



## ***Vulnerability of indigenous children and adolescents to rights violations in the Amazon***

### *Vulnerability of Indigenous Children and Adolescents in the Amazon Facing Human Rights Violations*

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#### **SUMMARY**

Indigenous childhood in the Amazon is characterized by social and cultural inequalities, which expose children and adolescents to significant vulnerability. The lack of effective public policies, restricted access to essential services, and institutional discrimination are factors that foster the exclusion and invisibility of this group, culminating in repeated violations of fundamental rights. Among the most frequent problems are sexual violence, child exploitation, premature mortality, and cultural dilemmas that directly impact the dignity and citizenship of Indigenous children. This study sought to understand how these vulnerabilities manifest and perpetuate themselves. To this end, a literature review was conducted that brought together ten academic and institutional works published between 2020 and 2025. The works were selected taking into account their timeliness, thematic relevance, and relevance to the Amazonian context, enabling a broader perspective on the factors that shape these realities. The qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive nature of the research allowed for the analysis of different dimensions, such as health, social exclusion, ethnic-racial inequality, sexual violence, child exploitation, and cultural and legal dilemmas related to the protection of Indigenous children. The findings show that vulnerability is multifaceted, resulting from the interaction between structural and cultural factors. In addition to the scarcity of appropriate services and policies, urban vulnerabilities manifest themselves in distinct ways, revealing the urgency of integrated strategies. It is essential to develop integrated responses that value cultural diversity and ensure fundamental rights, providing protection and dignity to Indigenous children and adolescents in the Amazon.

**Keywords:** Amazon; Indigenous children; Human rights; Child violence; Social vulnerability.

#### **ABSTRACT**

Indigenous childhood in the Amazon is marked by social and cultural inequalities that place children and adolescents in conditions of significant vulnerability. The lack of effective public policies, restricted access to essential services, and institutional discrimination contribute to the exclusion and invisibility of this group, resulting in repeated violations of fundamental rights. Among the most frequent issues are sexual violence, child exploitation, early mortality, and cultural dilemmas that directly affect the dignity and citizenship of indigenous childhood. This study sought to understand how these vulnerabilities manifest and persist. A literature review was conducted, encompassing ten academic and institutional publications released between 2020 and 2025. The selection of works considered their timeliness, thematic relevance, and pertinence to the Amazonian context, enabling a broad perspective on the

factors conditioning these realities. The qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive design of the research allowed the analysis of multiple dimensions, including health, social exclusion, ethnic-racial inequality, sexual violence, child exploitation, and cultural and legal issues related to the protection of indigenous childhood. The findings indicate that vulnerability is multifaceted, stemming from the interaction between structural and cultural factors. In addition to the lack of essential services and appropriate policies, vulnerabilities in urban areas emerge in distinct ways, underscoring the urgency of integrated strategies. It is crucial to develop responses that respect cultural diversity and ensure fundamental rights, providing protection and dignity for indigenous children and adolescents in the Amazon.

**Keywords:** Amazon; Human rights; indigenous children; Social vulnerability; Violence against children.

## INTRODUCTION

Childhood and adolescence are decisive phases in the formation of the human being, demanding the guarantee of conditions that ensure healthy development, protection and recognition of citizenship. However, in the Amazonian scenario, children and Indigenous adolescents experience a set of vulnerabilities that compromise not only their basic rights, but also their full integration into society. the reality of this population is crossed by historical inequalities, lack of effective public policies and exclusionary practices that weaken childhood experiences and of youth in its social, cultural and legal aspects.

The Amazon is home to a plurality of indigenous peoples who preserve ways of life, cultures and languages. This diversity, which should be recognized as social wealth, often becomes a reason for marginalization. Children and Indigenous adolescents are particularly affected by this process, experiencing precarious access to health services, education and social protection. The lack of institutional responses adapted to cultural specificities increase the barriers of inclusion, generating situations in which indigenous childhood is made invisible in the data statistical and neglected in government policies.

Among the most serious violations affecting this group, the high infant mortality, malnutrition, sexual exploitation, gender-based violence, work early childhood and school exclusion. These problems do not occur in isolation, but interconnected, creating a cycle of vulnerability that is reproduced between generations. In addition, addition, the displacement of indigenous families to urban centers, often motivated due to territorial conflicts or the search for basic services, generates new forms of exclusion,

such as the loss of community ties, the intensification of discrimination and the increase in risk of exploitation.

Another important aspect concerns the legal and cultural dilemmas that permeate the safeguarding of indigenous childhood. Certain traditional practices, which still can be found in certain communities, generate intricate discussions about the interaction between cultural diversity and universal children's rights. These conflicts highlight the urgency of an intercultural perspective that recognizes the cultural specificities, without giving up the full protection of the life and dignity of the child.

Thus, the discussion about the vulnerability of indigenous children and adolescents in The Amazon goes beyond the dimension of material need and is projected as an ethical challenge, legal and political. The issue requires the development of strategies that articulate policies integrated public policies, community participation and respect for cultural diversity, ensuring that these subjects can fully exercise their rights and design a dignified future.

Given this scenario, this study seeks to analyze, based on a literature review recent, the main factors that produce and perpetuate childhood vulnerability indigenous people in the Amazon, discussing not only the forms of rights violations, but also the possible paths for promoting inclusive public policies and culturally sensitive. The goal is to contribute to the academic and social debate on need to consolidate practices that strengthen citizenship and the dignity of children and indigenous teenagers from the region.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The vulnerability of indigenous children and adolescents in the Amazon is a result of multiple factors that intertwine and reveal the complexity of the Amazonian reality. It is not just about material deprivation or the absence of public policies, but also of historical processes of marginalization, exclusion and symbolic violence. As Barbosa and Caponi (2022) observe, the Covid-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst of these problems, bringing to light existing structural weaknesses and demonstrating how the lack of adequate protection strategies increased the exposure of people indigenous people to health and social risks.



Along the same lines, Andrade and Santos (2024) point out that childhood in The Legal Amazon is marked by a persistent situation of rights violations, in which highlight the precariousness of basic services, structural poverty and difficulty of access to opportunities for human development. This context creates significant barriers to the implementation of comprehensive protection policies, keeping indigenous children in conditions of social invisibility.

The difficulty in ensuring full protection for these groups can also be explained due to the absence of a legal framework that effectively addresses cultural diversity indigenous. Oliveira (2023) emphasizes that the Doctrine of Plural Protection arises as a proposal relevant in this scenario, as it seeks to reconcile traditional practices with guarantees universal rights. However, the author emphasizes that their application is still incipient, so that the Brazilian legal system remains limited in the articulation between respect for indigenous cultures and implementation of fundamental children's rights.

In addition to institutional weaknesses, the phenomenon of sexual violence is emerging as one of the most serious and persistent. Ferreira et al. (2025) demonstrate that incidence of this form of violence against children and adolescents in Amazonas does not is not only high, but also suffers from systematic underreporting, making it difficult to construction of effective coping policies. This reality is in line with the analysis de Souza et al. (2025), according to which child sexual exploitation in communities Amazonian is reinforced by the combination of the fragility of protection institutions, social tolerance and cultural barriers that make reporting more difficult.

These studies, taken together, show that the vulnerability of children and indigenous adolescents cannot be understood solely by the lack of resources materials, but it needs to be analyzed from a broad perspective, which considers the historical, social, cultural and institutional constraints. This integrated vision is fundamental to understanding the challenge of guaranteeing the rights of this group and to support effective public policies.

Analysis of the vulnerability of indigenous children and adolescents in the Amazon requires understanding how institutional and social structures reproduce inequalities and often fail to ensure fundamental rights. In this scenario, violence sexual represents one of the most serious manifestations of rights violations, with

impacts that go beyond the individual and reach the entire community. Camargo and Cezar (2023) highlights that tackling sexual violence against indigenous children demands a perspective that recognizes both the cultural specificities of indigenous peoples as the systemic failures of the legal and state apparatus. The absence of protocols sensitive to cultural particularities often makes it impossible to implement policies of protection.

Furthermore, the ethnic-racial dimension is central to understanding the multiple levels of exclusion that affect Amazonian children. Castro et al. (2024) point out that children and indigenous adolescents experience a reality marked by inequalities historical, in which factors such as race, ethnicity and territory determine access (or lack thereof) of it) to basic health, education and social assistance services. This intersection between ethnicity and social exclusion makes indigenous children particularly vulnerable, reinforcing the need for public policies that consider not only childhood in a generic, but also the identity specificities of these subjects.

The report prepared by UNICEF (2025) on the Yanomami Indigenous Land offers concrete evidence of the precariousness of protection for children and adolescents indigenous people in an urban context. The document shows that displaced indigenous youth for cities face not only the loss of community ties, but also the intensification of situations of exploitation, discrimination and institutional invisibility. The absence of articulated public policies to guarantee basic rights in environments urban areas exposes these populations to increased vulnerability, revealing how State omission contributes to the reproduction of cycles of exclusion and violence.

In this sense, the literature indicates that the protection of indigenous children must be thought from a broader perspective, which involves not only mechanisms of repression of rights violations, but also policies to promote citizenship and strengthening of cultural identities. Camargo and Cezar (2023) reinforce that, without consider cultural specificities, any attempt to confront violence sexual or other forms of abuse tend to be ineffective or limited. This reflection converges with the analysis of Castro et al. (2024), who defend the centrality of a intersectional approach to public policy formulation, recognizing that Indigenous childhood is simultaneously crossed by ethnic, social and territorial.

From this framework, it becomes evident that the challenge of comprehensive protection of indigenous children and adolescents in the Amazon is not limited to the creation of laws or legal standards. More than that, it requires the implementation of structured policies, integrated and culturally sensitive, which are capable of responding to the particularities of this population group and to effectively address the multiple dimensions of vulnerability.

The right to life constitutes the central core of legal protection for children and adolescents, being particularly challenging in the Amazonian indigenous context. Freitas et al. (2022) demonstrate, using data from states in the Northern Region between 2019 and 2021, that indigenous children face high rates of infant mortality, malnutrition and lack of access to basic health services. These indicators reveal not only socioeconomic vulnerability, but also the persistent neglect of public policies aimed at indigenous children, exposing serious gaps in the implementation of fundamental rights.

The complexity of this scenario is magnified when considering the practice of infanticide in some indigenous communities, a phenomenon that, although a minority, continues to be the subject of intense legal and ethical debate. Pereira and Filho (2022) analyze the topic from the perspective of cultural tolerance and legal protection, highlighting that, while the Brazilian legal system absolutely criminalizes infanticide, part of the cultural tradition of certain peoples still understands it within their rituals and worldviews. This clash between respect for cultural diversity and protection absolute of children's lives generates tensions that challenge both legislation and construction of inclusive public policies.

When dealing with this dilemma, it is important to understand that the issue is not limited to a conflict between culture and law, but above all involves the need for mediation intercultural. Oliveira (2023), when proposing the Doctrine of Plural Protection, argues that the effectiveness of protecting indigenous children requires an approach that does not deny the cultural specificities, but which at the same time ensures the preservation of rights universal, such as the right to life and dignity. This convergent perspective is shown essential to avoid both the unilateral imposition of norms and the perpetuation of practices that undermine the integrity of indigenous children.

In this context, the data presented by Freitas et al. (2022) reinforce the urgency of public policies capable of tackling infant mortality and guaranteeing the universal access to health, while the analysis by Pereira and Filho (2022) highlights the need for dialogue between the State and indigenous communities so that they can meet respectful but firm solutions in protecting children. Taken together, these studies show that the vulnerability of indigenous children and adolescents in the Amazon transcends the sphere of socioeconomic inequality, also involving ethical dilemmas and cultural issues that challenge the Brazilian legal system.

Finally, when bringing together the contributions of different authors, it is clear that the comprehensive protection of indigenous children can only be achieved through public policies structured, intercultural articulation and the consolidation of legal frameworks that reconcile respect for cultural diversity with the implementation of fundamental rights. This is, therefore, a challenge that demands not only legal and institutional effort, but also historical and cultural sensitivity to ensure that children and adolescents indigenous people of the Amazon can fully enjoy their citizenship.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study is characterized as a qualitative research, of an exploratory and descriptive nature, constructed from the bibliographic analysis of scientific articles, institutional reports and dissertations published between 2020 and 2025. The time frame was defined in order to ensure the current nature of the discussion and to include recent productions that specifically address the vulnerability of indigenous children and adolescents in the face of rights violations in the Amazon. The option for a qualitative approach is justified by the need to understand, in depth, the social, legal, and cultural and institutional structures that structure the multiple dimensions of vulnerability of children in the Amazonian context.

The selected productions cover different perspectives, composing a diverse overview on the topic. Barbosa and Caponi (2022) discuss the vulnerability of indigenous peoples during the Covid-19 pandemic and the impacts on childhood; Andrade and Santos (2024) analyze the violation of rights and the social precariousness in the Legal Amazon; Oliveira (2023) introduces the Protection Doctrine Plural as a way of reconciling indigenous cultural practices with universal rights

of the child; Ferreira et al. (2025) and Souza et al. (2025) investigate, respectively, the epidemiology of sexual violence and child sexual exploitation in Amazonas; Camargo and Cezar (2023) propose critical reflections on tackling sexual violence against indigenous children; Castro et al. (2024) discuss Amazonian childhood under the ethnic-racial perspective; UNICEF (2025) presents empirical evidence on young people Yanomami in an urban context; Freitas et al. (2022) analyze health indicators and right to life of indigenous children in the Northern Region; and Pereira and Filho (2022) examine the legal-cultural dilemma of indigenous infanticide.

The methodological procedure was structured in three stages. In the first, the survey and organization of bibliographic sources was carried out, considering previously established inclusion criteria: thematic relevance, publication between 2020 and 2025 and a direct relationship with indigenous children in the Amazon. In the second stage, a comparative analysis of the works was carried out, identifying convergences and divergences regarding vulnerability factors, forms of rights violations and responses legal and institutional. The third stage involved the systematization of the results in analytical categories, which guided the discussion of the study: (i) health vulnerability and social in crisis contexts; (ii) sexual violence and child exploitation in communities Amazonian; (iii) intersections between ethnicity, territory and social exclusion; and (iv) dilemmas legal and cultural aspects in the protection of indigenous life and childhood.

The research adopted as analysis technique the literature review guided by thematic categories, allowing not only the description of the authors' arguments, but also the critical interpretation of the relationships between empirical data and theoretical frameworks. As highlighted by Barbosa and Caponi (2022), Andrade and Santos (2024) and Castro et al. (2024), understand the vulnerability processes that affect indigenous children in The Amazon demands methodologies sensitive to the social and cultural plurality of the region, capable of capturing the tensions between cultural diversity and universality of rights humans.

As this is a bibliographical study, there was no collection of primary or direct contact with research subjects. The emphasis was on data interpretation secondary, duly systematized and referenced according to academic standards of the journal, ensuring the scientific validity of the work and its replicability in future investigations into indigenous childhood and the effectiveness of rights protection in the context Amazonian.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the set of references shows that the vulnerability of children and indigenous adolescents in the Amazon is not an isolated phenomenon, but the result of a complex plot involving historical, social, legal and cultural factors. This multiplicity of elements reinforces the idea that the comprehensive protection of indigenous children must be thought of from an intersectoral perspective, incorporating health, education, security and justice in a joint approach.

In the field of health, studies by Barbosa and Caponi (2022) show how The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of the Brazilian State in terms of protection of indigenous peoples. Children and adolescents were exposed not only to the high rate of contagion and mortality, but also to the collapse of community support systems, already weakened by decades of state neglect. This scenario reinforces Freitas' perception et al. (2022), who identified concrete data on infant mortality among children indigenous people in the Northern Region from 2019 to 2021, associating these deaths with structural inequalities such as the lack of sanitation, the precariousness of the units basic health services and the insufficiency of immunization policies targeted at villages. The two studies agree in arguing that health crises exacerbate inequalities historical, disproportionately impacting indigenous children.

Social marginalization constitutes another fundamental aspect of vulnerability. Andrade and Santos (2024) emphasize that indigenous children in the Legal Amazon face adverse situations regarding access to education, which keeps the cycle of marginalization. Often, educational institutions located in areas indigenous people do not provide bilingual or intercultural education, which results in discontinuity in the transmission of traditional knowledge and weakens identity cultural. Castro et al. (2024), when relating Amazonian childhood to the ethnic-cultural perspective, racial, reinforce that inequalities are not only material, but also symbolic. Structural racism and institutional discrimination hinder access to social services and intensify exclusion. Thus, indigenous childhood is marked by invisibility, both in the statistical scope and in public policies, which increases their vulnerability.

Regarding sexual violence and child exploitation, the literature points to a alarming panorama. Ferreira et al. (2025) analyze the epidemiology of sexual violence

in Amazonas, revealing high rates, aggravated by underreporting and the absence of reporting channels accessible to indigenous communities. Souza et al. (2025), investigate child sexual exploitation in Amazonian communities, they add that, in addition to existing protective legislation, factors such as social inequality, tolerance cultural violence and weak oversight contribute to the perpetuation of problem. Camargo and Cezar (2023) argue that combating sexual violence against Indigenous children must be guided by culturally appropriate protocols, which take into account the particularities of communities, avoiding the imposition of solutions universals that may prove ineffective. The three analyses interrelate to the point out that sexual violence perpetrated against indigenous children is of a multidimensional, demanding both rigorous legal responses and approaches prevention that align with cultural reality.

Another aspect that deserves attention is the situation of indigenous children in displacement to urban areas. The UNICEF report (2025) on Indigenous Lands Yanomami shows that the migration process to cities in Roraima exposes children and adolescents to new forms of exploitation and exclusion. By losing their bonds community, these young people face language barriers, racial discrimination and institutional invisibility. The study highlights that, in cities, the risk of exploitation sexual and rights violations increase, and support networks are practically non-existent. This phenomenon demonstrates how vulnerabilities are reconfigured: if in villages there are weaknesses linked to the lack of basic services, in urban centers there are challenges related to discrimination, abandonment and the lack of specific policies.

The legal-cultural dimension also presents itself as a central challenge. Pereira and Filho (2022) discuss indigenous infanticide in certain communities, showing that the practice, although minority, generates deep tensions between respect for cultural diversity and the universal protection of child life. The legal system Brazilian law absolutely criminalizes infanticide, but the debate remains alive regarding the possibility of intercultural mediation that allows protecting life without disregard indigenous traditions. Oliveira (2023), when proposing the Doctrine of Protection Plural, offers a relevant theoretical alternative, arguing that the compatibility between cultural practices and universal children's rights is possible, as long as the centrality of intercultural mediation. This debate demonstrates that vulnerability does not is limited to the absence of public policies, but also to the tensions between different systems

normative.

In terms of convergence, all the authors analyzed recognize that the vulnerability of indigenous children in the Amazon results from multiple layers of exclusion, which include poor health, violence, racial discrimination and legal gaps. The divergence, however, arises in the form of confrontation: while some, like Souza et al. (2025), emphasize the strengthening of legislation and supervision, others, like Camargo and Cezar (2023) and Oliveira (2023), defend intercultural solutions that seek to reconcile universality of rights and cultural specificities.

Another recurring point is the identification of gaps in scientific production. Andrade and Santos (2024) and Castro et al. (2024) point out the lack of quantitative studies and public policies that directly address Amazonian indigenous children. UNICEF (2025) reinforces the lack of systematized data in an urban context, which limits the planning effective state actions. This statistical invisibility is, in itself, a form of rights violation, as it prevents the State from acting in a targeted manner.

In summary, the findings in the literature reveal that the vulnerability of children and indigenous adolescents in the Amazon presents multiple facets, being rooted in historical processes of exclusion and intensified by current institutional deficiencies. The addressing this situation requires the implementation of integrated public policies, based on reliable information, which align legal protection devices with intercultural mediation strategies. Thus, the effectiveness of protecting indigenous children will be conditioned by the ability to integrate legal, social and cultural aspects, with a vision of valuing diversity and universally ensuring rights humans.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The discussion developed throughout the article demonstrates that the vulnerability of indigenous children and adolescents in the Amazon is a multifaceted phenomenon, traversed by historical and structural inequalities that remain alive to this day current. The study shows that, despite legal advances in the protection of children and indigenous peoples, the realization of these rights still encounters concrete obstacles that range from from the absence of public policies adapted to local realities to the permanence

of discriminatory and exclusionary practices within the institutional scope.

It was found that indigenous childhood is marked by a double process of invisibility: on the one hand, due to the absence of consistent statistical data that portray their reality in an appropriate manner; on the other hand, due to the lack of public policies that recognize their cultural, linguistic and territorial specificities. This invisibility is not only a consequence of administrative negligence, but also reflects the low priority given to indigenous children within the national political agenda.

The results also showed that the problem is not limited to communities indigenous people in their territories of origin. Children and adolescents displaced to areas urban areas face new forms of exclusion, which are compounded by the loss of ties community members and exposure to situations of exploitation and discrimination. This transition shows that the vulnerability of indigenous children is not a static phenomenon, but reconfigures according to the social and geographical contexts in which these subjects are inserted.

Another fundamental aspect relates to the cultural and legal conflicts surrounding the safeguarding of indigenous life and childhood. The discussion about traditional practices, such as infanticide in certain communities, highlights the urgency of dialogue intercultural that can harmonize respect for cultural diversity with universal safeguard of fundamental rights. This challenge reveals the relevance of develop mediated solutions that prevent both the unilateral imposition of rules regarding the continuation of unacceptable violations.

In terms of future prospects, it is urgent to invest in public policies integrated, articulating education, health, social assistance, and legal protection in a coordinated manner. It is equally essential to strengthen the participation of indigenous communities in the development of these policies, ensuring that they are not imposed from outside within, but built in dialogue with the subjects themselves who need them. In this process, the valorization of cultural identities and the promotion of citizenship must walk together as strategies to overcome exclusion.

Finally, this study reinforces that the defense of indigenous childhood in the Amazon is a ethical, social and legal imperative that transcends the mere application of the law. It requires political commitment, cultural sensitivity and the construction of collective paths for ensure that indigenous children and adolescents can grow up with dignity, health, education and recognition of their identity. Only from this comprehensive approach

it will be possible to move towards a society that, in fact, ensures the rights of all, respecting diversity and promoting social justice.

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