

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST FEMALE CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN BRAZIL (2011–2021), IN THE LIGHT OF INTERSECTIONALITY

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, there has been a prevalence of sexual violence against female children and adolescents in Brazil. The objective of the present study was to highlight predominant characteristics in cases of sexual violence against the female and Brazilian child population, between 2011 and 2021, and analyze such data in light of intersectionality and categories studied by it, such as gender, race/color and age group, to reflect on the relationship between these factors and the violence committed. The Epidemiological Bulletins from the Ministry of Health and the Panorama of lethal and sexual violence against children and adolescents in Brazil from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were used as a source of information. The data indicated a predominance of sexual violence against young black girls, with the aggressor generally being male and having some connection with the victim. Rape was the most common type of violence and the residence was the main place where crimes occurred. Using intersectionality, it was possible to identify historical, social and political factors that permeated the data in order to stimulate new reflections and actions to reduce violence against this group.

Keywords: sexual violence; children; adolescents; intersectionality.

RESUMO

Ao longo dos anos, houve uma prevalência de violência sexual contra crianças e adolescentes do sexo feminino no Brasil. O objetivo do presente estudo foi destacar características predominantes em casos de violência sexual contra a população infantojuvenil feminina e brasileira, entre 2011 e 2021, e analisar tais dados à luz da interseccionalidade e de categorias estudadas por ela, como gênero, raça/cor e faixa etária, para refletir sobre a relação desses fatores com a violência praticada. Utilizou-se como fonte de informações os Boletins Epidemiológicos do Ministério da Saúde e o Panorama da violência letal e sexual contra crianças e adolescentes no Brasil do Fundo das Nações Unidas para a Infância (UNICEF). Os dados indicaram um predomínio de violência sexual contra jovens meninas negras, sendo o agressor geralmente do sexo masculino e que possui algum vínculo com a vítima. O estupro foi o tipo de violência mais praticado e a residência foi o principal local onde ocorreram os crimes. A partir da interseccionalidade, foi possível identificar fatores históricos, sociais e políticos que atravessaram os dados a fim de estimular novas reflexões e ações para diminuição da violência contra esse grupo.

Palavras-chave: violência sexual; crianças; adolescentes; interseccionalidade.

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Presentation

According to data from the Epidemiological Bulletins published by the Ministry of Health (Brazil, 2018; Brazil, 2023), between 2011 and 2021, the majority of sexual-violence victims in Brazil were children and adolescents, predominantly female and Black. Perpetrators, in turn, were overwhelmingly male and maintained some degree of connection with their victims. The *Panorama da violência letal e sexual contra crianças e adolescentes no Brasil* issued by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF, 2021) underscores these same findings, thereby reinforcing the relevance—within Brazilian society—of reflecting upon the factors that may shape and influence this scenario.

In light of this, the present study aims to undertake a critical reading and analysis of the available data on sexual violence against female children and adolescents in Brazil between 2011 and 2021, highlighting the predominant characteristics of these cases and interpreting them through an intersectional lens that takes into account historical, social, and political factors essential for understanding the information presented. The study also seeks to employ categories developed within the analytical framework of intersectionality—such as gender, race, and age group—to reflect on how these factors relate to sexual violence and how they may have contributed to the incidence of sexual crimes against the female child-adolescent population in Brazil.

Considerations on Childhood, Adolescence, and Sexual Violence

According to the *Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* (Brazil, 1990), an individual is considered a child up to twelve years of age and an adolescent from twelve to eighteen. However, chronological age alone is insufficient to explain these stages of human life. It is crucial to recall that childhood is a socially constructed concept, that is, the result of a historical process rather than a natural inheritance, as highlighted by Andréa Rodrigues (1998, p. 1): “Childhood cannot be separated from the other stages of human life by taking age and biological development as the sole references, without taking into account the historical specificities of a given society.”

For Philippe Ariès (2014), the consolidation of the idea of childhood dates from the nineteenth century. Prior to this period, children performed tasks attributed to adults. Beginning in the nineteenth century, however, several transformations—such as the emergence of the bourgeois family and early-childhood education within the school

environment—placed the child at the center of the nuclear family, which had previously been oriented toward lineage and extended kinship but came to be organized around the basic parental nucleus. Affection between spouses or between parents and children did not exist in the way it is understood today. Newborn children from wealthier families were entrusted to the care of wet nurses, and by the age of three they were already incorporated into the adult world. With this shift in family dynamics, children came to be cared for directly by their parents and later placed in school (Frota, 2007).

Nevertheless, childhood is not experienced in a universal manner by all children. The history of childhood in Brazil, for instance, is marked by socio-racial inequality and exclusion. Although concern for childhood seemingly became more pronounced in the nineteenth century, from the outset social and racial differentiation shaped the treatment of children: on one side stood free children, and on the other, those who were enslaved. This divide persisted even after abolition and the political transition from monarchy to republic. In 1927, for example, the first *Código de Menores* was created, employing the term “minor” not only to designate individuals under legal age but also to label children and adolescents who violated the law (Rodrigues, 1998), as well as poor children whose families deviated from the conventional model—namely, two-parent households with stable financial and emotional structures, among other characteristics. These “minors” were viewed negatively by modern Brazilian society as individuals at risk—both socially and individually—who might become delinquents, and therefore should be subjected to the State’s harsh custody and disciplinary measures (Frota, 2007). They were thus regarded as distinct from other children and as potential threats to society, in a sense being held responsible for the very social adversities to which they were subjected. It is worth noting that, in the post-abolition period, Black children were perceived as future laborers or juvenile offenders.

Only with the creation and adoption of the *Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* in 1990 was the term “minor” abolished, and all children—without distinction—came to be recognized as human beings with rights and specific needs. This marked an important shift, demonstrating that every child occupies the status of citizen within society, endowed with rights and responsibilities (Frota, 2007). Thus, it becomes evident that the history of childhood does not follow a linear or unidirectional trajectory; instead, it must be

analyzed within each context in order to be properly understood—just as adolescence must be.

This stage of human life is viewed as a developmental phase between childhood and adulthood, involving physical, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. Adolescence is often associated with puberty, a physiological transition during which the adolescent attains sexual maturity, that is, reproductive capacity. In many cultures, puberty marks the passage from childhood to adolescence. In others, the onset of menstruation marks the moment a girl is considered to have reached maturity (Papalia; Feldman, 2013).

Yet beyond puberty, rites of passage, and physiological transformations, adolescence must also be understood as a historically constructed category, for, like childhood, it is a social and historical construct (Frota, 2007). This concept did not exist in traditional or pre-industrial societies, where, as noted earlier, children were regarded as adults at an early age and integrated directly into the workforce. Only in the twentieth century was adolescence defined as a stage of human life in the Western world (Papalia; Feldman, 2013). Today, adolescence may assume diverse forms depending on social, cultural, and economic contexts, and therefore cannot be understood as a universal condition experienced identically by all young people.

It is also important to understand the nature of the crimes that affected this age group—children and adolescents—during the selected period (2011 to 2021), crimes rooted in sexual violence. Violence is understood as an intentional act committed by a perpetrator that harms the physical, psychological, moral, or sexual integrity of another person—in other words, the victim (Saffioti, 2015). This study focuses on violence of sexual origin, which is characterized as an act in which an individual uses a position of power, physical force, coercion, intimidation, or psychological influence to compel another person to witness or participate in sexual interactions. It may also involve the use of the victim's sexuality for purposes such as profit, revenge, or other ends (Brazil, 2016).

Materials and methods

The data examined in this study derive from the Epidemiological Bulletins issued by the Ministry of Health, which contain reports of sexual violence perpetrated against female children and adolescents during the periods 2011–2017 (Brazil, 2018) and 2015–2021 (Brazil, 2023). The *Panorama da violência letal e sexual contra crianças e*

adolescentes do Brasil produced by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF, 2021), which provides records of violence occurring between 2017 and 2020, was likewise used as a source of information for analysis. To reflect upon these data through the lens of intersectionality, a brief elucidation of this analytical framework is required.

According to Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2020), intersectionality is an analytical tool that probes the ways in which power relations shape social relations and the everyday experiences of individuals, recognizing that factors such as race, class, ethnicity, gender, age group, and nationality are deeply intertwined. Thus, to understand the data presented on sexual violence against the female child-adolescent population, it is necessary to analyze the socio-historical, cultural, economic, and political contexts that frame the period under examination, in order to intersect the provided information with the categories of gender, race/color, and age group, since these “mutually shape one another” and operate within a given society and historical moment in a unified manner. From an intersectional analysis, it becomes possible to understand the violence practiced against children and adolescents at a specific historical juncture, as well as to open pathways for new reflections.

Presentation of Data on Sexual Violence Against the Brazilian Female Child-Adolescent Population, 2011–2021

According to the Epidemiological Bulletin of the Ministry of Health (Brazil, 2018), between 2011 and 2017, health services reported 184,524 cases of sexual violence, of which 58,037 (31.5%) involved children and 83,068 (45.0%) involved adolescents—that is, victims aged 0 to 19 years. From 2011 to 2017, notifications of sexual violence increased by 64.6% among children and by 83.2% among adolescents.

Among children, during the period 2011–2017, the vast majority of victims were female (74.2%), between 1 and 5 years of age (51.9%), Black (46%), and concentrated in the Southeast region (39.9%). Additionally, 71.2% of sexual-violence events occurred in the home, and the most frequently reported form of violence was rape (61%). In 80.8% of cases, the perpetrator was male, and 39.8% had a familial connection to the victim—such as father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, or sibling—while 24.8% were acquaintances.

Among adolescents, the overwhelming majority of victims were also female (92.4%), between 10 and 14 years of age (67.1%), Black (56%), and concentrated in the Southeast region (31.4%). The home was again the principal site of occurrence (58.7%), and 70.9% of incidents were reported as rape. In 92.8% of cases, the perpetrator was male, and 39.9% had an intrafamilial connection to the victim—family members (21.5%) and intimate partners (18.4%). Notably, in 26.3% of notifications, the perpetrator was a friend or acquaintance.

The most frequently perpetrated form of sexual violence against the child-adolescent population was rape, defined in Article 213 of the Penal Code (Brazil, 1940) as the act of “compelling someone, through violence or grave threat, to engage in sexual intercourse or to perform or permit the performance of another libidinous act.” Since the analysis also encompasses adolescents under the age of 14, it is pertinent to underscore the definition of statutory rape (*estupro de vulnerável*), defined in Article 217-A of the Penal Code (Brazil, 1940) as “engaging in sexual intercourse or performing another libidinous act with an individual under 14 years of age.” Both crimes are addressed in the more recent law that amended Title VI of the Penal Code on Crimes Against Sexual Dignity, Law No. 12.015 of August 7, 2009.

Based on the sexual-violence records compiled by UNICEF (2021), between 2017 and 2020, 179,277 cases of rape and statutory rape involving victims aged 0 to 19 years were documented across various Brazilian states, consistent with the descriptive study previously presented.

Among children, the vast majority of victims were female. In the 0–9 age group, girls accounted for 77% of all records of statutory rape. Among adolescents, the majority of victims were likewise female: in the 10–19 age group, females accounted for 91% of rape cases. Moreover, between 2017 and 2020, statutory rape was most frequently perpetrated against female children and adolescents aged 10 to 14, totaling 64,000 reported cases.

Regarding race/color, between 2017 and 2020, this information was provided in 59% of records, while 41% of cases lacked this data. Among the records that did include racial identification, white victims predominated (59%). However, given the substantial proportion of cases with missing data, the accuracy of this apparent predominance cannot be confirmed.

Upon examining the 2020 data—which are more complete—it is possible to observe an increase in the proportion of Black victims over the years. For example, in 2017, among victims aged 12 to 17, 42% were Black and 58% were white. By 2020, within the same age group, 52% of victims were Black and 48% were white. This represents a significant decrease of 26.8% in the number of white victims and an increase of 6.5% in Black victims during the period under consideration (2017–2020).

In general, both girls and boys were more frequently sexually assaulted in their homes—67% and 64%, respectively. Furthermore, 86% of crimes were committed by perpetrators known to the victims.

Additionally, according to the data made available in the Epidemiological Bulletin of the Ministry of Health (Brazil, 2023), between 2015 and 2021, 202,948 cases of sexual violence were reported against children (aged 0–9) and adolescents (aged 10–19) in Brazil—83,571 (41.2%) and 119,377 (58.8%), respectively. It is important to highlight that the number of notifications increased between 2015 and 2019. However, in 2020, there was a decline, followed by an increase in 2021, when the number of notifications reached its highest point in the entire period examined (2015–2021).

Among children, between 2015 and 2021, the vast majority of victims were female (76.9%), most were between 5 and 9 years old (53.6%), identified as *parda* (42.5%), and were concentrated in the Southeast region (43%). Moreover, 72.4% of incidents occurred in the home, and the most frequently reported category of violence was rape (56.2%). In 80.9% of cases, the perpetrator was male, and 40.4% had a familial connection to the victim.

Among adolescents, the majority of victims were female (92.7%), most were between 10 and 14 years of age (67.8%), identified as *parda* (51.5%), and were concentrated in the Southeast region (32.5%). The home was again the principal site of occurrence (64%), and 56.2% of cases were reported as rape. In 80.9% of cases, the perpetrators were male; 25.6% were friends or acquaintances of the victim, 22.6% had a familial connection, and 20.4% were intimate partners.

From the data presented, it is possible to underscore that among the Brazilian female child-adolescent population subjected to sexual violence between 2011 and 2021, there was a predominance of Black adolescent victims residing in the Southeast region,

with male perpetrators who, in most cases, maintained some type of relationship with the victim—whether familial, intimate, friendly, or otherwise familiar. The studies also indicated that the location where sexual violence most frequently occurred was the home and that rape was the most commonly perpetrated crime. Furthermore, between 2011 and 2019, there was an increase in notifications of sexual violence against children and adolescents; however, in 2020, this number declined, only to increase significantly again in 2021.

In light of the foregoing, the possible factors associated with the characteristics highlighted in relation to sexual violence against the Brazilian female child-adolescent population will be discussed below.

Discussion of the data in light of intersectionality

Based on the information gathered regarding the characteristics of sexual violence against female children and adolescents in Brazil between 2011 and 2021, it becomes clear that most victims are young girls sexually assaulted by adult men—a finding that inevitably leads to reflection on the concept of patriarchy. According to Heleieth Saffioti (2015), patriarchal society grants men the right to exercise domination over women as well as over children and adolescents, functioning as a vast apparatus designed to establish and maintain control over their lives. Patriarchy situates the male figure in a position of absolute authority over others, who become subject to his dominance and to the inequalities produced by hierarchical relations. In this sense, sexual violence committed against girls may be understood as the abuse of masculine power—reinforced by patriarchy—over victims. The perpetrator assumes the position of authority culturally conferred upon him by patriarchal norms, believing himself entitled to violate female bodies.

It is important to emphasize that, in addition to enduring sexual violence, these young girls are also subjected to what Pierre Bourdieu (2012, p. 47) defines as symbolic violence, which “is established through the complicity that the dominated cannot help but grant to the dominant (and therefore to domination) when they have no other means of perceiving or conceptualizing it—nor of conceptualizing their relationship to it.” In other words, those who are dominated often do not recognize the violence they endure, precisely because it manifests silently. The absence of reflection about domination leads

to its naturalization. Thus, many girls who are sexually abused—most often by adult men—find themselves in a relationship of domination of which they are not fully aware. Patriarchal culture itself reinforces the notion that younger individuals must obey their elders, a discourse that may be used both to impose violence and to normalize it.

Furthermore, both childhood and adolescence are life stages marked by dependence on adults—especially parents or caregivers—who are regarded as intellectually, physically, and socially more capable than children and adolescents (Teodoro, 2022). Parents often make use of this superior position to impose themselves coercively or violently, justifying their actions by claiming to know what is best. As bell hooks observes:

Many parents teach children to believe that violence is the easiest (if not the most acceptable) way to end a conflict and assert power. When they say ‘I did this for your own good’ while using physical abuse to control children, parents not only equate violence with love but also promote a notion of love synonymous with passive acceptance, with the absence of explanation or debate (p. 97).³

In this way, many adults rely on their position of authority over children or adolescents to perpetrate sexual violence—especially against girls, who are viewed as more passive than boys. This representation of femininity is also shaped by patriarchal society, as Brazilian women, due to gendered colonization, have historically been defined through constructions produced by the male imagination (Gonçalves, 2006).

According to Rachel Soihet (1989), in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Brazil—particularly Rio de Janeiro—women were widely regarded as naturally inferior to men:

Essential virtues of the female sex were understood to be weakness, sensitivity, gentleness, indulgence, modesty, and submission. [...] Man was the exact opposite. Physical and intellectual vigor dominated his emotional profile. It was expected to be harder, more rational, authoritative, proud, etc. (p. 115).⁴

³Original version: Muitos pais ensinam os filhos a acreditar que a violência é a maneira mais fácil (se não a mais aceitável) de acabar com um conflito e de afirmar poder. Ao dizer "Fiz isto para o teu bem", e ao mesmo tempo utilizando abuso físico para controlar as crianças, os pais não só estão a equiparar a violência ao amor, como também estão a passar uma ideia de amor sinónima à aceitação passiva, à ausência de explicação e de debate (p. 97).

⁴Original version: Eram reconhecidas como virtudes essenciais no sexo feminino a fraqueza, a sensibilidade, a doçura, a indulgência, o recato e a submissão. [...] O homem era o oposto exato da mulher. O vigor físico

Thus, each sex was assigned particular qualities according to supposedly inherent characteristics. Men were assigned to the public sphere—due to their strength and physical vigor—while women were relegated to the private sphere, responsible for domestic duties and child rearing due to their supposed delicacy and fragility. As Bourdieu (2012, p. 20) argues, “anatomical differences between sexual organs may be seen as a natural justification for the socially constructed difference between genders.” Yet, as Soihet (1989) affirms, such gender-specific roles are not present in all societies, demonstrating that the activities defined as masculine or feminine arise from socio-historical conditioning, particularly within Western societies. These characteristics are cultural and historical products—not biological determinants.

With the aim of denaturalizing distinctions between men and women, the term gender was introduced. It “places biological sex in the background by positing that differences between the sexes are a cultural construction” (Gonçalves, 2006, p. 74). Formerly, the term was misused to refer to personality or sexual traits. More recently, feminists have adopted it to signify the “social organization of the relationship between the sexes,” attending to the more literal meaning of the word. It was particularly among American feminists that gender emerged as a critique of biological determinism, emphasizing the social character of differences between the sexes (Scott, 1989).

Thus, sex refers to the biological characteristics associated with males and females, whereas gender concerns the social representations of femininity and masculinity. While sex is anchored in the apparent biology of bodies, gender is grounded in culture and socially constructed. Saffioti (2015) highlights the importance of this concept in challenging biological essentialism, observing that many individuals born male, for example, do not identify with traits historically attributed to this sex. For this reason, the body itself becomes a construction capable of assuming various performances; since gender does not depend on sex, it becomes a “floating signifier” (Butler, 2003).

Beyond gender, race also emerges as a central axis in the data analyzed: the majority of victims are Black. In the descriptive study by the Ministry of Health (Brazil, 2018), the race/color category “Black” includes both *pardos* and *pretos*. This choice likely

e intelectual dominavam seu perfil emocional. Este devia ser mais seco, duro, racional, autoritário, altivo, etc

follows the primary demographic classification system used in Brazil by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), according to which Black identity comprises those who self-identify as *preto* or *pardo* (Oliveira, 2004).

Miranda (2010), surveying ethnic-racial classification categories, notes that dictionaries define *pardo* as someone between white and Black, while *preto* refers to those with darker skin. Thus, “Black” encompasses those considered non-white. As Rodrigues (1998, p. 134) points out, skin color is “laden with cultural meaning,” perceived differently depending on social class, cultural environment, and historical context. The Black population in Brazil has long suffered the consequences of socioeconomic inequalities rooted in historical discrimination and racial prejudice. Violence against Black children and adolescents is therefore not new; since the colonial period, they have been subject to social oppression and neglect, which expose them to multiple forms of violence (Teodoro, 2022).

If women tend to occupy positions subordinate to men, and children and adolescents to adults, then Black girls—subjected simultaneously to inequalities of gender, age, and race—are placed in an even more vulnerable position. This is why Collins and Bilge (2020) emphasize the importance of intersectionality in analyzing how gender, age, and race/color interact and shape lived experiences, asserting that “people’s lives and identities are generally shaped by multiple factors that work together and influence each other” (p. 278). Although these factors often operate subtly, they profoundly structure individual experiences.

The studies analyzed also indicate that adolescent girls suffer sexual violence at higher rates than children. This may relate to the sexualization of adolescent bodies. A Folha de São Paulo report (2018) noted that the pornography website Pornhub identified a growing consumer interest in younger individuals, with “*adolescente*” appearing among the ten most frequent searches in Brazil.

The historical sexualization of the female body—especially of Black women, whose bodies were often treated as objects of male pleasure during the colonial period—persists. Angela Davis (2016) highlights that rape functioned as a mechanism of control exerted by overseers over enslaved Black women, reaffirming their status as property.

Recently, this sexualizing gaze has increasingly extended to girls. One explanation may be found in Maria Bruns' (2016) observations regarding the *adultização* (adultification) of girls:

[...] what we observe today in the lived world of many girls is that from the age of four, five, or six, they begin to mold themselves to adult styles—visiting the same hairdressers as their mothers; wearing makeup; dyeing their hair; painting their nails; and using high heels, handbags, bracelets, and other adult accessories (p. 256).⁵

Additionally, girls—more than boys—are encouraged by patriarchal culture to perform domestic tasks and to behave in a disciplined and polite manner. It is not uncommon to hear that girls “mature faster” than boys—an assumption stemming from the heavier responsibilities imposed on them from an early age. The adultification of girls thus contributes to the sexualization of adolescent female bodies, particularly within a society where the bodies of adult women are already deeply sexualized.

Regarding the concentration of cases in the Southeast region, this may be related to the distribution of specialized services for victims of sexual violence. According to the Ministry of Health (2018), in April 2018 the Southeast had 192 registered services, second only to the Center-West (253), while the South, Northeast, and North had 123, 112, and 92, respectively. This uneven distribution may influence the number of notifications. By December 2021, the Southeast and Northeast had the largest number of services registered in the SCNES—487 and 393, respectively (Brazil, 2023)—which may lead to changes in reporting patterns in the future.

Additionally, most of the data come from the Violence and Accident Surveillance System (Viva). However, underreporting is expected because implementation of Viva was not uniform across states (Brazil, 2018). Thus, some regions may appear to have more cases simply because they have better reporting systems.

Underreporting may also be explained by the fact that children and adolescents depend emotionally and financially on their relatives—many of whom are the perpetrators. As a result, cases may be concealed due to fear, loyalty, or pressure within

⁵Original version: o que constatamos hoje no mundo-vida de muitas meninas é que desde os quatro, cinco, seis anos, elas vêm se moldando ao estilo do adulto – frequentam o mesmo cabeleireiro da mãe; fazem maquiagem; tingem os cabelos; pintam as unhas e usam sapatos de salto, bolsa, pulseiras, entre outros acessórios de adultos (p. 256).

the family. Barbosa et al. (2021), analyzing data from the Northeast (2014–2018), emphasize that notifications do not reflect the region's true situation due to significant underreporting.

The increase in notifications from 2011 to 2019 may also be influenced by greater media coverage. A survey conducted by the authors of this study, examining *Folha de São Paulo* and G1 reports between 2011 and 2020, indicates that news outlets increasingly called attention to rising cases, discussed sexual education, launched campaigns, and promoted reporting tools. Such coverage likely encouraged greater public awareness and reporting.

Government actions may also have contributed. During Dilma Rousseff's presidency (2011–2016), several important legal and institutional measures were implemented: extending statutes of limitations for sexual crimes against children (2012), mandating comprehensive care for victims of sexual violence (2013), launching national protection campaigns (2013, 2014), and classifying child sexual abuse and exploitation as heinous crimes (2014).

Under Michel Temer (2016–2018), additional laws were enacted: establishing a rights-guarantee system for child victims and witnesses (2017), mandating asset forfeiture for crimes of sexual exploitation, and authorizing undercover police operations on the internet for investigating sexual crimes involving minors (2017).

These initiatives may have encouraged more reporting. However, media reports show few news items concerning the conviction and punishment of perpetrators—an element that may also shape the prevalence of crimes.

By contrast, during Jair Bolsonaro's administration (2019–2022), few positive measures were identified. Instead, actions included attempts to dismantle committees dedicated to confronting sexual violence, and omissions in official reporting of case follow-up data (*Folha de São Paulo*, 2019; 2020). Such measures may have weakened institutional responses and discouraged reporting.

It is noteworthy that in 2016—the year Dilma Rousseff was removed from office—notifications totaled 23,406. In 2017, under Temer, this number rose to 27,960, reaching 34,208 in 2019 (Brazil, 2023). These numbers raise questions about whether Dilma's government invested more in policies and mechanisms of action than subsequent

administrations. As the first woman elected president in a deeply patriarchal society, Dilma may also have faced opposition that hindered policy continuity, potentially affecting initiatives aimed at protecting children and adolescents.

The decline in reports in 2020 is likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which reduced access to schools and health services and intensified isolation—conditions that heighten the risk of underreporting. Given that most crimes already occurred within homes, the decrease in notifications does not indicate a real decrease in violence. Indeed, reports reached their highest level in 2021, reinforcing the hypothesis of pandemic-related underreporting in 2020. The prolonged confinement of families may also have contributed to increased violence.

Finally, the concentration of cases occurring inside residences suggests that offenders exploit the privacy and control afforded by domestic environments to perpetrate sexual violence—especially rape, the most prevalent form of violence identified in this study. Patriarchy grants men the authority to impose themselves sexually when their dominance is threatened; as Bourdieu (2012) notes, sexual acts may function as a form of possession or domination, often imposed by a man who believes his will should prevail.

Moreover, the fact that most perpetrators have some form of close relationship with the victim—family member, partner, friend, or acquaintance—can be explained by their access to the domestic environment, which facilitates the occurrence of sexual violence against children and adolescents.

Final Considerations

Through the use of intersectionality as an analytical framework in this study, it was possible to critically reflect on the factors that shape the data concerning sexual violence against female children and adolescents in Brazil between 2011 and 2021. Intersectional analysis revealed that the sexual victimization of the female child-adolescent population is structured by categories such as gender, race/color, and age group.

The study showed that young girls may experience higher levels of sexual violence perpetrated by men due to their gendered condition, insofar as patriarchal culture grants men the power to dominate and violate female bodies. It also demonstrated that girls may be especially vulnerable due to age-related dependence on older caregivers,

who may exploit their superior position to perpetrate sexual violence. In addition to the predominance of female victims, the data also indicated that a large proportion of them are Black. We suggested that this fact may be associated with race/color, as racism rooted in Brazilian society since the colonial period has continuously subjected the Black population to various forms of violence—sexual violence included.

Intersectional analysis thus revealed that multiple factors inherent to individuals' social realities intersect and shape their experiences. For this reason, we presented possible connections between the highlighted characteristics of sexual violence perpetrated against the female child-adolescent population between 2011 and 2021 and the socio-historical and political context surrounding the period.

With regard to the concentration of cases in the Southeast, we related this to the uneven distribution of services and to underreporting in other regions. Concerning the increase in notifications between 2011 and 2019, we proposed that political actions and media coverage during the period may have contributed to this rise. As for the decrease in reports of sexual violence in 2020, we associated this with underreporting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while the marked increase in 2021 may be linked to the rise in cases resulting from social isolation. Regarding the home having been identified as the principal site of the crime—which also explains the perpetrator's relationship to the victim, given that only those with close proximity have access to the residence—we argued that this finding may be connected to the relative privacy afforded by the domestic environment, which enables offenders to commit acts of violence without detection and thereby facilitates the practice of rape, the most common form of sexual violence recorded.

In sum, through the perspective of intersectionality, this study made it possible to analyze elements that may underlie sexual crimes involving the Brazilian female child-adolescent population between 2011 and 2021, demonstrating that each data point is embedded within a broader context. The aim was to encourage readers to reflect on measures capable of reducing sexual violence against this group by drawing attention to the full contextual framework revealed in the analysis.

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