

Educational Policies During the Covid-19 Pandemic and their Relationship with the Quality of Teaching in the City of Arequipa

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ABSTRACT: The COVID-19 pandemic drastically transformed educational systems, forcing governments and institutions to implement emergency policies and adapt to virtual environments, raising questions about their impact on educational quality. The main objective of this article was to analyze the educational policies implemented during the pandemic and their relationship with the quality of teaching in the city of Arequipa. The study employed a qualitative approach and a causal design, focusing on events resulting from the pandemic and the factors that affected the educational process. The population consisted of 1,400 secondary-level students (over 11 years old), and the sample included 302 participants. A scientific methodology was applied to describe and analyze the conclusions of the phenomenon. The results show that 51.4% of students reached a regular level of educational quality, while 24.2% achieved a low level. These outcomes were based on the use of communication tools implemented during the pandemic. Furthermore, a correlation of $r = 0.625$ was identified between educational policies and teaching quality, representing a moderate relationship. In conclusion, although the implemented educational measures allowed for some continuity in the learning process, limitations and gaps persist that must be addressed to improve the quality of education in similar contexts.

KEYWORDS: Educational policies; Teaching quality; Equity; Pandemic; Virtual learning.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in the development and progress of both individuals and society as a whole. However, there are often limitations, as many students do not keep up with the same pace of learning as their peers due to unequal access to education or the negative impact of COVID-19. This situation has two important implications: if not addressed properly, widespread school closures at various levels can lead to school dropouts, increased child labour, greater inequality, and other social issues. Therefore, in times of public health crises, it is essential for the government to strengthen digital and virtual resources to ensure quality education and help students reach the goals set for each educational level, while also implementing the necessary policies and institutional measures promptly.

In 2020, the Arequipa region had an estimated population of 1,497,438 people, of whom about 28% were between 0 and 17 years

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old — the typical school-age group. According to an educational census of the Arequipa Department, there were 347,528 students enrolled from preschool to secondary level in both public and private schools under Regular Basic Education, Special Education, and Alternative Education programs. Of these, 124,540 students attended public preschool and primary schools in urban areas, while 24,200 were in rural areas. Additionally, 1,000 students were enrolled in special education programs, supported by 212 special education teachers and 6,980 regular basic education teachers.

According to a 2020 UNESCO report on education during the COVID-19 pandemic, countries in the region responded to the crisis by suspending in-person classes at all levels and implementing virtual distance learning through various platforms and formats. This included online learning strategies and the mobilization and support of teachers and communities.

Similarly, the Ombudsman's Office (2020) highlighted the challenges faced by public and private education during the pandemic in its report "Disadvantages of Private and Public Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Accessibility, Quality of Distance Education, and Health Issues." The report emphasized the obligation to guarantee the right to education and to ensure its availability, accessibility, adaptability, and quality. To address this, the Ministry of Education introduced guidelines for virtual education, defining the responsibilities of the involved institutions and the principles that should guide this process, supported by a clear regulatory framework and proper educational services.

LIMITATIONS OF DISTANCE EDUCATION



Given these limitations, detailed evaluation guidelines should be applied to carry out corrective actions and improve the situation.

The National Strategy "Aprendo en Casa"

"Aprendo en Casa" is a program broadcast on national television, implemented by MINEDU under the principles of free and universal access. It is mainly directed at students from different educational levels, including Special Basic Education, Regular Basic Education, and Alternative Education. Its goal was to ensure the continuity of learning during the 2020 school year, to strengthen the competencies established in the National Curriculum, and to safeguard the socio-emotional and health well-being of students and the educational community in general in the context of COVID-19 pandemic (Ministerial Resolution No. 160, 2020).

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Similarly, the Policy to Close the Digital Divide is a measure implemented by the Ministry of Education with the aim of ensuring the continuity of Regular Basic Education services. This policy focuses on various schools and seeks to guarantee quality education for primary and secondary students in rural areas, as well as for those in urban areas who fall within the first and second quintiles of poverty, according to targeted criteria (MINEDU, 2020).

Education is one of the key factors that enables the highest levels of human and societal development. This process is essential in all areas of social life and has always been fundamental for progress; however, it has gained even greater importance today, as it undergoes significant changes driven by rapid scientific and technological advancements. At present, many students have a limited educational background or lack the means to keep up with the progress of their classmates due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has negatively impacted their learning process and poses a threat to overall educational development.

The COVID-19 pandemic shortened mandatory social distances according to national guidelines, as the virus posed a serious threat to the health and lives of the entire population, especially vulnerable and immunosuppressed groups. It also had a negative impact on the workforce, production systems, the national economy, families, and the ways people interact with the outside world.

It is important to note that the virus continues to affect the education sector. For this reason, the Ombudsman's Office highlights the State's responsibilities in guaranteeing rights such as accessibility, inclusivity, quality, availability, and adaptability of information. To meet these responsibilities, the Ministry of Education (MINEDU) must clearly define the distance learning guidelines, regulatory framework, and principles that govern education at all levels.

To do so, it is essential to consider all interconnected elements, whether higher or basic education, provided by public or private institutions offering various courses. This approach must respect all aspects of the right to education and the quality of educational services provided by the State, as well as ensure that the educational content supports the holistic development of individuals. This concept is reflected in the Institutional Court Law, which seeks to ensure that education in Peru fully fosters human development in line with constitutional objectives.

The right to education, recognized under international human rights law and the national constitutional framework, must be protected and upheld during the Covid-19 national emergency. Given the convenience and urgency of this right, the emergency situation risks undermining human rights and exacerbating the vulnerability of many people. In this context, nations are obligated to guarantee accessible, quality education to overcome exclusion, poverty, and inequality. In response to the pandemic and social challenges, Peru aims to halt the spread of the virus while establishing an accessible and compulsory social education system.

Similarly, the initial phase of this process involves the State guaranteeing the necessary resources and means for virtual distance education during the Covid-19 emergency. This includes ensuring universal access, with endorsement from all levels of government. Educational content must align with the national basic education plans and be tailored to the specific needs of vulnerable students, including indigenous peoples, those with disabilities, and those in remote areas. Furthermore, the implementation of guidelines and public policies must secure educational services that improve student learning outcomes. This requires strong technical and political leadership from MINEDU to oversee and inspect policy implementation.

Education during the COVID-19 emergency must provide psychological, physical, protective, cognitive, and social support to ensure quality learning across all educational levels. Both teachers and students need to be in safe environments that minimize

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infection risk. Teaching and learning opportunities should be considered creative, positive, and sustainable responses to school closures caused by the pandemic. However, it must be acknowledged that maintaining continuity in education during this period is a complex and challenging task.

Permanent education systems have specific strategies and responses for delivering distance education, which involves a set of guidelines and tools enabling the continuation of learning from home using virtual resources. These strategies are based on educational cultural activities and official curricula. Other institutions provide timely training and utilize existing digital infrastructure so that the broader educational community can achieve the goals set by the National Curriculum. Developing digital skills and competencies among teachers and students is crucial to ensure access to diverse resources, direct communication lines, and educational support through virtual platforms (Cobo and Hawkins, 2020).

Recent data emphasize the importance of teacher participation in research and quality evaluation of educational media and digital platforms, as well as their proficiency with these tools to deliver quality education. A meta-analysis study found that teachers' use of real-world technologies and methods leads to increased student engagement and, consequently, higher learning outcomes (Chauhan, 2017).

In view of this, Law No. 28044, the General Education Law (LGE), details the general guidelines to be implemented by the education system, determining the principles and goals that govern education in Peru, as well as the structure, responsibilities, and members that the educational community must fulfill, including the role of the State, businesses, and society. The law emphasizes that education is a free, public service and a right that must be provided by the State. Likewise, it recognizes the right of legal entities and specific persons to administer and establish educational centers. Regarding educational principles in Peru, Article 8 of the General Education Law (LGE) highlights the principles of equality, which guarantee accessibility and continuity in the education system for all students, as well as the principle of inclusion, especially in rural areas where the vulnerability of students living in poverty is observed. Similarly, the principle of quality is established, whose purpose is to guarantee an open, inclusive, appropriate, and flexible condition for the continuity of education.

Educational policy: It is a series of objectives, principles, and goals that guide the educational conduct of the State and the transnational territory, as well as private institutions. It aims to demonstrate the way in which the State manages the practical aspects and actions related to educational practice (Imen, 2008).

Educational quality: In defining quality, it is necessary to automatically consider the society it seeks to serve, establishing a creative approach and knowledge production where the narrative and transfer of knowledge take place (Méndez, 2012).

Cross-cutting axes of development: This encompasses a network of programs whose purpose is the globalization and customization of interdisciplinary tools that cover in detail the aspects of research, knowledge, and thematic areas to facilitate teaching. It forms the practical foundation of education by integrating areas of coexistence and understanding through processes, concepts, attitudes, and values oriented toward learning and education (Águila, 2020).

Sectoral guidelines: These are a public policy resource developed according to the responsibilities of the State to provide a broad vision of the national education system, allowing a series of actions aligned with achieving objectives and addressing challenges. To do this, it is necessary to detail strategies based on the current situation and the problems being solved in order to generate success (Global Partners for Education, 2006).

Standards: They must be adapted to social requirements, organizations, education actors, environmental factors, and inclusiveness of all to achieve the highest level of development. They guide the principles and responsibilities involved, engaging the agents of the educational service to control and supervise education (García, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Type of research

The present study is applied research with a quantitative approach and a cross-sectional causal design. It aims to analyze the relationship between the educational policies implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic and the quality of teaching in secondary school students in the city of Arequipa. The causal design allows establishing the influence of one variable on another at a specific point in time, without manipulation of variables, which aligns with the observational nature of the study.

Population:

The study population consisted of 1,400 secondary school students over 11 years old, belonging to an educational institution in the city of Arequipa. This population represents students in the basic training stage who experienced the educational process during the pandemic, making them ideal for analyzing the effects of the implemented educational policies.

Sample:

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The sample was composed of 302 students, selected using a statistical formula for finite populations. A simple random probability sampling was used, ensuring that all members of the population had the same chance of being selected, thus guaranteeing the representativeness and reliability of the obtained results.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria:

The following criteria were established for selecting the sample:

- **Inclusion criteria:**
 - Students enrolled in secondary school during the pandemic period.
 - Age over 11 years.
 - Voluntary participation in the study with informed consent.
- **Exclusion criteria:**
 - Students with prolonged absences during the study period.
 - Participants with severe difficulties in reading or listening comprehension.
 - Students who did not complete the questionnaire in its entirety.

Information collection instrument

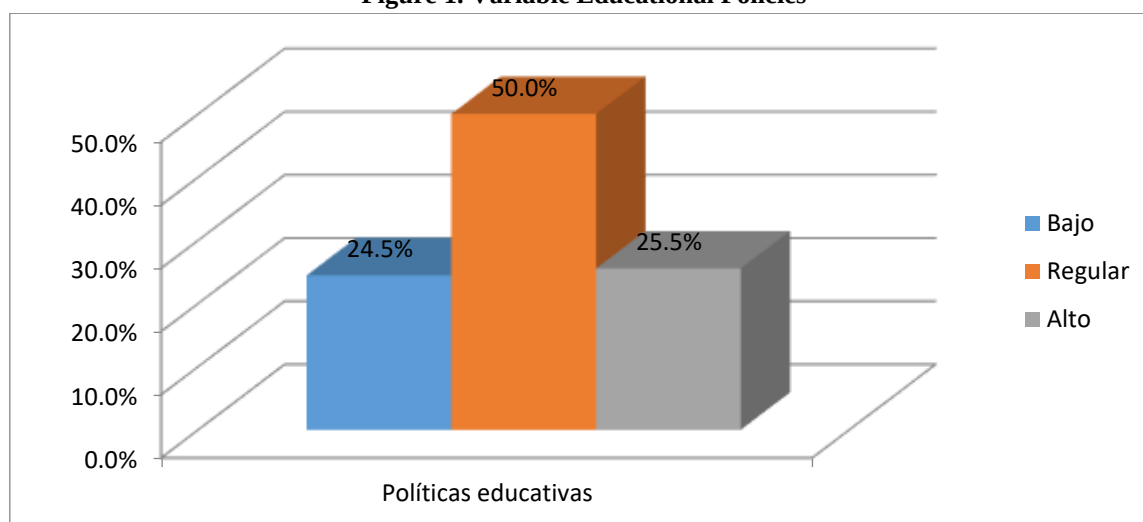
A structured questionnaire specifically designed to measure both variables of the study was applied: educational policies and quality of teaching. The validity of the instrument was determined by expert judgment, who evaluated the relevance and clarity of the items. Reliability was verified using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, obtaining values of 0.854 for the educational policies variable and 0.872 for teaching quality, which indicates a high internal consistency.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table 1. Variable Educational Policies

	f	%
Low	89	24.5
Regular	182	50.0
High	93	25.5
Total	364	100.0

Figure 1. Variable Educational Policies



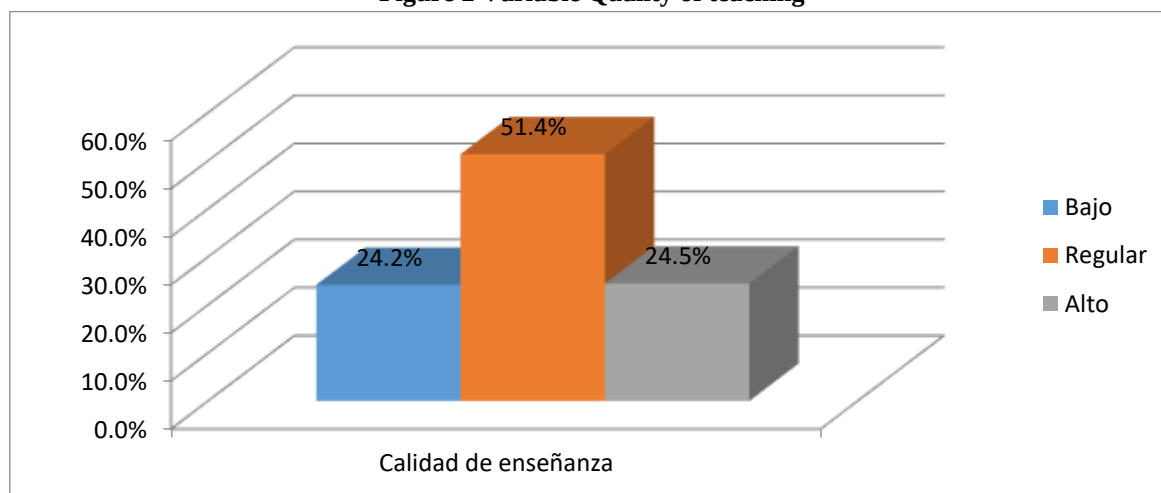
Regarding educational policies, it can be seen that these are partly composed of the cross-cutting axes of development as well as sectoral measures. The results found show an overall regular level of educational policies in the department of Arequipa, with an incidence of 50%. On the other hand, there is a portion that reflects a high level of educational policy in the school education sector, represented by 25.5%. With smaller trends, it can be seen that a low level is minimally represented by 24.5% of respondents. It should be noted that for educational policies to be optimal, there must be school conditions that provide a healthy environment and adequate communication, since everything is focused on developing teachers' digital capacities and skills for better teaching.

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Table 2. Variable Quality of teaching

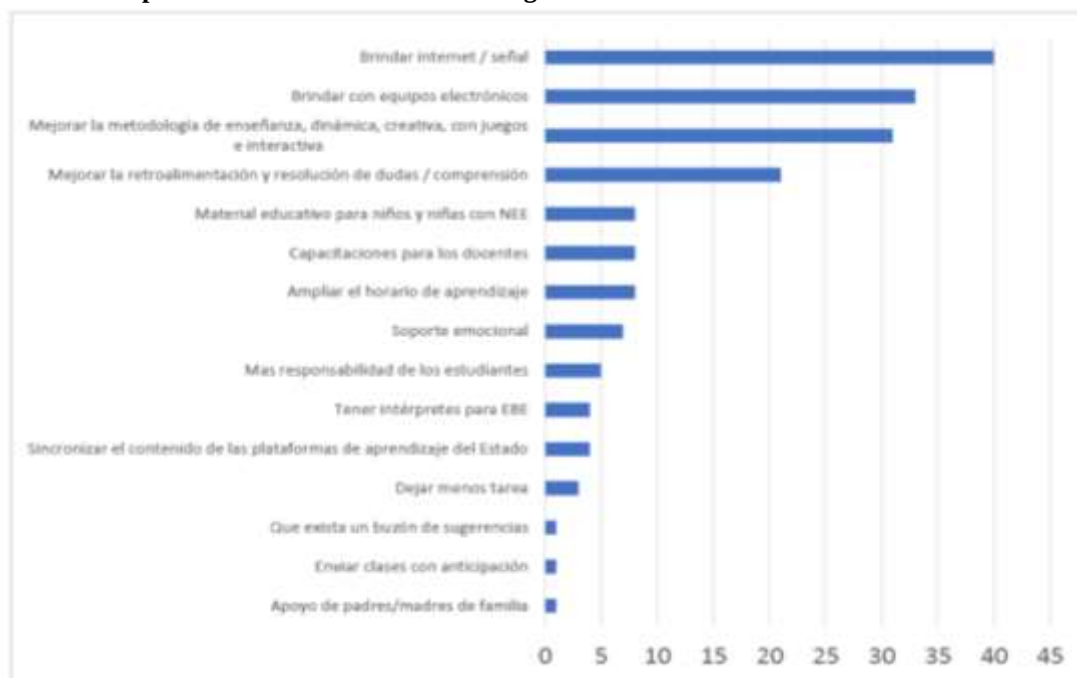
	f	%
Low	88	24.2
Regular	187	51.4
High	89	24.5
Total	364	100.0

Figure 2 Variable Quality of teaching



Regarding the quality of teaching, it can be seen that it consists of regulations, which include adaptability, accessibility, availability, and overall teaching quality. The results show that a regular level prevails, represented by 51.4%, while other findings reveal a high level of teaching quality, represented by 24.5%. Finally, the analysis shows a low level of teaching quality, represented by at least 24.2% of all respondents.

Proposed Solutions to Improve Distance Education – Dialogue with Students



In the questions regarding proposed solutions to improve the quality of distance education during the pandemic period in Arequipa, it can be seen that the highest priority is to provide students with internet access or ensure they have an adequate signal to attend their classes. In other words, a key recommendation is to supply appropriate electronic equipment so that students could have achieved a more practical assimilation of virtual classes. There are also other shortcomings that need to be addressed, such as

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improving teaching methodology, classroom dynamics, and creativity. Since interactivity does not generate direct contact between teacher and student, it is also necessary to improve feedback and, above all, to focus on resolving doubts and enhancing students' understanding and assimilation of the content.

Another important point to improve distance education is to have suitable materials to work effectively with students. Above all, the Ministry of Education should have provided training for teachers so they could adapt more practically to virtual teaching. Many teachers opted for "perfect suspension" and chose not to adopt the new technology that had to be implemented during the pandemic, among other issues.

Table 3. Relationship between the educational policies variable and the dimensions of teaching quality

		Políticas educacionales
Adaptabilidad	Correlación de Pearson	0.581
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.019
Accesibilidad	Correlación de Pearson	0,455*
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.032
Disponibilidad	Correlación de Pearson	0.639
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.010
Calidad	Correlación de Pearson	0.510
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.009

In the analysis of the relationship between the variable of educational policies and the dimensions of adaptability, it can be seen that there is a moderate relationship between adaptability and educational policies, whose value is $r=0.581$, which is a moderate relationship and where significance was $p=0.019$ minimum to the established parameter of $p<0.05$, The proposed correlation is thus accepted.

With respect to the relationship between educational policies and the dimensions of Accessibility, it can be seen that there is a moderate relationship between adaptability and educational policies, whose value is $r=0.455$, which is a moderate relationship and where significance was $p=0.023$ minimum to the established parameter of ($p<0.05$). The proposed correlation is thus accepted.

Regarding the relationship between educational policies and the dimensions of Availability, it can be seen that there is a moderate relationship between adaptability and educational policies, whose value is $r=0.639$ which is a moderate relationship and where significance was $p=0.010$ minimum to the established parameter of $p<0.05$, it is accepted thus, the proposed correlation.

Regarding the relationship between educational policies and the dimensions of Quality, it can be seen that there is a moderate relationship between adaptability and educational policies, whose value is $r=0.510$ which is a of the relationship between the educational policies variable and the dimension of adaptability, a moderate relationship was found with a value of $r = 0.581$, which is considered moderate, and a significance level of $p = 0.019$, which meets the standard parameter of $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the proposed correlation is accepted.

Regarding the relationship between educational policies and the dimension of accessibility, a moderate relationship was also found, with a value of $r = 0.455$ and a significance level of $p = 0.023$, which is within the established parameter of $p < 0.05$. The proposed correlation is therefore accepted.

For the relationship between educational policies and the dimension of availability, there is a moderate relationship with a value of $r = 0.639$ and a significance level of $p = 0.010$, which is within the standard parameter of $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the proposed correlation is accepted.

Finally, regarding the relationship between educational policies and the dimension of quality, there is a moderate relationship with a value of $r = 0.510$ and a significance level of $p = 0.009$, which meets the parameter of $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the proposed correlation is accepted.

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Table 4. Relationship between the teaching quality variable and the dimensions of educational policies

		Calidad de Enseñanza
Equidad e inclusión	Correlación de Pearson	0.546
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.022
Condiciones escolares saludables	Correlación de Pearson	0.469
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.017
Comunicación adecuada	Correlación de Pearson	0.427
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.024
Asistencia pedagógica	Correlación de Pearson	0.411
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.034
Capacitaciones de habilidades digitales	Correlación de Pearson	0.693
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.008
Uso y manejo de tecnología	Correlación de Pearson	0.583
	Sig. (bilateral)	0.015
N		364

Regarding the relationship between teaching quality and the dimension of Equity and Inclusion, a moderate relationship was found with a value of $r = 0.546$, which indicates a moderate relationship, with a significance level of $p = 0.022$, which meets the standard parameter of $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the proposed correlation is accepted.

In the analysis of the relationship between the teaching quality variable and the dimension of Healthy School Conditions, a moderate relationship was found with a value of $r = 0.469$ and a significance level of $p = 0.017$, which meets the established parameter of $p < 0.05$. Thus, the proposed correlation is accepted.

Regarding the relationship between teaching quality and the dimension of Adequate Communication, a moderate relationship was found with a value of $r = 0.427$ and a significance level of $p = 0.024$, which meets the standard parameter of $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the proposed correlation is accepted.

Regarding the relationship between teaching quality and the dimension of Pedagogical Assistance, a moderate relationship was found with a value of $r = 0.411$ and a significance level of $p = 0.034$, which meets the standard parameter of $p < 0.05$. Thus, the proposed correlation is accepted.

In the analysis of the relationship between the teaching quality variable and the dimension of Digital Skills Training, a moderate relationship was found with a value of $r = 0.693$ and a significance level of $p = 0.008$, which meets the standard parameter of $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the proposed correlation is accepted.

In the analysis of the relationship between the teaching quality variable and the dimension of Use and Management of Technology, a moderate relationship was found with a value of $r = 0.583$ and a significance level of $p = 0.015$, which meets the standard parameter of $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the proposed correlation is accepted.

Table 5. General Hypothesis Testing

		Correlaciones	
		Políticas educativas	Calidad de enseñanza
Políticas educativas	Correlación de Pearson	1	,625
	Sig. (bilateral)		,003
	N	364	364
Calidad de enseñanza	Correlación de Pearson	,625	1
	Sig. (bilateral)	,003	
	N	364	364

Regarding the relationship between educational policies and teaching quality, the value found according to Pearson's statistic was $r = 0.625$, which indicates a moderate relationship between the analyzed variables.

Proposed Hypothesis

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$P < 0.05$ the present hypothesis is accepted

H1= There is a relationship between educational policies during the COVID-19 pandemic and the quality of teaching in the city of Arequipa

The significance value found was $p = 0.000$, which is below the established threshold of $p < 0.05$; therefore, the proposed correlation is accepted.

DISCUSSION

Education is one of the most influential factors for promoting and developing individuals and society in general, making it fundamental to progress. However, it is important to note that it often faces limitations, as many students do not maintain the same daily pace of educational development as their peers. This may be due to limited access to education or the impact of COVID-19, which has had negative effects on this reality. There are two major implications: the widespread closure of schools at various levels, and economic recession. If these are not addressed, they can lead to school dropouts, increased child labour, widening inequalities, and other negative outcomes. Therefore, in the face of critical public health circumstances, it is essential for the State to strengthen digital and virtual resources to provide quality education that helps achieve the goals of each educational level. This must take into account educational policy considerations and the specific needs of each institution to ensure rapid and effective implementation.

In line with this, the present study aimed to demonstrate the relationship between educational policies and teaching quality. The findings confirmed that educational policies during the COVID-19 pandemic are related to the quality of teaching in the city of Arequipa, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.625$, indicating a moderate relationship between the variables analysed. The significance value of $p = 0.003$ reaffirms this relationship.

Educational policies are a set of objectives, principles, and goals that guide the educational actions of the State and the wider territory, including private institutions. These policies demonstrate how the State manages practical aspects and actions related to educational practice (Imen, 2008).

The COVID-19 pandemic reduced mandatory social interaction in line with national guidelines, as the virus has posed a serious threat to the health and lives of the entire population, particularly vulnerable and immunosuppressed groups. It has also had a negative impact on the workforce, means of production, national economy, families, and ways of interacting with the outside world. It is important to note that the virus continues to affect the education sector. For this reason, the Ombudsman's Office highlights the State's responsibility to guarantee the rights, accessibility, comprehensiveness, quality, availability, and adaptability of information. To fulfil this, the Ministry of Education (MINEDU) must define clear guidelines for distance learning, the regulatory framework, and the principles governing the application of teaching at all levels.

To achieve this, it is necessary to consider all elements that are interrelated across higher and basic education, whether provided by public or private educational institutions offering various courses. This must respect all aspects encompassing the right to education and the quality of service delivered by the State, as well as the educational content that should enable human development. This principle was developed and implemented through the Constitutional Court, ensuring that the education provided at the national level fully promotes human development for constitutional purposes.

Law No. 28044, the General Education Law (LGE), sets out general guidelines to be implemented by the education system, defining the principles and goals that govern education in Peru, as well as the structure, responsibilities, and roles of the educational community, the State, businesses, and society. The law emphasises that education is a free and public service and a right that must be guaranteed by the State. It also recognises the right of legal entities and individuals to manage and establish educational institution.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis confirms that educational policies during the COVID-19 pandemic and their relationship with the quality of teaching in the city of Arequipa show a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.625$, indicating a moderate relationship between the variables analyzed, with a significance level of $p = 0.003$, reaffirming this relationship

Second. Regarding the level of educational policies during the COVID-19 pandemic and their relationship to the quality of teaching in the city of Arequipa, the results reveal a projection were 51.4% of respondents perceive a regular level, while other projections show a high level of teaching quality represented by 24.5%, and to conclude the analysis a low level of teaching is reflected by 24.2% of the total number of respondents.

Third. The level of teaching quality in the city of Arequipa shows a regular trend in the perception of educational policies in the department of Arequipa, with an incidence of 50%. Meanwhile, other results indicate the possibility of a high level of educational policy in the school sector, represented by 25.5%; and a smaller proportion reflects a low level, minimally represented by 24.5% of the respondents.

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