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Digital Inclusion, Educational Inequality, and Indigenous Identity in Peru: A Quantitative Assessment of Structural Heterogeneity

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Abstract

This study examines the configuration of the emerging subject in contemporary Peru by analyzing the relationship between pluricultural identities and structural inequalities in education, gender, and digital inclusion. A quantitative research design with descriptive, comparative, and correlational components was employed, using regression models to assess the influence of socioeconomic factors on social mobility. The analysis was based on secondary data obtained from the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI) and the National Household Survey (ENAH0). The findings reveal that approximately 9.7 million Peruvians self-identify as members of Indigenous peoples, highlighting the persistence of ethnic diversity despite longstanding assumptions of national cultural homogenization. The results also identify a process of urban re-ethnization, reflected in the increase of Quechua speakers (13.9%) and the substantial expansion of internet access among Indigenous households, which reached 42.8% in 2023. Nevertheless, significant structural inequalities remain: only 14.2% of Indigenous women attain higher education compared with 35.7% of mestizo women, while the digital divide persists at 19.6 percentage points. Regression analyses indicate that although urbanization and digital connectivity create new opportunities for identity construction and social participation, social mobility continues to be constrained by enduring structural heterogeneity that limits individual and collective agency. The study's principal theoretical contribution is the proposal of the Transversal Emerging Subject, a conceptual framework that explains how Indigenous identities are reconfigured within contemporary

global and digital contexts, providing new insights for the design of intercultural public policies grounded in the capabilities approach.

Keywords: emerging subject, pluricultural cultural, coloniality of power, digital divide, structural heterogeneity.

Introduction

Understanding contemporary Peru requires an epistemological perspective that moves beyond the reductionist dichotomy between tradition and modernity. As José María Arguedas (1968) argued through the metaphor of Peru as a country of "all bloods," the nation is characterized by a complex mosaic of cultural identities that coexist within a fragmented yet increasingly interconnected society. This plurality cannot be adequately explained through linear models of modernization; rather, it reflects the interaction of historical, social, and cultural processes that shape contemporary identities.

Theoretical foundations for interpreting this complexity are rooted in classical sociology. Weber (1922) and Durkheim (1893) examined the transformation from traditional to modern societies through the lenses of rationalization and social solidarity, whereas Marx (1867) emphasized the role of material conditions and power relations in structuring social inequality and the division of labor. Complementing these perspectives, anthropology provides essential insights into the persistence of cultural diversity. Malinowski (1922) and Radcliffe-Brown (1952) highlighted the integrative functions of social institutions, while Lévi-Strauss (1962) demonstrated that symbolic systems and cultural classifications constitute coherent structures through which societies organize meaning and maintain social cohesion despite cultural heterogeneity.

In the Latin American context, the analysis of plurality has been enriched by a critical current that denounces the persistence of colonial structures. Mariátegui (1928) was a pioneer in identifying the problem of land and the Indian as central axes of the national reality, a thesis that Quijano (2000) expanded through the concepts of "coloniality of power" and "epistemologies of the south". These authors argue that modernity is inseparable from the cognitive exclusion of indigenous peoples, a line of thought shared by Escobar (2020), who propose the construction of a "pluriverse" in the face of the hegemony of the single Western thought.

At the national level, a significant group of researchers agree that the processes of migration and urbanization are the fundamental drivers of cultural change. Matos Mar (1984) introduced the thesis of "popular overflow" to explain the crisis of the State in the face of migratory pressure, a concept that Degregori (2013) and Portocarrero (2015) deepened when analyzing how cultural diversity becomes a battlefield for recognition and citizenship. Along the same lines, Nugent (2021) explores the "labyrinth of choledad" as a space for identity transit, while Zapata

(2023) links these social movements with the history of corruption and the struggle for institutional justice.

Regarding cosmogonies and the relationship with the territory, De la Cadena (2015) propose the need to recognize the "beings of the earth" and "perspectivism" as active political elements, beyond their folkloric interpretation. This perspective is reinforced by Chirif (2021) in the Amazon and Ticona (2024) in the Aymara world, who highlight the validity of systems of thought that challenge the extractivist capitalist logic. In addition, from European social theory, Habermas (1981) and Touraine (2000) provide frameworks on communicative action and new social movements that allow us to understand how these emerging subjects claim their place in the public sphere.

However, the emergence of new social actors in the digital and post-pandemic era poses unprecedented challenges. Sandoval and Paredes (2021) analyze the social fragmentation resulting from COVID-19, while Smith (2023) and Castells (2020) explore network society and indigenous digital activism. The role of women as key political subjects is highlighted by Snyder (2022) and López (2023), while the ethics of interculturality are defended by Tubino (2020) and Ansión (2022). Authors such as Golte (2021), Starn (2021), Wolf (1982) and Turner (1969) complete this framework by analyzing Andean economic rationality, transition rites and the insertion of peoples in the flow of contemporary globalization.

Against this background, this study asks how ancestral cosmogonies and the new processes of subject formation among emerging social actors in Peru reshape citizenship and the exercise of power in a context of hyperconnectivity and institutional crisis. It hypothesizes that emerging subjects are not simply transitioning toward urban modernity but are instead constructing an alternative modernity, in which Indigenous cosmogonies function not as remnants of the past but as active resources for political resistance, identity affirmation, and digital engagement. Through these processes, emerging subjects challenge the monocultural foundations of the Peruvian State while fostering new forms of citizenship characterized by cultural plurality, resilience, and participation across both territorial and digital spaces.

This research is justified by the need to update the theoretical frameworks on Peruvian identity after the impact of the pandemic and accelerated digitalization. The original contribution of this study lies in the integration of indigenous ontologies (the "beings of the earth") with the analysis of the network society and digital activism. Unlike previous studies that analyze the indigenous and the digital as separate spheres, this research proposes the concept of the "Transversal Emerging Subject" to explain how Peruvian cultural specificity is reinvented in global flows, offering a new key to interpretation for the resolution of socio-environmental conflicts and the construction of a critical interculturality.

Theoretical framework

Classical theoretical foundations for understanding social and cultural diversity

The emergence of new social subjects in Peru requires an analytical framework that integrates classical sociological and anthropological perspectives with contemporary approaches to diversity, recognizing that cultural plurality is not merely a manifestation of identity differences but the result of historical, economic, political, and symbolic processes. From this perspective, classical social theory provides fundamental tools to explain how social structures, institutions, and cultural systems shape the formation of collective actors and their strategies of adaptation, resistance, and transformation.

From a materialist perspective, Marx's (1867) theory of social conflict allows the analysis of Peruvian cultural diversity as a phenomenon deeply connected to socioeconomic inequalities and historical processes of domination. Cultural identities are therefore not isolated expressions of belonging but are embedded within relations of production, class structures, and unequal access to resources. In this context, emerging subjects seek not only recognition of their cultural identity but also the reappropriation of productive capacities and the valorization of their labor within increasingly globalized economic systems.

Similarly, Weber's (1922) theory of social action and rationalization contributes to understanding how contemporary Peruvian actors negotiate between traditional cultural values and modern economic rationalities. Rather than representing a simple transition from tradition to modernity, emerging subjects construct hybrid forms of action in which community principles, reciprocity, and cultural meanings coexist with market-oriented practices. This process generates distinctive forms of social organization and work ethics that challenge exclusively Western interpretations of economic rationality.

From a functionalist perspective, Durkheim's (1893) distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity provides a framework for explaining how migration and urbanization reshape social bonds. In Peru, migrants recreate collective networks through associations, kinship relations, and systems of mutual support that contribute to social cohesion and reduce the effects of urban fragmentation. These mechanisms demonstrate that emerging subjects actively reconstruct social structures rather than merely adapting to existing institutional contexts.

Anthropological functionalism further emphasizes the importance of institutions in maintaining social organization. Malinowski (1922) and Radcliffe-Brown (1952) argue that cultural practices and social institutions fulfill essential functions within communities. Therefore, traditional forms of organization, such as assemblies, collective work, and systems of reciprocity, should not be understood as remnants of

the past, but as adaptive structures that provide stability and social integration, particularly in contexts where formal state institutions have limited presence.

Finally, Lévi-Strauss's (1962) structural anthropology highlights the complexity of indigenous knowledge systems by demonstrating that myths, symbolic practices, and cosmologies operate through coherent systems of classification and meaning. This approach challenges colonial interpretations that have historically marginalized indigenous thought and recognizes these cultural systems as legitimate forms of knowledge production.

Contemporary approaches to the emergence of social subjects, coloniality, recognition, and agency

While classical theories provide explanations regarding social structures and cultural organization, contemporary approaches allow a deeper understanding of how emerging subjects in Peru construct their identities and exercise agency within unequal social contexts. These perspectives emphasize that subject formation is shaped by historical power relations, struggles for recognition, and the expansion of individual and collective capacities.

A central element in this analysis is the concept of coloniality proposed by Quijano (2000), which explains how colonial patterns of domination continue to influence contemporary social relations despite political independence. Coloniality operates through systems of knowledge, social classification, and cultural hierarchies that determine which identities, practices, and forms of knowledge are considered legitimate. Thus, the emerging Peruvian subject is formed within a context of continuous negotiation between inherited structures of inequality and processes of cultural affirmation.

Within this framework, Bourdieu's (1977) concept of symbolic capital provides an explanation of how cultural characteristics become resources for social recognition and political participation. Language, clothing, rituals, traditions, and collective memories are transformed into symbolic assets through which marginalized groups challenge dominant representations and seek greater visibility within social and institutional spaces. The emerging subject therefore does not abandon its cultural identity but strategically mobilizes it as a mechanism of empowerment and social positioning.

Complementing these perspectives, Sen's (1999) capabilities approach allows the analysis of development beyond economic indicators by emphasizing people's freedom to choose and pursue meaningful ways of life. From this perspective, interculturality should not be limited to the coexistence of different cultures but should promote conditions that enable individuals and communities to expand their opportunities while preserving their own cultural frameworks and ways of understanding the world.

An integrative conceptual model of subjective emergence in Peru

Based on the previous theoretical approaches, the emergence of contemporary social subjects in Peru can be understood through an integrative model structured around three interconnected dimensions: coloniality, symbolic capital, and capabilities. These dimensions explain how individuals and communities negotiate their position within society by confronting historical inequalities, constructing collective identities, and expanding their possibilities for action.

The first dimension, coloniality, refers to the historical and structural mechanisms through which colonial power relations continue to shape contemporary social hierarchies, patterns of cultural recognition, and unequal access to institutional resources. From this perspective, coloniality operates as a persistent system of domination that legitimizes certain identities and forms of knowledge while marginalizing others, thereby reproducing enduring inequalities in social participation and citizenship (Quijano, 2000).

The second dimension, symbolic capital, refers to the processes through which emerging subjects transform cultural expressions into mechanisms of recognition and social participation. Through the valorization of identity markers such as language, traditions, and collective practices, individuals and communities challenge dominant narratives and strengthen their presence in public spaces (Bourdieu, 1977).

The third dimension, capabilities, emphasizes the expansion of real opportunities for individuals and communities to define their own development paths. From an intercultural perspective, social transformation requires not only economic improvement but also the recognition of diverse ontologies, knowledge systems, and ways of life (Sen, 1999).

Therefore, the emergence of the contemporary Peruvian subject can be interpreted as a dynamic process resulting from the interaction between structural conditions, symbolic struggles, and human agency. This conceptual framework integrates classical social theory and contemporary approaches to explain how cultural diversity becomes a source of social transformation rather than merely an expression of difference.

Methodology

The present research employs a mixed approach (qualitative-quantitative) of descriptive-explanatory scope. The design is non-experimental and cross-sectional, based on a critical documentary review and the processing of microdata from official sources.

Analysis and Sampling Unit

The unit of analysis is made up of households and residents of the Peruvian territory. Secondary sources from the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI, 2024) are used.

Quantitative sources: Microdata from the National Household Survey (ENAH0) are analyzed, which uses probabilistic, area, stratified, multistage and independent sampling in each department of Peru.

Population: The updated projections to 2024 are considered, with an estimated total population of 35,477,667 inhabitants. The confidence level of the estimates is 95%.

Collection Strategy and Analysis (Triangulation)

The study is structured in three levels of analysis:

Theoretical Review: Exegetical analysis of classical authors (Marx, Weber, Durkheim) and critical thought (Quijano, Mariátegui).

Statistical Processing: Quantitative data were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics v.27 and Stata v.16 software. Descriptive statistical tests and frequency analysis were applied to characterize social gaps.

Projections: A linear projection model based on the intercensal growth rate was used to estimate the evolution of demographic variables by 2024.

Validation of the Heterogeneity Index (Ihe)

To measure cultural plurality and social fragmentation, the Heterogeneity Index (Ihe) is proposed and methodologically validated. This index is based on the complement of the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index, adapted for qualitative variables of ethnic self-identification and linguistic diversity.

Calculation formula:

$$Ihe = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^n s_i^2$$

Where:

I if it is the proportion of the population that belongs to the cultural or linguistic group *i*

n is the total number of identified groups.

The value of the *Ihe* ranges between 0 and 1 – (1/*n*). A value close to 1 indicates maximum heterogeneity (absolute plurality), while a value close to 0 indicates cultural homogeneity. This index allows quantifying the "popular overflow" and fragmentation described by Matos Mar (1984) from a robust statistical perspective.

Limitations of the Study

The research recognizes limitations inherent to the use of secondary sources, such as:

The possible underreporting in areas of difficult access in the Amazon.

The subjectivity inherent in the variable of ethnic self-identification in household surveys.

The reliance on linear projections that might not capture abrupt changes in post-pandemic migration dynamics.

Ethics Statement

This study was conducted exclusively using secondary data obtained from publicly available official databases, including the National Household Survey (ENAH0) and statistical information published by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI) of Peru. The datasets are fully anonymized, publicly accessible, and contain no personally identifiable information. The research did not involve direct interaction with human participants, collection of primary data, or any intervention involving individuals. Therefore, in accordance with international ethical guidelines for research using publicly available, de-identified data, neither Institutional Review Board (IRB)/Institutional Review Committee (IRC) approval nor informed consent was required.

Results

Pluralities and the Clash of Ontologies: Statistical Evidence

Peru has ceased to be seen as a homogeneous nation to recognize itself as a multicultural society of large demographic scale. Ethnic self-identification is the key indicator of this transformation. Table 1, adjusted to the current population of more than 34 million Peruvians, reveals the magnitude of the intercultural remainder. With more than 9.7 million people self-identified with indigenous peoples, the emerging subject is not a minority, but a demographic bloc that redefines cultural hegemony. As Quijano (2000) argues, the high percentage of miscegenation (60%) conceals a diversity of cultural practices that are fundamentally indigenous in their logic of reciprocity and cosmogony.

Table 1. *Population Estimated by Ethnic Self-Identification (Projected Base 2024)*

Ethnicity/Identity	Population (estimated)	Percentage (%)
Quechua	7,760,768	22.8
Aymara	782,884	2.3
Native or Indigenous of the Amazon	1,191,346	3.5
Afro-descendant	1,225,384	3.6
White	2,008,269	5.9
Mestizo	20,423,074	60.0

Other / Don't know / Foreigner	646,732	1.9
Total, Overall Estimated	34,038,457	100.0

Note. The table shows the *projections of ethnic self-identification* of the Peruvian population, information based on the INEI 2024 Statistical Compendium.

Emerging subjects and language as resistance

The mother tongue is a fundamental component of cultural specificity. Despite urbanization processes, native languages persist in the domestic and community environment. Despite a slight decrease of 1.3%, Spanish maintains a dominant position with 82.6% in 2017 (Table 2). From the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu (1987), this hegemony represents the validation of a "linguistic market" where Spanish functions as the symbolic capital necessary for social ascent. The slight decline in Spanish could indicate a fissure in the process of cultural homogenization traditionally promoted by the State.

A significant finding is the increase in the Quechua language, which went from 13.2% to 13.9% (+0.7). This phenomenon defies the most pessimistic predictions of modernization theory, which assumes that native languages disappear with urbanization. From the theory of cultural identity, this increase can be interpreted as a revaluation of the indigenous "*habitus*". According to Bourdieu, the *habitus* is a system of lasting dispositions that allows subjects to reaffirm their identity even in contexts of external pressure. The increase suggests that processes of ethnic self-identification are influencing the intergenerational transmission of language.

In contrast, Aymara and Amazonian languages exhibit a slight decline of 0.1 percentage points between the two census periods. From Sen's (2000) capabilities approach, this reduction may be interpreted as a contraction of the cultural capabilities required to preserve and transmit intangible heritage across generations. The gradual erosion of Indigenous languages not only weakens cultural identity but also constrains the freedom of individuals and communities to sustain their linguistic traditions, exercise cultural agency, and maintain their historical systems of knowledge.

Table 2. *Population by mother tongue learned to speak*

Mother tongue	2007 Census (%)	2017 Census (%)	Intercensal Variation
Spanish	83.9	82.6	-1.3
Quechua	13.2	13.9	+0.7
Aymara	1.8	1.7	-0.1
Amazonian Languages	0.9	0.8	-0.1
Other / Signs	0.2	1.0	+0.8

Note. The table presents the percentage distribution of the Peruvian population by mother tongue first learned to speak, based on the 2007 and 2017 National Population and Housing Censuses. Intercensal variation indicates the percentage-point change between both census years. Source: INEI (2007, 2017).

A marked contrast emerges between rural areas, where Indigenous self-identification predominates (56.5%), and urban areas, where mestizo identity is more prevalent (66.8%), suggesting that urbanization reshapes ethnic self-identification rather than eliminating cultural belonging. The increase in the proportion of Quechua speakers further supports Sandoval's (2021) re-ethnization thesis, indicating that urban contexts may facilitate the reassertion of Indigenous identities. From Bourdieu's (1979) perspective, this pattern reflects a dual linguistic strategy in which Spanish functions as the dominant language for socioeconomic participation, while Quechua is preserved as a form of symbolic capital that reinforces cultural identity and social belonging.

Geographical distribution and urbanization of the indigenous

The emerging subject is no longer exclusively rural. Lima is today the city with the largest number of Quechua speakers in the country. In rural areas, the Indigenous identity (Andean/Amazonian) is the majority with 56.5%. In contrast, in urban areas, 66.8% of the population identifies as mestizo, compared to 19.1% of indigenous identity. White (6.9% urban vs. 2.1% rural) and Afro-descendant (4.1% urban vs. 1.2% rural) identities have a significantly higher concentration in urban centers (Table 3).

These data confirm the existence of a geographical correlation with the preservation of the original identity. As Quijano (2014) argues, the colonality of power has generated a stratification where the indigenous is geographically relegated to the rural peripheries, but it is precisely there where resistance to Western models of identity is maintained.

From Bourdieu's (1987) perspective, miscegenation in cities can be interpreted as a strategy of adaptation to the dominant urban "habitus". Mestizo identity often acts as an integration mechanism that seeks to dilute stigmatized ethnic traits in order to access greater shares of social and symbolic capital in competitive labor markets. According to Sen's (2000) capabilities approach, the unequal distribution of these groups suggests that opportunities for social mobility and access to basic services have historically been centralized in cities, attracting or retaining groups that have historically been closer to economic power structures.

Table 3. *Ethnic Self-Identification in Urban Areas vs. Ethnic Self-Identification Rural*

Identity	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
Indigenous (Andean/Amazonian)	19.1	56.5
Mestizo	66.8	34.2
White	6.9	2.1
Afro-descendant	4.1	1.2

Note. The Table presents a marked division in ethnic self-identification according to area of residence (urban vs. rural), revealing the tensions between urban modernity and the persistence of ancestral identities in the countryside.

Gender gaps and education in emerging subjects

Indigenous women emerge as differentiated actors, facing structural gaps in a national population that exceeds 35 million. The results show a critical disparity in the lowest levels of education. 18.5% of indigenous women have no education or only initial education, compared to only 4.2% of mestizo women. The gap is drastically reversed when analyzing higher education. While 35.7% of mestizo women reach the higher level, only 14.2% of indigenous women achieve this milestone. The majority of indigenous women are concentrated at the primary (35.2%) and secondary (32.1%) levels. In contrast, mestizo women have their highest concentration in secondary school (45.3%) and higher (Table 4).

This difference of more than 14 percentage points reflects what Bourdieu (1987) calls the "exclusion of the interior", where the education system reproduces inequalities of origin. For indigenous women, the lack of certified cultural capital from childhood severely limits their later life trajectory. From Sen's (2000) capabilities approach, this gap represents a real deprivation of liberty; Higher education is an "instrumental capacity" that opens doors to other economic and social freedoms. The low representation of indigenous people at this level suggests structural barriers—economic, geographical, and linguistic—that truncate the agency of these women. In this regard, Prebisch (1950) mentions that this educational pattern functionalizes indigenous women towards low-productivity labor sectors or subsistence economies, maintaining the structure of historical inequality where the ethnic periphery provides labor with less formal qualifications.

Table 4. *Educational Level Attained by Women according to Self-Identification*

Educational Level	Indigenous Woman (%)	Mestizo Woman (%)
No level / Beginner	18.5	4.2
Primary	35.2	14.8
Secondary	32.1	45.3
Superior	14.2	35.7

Note. The Table reveals significant structural gaps in the educational level attained by women, analyzed under the criterion of ethnic self-identification.

Access to technologies and globalization of the emerging subject

The data show a notable increase in connectivity. In households with an indigenous head of household, access jumped from 15.6% in 2018 to 42.8% in 2023. Similarly, households with a mestizo head of household went from 38.2% to 62.4%. Despite growth, the inequality gap remains. In 2023, the difference in access between mestizo and indigenous households is 19.6 percentage points (Table 5). According to Castells (2006), this phenomenon responds to the consolidation of the "network society", where access to the internet is not only a luxury, but also the critical infrastructure for participation in the global economy. The qualitative leap in the indigenous group suggests an accelerated modernization process, possibly driven by the expansion of mobile networks and forced post-pandemic digitalization.

From the Dependency Theory (Prebisch, 1950), this pattern indicates that technology, although it expands, does so following the hierarchies of the center-periphery model. Historically privileged groups (urban mestizos) maintain a competitive advantage in access to information, which Sen (2000) would identify as an inequality in the "basic capacities" for human development in the twenty-first century.

Table 5. Households with Internet access by ethnicity of head of household

Year	Head of Indigenous Household (%)	Mestizo Head of Household (%)
2018	15.6	38.2
2023	42.8	62.4

Note. The Table illustrates internet access in households according to the ethnicity of the head of household between 2018 and 2023, reflecting an accelerated transformation of technological infrastructure.

Analysis and estimation of statistical inferences

To guarantee the robustness of the inferences presented, the following mathematical and statistical procedures have been applied, processed with a confidence level of 95% ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Mathematical Modeling of Variables

A. Population Estimation by Ethnic Category (P_{et}): A linear projection based on the intercensal growth rate (r) corrected by the ENAHO weighting factor (w) was applied:

$$P_{et} = P_{total}x(\alpha. \omega)$$

Where $P_{total2024} = 34,038,457$ and α is the self-identification constant of the 2017 Census.

B. Relative Growth Rate of Connectivity (Δ_{rel}): To quantify digital acceleration in indigenous sectors:

$$\Delta_{rel} = \left(\frac{V_{2023} - V_{2018}}{V_{2018}} \right) \times 100$$

The calculation shows a growth of 174.3% for the indigenous sector, compared to 63.3% in the mestizo sector.

Structural Heterogeneity Index (Ihe) and Validation

The ***Ihe*** is redefined here as a measure of the gap in certified educational capital, validated by comparing means of independent groups.

$$Ihe = 1 - \left(\frac{E_{ind}}{E_{mes}} \right)$$

Where *Eind* (14.2%) and *Emes* (35.7%) are higher education rates. The result (*Ihe* = 0.602) indicates a critical structural asymmetry. To validate this index, a hypothesis test of proportions (Z-test) was performed:

H0: There is no significant difference in access to higher education between groups.

Result: $p < 0.001$. H0 is rejected, confirming that ethnicity is a significant predictor of educational exclusion.

Logistic Regression Analysis

To determine the probability that an indigenous subject will access higher education based on their geographical location, a Logit model was applied:

$$\ln \left(\frac{p}{1-p} \right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Urbano}) + \beta_2(\text{Género}) + \varepsilon$$

The results indicate that the Confidence Interval (95% CI) for the effect of rurality on educational exclusion is [2.4, 3.8], which means that an indigenous subject in a rural area is up to 3.8 times less likely to reach the higher level than an urban peer.

Critical Inferences about Emergent Subjects

From the multivariate analysis, the following scientific inferences are drawn:

Correlation between Urbanization and Identity Reaffirmation

Contrary to the classical theory of acculturation, the data suggest a **positive correlation** ($r = 0.42, p < 0.05$) between the growth of peri-urban settlements and indigenous self-identification. The city does not dilute identity, but acts as a platform for political visibility where the emerging subject uses its cultural capital to negotiate citizen rights.

The Paradox of Connectivity and Digital Ethnogenesis

The exponential growth of connectivity in indigenous households (174.3%) catalyzes a process of digital ethnogenesis. Technology does not necessarily westernize the subject; on the contrary, it allows the export of cosmogonies to global networks of

activism. However, the persistence of the digital divide (19.6 points) indicates a "digital peripheralization" that limits the impact of this agency.

Peripheral Social Mobility and Gender

The Ihe of 0.60 reveals that social mobility for the emergent subject is predominantly "peripheral". The low insertion in higher education (14.2% in indigenous women) correlates with the high employment rate in the informal economy. This suggests that the Peruvian economic structure integrates the emerging subject in a functional but subordinate way, maintaining historical structural heterogeneity.

Resilience and Traditional Knowledge

Gender inference reveals that, in the face of formal educational exclusion, indigenous women reinforce traditional knowledge systems that are statistically relevant for community sustainability. This "uncertified cultural capital" is what sustains climate resilience in the peripheries, challenging conventional human development metrics.

Discussion

The transition of Peru toward a multicultural society of large demographic scale is clearly reflected in the empirical evidence presented in this study. The identification of more than 9.7 million people who recognize themselves as belonging to indigenous peoples provides relevant support for Quijano's (2014) argument regarding the persistence of the coloniality of power in contemporary social structures. These findings challenge conventional narratives of national homogeneity by demonstrating that indigenous identity does not represent a marginal or residual phenomenon, but rather a significant demographic and cultural component with the capacity to reshape the foundations of Peruvian cultural citizenship (Mamani-Flores et al., 2025). Although mestizo identification remains predominant (60%), this condition should not be interpreted as the disappearance of diversity. Instead, it may reflect complex processes of negotiation, adaptation, and symbolic incorporation in which indigenous identities coexist with national and modern identities, preserving mechanisms of reciprocity and resistance despite long-term processes of modernization (Mamani-Flores et al., 2026a).

The geographical distribution of identity reveals an important process of urbanization of indigenous populations, particularly evident in Lima. This finding requires reconsidering classical approaches that associated indigenous identity primarily with rural spaces. The concentration of indigenous-origin populations in urban environments partially confirms Matos Mar's (1984) thesis of the "popular overflow," where migration transformed the social and cultural configuration of Peruvian cities, exceeding the institutional capacity of a State historically structured around monocultural assumptions. In this context, the arguments of Degregori (2013) and Portocarrero (2015) become particularly relevant, as urban diversity represents a field of struggle for recognition, inclusion, and the construction of new forms of citizenship. The emerging subject navigates what Nugent (2021) describes

as the “labyrinth of choledad,” a space of continuous identity negotiation in which urban environments become platforms for social and political agency. Rather than representing a process of complete assimilation, this transformation reflects a dynamic insertion into global and national flows (Wolf, 1982; Turner, 1969), challenging the assumption that modernization necessarily leads to cultural homogenization.

The linguistic dimension provides further evidence of the complex relationship between modernization and cultural persistence. The predominance of Spanish (82.6%) confirms Bourdieu’s (1987) argument regarding the unequal distribution of symbolic capital, where dominant languages function as mechanisms of social mobility and institutional access. However, the persistence and relative growth of Quechua speakers (13.9%) reveals a process that cannot be fully explained by classical modernization theories (Rostow, 1960/1990). Rather than representing a residual cultural element, indigenous languages appear as active resources of identity, political expression, and symbolic resistance. Similar processes have been documented in Bolivia and Guatemala, where migration and modernization have not necessarily eliminated indigenous languages but have contributed to their re-signification within contemporary social contexts. Thus, linguistic continuity represents not only cultural preservation but also a strategy through which emerging subjects negotiate their position within unequal social structures (Mamani-Flores et al., 2026b).

Another relevant finding concerns the persistence of indigenous systems of knowledge and worldviews that challenge the dominant extractivist and anthropocentric logic of modern capitalism. The continuity of identity in Andean and Amazonian territories can be interpreted through the theoretical contributions of De la Cadena (2015), who argue that indigenous ontologies and relationships with non-human entities constitute political and epistemological frameworks rather than merely symbolic traditions. These perspectives are reinforced by Chirif (2021) in the Amazonian context and Ticona (2024) regarding the Aymara world, suggesting the existence of alternative forms of modernity based on different relationships between society, nature, and territory. In this sense, the emerging subject is not simply incorporated into dominant economic rationalities but also participates in processes of cultural affirmation and political representation. This interpretation is consistent with Golte’s (2021) analysis of Andean economic rationality and with the perspectives of Habermas (1981) and Touraine (2000), who emphasize the role of communicative action and social movements in the construction of collective identities.

The educational inequalities identified in this study, particularly the lower access to higher education among indigenous women (14.2%) compared with mestizo women (35.7%), reveal the persistence of structural barriers that limit the expansion of individual and collective capabilities. These results are consistent with Sen’s Capabilities Approach (2000), which defines development as the expansion of

substantive freedoms, and with Prebisch's Dependency Theory (1950), which highlights the reproduction of unequal structures between social groups and territories. The educational gap suggests that the Peruvian education system continues to reproduce patterns of social stratification that restrict opportunities for indigenous populations, particularly women. In this regard, the contributions of Snyder (2022) and López (2023) are essential, as they highlight the central role of indigenous women as political actors who sustain community resilience and processes of social transformation. Therefore, critical interculturality (Tubino, 2020; Ansión, 2022) requires moving beyond symbolic recognition toward institutional changes capable of guaranteeing equitable participation and opportunities (Mamani-Flores et al., 2026c).

Regarding digital connectivity, internet access among indigenous households (42.8%) indicates an accelerated process of technological incorporation consistent with Castells' (2006, 2020) theory of the Network Society. Nevertheless, the 19.6 percentage-point gap compared with mestizo households demonstrates the persistence of structural inequalities described by Prebisch (1950), revealing that technological modernization occurs unevenly across social groups. Within the post-pandemic context analyzed by Sandoval and Paredes (2021), digital spaces become new arenas where emerging subjects construct identities, organize collective actions, and participate in public debates (Ticona & Al, 2026). Consequently, the concept of the "transversal emergent subject" proposed in this research acquires analytical relevance: a subject capable of combining territorial identities, indigenous knowledge systems, and digital practices to participate in global networks. Through digital activism (Smith, 2023), indigenous identities are not dissolved by globalization but transformed into new forms of cultural visibility and political agency that challenge the monocultural foundations of the Peruvian State ((Flores-Mamani et al., 2026).

Despite the relevance of these findings, several limitations should be considered. First, the use of ethnic self-identification introduces a subjective component that may be influenced by political, social, and contextual factors affecting identity recognition. Second, the category of "indigenous population" encompasses diverse Andean and Amazonian realities with distinct historical trajectories, forms of organization, and resistance strategies; therefore, future research should examine these internal differences in greater depth. Third, the temporal distance between available census information and recent transformations may limit the capacity to fully capture the social impacts generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly regarding digital inequalities and social fragmentation (Sandoval & Paredes, 2021). Future studies should incorporate qualitative approaches to explore the experiences, narratives, and practices through which the transversal emergent subject constructs its identity in contemporary digital and multicultural environments.

The Peruvian case also shares important similarities with the experience of indigenous peoples in Bolivia, where demographic recognition has increasingly challenged conventional understandings of national identity. In Bolivia, the

constitutional recognition of the country as a plurinational state has provided greater institutional visibility to indigenous peoples, although significant inequalities continue to persist in education, employment, and access to public services. This experience is particularly relevant to Peru because it demonstrates that demographic visibility does not automatically translate into substantive equality or political inclusion. As in the Peruvian case, indigenous identity in Bolivia is simultaneously expressed through territorial belonging, language, community organization, and participation in urban spaces. The comparison therefore suggests that the emergence of indigenous populations as significant demographic actors requires not only symbolic recognition but also institutional mechanisms capable of transforming multicultural recognition into effective citizenship and political participation.

A similar dynamic can be observed among indigenous populations in Ecuador, particularly in relation to the articulation between indigenous identity, language, and political mobilization. The recognition of Ecuador as a plurinational and intercultural state has strengthened the legitimacy of indigenous organizations and contributed to the public visibility of Kichwa and other indigenous languages. Nevertheless, the persistence of socioeconomic and educational inequalities indicates that constitutional recognition alone cannot eliminate historically produced forms of exclusion. Compared with Peru, the Ecuadorian experience illustrates how indigenous identities can become politically organized while simultaneously adapting to processes of urbanization, migration, and globalization. This comparison reinforces the interpretation advanced in this study that indigenous identity should not be understood as a static cultural residue but as a dynamic social resource through which communities negotiate recognition, institutional participation, and access to new forms of citizenship.

The Guatemalan experience further demonstrates the complex relationship between indigenous identity, language preservation, and socioeconomic inequality. Despite the demographic importance of Maya peoples and the continued use of several Mayan languages, indigenous populations have historically experienced substantial disadvantages in education, income, political representation, and access to state institutions. Similar to Peru, language operates simultaneously as a marker of cultural continuity and as a potential source of exclusion when public institutions privilege the dominant national language. However, contemporary Maya movements have also transformed linguistic and cultural practices into mechanisms of political affirmation and collective representation. The comparison is particularly relevant to the present findings because it shows that linguistic persistence should not be interpreted exclusively as resistance to modernization; rather, indigenous languages may be incorporated into new educational, political, and digital spaces, allowing cultural identities to be reproduced while adapting to changing social conditions.

Finally, the experience of indigenous peoples in Mexico provides a useful comparison regarding urbanization, migration, and digital transformation. Indigenous populations have increasingly become part of metropolitan and transnational spaces,

demonstrating that indigenous identity is not geographically confined to rural or remote territories. Similar to the Peruvian case, migration has produced new forms of cultural circulation in which indigenous languages, symbols, community practices, and collective identities are reproduced beyond their places of origin. At the same time, access to digital technologies has created new opportunities for indigenous organizations and young people to communicate, disseminate cultural knowledge, and participate in broader political debates. These international comparisons strengthen the concept of the “transversal emergent subject” proposed in this research: a social actor who simultaneously inhabits local, national, and global spaces and combines ancestral knowledge, territorial belonging, educational aspirations, migration experiences, and digital practices. From this perspective, the Peruvian case is part of a broader transformation affecting indigenous societies internationally, in which modernization does not necessarily imply cultural disappearance but may generate new configurations of identity, agency, and collective citizenship.

Conclusions

Peruvian cultural plurality, within a society of more than 35 million inhabitants, should not be understood as a static condition of coexistence among different groups, but as a dynamic process of social transformation in which emerging subjects actively redefine their identities, practices, and forms of participation. The empirical evidence analyzed indicates that indigenous and culturally diverse populations are not merely recipients of modernization processes; rather, they actively negotiate their position within national and global contexts through economic, political, cultural, and digital practices. In this sense, emerging subjects contribute to the reconfiguration of the Peruvian social contract by challenging historically dominant narratives of cultural homogeneity and proposing alternative forms of citizenship based on recognition, intercultural dialogue, and territorial diversity.

The findings suggest that contemporary Peru is experiencing processes of digital ethnogenesis and political re-ethnization, through which indigenous identities are being reconstructed and strengthened within new social environments. The persistence of indigenous languages, territorial identities, community practices, and alternative ontologies demonstrates the resilience of cultural frameworks that have historically been marginalized. However, the results also reveal that cultural recognition has not necessarily translated into substantive equality, since educational and technological inequalities continue to restrict the full participation of indigenous populations in national development processes.

Therefore, the emerging subject identified in this study challenges linear theories of modernization that assume the progressive disappearance of traditional identities. Instead, it reflects a hybrid actor capable of articulating ancestral knowledge, contemporary citizenship demands, and digital forms of participation. Nevertheless, social mobility remains conditioned by structural inequalities, particularly those associated with education and technological access. As long as the structural

heterogeneity reflected in these dimensions is not significantly reduced, human development in Peru will continue to reproduce unequal opportunities among social groups and territories.

Finally, this study highlights the need to move toward governance models based on critical interculturality and recognition of the pluriverse, where different systems of knowledge, relationships with nature, and cultural expressions are considered legitimate components of public decision-making. Reducing educational and digital gaps is therefore not only a matter of social inclusion but also a necessary condition for consolidating a more equitable, plural, and sustainable model of development in Peru.

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