

Multidimensional determinants of sexual violence: an econometric approach to the childhood–adulthood nexus

Determinantes multidimensionales de la violencia sexual: un enfoque econométrico del nexo infancia–adultez

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ABSTRACT

Recent research highlights the influence of early psychological and social factors in shaping sexual violence (SV) in adulthood. This study examines the effect of childhood violence within the family and social environment on SV against women. Microdata from the National Institute of Statistics and Census of Ecuador for 2010 (5,879 observations) and 2019 (12,600 observations) were used, applying chi-square tests and discrete choice models. The estimates included traditional coefficients and marginal effects to capture the probability of victimization. The results indicate that women whose partners experienced violence in childhood are between 11% and 16% more likely to suffer SV. These findings demonstrate that childhood violence is a significant predictor of sexual aggression in adulthood and reinforce the theory of the intergenerational transmission of violence, underscoring the need for early interventions and effective preventive policies.

KEYWORDS: sexual violence against women, discrete choice models, Ecuador

RESUMEN

Recientes investigaciones destacan la influencia de factores psicológicos y sociales tempranos en la configuración de la violencia sexual (VS) en la adultez. Este estudio examina el efecto de la violencia infantil en el entorno familiar y social sobre la VS contra las mujeres. Se emplearon microdatos del



Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos de Ecuador correspondientes a 2010 (5.879 observaciones) y 2019 (12.600 observaciones), aplicando pruebas chi-cuadrado y modelos de elección discreta. Las estimaciones incluyeron coeficientes tradicionales y efectos marginales para capturar la probabilidad de victimización. Los resultados indican que las mujeres cuyas parejas experimentaron violencia en la niñez presentan entre un 11% y un 16% más probabilidad de sufrir VS. Los hallazgos evidencian que la violencia infantil constituye un predictor significativo de la agresión sexual en la adultez y refuerzan la teoría de la transmisión intergeneracional de la violencia, subrayando la necesidad de intervenciones tempranas y políticas preventivas eficaces.

PALABRAS CLAVE: violencia sexual contra las mujeres, modelos de elección discreta, Ecuador

1. INTRODUCTION

Sexual Violence (hereafter, SV) constitutes a severe public health problem that affects the lifelong well-being of hundreds of millions of people (Isabel et al., 2025). It is defined as any act or attempted act of a sexual nature carried out without consent and through force, coercion, or abuse of power, and represents a form of gender-based violence with high levels of underreporting (UN Women, 2025; World Health Organization, 2025a). Although SV can affect anyone, women are disproportionately exposed due to structural inequalities and patriarchal norms that heighten both its prevalence and persistence (Kassa et al., 2023; Chan y Sachs, 2023; Choudhry, 2024; UN Women, 2025).

Compared to other forms of violence against women, SV is characterized by deeper concealment, more severe consequences, and social stigma that discourages reporting (Sardinha et al., 2022; Isabel et al., 2025). This study focuses on SV perpetrated by intimate partners, a phenomenon that affects nearly one third of women worldwide and whose reduction has stagnated since 2000 (World Health Organization, 2025b). In Ecuador, intimate partner SV also exhibits a troubling persistence: in 2010, six out of ten women reported having experienced some form of violence, and in 2019, 43 percent reported partner violence (INEC, 2019), despite legislative advances such as the Organic Law for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women (LOIPEVCM), a fundamental framework establishing comprehensive mechanisms for addressing gender-based violence.

Aligned with SDG target 5.2, this study examines how childhood exposure to violence among perpetrators influences the likelihood of committing sexual violence against their female partners, incorporating additional factors from the social environment. The first hypothesis posits that SV is linked to behavioral patterns shaped by early experiences of maltreatment (Uribe, 2010; Hutchinson et al., 2023; Stoppelbein et al., 2024) and is grounded in intergenerational transmission theories, which argue that violence experienced or witnessed during childhood substantially increases the probability of reproducing or suffering abusive behaviors in adulthood (Smith-Marek et al., 2015; Mansoor, 2025). The second hypothesis highlights the role of the social and community context in shaping aggressive behaviors, emphasizing that contextual factors can either amplify or mitigate the manifestation of sexual violence (Brunton & Dyer, 2022; Bentivegna & Patalay, 2022; Harun et al., 2024).

To test these hypotheses, the study employs chi-square tests and discrete choice models using data from Ecuador's Violence Against Women Surveys conducted between 2010 and 2019. The contribution is threefold. First, chi-square tests identify the factors associated with SV, including perpetrators' childhood exposure to violence as well as women's sociodemographic and contextual characteristics such as region, education, ethnicity, number of children, age, marital status, and income. Second, discrete choice models estimate regression coefficients and marginal effects, quantifying the magnitude of these relationships. Third, the analysis incorporates spatial heterogeneity, revealing that women residing in the Coastal region face higher probabilities of SV than those in the Highlands, while women with paid employment exhibit lower exposure to intimate partner violence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

SV against women constitutes a severe violation of human rights with persistent effects on their physical, psychological, economic, and social well-being (Béjar, 2009). Its explanation requires a multidimensional approach, as it cannot be reduced to individual characteristics or isolated psychological mechanisms. While early psychodynamic frameworks linked adult violence to unresolved childhood conflicts (Uribe, 2010), contemporary research has consolidated integrative models that combine neurobiological evidence, trauma theories, socioeconomic inequalities, gender norms, and cultural contexts. Within this framework, the literature converges on the understanding that violence is a multicausal phenomenon emerging from the interaction between personal trajectories and social structures.

From feminist and gender studies perspectives, SV is interpreted as an expression of power relations that sustain the patriarchal order. Segato (2016, 2021) conceptualizes this violence as a “gender pedagogy” through which hierarchies are reaffirmed and feminized bodies are disciplined. This perspective is particularly relevant in Latin America, where structural inequality, racism, coloniality, informality, and institutional weakness shape both the occurrence and normalization of violence. Consistently, factors such as coercive control, jealousy, and male socialization into dominance are among the most robust predictors of SV (Cabrera et al., 2012; Dartnall & Jewkes, 2013). In Ecuador, these dynamics intensify due to tensions between traditional ideologies of male dominance and increasingly egalitarian social practices, which may trigger violent reactions when men perceive threats to their position of control (Stølen, 1991). Recent evidence shows that female labor force participation can increase the risk of violence when mediated by male jealousy (Buller et al., 2023), reinforcing the centrality of gender constructions.

This study draws on theories of intergenerational transmission of violence (Smith-Marek et al., 2015; Till-Tentschert, 2017; Mojahed et al., 2022), which posit that experiencing violence in childhood, either as a victim or witness, substantially increases the likelihood of reproducing or suffering abusive behaviors in adulthood. International evidence consistently shows that early exposure to physical, psychological, or sexual violence elevates the risk of aggressive behaviors later in life (Sokar et al., 2023), especially among men who witnessed interparental violence (Freedman, 2016; Ortega et al., 2008). Among women, childhood abuse is a particularly strong predictor of adult victimization, including sexual violence, with long-lasting effects on mental health and revictimization risks (Stith et al., 2000; Brunton & Dyer, 2022; Bentivegna & Patalay, 2022). Latin American research confirms these patterns and underscores the need for contextually grounded approaches: in Peru, childhood experiences of violence increase the likelihood of intimate partner violence in adulthood (Bazo-Alvarez et al., 2024; Bendezu-Quispe et al., 2024); in Colombia, such exposure raises the risk of physical violence (Stark et al., 2025); and in Mexico, biographical and interpersonal factors are key determinants of sexual violence within intimate relationships (Torres Munguía, 2025).

Structural determinants of violence against women have been widely documented over the past decade. McIlwaine (2013) shows that cities do not inherently produce gender-based violence, although urban inequalities can exacerbate it. In Brazil, SV is concentrated in territories with lower educational attainment, poverty, and weak institutions (da Silva & Roncalli, 2018). In Colombia, women’s economic participation reduces violence in rural areas but may increase it in the services sector, while education acts as a protective factor (Iregui-Bohórquez et al., 2019). In Nepal, belonging to lower castes, living in disadvantaged communities, and residing in the Terai region increase the risk of domestic violence (Sapkota et al., 2024).

Recent evidence further enriches this picture. In Ecuador, violence shows higher prevalence among women with higher education, non-Indigenous women, and urban residents of the Highlands and Amazon regions (Edeby & San Sebastián, 2021). In Peru, violence is concentrated in impoverished provinces with entrenched patriarchal beliefs (Bazo-Alvarez et al., 2024), is more common in rural

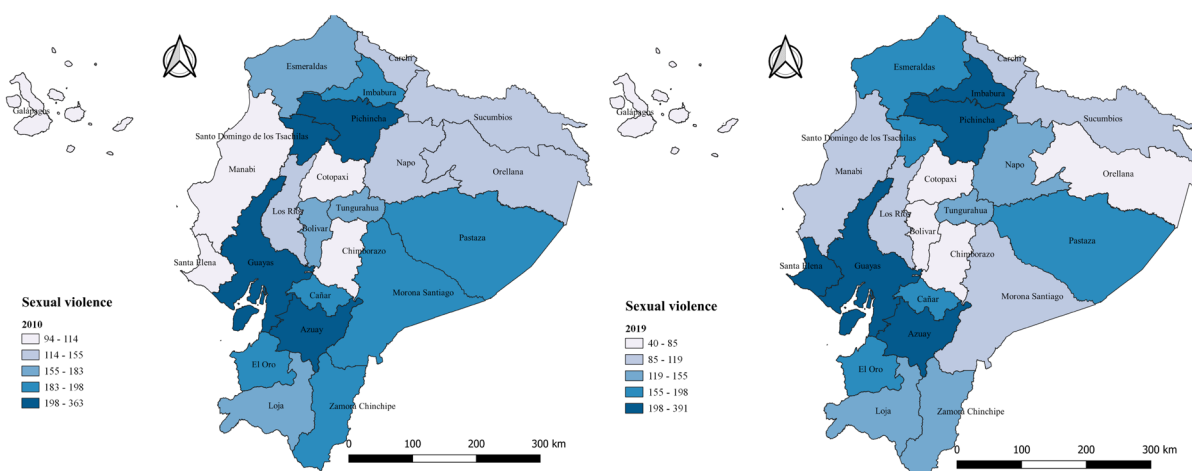
and low-density areas (Ibarra-Cabrera et al., 2025), and increases when the gender wage gap widens (Ortogorin, 2024). Other studies identify higher risks among divorced women, those with prior family violence, or those with higher incomes, often linked to male perceptions of loss of control (Hernández-Medina et al., 2023; Bendezu-Quispe et al., 2024; Hernández-Medina et al., 2025). Comparative evidence shows that women living in marginalized urban neighborhoods experience higher rates of violence than those in rural or non-marginalized urban areas (Chen et al., 2025), while in Chile higher educational attainment is associated with a greater likelihood of reporting violence (Cadena-Urzúa, 2025).

Despite strong international consensus on the link between childhood exposure to violence and its reproduction in adulthood, evidence for Ecuador remains extremely limited, particularly regarding sexual violence perpetrated by men against their intimate partners. Regional studies have predominantly focused on female victimization and on physical or psychological violence, leaving largely unexplored the role of the aggressor and his early-life experiences. Moreover, although Latin American research recognizes the influence of community, structural, and gender-related factors, few studies integrate these elements with aggressors' childhood histories to explain sexual violence in the Ecuadorian context.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs data from the National Survey on Family Relations and Gender Violence against Women (ENVIGMU) for 2010 and 2019, conducted by the National Institute of Statistics of Ecuador. The use of official data ensures quality and consistency of estimators. The analysis focuses on the role of childhood exposure to partner violence and its impact on SV against women, while also incorporating social environment factors into the econometric estimates, in line with the literature and contextual framework. Figure 1 illustrates the geographic distribution of SV across Ecuadorian provinces, highlighting persistent regional heterogeneity between 2010 and 2019.

Figure 1
Sexual violence in Ecuador (2010-2019)



Authors with data from INEC (2019)

The dependent variable is binary, capturing whether a woman has experienced SV. To model this outcome, discrete choice models are applied to estimate its probability. The main explanatory variable is intimate partner violence during childhood, while controls include geographic region, residence, age, education, marital status, ethnicity, number of children, and wage receipt.

Table 1 summarizes the variables included in the econometric analysis. SV and childhood partner violence are dichotomous (Yes/No). Age is grouped into three categories: under 30, 31–60, and over 60 years. Education is classified as illiterate, literacy, primary, secondary, non-university higher, university, and postgraduate. Marital status is reduced to two categories: with or without a partner. Ethnicity comprises Mestizo, Indigenous, Montubia, Afro-Ecuadorian, and White. The number of children is categorized as none, one, two, or three or more.

Table 1
Variables and descriptive statistics

Variable	Description	2010 M	2010 SD	2019 M	2019 SD
Dependent variable					
SV	1= Yes; 0= No	0.26	0.44	0.23	0.42
Independent variable					
VECP	0= No; 1= Yes	0.16	0.37	0.22	0.42
Region	0=Coast; 1= Highlands; 2= Amazon; 3= Galápagos	0.93	0.78	0.87	0.81
Area	0=Rural; 1=Urban	0.59	0.49	0.66	0.47
Age	1= Under 30; 2= 31-60; 3= Over 60	1.71	0.70	1.85	0.69
Education level	0= Illiterate; 1= Basic; 2= Secondary; 3= Higher	1.54	0.86	1.75	0.82
Marital status	1= Married; 0= Other case	0.31	0.46	0.39	0.49
Ethnicity	0= Mestizo; 1= Indigenous; 2= Afro-American; 3=Montubio; 4= White	0.54	1.08	0.35	0.87
Number of children	0= Childless; 1= One; 2= Two; 3= More than two	2.80	0.57	2.51	0.81
Wages	0= No wages; 1= With wages	0.61	0.49	0.53	0.50

Note. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. Variables are coded as indicated. (n = 5,879) and (n = 12,600) correspond to the number of observations for 2010 and 2019, respectively.

Source: Authors with data from INEC (2019)

In 2010, 26% of women reported experiencing SV, a figure that declined to 22.3% in 2019. The sample is mainly composed of women from the Sierra region (40.1%) and urban areas (65.7%). Women aged 31–60 represent 50.2%, those with secondary education 39.6%, and married women 38.8%. Most respondents identify as Mestizo (81%), 68.2% have more than two children, and 53.1% receive a salary. Table 2 groups provinces by region to identify potential heterogeneous effects across territories.

Table 2
Classification of regional units

Region	Provinces
Coast	El Oro, Esmeraldas, Guayas, Los Ríos, Manabí, Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, Santa Elena
Highlands	Azuay, Bolívar, Cañar, Carchi, Cotopaxi, Chimborazo, Imbabura, Loja, Pichincha, Tungurahua
Amazon	Morona Santiago, Napo, Pastaza, Zamora Chinchipe, Sucumbios, Orellana.
Galápagos	Galápagos

Authors with data from INEC (2019)

The methodological strategy was implemented in two stages. First, a chi-square test was applied to examine differences between women who experienced SV and those who did not. Second, discrete choice models (logit and probit) were estimated to assess the impact of partners' childhood violence (VECP) and social environment factors on SV. The logit model, proposed by Luce (1954) and extended by McFadden (1973), and the probit model, introduced by Bliss (1934) and Fisher (1935), are suitable given the binary nature of the dependent variable, allowing evaluation of covariates' influence on the probability of SV. Recent studies reinforce their relevance, including logistic regression applications to abuse against women (Augusti et al., 2023), partner SV and femicide (Colagrossi et al., 2023), gender-based violence in Ethiopia (Kasa et al., 2023), and SV analysis combining descriptive methods, chi-square tests, and logistic regression (Hutchinson et al., 2023).

$$SV=f(VECP) \quad (1)$$

The covariates include region, area, education, civil status, age, ethnicity, number of children, and salary receipt. Considering the error term and all variables, the model is specified as follows:

$$(VS)_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 VECP_i + \alpha_2 Region_i + \alpha_3 Area_i + \alpha_4 Educational\ level_i + \alpha_5 Marital\ status_i + \alpha_6 Ethnicity_i + \alpha_7 Age_i + \alpha_8 \#Children_i + \alpha_9 Wages_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

Before estimating the Logit and Probit models, a chi-square test was applied. Table 3 reports the results, highlighting factors associated with SV. In 2010, 27.8% of women reported having experienced SV, with the highest representation among women from the Sierra region (46.3%) and urban areas (60.1%). The majority were aged 31–60 (53.1%), had primary education (50.9%), and were unmarried (63.8%). Most identified as Mestizo (73.9%), 77.1% had more than two children, and 61.1% reported receiving wages.

Table 3

Distributions and chi-squared test statistics

Variables	Category	2010 No n (%)	2010 Yes n (%)	χ^2	2019 No n (%)	2019 Yes n (%)	χ^2
VECP	No	6299 (75.05)	1891 (63.80)	137.90***	7861 (79.70)	2124 (71.08)	98.28***
	Yes	2094 (24.95)	1073 (36.20)		2002 (20.30)	864 (28.92)	
Region	Coast	2736 (32.60)	884 (29.82)	10.33*	3673 (37.24)	1177 (39.39)	14.81***
	Highlands	3806 (45.35)	1373 (46.32)		3948 (40.03)	1212 (40.56)	
	Amazon	1593 (18.98)	621 (20.95)		1956 (19.83)	542 (18.14)	
	Galápagos	258 (3.07)	86 (2.90)		286 (2.90)	57 (1.91)	
Area	Rural	3490 (41.58)	1042 (35.16)	37.73***	3708 (37.60)	700 (23.43)	204.27***
	Urban	4903 (58.42)	1922 (64.84)		6155 (62.40)	2288 (76.57)	
Age	Under 30	3034 (36.94)	982 (33.89)	64.43***	2794 (28.82)	1280 (44.02)	353.69***
	31–60	3712 (45.19)	1539 (53.11)		4936 (50.92)	1393 (47.90)	
	Over 60	1468 (17.87)	377 (13.01)		1963 (20.25)	235 (8.08)	
Education level	Illiterate	638 (7.60)	192 (6.48)	8.74*	544 (5.52)	51 (1.71)	419.74***
	Basic	4270 (50.88)	1520 (51.28)		3911 (39.65)	710 (23.76)	
	Secondary	2130 (25.38)	722 (24.36)		3714 (37.66)	1380 (46.18)	
	Higher	1255 (16.14)	530 (17.88)		1694 (17.18)	847 (28.35)	

Marital status	Other	5260 (62.67)	1996 (67.34)	20.71***	5841 (59.22)	2015 (67.44)	65.13***
	Married	3133 (37.33)	968 (32.66)		4022 (40.78)	973 (32.56)	
Ethnicity	Mestizo	6229 (74.22)	2173 (73.31)	10.01*	7867 (79.76)	2545 (85.17)	96.72***
	Indigenous	949 (11.31)	338 (11.40)		1245 (12.62)	196 (6.56)	
	Afro-American	469 (5.59)	208 (7.02)		195 (1.98)	88 (2.95)	
	Montubio	334 (3.98)	120 (4.05)		317 (3.21)	78 (2.61)	
	White	412 (4.91)	125 (4.22)		239 (2.42)	81 (2.71)	
Number of children	None	211 (2.51)	57 (1.92)	4.49	297 (3.01)	124 (4.15)	39.55***
	One	627 (7.47)	214 (7.22)		987 (10.01)	382 (12.78)	
	Two	1111 (13.24)	376 (12.69)		1716 (17.40)	569 (19.04)	
	More than two	6444 (76.78)	2317 (78.17)		6863 (69.58)	1913 (64.02)	
Wages	No	1953 (43.42)	402 (25.84)	150.39***	4704 (47.70)	1314 (43.98)	12.76***
	Yes	2545 (56.58)	1154 (74.16)		5158 (52.30)	1674 (56.02)	

Note: χ^2 indicates chi-square test. Reference categories in parentheses. ***, ** and * denote significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% levels.

Source: Authors based on data from INEC (2019)

4. RESULTS

Table 4 and Table 5 show that, in Ecuador, childhood violence experienced by male partners is a strong and consistent predictor of SV. In 2010, women whose partners had suffered violence during childhood were 16% more likely to experience SV; by 2019 this probability had decreased to 11%, although it remained significant at the 1% level. These findings confirm the intergenerational transmission of violence, aligning with international evidence that links early-life exposure to aggression with higher violent behavior in adulthood (Freedman, 2016; Sokar et al., 2023). The pattern is consistent with Latin American studies emphasizing the role of gender norms that tolerate intimate partner violence (Bucheli & Rossi, 2019). In Peru, violence witnessed or experienced during childhood increases the likelihood of intimate partner violence in adulthood (Bazo-Alvarez et al., 2024; Bendezu-Quispe et al., 2024), while in Mexico biographical and interpersonal factors explain SV within intimate relationships (Torres Munguía, 2025). Taken together, these results confirm that childhood violence experienced by the aggressor remains a central mechanism for understanding SV against adult women in Ecuador.

Table 4
Determinants of sexual violence against women (2010)

Variable	Logit	ME (mena)	AME	Probit	ME (mena)	AME
VECP (ref: No)						
Yes	0.88*** (13.53)	0.15*** (14.07)	0.16*** (14.07)	0.51*** (13.70)	0.16*** (14.08)	0.16*** (14.04)
Region (ref: Coast)						
Highlands	0.30*** (3.71)	0.05*** (3.76)	0.05*** (3.76)	0.17*** (3.70)	0.05*** (3.74)	0.05*** (3.74)
Amazon	0.25** (2.68)	0.04** (2.65)	0.04** (2.66)	0.15** (2.69)	0.05** (2.67)	0.04** (2.67)

Galápagos	0.11 (0.63)	0.02 (0.62)	0.02 (0.62)	0.07 (0.66)	0.02 (0.65)	0.02 (0.65)
Area (ref: Rural)						
Urban	0.30*** (4.19)	0.05*** (4.28)	0.05*** (4.26)	0.18*** (4.19)	0.05*** (4.25)	0.05*** (4.24)
Age (ref: < 30)						
31 – 60	-0.01 (-0.12)	-0.002 (-0.12)	-0.002 (-0.12)	-0.01 (-0.11)	-0.002 (-0.11)	-0.002 (-0.11)
>60	-0.14 (-1.08)	-0.02 (-1.10)	-0.02 (-1.10)	-0.08 (-1.02)	-0.02 (-1.03)	-0.02 (-1.02)
Education (ref: Illiterate)						
Basic	0.06 (0.36)	0.01 (0.37)	0.01 (0.37)	0.03 (0.35)	0.01 (0.36)	0.01 (0.36)
Secondary	-0.04 (-0.22)	-0.01 (-0.22)	-0.01 (-0.22)	-0.02 (-0.24)	-0.01 (-0.24)	-0.01 (-0.24)
Higher	0.05 (0.29)	0.01 (0.30)	0.01 (0.30)	0.03 (0.25)	0.01 (0.25)	0.01 (0.25)
Marital status (ref: Other)						
Married	-0.40*** (-5.69)	-0.08*** (-5.52)	-0.07*** (-5.56)	-0.24*** (-5.67)	-0.08*** (-5.54)	-0.07*** (-5.56)
Ethnicity (ref: Mestizo)						
Indigenous	0.21* (2.00)	0.04 (1.92)	0.04* (1.96)	0.13* (2.07)	0.04* (2.00)	0.04* (2.01)
Afro-American	0.19 (1.41)	0.04 (1.36)	0.03 (1.37)	0.12 (1.44)	0.04 (1.40)	0.04 (1.40)
Montubia	0.08 (0.49)	0.01 (0.48)	0.01 (0.48)	0.05 (0.51)	0.01 (0.51)	0.01 (1.65)
White	-0.02 (-0.13)	-0.004 (-0.13)	-0.004 (-0.13)	-0.02 (-0.27)	-0.01 (-0.27)	-0.01 (-0.27)
Children (ref: None)						
One	0.28 (1.58)	0.05 (1.65)	0.05 (1.64)	0.16 (1.57)	0.05 (1.62)	0.04 (1.61)
Two	0.28 (1.66)	0.05 (1.76)	0.05 (1.75)	0.16 (1.59)	0.04 (1.66)	0.04 (1.65)
More than two	0.41* (2.42)	0.07** (2.67)	0.07** (2.63)	0.23* (2.38)	0.07** (2.57)	0.07** (2.54)
Wages (ref: No)						
Yes	0.66*** (9.15)	0.12*** (9.66)	0.11*** (9.61)	0.39*** (9.30)	0.12*** (9.69)	0.11*** (9.64)
Constant	-2.51*** (-10.55)			-1.48*** (-10.88)		
McFadden R ²	0.06			0.06		
AIC	6315.21			6315.64		
BIC	6448.79			6449.22		
Observations	5879			5879		

Note: ME = marginal effects at the mean; AME = average marginal effects. Reference categories in parentheses. ***, ** and * denote significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% levels.

Source: Authors based on data from INEC (2019)

The results indicate that socioeconomic and territorial factors shape the risk of SV in Ecuador in differentiated ways. In 2010, urban women were 5% more likely to experience SV than rural women, but by 2019 this relationship had reversed, with urban areas showing a 7% lower risk. This pattern suggests relative improvements in urban contexts, while rural poverty continues to operate as a structural determinant linked to stress and violence. These findings align with regional evidence attributing higher levels of violence to impoverished areas with entrenched patriarchal beliefs, such as in Peru (Bazo-Alvarez et al., 2024), and to marginalized urban neighborhoods in low- and middle-income countries (Chen et al., 2025). However, the Ecuadorian case exhibits particularities: Edeby & San Sebastián (2021) report higher prevalence of SV among urban women in the Highlands and Amazon regions, underscoring how territorial inequalities and local conditions decisively modulate exposure to risk.

Age also reveals differentiated patterns. In 2019, women aged 31 to 60 were 8% less likely to experience SV than those under 30, while the reduction reached 16% among women over 60. The lack of significance in 2010 points to greater vulnerability among younger women, consistent with studies showing that SV frequently occurs within the household and in educational settings, disproportionately affecting girls and adolescents. These results coincide with the findings of Edeby & San Sebastián (2021), who identify the highest prevalence of SV among women aged 15 to 25 in Ecuador. Generational differences in social and individual tolerance of violence, as well as varying levels of awareness and willingness to report, may help explain these variations in risk patterns.

Table 5
Determinants of sexual violence against women (2019)

	Logit	ME (mean)	AME	Probit	ME (mean)	AME
VECP (ref: No)						
Yes	0.62*** (11.88)	0.11*** (11.02)	0.11*** (11.26)	0.37*** (11.87)	0.11*** (11.19)	0.11*** (11.32)
Region (ref: Coast)						
Highlands	0.10 (1.84)	0.02 (1.85)	0.02 (1.85)	0.05 (1.61)	0.01 (1.61)	0.01 (1.61)
Amazon	0.01 (0.18)	0.002 (0.18)	0.02 (0.18)	0.005 (0.12)	0.001 (0.12)	0.001 (0.12)
Galápagos	-0.43** (-2.75)	-0.06** (-3.11)	-0.06** (-3.05)	-0.25** (-2.86)	-0.06** (-3.18)	-0.06** (-3.13)
Area (ref: Rural)						
Urban	-0.46*** (-8.37)	-0.07*** (-8.79)	-0.07*** (-8.75)	-0.26*** (-8.36)	-0.07*** (-8.68)	-0.07*** (-8.63)
Age (ref: <30)						
31 – 60	-0.43*** (-8.04)	-0.08*** (-7.85)	-0.08*** (-7.89)	-0.26*** (-8.00)	-0.08*** (-7.86)	-0.08*** (-7.87)
>60	-1.02*** (-11.94)	-0.16*** (-13.44)	-0.16*** (-13.41)	-0.57*** (-12.17)	-0.15*** (-13.26)	-0.16*** (-13.16)
Education (ref: Illiterate)						
Basic	0.17 (1.06)	0.02 (1.12)	0.02 (1.11)	0.06 (0.77)	0.01 (0.79)	0.01 (0.79)
Secondary	0.59*** (3.71)	0.09*** (4.38)	0.09*** (4.31)	0.31*** (3.72)	0.08*** (4.18)	0.08*** (4.13)

Higher	0.88*** (5.43)	0.14*** (6.68)	0.14*** (6.54)	0.48*** (5.71)	0.14*** (6.61)	0.14*** (6.52)
Marital status (ref: Other)						
Married	-0.28*** (-5.45)	-0.05*** (-5.56)	-0.05*** (-5.55)	-0.17*** (-5.56)	-0.05*** (-5.56)	-0.05*** (-5.64)
Ethnicity (ref: Mestizo)						
Indigenous	-0.46*** (-5.02)	-0.07*** (-5.56)	-0.07*** (-5.55)	-0.26*** (-5.13)	-0.07*** (-5.64)	-0.07*** (-5.58)
Afro-American	0.27 (1.96)	0.05 (1.84)	0.05 (1.86)	0.16 (1.90)	0.05 (1.81)	0.05 (1.82)
Montubia	-0.11 (-0.77)	-0.02 (-0.80)	-0.02 (-0.79)	-0.07 (-0.92)	-0.02 (-0.95)	-0.02 (-0.95)
White	-0.19 (1.39)	0.03 (1.33)	0.03 (1.34)	0.12 (1.44)	0.04 (1.39)	0.03 (1.39)
Children (ref: None)						
One	-0.15 (-1.14)	-0.02 (-1.12)	-0.02 (-1.12)	-0.09 (-1.11)	-0.02 (-1.09)	-0.02 (-1.10)
Two	-0.09 (-0.75)	-0.02 (-0.74)	-0.02 (-0.74)	-0.05 (-0.74)	-0.02 (-0.73)	-0.02 (-0.73)
More than two	-0.06 (-0.49)	-0.01 (-0.48)	0.03 (1.34)	-0.03 (-0.46)	-0.01 (-0.46)	-0.01 (-0.46)
Wages (ref: No)						
Yes	0.13** (2.74)	0.02** (2.74)	0.02** (2.74)	0.08** (2.73)	0.02** (2.74)	0.02** (2.74)
Constant	-1.26*** (-6.29)			-0.72*** (-6.62)		
McFadden R ²	0.07			0.07		
AIC	12721.86			12724.33		
BIC	12870.69			12873.16		
Observations	12600			12600		

Note: ME = marginal effects at the mean; AME = average marginal effects. Reference categories in parentheses. ***, ** and * denote significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% levels.

Source: Authors based on data from INEC (2019).

Education is often considered a protective factor against SV, yet the results for Ecuador reveal a more complex relationship. In 2019, women with intermediate education were 9% more likely to experience SV than those with no schooling, and women with higher education also faced elevated risk; primary education was not significant, and in 2010 educational level showed no clear effects. These patterns align with Edeby & San Sebastián (2021), who found that although overall violence was highest among women with no education (70.50%), SV reached its highest prevalence (62.52%) among women with university education. In contrast, regional evidence shows different dynamics: in Colombia, education operates as a protective factor (Iregui-Bohórquez et al., 2019), while in Chile higher education is associated with greater willingness to report violence (Cadena-Urzuá, 2025). Thus, in contexts where traditional gender norms persist, higher educational attainment may challenge male authority and consequently increase the risk of violence.

Marital status exhibited a significant effect on the risk of SV in Ecuador. In 2010, married women were 7% less likely to experience SV than single women, and in 2019 this difference persisted with a 5% reduction, indicating greater vulnerability among women who are single, separated, widowed, or divorced. This pattern may reflect perceived protective mechanisms within marriage, where

interactions occur in private and relatively stable environments. These results are consistent with Hernández-Medina et al. (2025), who find greater risks of victimization among divorced women, associated with both socioeconomic vulnerability following separation and the potential continuation of prior abusive dynamics.

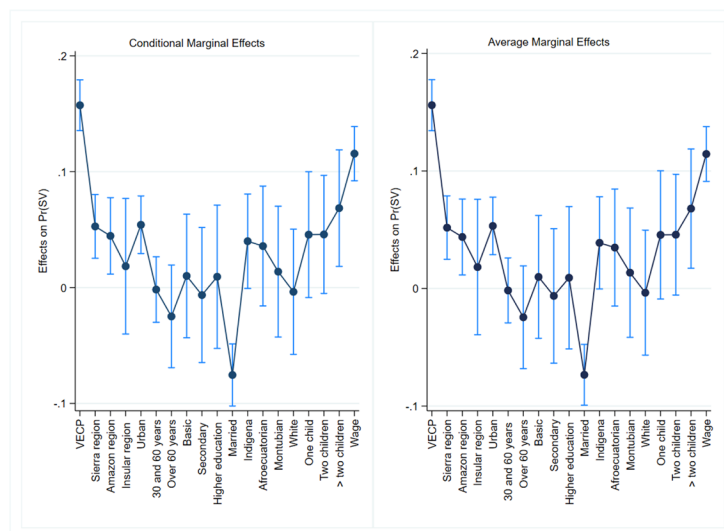
Ethnicity was significant only for Indigenous women in both years: in 2010 they were 4% more likely to experience SV than Mestiza women, while in 2019 this likelihood decreased by 7%. No significant effects were observed for Afro-Ecuadorian, Montubio, or White women. These patterns reflect historical inequalities affecting Indigenous populations and align with international evidence showing that membership in structurally subordinated groups—such as lower castes in Nepal (Sapkota et al., 2024) or Quechua communities in Peru (Bendezu-Quispe et al., 2024)—increases exposure to violence. Yet the Ecuadorian case presents nuances: Edeby & San Sebastián (2021) report higher SV among White women, greater physical violence among Indigenous women, and psychological and economic violence among Afro-descendant women, while Hernández-Medina et al. (2025) find greater severity of violence among Mestiza women in urban areas characterized by inequality and weak social cohesion. Overall, the findings suggest that the risk of SV is mediated by the interaction between ethnicity, territory, and structural inequalities.

In 2010, having more than two children increased the probability of experiencing SV by 7% compared to women without children, whereas having one or two children showed no significant effects. By 2019, the number of children no longer influenced risk. This pattern suggests that a heavier reproductive burden may intensify domestic stress and limit the resources available to cope with violent dynamics. These results align with evidence from Hernández-Medina et al. (2023) for Ecuador, who note that women with children older than six experience lower vulnerability due to greater autonomy and economic stability, whereas those with younger children face additional constraints that impede leaving abusive relationships.

The wage variable was significant at the 1% level in 2010 and at the 5% level in 2019. In 2010, salaried women were 11% more likely to experience SV, although this effect declined to 2% in 2019, suggesting that greater economic autonomy is associated with a reduced risk. This result is consistent with the view that labor market equality strengthens women's bargaining power. In Peru, Ortogorin (2024) shows that violence increases when the gender wage gap widens, even among women without paid employment. However, higher income does not guarantee lower exposure to SV; in certain contexts, it may generate tensions and power conflicts within the household, particularly linked to male reactions to perceived losses of economic control.

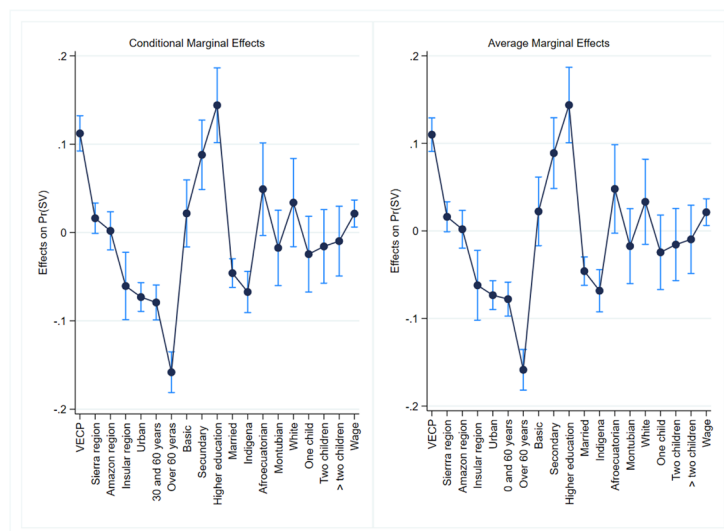
Figure 2 shows that in 2010 childhood exposure to intimate partner violence increased the probability of experiencing SV in adulthood by 16%, while being a salaried worker increased this risk by 12% and being married reduced it by 9%. In 2019 (Figure 3), childhood violence remained a significant determinant, raising the risk by 11%, while higher education increased it by 14% and being over 60 reduced it by 16%. These patterns corroborate evidence linking violence experienced or witnessed in childhood to higher probabilities of victimization in adulthood, supporting the theory of the intergenerational transmission of violence (Smith-Marek et al., 2015; Sokar et al., 2023; Bazo-Alvarez et al., 2024; Torres Munguía, 2025). Taken together, the results highlight the need for early interventions aimed at breaking these cycles and reducing their persistence across future generations.

Figure 2
Marginal effects of the Logit model (2010)



Authors with data from INEC (2019)

Figure 3
Marginal effects of the logit model (2019).



Authors with data from INEC (2019)

5. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study provide strong support for the theory of intergenerational transmission of violence, which posits that exposure to violent experiences during childhood influences the likelihood of reproducing or experiencing violent behaviors in adulthood. The consistency between this theoretical framework and the empirical evidence is clear: the chi-square test confirmed a significant association between witnessing intimate partner violence in childhood and subsequent sexual victimization among women, while the discrete choice models showed that this early imprint operates as a robust determinant of contemporary patterns of SV in Ecuador.

Although the prevalence of sexual violence declined by 2019—affecting one in ten women—the results indicate that this reduction has not been homogeneous. Territorial and sociodemographic disparities persist, and in some cases have shifted: the risk, previously higher in urban areas, shifted to rural areas in 2019, while the Coastal region consistently exhibited the highest levels of violence. Young women remain the most affected group, and the association between high fertility and increased likelihood of victimization underscores the role of family dynamics in the reproduction of risk. These findings align with intergenerational theory, as family environments where violent models persist tend to reinforce unequal relationships and coercive behaviors.

The evidence also reveals counterintuitive patterns: women with higher levels of education or income exhibited greater probabilities of reporting SV. This paradox does not contradict empowerment frameworks but rather demonstrates that violence may persist or even intensify when women challenge traditional patriarchal norms, generating tensions and reactive control mechanisms within intimate relationships. Likewise, the decline in risk among Indigenous women in 2019, despite persistent structural discrimination, suggests the presence of community or institutional factors that may buffer intergenerational cycles of violence—an avenue that warrants further investigation.

The study faces limitations related to data availability, restricted to the 2010 and 2019 survey waves, which constrains the analysis of recent trends and the assessment of policy impacts implemented over the past decade. Future research should therefore incorporate newer data, deepen causal mechanisms, and examine the role of legal, educational, and community interventions in disrupting cycles of violence. From a policy perspective, the results demonstrate that SV is not an isolated event but a phenomenon reproduced across generations when traumatic childhood experiences are not addressed in time. Breaking this intergenerational transmission requires comprehensive strategies that combine early prevention, institutional strengthening, gender equality education, and effective protection systems for women, children, and adolescents. Ultimately, addressing sexual violence demands multidimensional public policies aimed not only at mitigating current risks but also at transforming the structural and familial conditions that perpetuate violence over time.

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