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Gender-based digital violence in Peru: Legal and educational challenges

Violencia de género digital en el Perú: Desafíos legales y educativos

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Abstract

This study is an analysis of what digital violence in Peru means and how the expansion of the use of information and communication technologies has impacted the generation of digital violence during the period from 2021 to 2024. This study places special emphasis on the protection of children and adolescents in light of the increase in reported cases. This is a quantitative and descriptive analysis based mainly on the findings of the Women's Emergency Center and the official records of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Perú. The results show that digital violence has serious psychological, social, and educational implications for victims, raising awareness for the creation of legal protection mechanisms.

Keywords: Digital violence, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), cyberbullying, Peru, children, adolescents, online harassment, legal protection, gender-based violence, ICT.

Resumen

El presente estudio es un análisis al respecto de lo que la violencia digital en el Perú significa, y cómo ha impactado la expansión del uso de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación en la generación de violencia digital durante los periodos entre 2021 hasta 2024. Este estudio pone especial énfasis en la protección de niños y adolescentes ante el incremento de denuncias registrado. Este es un análisis de enfoque cuantitativo y descriptivo que se basa principalmente en lo que establece el Centro de Emergencia Mujer y los registros oficiales del Ministerio Público del Perú. Asimismo, mostrando que los resultados evidencian una violencia digital con implicaciones psicológicas, sociales y educativas gravísimas para las víctimas, aumentando la consciencia para la creación de mecanismos legales de protección.


Palabras clave: Violencia digital, Tecnologías de la información y comunicación, Ciberacoso, Perú, Niños, Adolescentes; Acoso virtual, Protección legal, Violencia de género, TIC.


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Introduction

Currently, with the advancement of technology and the constant digital transformation in which we live, social media has taken a leading role in human life, becoming a means of communication that guarantees online accessibility. Social media facilitates a free and democratic space; however, it has also transformed into an environment where new forms of violence and harassment emerge. Online aggressions constitute increasingly frequent practices, particularly among adolescents and young people, who form part of a vulnerable group for perpetrators who use digital technologies for harassment (González Suárez, 2022).

In this sense, gender-based violence acquires a concerning dimension in the use of ICT, as it generates discriminatory patterns and control practices that lead to psychological, emotional, and social difficulties for victims. In Peru, digital violence has become a problem that directly affects how we relate to women, girls, boys, and adolescents (Gobierno del Perú, 2025).

The Public Prosecutor's Office has also recorded a sustained increase in complaints related to the misuse of digital technologies. In 2024, 7,275 cases of harassment were reported, along with 3,729 cases of sexual harassment and 793 cases of non-consensual dissemination of intimate images (Gobierno del Perú, 2025). This enumeration of cases not only shows the magnitude of the problem but also highlights the urgency of strengthening prevention, sanctions, and response mechanisms against digital violence.

The Peruvian State has developed a regulatory framework that specifically addresses protection against gender-based violence as a response to this issue. This framework includes Law No. 30364 (Gobierno del Perú, 2024), aimed at the prevention, punishment, and eradication of violence against women and family members. Likewise, Legislative Decree No. 1440 (Diario El Peruano, 2018) incorporated Article No. 176-B, which refers to sexual crimes in the form of harassment in both face-to-face and digital contexts. Additionally, guidelines were issued by the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP), through which violence via

information technology began to be recognized, requiring adaptive mechanisms for prevention, reporting, and sanctions.

Furthermore, policies and mechanisms for care and support have been established, such as the Women's Emergency Center, Line 100, the Portal Estadístico Programa Nacional *Warmi Ñan* (2025), and the most recent digital violence guidebook (Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, 2025). However, violence through ICT remains a challenge for the justice system and social systems due to the rapid circulation of content and the difficulty in identifying those involved to ensure effective redress.

Therefore, the guidebook seeks to provide clear and accessible information on the main manifestations of digital violence, available protection processes, and the necessary actions to promote safe use in the digital age, ensuring environments free from violence and discrimination.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are defined as the set of technological tools, software, networks, and services used for accessing, processing, storing, and transmitting information in various formats. In this way, communication between public administration and citizens is facilitated, requiring appropriate mechanisms to combat gender-based violence.

Essentially, ICT consists of several components for its proper use by all citizens. First, the technology must exist physically, such as computers; it must also include software and applications. Finally, ICT must be connected to networks and provide services. This enables the exercise of the right to access information, immediate communication, the promotion of innovation among the population, and the optimization of business processes, helping organizations make safe and informed decisions.

However, these technologies also reveal a darker side in individuals who use them to inflict violence in digital environments. Sadly, we find ourselves in a kind of ongoing conflict, where the most vulnerable populations—women, children, and adolescents—are affected (Zambrano & Macías, 2023).

Gender-based violence is a phenomenon that has existed since ancient times and, as long as harmful elements persist in society, it will continue to reinvent itself. Today, violent attitudes toward others can manifest through ICT in forms such as cyberbullying, online violence, sexual extortion, non-consensual exposure of sexual content, grooming of minors by adults, and incitement to harmful, self-destructive, or violent behaviors in real life.

Domínguez Alonso and Portela Pino (2020) state that gender-based violence through ICT is increasingly penetrating younger populations, particularly affecting women. This includes discriminatory attitudes or abuses of power occurring across genders, generating psychological, physical, and social risks. According to these authors, men are more often associated with behaviors that carry a high risk of being classified as cyber-aggressors, while women are usually seen as cyber-victims.

This type of violence is considered a relatively new phenomenon for humanity, emerging alongside digital platforms. This technological advancement has brought various changes to society, one of the most significant being the apparent strengthening of cyber harassment. Due to the accessibility of these communication platforms, they have become spaces where it is easy to cause trauma to victims, with the number of cases increasing daily. As mentioned, these platforms are widely used by young women, adolescents, boys, and girls—the latter being the most vulnerable, as malicious individuals can exploit their trust and innocence (Serrano-Barquín & Ruiz Serrano, 2013).

ICT, therefore, cannot be analyzed in isolation from the structural inequalities present in Peru. These include the gender digital divide, traditional gender roles, and a culture of normalized machismo associated with control mechanisms. These factors exacerbate the situation of women, children, and adolescents at risk, especially in virtual environments where aggression spreads more rapidly and broadly. In this sense, understanding new technologies, gender-based violence, and inequality is essential for designing preventive policies and strategies.

In Peru, digital violence, as observed, develops within a context of increasing internet access and intensive use of social media, especially among young people. Current regulations, including Law No. 30364 (Gobierno del Perú, 2024) and Legislative Decree No. 1410 (Diario El Peruano, 2018), represent progress in sanctioning gender-based violence and harassment through digital means. However, various reports from the Ombudsman's Office and international organizations such as the United Nations warn that the legal framework remains insufficient in the face of the rapid evolution of technology and new forms of digital violence.

The objective of this study is to analyze, from a quantitative approach, the magnitude, characteristics, and trends of digital violence in Peru during the period from 2021 to 2024, in order to highlight how this phenomenon affects girls, boys, adolescents, and women differently, as they represent the groups most exposed in ICT environments. In this way, we aim to use statistical data as concrete evidence to demonstrate vulnerability in digital spaces.

Likewise, we aim to present the digital violence guidebook, showing that the subject of analysis—digital violence—has become a growing problem expressed in various forms such as cyberbullying, grooming, identity theft, and the non-consensual dissemination of intimate content. These practices have increased in recent years, with a growing number of cases handled by Women's Emergency Centers.

Finally, our study also seeks not only to quantify the frequency of these manifestations but also to identify age-related patterns and types of violence in order to provide a clear diagnosis of the phenomenon. Thus, statistical analysis becomes a tool that supports the need to strengthen the legal framework, improve existing reporting mechanisms, and consolidate the protection of rights in the digital sphere.

Methodology

This study was developed using a quantitative approach, supported by official statistical data that allow for measuring the magnitude of digital violence in Peru. For this purpose, records from the National

Aurora Program, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and the Virtual Harassment Alert system were used— institutions that collect information on cases handled by the Women's Emergency Centers (CEM) and complaints related to the misuse of information technologies.

The research design is descriptive, aiming to identify how cases of digital violence have evolved over time and which forms are most frequent. Categories such as types of violence (sexual, physical, psychological, and economic), age differences between minors and adults, and the increase in complaints between 2021 and 2024 were examined. This approach allows for the observation of clear patterns and comparisons across the specified years.

The study population consists of officially recorded cases across the country. This ensures representativeness, although it is acknowledged that not all cases are reported, which could mean that the actual population is larger. Nevertheless, the collected data accurately demonstrate the growing trend of the problem.

Data processing was carried out using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and annual variations. This made it possible to demonstrate how digital violence has increased year after year and how it affects girls, boys, adolescents, and women differently, as they represent the most vulnerable groups.

The method used to obtain the information for drafting this document was data collection from the Statistical Portal of the National Aurora/Warmi Ñan Program and official reports from the Peruvian Public Prosecutor's Office, corresponding to the period from 2021 to 2024. These data were downloaded and systematized for the present study from the databases and reports published by the aforementioned institutions. No access was obtained to individual records of affected persons or to any personal information that could identify them. All cases were analyzed using descriptive data regarding the magnitude and general characteristics of digital violence within the national territory.

Finally, this research was conducted using publicly available data that do not directly involve human or animal evaluation; therefore, it did not require ethical review or approval.

The tools used were primarily developed by the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, providing the dataset and categories for public data collection. Thus, the purpose was to identify experiences, perceptions, and forms of digital violence through ICT.

The dimensions of the analysis were developed around the following theoretical aspects:

- Number of recorded cases: The number of ICT-related violence cases reported to the Women's Emergency Centers between 2021 and 2024 was collected.
- Types of digital violence: This includes sexual, physical, psychological, and economic violence in digital environments, highlighting the most prevalent forms such as cyberbullying, sextortion, grooming, identity theft, and the non-consensual dissemination of intimate content.
- Affected age groups: Cases involving victims under 18 years of age and young adults were analyzed, taking into account the increase in reported cases between 2021 and 2024..

Results and Discussion

In recent years, up to 2024, the use of the internet as a tool of violence has expanded, primarily harming girls, boys, adolescents, and women. These aggressions occur through social media, email, and text messages, with the aim of harassing and blackmailing victims, causing moral harm.

Article No. 8 of Law No. 30364 defines violence against women and members of the family group, encompassing physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence (Gobierno del Perú, 2024). These forms of harm are also reflected in social media, where perpetrators use ICT to victimize others.

The National Aurora Program of the Women's Emergency Centers (CEM) recorded 141 cases of

violence through ICT in 2024. This was the highest number of reported cases since 2021 (Figure 1).

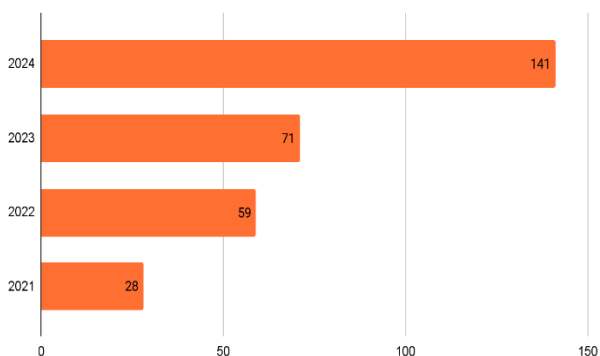


Figure 1. Number of cases of violence through ICT handled by the Women’s Emergency Center from 2021 to 2024. Source: Authors’ own elaboration based on data collected from the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (Gobierno del Perú, 2025).

The digital divide has been increasing in recent years. Regarding the specific types of ICT-related gender-based violence reported in Peru, it is estimated that 7 out of 10 women have experienced some form of aggression.

The Women’s Emergency Center (CEM) has recorded results across four types of violence over the past four years (sexual, psychological, physical, and economic violence). As shown in Figure 2, in 2021 the percentages were: Economic Violence 0.39%, Physical Violence 39.56%, Psychological Violence 46.33%, and Sexual Violence 13.17%. In contrast, in 2022 the figures were: Economic Violence 0.45%, Physical Violence 38.60%, Psychological Violence 43.21%, and Sexual Violence 17.74%.

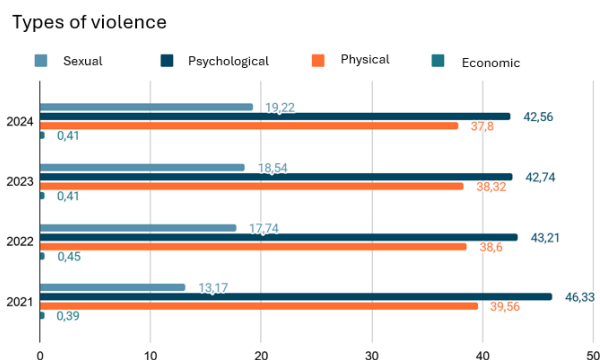


Figure 2. Types of digital violence reported to the Women’s Emergency Center. Source: Authors’ own elaboration based on data collected from the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations.

In 2023, the collected data showed: Economic Violence 0.41%, Physical Violence 38.32%, Psychological Violence 42.74%, and Sexual Violence 18.54%. Finally, in 2024 there was growth in several types: Economic Violence reached 0.41%, Physical Violence 37.80%, Psychological Violence 42.56%, and Sexual Violence showed the greatest increase over the four-year period, reaching 19.22%.

Between 2021 and 2024, more than 20,000 cases of sexual violence against minors were recorded at the Women’s Emergency Centers (CEM). Of these, 141 cases were specifically linked to ICT-related violence. Additionally, the most frequently reported cases involve individuals under 18 years of age. For instance, in 2021 there were 10 reported cases, which increased to 14 cases in 2022. In 2023, 15 cases were recorded, and finally, in 2024, there was a total of 41 cases, representing a dramatic increase. These results correspond to victims under 18 years of age who experienced digital violence through ICT (Figure 3).

However, minors are not the only group affected by digital violence through online platforms. Among adults aged 18 to 59, there was also a steady annual increase. In 2021, 17 cases were reported; in 2022, 39 cases; in 2023, 55 cases; and in 2024, 99 cases. The CEM is one of the primary institutions addressing these cases, particularly in remote areas, and provides records of reported cases during these years (Figure 3).

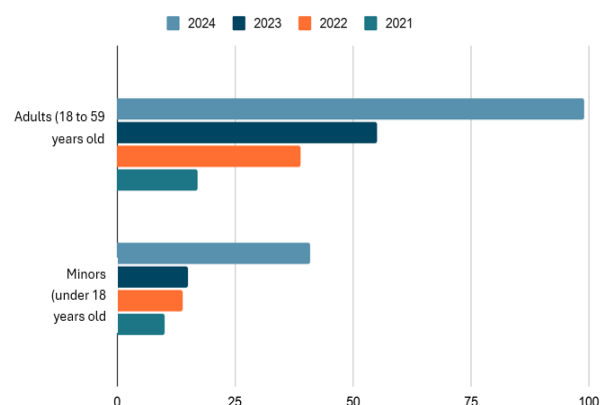


Figure 3. Group of minors who are victims of digital violence through ICT reported to the Women’s Emergency Center. Source: Authors’ own elaboration based on data collected from the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (Gobierno del Perú, 2025).

From the results, it can be observed that there has been a significant increase in reports of digital violence through ICT, with minimal figures in 2021 but reaching 141 cases in 2024 reported to the CEM. This increase can be understood in two ways: first, it reflects the lack of preventive practices against violence on digital platforms; and second, it reveals the limited willingness of victims to report such incidents. However, this situation is gradually changing due to awareness campaigns and the growing public visibility of the problem. What stands out is the clear upward trend, which is still limited by the fact that only reported cases are recorded, while unreported cases—often due to lack of information—remain uninvestigated, demonstrating a significant imbalance.

Various reports have warned about this increase in complaints, reflecting a greater willingness to make the problem visible while also revealing the depth of its psychosocial effects. In 2021, the Ombudsman's Office of Peru indicated that gender-based violence in digital environments is directly associated with anxiety, depression, intense shame, social isolation, and low self-esteem among victims, with particular emphasis on sexual harassment. When such situations become prevalent in a person's life, they generate high-impact negative effects on academic performance and family relationships, leading to sustained vulnerability.

Regarding women, girls, boys, and adolescents, exposure to violence may take the form of cyberbullying, sexual extortion, and the dissemination of intimate content, disrupting the life projects of vulnerable populations, promoting the abandonment of responsibilities, and leading to ongoing revictimization due to the ease with which such content spreads. In this regard, the 2025 digital violence guidebook of the Government of Peru emphasizes the need for a comprehensive legal response accompanied by psychological and educational support measures. Thus, the results of this study not only provide evidence of a large-scale phenomenon but also highlight the need to strengthen psychological support systems at the national level, especially for vulnerable groups.

According to Alcalá Molina (2022), the advancement of ICT in the digital industry has produced sudden changes. Crimes committed through social media have been reported, increasing their reach to a wider audience. Consequently, Article No. 176-B was incorporated into Legislative Decree No. 1410, establishing prison sentences for crimes committed through social networks or any form of technology.

Research by the Ombudsman's Office (Gobierno del Perú, 2022) indicates that cases continue to increase. This aligns with international findings by UN Women regarding the difficulty of measuring violence on social media, with reports rising alongside technological advancements. A plausible explanation is that the expansion of digital platforms increases opportunities for abusive contact, especially in rural areas where technological access continues to grow over time.

Available databases show a high percentage distribution among types of violence. Psychological and physical violence remain constant, while sexual violence has gradually increased from 13.17% in 2021 to 19.22% in 2024. This aligns with findings from the Defensoría del Pueblo (2021) and ONU Mujeres (2025), which identify cyberbullying and the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images as practices that can severely damage a person's reputation. Violence against women through digital platforms has increased at a rate comparable to technological advancement, highlighting the need for more reporting platforms and educational initiatives that guide children, adolescents, and young adults on how to use social media safely. Therefore, a strength of this study lies in identifying reporting percentages, types of violence, and also the limitation related to the lack of qualitative testimonies that would allow a deeper understanding of the emotional and social consequences for victims.

Minors under 18 years of age are the most vulnerable group to this new form of violence, followed by young adults. This study has focused on analyzing the sectors and channels through which gender-based violence is manifested, as these platforms provide rapid access for harassment, intimidation, and sexual exploitation. Therefore, it is recommended that existing protection mechanisms be made more

efficient across all regions. Reporting systems should include faster-response modules where victims are heard, can file complaints, and have their testimony serve as effective evidence for initiating investigations. Additionally, processes should include psychological therapy, preventive digital education, and strengthening of the current legal framework.

The study results show a sustained upward trend in digital violence in Peru during the period 2021–2024. This growth can be explained by several structural factors. First, increased internet access and widespread use of social media have expanded digital interaction spaces, creating more opportunities for violent acts. Second, the lack of digital literacy limits the population's ability to prevent and respond to these risks. Furthermore, the normalization of certain behaviors in digital environments—such as harassment, the sharing of private content, and verbal abuse—contributes to the reproduction of these practices. This situation is worsened by the perception of anonymity and the low perception of punishment in virtual spaces.

Another relevant aspect is the underreporting of cases. Although official figures show a significant increase, the real magnitude of the problem is likely greater, as many victims do not report incidents due to fear, shame, or distrust in institutions. In this sense, the rise in complaints can also be interpreted as progress in making the issue visible and improving access to support mechanisms.

Undoubtedly, these findings demonstrate that digital violence should not be addressed solely as a technological issue, but rather as a manifestation of social and gender inequalities that extend into the digital environment. Therefore, addressing it requires a comprehensive approach that integrates public policies, education, institutional strengthening, and the participation of civil society in the country.

Conclusions

In light of the results obtained, it can be observed that between 2021 and 2024 there has been a significant increase in cases classified as digital violence in Peru. In particular, there is a noticeable rise in cases affecting women, girls, boys, and adolescents—

populations considered vulnerable within the legal framework. This growth clearly reflects the expansion of ICT among the population and the evident lack of mechanisms in the country to prevent such incidents. Likewise, educational mechanisms that could be crucial in reducing cyberbullying and sexual extortion (sextortion) remain insufficient. The dissemination of non-consensual images is one of the most widespread forms of violence, something that, in a socially responsible society, should receive greater attention.

Victims experience a multidimensional impact due to the consequences generated across various areas, particularly psychological, social, and educational domains. Violence carried out through ICT leads to severe consequences that affect the personal and emotional development of victims. It also amplifies harm, perpetuating situations of vulnerability and stigma.

Statistical evidence reveals insufficient management of reporting systems, legal mechanisms, and the lack of regulatory progress to address existing legal gaps. Legislative Decree No. 1410 represents an important step forward; however, it remains insufficient in the face of the rapid evolution of ICT, which exceeds the limits of state management. There is a need to strengthen reporting platforms, create accessible channels for rural areas, and improve institutional responses to regulate digital violence.

There is also a clear need to advance digital education as part of preventive efforts. The results highlight the urgency of implementing digital literacy programs, as well as awareness campaigns aimed at young people. The objective of these measures is to promote responsible use of ICT in order to prevent online harassment and exploitation.

Finally, we conclude that greater importance must be given to an interinstitutional and gender-based approach. Combating digital violence requires coordination between the State, civil society, and educational institutions. Public educational policies must be designed to prevent harm against women, ensuring the right to digital environments free from violence.

Author contributions

Ramiro Israel Trujillo Román (ramirotujillo7@hotmail.com) contributed to the conceptualization and design of the study, as well as the definition of the research problem and objectives. He was also responsible for the collection and systematization of statistical data from the National Aurora/Warmi Ñan Program and the Public Prosecutor's Office of Peru. He provided the quantitative analysis and the development of tables and figures.

Willmar José Gallegos Sotomayor (systemoad1985@gmail.com) contributed to the structuring of the theoretical and regulatory framework regarding digital and gender-based violence in Peru. He also participated in drafting the structure of the paper, including the introduction, methodology, results, and discussion. He provided a critical review of the manuscript and addressed all editorial observations. Both authors approved the final version of the article and assume responsibility for its content.

Data availability

The data used in this study are secondary in nature and come from official sources, specifically Peruvian public institutions with publicly accessible information. These include the Statistical Portal of the National Warmi Ñan Program – National Aurora Program of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations, and reports from the Public Prosecutor's Office up to 2025. These sources were used in aggregated form. No personal records or individual-level information that could identify individuals were used. These databases were generated for analysis and formally requested for academic purposes.

Peer review comments

This article underwent a peer-review process under an anonymous review model, in accordance with the journal's editorial transparency policy. The reviewers, who participated anonymously, consented to the publication of their comments issued during the review process.

Review Comment 1: The article addresses a current and relevant issue such as gender-based violence

through ICT. The effort to present updated statistical data and to highlight a form of violence that affects vulnerable groups such as women, girls, boys, and adolescents is appreciated.

Review Comment 2: It is recommended that the article be approved for publication, given the relevance and timeliness of the topic.

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