

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# La educación comunitaria como mecanismo para mejorar la seguridad ciudadana en Lima Metropolitana

### ABSTRACT

Public security refers to the state where individuals can live freely and safely, without fear of violence or crime, and where the government guarantees the protection of their rights. However, due to the failure of national-level public security strategies, there is a need to review approaches aimed at promoting public security and the perception of security in Peruvian cities. This has revealed a gap in the need for innovative proposals that take a community perspective on security. The research aimed to assess the use of community education as a means of enhancing public security in the southern districts of Metropolitan Lima. The study covered eleven districts, namely Chorrillos, San Juan de Miraflores, Villa María del Triunfo, Villa El Salvador, Lurín, Pachacamac, San Bartolo, Pucusana, Punta Hermosa, Punta Negra, and Santa María del Mar, which make up this area. The study followed a descriptive, non-experimental, and cross-sectional research design. The findings indicate that the community education methodology is significantly effective in improving public security in the southern districts of Metropolitan Lima.

**Keywords:** public security; community education; life conditions; rights; plans.

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## INTRODUCTION

According to the Informe de Desarrollo Humano 2019, Latin America remains the sole region worldwide where crime rates are on the rise. This report observes that such crime escalation is linked to economic imbalances and a lack of opportunities to enhance the standard of living of the population (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo [PNUD] [UNDP], 2019).

In Peru, the report from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática (INEI, 2018) on crime rates reveals that the overall national crime rate has tended to decline since 2013. However, Metropolitan Lima bucks this trend, as it continues to experience an upward tendency and recorded a surge in the number of crime victims between 2017 and 2018.

Based on data provided by police agencies, the INEI (2017) reported an increase by 5,214 crime reports in the metropolitan area of Lima between 2016 and 2017. The report also found that in South Lima, 32.1% of individuals aged 15 years and older claimed to have been victims of a criminal act. The rate of victims of theft of money, wallets, and cell phones in this area was also higher than in other areas, at 19 per 100 inhabitants aged 15 or over. Additionally, the perception of insecurity among residents of South Lima was 92.5%, thus exhibiting an alarmingly high percentage compared to other areas of the city.

The Municipalidad de Lima - Comité Regional de Seguridad Ciudadana (2022) has provided information that highlights that a total of 6,273 cases were dealt with at Centros de Emergencia Mujer (CEM) in South Lima. When broken down by district, it shows that 2,233 were from Villa El Salvador, 1,991 from Villa María del Triunfo, 1,206 from Lurín, 681 from San Juan de Miraflores, and 162 from Pachacámac. Additionally, as to the percentage of victims of firearm-related crimes, South Lima reported a rate of 19.2%, and the period between 2017 and 2019 saw the highest increase in such cases with a variation of 11.3% compared to the previous year. Furthermore, the number of homicides reported by district police stations in South Lima increased from 36 to 96 between 2017 and 2019.

Given this situation, according to INEI (2017), the percentages of variation in the habits adopted by the inhabitants of southern Lima to protect themselves from crime are as follows: 7.5% of people over the age of 15 prefer not to go out at night, 4.5% claim that they do not regularly walk in their neighborhoods, 12.4% do not answer their cell phones while on the street, 7% avoid arriving home very late, 6.1% choose not to take taxis on the street, and 8.4% have opted to carry less cash with them.

The Plan Nacional de Seguridad Ciudadana (PNSC) 2019-2023 in Peru has proposed various strategies, including the creation of local observatories to promote community participation in the proposal and implementation of initiatives for monitoring and following up on public security policies. This approach aims to involve communities as protagonists and makers of democratic governance, in line with a participatory approach involving community actors. The observatories are designed to promote community participation at all stages of the PNSC 2019-2023, enabling communities to play a leading role in designing programs that address public security from a comprehensive perspective (Decreto Supremo N°013-2019-IN, 2019).

This paper aims to assess the effectiveness of community education as a means of improving public security in the districts in South Lima, given the prevailing situation. Despite the shift in the approach to fight crime, from a punitive to a community-based model, there are still several shortcomings in this strategy that are reflected in the high perception of insecurity among the residents of South Lima. Therefore, it is essential to assess the impact of a community education methodology, its pedagogical approach, interaction system, and implementation procedures in reducing the population's perception of insecurity.

## PURPOSE OF THIS PAPER

The aim of this paper is to assess the efficacy of community education in enhancing public security in the districts of the southern area of Metropolitan Lima by employing the six stages of community education methodology, which

include community pedagogy, personal interaction systems, community work, diagnostic phase, improvement phase, and development and control phase.

## ARGUMENTATIVE REVIEW

This article presents a theoretical analysis of the current situation, revealing how public security has a negative impact on people's quality of life, work, and relationships. It emphasizes the significance of understanding the novel notion of security, which refers to a framework for people to strengthen social ties, foster public participation, and increase civic awareness. Such a security concept guarantees equal opportunities for citizen development, considers their concerns, and enables their participation in managing security.

According to Garcia (2013), this is an approach in which the role of citizens should be more active, even to the extent of engaging them in community prevention efforts. From the perspective of prevention and critical criminology, citizen participation is not viewed as community repression, but rather as an opportunity for more humane and social responses to managing problematic situations. Fitzsimons (2017) argues that the development of a discipline originates from knowledge that emerges from social experiences or interactions between humans and the environment in the form of a personalized experience within a particular cultural context, which can be translated into universally applicable terms. Community education, therefore, involves adults engaging in methodical and organized activities that facilitate lifelong learning from others, requiring them to update their knowledge, skills, abilities, and aptitudes (Allen and Bull, 2018). Furthermore, community development refers to the process by which members of a community come together to address common problems and take collective action to generate solutions. It is a broad concept that encompasses the practices of civic leaders, activists, engaged citizens, and professionals to improve various aspects of communities, with the overarching goal of building stronger and more resilient local communities (Brizuela *et al.*, 2015).

Huanacuni (2015) states that community education is based on a community-centered approach and principle, which involves not only changes in content but also a shift in the educational structure. In this approach, the focus shifts from the individual to the community. Therefore, teaching and assessment are no longer individual but community-based, as community-based education aims to reintegrate human beings with nature, such as to generate a social education. Essomba (2019) explains that community education upholds learning and community development principles that aim to empower organized and trained communities to influence the issues that affect them and their communities. It emphasizes the importance of community participation in decision-making and the inclusion of all members, regardless of their level of contribution, which shall always be relevant, with some members requiring more support than others. Furthermore, it promotes empowerment, allowing individuals to take a stand for themselves, and partnership, recognizing contributions and ensuring effective resource use.

Community education is considered an effective approach to address the challenge of improving education at the international, national, and local levels of society. It extends beyond the traditional role of public schools and creates relationships among the home, school, and community, leading to improvements in the lives and communities of people through opportunities for learning and collaboration. Community education involves a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including local community members, schools, government, families, neighbors, and individuals (Del Pozo *et al.*, 2018).

The literature review has confirmed the applicability of this theoretical framework in addressing problems related to public security. Moreover, the design of public security policies should prioritize a human and community-centered approach. Failure to consider the debate and theoretical knowledge in policy-making may result in inadequate short-term, medium-term, and long-term policies. A sound theoretical basis is essential to formulate well-planned policies that address structural problems, instead of focusing on temporary situations or governmental expectations.

## CONCLUSIONS

- In conclusion, community education is a valuable addition to security management models as it provides tools for managing and planning the neighborhood and territorial context, optimizing resources, and involving key stakeholders in solving problems. Through this approach, citizen participation becomes a hallmark of true democracy, benefiting both adults and children who are currently not able to fully develop due to violence and delinquency. Our findings have challenged the belief that increased participation leads to an absence of state governance. Instead, an appropriate community intervention, in conjunction with the presence of authorities, enhances citizen coexistence, provides stakeholders with skills, and strengthens democracy.
- Community work has a significant impact on improving public security, including integration policies implicit in the community education model, which has positive effects such as the appropriation of public spaces by the community, the creation of containment networks for young people, the design of projects, and the emergence of community leadership, all strengthened by an institutional coordination network from the first level of services to citizens at police stations, courts and other agencies responsible for ensuring security.
- The personal interaction system plays a crucial role in improving public security as it fosters a sense of community and networking, with the goal of creating dignified and high-quality living conditions. These interactions can transform a community into an integrated entity that effectively generates responses and participates in all social, cultural, and political spaces within their community. This interrelation process fosters the organization of citizens, which enables strategies like georeferencing and planning mechanisms that cater to the needs and realities of each citizen. This is especially important when considering the diversity of social groups within cities, and approaching the problem from different perspectives that facilitate genuine awareness of the needs and institutional strategies.
- The diagnostic phase plays a crucial role in the application of a methodology, encompassing theoretical, methodological, and practical considerations. In this research, it solely focuses on identifying the key elements that facilitate its progress. The study confirms the existence of these elements and the willingness of district representatives to participate. It highlights that any policy targeting crime prevention must give priority to the strengthening of the relationship between police and community. This is crucial for developing robust support networks and promoting a sense of security among citizens. Therefore, the diagnostic phase must focus on identifying the community's specific characteristics to enable authorities to integrate and collaborate with them towards the prevention of crime.
- The development and control phase is of utmost importance as it follows a pedagogical model that emphasizes value formation over knowledge accumulation. This approach fosters a culture of continuous reflection among all stakeholders and acknowledges the significance of each individual's unique knowledge contributions. However, for these transformations to be successful, they must be supported by concrete actions at the institutional level. It is crucial to identify personnel with greater autonomy in decision-making, which may require restructuring the police force. As the police is a vertical entity, this process may take considerable time.
- The improvement phase is crucial to ensure the enhancement of public security. According to the theory cited and contrasting opinions, contemporary citizens demand greater participation in public affairs. People are interested in being included in decision-making processes because traditional politics has often marginalized them, leaving them out of all processes. As a result, plans and programs are imposed that, in many cases, have nothing to do with the real situation of their communities. Nowadays, it is necessary to consider people in

decision-making processes and encourage communities to identify their competencies, potential, and knowledge. Doing so can eventually generate solutions to their problems.

- The above observations lead to the conclusion that the community education methodology is highly effective in improving public security in the southern districts of Metropolitan Lima. This approach to tackling crime has produced positive results in people's perception of public security and represents a significant cultural shift from the state's authoritarian approach. The research findings contradict the notion that community-based policies are not effective because they focus on preventive actions rather than on directly tackling the problem. The results invite further analysis through debates and exchange of ideas on the role of the democratic intervention of citizens and institutions in fighting crime and violence.

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**Competing interests**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

**Authors' Contribution**

Juan Carlos Carrillo Llerena (lead author): Conceptualization, collection/obtainment of results, analysis and interpretation of data and writing (review and edition).

Juan Victoriano Castillo Maza (coauthor): Conceptualization, critical review of the manuscript, approval of its final version and technical or administrative advice.