



## School violence and pedagogical mediation in basic education students

*Violencia escolar y mediación pedagógica en estudiantes de educación básica*

*Violência escolar e mediação pedagógica em alunos do ensino fundamental*


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### ORIGINAL ARTICLE

#### KEYWORDS

Aggressors, pedagogical mediation, victims, school violence.

**ABSTRACT.** School violence is a subject that has aroused interest in its study because it has permeated society through time at school, therefore, the objective is to design a strategy to prevent future misunderstandings among fifth-grade kids of the Marco Antonio Franco Rodriguez school of Villavicencio, Colombia. For the research, a descriptive research method was used with a mixed qualitative and quantitative methodology, the technique for the collection of information was done through an interview and a survey directed to the students, showing the following results: The witnesses show that the most repeated problems are teasing in class, stealing things and hitting in the classroom; the victims say that they almost always lose something and have been teased. The behaviors of highest incidence on the part of the aggressor are teasing in the classroom, pushing in lines, and hiding or taking things. It can be concluded that mediation is an opportunity for change with no losers.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Agresores, mediación pedagógica, víctimas, violencia escolar.

**RESUMEN.** La violencia escolar es un tema muy complejo e interesante, debido a que ha permeado a la sociedad a través de la historia de la escolaridad. Se diseñó una estrategia para prevenir futuros desencuentros en los niños y niñas del grado quinto del colegio Marco Antonio Franco Rodríguez de Villavicencio, Colombia. Para la investigación se utilizó una metodología de tipo mixta, cualitativa y cuantitativa, se recolectó la información a través de una entrevista y una encuesta dirigidas a los estudiantes, mostrando como resultados que la problemática que más se repite es la burla en clase,

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el robo de cosas y agresiones físicas en el salón. Se puede concluir que la mediación es una oportunidad de cambio sin que haya perdedores, e invita a fomentar el diálogo y la escucha.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Agressores, mediação pedagógica, vítimas, violência escolar.

**RESUMO.** A violência escolar é um tema muito complexo e interessante, pois permeou a sociedade ao longo da história da escolarização. Uma estratégia foi desenhada para prevenir futuros mal-entendidos em meninos e meninas da quinta série da escola Marco Antonio Franco Rodríguez em Villavicencio, Colômbia. Para a pesquisa, foi utilizada uma metodologia mista, qualitativa e quantitativa, as informações foram coletadas por meio de entrevista e pesquisa dirigida aos alunos, mostrando como resultados que o problema mais repetido é o escárnio nas aulas, o roubo de coisas e as agressões físicas na escola. Conclui-se que a mediação é uma oportunidade de mudança sem perdedores e estimula o diálogo e a escuta.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study was born as a proposal to a need that was evident in the classroom, where peer violence was shown in the pedagogical work of the Marco Antonio Franco Rodríguez Educational Institution in the city of Villavicencio Meta, Colombia. Institution that had experienced a study, in which 32 fifth grade students and 14 teachers were the object of research, this study allowed a descriptive analysis of what was happening, showing that there was violence and that it was necessary to address the issue, to seek strategies to mitigate this phenomenon. Violence contributes to low academic results and states of frustration to the point of wanting to take one's own life. This problem involves student provocateurs, aggressors, defenders, bystanders, inciters, witnesses, and victims of aggression. The beneficiaries of the study were the children, who found themselves in an adequate environment to perform satisfactorily with their schoolwork, found affective values increasing self-esteem, academic level and decreasing child risk factors. Parents and teachers were also benefited, since finding a student in these conditions resulted in a higher index of academic performance, increasing the possibilities for the future of the community, and why not the city or the nation.

School violence has been present in educational institutions since the beginning of school until today, it is a phenomenon that despite attempts to eradicate it has not been eliminated and leaves sequels, which in the short or medium term may cause other situations of violence and continue the chain. The RAE defines it as a violent action or of becoming violent, it can be defined as a repressive behavior that seeks to dominate and exert control over the other, producing physical and psychological damage affecting the social contour of the student (Penalva, 2018; Saavedra, 2007).

Although Colombia is a country hardly hit by violence in all areas, the Ministry of Education, with respect to the prevention of school violence, has implemented, from the reinforcement in its standards of competences in the different learning areas, including citizenship competences, which is responsible for specifying what students should be able to do in terms of peaceful coexistence and other related issues. The "Peace Classrooms" program seeks to prevent violent provocation in students by combining primary and secondary focused prevention (Cox, Jaramillo & Reimers, 2005; Reimers & Villegas-Reimers, 2005; cited by Chaux et al., 2008).

The different forms in which school violence manifests itself can be classified into several groups: physical, verbal, psychological and discriminatory abuse, or social exclusion, which are mostly provoked at the same time. Physical violence is an act that causes or may cause physical injury, represented by blows (Esplugues, 2007).

While verbal violence is a very common action in our classrooms and causes too much damage, it can even lead to death by suicide. It consists of threats, insults, nicknames, and harmful terms, it is the most frequent and, therefore, the most damaging, repeated, and visceral (Fernandez, 1999).

Social exclusion is another type of violence that causes the greatest harm, since it is a form of intimidation that causes psychological damage to those who suffer it because they may come to believe that the aggressors are right to exclude them, causing low self-esteem. The aim of the bully is to isolate and marginalize the victim from his or her social context (Merayo, 2013).

Peer violence occurs when the relationship has been spoiled and malformed, as it moves from a reciprocity of affection and equality to a relationship of subjugation. This form of relationship displays special characteristics. There must be a victim attacked by an academic or group peer, there must be an inequality of power between the stronger and the weaker, by the way the victim is defenseless. The exclusion of the victim is sought, the target is usually a single student or several, always to specific individuals, never to the group. Victimization can be carried out alone or in a group, it involves persecution without sufficient cause, psychological abuse would be present in all other forms of abuse (physical, verbal, or social) with different degrees. The continuity in time and the focus on the victim prove that it is not a casual or isolated behavior and causes pain in the victim, always, since he/she considers that he/she may be the target of future attacks by his/her aggressors or other classmates (Mateo, Soriano & Godoy, 2009).

Violence in the classroom is something that has been difficult to eradicate, there are several causes that encourage the fact that it is becoming more frequent. Here we mention some of the factors that can increase it, among these we have the feeling of exclusion or total exclusion from a group, the violence emitted by the media, the lack of limits (Diaz, 2005). Soriano (2015) tells us that when within the family there is a negligent treatment that deprives the child of the enjoyment of their rights and the enjoyment of welfare, it interferes in the proper physical, social and mental development. Salmerón (2017) states that society and institutions with their apathy also deprive the child of the satisfaction of enjoying his or her rights and well-being in general. Gangs that are organized in schools or the influence of them in the environment in which the student moves are considered risk factors (Amemiya, Oliveros & Barrientos, 2009). UNICEF points out that among the most important causes of such violence are poverty, child labor, child trafficking, AIDS, remote geographical location, poor infrastructure, ethnicity (Monclus, 2005).

School violence or any type of violence that is generated to another person will always have consequences, academic performance is affected by the presence of violence in school, spoiling both the development and quality of classes (Abramovay, 2005). The school environment is also affected when there is bullying or aggression among peers, with negative repercussions on teaching and learning (Cid et al., 2008). On the other hand, children's lives become a little more difficult when their school performance drops, as they begin to receive reproaches from the family and teachers themselves (Cepeda & Caicedo, 2012). According to the above, a child who is involved in a situation like this one is at greater risk of suffering emotional and psychosocial disorders and psychopathological disorders in adolescent and adult life than a child who has not been involved in such a situation (Garaigordobil, 2011). Hunter, Mora-Merchán and Ortega, cited by Cerezo and Sánchez (2013), highlight psychopathological effects, personality alterations, problems in interpersonal relationships.

School mediation is a tool that serves as a source of dynamic learning, which brings us experiences to know how to act around effective coexistence (Rosario, 2007). It is a means to prevent violence and conflicts before they worsen and worsen, but it requires intelligence, knowledge, and clarity; likewise, (Garcia and Serrano, 2002), mediation occurs through a negotiation between the parties involved with the help of a third party who must be neutral in decision-making, whose main function is to facilitate the search for measures to resolve the conflict. Mediation bets on the resolution of conflicts in a creative and peaceful way, developing group and individual skills to intervene at the right time (Brandoni, 1999; cited in Quijano and Cervera, 2012). The personality of everyone should always be taken into account in order to find the right intervention for each type of temperament (Garaigordobil & Oñederra, 2008). Accordingly, mediation seeks that the parties involved find a solution to their dispute (Calderón, 2011). By applying these strategies, the recurrence of conflict is reduced, interpersonal relationships are preserved, and there is conformity between the parties involved, all this in an easy and economical way (Martínez, 2005).

In relation to the topic of school violence and mediation, different sources have been consulted and authors have been found who have carried out studies and research with the purpose of applying a strategy that allows mediation in violent spaces or classrooms, generating quite favorable changes in attitudes and leaving significant experiences to be put into practice in other spaces. According to the study conducted by Chaux (2002), it is clearly defined that physical aggression and other aggressive behaviors come mostly from boys with a percentage of 50% and girls 22%. On the other hand, Perez (2008) in his article: Mediation in educational centers, mentions the social educator as mediator, considering that "mediation is a method to solve conflicts and disputes" (p. 79).

A study by Varela (2011) called Effectiveness of Strategies for the Prevention of School Violence, suggests conflict resolution through the development of moral and social skills and emotional intelligence. Calderón (2011) refers to the mediation made by teachers at school through various strategies that can be considered as a proposal to intervene and solve conflicts. García, Serrano and Vázquez (2013) present a proposal in peace education that should be implemented in official and private schools. Mendoza and Pedroza (2015), have as main objective of the study to identify bullying behavior in basic education classrooms to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention program aimed at teachers.

## 2. METHOD AND MATERIALS

A descriptive type of research was used, since it indicates the characteristics and significant features of the group under study, describes the situation that is occurring in the educational institution and the context of the students. This type of study seeks to specify the characteristics, properties and profiles of groups or people, communities, processes, objects, or any other phenomenon that can be subjected to an investigation (Hernández, Fernández and Baptista, 2010). It has a mixed approach, qualitative and quantitative, which gives a complete and adjusted contribution to the situations that are experienced daily. The methodology was handled with sequential explanatory design (DEXPLIS), with an initial stage where quantitative data are obtained and examined, then these data are collected and evaluated qualitatively, these two types are integrated at the time of reporting the data.

To begin the study, two surveys were applied, one to the students of the fifth grade of primary school of the IE Marco Antonio Franco Rodríguez of Villavicencio's city, from the analysis of the results it was possible to establish and find the usual reiterations about school violence, as well as to find the frequency in which the different types of mistreatment are manifested among the participating students, several days of work were dedicated in which different schedules were cited for the application of the interview in oral and individual form and the data were taken for their respective analysis. The second survey applied to the teachers of the educational center was carried out at a specific time and with prior authorization of the directors of the establishment and keeping the confidentiality of the information received from them. To find and give a detailed analysis of the results of the research, corresponding to the perspective of the aggressors, the victims and the witnesses, a Child School Violence Estimation Questionnaire (CEVEI) was made, according to the behaviors that have generated some type of violence. An exhaustive search was made of scientific questionnaires at national and international level that were related to the topic, which were taken as a reference to elaborate the proposal to be applied to the students of one of the fifth grades of the Marco Antonio Franco Rodríguez Educational Institution of Villavicencio. The questionnaires used as a reference to create the CEVEI were the following: Cuestionario de Evaluación de la Violencia entre iguales en la Escuela y en el Ocio (CEVEO) by Díaz, Martínez and Martín (2004), Cuestionario de Violencia Escolar Cotidiana (CUVECO) by Fernández, Escobar and Trianes (2011).

The data collection instruments can be considered valid since a pilot test was conducted with a small group of students to test the feasibility of applying the questionnaire and to rule out any difficulties that might arise. When applying the survey to the chosen sample it was possible to confirm the level of violence that had been occurring within the institution and it was possible to affirm that 68% of the students at some time in their lives have participated as aggressors in the student environment, knowing that 22 students out of 32 affirmed to have assaulted their classmates in some way. After performing the necessary calculations, a p-value of 1.010 with a significance of 0.05 was obtained. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for the total number of students surveyed, the results show an alpha of 0.81 for the witnesses, 0.85 for the victims and 0.95 for the aggressor, values that allow a valid reliability coefficient for an investigation.

As in any study, there are variables that can occur in a problem; in the case of school violence, the levels of violence manifested by children can vary according to different causes that can be classified into dependent and independent variables. "The dependent variable responds to the phenomenon that appears, disappears or changes when the researcher applies, suppresses or modifies the independent variable" (Bisquerra, 2009, p. 139). Within the dependent variables can be found those related to any type of school violence. "The independent variable responds to the factor that the researcher intends to observe and manipulate deliberately to discover its relationships with the dependent variable" (Ibid. p. 138). Within the independent variables we find everything related to the sociodemographic and academic aspect of the students.

Among them we have:

Table 1.

Study variables.

DIMENSION	INDICATORS	EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE
Variables	violence among peers	Causing damage, stealing, and hiding objects
Dependent	Student-student relationship	Offenses, gossip, insults through peers, through social networks, blackmail, imposition, hindering, hitting, altercations, sharp weapons.
Variables	Family economy	Family economy
independent	Social aspects	Social context, neighborhood, locality, commune
	Family	Type of family at home
	Age	10 - 13 years old
	Gender	Male or Female

Note: Prepared by the authors.

### 3. RESULTS

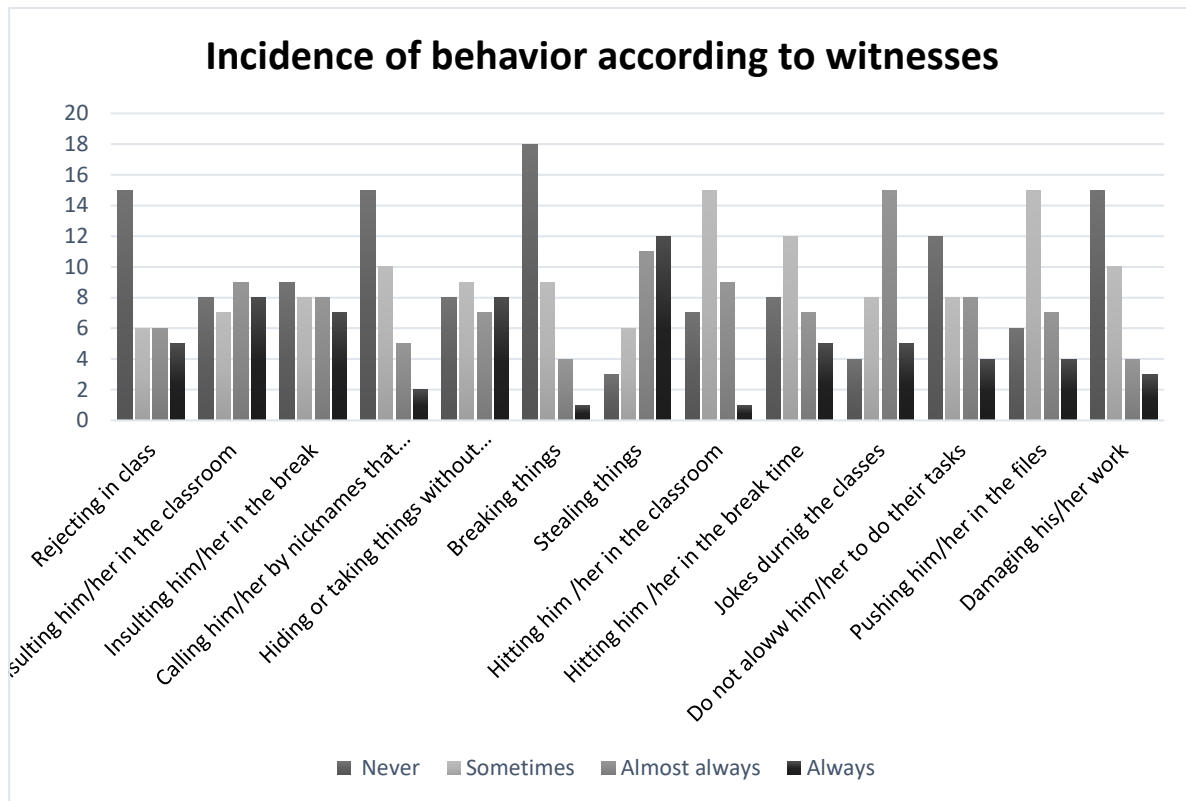
#### Incidence of behavior according to witnesses.

The survey applied to the students shows that according to the participation as witnesses or spectators, the rates of violence and the most repeated problem in the classroom is "teasing in class" with a total of 15 children who responded having been witnesses, another of the most repeated rates is: "stealing things", with 12 children who responded having seen it, which corresponds to 38%, followed by hitting classmates in the classroom, represented by 47%. Another of the risk factors that had a high percentage is: "hiding or taking away their things", with 25% of frequency.

These statistics reveal the presence of violence in the classroom, and how these behaviors are so common worldwide other researchers have been dedicated to study this phenomenon, Rodriguez et al. (2015), in school violence in adolescents of a Basic Secondary School in the countryside. Velasco and Alvarez-Gonzalez (2015) with profiles and perceptions of gender in school violence; Cerezo et al. (2016), write a book entitled "Violence in relationships between schoolchildren keys to understand, evaluate and intervene bullying". Chuquilin and Zagaceta (2017) publish " Violence in schools from the perspective of its actors. ", among other authors.

Graphic 1.

Incidence of behavior according to witnesses.



Note: Own elaboration.

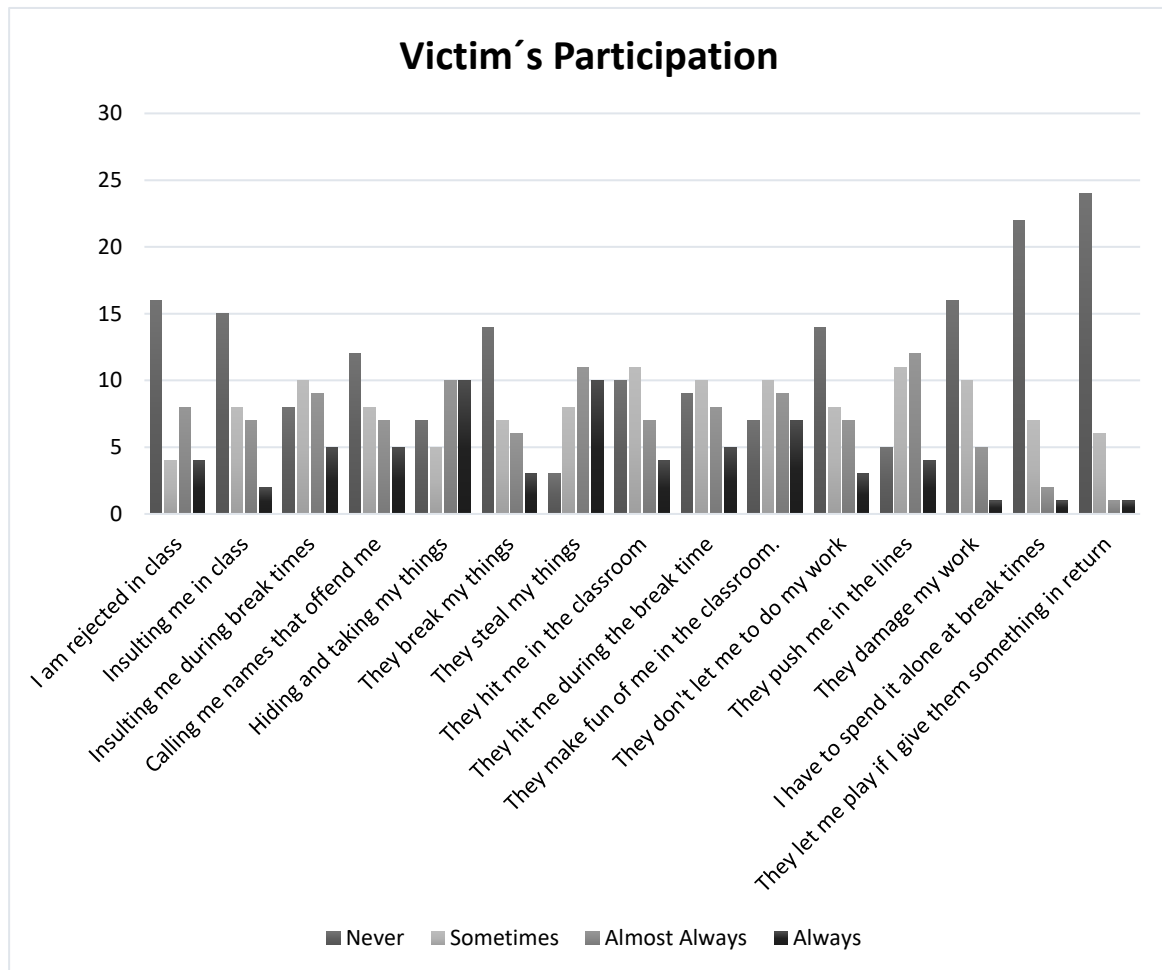
### Incidence of behavior according to the victim

The highest rates of violence perceived from the victim's perspective have been the theft of objects with 31%, followed by the loss of materials because they have been hidden to generate discomfort 31% and teasing in class with 22%.



Graphic 2.

Incidence of behavior according to the victim.



Note: Own elaboration.

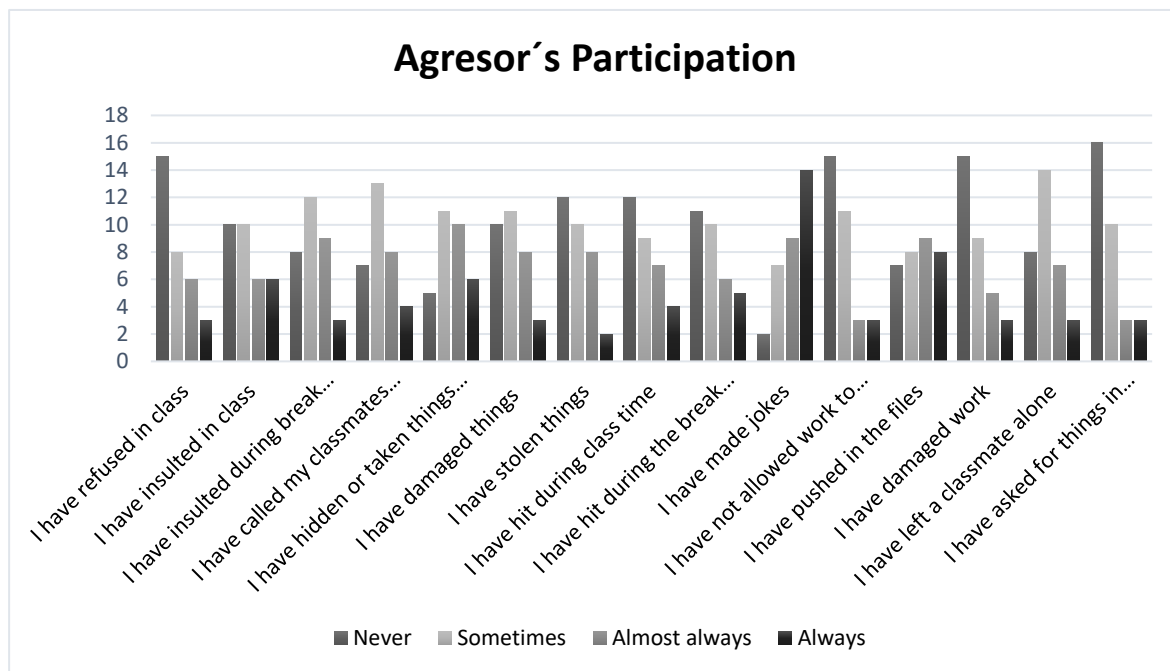
### Incidence of behavior according to the aggressor.

The behaviors with the highest incidence, according to the aggressor, are jokes in class, with 44% of the respondents answering that they always do it. This is followed by pushing in the rows, which 8 students acknowledge having done for 25%; stealing and hiding objects from classmates is another factor that is presented with 19% of recidivism.



Graphic 3.

Incidence of behavior according to the aggressor.



Note: Own elaboration.

### Analysis of results of student interviews

To meet the objectives, set out in this stage of the research, a group of fifth grade students of the Marco Antonio Franco Rodriguez Educational Institution were interviewed to learn about the opinion of the students. The participants involved in the research stated that they had personally experienced or witnessed situations of violence at some point in the weeks prior to the interview and that there are students who cause them discomfort, that it is almost always the same people who cause conflictive situations in the classroom and outside of it.

Hits, threats, jokes, nicknames, insults, pushing, rejection, theft of objects, not allowing to play, are the highest rates of violence that occur in the educational institution, students express that every time they see a situation like this they go to the teachers in charge of discipline, or to those they see nearby, some say that they do not leave, "he hit me and what did he want me to do", "my mom told me not to leave". For Calle et al. (2016), the violence that occurs most frequently at school is verbal aggression, situations of intolerance and bullying. Gamboa, Ortiz and Muñoz (2017) mention that aggressions also occur between students and teachers (Conde & Delgado, 2020; Nieto, Portela, López & Domínguez, 2018).

The students interviewed indicated that the most common solution when conflicts arise is to make notes in the observer book, followed by the teacher scolding the aggressor students and making them apologize, and when the offense becomes repetitive, they take them to coordination and call their parents, they state that the corrective measures applied to repeat offenders, depending on the offense, are punished with one or two days of suspension from class.



All the students interviewed agree with the application of these corrective measures; they state that it helps them to stop being a nuisance, to let them work and not to promote any more trouble. Most of the students interviewed stated that they seek out the teacher and tell him/her when they are witnesses or victims of conflict situations among their classmates or in another grade or classroom. Calderón (2011), teachers intervene to solve conflicts. Mendoza and Pedroza (2015), this behavior must be identified to implement teacher intervention.

It is important to mention that the observer book is an instrument/form, which is used in educational institutions to make notes to students who in some way violate the coexistence manual, where the type of offense I, II or III must be stipulated according to the seriousness, describe the situation that occurred indicating the responsible parties, the time, place and date, the involved parties must sign it and the teacher keeps it. Most of the children recognize that this tool is used and that one way to avoid signatures is to provide an immediate solution to the problem presented, reaching agreements between the people involved if the misconduct is not frequent or repetitive.

### **Analysis of the results of the teacher interview for the evaluation of school violence (EDEVE)**

86% of teachers considered that aggressions and violent situations are a serious problem that occurs in the educational institution and that parents often worsen the situation, Morales (2020) within the family, the issue of prevention or ease of violence is addressed. To eliminate the problems of school violence, it is necessary that the total team of teachers become aware and decide to act at the right time, involving the family so that they can participate in the solution. Teachers must recognize themselves as subjects of power so that prevention strategies can be developed (Colombo, 2011). 50% of teachers tend to control, tackle, and reduce conflicts in the classroom; the attention offered by teachers to students serves to optimize the treatment between students (Treviño and González, 2020), 100% of teachers strongly agreed that initiating an intervention project to reduce aggression and any act of violence in the institution would be a good idea.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

The origin of this research stems from the question: Can pedagogical mediation reduce school violence and improve the classroom climate in students belonging to the fifth grade (10-13 years old) of the Marco Antonio Franco Rodriguez Educational Institution located in Villavicencio, Meta? Pedagogical mediation is understood as any intervention carried out by teachers or academic peers with the purpose of advocating any conflictive situation in which the actors of the conflict come voluntarily. "Mediation is a conflict resolution process in which the two opposing parties "voluntarily" resort to an "impartial" third person" (Hernández, 2003, p. 126). And that it would improve the school climate inside and outside the classroom.

It is worrying that some situations that students experience everyday are not known, because they are not reported, for fear that the aggressors' revenges may become more intense or for unknown reasons. For this reason, the negotiation table between academic peers was considered an effective strategy, since it is the same classmates who act at the right time and at the request of the interested parties, this measure contributes to reduce the rates of school violence in the Marco Antonio Franco Rodriguez Educational Institution in the city of Villavicencio, Meta.

The findings obtained with the application of the surveys showed that joking and insults, beatings in the classroom and outside it, theft or disappearance of objects had the highest rate of recidivism according to witnesses. Calle et al. (2016), identified that the most frequent problems within the institution of school violence were verbal aggressions, situations of intolerance and bullying, which, although it does not reach a type of physical violence also causes harm. Gamboa, Ortiz and Muñoz (2017) state that students not only attack each other, but also aggression between students and teachers.

As for the victims, it was found that the loss of objects, pushing and shoving, theft, insults, and teasing were more common in the surveys. Chávez (2017) concludes that children conceptualize violence through physical blows, students conceive themselves as the main actors. Conde and Delgado (2020) identify disruptive behaviors in the classroom and verbal violence between students and teachers in higher education. Nieto et al. (2018), expose that there is a greater presence of verbal violence among students in secondary education, than towards teachers and that it is not considered important among learners.

The aggressors recognize that they joke, sometimes push, hide school supplies, hit in class or during break times as the activity they use the most against their classmates. Gil (2020) states that there are various types of violence among which verbal, psychological, sexual, and social violence can be distinguished, verbal violence is the most common, which is evident in schoolchildren now also encompassing social networks. Aroca (2020) points out that verbal violence causes psychological damage and that it is present both at school and in the family and that since it does not show itself physically, it goes unnoticed among parents and teachers.

The objective of the application of this tool responded to the need to reduce the rates of school violence reported by the fifth-grade students of the educational institution Marco Antonio Franco Rodriguez of Villavicencio Meta. It is through negotiation tables that several student leaders and pacifists of the classroom were chosen as mediators, to whom those involved in the conflict went. In case a solution could not be found through this stay, the teacher, or teachers in charge of the group or groups in case they are from different classrooms are assisted. "Mediation implies the incorporation of communication, interrelation and negotiation skills, and we believe that schools and communities are the most appropriate places to incorporate them" (Horowitz, 2007, p.17).

A particularity of the intervention is that there is no winner or loser in the dispute, it is about the two parties dialoguing with a common and definitive benefit (Aguilar, 2018). It becomes necessary that the parties want the mediation to develop cooperatively as a negotiation so that in the solution to the conflict it is not adversarial, that is, there is no winner and loser (Calvo, Marreo & García, 2004).

This instrument serves as a support for teachers, both institution and those who wish to take it, since it promotes a strategy for conflict resolution in order to improve the school climate, academic performance and acquire social skills among others, applicable to all grades and ages of students. The advantages of this strategy are numerous, among which we have to propitiate a pleasant school environment, respect for others, peaceful solution of disagreements, decreases teacher participation in conflict resolution, creates enthusiastic leaders who encourage negotiation as a form of conflict resolution, there is no loser, therefore, there will be no fear of facing a complex situation, increases the faculty of dialogue and listening, creates people who contribute to peace from their social environment.

School mediation is an easy-to-use tool, very useful for conflict management, which saves time and allows the parties involved to be satisfied, reduces recidivism and improves relationships. Involving peers does not mean that they replace the role of the teacher, who must always be attentive to intervene when the situation warrants it or when the child is not capable of doing it.

During the development of this research work carried out at the Marco Antonio Franco Rodriguez Educational Institution with the students of grade 5-2, some limitations were detected, among which we have: not linking all the teachers of the educational institution. Since they would not speak the same language and the process would not have continuity since the students change time and teachers when they move to the next grade. According to the above, the continuity is changed, since in the fifth-grade students have only one teacher to guide all areas and in the following grade (sixth) there is a teacher for each area of knowledge.

The floating population of the community to which the educational institution belongs is another limitation; a high percentage of students change their place of residence, which obstructs the continuity of the process that has been initiated, just as new students enter the classroom as soon as they leave, and the process must be started with them again.

Some students do not know their peer mediators do not consider them, go to the teacher and this makes the academic peers feel uncomfortable and consider not supporting the process anymore, or generates indisposition with the instigating peers.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

School violence has been present in the classrooms and outside them, in the hallways and playgrounds; therefore, it was necessary to identify the most common cases to design a proposal to reduce these rates. The development of the research work made it possible to detect the different types of violence that were occurring within the school, and it was possible to verify that, by applying mediation at the right time, these rates decreased.

The highest rate of violence found in the classroom is joking; a fact categorized as verbal violence, which allows us to affirm that disagreements between peers should not be seen as a problem, but rather as an opportunity for change, for transformation, in which mediators become part of this renewal.

Pedagogical mediation through negotiation tables is an opportunity for change that the protagonists of the conflict have so that, voluntarily, and without there being losers, they can settle their differences.

Academic peers help to solve conflicts; however, they should not be left alone in all negotiations, since some conflicts need the help of adults due to their level of severity.

At the culmination of the research and with the experience brought to working life, the following topics can be suggested for further studies. The incidence of family and social environment in the aggressive behavior of students, school violence from the perspective of the victims, techniques for detecting violence in elementary school, age at which a child begins to externalize violence, techniques for the prevention of school violence.

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Mireya Frausto: conceptualización, investigación, metodología, administración del proyecto, recursos, software, supervisión, validación, visualización, escritura - preparación del borrador original, escritura - revisar & edición.

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