sexual violence is more associated with school personnel. The standardized residuals indicate that these differences are significant in all pairs of values, especially in high school with a larger effect size.

The analysis of the association between frequency of aggression and type of aggressor, in the period from 2014 to 2019 (SM2), revealed statistically significant associations only at the elementary and high school

Table 3. Analysis of the association between aggressor type, type of violence, and frequency of aggression

PRE-SCHOOL	Between Schoolchildren	IE Personnel to Schoolchildren
Type of violence		
Physical	32.1% (11.7)	67.9% (-11.7)
Psychological	9.0% (-18.8)	91.0% (18.8)
Sexual	50.8% (11.5)	49.2% (-11.5)
	$\chi^2 = 414.491$. $p < 0.000$; Cramer's V = 0.292	
Frequency*		
Once	54.8% (-1.1)	57.1% (1.1)
More than once	45.2% (1.1)	42.9% (-1.1)
	$\chi^2 = 1.135$. $p < 0.287$	
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Between Schoolchildren	IE Personnel to Schoolchildren
Type of violence		
Physical	65.9% (40.3)	34.1% (-40.3)
Psychological	39.8% (-33.8)	60.2% (33.8)
Sexual	44.9% (-11.5)	55.1% (11.5)
	$\chi^2 = 1653.607$. $p < 0.000$; Cramer's V = 0.249	
Frequency*		
Once	54.7% (2.5)	52.7% (-2.5)
More than once	45.3% (-2.5)	47.3% (2.5)
	$\chi^2 = 6.048$. $p < 0.005$; Cramer's V = 0.020	
HIGH SCHOOL	Between Schoolchildren	IE Personnel to Schoolchildren
Type of violence		
Physical	84.0% (73.7)	16.0% (-73.7)
Psychological	58.2% (-18.2)	41.8% (18.2)
Sexual	32.8% (-67.7)	67.2% (67.7)
	$\chi^2 = 7035.756$. $p < 0.000$; Cramer's V = 0.404	
Frequency*		
Once	64.2% (11.2)	56.8% (-11.2)
More than once	35.8% (-11.2)	43.2% (11.2)
	$\chi^2 = 124.758$. $p < 0.000$; Cramer's V = 0.075	

Note: Each cell presents percentage values and, in parentheses, the adjusted standardized residuals. *For the frequency variable, data is only provided for the 2014-2019 period (SM2). Source: SíseVe (2024). IE: Educational Institution.

levels. The most common frequency reported is “once” for both types of aggressors at these levels, although the difference between them varies. At the elementary level, the differences are smaller, reflected by lower standardized residuals compared with high school, indicating a more uniform distribution in the origin of the aggression. The smallest differences are found at the elementary level, in aggression from school personnel, indicating, in this case, a higher incidence of more frequent aggression.

Profile analysis

Figure 2 shows the results of the hierarchical segmentation analysis performed to describe the different aggression profiles. The preschool level was not included since the difference in the number of cases with respect to the other levels could bias the configuration of the profiles. Two analyses are proposed: the first one (SM1), with all the variables of the study, and the second one (SM2), which covers the period 2014-2019 and does not include the frequency variable given that, as noted above, no data are available for that variable in this period.

In the Hierarchical Segmentation Analysis (CHAID) 2014-2023 (SM1), the findings suggest that it is possible to predict the type of aggressor with a 32% risk using the variables Type of Violence and Educa-

tional Level. The model correctly classifies 68% of the reported cases, while the accuracy percentages for each category analyzed were 80% for aggression between schoolchildren and 48% for aggression by school personnel.

The final tree was configured by a total of 9 nodes, 6 of them final, with the variable Type of violence being the variable that best discriminates ($\chi^2 = 6729.851$, corrected p value < 0.000). In the case of peer violence, the profile with the highest discriminating power corresponds to the type of violence occurring in high school (node 5) which is physical (node 1). The profile that best discriminates in the case of violence by school personnel is a type of violence that also occurs in high school (node 9), but which is of a sexual nature (node 3).

For the 2014-2019 period (SM2), the CHAID findings suggest that it is possible to predict the type of aggressor with a 34% risk using these variables. The model correctly classifies 66% of reported cases, while the accuracy percentages for each category analyzed were among schoolchildren (74.6%) and school personnel to Schoolchildren (55.6%).

The final tree is configured with a total of 20 nodes, 10 of them final, with the variable Type of violence being the variable that best discriminates ($\chi^2 = 3814.369$, corrected p value < 0.000). In the case of peer violence,

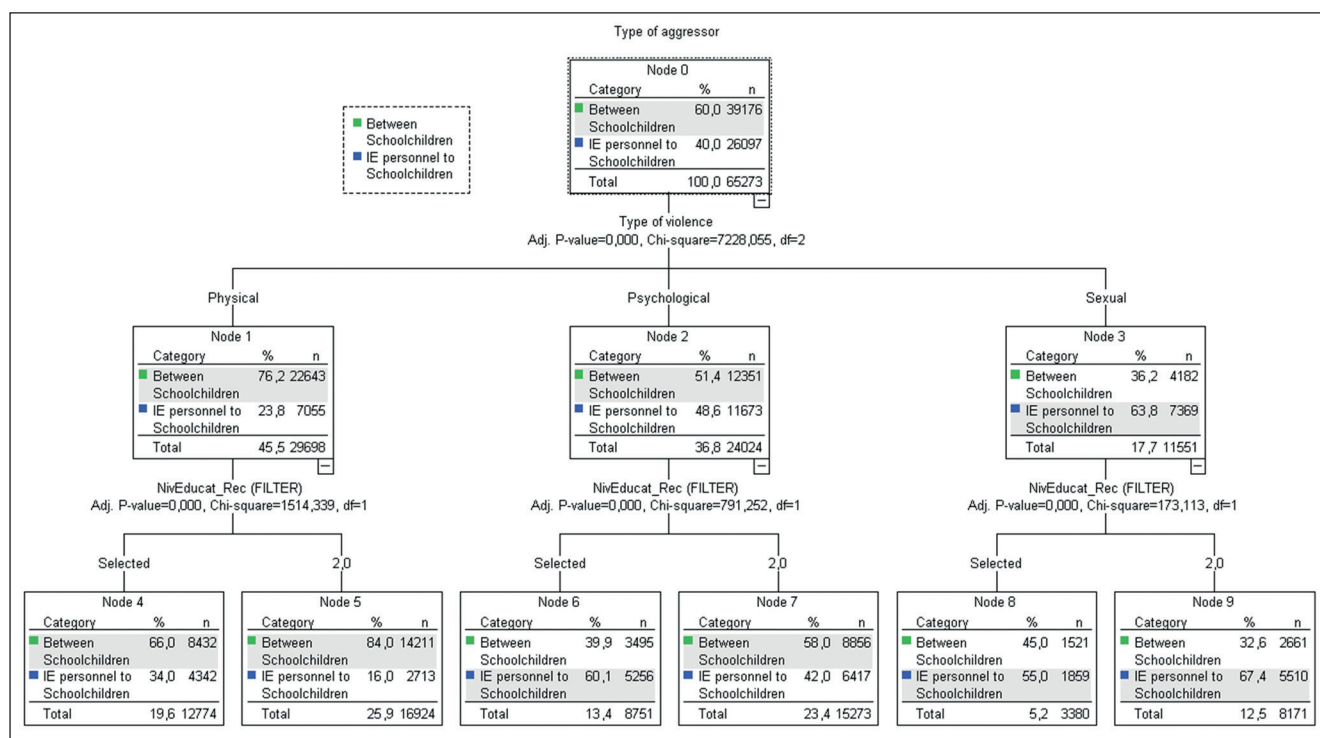


Figure 2. Hierarchical segmentation analysis to describe aggression profiles: type of violence, educational level (primary and secondary) 2014-2023 (SM1). Source: SiseVe (2024).

the profile with the highest discriminating power corresponds to the concurrence of these 3 values of the corresponding variables: frequency of aggression more than once (node 15), elementary level (node 6), and physical type (node 2).

The CHAID tree indicates that school personnel aggression towards schoolchildren is best distinguished by higher frequency (node 13), high school (node 5), and sexual type (node 1).

Discussion

This is the first exhaustive analysis of cases of school violence in Peru considering the educational level and the characteristics of the aggressor, providing a comprehensive view of the problem.

In relation to the first objective, a gradual increase in case reports of school violence affecting elementary education students was observed between 2014 and 2019. Subsequently, in 2020 and 2021, there was a notable decrease attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic due to less physical interaction, a consequence of the confinement of schoolchildren and school person-

nel. Surveys, such as the National Household Survey (ENAH) of the Peruvian Institute of Economy (IPE) support this observation, indicating a decrease in class attendance in different modalities in 2021 compared to 2019³¹.

From 2022 onwards, confinement was ended, and reports began to increase again, showing a more pronounced growth in 2023. It is considered that the implementation of the SiseVe platform has been crucial to increasing the visibility of these cases and allows us to affirm that school violence is a growing problem, in all its variants, both during the pre-pandemic period and in the post-pandemic stage.

Regarding the second objective, significant differences were observed in the variables type of aggressor, type of violence, and frequency of aggression, according to educational level. Physical violence is very frequent at all educational levels, with a notable increase in cases of sexual violence in high school. This result, supported by studies such as that of Arhuis-Inca et al.³², underscores the urgency of addressing these types of violence in the educational setting.

The frequency of aggression reported as isolated events was higher in high schools, suggesting a timelier

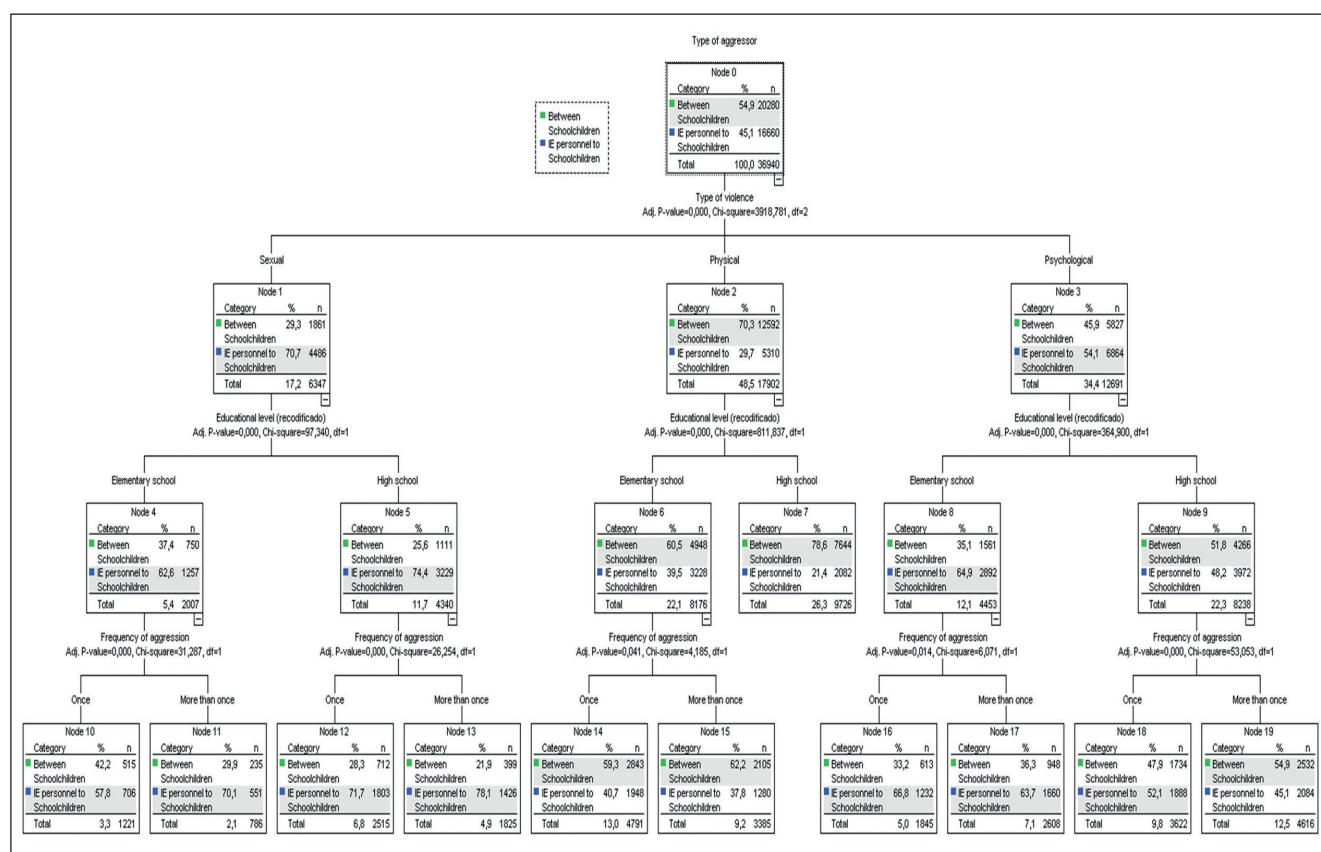


Figure 3. Hierarchical segmentation analysis to describe aggression profiles: type of violence, educational level (primary and secondary), and frequency 2014-2019 (SM2). Source: SiseVe (2022).

response to cases of violence once detected. It would be useful to deepen the profile of informants, given their involvement in violence reduction. In addition, the increasing relevance of the role of bystanders in this context is recognized^{33,34}.

In the analysis of complaints according to the type of aggressor, an increase in psychological violence was observed in elementary and high school, and especially at the latter level, a significant increase in sexual violence. These results coincide with previous research³⁵. Steiner et al.³⁶ indicate that sexual violence perpetrated by teachers reflects a generalized trend, being important to warn as Slavin et al.³⁷ point out that, at the high school level, students may show permissive attitudes, which could indicate that these figures are underrepresenting the problem, highlighting the need to develop more robust policies for its prevention and management.

The third objective of the study focused on identifying typologies of violence according to the aggressor, revealing that during 2014-2023, physical aggressions in high school were the most representative. In contrast, between 2014-2019, continuous physical aggressions in elementary school were the most frequent, underlining their clear negative impact³⁶. In addition, in both periods, sexual violence in high school is the most distinctive, especially by school personnel towards students. This result is supported by Altinyelken et al.³⁸, who point out the frequency of school personnel in sexual violence and their tendency to ignore these incidents, shifting responsibility. Given these results, it is suggested to implement strict and effective measures to prevent and address this issue.

For all these reasons, school violence, reflected in inappropriate behaviors within education³⁹, continues to be a normalized and constant phenomenon⁴⁰. These results coincide with the literature reviewed in the introduction, which indicates that students are victims of bullying, the most frequent forms being physical and sexual⁷.

Also, this study highlights the need to carry out studies to prevent school violence⁴¹, involving teachers and students, and fostering self-esteem. It is suggested to implement evidence-based programs aimed

at victims, aggressors, and non-aggressors, as well as training school personnel to detect and manage bullying. Increasing self-esteem in schoolchildren is crucial, as it motivates them to seek help and, together with teacher support, reduces the risk of victimization.

Limitations and foresight

The SiseVe platform study revealed important deficiencies in the data matrix, including the lack of accurate information on the number of educational institutions, the number of schoolchildren represented, and their funding. In addition, the system lacks detailed sub-registers as well as those who report cases of school violence.

It is necessary to consider that these data reflect only reported cases, which may underestimate the real magnitude of the problem due to underreporting. Also, we should take these data with caution, since the types of violence lack explicit categories in the SiseVe platform, which could generate diverse interpretations by reporters⁴².

It is recommended to evaluate the mental health of teachers and to implement peaceful conflict management programs⁴³. It is also essential to investigate the causes of school violence through interviews to better understand the reasons in both students and adults. School health policies should be structured considering these variations to be more effective in preventing and managing school violence.

Ethical Responsibilities

Ethics committee: The study is based on records of complaints collected by the Specialized System in Case Reports on School Violence (SiseVe). Data available at: site www.siseve.pe

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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