










PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AMONG SCHOOLCHILDREN IN BRAZIL: DATA FROM THE 2019 NATIONAL SCHOOL HEALTH

PREVALÊNCIA DE VIOLÊNCIA SEXUAL EM ESCOLARES NO BRASIL: DADOS DA PESQUISA NACIONAL DE SAÚDE DO ESCOLAR 2019

PREVALENCIA DE LA VIOLENCIA SEXUAL EN ESTUDIANTES EN BRASIL: DATOS DE LA ENCUESTA NACIONAL DE SALUD ESCOLAR 2019

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the prevalence of sexual violence among schoolchildren aged from 13 to 17 years old in Brazil. **Methods:** a cross-sectional study conducted with data from the 2019 National School Health Survey. The prevalence values for sexual abuse and rape and their respective 95% confidence intervals (95% CI) involving students aged from 13 to 17 years old in Brazil were analyzed according to gender, age group, type of institution, aggressor, administrative region of residence and federated units. **Results:** the prevalence of sexual abuse among schoolchildren was 14.6% (95% CI: 14.2; 15.1) and the one for rape was 6.3% (95% CI: 6.0; 6.6). Higher prevalence values were found among female adolescents in the age group of 16 and 17 years old. The most common aggressor for both indicators was boyfriend/girlfriend, ex-boyfriend, date or crush. Among the schoolchildren who were victims of rape, more than half reported having suffered this type of violence before 13 years of age (53.2%; 95% CI: 51.0; 55.4). **Conclusion:** sexual violence has high prevalence among schoolchildren aged from 13 to 17 years old in Brazil, in addition to the aggressions being mostly perpetrated by people from the family nucleus and by individuals with intimate and affection ties. Intersectoral articulation is necessary to develop public policies that act on coping with the problem.

Keywords: Sex Offenses; Adolescent; Health Surveys; Brazil; Epidemiology.

ABSTRACT

Objetivo: analisar a prevalência de violência sexual entre escolares adolescentes de 13 a 17 anos no Brasil. **Métodos:** estudo transversal com dados da Pesquisa Nacional de Saúde do Escolar de 2019. Foram analisadas as prevalências de abuso sexual e estupro e seus respectivos intervalos de confiança de 95% (IC 95%) envolvendo escolares de 13 a 17 anos no Brasil, de acordo com sexo, faixa etária, tipo de instituição, agressor, região administrativa de residência e unidades federadas. **Resultados:** a prevalência de abuso sexual entre escolares foi de 14,6% (IC 95%: 14,2-15,1) e de estupro foi de 6,3% (IC 95%: 6,0-6,6). Maiores prevalências ocorreram entre adolescentes do sexo feminino e da faixa etária de 16 e 17 anos. O agressor mais comum para ambos indicadores foi namorado(a), ex-namorado(a), ficante ou crush. Entre os escolares que sofreram estupro, mais da metade relatou ter sofrido essa violência antes dos 13 anos de idade (53,2%; IC 95%: 51,0-55,4). **Conclusão:** a violência sexual tem elevada prevalência entre os escolares de 13 a 17 anos no Brasil, além de as agressões serem perpetradas, em sua maior parte, por pessoas do núcleo familiar e das relações íntimas e de afeto. É necessário que haja articulação intersectorial para desenvolver políticas públicas que atuem no enfrentamento ao problema.

Palavras-chave: Delitos Sexuais; Adolescente; Inquéritos Epidemiológicos; Brasil; Epidemiologia.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar la prevalencia de la violencia sexual entre los estudiantes adolescentes de 13 a 17 años en Brasil. **Métodos:** estudio transversal con datos de la Encuesta Nacional de Salud Escolar 2019. Se analizó la prevalencia de abuso sexual y violación y sus respectivos intervalos de confianza del 95% (IC95%) que involucran a estudiantes de 13 a 17 años en Brasil, según sexo, grupo de edad, tipo de institución, agresor, región administrativa de residencia y unidades federadas. **Resultados:** la prevalencia de los abusos sexuales entre los estudiantes fue del 14,6% (IC95%:14,2;15,1) y de la violación fue del 6,3% (IC95%:6,0;6,6). La mayor prevalencia se dio entre las adolescentes mujeres y en el grupo de edad de 16 y 17 años. El agresor más común para ambos indicadores fue el novio/novia, ex novio, amante o enamorado. Entre los estudiantes que sufrieron una violación, más de la mitad declaró haber sufrido esta violencia antes de los 13 años (53,2%; IC95%: 51,0;55,4). **Conclusión:** la violencia sexual tiene una alta prevalencia entre los escolares de 13 a 17 años en Brasil, además de que las agresiones son perpetradas principalmente por personas del núcleo familiar y de las relaciones íntimas y afectivas. Es necesario que haya una articulación intersectorial para desarrollar políticas públicas que actúen para enfrentar el problema.

Palabras clave: Delitos Sexuales; Adolescente; Encuestas Epidemiológicas; Brasil; Epidemiología.

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are considered one of the vulnerable groups in our society and are exposed to different types of social and health problems, with violence standing out.¹ Among the types of violence, sexual violence (SV) is one of the most prevalent among adolescents - especially among women.² SV is defined as “any action in which a person, taking advantage of their position of power and making use of physical force, coercion, intimidation or psychological influence, either with the use of weapons or drugs or not, compels another person - of either gender - to have, witness, or participate in any form of sexual interactions or to use his or her sexuality in any way for profit, revenge, or otherwise”.³

Worldwide, it is estimated that more than 120 million women and girls have experienced some type of forced sexual contact before the age of 20.⁴ In Brazil, SV accounted for more than 20% of all notifications in the Notifiable Diseases Information System (*Sistema de Informação de Agravos de Notificação*, SINAN) for children and adolescents aged between 10 and 19 years old in the period from 2011 to 2017.² Furthermore, in 2017 and 2020, approximately 180,000 cases of rape were recorded in this age group.⁵

As is the case with other types of violence, SV presents unequal distribution in the population. In Brazil, in the age group from 15 to 19 years old, more than 90% of the victims are girls, with a tendency to increased occurrence, especially among black-skinned children and adolescents,⁵ ratifying the relationship between inequality, vulnerability and violence. Thus, to size the impact of SV among adolescents, it is essential to recognize the social determinant of health.⁶

The negative effects of SV in adolescence are countless and include social impacts and health problems. Among them, psychological issues stand out, such as anxiety, anger and suicidal thoughts, as well as unsatisfactory school performance and risk behaviors, such as alcohol consumption, smoking and drug use.⁷ In addition, it is known that the consequences of violence have long-term repercussions and can interfere with relationships, socialization and even future housing conditions. It is common for homeless people to report that the main reason for them to live on the street is their attempt to escape from the violence experienced in the home environment.^{8,9}

In view of the impacts of violence on individuals, families, society and the health of adolescents, tackling of this problem was included in the discussion of the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹⁰.

This agenda included two targets related to the theme, with target 5.3 aimed at eradicating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. In turn, target 16.2 seeks to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all types of violence and torture against children.¹⁰

In Brazil, in order to monitor the risk and protection factors for adolescents' health, the National School Health Survey (*Pesquisa Nacional de Saúde do Escolar*, PeNSE) was implemented in 2009 as regular national survey.¹¹ From PeNSE 2015 onwards, questions about the schoolchildren's SV experiences were included. In the 2019 edition, the questions about SV were reformulated, detailing the experiences of sexual abuse and rape, in addition to adding a question for the adolescents to identify the perpetrators.¹¹

Thus, the objective of the current study was to analyze the prevalence of sexual violence among schoolchildren aged from 13 to 17 years old in Brazil. In this way, this study advances in the knowledge on the theme of sexual violence in adolescents by analyzing the most up-to-date data from PeNSE, which, in addition to contributing a new approach to SV in 2019, also expanded the sample of schoolchildren interviewed.

METHODOLOGY

Design and data source

This is a cross-sectional study that resorted to data from PeNSE 2019, conducted in Brazilian public and private schools. The survey was carried out by the Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*, IBGE) in partnership with the Ministry of Health (*Ministério da Saúde*, MS), in addition to enjoying the support of the Ministry of Education (*Ministério da Educação*, MEC).¹¹

The PeNSE sampling plan corresponds to clusters in two stages, where the schools corresponded to the first stage and the classes of enrolled students, to the second. Of all the schools, the ones included were those that offer Elementary and High School teaching, in addition to technical courses with Integrated High School and normal/teacher's training courses. Most of the students who make up the selected classes are between 13 and 17 years old, which is the target population of the research, and all students who fit into it were invited to answer the research questionnaire.¹¹

A single sample of students aged from 13 to 17 years old was used in 2019, all coming from public and private schools.

The students answered the structured and self-applied questionnaire via their smartphones. This questionnaire included information on socioeconomic status, family context, experimentation and use of cigarettes, alcohol and other drugs, violence, safety, accidents and other life conditions.¹¹ A total of 4,242 schools from 1,288 Brazilian municipalities and 6,612 classes took part in the study, totaling 160,721 collected questionnaires, of which 159,245 were considered valid.¹¹

In order to ensure that the results represented students aged from 13 to 17 years old attending public and private schools in Brazil, sampling weight were calculated considering the following: the weights of the schools, classes and students, which were adjusted based on the School Census data. More details about the sample can be found in other publications.¹¹ In addition, the data are public and are available in the IBGE website (www.ibge.gov.br).

Variables

The current study analyzed indicators referring to the occurrence of SV, which is part of the “Security” section of the PeNSE questionnaire and refers to security situations in the schoolchildren’s life environment. The following indicators were considered for this study:

1. Sexual abuse: prevalence of schoolchildren that, at some point in their life, have been touched, handled, kissed or had their body parts exposed against their will;
2. Rape: prevalence of schoolchildren that, at some point in their life, were threatened, intimidated or forced to have sexual relations or any other sexual act against their will.

For the second indicator, the question “How old were you when someone threatened, intimidated or forced you to have sex or any other sexual act against your will for the first time?” was also analyzed.

In addition, the following variables were considered: gender (male; female), age group (from 13 to 15 years old; 16 and 17 years old), type of institution (public; private), region of residence (North; Northeast; Southeast; South; Midwest), aggressor [boyfriend; ex-boyfriend; date; crush; friend; father; mother; stepfather; stepmother; other family members; unknown; other] and Federated Unit (FU).

Statistical analyses

An analysis of the prevalence and respective 95% confidence intervals (95% CI) was carried out for the indicators, according to sociodemographic characteristics and to the aggressor, based on the tables released by the

IBGE, as available on the institute’s website. Subgroup prevalence values were compared, with statistically significant differences between the groups when there was no overlapping of the 95% CIs.¹² The structure of the sampling process and the post-stratification weights were considered in the analysis of the results.

Ethical aspects

The students expressed their agreement to take part in the survey on the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF) presented in the PeNSE app that was used to answer the questionnaire. In the FICF, each student was informed about their voluntary participation in the survey and about the possibility of not answering any question or exiting the questionnaire at any moment. In addition to that, they received diverse information about secrecy of the survey and non-identification of the schools. PeNSE 2019 was approved by the National Research Ethics Committee under opinion No. 3,249,268 dated April 8th, 2019.

RESULTS

The prevalence of schoolchildren that reported having already being victims of sexual abuse at some point in their life was 14.6% (95% CI: 14.2-15.1). This prevalence was higher in the age group of 16 and 17 years old (17.4%; 95% CI: 16.6-18.1), in the female gender (20.1%; 95% CI: 19.4-20.9%), and among schoolchildren attending private schools (16.3%; 95% CI: 15.7-16.9). The prevalence of schoolchildren that reported having already being rape victims at some point in their life was 6.3% (95% CI: 6.0-6.6). This prevalence was higher in the age group of 16 and 17 years old (7.7%; 95% CI: 7.2-8.1), in the female gender (8.8%; 95% CI: 8.4-9.3) and in those attending public schools (6.5%; 95% CI: 6.2-6.9). Sexual abuse and rape had higher prevalence values in the North region (17.1%; 95% CI: 15.7-18.4 and 8.4%; 95% CI: 7.7; 9.1, respectively), followed by the Southeast (15.2%; 95% CI: 14.2-16.2 and 6.1%; 95% CI: 5.5-6.6, respectively) and Midwest (14.6%; 95% CI: 13.8-15.4 and 6.7%; 95% CI: 6.1-7.2, respectively) regions (Table 1).

Regarding sexual abuse, for all age groups and regions of residence, the main aggressor was a boyfriend/girlfriend, ex-boyfriend/girlfriend, date or crush, except for students aged between 13 and 15 years old in the Northeast region, in which the main aggressor was a friend (24.3%; 95% CI: 19.8; 28.8) (Table 2). As for rape, in both age groups and in all regions studied, the main aggressor was the boyfriend/girlfriend, ex-boyfriend/girlfriend, date or crush, followed by other family members (Table 3).

Table 1 - Prevalence (95% CI) of schoolchildren aged from 13 to 17 years old that have been victims of sexual abuse or rape at some point in their life, according to sociodemographic variables, PeNSE 2019, Brazil

Variables	Sexual abuse		Rape	
	Total	95% CI	Total	95% CI
Total	14.6	14.2 - 15.1	6.3	6.0 - 6.6
Regions				
North	17.1	15.7 - 18.4	8.4	7.7 - 9.1
Northeast	13.5	12.9 - 14.1	5.9	5.4 - 6.3
Southeast	15.2	14.2 - 16.2	6.1	5.5 - 6.6
South	13.4	12.3 - 14.6	5.9	5.1 - 6.6
Midwest	14.6	13.8 - 15.4	6.7	6.1 - 7.2
Age group				
13-15 years old	13.2	12.6 - 13.7	5.5	5.1 - 5.9
16 and 17 years old	17.4	16.6 - 18.1	7.7	7.2 - 8.1
Gender				
Male	9.0	8.4 - 9.5	3.7	3.3 - 4.0
Female	20.1	19.4 - 20.9	8.8	8.4 - 9.3
Type of institution				
Public	14.4	13.8 - 14.9	6.5	6.2 - 6.9
Private	16.3	15.7 - 16.9	4.9	4.6 - 5.2

Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

Table 2 - Prevalence (95% CI) of schoolchildren aged from 13 to 17 years old that have been victims of sexual abuse at some point in their life, by identification of the aggressor and according to age groups and to the Major Regions, PeNSE 2019, Brazil

Age group and region of residence	Aggressor (95% CI)					
	Boyfriend/ Girlfriend, ex-boyfriend/ ex-girlfriend, date, crush	Friend	Father, mother, stepfather, stepmother	Other family members	Stranger	Other
13-17 years old						
Brazil	29.1 (27.6; 30.5)	24.8 (23.5; 26.0)	6.3 (5.7; 7.0)	16.4 (15.4; 17.4)	20.7 (19.6; 21.9)	14.8 (13.8; 15.8)
North	26.9 (24.0; 29.8)	20.3 (17.7; 22.9)	8.2 (6.5; 10.0)	19.5 (17.4; 21.6)	20.4 (17.2; 23.5)	15.4 (13.0; 17.8)
Northeast	28.0 (25.9; 30.0)	28.0 (25.9; 30.0)	5.5 (4.3; 6.6)	15.3 (13.3; 17.4)	20.6 (18.7; 22.5)	14.7 (13.1; 16.4)
Southeast	30.9 (27.9; 33.9)	25.3 (22.9; 27.8)	5.7 (4.6; 6.9)	14.4 (12.6; 16.1)	21.2 (19.1; 23.3)	14.2 (12.3; 16.2)
South	28.4 (25.5; 31.3)	22.3 (19.4; 25.3)	7.9 (5.4; 10.3)	20.0 (17.0; 23.1)	20.2 (17.3; 23.0)	14.8 (12.7; 16.9)
Midwest	27.9 (25.5; 30.4)	22.2 (20.0; 24.3)	6.9 (5.5; 8.4)	19.2 (16.8; 21.6)	20.3 (17.9; 22.6)	16.6 (14.2; 19.1)
13-15 years old						
Brazil	28.6 (26.7; 30.5)	28.1 (26.2; 29.9)	6.4 (5.5; 7.3)	15.6 (14.4; 16.9)	18.5 (17.1; 19.9)	14.2 (12.9; 15.5)
North	29.0 (25.3; 32.6)	21.8 (18.7; 24.9)	6.5 (4.5; 8.5)	18.5 (15.1; 21.9)	20.6 (15.8; 25.4)	13.5 (10.3; 16.6)
Northeast	26.6 (24.2; 29.1)	31.7 (28.8; 34.6)	6.1 (4.4; 7.7)	13.3 (11.5; 15.2)	19.0 (16.7; 21.3)	14.4 (12.3; 16.5)
Southeast	29.9 (25.8; 34.0)	29.4 (25.5; 33.2)	6.2 (4.6; 7.8)	14.2 (11.9; 16.5)	18.7 (16.2; 21.2)	13.6 (11.1; 16.1)
South	28.7 (24.6; 32.8)	24.9 (20.5; 29.3)	7.6 (4.7; 10.5)	21.2 (16.9; 25.4)	15.8 (12.5; 19.1)	14.7 (11.8; 17.5)
Midwest	28.1 (24.8; 31.4)	24.4 (21.2; 27.5)	6.3 (4.8; 7.7)	17.8 (14.8; 20.7)	17.1 (14.8; 19.4)	16.5 (13.3; 19.7)
16 and 17 years old						
Brazil	29.7 (27.6; 31.8)	20.2 (18.6; 21.8)	6.3 (5.3; 7.3)	17.4 (15.8; 19.1)	23.8 (22.1; 25.5)	15.6 (14.0; 17.2)
North	23.8 (19.6; 28.0)	18.1 (14.3; 22.0)	10.9 (8.5; 13.3)	21.0 (17.4; 24.7)	20.0 (16.6; 23.5)	18.3 (14.9; 21.7)
Northeast	29.9 (26.2; 33.6)	22.4 (19.9; 24.9)	4.6 (3.0; 6.2)	18.3 (14.4; 22.3)	23.1 (20.0; 26.3)	15.2 (12.6; 17.7)
Southeast	32.2 (28.1; 36.4)	19.9 (16.9; 22.8)	5.1 (3.5; 6.7)	14.6 (12.1; 17.0)	24.6 (21.6; 27.6)	15.0 (11.8; 18.2)
South	28.1 (24.3; 31.9)	19.3 (14.7; 23.8)	8.2 (4.6; 11.7)	18.6 (14.2; 23.1)	25.4 (20.5; 30.2)	14.8 (11.5; 18.2)
Midwest	27.6 (23.9; 31.3)	19.2 (16.0; 22.5)	7.8 (5.2; 10.3)	21.2 (17.1; 25.3)	24.5 (19.4; 29.6)	16.9 (13.6; 20.1)

Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

Note: The schoolchildren were allowed to indicate more than one aggressor.

When analyzing the schoolchildren's age when they were first raped, more than half of them (53.2%; 95% CI: 51.0-55.4) reported having being rape victims before the age of 13, with 56.3% (95% CI: 52.2-60.4) among boys

and 52.0% (95% CI: 49.5-54.4) among girls. There was no statistically significant difference when considering the regions (Table 4).

Table 3 - Prevalence (95% CI) of schoolchildren aged from 13 to 17 years old that have been victims of rape at some point in their life, by identification of the aggressor and according to age groups and to the Major Regions, PeNSE 2019, Brazil

Age groups and Major Regions	Aggressor (95% CI)					
	Boyfriend/ Girlfriend, ex-boyfriend/ ex-girlfriend, date, crush	Friend	Father, mother, stepfather, stepmother	Other family members	Stranger	Other
13-17 years old						
Brazil	26.1 (23.9; 28.4)	17.7 (16.1; 19.3)	10.1 (8.7; 11.5)	22.4 (20.6; 24.1)	19.2 (17.5; 21.0)	14.7 (13.2; 16.2)
North	21.6 (17.2; 25.9)	14.6 (11.1; 18.1)	10.9 (7.8; 14.0)	25.0 (20.3; 29.7)	22.7 (18.4; 26.9)	15.0 (12.4; 17.7)
Northeast	26.1 (22.7; 29.5)	21.4 (18.5; 24.4)	9.6 (7.0; 12.1)	20.4 (17.7; 23.2)	16.9 (14.1; 19.7)	14.5 (11.9; 17.2)
Southeast	28.6 (23.7; 33.4)	17.4 (14.3; 20.5)	8.9 (6.4; 11.5)	21.2 (17.9; 24.6)	19.6 (16.2; 23.1)	13.1 (10.0; 16.2)
South	25.2 (20.3; 30.0)	16.2 (12.1; 20.4)	12.9 (9.0; 16.8)	26.0 (20.7; 31.3)	20.2 (15.6; 24.7)	15.8 (12.0; 19.6)
Midwest	24.9 (21.2; 28.8)	15.0 (11.4; 18.7)	11.2 (8.6; 13.9)	23.2 (19.4; 27.1)	17.4 (14.3; 20.5)	19.7 (16.0; 23.4)
13-15 years old						
Brazil	23.3 (20.3; 26.3)	20.1 (17.8; 22.4)	11.3 (9.3; 13.4)	21.8 (19.4; 24.1)	19.5 (17.2; 21.7)	15.0 (12.8; 17.2)
North	24.0 (17.7; 30.3)	16.3 (11.8; 20.7)	10.4 (6.8; 14.0)	25.5 (20.2; 30.8)	18.4 (14.7; 22.2)	15.0 (10.5; 19.6)
Northeast	23.9 (19.9; 28.0)	24.3 (19.8; 28.8)	11.1 (7.7; 14.4)	20.2 (16.7; 23.8)	18.8 (14.4; 23.1)	13.1 (10.4; 15.8)
Southeast	23.9 (17.3; 30.5)	20.8 (16.5; 25.1)	10.4 (6.2; 14.7)	19.5 (14.9; 24.1)	19.9 (15.7; 24.0)	13.9 (9.1; 18.6)
South	19.1 (12.9; 25.4)	16.5 (10.4; 22.6)	15.3 (9.5; 21.0)	26.3 (19.5; 33.2)	24.0 (16.8; 31.2)	19.1 (13.5; 24.7)
Midwest	23.2 (18.8; 27.7)	15.8 (10.9; 20.8)	11.7 (8.4; 15.1)	22.9 (18.0; 27.8)	14.9 (11.4; 18.3)	19.5 (15.3; 23.8)
16 and 17 years old						
Brazil	29.9 (26.7; 33.2)	14.5 (12.5; 16.5)	8.5 (6.7; 10.2)	23.2 (20.2; 26.1)	18.9 (16.0; 21.9)	14.3 (12.2; 16.5)
North	18.2 (12.3; 24.1)	12.4 (7.7; 17.1)	11.4 (6.5; 16.4)	24.3 (15.2; 33.4)	28.5 (19.4; 37.5)	15.0 (11.1; 18.9)
Northeast	28.9 (23.4; 34.5)	17.6 (14.2; 20.9)	7.6 (4.5; 10.6)	20.7 (16.7; 24.8)	14.5 (11.5; 17.4)	16.5 (12.0; 21.0)
Southeast	34.7 (27.7; 41.6)	12.8 (9.2; 16.5)	7.0 (3.8; 10.1)	23.5 (18.0; 29.0)	19.4 (13.1; 25.6)	12.1 (8.1; 16.1)
South	33.4 (26.9; 39.9)	15.9 (9.0; 22.8)	9.6 (4.5; 14.7)	25.6 (17.0; 34.1)	15.0 (9.1; 20.8)	11.4 (6.4; 16.4)
Midwest	26.9 (20.6; 33.1)	14.1 (9.5; 18.7)	10.7 (6.3; 15.1)	23.7 (17.6; 29.7)	20.3 (15.1; 25.5)	19.9 (14.1; 25.7)

Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics

Note: The schoolchildren were allowed to indicate more than one aggressor.

Table 4 - Prevalence (95% CI) of schoolchildren aged from 13 to 17 years old that have been victims of rape at some point in their life, by age when the event took place and according to gender and to the Major Regions, PeNSE 2019, Brazil

Gender and Major Regions	Age when the rape took place (95% CI)					
	Less than 13 years old	13 years old	14 years old	15 years old	16 years old	17 years old
Total						
Brazil	53.2 (51.0; 55.4)	15.0 (13.2; 16.7)	12.8 (11.3; 14.4)	10.1 (8.7; 11.4)	5.3 (4.4; 6.3)	2.8 (1.9; 3.8)
North	55.7 (51.5; 59.9)	14.6 (11.3; 17.9)	12.9 (10.4; 15.4)	10.2 (6.9; 13.4)	4.8 (3.3; 6.3)	0.8 (0.1; 1.5)
Northeast	54.2 (50.4; 57.9)	15.1 (12.4; 17.8)	12.5 (10.0; 14.9)	9.2 (6.8; 11.6)	6.3 (4.3; 8.2)	1.9 (0.7; 3.1)
Southeast	49.7 (45.3; 54.1)	15.7 (11.9; 19.4)	13.7 (10.4; 17.1)	11.0 (8.3; 13.7)	4.7 (2.9; 6.5)	4.5 (2.2; 6.8)
South	55.2 (49.5; 60.9)	14.3 (10.1; 17.8)	12.5 (8.8; 16.2)	9.1 (6.1; 12.1)	6.6 (3.7; 9.5)	2.3 (0.2; 4.5)
Midwest	58.1 (54.0; 62.2)	13.5 (10.7; 16.4)	10.7 (8.0; 13.3)	10.1 (7.4; 12.8)	4.2 (2.9; 5.6)	2.5 (1.0; 4.0)
Boys						
Brazil	56.3 (52.2; 60.4)	13.1 (10.6; 15.6)	11.3 (8.9; 13.7)	8.6 (6.2; 10.9)	5.1 (3.5; 6.6)	4.0 (1.9; 6.2)
North	50.6 (41.1; 60.0)	17.9 (11.8; 24.0)	12.4 (7.8; 17.1)	9.9 (4.1; 15.6)	6.0 (2.8; 9.1)	1.5 (0.0; 3.4)
Northeast	57.4 (51.8; 63.0)	12.2 (8.8; 15.7)	11.8 (8.0; 15.6)	7.7 (4.9; 10.6)	7.7 (3.7; 11.6)	1.9 (0.4; 3.3)
Southeast	54.7 (51.8; 63.0)	12.1 (7.0; 17.3)	11.2 (5.9; 16.6)	9.2 (4.0; 14.3)	2.1 (0.6; 3.5)	8.3 (2.3; 14.3)
South	63.6 (49.6; 77.7)	12.3 (3.1; 21.5)	9.2 (2.8; 15.6)	7.9 (2.2; 13.7)	5.4 (0.9; 9.9)	0.4 (0.0; 1.2)
Midwest	62.7 (54.5; 70.9)	11.0 (5.7; 16.3)	9.3 (4.7; 13.8)	6.8 (3.4; 10.2)	5.6 (2.2; 9.0)	4.0 (0.4; 7.6)
Girls						
Brazil	52.0 (49.5; 54.4)	15.7 (13.6; 17.8)	13.5 (11.4; 15.6)	10.7 (9.0; 12.3)	5.4 (4.3; 6.6)	2.4 (1.3; 3.4)
North	58.5 (53.8; 63.2)	12.8 (8.4; 17.3)	13.1 (9.4; 16.9)	10.3 (6.5; 14.1)	4.2 (3.0; 5.4)	0.4 (0.1; 0.8)
Northeast	52.5 (47.9; 57.2)	16.5 (12.8; 20.2)	12.8 (9.5; 16.1)	9.9 (6.6; 13.2)	5.6 (3.6; 7.6)	1.9 (0.2; 3.6)
Southeast	47.9 (43.4; 52.5)	16.9 (12.6; 21.3)	14.6 (10.2; 19.0)	11.6 (8.4; 14.9)	5.6 (3.3; 7.9)	3.2 (0.9; 5.5)
South	52.8 (46.3; 59.3)	14.4 (10.3; 18.5)	13.5 (8.9; 18.0)	9.4 (5.9; 13.0)	6.9 (3.5; 10.4)	2.8 (0.1; 5.6)
Midwest	56.6 (51.9; 61.3)	14.3 (11.0; 17.7)	11.1 (8.2; 14.0)	11.1 (7.8; 14.5)	3.8 (2.4; 5.2)	2.0 (0.4; 3.7)

Fonte: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística.

Nota: Não são apresentados resultados para escolares que deixaram sem resposta.

In the analysis by FUs, the highest prevalence values for sexual abuse were found in *Amapá* (18.2%), *Pará* (17.8%), *Amazonas* (17.6%), *Roraima* (17.4%) and *Distrito Federal* (16.3%). The lowest prevalence values were obtained in *Alagoas*, *Bahia* and *Rio Grande do Sul* (12.1% each), as well as in *Sergipe* (12.2%) and in *Piauí* (12.8%). Rape presented its highest prevalence values in the states of *Amapá* (9.7%), *Amazonas* (9.4%), *Pará* (8.6%), *Roraima* (8.2%) and *Mato Grosso do Sul* (8.0%). The lowest prevalence values for rape were found in *Rio Grande do Sul* (4.8%), *Alagoas* and *Bahia* (5.1% each), as well as in *Paraíba*, *Pernambuco*, *Piauí* and *Sergipe* (5.6% each) (Figure 1).

DISCUSSION

The current study identified the SV suffered by adolescent students and their main aggressors, according to data from PeNSE 2019. Approximately 15% of the students reported having suffered sexual abuse at some point in their life, while more than 6% reported having been raped. Female adolescents were the main victims of any type of sexual violence, with one-fifth of them reporting having suffered sexual abuse and almost 10% stating having being raped at least once in their

life. In addition, the main aggressors were boyfriends/girlfriends, ex-boyfriends/ex-girlfriends, dates or crushes. In addition, more than half of the students reported having been raped before the age of 13.

The study found higher prevalence of sexual abuse and rape among older adolescents, aged 16 and 17. As the question in the questionnaire refers to SV suffered throughout life, the higher prevalence in older adolescents can be related to improved access to information and to the perception they have about acts of violence,¹³ in addition to longer exposure time in life.

When asked about the age at which they were raped, more than half of the adolescents reported that it was before the age of 13, a period of greater vulnerability and that can be related to lesser maturity to react to violence, in addition to fear or dependence in relation to the aggressor.⁸ Moreover, in the media, there is eroticization of children's bodies, especially female ones. The representation of girls as objects of desire and consumption contributes to the normalization of pedophilia, which has repercussions on violence against children.¹⁴ Corroborating the results herein found, a study carried out in Brazil with records of rape showed that, between 2017 and 2020, 81% of children and adolescents victims of rape were aged up to 14 years old.⁵

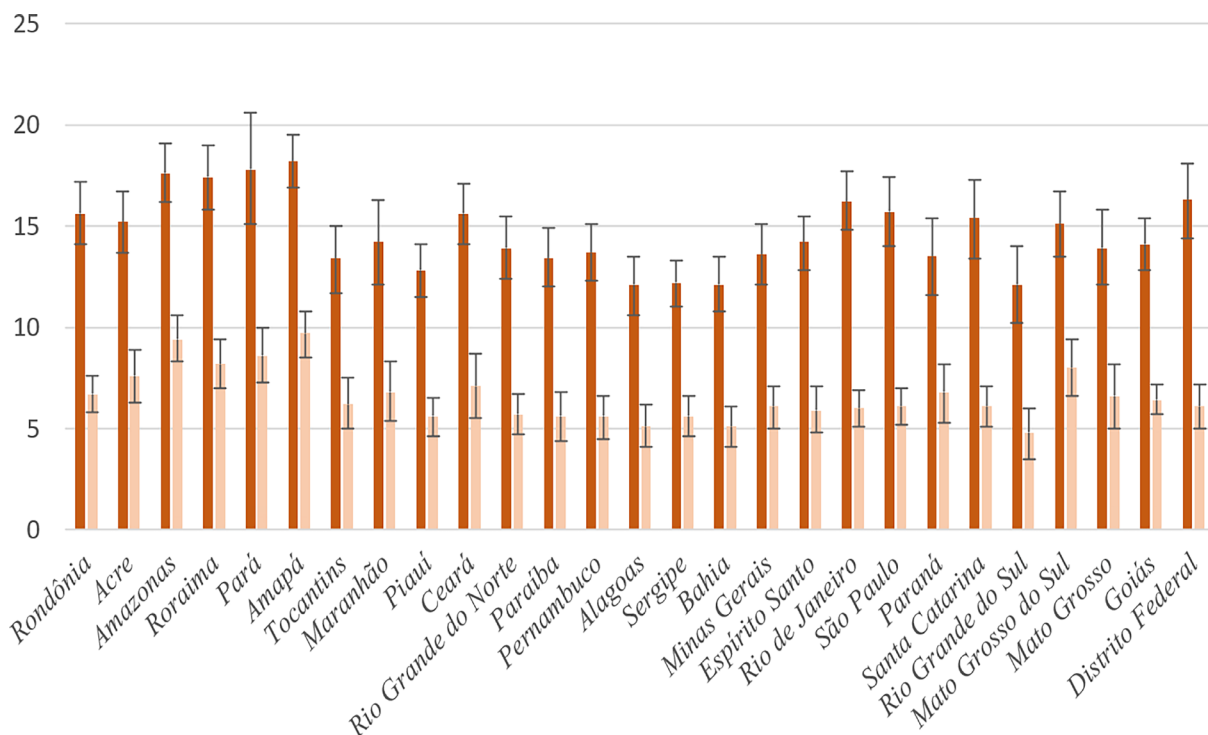


Figure 1 - Prevalence (95% CI) of schoolchildren aged from 13 to 17 years old that had already been victims of some type of sexual violence at some point in their life, by type of violence and according to the Federation Units. PeNSE 2019, Brazil.

In the current study, it was observed that girls are the main victims of different forms of SV, suffering more than twice as much abuse and rape than boys. A previous study, which analyzed SINAN notifications regarding SV against adolescents in schools between 2010 and 2014, showed that more than three quarters of the notifications of violence in adolescents aged between 10 and 19 years old are against girls.⁸ Furthermore, in the PeNSE 2015 edition, the chance of girls reporting having already been forced to have sexual intercourse was 18% higher than that of boys.¹⁵ This finding corroborates the patriarchal structure of our society.

Patriarchy is understood as a socioeconomic structure based on paternal power, in which women are not only dominated by men, but exploited by them.¹⁶ In this view, the supposed male supremacy legitimizes men to control women's sexuality, body and autonomy, with sexual violence being a way to maintain this power.¹⁷ In addition to that, gender inequalities generated in a patriarchal society keep women in a vulnerable situation by denying them access to material, cultural and symbolic resources to break the cycle of violence in which they are inserted.^{18,19}

This study showed that the experience of SV is reported by students in both private and public schools and that the prevalence of sexual abuse was higher in those attending private schools, while rape was more prevalent in public schools. In Brazil, the higher occurrence of violence can be related to low income;⁸ however, in this study, the administrative system of the school, as a proxy of income and social class, did not present clear evidence. Therefore, it becomes necessary to perform a crossing with other variables, such as parents or guardians and family situation, in addition to other deeper analytical studies to assess a possible association.

In this study, boyfriends/girlfriends, ex-boyfriends/ex-girlfriends, dates or crushes appear as main aggressors, both for sexual abuse and rape, followed by other family members or friends. This finding is corroborated by a study carried out with data from SINAN/Violência, which shows that more than 45% of the SV notifications in adolescents corresponded to cases in which the perpetrator was a known person.⁸ Domestic and intrafamily violence is of major magnitude in Brazil, and a study using data from PeNSE 2015 found a prevalence greater than 60% of adolescents who reported this type of violence.²⁰ This occurrence can be related to the adolescents' dependence on their parents or relatives, which makes it difficult to report the aggressor and leave the environment of violence.¹⁵ On the other hand, in relationships of affection, victims often submit to non-consensual sex because they believe that their partner has the right to have sex with them, even if against their will.²¹

Sexual violence against adolescents is a serious attack on the Child and Adolescent Statute (*Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente*, ECA).²² In order to ensure comprehensive care for children and adolescents experiencing violence, health services need to train their professionals to identify signs and symptoms of violence. In addition to that, it is necessary to establish a line of care based on welcoming, assistance, notification, care actions and protection of children and adolescents in situations of violence, in order to break the cycle of violence that often settles into the very dynamics of family relationships.²³ Furthermore, there should be articulation between the care network and the existing social protection network in the territory, promoting comprehensive and humanized care for these adolescents and their families.²³

The data in this study refer to the last year before the COVID-19 pandemic, decreed in 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO). In the pandemic context, social restrictions linked to health recommendations imposed new issues on the determinants of children's health.²⁴ SV against children and adolescents was impacted, with an increase in intrafamily violence.²⁵ However, case identification appears to have declined, possibly due to school closures and restrictions in the care services.²⁵

Among the limitations of this study, it should be noted that PeNSE is a survey conducted with adolescent students, and that there may be other points in relation to adolescents who do not attend school and who belong to other age groups. In addition to that, the questionnaire is answered by the students themselves, which can generate information bias, which can underestimate or overestimate the occurrence of SV depending on the social acceptance of the behaviors studied.

On the other hand, the 4th edition of PeNSE, conducted in 2019, expanded the scope of the sample of schoolchildren by interviewing adolescents aged from 13 to 17 years old. In addition, PeNSE 2019 innovated in addressing the topic of sexual violence, including questions related to both sexual abuse and rape.¹¹

Thus, the current study contributes to the monitoring of data and the production of diverse scientific evidence on sexual violence against adolescents in Brazil, being able to support decision-making and targeting of the existing policies for effective reach in coping with this significant problem.

CONCLUSIONS

This study revealed a worrying prevalence of SV among students aged from 13 to 17 years old in Brazil,

especialmente entre adolescentes do sexo feminino. Apesar do fato de que os relatos de violência são mais prevalentes em adolescentes com 16 e 17 anos, o fato de que mais da metade dos eventos ocorreu quando os adolescentes tinham menos de 13 anos se destaca. Além disso, os dados mostram que essas agressões foram cometidas principalmente por pessoas no núcleo familiar e em relações íntimas e afetivas.

A violência vivida na infância e adolescência deixa marcas profundas e impactos na saúde física e mental, com repercussões de longo prazo na vida adulta. Os serviços de saúde devem ser um espaço privilegiado para a proteção de crianças e adolescentes em situações de violência. Além disso, pesquisas nacionais, como a PeNSE, contribuem para a compreensão da magnitude do problema. Estudos mais aprofundados com dados de pesquisa podem gerar evidências diversas e colaborar para o desenho de políticas públicas intersetoriais que atuem para enfrentar o problema.

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