

Approaching Sexual Violence Against People with Disabilities in Colombia from a Qualitative Perspective

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Abstract : Recently, different countries and international organizations have put on their agenda the elimination of violence against people with disabilities. This research aims to evaluate the social dimensions of sexual violence against people with disabilities, particularly those with psychosocial and cognitive, in Colombia. Results reveal that 55% of people with disabilities that are survivors of sexual violence are younger than 29 years and 20,4 are people with cognitive and psychosocial disabilities. Colombian regions with better social positions presented more cases of sexual violence against people with disabilities. There were found access barriers for health, education and employment among this population, and there was also found poor data quality. Despite Colombia having an important normative framework aimed at preventing and attending to gender-based violence, it does not take into account people with disabilities specific needs. Additionally, it was found an insufficient implementation and appropriation of these norms, negative attitudes, and in general, a lack of service adaptation according to the needs, identities and circumstances of people with disabilities. Furthermore, among the factors that are exposing people with disabilities to sexual violence, it was found that family members tend to be the main aggressors, there are deep gaps in the sex education received by people with disabilities, imaginaries and perceptions about their sexuality are both hypersexualizing and presenting them as asexual. On the other hand, among protective factors, there were found body self-knowledge and conscience, acknowledgment of their sexuality and their sexual and reproductive rights and access to sex ed. Although during the last few years, there has occurred a positive change toward social inclusion of people with disabilities, specifically through their role in the political agenda and the recognition of their rights. More work is needed in order to guarantee their sexual and reproductive rights, particularly for persons with psychosocial and cognitive disabilities. This research results showed the importance of transforming persisting negative imaginaries about their sexuality and also enforcing and promoting their autonomy. In this sense, it is important to acknowledge gaps and barriers faced by them and create strategies to encourage their social inclusion through education, employment, and skill development. Nevertheless, it is necessary to keep contributing new evidence of the social determinants of health that are influencing the occurrence of sexual violence. This research understands sexual violence against people with disabilities in a multidimensional manner and offers the following recommendations: 1- To foment public sensitization and understanding of disabilities. 2- To increase parents, caregivers and officers' commitment to the prevention and reduction of sexual violence. 3- To focus on the needs, identities and circumstances of people with disabilities.

Keywords : disabilities, sexual and reproductive rights, sexual violence, prevention

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