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ORIGINAL

Collaborative work: a tool for strengthening inclusive coexistence

El trabajo colaborativo: una herramienta para el fortalecimiento de la convivencia inclusiva

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article was to strengthen collaborative work among peers to improve the school environment for children with disabilities in the 5th grade at Enrique Olaya Herrera School in Bogotá. The methodology employed was a critical social approach and a qualitative paradigm; the data collection techniques used included participant observation and interviews with parents, teachers, school administrators, and staff. The results demonstrated how the incorporation of collaborative work among peers contributed significantly to improving the social environment and the inclusion of children with disabilities. It allowed the key stakeholders in the educational setting—students, parents, teachers, school leaders, and administrative staff—to identify the advantages of the proposed strategy, including acceptance, communication between parents and teachers, classroom work, empathy, and the school's educational quality. Notably, several authors highlight and consider collaborative work as a strategy to improve school coexistence through effective inclusion and as a contribution to educational quality.

Keywords: Barriers for People with Disabilities; School Environment and Learning; Social Inclusion; Teamwork,

RESUMEN

Este artículo tuvo por objetivo fortalecer el trabajo colaborativo entre pares para mejorar la convivencia escolar de niños y niñas con discapacidad en el grado 5 del colegio Enrique Olaya Herrera de la Ciudad de Bogotá. La metodología empleada fue un enfoque crítico social y el paradigma cualitativo, las técnicas de recolección de información empleadas incluyeron la observación participante, entrevistas a padres, profesores, directivos y administrativos. Los resultados evidenciaron la manera como la incorporación del trabajo colaborativo entre compañeros contribuyó, en gran manera, al mejoramiento de la convivencia e inclusión de niños y niñas con discapacidad. Permitió que los protagonistas del ámbito educativo: estudiantes, padres de familia, profesores, directivos y administrativos, identificaran las ventajas de la estrategia propuesta con elementos como la aceptación, la comunicación entre padres y maestros, el trabajo en el salón de clases, la empatía y la calidad educativa de la escuela. Es relevante anotar que varios autores destacan y consideran el trabajo colaborativo como una estrategia para mejorar la convivencia escolar a través de la inclusión efectiva y como un aporte a la calidad educativa.

Palabras claves: Barreras para las Personas con Discapacidad; Convivencia Escolar y Aprendizaje; Inclusión Social; Trabajo en Equipo.

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INTRODUCTION

Educational inclusion in Latin America faces significant challenges. According to a study "In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are approximately 19,1 million children and adolescents; of this population, 1 in 10 students has some form of disability." We constantly see how these children and young people experience various forms of violence, abuse, and discrimination—situations that lead to isolation and poor academic performance. This situation necessitates the implementation of measures to ensure that all students can receive high-quality education.[1,2] The data reveal how children and young people with disabilities are prone to discrimination and social stigmatization, which limits their opportunities and quality of life.

For its part, the DANE[3] in Colombia recorded the following statistics for the year 2023: of the total population of school-age students, 18,7 %—that is, 1,782,136—had special needs. Of this figure, 10,2 % belonged to an ethnic group; 6,3 % were part of the displaced, demobilized, or victim populations of the armed conflict; and 2,2 % had a disability, such as a disorder or other condition, as well as exceptional abilities.

On the other hand, the Enrique Olaya Herrera Educational Institution (I.E.D.) in Bogotá, located in the Rafael Uribe Uribe neighborhood, has been implementing an inclusion process for children and adolescents with disabilities for approximately nine years, with the aim of ensuring high-quality education for this population.

According to Leyton–Leyton[4], conflict is an inherent characteristic of human relationships and, as such, is the situation that arises among fifth-grade students. It therefore became necessary to address the conflict in a pedagogical manner, beginning with an analysis of the current academic landscape, which revealed how the inclusion of students with disabilities presents significant challenges in school life and academic settings. The fifth grade at Enrique Olaya Herrera School in Bogotá is no exception; the limited implementation of inclusive practices has created significant barriers for students with disabilities, hindering their integration into the school environment and leading to an unfavorable social atmosphere. Lara[5] argued that non and collaborative work not only fosters coexistence but also promotes meaningful learning, strengthening the ability to work in teams and preventing conflicts that arise during activities.

This school coexistence works to the extent that it enhances all the inclusive processes that can occur in a classroom, encouraging the development of social skills among students through collaborative work and eliminating barriers between students. The challenge involves a specific purpose: to recognize the difficulties associated with school coexistence among all students. According to Bolaños et al.[6], coexistence in the educational environment is a topic of interest to everyone and is influenced by various situations that occur in the classroom.[7] To address this issue, which is linked to others such as inclusion, disability, and collaborative work, a review of international, national, and local literature was conducted to examine the existing body of research on these topics and determine how the issue has been addressed in various institutions, with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the problem.

This exercise helped identify best practices and strategies that have been implemented in similar educational contexts. It was possible to determine how teamwork should be incorporated into the current vision of the school environment so that it contributes to clearly and efficiently improving the coexistence and inclusion of children with disabilities.[7,8,9]

In this context, proposed developing specific teaching strategies such as collaborative work; the methodology used in the study was based on a qualitative approach. This study provided strategies to improve collaborative work among students with disabilities and demonstrated that such strategies enhanced the quality of learning and the development of children's social and cognitive skills, promoting the holistic development of all students.

Lara[5] set out to address the issue of students' knowledge management and its relationship to social interaction. Her methodology was qualitative, allowing her to delve deeper into the phenomena observed among the participating students within their school context. Her contribution to this project—which, considering the school as a place where students interact both to acquire knowledge and to have fun—was to perceive the different ways of seeing the world. Therefore, through coexistence, it becomes possible to recognize diversity and learn to accept the right to equal and equity among peers.

Piñeros[10] aims to understand the process of inclusive education taking place in a district school in the city of Bogotá. He used documentary research as his methodology, analyzing categories of inclusive education and pedagogy, as well as the barriers that arise. The research concludes by emphasizing the importance of developing practices, which require a commitment from the entire community. On this basis, the urgency of implementing more inclusive educational practices that promote equity for all students becomes evident.

On the other hand, Fuentes et al.[11] argue that applying collaborative work as a pedagogical strategy strengthens school coexistence, demonstrating students' interest in participating in activities and improving interactions among them. The implementation of strategies that require a structured pedagogical approach allows the specific needs of students with disabilities to be addressed, thereby fostering an inclusive school environment. Thus, the following research questions were established:

What are the main challenges to school community life faced by students with disabilities in the 5th grade at Enrique Olaya Herrera School in Bogotá?

What collaborative classroom activities can promote interaction and inclusion among students with disabilities in the 5th grade at Enrique Olaya Herrera School in Bogotá?

How does the implementation of peer-based collaborative work improve school life and the inclusion of children with disabilities in the 5th grade at Enrique Olaya Herrera School in Bogotá?

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

In recent decades, educational inclusion has evolved from being a discursive element and an abstract ideal to a guiding principle for educational policies and school practices. Today, it is conceived not as a matter of access for students with disabilities but as a

comprehensive approach to building environments where diversity is a valued element within institutional life. Under this approach, inclusion provides the tools to transform the pedagogical and social structures that shape student life, learning, and participation. According to Kart et al.[12], this paradigm shifted away from welfare-oriented models by conceiving of difference as an opportunity to build more equitable educational communities, which facilitated the expansion of support to students with diverse needs.

In Latin America and Colombia, despite various initiatives aimed at empowering educational communities, educational inclusion has faced numerous challenges.[13,14] In this context, studies such as those by Ainscow et al.[15] and Suárez Chávez et al.[16] demonstrate that despite the recognition of inclusion as a fundamental right related to dignity, equality, and participation, difficulties persist in the region. According to the literature, these shortcomings are related to a scarcity of resources, limited stakeholder involvement, insufficient teacher training, and cultural resistance.[17,18,19] However, the literature also attests to significant progress in terms of curriculum transformation, the strengthening of community work and awareness, the adoption of educational technologies, the restructuring of assessment systems, and the reconceptualization of educational quality.[20,21]

School coexistence can be described as the system of interactions that occur among the various members of the educational community and that, over a given period of time, shape the institution's social and cultural organizational climate.[22,23,24] Another important conceptual aspect is that positive coexistence is not a state of conflict-free harmony; rather, it refers to the building of relationships on the basis of respect, tolerance, cooperation, and the peaceful resolution of differences.[25] In Colombia, the analysis by Mora Pontiluis et al.[26] highlights the importance of building a culture of peace as the foundation for developmental learning in harmonious and safe environments.

In the context of educational inclusion, positive coexistence takes on greater relevance, as the diversity of abilities, needs, values, and experiences requires schools to create spaces where differences are recognized and do not serve as grounds for exclusion—aspects that must be integrated into school management.[27,28] However, in these contexts, coexistence presents numerous challenges, among which attitudinal and communicative barriers, structural and symbolic violence, and poor empathy and microaggressions stand out.

Thus, strategies such as cooperative learning, peer mediation, and classroom projects focused on solidarity have shown that it is possible to reverse the dynamics of exclusion and foster attitudes of respect.[29] Specifically, Pina et al.[30] reported that programs based on collaboration and peer interaction can help prevent violent behaviors and promote prosocial behaviors in elementary schools, including those with budget constraints. Therefore, collaborative work is conceived as a pedagogical strategy that transcends the mere division of tasks in the classroom.[31,32] It involves a process in which students can recognize themselves as part of a collective, assume shared responsibilities, and construct knowledge together. Unlike group work, which tends to fragment roles, collaboration requires constant interaction, active listening, and shared responsibility for outcomes. This approach promotes more meaningful learning, as it is based on dialog, negotiation, and joint problem-solving, while it offers varied opportunities for collaboration among educational stakeholders.[33,34] In this way, collaboration impacts not only academic performance but also the development of essential social skills. A crucial example is provided by García V et al.[31], who, through collaborative work as a pedagogical strategy, succeeded in improving the sociocognitive skills of the participating children and strengthening the school community. Nevertheless, García V et al.[31] note that the literature on collaborative work in school contexts is still in its infancy.

METHOD

The research was conducted using a critical social paradigm, understood as *"community studies and participant* observation",[35] which led to an investigation of the selected issue. This approach allowed for direct engagement with the community, as school coexistence was strengthened following an observation of the issue in the 5th grade of Enrique Olaya Herrera Elementary School, supported by the research of Zavaleta who confirms that inclusive education improves school coexistence in educational institutions; when students work with peers, they have experiences that spark their curiosity and motivation.

The approach was qualitative in nature, employing strict systematic methods to identify a potential solution to the main problem, which generated new alternatives for its understanding and social acceptance. Following Hernández-Sampieri[36], this paradigm allowed for an understanding of the factors influencing the discrimination or exclusion of children with disabilities; on the basis of the contribution of Vega[9], it was confirmed that collaborative work offers multiple benefits to the educational community, where everyone's participation is fundamental for continuous improvement.

The method employed was action research, as it is participatory and reflective in nature.[37] Information was sought through testimonies and experiences of school life, on the basis of the three phases proposed in the book on project design in qualitative research: exploration, focusing, and deepening.[38] However, given the complexity of the phenomenon, we resorted to a data analysis inspired by grounded theory procedures, framed within what Pérez Gamboa et al.[25] call internal multimodality, which allows for the integration of methodological approaches within a single qualitative design.

The multimodal nature of the analysis allowed us to maintain coherence with the transformative objectives of action research by acknowledging the voices of the actors and promoting collective reflection on coexistence practices. Furthermore, it allowed us to leverage grounded theory's systematizing capacity to organize the data into established and emerging categories. This process of methodological integration ensured interpretive depth and procedural transparency by ensuring that the results were not limited to the description of situations and expanding the analysis to the interpretation of meanings, tensions, and possibilities for change in the construction of a truly inclusive coexistence.

During the exploration phase, participant observation was used as the primary tool to identify the problems faced by the children at Enrique Olaya Herrera School. Once the problem was identified, a preliminary review of international, national, and local experiences was conducted in accordance with the research carried out; a literature review revealed the conceptual gap that allowed

the research question to be formulated, creating four categories for the theoretical framework on which this research is based and the information related to the initial research topic.

During the data collection phase, information was gathered through semistructured interviews—interviews with simple questions in which students described their experiences related to difficulties in coexistence. Parents and teachers contributed through self-assessment; the development of educational workshops with group projects organized by theme; and, finally, fieldwork through observation, yielded precise information, which allowed for the development of an overview of the existing barriers to learning among fifth-grade students at Enrique Olaya Herrera School in Bogotá.

Finally, in the in-depth analysis phase, the data obtained were analyzed to interpret the information provided by each of the previous phases, yielding findings and conclusions that answered the research question posed for this project.

This approach allowed for the exploration and acquisition of knowledge regarding social development within the selected setting. Taking into account the considerations of Carrillo-Sierra et al.[39], the quality of the research depends on the methodological design and the data collection tools used such that they address the research question posed to achieve the expected objectives.

The research was conducted with 2 girls and 3 boys in the 5th grade of elementary school at Enrique Olaya Herrera School, aged between 9 and 11 years. These students were diagnosed with various types of disabilities, and because of this condition, they were included in the process described here. The children were selected from different classes to ensure equity and ensure the commitment of the classroom teachers. Students with disabilities faced difficulties in being accepted and respected by their peers; they were also perceived as a vulnerable group when they participated in various recreational and academic activities, with a lack of empathy observed from their academic peers. Classroom teachers generally demonstrated a certain degree of commitment to students with disabilities; the required support and accommodations were provided progressively, adapting to the individual needs of each student.

Table 1. Operationalization Matrix

General Objective	Specific Objectives	Data Collection Techniques
Strengthening collaborative work among peers to improve the school environment for children with disabilities in 5th grade at Enrique Olaya School in Bogotá	Identify the challenges related to school life faced by students with disabilities in 5th grade at Enrique Olaya Herrera School in Bogotá.	Participant observation
	Implement collaborative work among peers within the 5th-grade classroom at Enrique Olaya Herrera School in Bogotá.	Educational workshop
	Evaluate the impact of collaborative work on school socialization among fifth-grade students with disabilities at Enrique Olaya Herrera School in Bogotá.	Semistructured interviews

Participant observation: this allowed the researcher to identify how the school environment functions and to familiarize themselves with it, as well as with the interactions between students with and without disabilities. The technique was effective in that it allowed for the observation of the behavior and dynamics that arose naturally and spontaneously within the group of students without hindering the development of their academic activities. Participant observation took place at different times during the school day, both during collaborative activities and during recess and break times, providing a comprehensive view of school life. Detailed field notes were taken, and the interactions, behaviors, and reactions of the students were recorded, which allowed for a deeper reflection on the elements involved in school life.

Educational workshops: the educational workshops became dynamic and creative spaces to facilitate learning through interaction and practice. The workshops were effectively implemented, ensuring compliance with the necessary phases and ensuring an accessible experience for students with disabilities (). Objectives were clearly established, along with the specific skills and knowledge required for the practical development of these skills, making the student profile clear to adapt the content and activities to the practical competencies of the workshops.

Semistructured interviews: this technique was used as the primary tool to obtain relevant information with details regarding perceptions and experiences related to challenges in educational inclusion and school life, as well as collaborative work among children with disabilities. The interviews were designed with a flexible structure that allowed the interviewees to freely express their thoughts, while the interviewer followed a predefined guide of key questions. This approach allowed for the collection of both the expected information (based on the preestablished questions) and emerging data, which provided a deeper understanding of the topics addressed.

To ensure the study's robustness, a program of methodological rigor was implemented to strengthen both the validity and the reliability of the findings. First, a process of triangulation of techniques and informants was applied, integrating participant observation, semistructured interviews, and educational workshops. This methodological combination not only facilitated a broader view of the impact of collaborative peer work on improving school coexistence and inclusion but also allowed for the cross-validation of data from different sources, such as students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Thus, the aim was to avoid reliance

on a single perspective. In this case, Triangulation served as a mechanism for cross-checking and complementarity, ensuring that the emerging categories reflected consistent patterns rather than isolated incidents.

Furthermore, procedures were implemented to ensure data reliability. This strategy involved taking detailed field notes and maintaining complete records of observations to ensure the traceability of interpretations. The interviews were transcribed in full and subsequently subjected to a systematic coding process, which allowed for the identification of cultural, axial, and selective categories through qualitative microanalysis. Similarly, a member validation strategy was developed, which consisted of sharing preliminary findings with some of the participants to corroborate the fidelity of the interpretations against their experiences.

Finally, the internal coherence of the study was reinforced through reflexivity, understood as the constant critical review of the process and the impact of one's own beliefs on the production of knowledge. This continuous self-evaluation, together with the use of operationalization matrices and the condensation of results, made the steps transparent and ensured that the reader could clearly follow the methodological path. Thus, the research not only offers contextualized findings but also demonstrates that the process followed meets the standards of quality and rigor characteristic of qualitative studies with a critical-social approach.

RESULTS

After framing the research problem, reviewing the literature, establishing the theoretical framework, and using data collection techniques in accordance with the proposed methodology, the research results are presented under two criteria: in relation to the specific objectives and in relation to the analysis of the data.

First, the results of the analysis of the information collected through participant observation revealed that the main difficulties associated with school coexistence in fifth grade were related to intolerance of differences and a limited ability to resolve conflicts peacefully. In terms of classroom dynamics, students exhibited behaviors marked by disrespect, constant interruptions, and mocking attitudes toward their peers. These situations disrupted classroom organization and created a tense atmosphere that limited the participation of children with disabilities.

An excerpt from the observation records illustrates this situation: "They don't listen to each other; they shout to prove who is right; they argue over the work to be done. They get up from their seats again and again to look at the other groups and see who is doing better. They're becoming more and more aggressive" (TE:1, R:6). This account reflects how the lack of active listening and heightened competitiveness hinder consensus-building and undermine classroom harmony. The lack of empathy was also evident in the rejection of students with disabilities, who were frequently ignored or did not receive support from their peers when they participated in group activities.

The parents' perspective confirms this issue. One mother noted, "My son tells me that his classmates reject him; he comes home with a new comment from school… when I speak with the teacher, he tells me that everything the child hears, he internalizes and takes as if it were directed at him" (EP:1, R:8). This testimony provides evidence that attitudes of ex n the classroom were not limited to the school setting but extended into the family environment, affecting the self-esteem and emotional well-being of students with disabilities.

In summary, the difficulties in school coexistence observed were not only expressed through disruptive behaviors but were also understood as part of the reproduction of attitudinal barriers that hinder inclusion. The combination of intolerance, offensive language, and disobedience toward rules reinforced an environment that was not conducive to integration. This evidence underscores the need to implement pedagogical strategies that promote empathy, mutual respect, and collaborative conflict resolution as a foundation for moving toward a truly inclusive school environment.

The information obtained revealed that students with disabilities face greater barriers in their school life, stemming primarily from their peers' lack of tolerance and the absence of support in group activities. Unlike what was observed in other students, exclusion toward them frequently took the form of rejection, isolation, and devaluation of their contributions. These practices limited their active participation in class while reinforcing feelings of insecurity and distrust in their own abilities.

A mother's account illustrates this situation: "It worries me a little because my son tells me that his classmates reject him; he comes home and tells me things I never even imagined could be happening at school" (EP:1, R:8). This account reveals how school experiences are not confined to the classroom but spill over into the home, affecting the child's emotional and family life. The classroom, far from being a space for inclusion, becomes a setting of exclusion that affects both learning and well-being.

Likewise, classroom observations confirmed that on repeated occasions, students with disabilities were ignored or interrupted when they attempted to express their opinions or ask questions. These behaviors demonstrate that difficulties in social interaction are not limited to isolated incidents but rather reflect patterns of interaction that reinforce existing social barriers. The fact that peers do not acknowledge their contributions reflects a deficit in the development of values of respect and empathy, which are fundamental in an inclusive environment. Therefore, the school environment for students with disabilities is characterized by tension between the institutional intention to include and daily practices that still perpetuate the dynamics of segregation.

The implementation of collaborative workshops revealed significant changes in classroom dynamics. Although students initially struggled to follow basic rules of coexistence and organize themselves around shared tasks, they gradually began to show a greater willingness to interact respectfully and listen to their peers' ideas. Participation in activities such as the collective construction of paper towers demonstrated that when structured conditions for cooperation are created, children find ways to communicate and coordinate with greater empathy.

A quote gathered during the workshops reflects this transformation: "The areas where students would be most motivated to engage in collaborative work are those in which we motivate them, where knowledge is practical and verifiable" (ED: R6/E:1). This teacher's insight shows how motivation becomes a catalyst for positive interaction, highlighting that collaboration is enhanced when

activities are meaningful and connect with students' everyday experiences. In smaller groups, where students feel a sense of trust and closeness, more fluid communication and attitudes of openness toward diversity were established.

The testimonies also revealed that collaboration helped reduce exclusionary attitudes. A school administrator noted, "Regarding student interaction during collaborative activities, when there are leaders, the activities are successfully carried out, tasks are assigned, and each person assumes a role" (ED:2, R:3). This quote shows that assigning responsibilities within the group fosters recognition of individual abilities, including those of students with disabilities. Thus, collaborative work functioned as a pedagogical tool that transformed classroom dynamics by building trust and creating opportunities for all children to be heard and valued in decision-making.

In this way, the implementation of collaborative strategies not only highlights the importance of designing structured and motivating activities but also confirms that genuine cooperation fosters a climate of inclusion. The experience demonstrated that, under the right conditions, students overcome attitudes of indifference and embrace values of respect, solidarity, and shared responsibility—fundamental to building an inclusive school environment.

Analysis of the collected testimonies reveals that the impact of collaborative work went beyond the simple execution of group activities and generated transformations perceived in a convergent manner by the different actors in the educational community. For teachers, the strategy provided an opportunity to observe how students, by working as a team, developed more proactive and participatory attitudes. One teacher noted, "During the students' interaction in collaborative activities, I notice that they truly enjoy working in groups and are generally proactive and willing to contribute" (ED:4, R:3).

This finding demonstrates that collaborative work not only allowed for greater student engagement but also improved pedagogical dynamics within the classroom.

From the perspective of administrators and school leaders, the impact was evident in the creation of more inclusive spaces, where the participation of students with disabilities was naturally integrated into school activities. One of them stated, "The areas where I perceive the greatest motivation regarding collaborative work are physical education, the school orchestra, and recreational or play-based activities" (ED:5, R:6). This testimony suggests that collaborative work was not limited to the academic setting but also fostered social interaction in extracurricular contexts, reinforcing cohesion and a sense of community.

Parents highlighted the positive effect that peer collaboration had on their children's learning and well-being. One mother commented, "As a mom, I think collaborative work is good because I see that my daughter has improved in many ways; in social studies classes, you can see she's making more progress" (EP:2, R:6). This observation confirms that the strategy not only had an immediate effect in the classroom but was also reflected in the academic progress perceived at home, strengthening families' confidence in the educational process.

The triangulation of these perspectives shows that collaborative work acted as a catalyst for inclusive coexistence. While tensions inherent in daily interaction persisted, the strategy helped create spaces for trust, dialog, and shared responsibility that changed the way students related to one another and to their teachers. Thus, the impact cannot be understood solely as a pedagogical outcome but rather as a process of cultural transformation within the school, where attitudinal barriers began to give way to practices based on cooperation, empathy, and mutual recognition.

Table 3. Condensation Matrix

Selection Category of Stories	N	%	Axial Categories	N	%
School coexistence creates tension in social relationships	93	44 %	Classroom Interaction	18	9
			Friends and Emotions	24	11
			Conflicts and disagreements	17	8
			Exclusion and segregation	24	11
			Reflections on school life	10	4
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Disability in the school and family	26	12 %	Family context	14	7
			Disability and its implications for school	12	6
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Collaborative work: a pedagogical practice	93	44 %	Challenges and benefits of collaborative work	62	29
			Strategies and resources to promote collaborative work	31	15
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Total	212	100 %	Total	212	100

This finding demonstrates that students show a greater willingness to interact assertively—that is, they converse and listen to one another, actively participating in the proposed activities; when they carry out the workshop activity, they are slightly more understanding and display more open and empathetic attitudes toward one another. They feel comfortable sharing their emotions and ideas, allowing them to express themselves in a more respectful and sincere manner.

The instruments were analyzed using microanalysis for qualitative research, which involved examining the data on the basis of an inductive process, where cultural categories were grouped according to their thematic affinity, leading to the emergence of axial categories, for which a preliminary interpretation exercise was subsequently conducted.

The selective category "School Coexistence: A Tension in Social Relationships" consists of 93 narratives, which accounts for 44 % of the total weighted value of the research study. It is the broadest category in terms of axial categories, as it comprises five categories: classroom coexistence, friends and emotions, conflicts and disagreements, exclusion and segregation, and reflections on school coexistence. The narratives refer to moral values, social and emotional development, differences of opinion, and excluded or marginalized peers, and with respect to inclusion, they invite reflection on ways to promote a positive climate of coexistence and a call for respect.

The second category is titled "Disability in the School and Family Environment" and consists of 26 stories, accounting for 13 % of the total weight of the research study. It comprises two core categories: "The Family Context" and "Disability and Its Implications for School." The narratives address topics such as disability, the family context, the challenges faced by students with disabilities in the school environment, and the importance of instilling values within the family.

The selective category "collaborative work, a pedagogical practice" consists of 93 narratives, accounting for 44 % of the total weight of the research study. It includes all situations related to group work: perceptions of group and collaborative work, activities carried out in groups, and the benefits of group work. This category comprises two core subcategories: The first subcategory refers to what members of the educational community express regarding group work and collaborative work. The second subcategory refers to the strategies or activities carried out in a group and collaborative manner across different areas.

DISCUSSION

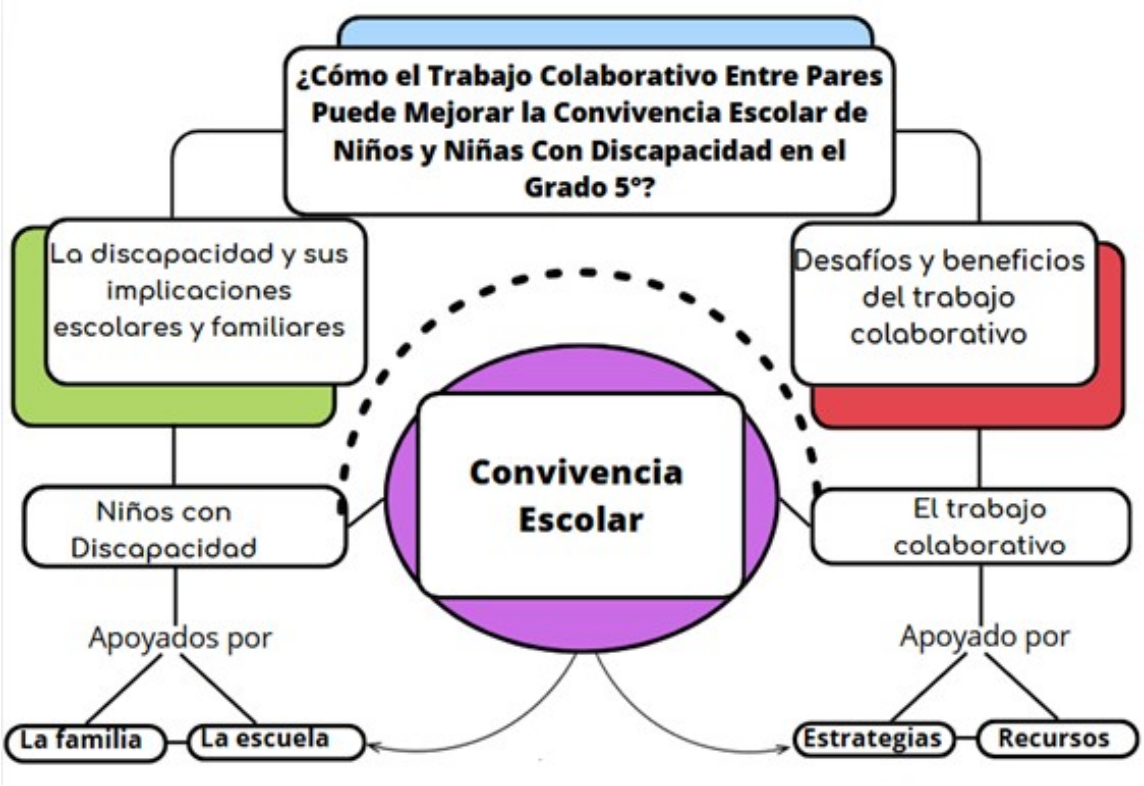

Figure 1. Framework of Meaning

The authors of Fuentes et al.[11] and Lara[5] agree that the implementation of collaborative work improves school social interaction. On the basis of these authors and the research question presented, this research project, as shown in the figure, begins with the following research question: How can collaborative work among peers improve the school climate for children with disabilities in the fifth grade at the IED Enrique Olaya Herrera in Bogotá? A qualitative analysis is conducted on the basis of the identification, implementation, and evaluation of data collection instruments, such as interviews with parents, classroom teachers, school administrators, and school staff, as well as participant observations. Three distinct categories emerged: the first category is disability and its implications for school and family life; the second category is school social interaction; and the third and final category consists of the challenges and benefits of collaborative work. Collaborative work strategies must be implemented to

improve school life, as this is fundamental to relationships.

The category of disability and its implications for school and family life stems from accounts of cultural categories. Here, the discussion focuses on the difficulties that children with disabilities may face both at school and at home; among the disabilities present in the classroom are physical, sensory, and cognitive, which explains why support from the family and the institution is crucial in overcoming these challenges.

According to Guerrero Cuentas et al.[40], adequate support must be provided to these students with disabilities so that they can achieve optimal performance in their academic and learning processes. This proposal demonstrates how teamwork can help all children feel more comfortable, secure, and learn better at school, especially those with disabilities, with the aim of improving school life through this collaborative work.

With respect to the category "challenges and benefits of collaborative work," the author Ayala[7] states that collaborative work as a pedagogical strategy is effective for the inclusion of students with disabilities. In turn, the author Vega[9] notes that collaborative work improves the performance of children with disabilities and facilitates the creation of strategies that benefit student learning.

Taking these observations and findings into account, educational workshops were developed with 5th-grade students through collaborative work, supported by various strategies and resources. How this creates bonds among the work groups was observed; each student contributes on the basis of their abilities and skills, an environment is fostered where empathy is highlighted, and a harmonious atmosphere prevails in the classroom. One of the mothers remarked:

"I think the collaborative work my son does at school is beneficial, since they involve him in the process—having him contribute to projects they need to turn in—which helps lighten his workload and reduce the amount of homework he has. It's also great that they teach my son to help others, to be kind, and to have the willingness to help and collaborate with those who need it." (T: EP, EP:3, R:6).

Additionally, several students expressed their enjoyment of working in groups. Therefore, we can conclude that collaborative work among peers truly improves school life. According to a study coteaching and collaborative learning are inclusive learning strategies that teachers can incorporate into their classrooms. As evidenced during the project's implementation, this inclusive learning occurs because of dialog among students to generate solutions to proposed topics.

Consequently, a study notes that education is a task that falls to society as a whole; on the other hand, classroom interaction is a fundamental element for children's education; in this sense, the teacher must ensure that it occurs in an inclusive manner. This is a challenge, as we know that in the classroom, there is cultural, functional, gender, socioeconomic, and religious diversity, among others, which allows everyone to enrich society in different ways. However, working with functional diversity is somewhat complex, as children bring beliefs from their homes; this is why families must be involved in the concept of inclusive education, and the teacher's perspective—who plays a fundamental role—must be explored. Failing to do so leads to constant situations of conflict among students, for example:

"After an hour, the test proctors collect some exams. Child 1 hands in his work, but when the proctor reviews it, she notices that some questions are missing. Therefore, she asks him to review the exam and complete it. Some children ask to go to the bathroom, so the proctor gives them permission, but one at a time. The children argue among themselves, push each other, and try to get in line first." (T: DC, DC:4, R:4).

The findings of this study are closely aligned with the literature on educational inclusion and collaborative work, confirming some of its premises and offering distinct nuances from the Latin American and Colombian context. In line with the observations of Cuji Sangucho[41] and Villar-Cavieres et al.[34] it was evident that collaborative work fosters peaceful environments and stimulates meaningful learning. Testimonies from teachers and students revealed that cooperation, when guided by structured dynamics, reduces conflicts in the classroom and enhances active participation. These results validate the role of collaboration as a pedagogical tool for resolving and preventing school tensions, aligning with the findings of García Vera et al.[31] and Mora Pontiluis et al.[26].

Similarly, the results align with the observations of Fuentes Daza et al.[11], who argue that peer collaboration strengthens social cohesion by increasing students' motivation and willingness to participate. In this study, both parents and school administrators highlighted improvements in the academic and social engagement of children with disabilities, confirming that collaboration not only has an effect in the classroom but also extends to the family and community spheres. This finding broadens the authors' perspective by underscoring the importance of the impact shared by multiple educational stakeholders.

However, compared with other studies, this study introduces significant differences. While research such as that by Navarro Montaño et al.[42] highlights the need for sustained inclusive practices at the institutional level, this study revealed that even short-term interventions, when grounded in collaborative work, can generate significant transformations in social interaction.[43] This tension opens the possibility of reflecting on the scale and duration of inclusive strategies, showing that attitudinal changes can emerge in specific processes, even though broader educational policies are required to ensure their permanence.[44] In this sense, the findings do not contradict the literature, but they do nuance its interpretation by demonstrating how the immediate effects of collaborative work can lay the groundwork for deeper cultural change.[45]

CONCLUSIONS

Colombian legislation recognizes the rights of children as human beings and/or subjects of special protection. This is established by the Political Constitution of Colombia and the Code on Children and Adolescents. As a society, we have an obligation to protect them and ensure their harmonious development; their right to life, health, identity, freedom, and, of course, education. Under this premise, this study develops strategies to ensure the right to healthy coexistence, especially since it is in the classroom where children spend most of their time sharing various experiences during the educational process. Thus, the educational institution has

an obligation to create an environment with favorable conditions—both physically and psychologically—to ensure that its students' rights are, in fact, respected and addressed.

School life in the fifth grade at Enrique Olaya Herrera School is marked by individual differences, social roles, and prejudices within the school environment, particularly toward children with disabilities. For this reason, this pedagogical intervention guides students to practice values, primarily respect and empathy, during academic activities.

Collaborative work, as the pedagogical practice employed, enabled the creation of bonds among students, allowing them to connect, engage in dialog, listen to one another, and work together to achieve the common goals set for the class; the participation of all students and their interaction within groups allowed them to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, foster bonds of unity, and encourage the practice of values to improve school coexistence in the classroom.

Through collaborative work, which is a response to the social nature of human beings, school inclusion was fostered such that it promoted the integration of students regardless of their circumstances; the children put their abilities and skills at the service of their classmates, which generated them to generate trust, respectful treatment, and recognition of their potential to contribute to the completion of the activities proposed in the classroom. This study demonstrates that, with appropriate strategies, it is possible to overcome attitudinal barriers and build a more inclusive and supportive school community.

Although the results are valuable, it is important to note that some limitations may affect how well these findings can be applied to other situations. This study focused on a very specific case, the fifth grade at the Enrique Olaya Herrera School, so the results may not be fully applicable in different educational contexts. Furthermore, the research was based on a short-term pedagogical intervention, so the changes in social interaction and inclusion observed may be temporary. Long-term follow-up is necessary to confirm whether practices based on values such as respect and empathy are truly sustained over time. On the other hand, although collaborative work proved to be an effective strategy for improving inclusion, the study did not delve into how other external factors, such as the family environment or the institution's broader policies, also play important roles in school coexistence. It is possible that the results are closely linked to the specific characteristics of the students and the school's social and cultural context.

These limitations also open up opportunities for new lines of research. It is appropriate to continue the study through longitudinal follow-up processes that allow for the evaluation of the sustainability of changes in school coexistence. Similarly, it is advisable to replicate the experience in other grades and institutions with diverse characteristics to compare the effectiveness of collaborative work in different educational settings. The relationships among the participation of families, institutional commitment, and the impact of collaborative strategies should also be explored in greater detail to achieve a comprehensive analysis of the factors that strengthen or weaken inclusion.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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