

Process of Evaluation and Attention to Victims of Socio-Political Violence at the National University

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Abstract

This qualitative ethnographic research work aims to identify and understand the experience of students who access universities through the extraordinary exam, as well as to explore how these institutions implement the processes of care. National universities must attend to the victims of terrorist violence according to Law No. 28592, by virtue of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which covers the period 1982-2000. Through in-depth interviews, participant observation, documentary analysis and triangulation of information, it has become evident that, although the national universities and their authorities formally comply with the Law in their admission processes, in practice there are serious difficulties in its application. These difficulties are associated with the fear of the stigma of "terruqueo" and of being accused of apology for terrorism, which has led to the abandonment of students who enter national universities under the extraordinary modality.

Keywords: *University Scholarships, University, Political Violence, Admission Exam, Andes.*

Introduction

In Peru, the armed conflict known as socio-political violence lasted from May 1980 to November 2000, as established by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR). This state institution "was created in 2011, in a difficult political context, after President Alberto Fujimori left the country for Japan and during the transitional government of Valentín Paniagua" (Mantilla 2006, p. 323). The Commission's final report is an official Peruvian state document that serves as the basis for investigations into the socio-political violence that occurred, which left thousands dead and caused devastating consequences for the victims, who did not receive adequate psychological treatment or state reparations. The CVR affirms "the actors of the internal armed conflict, namely the Peruvian State and the subversive groups Shining Path (SL) and the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA)" (Mantilla 2006, p. 232). The conflict took place mainly in the Peruvian highlands, with Ayacucho as the epicenter. According to the CVR:

... of 23,969 Peruvians dead or missing, calculations and statistical estimates allow affirming that the total number of fatal victims of the internal armed conflict would exceed 2.9 times that amount. Applying a methodology called Multiple Systems Estimation, the CVR has estimated that the total number of Peruvians who may have died in the internal armed conflict is 69,280 people. (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2011, p. 53).

The Peruvian State attempted to recognize this social phenomenon through a series of affirmative actions, which varied according to the recognition policy of each government in power. An example of this is the creation of Law No. 28592, which establishes "the Regulatory Framework of the Comprehensive Reparations Plan-PIR for the victims of the violence that occurred during the period from May 1980 to November 2000, in accordance with the conclusions and recommendations of the CVR Report" (Congreso de la República 2005). Based on this law, universities at the national level have been implementing various affirmative actions to compensate the victims of the social phenomenon. In the Ayacucho region there are

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two universities: the century-old National University of San Cristobal de Huamanga and, more recently, the National Autonomous University of Huanta, which has been in existence for eight years and is located in the province of the same name. This research focuses on the National Autonomous University of Huanta, which complies with the provisions of Law No. 28592 in its extraordinary admission process, granting special quotas to victims and/or those affected by socio-political violence.

The National Autonomous University of Huanta, was founded in “January 2011 by the Congress of the Republic, through Law No. 29658... Subsequently, the Resolution of the Board of Directors No. 014.2017-SUNEDU/CD granted the university the Institutional License to offer university higher education services” (Gutiérrez-Gómez 2024, p. 45). According to information on its admissions website (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Huanta 2022) it is indispensable to present the requirement “legalized copy of the Certificate of Accreditation of Special Registry of Beneficiaries of Reparations in Education, must consign the name of the applicant. (Law No. 28592)”. The requirement is granted through the Education Reparations Program that “seeks to provide facilities and new opportunities for the victims of the 1980-2000 period of violence and their direct relatives, who lost the possibility of receiving an adequate education or of completing their primary, secondary, higher and technical studies” (Ministerio de Justicia y Derechos Humanos 2024).

Ayacucho is the region that had the most victims of the social conflict, estimated at “(26,259 victims) with an analysis of the demographic patterns of that department between 1981 and 1993. We show that the number of people lost resulting from the demographic analysis is greater than the number of dead and disappeared” (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2011a, p. 19). It is concluded that the armed conflict mainly affected “(the rural, peasant, poor and culturally more distant areas of the western Peruvian world), it is not implausible that so many citizens of that Peru have perished before the indifference or ignorance of the official, modern or western country” (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2011a, p. 22). The National Autonomous University of Huanta is located in an area affected by the armed conflict, as well as by the remaining presence of the Shining Path and drug trafficking, in the so-called VRAEM (Valley of the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro Rivers). Its geography covers both the high Andean zone and the Peruvian jungle.

Methodology

The researchers belong to national universities that handle special cases like this one. A qualitative ethnographic research was carried out, through in-depth interviews, with the objective of learning about the experience of victims of socio-political violence in the modality of extraordinary admission exam, endorsed by the Law. In addition, focus groups were conducted with students who entered the university under this modality, who do not receive any type of emotional support once admitted. Data collection included in-depth interviews, participant observation and documentary analysis. Subsequently, the data were processed by organizing and classifying the field notes, interview transcripts and documents collected.

Within the framework of the TRC report, data analysis was conducted. The objective was to identify recurrent patterns and emerging themes that contribute to the interpretation of the research. It is essential to contextualize the data, which allows understanding the environment in which the information was collected. Triangulation of sources, such as observation, interviews and documents, complements and reinforces the conclusions. Once the data have been processed, we proceed to the interpretation of the research, constructing meanings that reveal the underlying beliefs and values. In this process, a critical reflection is made and theories are elaborated to explain the social phenomenon occurred in Peru, with a particular focus on the way this topic is currently approached at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Huanta.

The fundamental aspect of this research is that the members of the work team have Quechua as their mother tongue and are part of the University as teachers, which has allowed them to be accepted to participate in the interviews and in the participant observation. However, there have been difficulties in

accessing information about students who enter through the extraordinary modality, specifically those who are victims of terrorism. This is a sensitive issue for authorities, teachers, administrative workers and students, which makes it difficult to ask questions about the social phenomenon under investigation. In addition, some sectors of teachers and authorities show interest in misrepresenting the results of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which leaves the students affected by this problem helpless.

Contextualization of Socio-Political Violence and the University

Regarding the armed conflict in Peru, there are a number of official documents such as the CVR report and other unofficial ones that contextualize the violence from different perspectives. As indicated by (Santillán 2017) “in March 1982, the Shining Pathists carried out their biggest attack so far: the guerrillas attacked municipal and civil guard offices, and stormed the Ayacucho prison freeing 247 prisoners” (p. 6). This would be one of the beginnings of an armed conflict in the Ayacucho region, involving the Peruvian State and the nation as a whole. In spite of the University as an institution, it is Shining Path, as a political organization, who initiates the conflict “from the University of Ayacucho the Shining Path cadres moved to the countryside and the marginal urban spaces of the city, learned the Quechua language, founded schools and imposed their political leadership” (Escárzaga 2001, p. 88). The success in imposing the Shining Path's political leadership was due, in part, to the proper use of Quechua, which remains the predominant language in the Peruvian highlands of Ayacucho to this day.

There are numerous documents on the emergence of the Shining Path and its actions at the National University of San Cristobal de Huamanga (UNSCH), although this topic is not the focus of this research. However, the collateral impact of this conflict has not been considered as a fundamental aspect in the psychological and educational reparation of the descendants. Thus, in the seventies “Guzmán and his battered hosts began their long march and took refuge in the UNSCH, where they built what we call an Andean Yenan. For this purpose, precisely from 1969 to 1973, they had an undisputed predominance in the university” (Degregori 2000, p. 496). Economic, social, political and psychological reparations to the university institution have not yet been granted. The university continues to live under the social stigma of having been, in the past, a nest of Shining Pathists, a stigma that persists every time there are university protest movements.

In the university environment of the UNSCH and the recently created National Autonomous University of Huanta, resentment and hostile behavior towards the governments in power is evident, due to the lack of attention to both the institution and the region in general. The reconciliation process has not culminated and tensions persist “in which students of UNMSM, UNSCH and several other public universities are conceived as subjects that would commonly have ‘leftist’ ideological inclinations and that in their political practices would be prone to radicalism and violence” (Nureña 2016, p. 120). The working population and the student body live with the stigma of being considered “senderistas”, “revoltosos”, “leftists” and other derogatory labels imposed by politicians in the capital.

The university is characterized by its universal essence of academic analysis and debate. The university history of Ayacucho is closely linked to the armed conflicts and political violence in Peru. The study is carried out in the province of Huanta, where the National Autonomous University of Huanta (UNAH) was recently founded and is part of the current social context:

When talking about the war that took place in Peru, one must face censorship and self-censorship, stigma, silence and oblivion. And it is in spite of this oblivion of those tragic events, that the persistent memory is present in the people of Huanta, the bullets, the blood and the gunpowder were immortalized in a traditional huayno composed by Ricardo Dolorier and popularized by the singer Martina Portocarrero, which narrates all the events that took place. (Escamilla 2023, p. 113).

The people of Huantina are known for their social struggle and constant protests against any political phenomenon affecting their province. The University is immersed in this context, where local authorities

have a constant presence on campus. These authorities demand recognition and affirmative action from the State in relation to the armed conflict experienced between 1982 and 2000. In the interviews and conversations conducted for the research, their demands are vehement, highlighting Huanta as the cradle of the social struggle, as pointed out by (Gutiérrez 2019) “in Huanta the population is organized to demand the repeal of DS-006 in an open town meeting, at the same time in Ayacucho the Defense Front sends a memorial to the President of the Republic, demanding its repeal” (p. 36). The University, as an institution of higher education, has a debt with its people and, therefore, must make restitution to its citizens by complying with the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

Intake Victim Assessment Process

Universities nationwide have the obligation to comply with Law No. 28592, which establishes the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) to implement differentiated admission exams, called extraordinary. In this sense, the National Autonomous University of Huanta, in its admission process, has established the modality: “Victims and/or Affected by Sociopolitical Violence, Peasant and Native Communities, People with Disabilities, Military Service, Talented Applicants Scholarship 18, Outstanding Athletes, University Graduates, External Transfer and Internal Transfer” (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Huanta 2022). This research focuses on the modality of Victims and/or Affected by Sociopolitical Violence, as well as on the Peasant and Native Communities, which constitute the most vulnerable sector of the armed conflict in Ayacucho, which occurred between 1982 and 2000, according to the official Peruvian history.

Once students enter the university through the admission process, which is carried out up to twice a year according to the institution's autonomous administration policy, the Peruvian State grants a series of scholarships to new entrants. This is a government policy that seeks to promote access and permanence in higher education, “one of them is the National Scholarship and Educational Credit Program (Pronabec), which offers scholarships to students with low income and/or in a situation of economic vulnerability, as well as to students who stand out for their academic performance” (Nuñez 2023). However, these scholarships may face serious difficulties in terms of their applicability and effective reach to beneficiaries, as collected in the research work of (Gomez et al. 2024) on a “sector of the student and social population questions the legality of these programs, alleging possible illegal benefits for those who are already within the system. In addition, they criticize the inadequate dissemination of scholarship benefits and application deadlines” (p. 13). The Quechua-speaking population, especially the most vulnerable, is the most affected by the lack of educational support from the State, while the direct victims of political violence continue to be marginalized.

The National Autonomous University of Huanta has been operating academically since August 2017 and, to date, has conducted fourteen admission processes in its three professional careers. In each of these processes, it offers vacancies in the extraordinary modality, with six places available “affected by socio-political violence and/or victims of terrorism, peasant and native communities” (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Huanta 2022). In the extraordinary admission modality, to date 83 students have been admitted due to socio-political violence and/or victims of terrorism, as well as 83 students from peasant and native communities, for a total of 166 students from the most remote areas of the province. This research focuses on the extraordinary modality for victims of terrorism, complemented with students from peasant and native communities of the Andean region of the Quechua-speaking Andean region and native Amazonian languages. The attention provided by the University of Huanta addresses the consequences of the military mobilization that occurred in 1983 and 1984 that “ended in detentions of unarmed peasants, resulting in a high number of forced disappearances and arbitrary executions. In fact, according to CVR data, 22.16% of the murders took place in the province of Huanta” (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2011, p. 89).

According to accounts from the villagers interviewed, who acted as key informants in the research, the attention provided by the Peruvian State through exceptional admission to university is insufficient, as it does not compensate for the damage caused by the Armed Forces and Shining Path. The students who enter are limited to recounting the testimonies of their parents and grandparents in the community, and

fear being stigmatized as children of Shining Path members, according to their own statements. This situation is reflected in some recent news, which also limit the dissemination of the students' testimonies, such as “after 20 years of investigation, the trial for perpetration-by-means against members of the Navy General Staff in charge of the Huanta base in 1984 has come to an end. They are accused of kidnapping, torture and extrajudicial execution” (Castillo 2024). There are oral testimonies that students share about what they heard in their community, but they are limited due to the presence of Shining Path remnants and drug traffickers.

The news is alarming, as in the recent case of the recovery of corpses, for example “of Macabamba developed in two events leaving a total of 12 victims. The first occurred on October 17, 1983, when the community members were surprised by the incursion of a group of members of Sendero Luminoso” (Gob.pe 2022). According to the university authorities of the Organizing Commission and the unions organized in Huanta, the attention is insufficient, since the available budget does not respond to the needs of the population that suffers the consequences of the armed conflict, as stated by the CVR. Students competing for the six places offered in the socio-political violence and/or victims of terrorism modality in the admission process face great difficulties. Once admitted, many do not have an adequate process of social insertion into university life, which generates frustration, especially when they feel dissatisfied with the chosen career and the only three options available. In addition, students live in the city in rented rooms, in conditions of loneliness, far from their parents, who are in the high Andean communities.

Psychosocial and Restorative Care within the University

The collection of information is restricted for both students and university workers, who are limited to address the issue of the violence that occurred between 1982 and 2000 due to various legal restrictions, including Law No. 30610, which amends the Penal Code, this “lies in the fact that now the crime of apology for terrorism is typified in a single article, 316^o-A. This contains the actions and verbs with which the crime of apology for terrorism is committed: “exaltation, justification or glorification” (Ministerio del Interior 2017). Psychological and restorative treatment at the University is hindered by the legal regulations, which generates confusion among young people. News such as: “last January 26 the Judiciary sentenced in first instance to eight years of effective imprisonment to the student of Automotive Mechanics Rodrigo Benites Silva (22) for apology to terrorism in social networks” (Política LR 2023). These legal restrictions limit specialized attention and the freedom to testify about the violence that occurred.

The universities have an area of attention to students that includes professionals in psychology, social assistance and tutoring. However, within these services it has been reported that there are no students who can testify about the political violence and terrorist actions that occurred in their place of origin, which were decisive for their admission to the university in the extraordinary admission process. The human rights violations that occurred in the province of Huanta have psychological repercussions on the student population, especially on those who enter under the extraordinary admission process due to political violence and terrorism. These terror scenarios, which remain unaddressed by specialists, generate fear of being labeled as apology for terrorism. Cases such as the following exemplify this situation:

... in December 1984, 123 people from the villages of Cayramayo, Vizcatampata, Orcohuasi and Putis, in the district of Santillana, province of Huanta (Ayacucho), as again recognized by the CVR, “were victims of an arbitrary execution carried out by Army troops stationed in the community of Putis”. (Ríos and García de las Heras 2019, p. 84)

There is no policy of restorative actions in the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Huanta, nor is there any record of interviews or spaces to listen to the testimonies of incoming students, whether in the extraordinary or ordinary modality, due to the fear of being accused of terrorism apology.

The majority of the student population at the University of Huanta has Quechua as their mother tongue and face certain difficulties in learning Spanish in their professional training process. In addition, there is a generalized fear of talking about the events that occurred between 1982 and 2000 related to political violence. This feeling of coercion to share their testimonies generates impotence, which translates into

aggressive behavior towards current state policy, regardless of the governor in office. A key aspect in communication during this period was the use of Quechua by the Shining Path members in the countryside, while the military did not master this language, which generated a derogatory treatment towards the peasants, who were accused without evidence of being Shining Path members. This was evidenced in the research “from the analysis of the testimonies received, it turns out that seventy-five percent of the fatal victims of the internal armed conflict had Quechua and other native languages as their mother tongue” (Castillejo 2007, p. 80). To date, Quechua remains the official language in the Ayacucho region. Many students are fluent in Quechua and can narrate their experiences of violence in this language, although the lack of documentary records means that these stories are mainly transmitted orally.

The impact of socio-political violence in Ayacucho remains profound, and both the University and mental health professionals face the difficulty of dealing with the fear of being accused of being prosenderistas. The media and influential politicians tend to consider “a racist connotation, to denigrate people with indigenous features or coming from Ayacucho or from the Andes in general, due to the stigma that weighed on the inhabitants of the highlands, of being suspected of “terrorism”” (Pighi Bel 2021). The university population lives in fear of a repressive policy that might address issues related to socio-political violence. The professors interviewed are reluctant to talk about the subject, as they feel under surveillance by the state intelligence services. During tutoring hours, issues related to repairing the psychological damage caused to young people, whose experiences are transmitted orally in Quechua, are not addressed. Moreover, psychosocial actions “at present, in these communities, post-conflict and drug trafficking zones, a stranger is scrutinized from ‘head to toe’, studied as if he were a weirdo, observing every detail” (Gavilán 2023, p. 25). Under these conditions, the reparations and reconciliation recommended by the TRC remain a pending task.

Participation of Victims in the Reparation Process

Parents who come to inquire about the admissions process at the University of Huanta are directed to the various options available. Many of them arrive accompanied by their university-age children. However, the administrative assistant in charge of admissions limits himself to providing general information about the modalities, without delving into specific requirements. Specifically, parents are interested in the modality for victims of terrorism, but they do not know the steps to follow, the requirements they must fulfill and the places where they can obtain the corresponding certification. In the entire admission exam from its foundation 2017 to 2024-II, 437 applicants applied for the Victims of Terrorism modality, of which only 83 were admitted, due to the limitations established in the requirements. The rest could not access the available quotas. The head of the university's Admissions Office points out that there is no follow-up of the students admitted under this modality, who are left uninformed about their educational process. The only exoneration they benefit from is the registration fee for each academic semester and, at the end of their studies, the exoneration of the payment to obtain the degree, as long as they present proof that they are victims of terrorism.

One of the ways in which the state and universities provide support is through university scholarships in their various forms. However, students must manage to access the scholarship for victims of terrorism during the national examination stages. There is also a fear of applying for national scholarships due to a rumor related to a PRONABEC regulation that “could require the graduate to ‘return the scholarship’ if he/she did not comply with the agreements contemplated in Article 4 of the Guide for Case Resolution regarding the status of the undergraduate scholarship recipient” (Tovar and Huamán 2020). Under these conditions, victim participation is insufficient. The fear of being stigmatized as prosenderistas and the concern of having to reimburse the full cost incurred if they do not meet the academic requirements to graduate or perform, generate a significant barrier. According to the university's admissions officer, parents go to great lengths to obtain certification as prosender victims. However, once students are admitted, they do not receive adequate support during their educational process.

The educational competition at the University is developed on equal terms with other students who have entered through other more demanding modalities. Students who are unable to obtain a place through the extraordinary admission process for the Victims of Terrorism modality have the option of applying again

in the ordinary admission process, by paying a tuition fee that ranges between 80 US dollars, convertible into soles. In the Peruvian context, differentiated education represents an obstacle for applicants in this modality, since students affected by violence do not receive the timely accompaniment necessary for their integration and academic success. There are law initiatives such as “the zero cycle is a free admission program that seeks to implement as a modality for admission to universities nationwide” (Calderón 2025). Or proposals for the political debate on “free admission to Peruvian universities has been a controversial issue in recent years, since it was not known how it would be implemented, if it would really work and if there would be an increase in the budget of public institutions” (Ortega 2023).

These proposals would contribute to foster competition under equal conditions; however, they are still far from becoming a reality and, instead, a differentiated and competitive education among students will prevail. It is important to consider the memory of “the rise of negationist currents, with messages amplified by extremist groups of the right and left, and representatives of political parties to whom the CVR attributes a very serious responsibility for what happened during the internal armed conflict” (Vargas 2024). Taking into account the vulnerability of the population due to the presence of drug trafficking and remnants of the Shining Path, “is a favorable scenario for the siege of drug trafficking and remnants of the Shining Path, with which the State must deal by granting university scholarships to achieve their professionalization” (Gutiérrez-Gómez et al. 2024).

Evaluation of the Institutional Response

Universities throughout the country comply with the provisions of the Victims of Terrorism Act in their admissions process, following a series of requirements specific to each institution. The implementation of the admissions process is homogeneous among universities due to their administrative autonomy. The institutional response is based on the information provided by the Single Registry of Victims (RUV), which “is a public instrument of national character, inclusive and permanent, to which all persons and communities affected during the process of violence that occurred in Peru between May 1980 and November 2000 can apply for registration” (gob.pe 2022). With the document issued by the RUV, the student applies for the extraordinary admission process, which exempts him/her from payment. However, he/she must compete with other applicants under the same conditions. If he/she is not admitted, he/she has the option to opt for the ordinary admission process, paying the corresponding fees in full.

According to the interviews conducted with the head of admissions, directors of the Professional School and staff of the social assistance office, it has been indicated that they do not carry out any type of follow-up to students admitted under the Victims of Terrorism modality. In addition, they mention that they do not have adequate protocols to carry out this follow-up and express fear of being stigmatized as prosenderistas, which could involve them in the Law of Apology to Terrorism. Addressing the issue of those who enter through this extraordinary modality is complicated due to cases such as “any teacher who performs activities of apology to terrorism inside or outside the classroom will be severely punished, warned this Tuesday the Minister of Education” (Solar 2023). The same scenario is presented with the students who managed to enter the university under the Victims of Terrorism modality, in this case, at the National Autonomous University of Huanta.

Participant observation and unstructured interviews show that students are abandoned once they enter university. There is no psychological or academic follow-up, let alone support regarding their situation as graduates and how they face professional life. Although the university has a number of inter-institutional agreements, these do not address specific cases related to student victims of terrorism. Fear prevails among both students and professors, who feel unable to address the issue of trekking in the subjects they teach, especially in the face of news such as “last March 23, three weeks before the first round of the April 11 elections, four members of the same family died after an attack in the town of Huarcatán, in the Ayacucho region” (Cueto 2021). As well as “one of these was the Ayacucho committee, in the southern highlands of Peru, says Peruvian journalist Gustavo Gorriti, author of the book ‘Sendero’, to BBC Mundo. Part of the Ayacucho territory today belongs to the Vraem” (Redacción 2021). The university is located in an area characterized by constant armed conflicts caused by the remnants of the Shining Path and drug trafficking.

The institutions dealing with the armed conflict that occurred between 1982 and 2000, the repercussions of which persist to this day, face constant harassment by the State and the Shining Path laws. A relevant case is “in 1983, after the entry of the Armed Forces into Ayacucho, the Pro Human Rights Association (APRODEH) was created which, to this day, among numerous other services, offers legal assistance to the relatives of the victims” (Serranò and Jara Gómez 2024, p. 146). This institution, as well as professionals dealing with the issue of victims of terrorism, suffers constant harassment. In these conditions, students are left to their own devices. According to student testimonies, the tendency of the authorities to reward the outstanding student, the first place student and the media student leaves the vulnerable students, victims of the political violence that took place between 1982 and 2000, forgotten, according to CVR's official report.

Conclusion

The various successive governments took into account the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, although many of them ignored its contents because they considered it an exaggeration in the context of the government in power. The aftermath of the internal war, which still divides the Peruvian population, has not been able to achieve true reconciliation, “the only thing it did was to reopen wounds. These same people think that the Truth Commission does not pay due homage to the victors, that is, the Armed Forces, but rather accuses them of crimes” (Cárdenas 2024). In these post-conflict social conditions, which fail to heal the wounds, it becomes complicated to provide adequate attention to students who enter through the extraordinary admission exam in the modality of victims of terrorism. They are simply abandoned to their fate within the university, as well as in society, where they are restricted from discussing what happened with their families, many of whom still live in the highlands of Huanta and Ayacucho.

University students, the National University as an institution and the population protesting their discontent are frequently branded as violent and associated with the Shining Path, using in political terms the simplistic resource of “terruqueo”. This is even reflected in the interpellation in the Congress of the Republic of two rectors of public universities: the rector of UNI responded to Congresswoman Mery Infantes, who questioned him for having given asylum to “terrorists”. He pointed out that a student from Puno advocated for national unity, questioning whether this could be considered terrorism (Quispe 2023). The easiest way to justify anti-government protests is to label protesters as “terrorists,” “Sendero nests,” “violentistas,” and other labels that both teachers and students prefer to avoid in their daily conversations. This phenomenon of legal harassment by the Peruvian state limits the process of proper follow-up and true reconciliation of communities affected by political violence.

It is crucial to address a true reconciliation, leaving aside the idea of the resurgence of the Shining Path and the violent actions of its time. The main people affected are young university students, who are not involved in the officially recognized events that took place between 1982 and 2000. However, the aftermath of the violence and the legislation against collective memory continue to impact university students. It is common to hear expressions of social marginalization related to the particularly violent “armed” conflict (Ayacucho -which concentrates most of the victims-, Huancavelica, Apurímac, among other central-southern Andean regions), as well as in regions where there is still narco-terrorist activity. Terruqueo “does not explain the socioeconomic, political and ethnic fragmentation of Peru” (Velásquez 2022, p. 82). Overcoming the abysmal gap that divides Peruvians is a clear challenge, as demonstrated by the fieldwork conducted in this research. The main actors are inhibited from sharing their testimonies about what happened, which generates a psychological impact that affects both their student and work performance.

The main limitations of this research are the lack of freedom of expression and the difficulty in accessing the most heartbreaking testimonies, especially those that the affected individuals heard from their parents during the period between 1982 and 2000. These testimonies, as reported by the participants, remain unhealed and psychologically unaddressed to this day. On the contrary, harassment persists whenever there are student and social movements in the cities of Ayacucho and Huanta. Most of the communication is in Quechua, which reflects the true essence of the events experienced during that time. The methodological approach is primarily based on dialogue and testimony, establishing a relationship of trust with the

victims—specifically those who entered under the terrorism victim modality through an extraordinary process. However, once inside the university, these students are left to their fate, receiving no moral, academic, or psychological support from university authorities, who fear being labeled as terrorists and facing potential criminal charges or expulsion. There is still much work to be done in the fields of memory and reconciliation, as many continue to seek a rational explanation for what happened.

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