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Citizen Insecurity in the Face of Impunity in Ecuador

Inseguridad Ciudadana Frente A La Impunidad En El Ecuador

Limaico Mina Josué Ramón¹, Limaico Carcelén Melanie Karina², Terán Vaca Claudio Antonio³

Abstract

Citizen insecurity refers to the perception or reality that citizens are not safe in their environment, either due to the presence of criminals, violence, or organized crime, among other factors. Impunity, on the other hand, refers to the lack of punishment or sanction for those who have committed a crime, which generates a sense of injustice and a greater propensity to repeat these criminal acts. The relationship between citizen insecurity and impunity is very close, as the perception of impunity can be a factor that contributes to increasing insecurity. When people feel that criminals can act without consequences, they are more likely to feel vulnerable and fearful in their daily lives. In addition, impunity can lead to a sense of distrust towards the authorities and the justice system, which, in turn, can foster an environment of disorder and a lack of respect for rules and laws. It is important to note that citizen insecurity and impunity are complex problems that require comprehensive and multifaceted solutions. It is necessary to address the structural causes that generate crime, such as poverty, social exclusion, lack of opportunities, and economic inequality. Furthermore, it is essential to have an effective justice system that ensures the investigation and punishment of crimes, so that citizens have confidence in the system, and criminal acts are deterred through certain public policies.

Keywords: *insecurity; impunity; laws; solutions.*

Resumen

La inseguridad ciudadana se refiere a la percepción o realidad de que los ciudadanos no están seguros en su entorno, ya sea por la presencia de delincuentes, la violencia, el crimen organizado, entre otros factores. La impunidad, por otro lado, se refiere a la falta de castigo o sanción para quienes han cometido un delito, lo que genera una sensación de injusticia y una mayor propensión a la repetición de esos actos delictivos. La relación entre la inseguridad ciudadana y la impunidad es muy estrecha, ya que la percepción de impunidad puede ser un factor que contribuya a aumentar la inseguridad. Cuando las personas sienten que los delincuentes pueden actuar sin consecuencias, es más probable que se sientan vulnerables y temerosas en su vida cotidiana. Además, la impunidad puede llevar a una sensación de desconfianza hacia las autoridades y el sistema de justicia, lo que a su vez puede fomentar un ambiente de desorden y falta de respeto por las normas y leyes. Es importante tener en cuenta que la inseguridad ciudadana y la impunidad son problemas complejos que requieren soluciones integrales y multifacéticas. Es necesario abordar las causas estructurales que generan la delincuencia, como la pobreza, la exclusión social, la falta de oportunidades y la desigualdad económica. Además, es fundamental contar con un sistema de justicia efectivo que garantice la investigación y el castigo de los delitos, de manera que los ciudadanos sientan confianza en el sistema y se disuadan los actos delictivos a través de ciertas políticas públicas.

¹ Universidad Autónoma Regional de los Andes, Sede Ibarra, Ecuador. Email: ui.josuelimaico@uniandes.edu.ec
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7178-4119>

² Universidad Autónoma Regional de los Andes, Sede Ibarra, Ecuador. Email: di.melanicklc21@uniandes.edu.ec
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1334-2740>

³ Universidad Autónoma Regional de los Andes, Sede Ibarra, Ecuador. Email: ui.claudioteran@uniandes.edu.ec
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1322-6629>

Palabras Clave: *inseguridad; impunidad; leyes; soluciones.*

Introduction

The issue of citizen insecurity is one of the most significant social problems that Ecuador is currently facing. According to the report from the National Council for Public Safety, the homicide rate in the country has increased in recent years, reaching a rate of 5.4 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2020 (National Council for Public Safety, 2020). This situation has created a sense of fear and distrust among the population, as Beloso (2018) points out: "The perception of citizen insecurity, especially in large cities, has been a growing concern among citizens who view the presence of criminal gangs and prevailing impunity in many cases as a threat to their safety" (p. 47).

Citizen insecurity in Ecuador has become a chronic problem affecting all cities in the country. Rates of violence and criminality have risen in recent years, leading to a perception of insecurity among the population. Common crime, drug trafficking, and organized crime are some of the main causes of citizen insecurity in Ecuador.

Furthermore, impunity is a factor that contributes to citizen insecurity in Ecuador. According to the National Council for Public Safety report, in 2020, there was an impunity rate of 92% in homicide cases (National Council for Public Safety, 2020). This situation generates a sense of injustice and distrust in the authorities and the justice system, as noted by Paredes (2016): "Impunity in Ecuador is a chronic problem. The lack of punishment for crimes committed creates a sense of impunity that encourages the repetition of crimes" (p. 10).

However, another factor contributing to citizen insecurity in Ecuador is impunity. The lack of punishment for crimes committed generates a sense of injustice and distrust in the authorities and the justice system. This, in turn, can encourage the repetition of crimes and create a spiral of violence that affects society as a whole.

According to Julio Prado, an expert in citizen security, impunity is one of the main factors contributing to citizen insecurity in Ecuador. Prado points out that "the lack of punishment for crimes committed creates an environment of insecurity and distrust in the population, which, in turn, can encourage the repetition of crimes" (Prado, 2018).

In Ecuador, impunity is a severe problem affecting all areas of the justice system. The lack of resources, corruption, and the slow pace of judicial processes are some of the main causes of impunity in the country. Impunity also extends to gender-based violence, where many cases are not adequately investigated or sanctioned.

A study conducted by the non-governmental organization Observatorio Ciudadano (Citizen Observatory) found that impunity is one of the main problems in the Ecuadorian justice system. According to the report, "impunity is one of the population's major concerns and significantly contributes to citizen insecurity in the country" (Observatorio Ciudadano, 2019).

The lack of effective measures to reduce citizen insecurity and impunity has led the population to take extreme actions, such as vigilante justice. This generates greater social instability and can lead to increased violence and crime.

Citizen insecurity and impunity are two problems significantly affecting Ecuadorian society. Citizen insecurity creates a sense of fear and distrust among the population, while impunity

encourages the repetition of crimes and a sense of injustice. To combat these problems, comprehensive measures are required, including crime prevention, effective justice, and strengthening the institutions responsible for ensuring citizen security. Only then can a safer and more just society be established for all.

Hence, the objective of this research is to analyze citizen security in the face of impunity in Ecuador.

Method

The method of documentary analysis is a qualitative research technique that allows for the examination and analysis of documents relevant to the study's topic. In the case of a scientific article on citizen insecurity in the face of impunity in Ecuador, documentary analysis could be a valuable tool for obtaining information about the context and historical evolution of the problem, as well as the policies and measures implemented by authorities to address it.

According to Pardo and Martínez (2014), documentary analysis is a technique that "involves the systematic and thorough review of a series of relevant documents that provide insight into important aspects of the subject of study" (p. 88). In this sense, documentary analysis can be useful for obtaining information about the political, social, and economic context in which citizen insecurity and impunity in Ecuador occur, as well as for understanding the policies and strategies implemented to address the problem.

To carry out rigorous documentary analysis, it is necessary to select appropriate documents and establish clear inclusion and exclusion criteria. According to González (2017), the selection of documents should be "rigorous and systematic, taking into account both their relevance and pertinence to the study" (p. 52). Likewise, it is important to establish clear inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the quality and validity of the analysis results.

Among the documents that could be useful for conducting documentary analysis on citizen insecurity and impunity in Ecuador are government reports, official statistics, laws and regulations, previous research, news articles, and journalistic reports, among others. The analysis of these documents would provide detailed information about the historical evolution of the problem, the causes, and consequences of citizen insecurity and impunity in Ecuador, as well as the measures and strategies implemented to address it.

In summary, documentary analysis is a useful technique for obtaining detailed and rigorous information about citizen insecurity and impunity in Ecuador. Proper document selection and the establishment of clear inclusion and exclusion criteria are essential to ensure the quality and validity of the analysis.

Results

Relevant Information on the Historical Evolution of the Problem

The historical evolution of citizen insecurity in the face of impunity in Ecuador has been influenced by various factors, including changes in the economy, politics, and society.

According to Alvarado (2015), in the 1990s, Ecuador experienced a "profound economic crisis" that led to an increase in unemployment and poverty, which in turn contributed to rising

crime and citizen insecurity (p. 98). The author argues that the economic crisis had a negative impact on citizen security in Ecuador. He suggests that the increase in crime and citizen insecurity was a direct consequence of rising unemployment and poverty. This citation is relevant to the study of citizen insecurity in Ecuador as it highlights the importance of considering socioeconomic factors in the analysis of citizen security.

On the other hand, Viteri (2018) points out that in the 2000s, Ecuador experienced a "growing institutional deterioration," including corruption and the justice system's lack of capacity to prosecute and sanction criminals (p. 174). This includes corruption and the justice system's lack of capacity to prosecute and sanction criminals. The author does not provide specific data on the extent of this institutional deterioration but suggests that it had a negative impact on citizen security.

Consequently, in the last decade, according to Mena (2021), citizen insecurity in Ecuador has been marked by gender-based violence and youth violence, and it has worsened further during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the economic downturn and rising unemployment (p. 42). The citation emphasizes the importance of considering socioeconomic factors in the analysis of citizen security. In particular, it is suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic effects may be exacerbating citizen insecurity in Ecuador. The mention of gender-based violence and youth violence is also relevant to the study of citizen security in Ecuador, as these forms of violence may require specific policies and strategies to address them. In general, it provides an updated perspective on the state of citizen security in Ecuador and highlights the importance of considering socioeconomic factors in the analysis of citizen security.

Regarding impunity, Gutiérrez (2016) notes that the lack of resources and the lack of independence of the judicial system have hindered the proper prosecution and sanctioning of criminals, leading to an atmosphere of impunity and a lack of trust in institutions (p. 219). As a result, impunity has become widespread, and the population's trust in law enforcement institutions has been undermined. The lack of resources and the lack of independence in the judicial system can create an environment of impunity and mistrust in institutions.

Causes and Consequences of Citizen Insecurity and Impunity

Causes

Citizen insecurity and impunity in Ecuador have multiple causes. According to Buitrón (2017), one of the factors contributing to the increase in crime is the lack of economic opportunities for young people. Poverty and unemployment are factors related to criminality and violence, especially in marginalized urban areas. Furthermore, corruption and the lack of transparency in the judicial system have allowed for impunity for crimes, discouraging people from reporting and increasing the perception that crime goes unpunished (Cárdenas, 2018).

Consequences

The consequences of citizen insecurity and impunity in Ecuador are severe and impact the entire society. According to Zambrano (2020), the increase in crime has led to a loss of trust in institutions and a perception that justice does not function properly. Additionally, insecurity also affects people's quality of life, limiting their mobility and generating fear and stress. Gender-based violence and youth violence are specific forms of insecurity that cause psychological and social harm (Mena, 2021). Furthermore, citizen insecurity and impunity have

a negative impact on the country's economy as it discourages investment and tourism (Gutiérrez, 2016).

Measures and Strategies Implemented

Ecuador has implemented various measures and strategies to address the issue of citizen insecurity and impunity. One of the most significant measures has been the creation of a more professionalized and better-equipped National Police to strengthen citizen security and improve the capacity for crime investigation and processing (Naranjo, 2018).

Another strategy has been the implementation of public policies for crime and violence prevention. This includes rehabilitation and social reintegration programs for offenders, as well as programs to prevent youth violence and gender-based violence (Ministry of the Interior, 2021).

Furthermore, legal reforms have been carried out to enhance the justice system's capacity to prosecute and sanction criminals. For example, in 2014, the Indigenous Justice Law was approved, recognizing and strengthening indigenous justice systems and their ability to effectively and fairly resolve conflicts (National Assembly of Ecuador, 2014).

However, despite these measures and strategies, citizen insecurity and impunity remain significant issues in Ecuador. It is necessary to continue working on the implementation and strengthening of effective policies and measures to address these problems (García, 2020).

In summary, the measures implemented in Ecuador to address the issues of citizen insecurity and impunity include the professionalization and equipping of the National Police, the implementation of public policies for crime and violence prevention, and legal reforms to enhance the justice system's capacity. Nevertheless, sustained and ongoing efforts are needed to achieve a significant reduction in insecurity and impunity in the country.

Conclusions

- Citizen insecurity in the face of impunity is a complex and multifaceted problem in Ecuador. Citizen insecurity has been exacerbated by factors such as the economic crisis, gender and youth violence, and the lack of resources and independence within the judicial system. Additionally, impunity has generated an atmosphere of distrust in the institutions responsible for citizen security and justice.
- Various measures and strategies have been implemented to address this issue, including judicial system reform, the creation of crime prevention programs, the promotion of citizen participation, and international cooperation in the fight against organized crime. However, their effectiveness has been limited due to the lack of resources, corruption, and a lack of coordination among institutions.
- It is necessary to continue working on the implementation of comprehensive public policies that address the structural causes of citizen insecurity and impunity. This involves improving the institutional capacity of the judicial system, strengthening crime prevention measures, and promoting citizen participation in citizen security.
- Citizen insecurity and impunity are complex problems that require a comprehensive and multidimensional approach in Ecuador. International cooperation, institutional

strengthening, and citizen participation are key to achieving a safer and more just society.

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