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**Armed conflict and its impact on bilingualism: a reflection for the departments of
Antioquia and Chocó**

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Antioquia and Chocó**

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This research is dedicated to the teachers and students of Colombia who lost their lives at the hands of the armed conflict.

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Table of contents

Abstract	7
Introduction.....	8
Background research	10
Research statement	17
Research Aim	20
Research Objectives	20
Rationale	21
Theoretical Framework.....	24
Armed conflict	24
Armed conflict in Colombia	28
Armed conflict in Antioquia and Chocó	32
Bilingualism	37
Standardized Testing	39
ICFES Saber 11 English Test	41
Methodology	46
Instruments	49
Population and sampling	51
Ethical Considerations	53
Data analysis and discussion.....	54
Conclusions.....	85
Further research	87
References	88

Graphics Index

Figure 1.....	17
Figure 2.....	22
Figure 3.....	47
Figure 4.....	54
Figure 5.....	55
Figure 6.....	56
Figure 7.....	57
Figure 8.....	58
Figure 9.....	58
Figure 10.....	60
Figure 11.....	61
Figure 12.....	61
Figure 13.....	62
Figure 14.....	63
Figure 15.....	64
Figure 16.....	65
Figure 17.....	66
Figure 18.....	70

Abstract

The intention of this research is to analyze the relationship among the armed conflict and students' performance in the ICFES Saber 11 English exam over the last 10 years. For the analysis, it is observed the rural educational population belonging to the departments of Antioquia and Chocó, considering their strong history of violence at the hands of the armed groups outside the law. To get to the results, a correlational mixed methodology was adapted that allowed the use of a quantitative and qualitative analysis which, through a review of the results of the ICFES databases and an open-type interview, revealed different educational gaps in these departments.

Key words: armed conflict, standardized testing, rurality, bilingualism, and connectivity.

Introduction

This thesis project was created as one of the research lines of the macro project called Diagnostic Evaluation of the Results of the Saber 11 Tests in the Area of English and its Relationship with the Connectivity Data in Colombia; nevertheless, the idea of addressing the relationship between armed conflict and rural school performance in the English test arose from the interest of letting know the increasing intensity of armed conflicts in the world and the importance that education has in the well-being of students, considering that, according to several authors, the educational community is one of the most affected when there is presence of armed groups (Meneses, et al, 2019).

This study was contextualized in the departments of Antioquia and Chocó, which sought to analyze the relationship among the armed conflict of these departments' rural regions and the students' performance in the ICFES Saber 11 English test over the last 10 years. In order to understand the characteristics of the object under study, a theoretical framework was developed to delve into the concept of armed conflict and its history in Colombia, Antioquia and Chocó, as well as the definition and contextualization of the concept bilingualism, standardized tests and the ICFES Saber 11 English test.

On the other hand, for the development of the research, a mixed correlational methodological approach was implemented which included a quantitative analysis of the performance data of the English test and a qualitative analysis that measured the intensity of conflict; in this case, for the quantitative phase, the databases of the results of the English test of the last ten years were used, while for the qualitative phase, an open-type interview was applied to a specialist in the subject of conflict in these regions.

By using this methodology in the data collected, it was possible to find a variation in the performance of the tests where the armed conflict could be recognized as one of the variables that alter performance, likewise, it was possible to identify important gaps within the educational community and other social issues that contribute to the set of findings that justify the relationship between violence and the performance of the ICFES standardized English test.

In order to understand the construction of this study, it is important to mention that the document is divided into nine chapters, and that each one of them contains at the beginning a brief description of how it was developed. In general terms, it begins by relating the subject with the research of other authors to know the background; then the research statement to clarify the intention of the study is explained; followed by the description of the history of the object of study and the explorations of sections such as the concepts used in the discussion; the means used to analyze the data; the discussion to compare the results of the two phases, and the conclusions to answer the research objectives.

Background research

The following chapter presents continuously and articulately the different axes of study that lead to understand the context of the problem at hand. In a first instance, the academic performance of schools in areas where there is a presence of armed groups is defined, in which it is explain the armed conflict in the world, its behavior in Colombia, and its intensity through the years. On the other hand, the impact of armed conflict on educational agents is explained, in which is carried out an analysis for the global picture and then for the Colombian case. Finally, the Colombian academic achievement reached in other standardized tests is noted, considering the context of internal conflict that the country has witnessed.

Regarding the context of the academic performance of rural schools, it has been well known that it is usually affected by different circumstances such as isolation, child labor, poverty, shortage of educators, among others; however, despite these phenomena, the violence exerted by armed groups outside the law has been one of the main consequences that affect the academic development. In this sense, several investigations have agreed that armed conflict has behaved as a risk for the educational system since it directly affects students and therefore their educational average.

Taking into account the above, the research works of Poirier (2012) and Alberca (2015) help us to understand this problem, Poirier emphasizing the armed conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa and Alberca focusing on the Syrian case; in these, despite their cultural differences, both studies concluded that students who have been victims of the armed conflict present a significantly lower measure than students who have not been, since young people who have been affected by the violence of their country have different psychological, physical and emotional

repercussions that are shown to have a strong negative impact on the educational performances (Alberca, 2015).

Along the same line of work, Rojas, *et al* (2017) contribute an investigation for the Colombian case, in which the same negative impact is evidenced in rural schools that present the same condition of violence. For his part, González (2016) points out that “54.5% of the students consider that the greatest effects that the conflict has left them are psychological” (p. 184). Besides, his findings contemplate that the students themselves recognize that basic education is one of the main gaps and needs that exist in those areas, communities belonging to regions like Antioquia, Chocó, and Bolívar that have precisely been the most affected (González, 2016).

Consequently, this situation brings a temporary or permanent isolation of students from educational institutions, which paralyze the academic performance and therefore, the participation in state examination tests. In Colombia, this effect has been measured in several investigations through the results of state exams; the investigations of Camargo (2020) and Saldarriaga, *et al* (2020) are an example of this, bearing in mind that by using the results of the ICFES Saber 11 exit exam, especially the subjects of language and mathematics, have managed to measure the intensity of the armed conflict in the educational population of the most affected areas. Camargo (2020) points that “the results show an increase of student population in areas of low intensity of the conflict, a drastic change in the local demography that leads to fewer students in the areas of greater intensity of conflict” (p. 278). Based on Saldarriaga *et al* (2020) Antioquia, Chocó and Cauca stand out within the regions with low academic performance and high level of conflict.

Additionally, they coincide that between 2002 and 2018 there have been alterations in the results according to the period in which the conflict takes place, in this, a lower average score of

the tests is observed in 2002 since the violence was more intense at that time, and a higher score between the years 2013 and 2018 in which the opposite is evident (Camargo, 2020). This behavior of academic performance according to the intensity of conflict is also evident in the Syrian case, in which Alberca (2015) mentions that “before the arrival of violence to the country, 97% of children were in school” (p. 2), however, after this, “more than one million Syrian children were registered as refugees, of whom 75% no longer received educational care” (p. 2).

Considering the investigations mentioned above, it can be stated that the effects of social conflicts and their intensity, ranging from the loss of family members, physical violence, displacement; the inability to attend school in terms of danger, the destruction of infrastructure, among others, negatively impact students' performance. Likewise, it is highlighted that the participation of armed groups in the educational context interrupts the learning process and, in some cases, the partial loss of it since students are forced to leave schools and resume their educational activities in other institutions.

On a different subject, the effects on the educational framework by the armed conflict are also reflected in educational agents. Teachers, for their part, have also been one of the main victims of the conflict, since in most cases they act as social leaders and promoters of ideas, tasks that are against the political ideas of armed groups, as consequence, they must face constant grievances that put their security at risk.

According to Duarte and Cano in 2016:

Around the world, there have been thousands of reported cases of, teachers, professors, academics, and other members of the educational community being taken prisoner, held in captivity, beaten, tortured, burnt alive, shot by rebels, armies, and repressive regimes; imprisoned or raped by armed groups or forces in school or on their way to school. Due to their privileged

position as conveyors of knowledge, their access to the most vulnerable members of the population, and their embrace of political ideals that are respected by the community, those within the teaching profession are very tempting prey for armed groups and the military (p. 10).

Zhang & Zhao (2018) agree that “during the war, a large number of qualified teachers flee the country, are injured, killed, or are mobilized to the front line, which results in a dramatic declination in the number of teachers” (p. 81). On the other hand, Buckland (2014) adds different context stating that:

In Cambodia, the carnage was even greater, leaving the system virtually without trained or experienced teachers. In Timor Leste, the impact on teacher numbers of that relatively short conflict was uneven: in primary schools, 80 percent of the teachers were Timorese and remained, while almost all secondary school teachers were Indonesian. The failure of the Indonesian teachers to return left Timor Leste with almost no trained or qualified personnel for its secondary system and no access to tertiary education (p.13).

In Colombia, the picture is not different. Through a qualitative research Romero (2011) and Lizarralde (2003) have had an approach to educational personnel in rural areas of the country where this problem is evidenced. In the research *Teachers in Conflict Areas* by Lizarralde (2003) it is explained that the teachers make it a daily routine to think about the idea of becoming victims of conflict, which, according to the researcher:

“It has led teachers to internalized fear as a pattern of behavior since they have also seen how impunity allows armed actors to act without any problems, and where the polarization of the conflict means that anyone who is not on one side is suspected of being an "enemy” (p. 3).

Therefore, this situation does not allow them to trust anyone, which makes them adopt an attitude of rejection since even their colleagues can be considered a danger, so in order not to

be compromised by their own political ideas, they prefer to stay away from everyone (Lizarralde, 2003). It is important to remember the context in which these teachers work. Flor Romero makes an analysis specifically in the Department of Antioquia in her research in 2005, in which she suggests that nowadays there are still illegal armed groups from the extreme right and the extreme left, in her study, she points out that those teachers work in real minefields, and that some causes for which they are assassinated are their political position, for being agents of left-wing organizations, for being human rights defenders, among others. (Romero, 2011).

In short, it is important to note that many of the teaching staff like teachers, coordinators, counselors, and volunteers have also experienced deep psychological and physical suffering during times of war, which can cause severe damage to the teaching and learning activities. Likewise, the pressure from the armed groups creates in them a feeling of fear that does not allow them to carry out pedagogical activities correctly, causing many of them to leave their posts, and consequently, education remains in the hands of personnel not qualified to teach.

Finally, the information provided above helps to understand the last axe of this chapter, the academic achievement in a war scenario, in this case focusing on academic achievement in Colombia through standardized testing. For our interest, in the research article of Meneses, *et al* (2019) the ICFES state tests Saber 3, 9, and 11 are analyzed, in this, it is found that the performance of students is significantly interrupted when violent acts occur during the academic period, outcoming as a low score in the test results. In this sense, the students do not have the cognitive requirements established to take the test, in other words, they take the exam without having seen or studied the subjects it contains.

Even so, a similar study carried out in 2017 by Silvia Gómez states that “the relationship between the intensity of the conflict and student performance on exit examinations is not as

straightforward as it may seem at first glance” (p. 74). The results obtained using a multilevel model do not show any significant relation between civil conflict and educational achievement, whereas the results obtained using an instrumental variables approach do provide evidence of the negative repercussions that a civil conflict can have on the educational achievement of students taking into account that schools can deliver that protection by providing them with a safe place to play, offering an alternative to destructive conduct, providing access to healthy and nutritious meals, and offering guidance from counselors and teachers (Gómez, 2017, p. 95).

However, it is important to highlight that the dynamics of the conflict vary according to time and intensity since there are places where the school is not a safe place because in many cases it is used as a strategic recruitment center. To understand it better, the research of Soler (2016) and Cita (2019) provide evidence of the negative repercussions that a civil conflict can have on the achievement of schools, these agree that the achievement of children is not outstanding because of the chaotic atmosphere in which they perform their classes and many other authors have reached the same conclusion considering the complexity of the case study.

For its part, the achievements of basic education in Colombia in the PISA tests show the same trend, in which the country is presented as one of the lowest in academic performance compared to other countries from Asia and Latin America. One of the aspects mentioned by Elena Martinez in 2013, which could be one of the consequences of the low results of Colombian students in the PISA tests, is:

The lack of psychological attention to early childhood and teenagers who lose their parents or loved ones in the middle of violent acts by armed groups outside the law since this may cause a trauma that prevents them from carrying out their studies (Martínez, 2013, p. 50).

To conclude, according to the previously analyzed studies, it can be stated that there is a relationship between armed conflict and the low academic performance of rural schools in different state exams, considering that the violent acts caused in these places hinder the development of pedagogy and consequently generate an unequal performance between students from rural and urban areas. Within the analysis, it is also understood that although there have been studies that examine the results of national standardized tests in areas where there is a presence of armed conflict, most of them are focused on language and mathematics.

Research statement

In Colombia, the case of armed conflict has been very well known. Historically, around eight insurgent groups (FARC, ELN, EPL, M-19, PRT, MAQL, CRS, MIR-Patria Libre) have strongly hit the civil population from 1950 up to now in the bipartisan struggles between liberals and conservatives, which seek to gain control of territories and, more recently, in the dispute over the control of drug trafficking (Pulzo, 2020).

Even though the internal conflict has spread throughout the national territory, some departments have been more affected than others, bearing in mind the high number of massacres, social leaders assassinated, displacements, territorial losses, etc. within these cases are the Antioquia and Chocó departments, shown below in figure 1, which according to Posso (2020) have historically been reported among the most affected.

Figure 1.

Location of Antioquia and Chocó in Colombia.



Note. own creation.

As a consequence, this violence has significantly affected the educational community, bringing a negative impact on school performance and a gap between affected and unaffected students when it comes to measuring their educational level. In the case of last grade high school students, the Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education (ICFES) measures their academic knowledge through the Saber 11 exit exam, in which the subjects of Critical Reading, Mathematics, Social and Citizens; Natural Sciences, and English are included.

Although it can be confirmed that the exam results remain stable in the national average, the subject with the lowest performance, in general, is English with a score of 46.9 in the last year (ICFES, 2021), in which the negative impact of students from rural areas stands out based on the ICFES annual report (ICFES, 2020). This performance could be the result of the low index of English in the country; in the last 10 years, the English Proficiency Index study, carried out by the Education First Institution, has positioned Colombia in the “low” and “very low” categories, ranking 77th out of the one hundred countries that participated in the last year, and the 17th within the 19 Latin American countries (EF, 2020).

However, the analysis of the aforementioned results presents a particularity; these have tended to generalize the performance of rural schools without taking into account the cases of armed conflict in some of the municipalities. In the latest national report of the Saber 11 exam, a standard of the English test is made according to the rural and urban area (ICFES, 2020), nevertheless, this is done at a national level, it does not take into account that rurality is affected in different places by different situations, such as conflict. Likewise, most of the investigations carried out previously in this field have only addressed the behavior of the results of language and mathematics, leaving aside subjects such as English, which has indeed been ranked as the lowest one.

Thus, taking into account the above, it is found that the performance of rural schools continues to be a breaking point in the ICFES national average, and if this trend continues, not only will the results remain the same, but it will also not be fully understood how education needs to be developed, specifically in the English area, in territories where there is a presence of conflict; and in this way, the possibility that students have to achieve a better result is limited as well as it is the chance to get appropriate learning in a second language.

In this context, it is important to ask:

How is the armed conflict in the Antioquia and Chocó rural regions related to students' performance in the ICFES Saber 11 English test over the last 10 years?

Research Aim

Analyzing the relationship among the armed conflict in the Antioquia and Chocó rural regions and students' performance in the ICFES Saber 11 English test over the last 10 years.

Research Objectives

1. To observe the trend of the Saber 11 English test over the last 10 years in all rural areas of Antioquia and Chocó.
2. To identify the rural areas with the lowest performance in the English test and assess their background or signs of armed conflict.
3. To assess whether the results of the English test vary according to the intensity of conflict over the years.

Rationale

The current research project seeks to understand the relationship between the performance of Colombian students in the ICFES Saber 11 tests in the area of English and the violent acts carried out by illegal armed groups in rural areas of the departments of Antioquia and Chocó through the years.

The initiative of this project is part of the institutional research ‘Diagnostic Evaluation of the Results of the Saber 11 Tests in the Area of English and its Relationship with the Connectivity Data in Colombia’ which contributes to the institutional research of bilingualism translation; however, the idea of making an approach to the relationship with the armed conflict comes up from the interest of implying the importance of the historical context to which the object of study has been exposed since the educational community has been one of the social groups that most have historically been affected by conflict. For this measurement, the results of the Saber 11 exam are used since it is a standardized test that helps to understand the level of students with exact results and to design improvement strategies in the education sector.

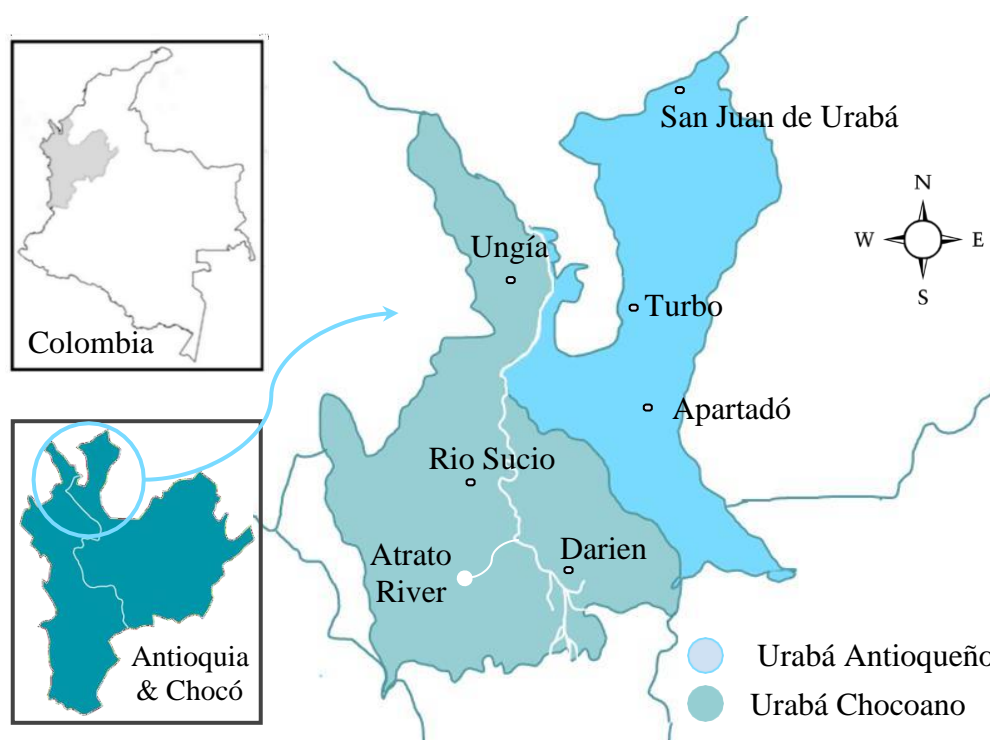
Regarding the object of study, the regions of Antioquia and Chocó are chosen, taking into account that they share a dynamic between some of their municipalities, shown in figure 2, such as Unguía, Riosucio, Carmen del Darién, Ituango, Apartadó, among others, which includes four moments in the history of internal conflict.

First, the formation of guerrilla groups, mainly in Antioquia municipalities, from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s; second, the effort to regain control of the territory by the Armed Forces since the early 1970s, both in the Antioquia and Chocó subregions; the third moment corresponds to the formation of paramilitary groups under the structure of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia) and the consolidation of

territorial, military, economic and political control in the region Elmer Cárdenas, which includes the Urabá Antioqueño and Chocoano, during the 90s until 2006. With the demobilization of the AUC (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia), the fourth moment begins, in which the interest of the guerrillas in having control of some of these territories is once again evident (Tovar, 2015).

Figure 2.

Municipalities exposed to armed conflict in the Urabá subregion.



Note. Own creation.

Based on the intensity of the conflict, education initiatives have been focused mainly on places where this problem is not experienced. In Colombia, within the subjects examined by the ICFES, English is one of the least promoted at the national level and is one of the subjects with the greatest gap between rural and urban areas. Although there are important bilingualism

initiatives in the country, only a part of the student community has access to these. Regarding the object of study, both Antioquia and Chocó have important bilingualism initiatives such as educational centers for the learning of English in their capitals Medellín and Quibdó, however, when analyzing the case of Urabá or Atrato, subregions with territory in both departments, the scenario of bilingualism may be very different due to the isolation and state neglect (Meneses, et al, 2019).

Therefore, analyzing the English results of these rural areas would not only help to understand the low levels of bilingualism but also the importance of implementing initiatives or functional strategies that support the educational community in strengthening English as a second language. On the other hand, it would help the field of languages to measure the level of English handled by rural high school students who are possible candidates for careers in foreign languages. Finally, evaluating the relationship of the results with the intensity of the armed conflict would help to understand the importance of receiving education in a healthy context to achieve better academic performance.

Theoretical Framework

In order to understand the armed conflict in this research, the following section is intended to provide information on historical aspects and a description of the related concepts. Initially, the term of armed conflict is defined for later understanding its historical behavior in the world, in Colombia, and in the departments of Antioquia and Chocó, which are the regions of the object of investigation. Considering that the historical aspects are complex and large, the most important and relevant moments are considered. Additionally, in this section are described relevant concepts to understand some of the terminology used in the research, within these concepts are bilingualism, standardized tests, and Saber 11 English Test; here, the concepts are initially defined and then contextualize to the problem of the object under study.

Armed conflict

To establish a definition of armed conflict, it is important to take into account the complexity and diversity of the term, although it could be defined as a violent confrontation between two or more parties, there are diverse ways to explain it depending on the context, characteristics, and causes. Therefore, various authors have chosen to distinguish the term between international armed conflicts and non-international armed conflicts.

The International Humanitarian Law Treaties stands that for centuries, sovereign States have regulated their relations in both peace and war through treaties, a tradition based on mutual recognition of national sovereignty and international legal personality. Conversely, “governments have long been reluctant to subject their efforts to maintain law and order and public security within their territorial borders to the purview of international law” (Melzer, 2016,

p. 53), this is why the dichotomy between international and non-international armed conflicts is a result of political history rather than military necessity or humanitarian need (Melzer, 2016).

Now, taking into account the explanation of Melzer (2016) in the International Humanitarian Law Treaties, Cañadas et al (2005) and Hernández (1999) agree that there is a distinction in the definition of the term, in this sense; an international armed conflict occurs between two or more sovereign states and the dispute it is fought with its own military forces, while a non-international armed conflict takes place within a single State, considering the participation of non-state agents and, in general, armed groups that fight among themselves or against the government.

Although it can be stated that the distinction between the aforementioned forms of armed conflict would be unnecessary, considering that in both there is violence due to the use of arms, Melzer (2016) insists that there are decisive differences that makes it indispensable to maintain the distinction between them, he points out that:

The most significant difference concerns the threshold of violence required for a situation to be deemed an armed conflict. Given that *jus ad Bellum* imposes a general prohibition on the use of force between States, any such use can be legitimately presumed to express belligerent intent and to create a situation of international armed conflict, which must be governed by the International Humanitarian Law. By contrast, within their own territory, States must be able to use force against groups or individuals for the purpose of law enforcement; and the use of force by such groups or individuals against each other or against governmental authorities generally remains a matter of national criminal law (Melzer, 2016, p. 54).

Likewise, he states that consequently:

The threshold of violence required to trigger a non-international armed conflict and, thereby, the applicability of the International Humanitarian Law is significantly higher than for an international armed conflict. Another important reason for maintaining the distinction between the international and non-international armed conflict is the position taken by many States that equating the two types of armed conflict could be perceived as providing armed opposition groups with international status and might therefore undermine State sovereignty and encourage rebellion (Melzer, 2016, p. 65).

Now, having regard to this information, it is important to mention that currently armed conflicts are characterized by being mostly non-international, in other words, internal, and these have an important national and international influence (Cañadas et al., 2005). Additionally, it must be taken into account that for a dispute to be considered as an armed conflict, hostilities must reach a minimum level of intensity, therefore, according to Themnér and Wallenstein (2011) “using weapons or other means of destruction, they must cause at least twenty-five battle-related deaths in a year” (p. 532).

In the *Agenda Internacional Journal*, Hernández (1999) points that there are three elements that must be considered in the identification of an internal conflict: the first are the actors, who must be organized as collective entities and the generation of peace is not within their interests; the second is the incompatibility, which consists of the impossibility of satisfying the two or more parties seeking the same resources (for this type of situation, the best solution is perceived by external observers), and the third is the behavior or actions that the actors consciously perform, such as violent confrontations (Hernández, 1999).

Additionally, it is important to note that the process to get to civil war can be long and prolonged, in this regard, Hernández (1999, p. 84) suggests four possible moments in the

creation of an internal conflict, initially, the identification of patterns that trigger disagreements within the communities is found, then it is followed by the mobilizations where these disagreements are disclosed, after that the politicization of ideas or initiatives for change takes place, and finally, everything leads to the civil war in the dispute between political axes, which is generally fought in violent struggles.

Hence, it can be confirmed that armed conflict is the existing incompatibility or opposition between two or more parties that result in the use of armed force as the only resource to achieve their interests and purposes. In respect of internal conflict, it must be taken into account the participation of outlaw groups or non-state armed groups that fight among themselves or against the government and that consequently leave a considerable number of deaths per year.

Bearing in mind this definition and the characteristics that an internal armed conflict must have, it is possible to take a look at its behavior in the world over the years. In an analysis carried out by Lotta Themnér and Peter Wallensteen in 2011, all the cases of conflict between years 1946 and 2010 are mentioned, the results show a total of 133 conflicts around the world, including the regions of Europe, the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Americas, within the analysis, the years 2003 and 2010 stand out as the years with the fewest cases of conflict in the world with a total of 30, and on the other hand, it is found that 1992 was the year with the highest number of conflicts with a total of 53 (Themnér and Wallensteen, 2011).

Unfortunately, today there are still numerous cases of armed conflict around the world, according to a report by Amnesty International, “by the end of 2016, sixty-five million people around the world remained displaced by armed conflict; the largest number ever recorded” (Amnesty, 2021).

Armed conflict in Colombia

It is worth mentioning that there is a lot of information regarding the Colombian case of armed conflict, therefore, it is not easy to fully understand its emergence without contemplating the whole historical background. Nevertheless, a brief description of the most relevant moments in its history will be made below as well as certain factors that will facilitate the understanding of its formation, causes, impact, and scope.

For more than 50 years, Colombians have endured the longest-running armed conflict in the Western Hemisphere (ICTJ, 2009). According to Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2013):

The history of the Colombian armed conflict is so extensive that it is difficult to explain, not only because of its prolonged character but because, unlike armed conflicts and wars in other countries, in the case of Colombia, several factors that encourage war are emerged and intertwined. On one hand, there are the economic factors, which are related to the possession and use of lands such as agricultural, mining, and energy exploitation, or to the income linked to illegal activities such as smuggling and drug trafficking (p. 192).

On the other hand, there are the socio-political factors, such as the closure of spaces for citizen participation, the exclusion of certain regions, the instrumentalization, the attack on legitimate forms of social organization, the opposition, the claim, among others (CNMH, 2013).

In this context, the existing armed groups have justified the use of violence as the only method to transform society. Thus, the breakage created by inequalities, the use of violence, and the struggle for power have marked the social and political dynamics that have taken place in Colombia since the republic was established in the 19th century until today (Moreira, *et al*, 2015).

The beginning of the armed conflict in the country dates back to the confrontation between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. The first one was characterized by keeping the social and political system that protected the interests of the wealthy class; while the second one was presented as a reforming alternative and in defense of the interests of merchants and less favored groups of society (Moreira, *et al*, 2015). The confrontation ended up unleashing what is known as the period of La Violencia (The Violence) that began in 1948, with the assassination of the popular liberal candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitán and lasted until the end of the 1950s, this dispute led to the death of thousands of Colombians (Cosoy, 2016).

From this event, a self-defense group was created in the center of the country, made up of displaced liberal peasants, who later adopted the communist ideology. In 1964 the formation of this self-defense was made official, calling itself FARC (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces), and this emergence marked the end of the period La Violencia (Cosoy, 2016). Additionally, according to Cosoy it is important to mention that “the FARC were not only a product of Colombian history but also of the events that occurred in the world, at that time the Latin American liberation struggles emerged, fueled by the tension of the Cold War” (2016).

Almost parallel to the creation of the FARC, the ELN (National Liberation Army) emerged in 1962 as well as the EPL (People's Liberation Army) in 1967, whose, according to Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2013) “stories refer to the encounter of young people trained and radicalized according to the guidelines of the Cuban and Chinese revolutions, and the heirs of former Gaitanista guerrillas” (p. 123).

At the end of the 80s, the FARC tried to join forces with other leftist guerrilla groups, however, this initiative was not completed, additionally, around this time drug trafficking began to have more and more influence in the Colombian armed conflict, from which both the

paramilitary groups and the guerrillas were benefited (Cosoy, 2016). Later, more guerrilla groups emerged in the country, including the M-19, which had a greater impact on the urban population, and by the time of the 2000s the FARC reached its greatest military capacity with approximately, according to Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2013) “28,000 men and women in arms, with a presence in 622 municipalities, equivalent to 60% of all municipalities in the country (p. 162).

During the governments of President Alvaro Uribe Vélez, from 2002 to 2010, the so-called democratic defense and security strategy was carried out, in which, in an attempt to combat the armed groups, a strong offensive was launched against the FARC, which included the bombing of camps and operations that managed to kill several of its top leaders, however, this unleashed a succession of dramatic events that caused the death of thousands of innocent people (Cosoy, 2016).

Throughout all these events, the report by Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (2013) indicates that between 1958 and 2012 the conflict caused the death of 40,787 combatants and 177,307 civilians, and between 1981 and 2010 were reported 25,000 missing people, 27,023 kidnappings, and 150,000 murders. In this time the guerrillas, the paramilitary groups, and state forces carried out human rights violations, in which the country saw kidnappings, massacres, forced displacement, torture, disappearances, recruitment of minors, rapes, attacks, false positives, among others.

Despite the fact that treaties to achieve peace had tried to be carried out previously, on October 2nd, 2016, a plebiscite called by former President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón took place in Colombia, the purpose of the event was to authorize or not the agreement signed between the national government and the FARC guerrillas. The dialogues began in the city of

Oslo, Norway, on October 18th, 2012, and ended in Havana, Cuba, on August 24th, 2016; in the results of the plebiscite, the answer 'NO' won to the question: Do you support the "Final Agreement for the termination of the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace"? (Solarte, 2018).

The results of the plebiscite were not enough for the agreements to come true, since, according to Boris Miranda:

With a vote of 99.98%, 50.21% of Colombians said "NO" and 49.78% said "YES". Either out of fear or justice, the Colombians who voted "NO" did not agree with the FARC having a political space, since they think that it is not going to be enough to forget 50 years of horror with an apology (2016).

Finally, during the last years, the country still has been facing the horror of conflict in some regions where armed groups are still active, In 2018, former President Juan Manuel Santos ordered the suspension of peace negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army), due to the fact that the armed group committed attacks in some regions of the country after stopping the 101-day ceasefire on both sides, and in January In 2019, President Ivan Duque Marques completely suspended negotiations with the ELN taking into account a car bomb attack in a police school in Bogotá; As a result of these events, the civilian population began to suffer new war crimes and other serious abuses, such as assassinations, forced displacement, and child recruitment at the hands of members of the ELN, FARC dissidents, and paramilitary successor groups (Roth, 2020).

To conclude, it is important to mention that nowadays it is still confirmed the existence of at least five armed groups in the country, whose actors continue to affect the civilian population, mainly the rural areas. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross, "the parties

in the current conflicts are the Colombian State, the ELN, the EPL, the AGC, and the structures of the FARC-EP currently not covered by the Peace Agreement” (ICRC, 2021).

Armed conflict in Antioquia and Chocó

Considering the violent historical context mentioned above, the following is a description of the behavior of the armed conflict in the departments of Antioquia and Chocó, in which the intensity of the conflict experienced by its inhabitants is highlighted as well as the reasons why they have been strategic territories for the armed groups and their illegal activities.

These municipalities share a very close history of conflict, according to Paulo Tovar, in his article Local Capacities for Peace in Antioquia and Chocó:

One of the main events that characterize these two regions is the formation or settlement of guerrilla groups, since the end of the 1960s to the mid-1970s, due to the disagreement of peasants, unions, students and even members of the church on the disconnection and abandonment of the central state (Tovar, 2015).

On the one hand, the department of Antioquia is located in the northeast of Colombia, it is made up of 125 municipalities and nine geographical regions: Urabá, Occidente, Southwest, Valle de Aburrá, Bajo Cauca, Magdalena Medio, North, Northeast, and East (Gobernación de Antioquia, 2021) According to the DANE census, the population for 2021 is 6,782,584 inhabitants, of which 79.6% are located in urban areas and 20.3% in rural areas (DANE, 2020). In the article *Armed Conflict and Poverty in Antioquia Colombia, et al* (2018) state that the department of Antioquia was especially affected by the armed conflict, during the 90s the dynamics of armed groups came to cover almost the entire territory. In addition, there was the

presence of different structures from the FARC, the ELN, the EPL, and various self-defense groups.

Taborda *et al* (2018) point out that in the period 1997 - 2010, the municipalities with the highest incidence of the conflict were Mutatá, Dabeiba, Ituango, Valdivia, Nudo del Paramillo, Toledo, San Andrés de Cuerquia, Yarumal, Campamento and Anorí, in the north of the Cauca River were Caicedo, Abriaquí and Giraldo.

The department of Chocó, for its part, is located in the west of the country, in the Pacific plain region, and is divided into thirty municipalities (Gobernación de Chocó, 2021). According to DANE, the population for 2021 in the region is 549,225 inhabitants, of which 44.1% are in urban areas and 55.8% in rural areas (DANE, 2020). The violence in the department of Chocó, according to Rosa Ana Abadía (2005) is part of the social problems of the country, since the territory has been disputed by the ELN guerrillas, the FARC, and paramilitary groups even though its population is peaceful by nature.

Until the mid-1970s, no armed group was present in the department, however, at the end of that decade, the FARC began to have a presence in the Lower Atrato region and later in the Middle Atrato region. At that time, Chocó was considered a resting area for the guerrillas, however, after the 80s, political activity began there through the FARC front 57, and over time paramilitary activity began to grow in the Bajirá, Riosucio, Murindó, Vigía del Fuerte, and Bojayá areas, finally, from 1997 to 2000 the AUC (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia) achieved a significant control over the Atrato River (Abadía, 2005).

There are regions that share territories of the two departments that have experienced the same conflict activity, one of these cases is the Urabá region, which has eleven municipalities in Antioquia and four in Chocó. Based on the Centro de Memoria Histórica records, historically,

starting in 1994, violence assumed a terrifying panorama: for this time, in less than five years there were fifty-two massacres, in which La Chinita is found, where thirty-five people died while chatting at a festive event organized by the community. This caused forced displacement and selective homicides between 1989 and 1996 when the highest rate of displaced population was registered in Urabá with 167,178 people, the municipalities that registered the highest levels of expulsion were Turbo, Necoclí, Tierralta, Apartadó, and Arboletes (CNMH, 2020).

Another of these regions is the Medium Atrato, which has four municipalities in Chocó and two in Antioquia. According to Jesús Alfonso López, in his contribution to the Armed Conflict and Forced Displacement cathedra, the phenomenon of forced displacement in this area began to appear in the mid-1990s, a time in which the paramilitary seizure took place from the Gulf of Urabá to the south. With the intensification of the armed conflict in these years, there were cases of torture and murder to countless people throughout the Atrato area, from the Carmen de Atrato to the Gulf of Urabá, actions mostly attributed to the paramilitaries of the AUC (López, 2005).

Years later, the FARC took over the municipalities of Juradó, Bojayá, Vigía del Fuerte, El Carmen de Atrato and Bagadó. The ELN and the AUC for their part affected the regions of Lloró, Vigía, Bellavista, Turbo and Riosucio, and confrontations were fought that affected Carmen de Darién, Murindó, Vigía del Fuerte, Bojayá and Medio Atrato, areas where there was no presence of law enforcement (López, 2005).

In both cases, López (2005) and Abadía (2005) agree that the interests in obtaining control of these territories were the privileged geographical location since there is a land connection with Panama and an outlet to the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, where arms trafficking circulates, and coca is exported to international markets.

In the case of Antioquia, Bajo Cauca is one of the subregions that has been attacked the most, which within the years 2010 - 2013 presented important figures of humanitarian impact, the foundation Ideas para la Paz (2014) points out that although since 2010 the conflict began to decrease, this in year it was found that the number of homicides per 100 thousand inhabitants was 225, while for 2011 it fell by 76%, and for 2012 the number of homicides was 54. According to the information on homicide rates disaggregated at the municipal level, the municipalities with the highest numbers of homicides were the municipalities of Tarazá and Cáceres (Fundación Ideas para la Paz, 2014). On the other hand, in terms of armed actions, the phenomenon intensified at high levels in 2012 and 2013 in this subregion, and in 2012 its forced displacement represented 13% of the displaced population in Antioquia, which for that year it was 8,282 (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2016).

Currently, both departments still face the incidence of armed groups, according to the last departmental briefing of Chocó, between 2012 and 2019 there were eighty-one homicides, 234 threats, 508 attacks against the civilian population, and 376 armed actions, while between the years 2017 and 2020 there were 20.094 forced displacements and twenty-four cases of landmine victims (Humanitarian Response, 2020). For its part, the latest departmental briefing in Antioquia shows that between 2012 and 2019 there were 232 homicides, 524 threats, 1.189 attacks against the civilian population, and 697 armed actions, while between 2017 and 2020 there were 9.560 forced displacement and fifty-eight cases of landmine victims (Humanitarian Response, 2020).

Finally, the Ombudsman's Office alerts the expansion of the AGC and the ELN in the municipalities of Chocó and Antioquia, among which are Bojayá, Medio Atrato, and Vigía del Fuerte. The alert refers to recent events that affect the population such as homicides, threats,

forced recruitment, extortion, armed confrontations, restrictions on mobility, landmines, among others (Defensoría del pueblo, 2021).

This is supported by a World Report article (2020), which assures that the current confrontation between the ELN and the AGC, which has intensified from 2019 to 2021, has led some communities to poverty and confinement that prevents them from Access to food, additionally, to this day, cases of abuse have been prioritized, such as the recruitment and use of minors, by the Farc and the Army itself in the Urabá region. Most of these abuses occurred in areas where illegal economic activities, including drug production and trafficking, are common (Roth, 2020).

For example, the Atrato subregion, Chocó, has been one of the regions most affected by this in recent years, which, according to the newspaper El Espectador (2019), in the region there are towns that are strategic points for the development of the control of drug trafficking, since its geographical location has fluvial connections with the Atrato River and the Salaquí River, which "is part of the route used by armed groups to transport drugs to Panama through the Choco's jungle and continue their journey through Central America" (González, 2019), Additionally, in some towns there is no presence of public authorities such as police or mayors, which allows armed groups to take command and therefore assassinate social leaders who demand security from the state (González, 2019).

For his part, Vásquez mentions that more than 8,000 people are being affected by these harassments and that the communities located in Urabá have been the most vulnerable. In this sense, the communities call on the National Government to take action to get protection, since they are not only affected by the armed groups but also by the lack of health care, education, and public services (Vásquez, 2021).

Bilingualism

The term Bilingualism is well-known nowadays and could be defined simply as the ability to handle two languages, just as the Oxford dictionary defines it: as the fluency in or use of two languages (Oxford, 2021), however, some studies have differed in this definition since, although they agree with the short definition about the ability to speak in two languages, they believe that there are certain characteristics and context that help to better understand the term and give a more complete definition.

One of the definitions of bilingualism is presented by Franson (2011) in which it is noted that defining bilingualism is problematic since there are individuals with characteristics that vary, and consequently they could be classified, for instance, a person may describe themselves as bilingual but may mean only the ability to converse and communicate orally, and others may be just proficient in reading; therefore, even though this description excludes the four skills that must be taken into account when acquiring a second language (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) Franson states that “being bilingual could mean different things to different people” (2011, p. 1).

This definition is supported by Guerrero (2008) which suggests in her research that a bilingual person would be any person who possessed at least one of the four linguistic skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) in a second language, the author concludes that “proficiency is misunderstood because people, in general, do not have the same level in each of the language skills” (p. 42), this means that some people might have a high command of listening and speaking skills but very little writing or reading skills. Nevertheless, Wei (2000) expresses that bilingualism, on the contrary, refers to “the ability to use two languages in everyday life” (p.

248), which means, managing both languages with all the skills as a native speaker in any communicative context and with the same efficiency.

Additionally, Franson (2011) and Serin (2021) agree that a person may be bilingual by simultaneous bilingualism, which is the virtue of having grown up learning and using two languages at the same time; or sequential bilingualism, which means that people may become bilingual by learning a second language sometime after their first language regardless of the context, whether the second language is learned by interacting with other speakers or academically (Serin, 2020). In Colombia, many rural communities are an example of this, considering that for being mostly ethnic communities, people already speak in two languages since culturally they have their own language, which they use mainly in family and social contexts, and Spanish, the Colombian standard language, which they use in academic and business context.

The Kuna community, from the Urabá subregion, located in Turbo and Necoclí in Antioquia and Unguía in Chocó, is an example of the aforementioned, taking into account that their language, Guna, is used daily within the community but they use the Spanish language for education and the access to written documents (Hernández, 2021). Although the Colombian government recognizes the ethnic languages as official languages within the territories where they are spoken, in terms of globalization, this bilingualism managed by these ethnic communities is not valid, since, in the case of the Kuna community, the language Guna would not contribute to global knowledge and access to global information. In this sense, although bilingual communities already exist, in Colombia, as in many countries, bilingualism is measured in English-Spanish terms, understanding the importance of English in the globalized world.

Either way, in Colombia being bilingual (English - Spanish) has turned out to be a privilege and in some cases an injunction for accessing to the labor and academic field. Although the rate of English in Colombia is low, as mentioned in the relation chapter, bilingualism initiatives (English - Spanish) are present mainly in populated centers and large cities, where there are bilingual schools, mostly private, unlike rural regions, where there are mainly only public schools. Consequently, according to Duarte (2016), “students in public schools have a lower level of linguistic competence than those in private schools” (Duarte, 2016, p. 5, taken from Usma, 2009) Therefore, being bilingual can be considered as a competent skill which only a part of the country's population has access to.

In short, even though bilingualism encompasses a range of context, linguistic proficiency, and purpose, according to the information discussed previously, it is possible to determine bilingualism as the ability a person has to express in two languages, either managing at least one of the four teaching skills or having complete control of both languages, in order to establish communication. In addition, taking into account the Colombian case, bilingualism is understood as a competitive ability, whose access is a priority for individuals belonging to urban regions, usually from bilingual schools, which is an example of inequity, understanding that, according to Duarte (2016), “the adoption of a second language such as English should be a priority for all individuals” (p. 22).

Standardized Testing

According to Thompson (2009), “standardized tests usually assess what is taught on the national level and help to set meaningful standards and strategies in education” (p. 14). Though

standardized tests have limitations, they can be greatly beneficial to the educational community, in this case, to become a nationally standardized test, a test must go through rigorous reliability and validity testing.

Furthermore, standardized testing is crucial in the development of a national educational system because tests can be keys to improving the productivity of schools. For policymakers, the results of the standardized test can be employed to evaluate educational organizations, policies, and programs to determine which are most effective and efficient (Mukminin et al., 2017).

In this field, standardized achievement tests can improve the diagnosis of students' and teachers' strengths and weaknesses; results can help guide education in knowing how a student compares to the average national student and if children's scores seem to indicate that they are falling behind academically, they can get help instead of allowing the problem to persist. In addition, Thompson, (2009) states that:

Analyzing test results can help an educator evaluate the effectiveness of a curriculum or to help assess if instructional methods are a good match to a child's learning style. Standardized tests can also improve prediction and selection for gifted programs, college, scholarships, or employment; additionally, the results can be highly effective in identifying the needs of exceptional students, and teachers may work harder for the students to improve their scores or to show their accomplishments when they know they are being assessed (p. 15).

However, despite the fact that standardized tests really do provide important information to create consensus and strategies for the educational plan of a nation or district, standardized assessment has limitations that lend to generalizations without understanding the different scenarios or contexts in which education is given which can result in an unfair or unequal evaluation, which harms the implementation of tools or strategies to promote the improvement of

student learning and the teaching methods used by teachers. This is supported by Mukminin, et al (2017) when mentioning that “lack of literature and research on the national standardized exam policy practices may not give much information whether the policy directs our teaching and learning English in the right or wrong direction” (p. 201). Therefore, to establish a state exam, constant research should be carried out to improve the way in which students are evaluated according to the conditions in which they learn and idealize their life project. For this, schools and teachers should be involved not only in the evaluation but also in the monitoring and progress of their students, before, during and after taking the exam because they know exactly what is happening to their students, especially for affective and psychomotor domains (Mukminin et al., 2017).

In short, national standardized tests are important within the educational community because it helps to understand if the education system that is carried out is effective enough for the student’s development, besides, it helps to categorize the student population and to know the gaps within gender, ethnicity, social stratum, disabilities, among others. In this way, initiatives can be created to identify the needs that some students may have in order to work on the improvement.

ICFES Saber 11 English Test

In 2005, the Colombian National Ministry of Education developed a nationwide program to strengthen the teaching and learning of English called Programa Nacional de Bilingüismo (National Program of Bilingualism) bearing in mind the gap between urban and rural students, within the project initiatives, the Ministry developed two English tests aligned to the Common

European Framework of Reference, one of them was implemented in the ICFES Saber 11 exit exam for the students of high school (López et al., 2011).

To get an overview of its assessment, the English test is divided into seven parts, all of them with multiple-choice questions. However, for reasons of practicality and lack of technology in some regions of the country, the exam only assesses the skills of reading, vocabulary, and grammar, leaving aside skills such as listening, speaking, and writing (López et al., 2011).

According to the description elaborated by López, Ropero, and Peralta in their investigation Study of the validity of the Saber 11 English exam, the English test is made up of the following 7 parts: the first part, the task requires students to read a notice or sign and then identify where they would be seen when choosing the best option; second, students have to match definitions in a list of choices in a lexical category; in the third part, students are asked to end a conversation to assess the English language in everyday life; fourth, students must choose the best option to complete a blank space, this part is oriented towards grammar; fifth, students have to understand a written text and answer some questions related to relevant information; sixth, students must take a reading to answer comprehension questions; and finally, in the seventh part, there are some missing words in a text and students have to choose the best option that best fits each blank. (López et al., 2011).

Despite the fact that the implementation of the Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo (National Plan of Bilingualism) would help students from all over the country to improve their English, the results of the ICFES exam began to show a low trend in performance, so, once the project expired in 2010, the Ministry of Education, with the ICFES' help, implemented a new initiative called Programa de Fortalecimiento al Desarrollo de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras

(Program for Strengthening the Development of Competencies in Foreign Languages), which aimed to bring 40% of high school students to B1 English level between 2010 - 2014 (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2013).

Nevertheless, an analysis carried out by Hernán Duarte in 2016, showed that although the new program increased the performance of high school students, the percentage was not what was expected, since “the goal of taking 40% of the country's students to level B1 was not achieved” (p. 6).

With the unexpected results obtained in the second bilingualism program of 2013, the National Government established that by the year 2025, all students of basic and secondary education in the country must have a B1 English level. The first strategies that the Ministry of Education has implemented to achieve the goal are the adoption of modern technologies in the classroom and the accompaniment of native teachers in public institutions (Duarte, 2016).

One of the most important initiatives for that date was the implementation of the Kioscos Vive Digital program, introduced by former president Juan Manuel Santos in his second term (2014 - 2018) which sought to connect the country through internet antennas, with this initiative, by 2014 the country's connectivity exponentially improved, connecting 96% of the country to the national fiber optic network, mainly benefiting educational centers. Likewise, programs were developed that facilitated ICT access for all Colombians, installing 5,225 Kioscos Vive Digital and 237 Vive Digital points (Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, 2014). However, with the arrival of the new president Ivan Duque Marques, the first phase of this program ended and 1,240 Kioscos ended their operation in 2018, because, according to the ICT ministry, it was due to the contract reaching its capacity legal and financial allowance to make new budget additions (MinTIC, 2021).

Although this test works to measure different aspects of bilingualism (English-Spanish) such as participation and reading level, the ICFES Saber 11 English exam is not correctly established at the national level, since, first of all, it does not evaluate all the learning skills that should be considered, therefore, since the exam is based on the Common European Framework of Reference, it should also evaluate the listening, speaking and writing skills, in order to evaluate in a proper way the level of bilingualism of a student. In addition, the design of the test is the same for the entire Colombian educational community, which is, to a certain extent, unequal, understanding that there are students belonging to isolated rural educational centers where there are no appropriate educational tools for learning English and where the context in which they learn is not the same in which rural students do (Guerrero, 2008).

To this extent, although the exam does not discriminate against any student in the country and offers the option of taking the exam to all students, there is an inequality in offering learning tools to achieve an equitable trend in the results. In this case, the exam should contemplate strategies considering the entire educational community, where there is no room to generalize the level of bilingualism of the students.

Now, considering the information provided above, it can be stated that the ICFES Saber 11 English test is important for Colombian secondary education since it allows an approach to the general average of bilingualism (English-Spanish) in the country, nonetheless, it is important highlight that the test fails to correctly assess the exact level of bilingualism, since it does not examine all learning abilities and its design lends itself to generalizing the results among all students without taking into account the context in which some students take the test and without considering the lack of educational tools in some cases.

To conclude this chapter, it is possible to confirm firstly that the case of armed conflict that occurs in Antioquia and Chocó, specifically in the Urabá subregion, is mainly due to its location, which prompted the creation of armed groups, not only because of the state abandonment case but also because its strategic location for carrying out illicit activities. On the other hand, it is believed that the educational community of the region has been harmed when accessing bilingualism initiatives, considering its isolation, which has led students to present difficulties when taking the English test of the ICFES Saber 11 exam.

Methodology

This study seeks to understand how armed conflict is related to the performance of students from rural areas in the ICFES Saber 11 English test over the last 10 years. This chapter focuses on explaining the research methodology. During this section, the procedures and techniques applied are described systematically in order to understand the information obtained in the data collection. This chapter explains the research perspective and the research type chose for the investigation, as well as the instruments, population, sample, type of sampling and the ethical considerations that every research must include. Additionally, it is important to mention that the research was developed simultaneously in two phases, so in every aspect it is explained first the phase one and then the phase two.

According to the aforementioned, it is possible to start by saying that the research adopted a mixed methodology, this is why it is divided into two phases. According to Collection of Mixed Methods by Carlos Fernández *et al* (2014):

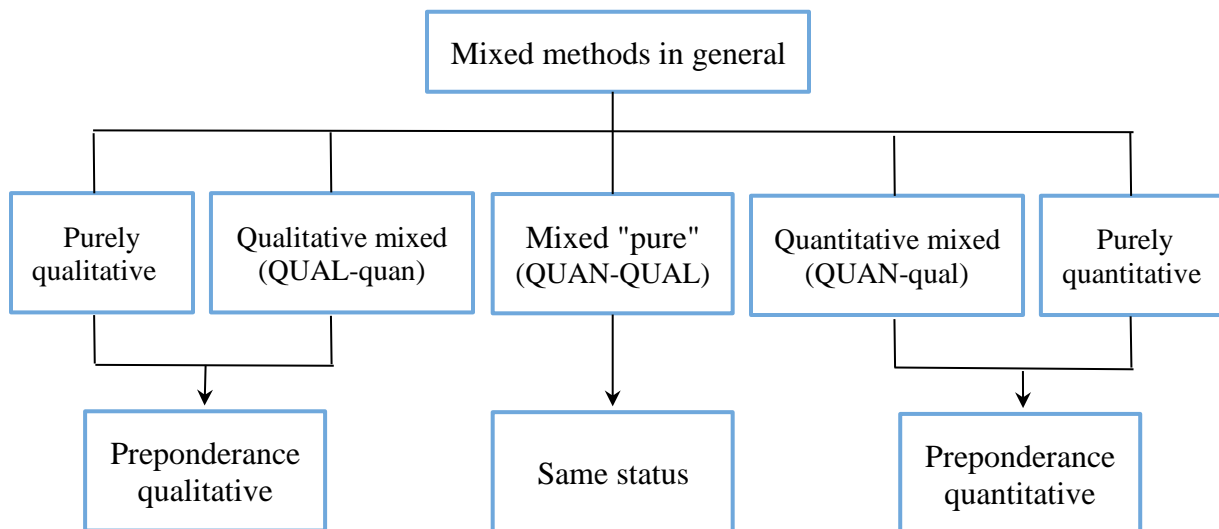
Mixed methods represent a set of systematic, empirical, and critical research processes and involve the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, as well as their integration and joint discussion to make inferences as a result of all the information collected and achieve a better understanding of the phenomenon under study (p. 532).

Likewise, they suggest that “mixed studies achieve a broader and deeper perspective of the phenomenon, making our perception more comprehensive, complete, and holistic” (p. 532); additionally, “if two methods are used with their own strengths and weaknesses that reach the same results, our confidence increases that these are a faithful, genuine, and reliable representation of what happens with the phenomenon under consideration” (p. 532).

Besides, it is important to highlight that mixed studies are a set where quantitative and qualitative approaches are combined, focusing more on one of them or giving them the same relevance, shown below in figure 3, where it should be noted that when talking about the quantitative method will be abbreviated as QUAN and in the case of the qualitative method as QUAL, also, “uppercase-lowercase letters indicate priority or emphasis” (Fernández et al., 2014, p. 534, taken from Johnson, 2006).

Figure 3.

The three main research approaches, including subtypes of mixed studies.



Note. Adapted from *Metodología de la investigación* (p. 535), by Fernández et al, 2014, McGraw-Hill Education.

Therefore, considering this explanation, a mixed methodology applies to this research considering the fact that a qualitative and quantitative analysis is carried out, furthermore, it should be noted that for research a "pure" mixed approach is chosen since both phases (QUAN - QUAL) have the same status.

Considering this, on the one hand, the quantitative analysis was built up from the collection of numerical data which included the collection of the information from two different databases, described in the instruments section; the application of an RBG Model for sampling; a descriptive statistical analysis, and the creation of a predictive model to compare enormous amounts of data. On the other hand, the qualitative analysis consisted of a data collection by observation in which the researcher achieved an approach to the phenomenon of study through the design of an interview, which considered a selection of a sample with criteria, a data collection from a specialist, and a qualitative analysis of the interview through a coding process. Finally, the results of the two phases were compared in order to build the conclusions of the study.

Along with it, the type of research selected for the study is the correlational one. In the same line of study, Fernández *et al* (2014), stand that:

This type of study aims to know the relationship or degree of association that exists between two or more concepts, categories or variables in a particular sample or context. The main utility of correlational studies is to know how a concept can behave when knowing the behavior of other linked variables. In other words, to try to predict the approximate value that a group of individuals or cases will have in a variable, based on the value they have in the related variables. (p. 88).

This research is an example of this, taking into account that we are also trying to understand the approximate value or the behavior between two variables, in this case, for both the QUAN phase and the QUAL phase, the dependent variable was *English score*; nevertheless, for the statistical analysis (QUAN phase) the independent variables were student connectivity, school connectivity, level of connectivity, if the school was rural or urban, if the school was

public or private, if the school was bilingual or not, the number of inhabitants in the region and the number of participants in the test for both calendar A and calendar B. In this phase, the databases from which the information was obtained allowed us to analyze how the dependent variable changed in relation to the independent variables. On the other side, for descriptive analysis (QUAL phase) the independent variable was armed conflict, and in this phase, was the interview that one that allowed us to determine how the dependent variable was modified in relation to the independent variable.

For the QUAL phase, it is important to mention that the independent variable (armed conflict) was determined or chosen bearing in mind the same aspects of phase one (students connectivity, school connectivity, level of connectivity, if the school was rural or urban, if the school was public or private, if the school was bilingual or not, the number of inhabitants in the region and the number of participants in the test for both calendar A and calendar B).

Instruments

Regarding the quantitative phase, the information for the analysis was obtained from the databases contained in the official pages of Data ICFES and MINTIC, from which more than four million data were found. It was decided to extract the databases from the two pages since both, Data ICFES and MINTIC, have their own statistical connectivity repository, but by extracting both it was possible to compare and corroborate the data.

In this phase, the data set is a random sample made up of years of historical records of the students who took the ICFES Saber 11 test, in addition, there are a number of variables that contributed to the learning of the model, some of them already mentioned above in the research type, such as student gender, period of the test presentation, student residence department,

student residence municipality, student housing stratum, if the family has internet or not, the school calendar, if the school is bilingual, score or performance of the English test, categorical performance rating (-A, .., B1), location area of the school (rural or urban), nature of the school, region of presentation of the test, coordinate of the latitude of the municipality, coordinate of the longitude of the municipality, among others. It is important to mention that in this phase the variable armed conflict was not considered since the quantitative information collected in the databases did not have any data regarding signs of armed conflict, this is why it was measured in the qualitative analysis.

For the data collection of the qualitative phase, an open-type interview was taken into account in order to achieve a perspective closer to the object of study. According to Fernández *et al* (2014) an interview is defined as a “meeting to converse and exchange information between one person (the interviewer) and another (the interviewee) or others (interviewees) (p. 403). In the interview, through the questions and answers are achieved the communication and the joint construction of meanings regarding a topic. Interviews, as tools to collect qualitative data, are used when the study problem cannot be observed, or it is very difficult to do so due to ethics or complexity (Fernández *et al*, 2014).

Subsequently, they state that open type interviews are based on a general content guide and the interviewer has all the flexibility to handle it. Regularly in qualitative research, “the first interviews are open and of the "pilot" type, and they are structured as the field work progresses. The researchers themselves regularly conduct the interviews” (Fernández *et al.*, 2014, p. 403).

For the research interview, some parameters that fulfilled the purpose of the research were taken into account, for this case it was intended to collect information alluding to rural

education, armed conflict, academic performance, bilingualism, and state tests, all this considering the opinions, reflections, and experiences of the interviewee.

In this case, the day and time of the interview depended entirely on the availability of the interviewee, while the duration was 40 to 60 minutes. Bearing in mind that the interview was of an open type, there was the flexibility to ask the questions according to the criteria of the researcher, therefore, in this case, it was decided to ask the questions as the interviewee recounted his experience and gave his opinions. According to this, the session ended with ten open questions all of them answered by the interviewee. To have access to the full interview protocol, check annex 1.

Population and sampling

Initially, for the population of the quantitative phase were specifically selected the results of the English test of the last 10 years (2010-2020), delimited from a mathematical program called R using a RBG Method, (Random Boost Machine), the program itself already brings mathematical functions, so the databases only have to be loaded. Using this program, regression models were generated from decision trees to classify the variables. With the help of these decision trees, it was possible to create a correlation between variables since there were more than four million data.

After having the databases, a cleaning process was carried out to remove commas and periods from the numbers. From the 4 million data, 1 million was initially used to test the RBG model, after this, the model itself was able to find a relationship to make a prediction as close as possible to reality. In the use of the data, 60% represented the training set of the model and 40% was for the testing and use. Finally, for the sampling of this phase, were specifically taken into

account the data of the students belonging to rural schools of the Antioquia and Chocó departments.

On the other hand, for the population of the qualitative phase of the research, It was determined to use the population of social workers since it is a population that works for the people of the communities and seeks to promote their social development. For this phase of the investigation, this population allows an approach to the object of study both in the educational field and in the area of armed conflict, which allows a perspective of the two concepts, not only based on opinions, but from the experience and professional perspective that allows analyzing the behavior of the educational community in scenarios of armed conflict.

The type of sampling selected for this phrase was by criterion which is defined as individuals selected based on the assumption that they possess knowledge and experience with the phenomenon of interest and thus will be able to provide information that is both detailed (depth) and generalizable (breadth). From the perspective of qualitative methodology, participants who meet or exceed a specific criterion or criteria possess intimate (or, at the very least, greater) knowledge of the phenomenon of interest by virtue of their experience, making them information-rich cases (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Within the criteria established to select the participant it was taken into account that the social worker had at least 3 years of experience with any type of community and at least 6 months of experience working specifically with communities belonging to the Urabá subregion. Likewise, it was important to consider that the experience in this region was within the period 2010-2020, and finally that within the experience, the participant had an approach to the educational community, working with schools, and understanding the support against the psycho-emotional problems generated by the armed conflict.

Ethical Considerations

It is important to bear in mind that the macro project from which this research arises called Diagnostic Evaluation of the Results of the Saber 11 Tests in the Area of English and its Relationship with the Connectivity Data in Colombia, was submitted through a review by the institutional ethics committee of the ECCI university, thus having an approval that it complies with all the ethical requirements that must be to consider in a research project.

Regarding the treatment of the statistical phase, all the databases had unrestricted access, therefore, no special permission was required to obtain this information; however, once the databases were downloaded, the group of researchers had limited access to avoid improper handling. Additionally, for the open interview carried out on October 20th, 2021, an informed consent was taken into account in which the participant was let know the objectives of the research, the data processing and some other important considerations when providing information and its use in this research. To see the full consent, see axe 1.

Data analysis and discussion

This chapter develops the analysis of the data obtained for both the QUAN phase and the QUAL phase. Initially, the findings of the quantitative phase are exposed since these were obtained first and then it is developed the explanation of the qualitative phase. After disclosing the description of all the results, a discussion is carried out in order to note similarities, differences, contrapositions, etc.

It is important to take into account that for the quantitative phase it is first developed the data of the department of Antioquia, and then the data of Chocó. During the analysis, different graphs are exposed in which the behavior of the results is analyzed, according to participation, location, gender, stratum, among others. In addition, each graph has an explanatory description to better understand.

To start with the analysis, it was decided to take a look at the general panorama of the English score of all the municipalities of Antioquia (125) and Chocó (21) of the last 10 years, in order to observe the results of all the regions and understand their differences.

In figure 4, it is evident how the average remained steady through the years in the department of Antioquia, unlike the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 calendars A, where an increase in the test performance was presented, taking into account that there were scores above 70; however, it is important to note that this was due to low participation, see figure 5.

Figure 4.

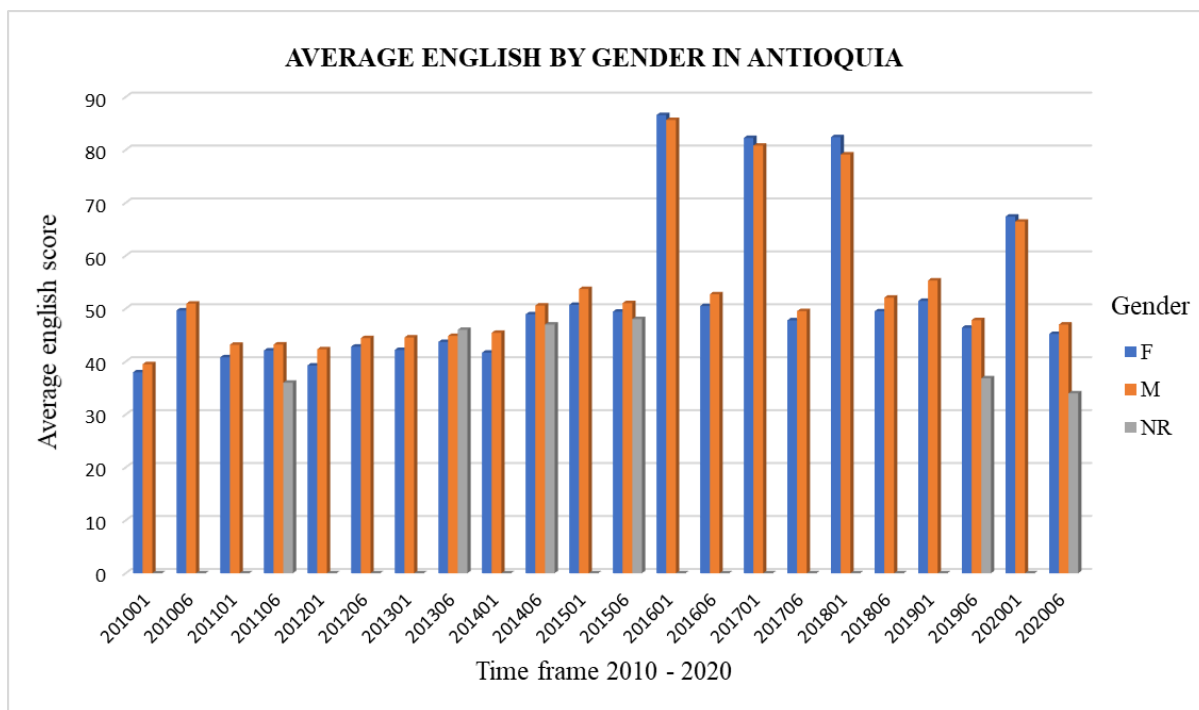
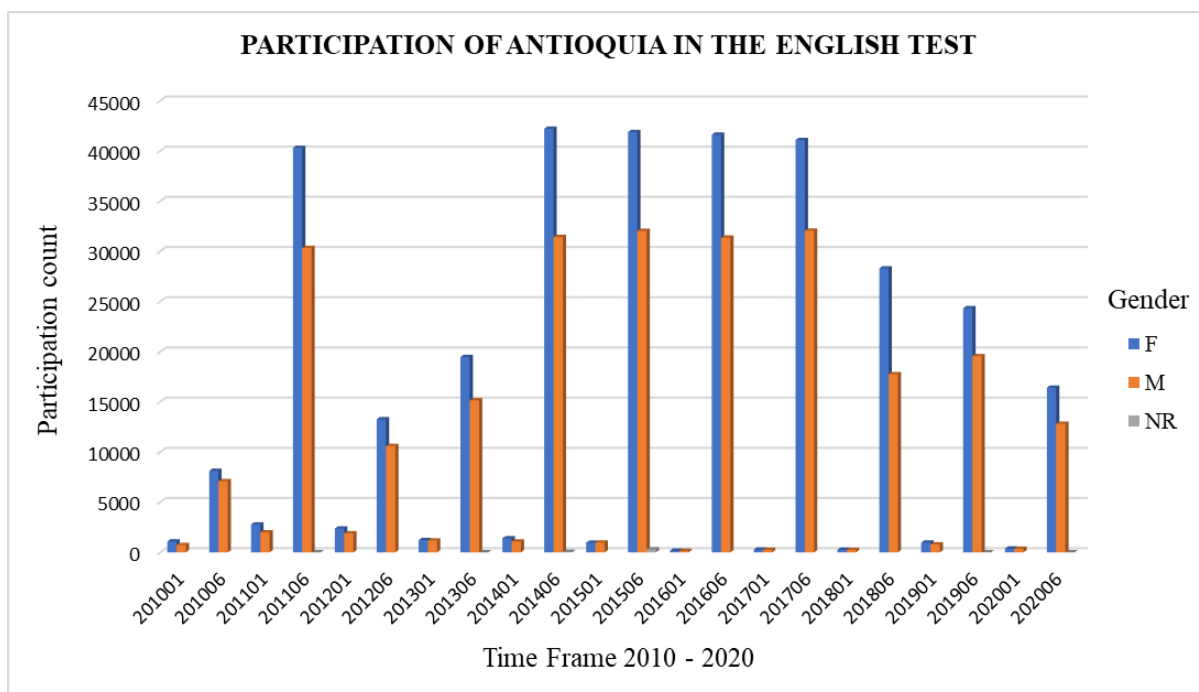


Figure 5.

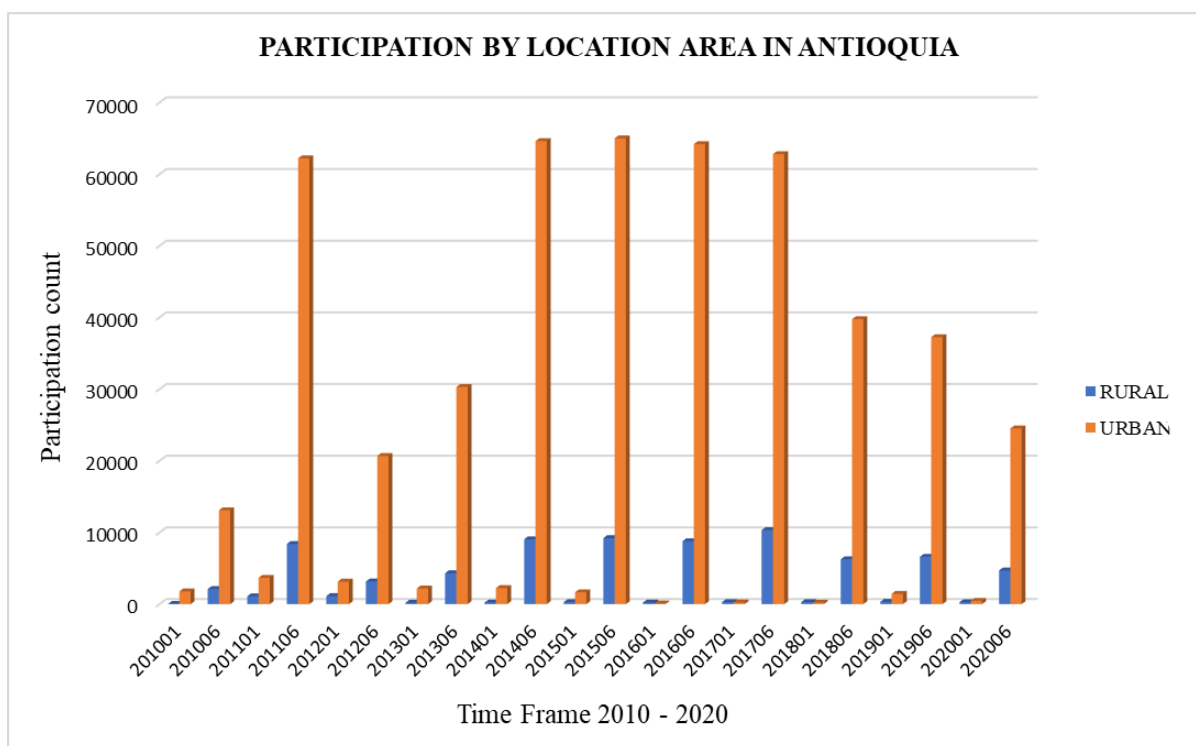


In other words, while in figure 4 the scores of calendar A for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 were particularly good compared to those of calendar B, but in figure 5 it is clear that it

was due to the low participation since while in periods A the participation was less than four hundred students per gender, in periods B the participation was greater than 3,000 students per gender. Nevertheless, in general terms, during the period 2014 - 2017 an exceptionally good participation was evidenced compared to years 2018, 2019 and 2020, in which the general participation descended constantly. It should be noted that in all years there was always greater female participation.

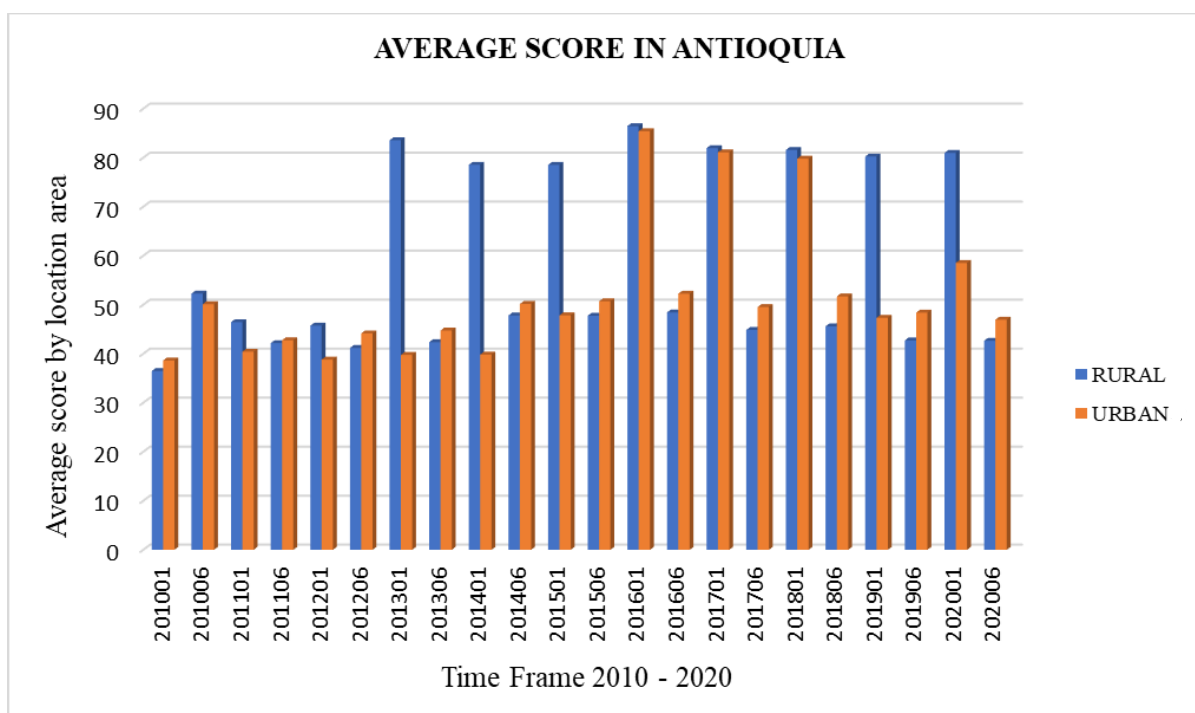
Taking into account the general scenario, in which the average score for the department is 48 out of 100, now it is possible to take a look at the difference between the scores by location, in other terms, between urban and rural areas. Initially, in figure 6 it was observed that urban schools had greater participation in the test than rural schools; nevertheless, despite the existing gap in the participation, the score was similar for the two locations.

Figure 6.



Additionally, in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2019 and 2020, rural schools had a significant increase in performance compared to urban schools (figure 7). Despite this, the results showed in the general average that the score of the rural regions continues to be below the urban area; the rural one with 46 and the urban one with 48.

Figure 7.

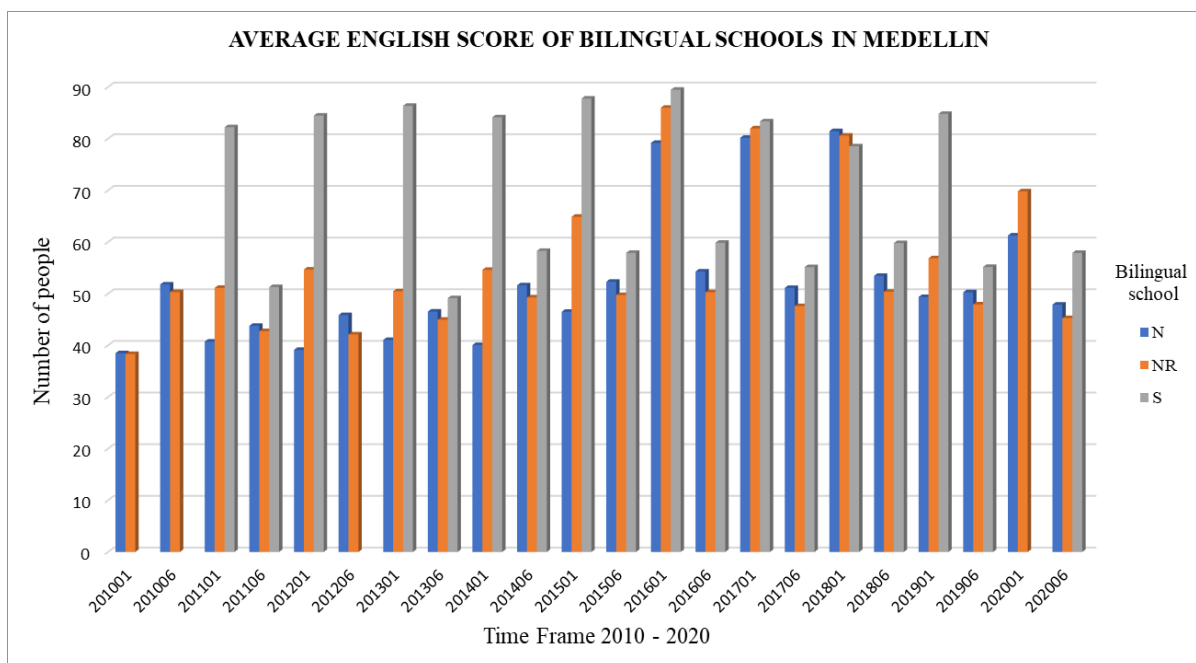


Regarding internet connectivity, the data showed that in Antioquia, out of 578,538 students who took the test in the established period of time, only 13% represented rural students, of which 64% did not have internet connection, unlike the urban area, in which participation was much higher and only 33% of the students did not have internet access.

To speak more widely about the gap between rural and urban locations, it must be taken into account that only the capital of the department, Medellin, had the participation of bilingual schools, (see graph 8) which, although they had a very low participation compared to non-bilingual schools, their average score in the 10 years was 73, while non-bilingual schools was 50.

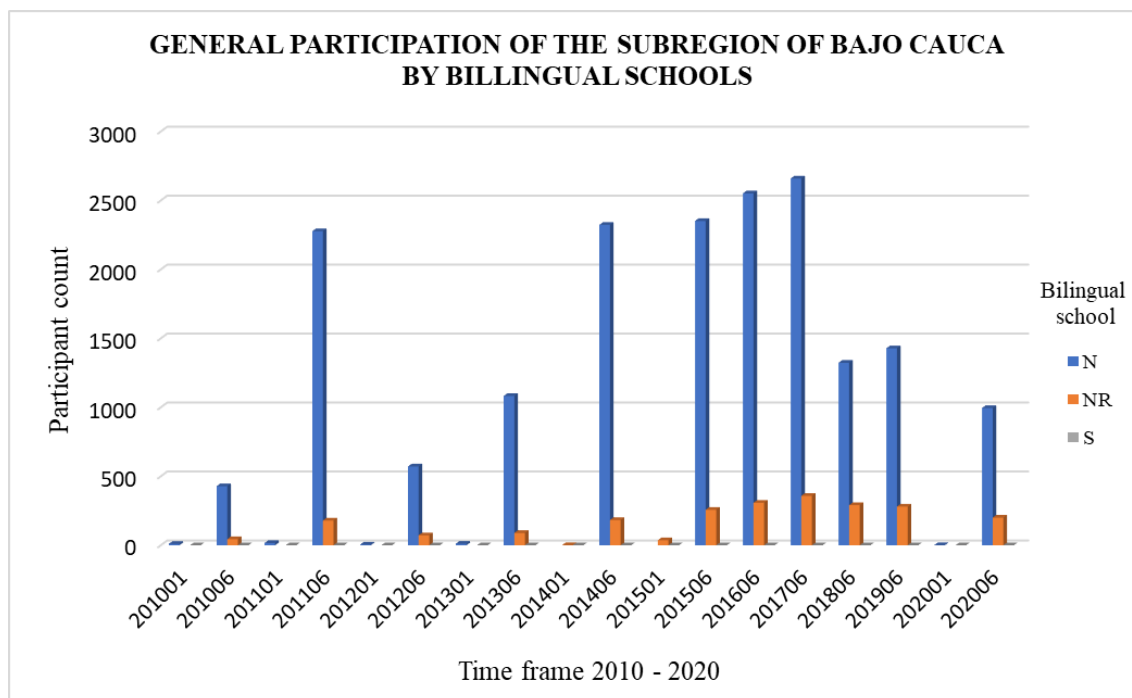
It is important to note that in 2016, 2017 and 2018 there was a satisfactory performance in both bilingual and non-bilingual schools, and also that the global score of all the city's schools was 50.

Figure 8.



Contrary to Bajo Cauca, a rural subregion of Antioquia, which in its municipalities (Caucasia, El Bagre, Nechí, Tarazá, Cáceres and Zaragoza) there were not found bilingual schools (see figure 9) and in which, regarding their score, the region kept an average equal or greater than 35, except year 2020, in which they acquired an average of less than 25, both scores incredibly low.

Figure 9.

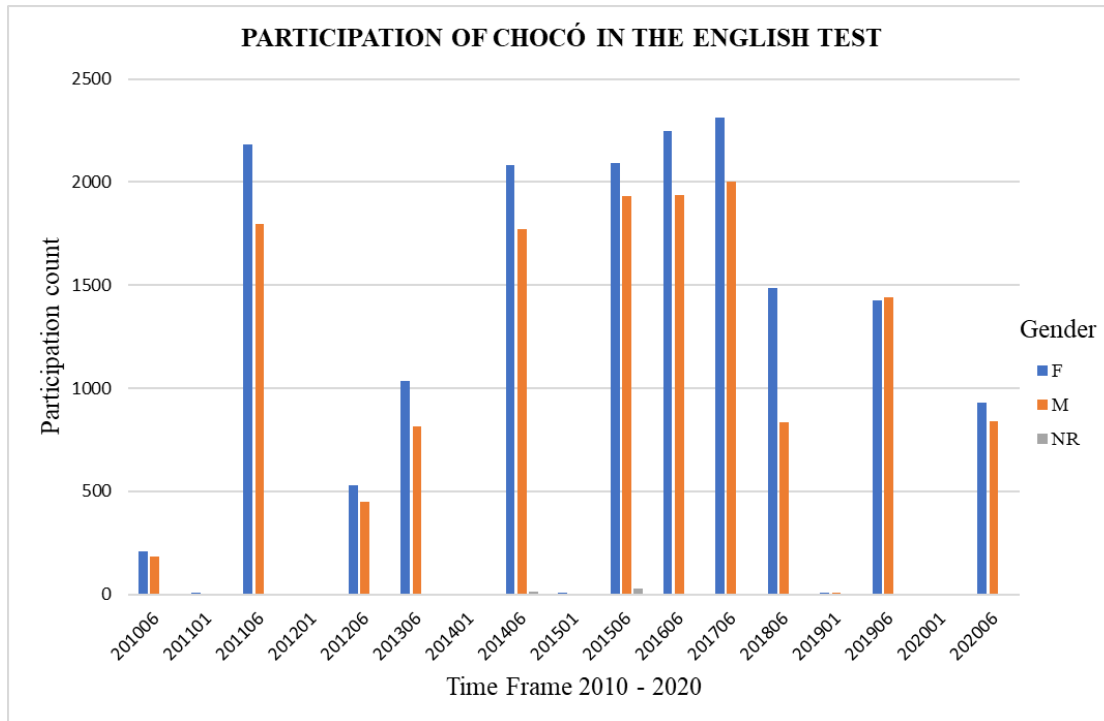


Additionally, all municipalities had a majority female participation, in which 60% of the participation corresponded to women. Likewise, the results showed a difference in the participation of social strata between the rural and urban areas, in which Medellin, on the one hand, had a greater participation of students from strata 2 and 3, while in the rural municipalities of Bajo Cauca the majority participation was of students from social stratum 1. It is important to note that during the period 2014 -2017 participation was really good compared to the next years, where the participation decreased.

Finally, the predictions of the department of Antioquia were analyzed to compare the scores by schools, in this, it was evidenced that bilingual schools had a higher average score in the English test compared to people who are not from a bilingual school, also the model's predictions pointed to a higher average score in the future. In addition, it was evidenced that the general average by location remained above 40 per year, and that although the score between rural and urban schools was similar, students from urban schools were above rural students.

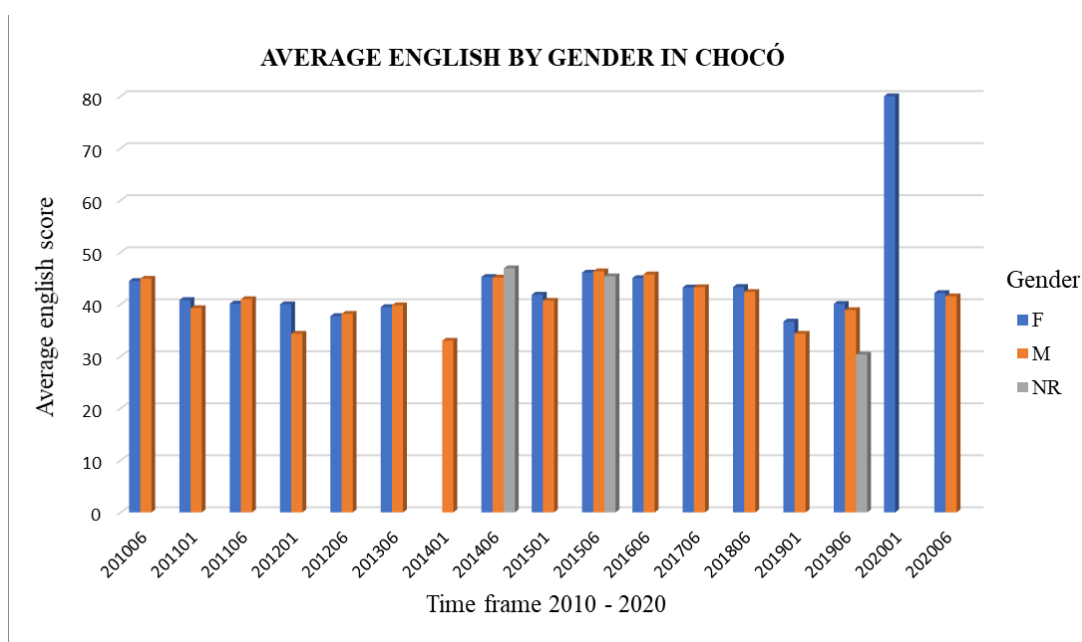
On the other hand, in figure 10 the department of Chocó is found, in which it was observed that participation had an important variation when presenting the test over the years, since in calendar B of the years 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 there was a large increase in participation compared to the next years where it started to decrease; nonetheless, it is important to mention that the participation in calendar A was always too low, since, for instance, in the years 2011 - 2020 the average participation was only of 7 students, and that in years 2010, 2013, 2016, 2017 and 2018 anyone took the test. Besides, in the first semester of 2014 there was no presence of women in the test, only a man took it, contrary to the first semester of 2020 where there was no presence of men and only a woman took it. At a global level, approximately 50% of the participation was female and 40% participation was male (see figure 10).

Figure 10.



Regarding performance, the general panorama showed that during the 10 years there was not variation in the English scores with a general average of 43. Additionally, it should be taken into account that in the period 2020A a score of 80 was achieved but it was due to the fact that only one student participated.

Figure 11.



Considering the general scenario, in which the average for the department was 43 out of 100, now it is possible to take a look at the difference in scores between urban and rural areas.

In graph 12 it was observed that the urban school had a significant difference in participation regarding the rural one but both locations increased the participation during years 2014 - 2017, additionally, despite the fact that the urban average was always above the rural one (see figure 13), the two locations tended to achieve the same annual average, excluding 2020 where urban schools had a significant increase in scores.

Figure 12.

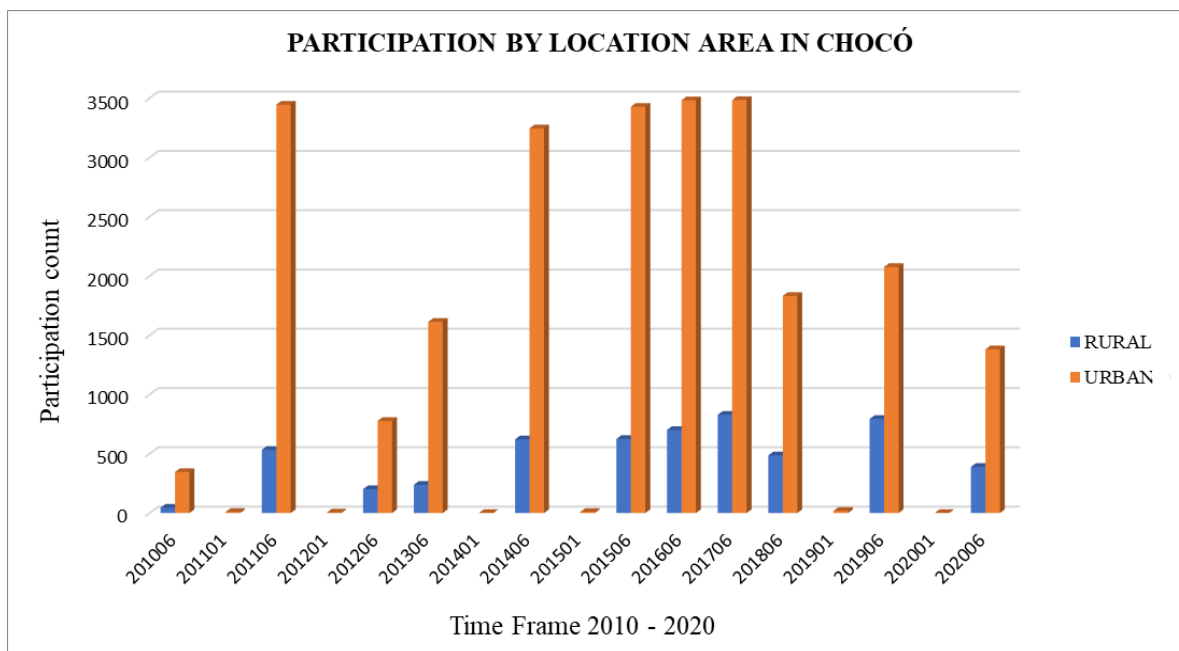
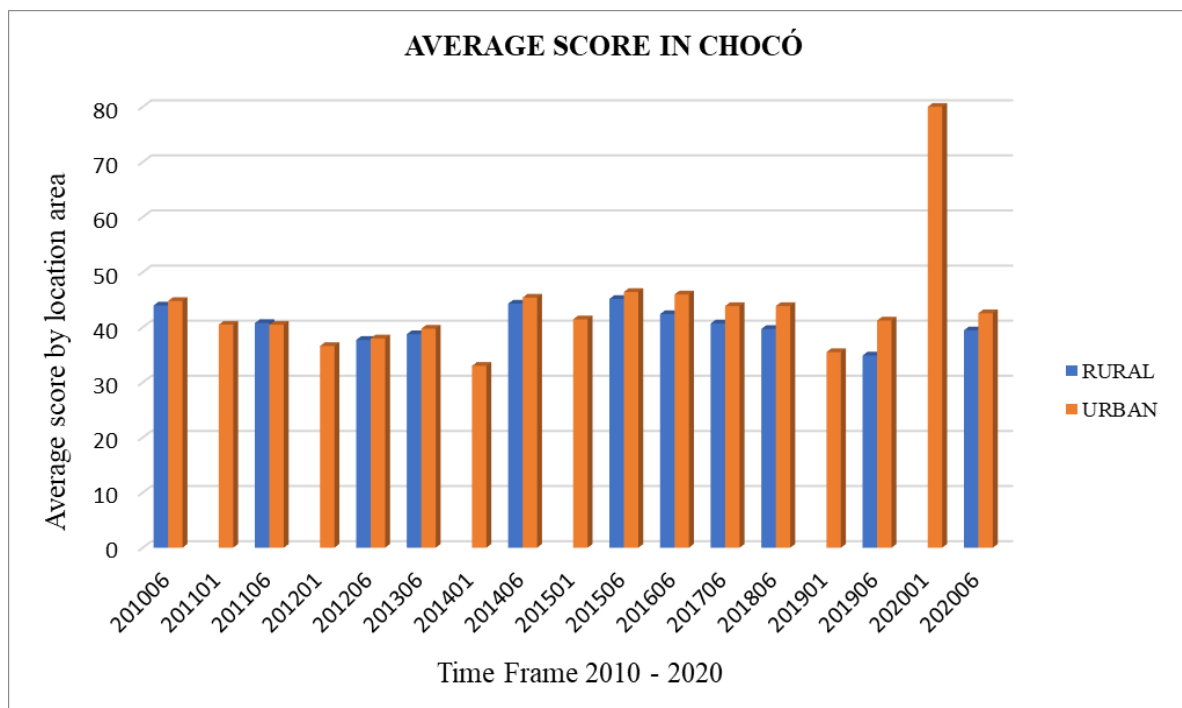


Figure 13.

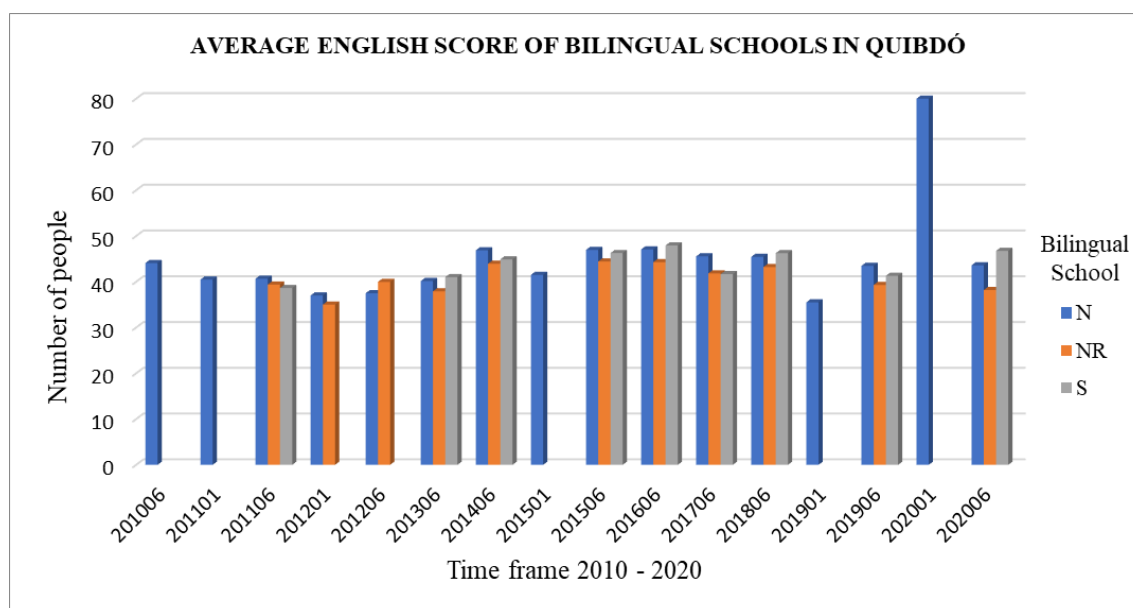


Regarding internet connectivity, the data showed that in Chocó of 30,617 students who took the test in the established period of time, only 17% represented rural students, of which 84%

did not have internet connection, while in the urban area, although participation was much higher, 64% of the students did not have internet access. In this case, in both locations there was a significant lack of connectivity.

To be more specific about rural and urban regions, in Quibdó, the main city of Chocó, throughout the 10 years it was evidenced that the highest participation in the English test was from non-bilingual schools since, although there are bilingual schools, they are very scarce in this department. Regarding their general average per year, it was found that the scores were low but very constant, having no significant changes in the last 10 years, in addition, it was found that there was not significant difference between the scores of non-bilingual schools compared to bilingual schools, as shown below:

Figure 14.

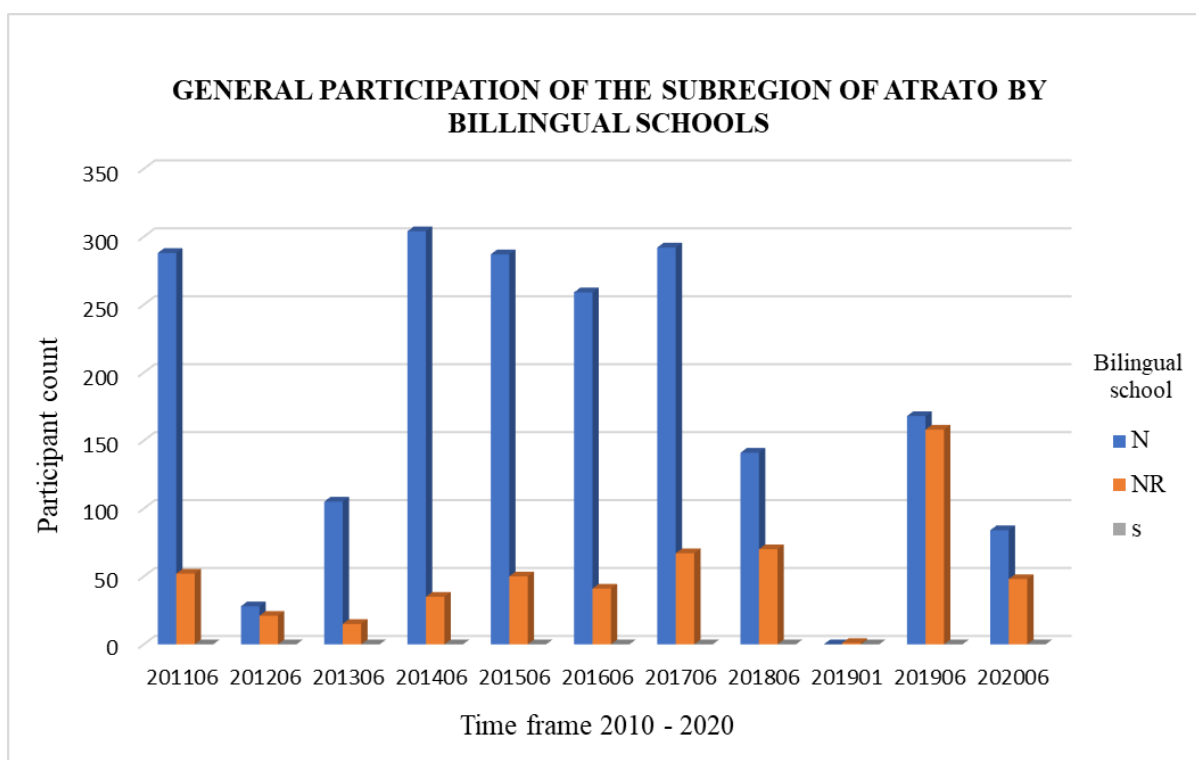


Unlike Atrato, a rural subregion of Chocó, which in its municipalities (El Atrato, Bagadó, Bojayá, El Carmen de Atrato, Río Quito, Lloró, Medio Atrato) were not found the existence of

Bilingual schools (see figure 15), with the exception of the Atrato municipality in 2010, in which the participation of a bilingual school was observed.

Regarding the score, the region remained in an average equal to or greater than 35, except for the year 2020, in which an average of less than 25 was obtained, and just like the case of Bajo Cauca, both scores were incredibly low. Besides, the municipalities had an equitable participation in terms of gender, similarly, the results highlighted an equity in terms of participation of strata between the rural and urban areas, in which both the city of Quibdó and the municipalities belonging to the subregion of Atrato were predominant in the social stratum 1. It is important to note just like in the previous participation graphs, there was an upward trend during the years 2014 - 2017.

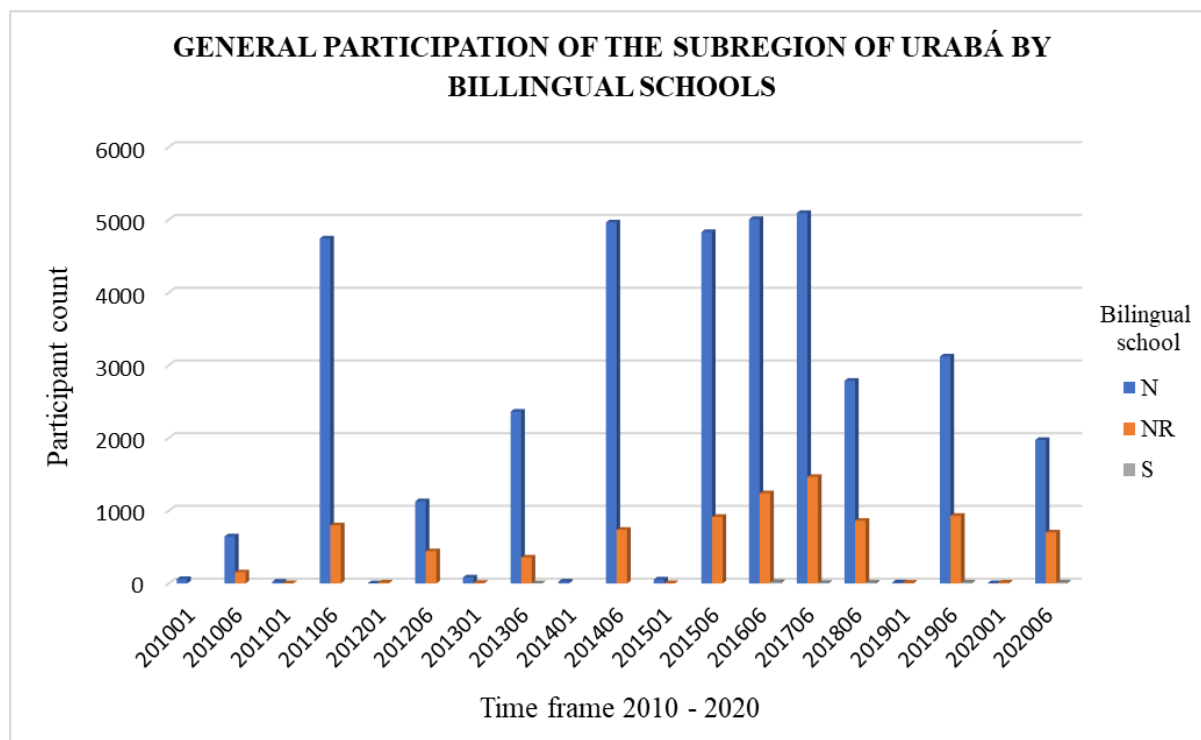
Figure 15.



Additionally, the predictions of the department of Chocó were analyzed to compare the scores by schools and here it was evidenced that the bilingual schools had an average score lower or equal in the English test compared to people who were not from a bilingual school. Furthermore, regarding the location of the school, it was observed that the average per year remained above or equal to 40 and that although there were no significant changes between urban and rural areas, as it was in the rural regions of Antioquia, urban school students continued to perform better than rural students.

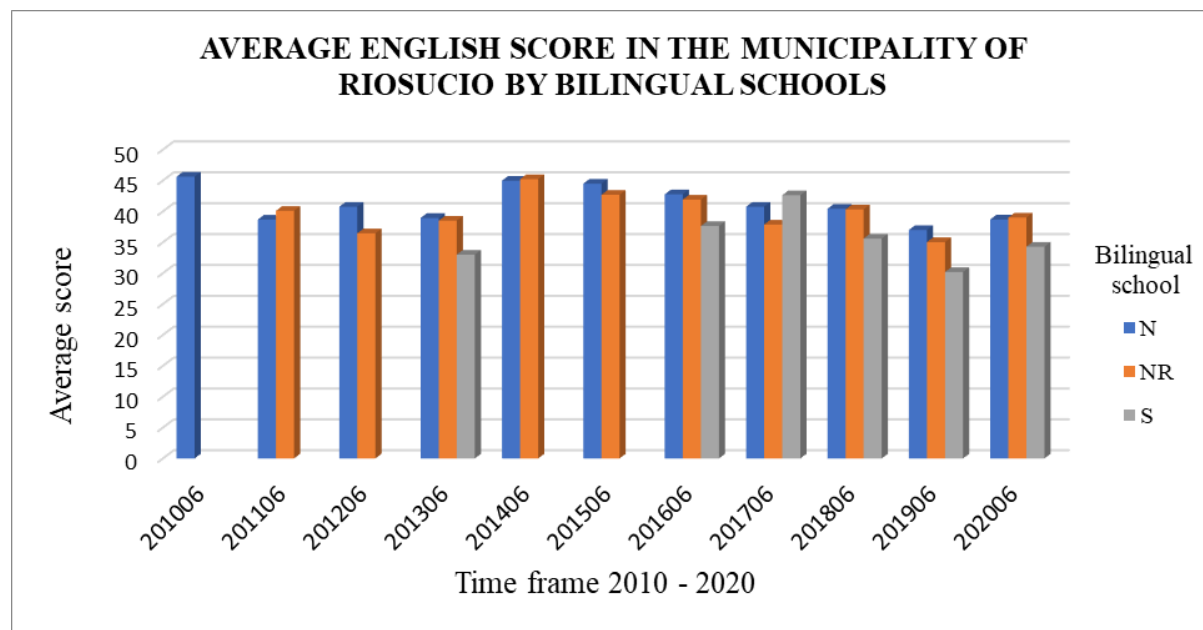
Finally, for the analysis of this phase, it was decided to examine the Urabá subregion, bearing in mind that in this area there were municipalities of both Chocó and Antioquia (Apartadó, Carepa, Chigorodó, Turbo, Arboletes, San Juan de Urabá, San Pedro de Urabá, Necoclí, Acandí, El Carmen del Darién, Riosucio, and Unguía). In the 10-year participation data (see figure 16), it was found that this subregion had greater participation, with 45,622 students, compared to the previous rural subregions analyzed, since Bajo Cauca only had 20,329 participants and Atrato 2,514, additionally, figure 16 showed the same trend in years 2014 - 2017 where participation went up but then decreased passed this period.

Figure 16.



On the other hand, in the data for this subregion, only in Riosucio were found bilingual schools (see figure 17), with a count of 61 schools within the 10 years analyzed; nevertheless, according to the average percentages of this municipality, the existence of these bilingual schools does not have a significant performance with respect to non-bilingual schools, indeed, in years 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019 and 202 calendar A, bilingual schools scores were considerably low compared to non-bilingual schools.

Figure 17.



Finally, the participation of women in the test was majority compared to men in all municipalities. Likewise, the socioeconomic stratum 1 was major in the region, except for the municipalities of Apartado, Carepa, Chigorodó, Turbo and Arboletes, which also had the participation of students from stratum 2. At length, regarding the global score, the subregion maintained an average of 42 over the 10 years, in which Carmen del Darien and Riosucio obtained the lowest scores.

In relation to the theoretical and background review developed for this research, the quantitative data indicates that indeed bilingualism initiatives in the rural regions of these departments were really low and in most cases non-existent; the case of Riosucio was an example of this, since although there were bilingual schools, their performance was lower than the Non-bilingual schools, unlike the main cities analyzed, Medellín and Quibdó, in which significant bilingualism initiatives were found and better results were also achieved.

Additionally, it was clear that the overall performance in the two departments did not show remarkable scores, which confirms what was mentioned by the English Proficiency Index

study, considering that Colombia has a low index of English hovering between the "low" and "very low" categories, this taking into account that the main cities analyzed (Medellín and Quibdó) had an average score of 50 while the rural schools of the subregions analyzed (Atrato, Bajo Cuca and Urabá) had an average score of 25 to 40.

On the other hand, the issue of connectivity was also covered, in which it can be confirmed that the low results of rural areas was linked to the poor access that students had to the internet, precisely what Guerrero (2008) mentioned when saying that There is a part of the educational community that still does not have access to the internet and other technological tools that do not allow them to learn English, and Duarte (2016) when highlighting that the Plan Nacional de Bilingüismo (National bilingualism plan) is not completely effective since the trend of test results is still low, which was also evident in this analysis.

Finally, another finding shows that precisely during the period in which the Kioscos Vive Digital program was developed (2014-2018), student participation was much higher in all rural municipalities, since many schools had internet access, while Once the first phase of the program ended, participation decreased again in the coming years (2018, 2019 and 2020) in all the rural municipalities analyzed. Therefore, although there is no greater variation in the scores, the performance in terms of participation decreased.

Now to introduce the qualitative analysis, the definition of the categories, which were selected according to the research problem, is taken into account in order to develop the discussion based on the coding extracted from the interview. During the analysis, fragments of the interview are extracted to justify the codes belonging to each category and thus better understand the information obtained.

After completing the interview with the specialist on the subject, a transcription of the interaction recording was made to carry out a textual analysis, it should be noted that the interview was conducted in Spanish, since it was the language of the interviewee, so the transcription was also made in Spanish. During the transcription process, all the information that the interviewee gave was carefully kept to avoid losing details when analyzing the entire discussion. An example of the transcription can be seen below:

Excerpt 1. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

Digamos que mi experiencia laboral, profesional y también de pronto política ha sido en lo comunitario, en esa medida, pues, he podido, digamos, establecer algunos contactos con algunas comunidades en sitios urbanos y en otras regiones del país, entonces eso me da la posibilidad de poder presentarme a una convocatoria, de un proyecto en el que está la Unicef, con una fundación que se llama Opción Legal que está ayudando, digamos, como al acompañamiento a diez colegios focalizados de Riosucio Chocó para poder generar algunas herramientas alrededor de lo psicoemocional en el conflicto armado; entendiendo que Riosucio tiene, digamos, una historia trágica en su territorio...

Once the transcription of the interview was completed, it was decided to read the entire text four times to extract key concepts from the whole discussion. After this first review, forty concepts were extracted, all of them related to the case study; however, later after having the concepts extracted, a debugging exercise was performed to analyze all the ideas and ensure that they were not repeated. For the debugging process the text was read three times again and consequently, it was found that twenty-four concepts were either repeated or irrelevant for the analysis, hence, they were discarded and finally only sixteen concepts remained.

After having the debugging process completed, the sixteen concepts were classified to see how they were related. In this categorization procedure two versions were achieved. The first version placed the concepts into two categories: education and armed conflict, while the second version placed them into education, armed conflict, and rural population. Finally, it was decided to choose the second version, shown below in figure 18, which involved education, armed conflict, and rural population, since there were concepts that did not correspond to education or armed conflict, so a third category was necessary.

Figure 18.

Code tree

Education	Armed Conflict	Rural Population
Globalization	Violence	Amphibian culture
Bilingualism	Forced displacement	Isolation
Internet access	Criminal bands	Inequality
Academic performance	Vulnerability	State abandonment
Educational tools	Corruption	Poverty
Community enhancer		

Considering the code tree that emerged from the interview debugging, an interpretation of each category (education, armed conflict, and rural communities) will be given in order to achieve a better understanding of the analysis. For the definition, are taken into account the codes that make up each category.

In this sense, the first category, **education**, was adapted for the research as a knowledge acquisition process characterized by being a *community enhancer* that must be related to *globalization*, since skills and knowledge acquired are taken into account when it comes to the global environment, so the educational community should have access to the *internet* and other *educational tools* to help promote *academic performance* and generate skills such as *bilingualism*.

This definition concurs with Gómez (2017, p. 95) when mentioning that **education** indeed plays a critical role in building bridges and in helping to break down community stigmas, additionally, Guerrero (2008) points out that education and bilingualism are essential in the globalized world, hence, the presence of educational tools such as the internet must be essential in schools, in this case, Guerrero exemplifies that in Colombia there is a part of the educational community that remains excluded from taking advantage of being bilingual because they do not have the economic resources to purchase access to the Internet, cable TV, movies, tourism, and all the other wonders (2008, p. 38).

One of the codes that is part of this category is *globalization*, which was marked six times in the analysis. As mentioned before, this code represents the importance of educational centers having access to global information to generate initiatives such as *bilingualism*, which is another code of this category that was marked six times in the discussion. In order to better understand these concepts, an example taken from the interview is presented below.

Excerpt 2. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

A mí me parece que este tipo de bilingüismo hace parte de esta sociedad moderna, se trata de conectar, ¿no? En términos de la globalización es una reflexión que tiene que ver mucho con la actualidad.

In this case, it is understood that the ability to handle a second language is part of, as interviewee said, a modern society, which is linked to *globalization* and access to information. This is why access to internet is essential in schools, to achieve this kind of skills. In fact, this concept of *internet access* is part of this category, in the analysis it was marked three times, and, in the interview, it can be evidenced as follows:

Excerpt 3. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

Mucha de la información de lo que pasaba en el territorio tú te podrías enterar por ese medio (antenas de internet), si sucede una catástrofe, tantas cosas que pueden llegar a suceder, por medio de esas antenas la gente podía saber, ahora, quitando eso significaba quitar la información, quitando la información, pues estás aislado del mundo entero, y ¿por dónde más podrías tú, digamos, practicar el inglés si no es por medio de las redes sociales?

In this manner, we can corroborate the aforementioned by Guerrero (2008) when it is stated that bilingualism is essential in the globalized world and that this is achieved exclusively when students or the community have access to the internet and other tools of this kind, hence, within many other factors, the lack of *educational tools* is undoubtedly one of the main aspects that prevent the educational community from achieving a favorable *academic performance*. To complement this section, both, *educational tools* and *academic performance*, are part of the codes within this category; *educational tools* was marked nine times during the analysis while *academic performance* eight times. In the following extraction the two concepts are evident.

Excerpt 4. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

Hay una profe rural en una casa, es decir, tiene una habitación, una cocina, un baño, ¿sí? pero al lado también está el salón de clases, entonces es una casa-escuela. Es muy interesante porque la profesora, normalmente mujeres muy inteligentes, da clase a primero, segundo, tercero, cuarto, quinto, entonces me parece loco porque es una profesora que se convierte, o que tiene que convertirse o multiplicarse, en cinco profesoras al tiempo; no se tiene en cuenta que cada niño o cada niña tiene necesidades de aprendizaje distintos.

Excerpt 5. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

No hay espacios deportivos ni lúdicos, y audiovisuales, hay una falta de brindar las herramientas necesarias para que un niño o joven aprenda en lo que llaman el 2021, con tanta información y tantas cosas.

By not taking these aspects into account in schools, education does not achieve its purpose as *community enhancer*, mentioned in the definition, and consequently, the community is less likely to develop in places where education is not promoted. *Community enhancer* is the last code of this category, and it was addressed eight times in the interview.

Excerpt 6. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

La pobreza impide que también la educación sea una forma de potenciar a las comunidades.

Excerpt 7. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

Resulta que el gobierno de Santos crea un programa que se llama Kioscos y Vive Digital, que consistía en poner unas antenas donde coge la señal de internet a un kilómetro, más o menos, alrededor de la antena cogía el internet,

qué benefició a las comunidades que estaban al lado del colegio, es decir la escuela se convirtió también en un eje importante y los profesores, hacían actividades alrededor del colegio y unían a la gente en las comunidades, o sea, la escuela es un actor igual político importante.

Now, regarding the description of education, it is possible to refer to the second category of the code tree, which is **armed conflict**, and it was adapted as a phenomenon characterized by the use of *violence*, generally on *vulnerable rural territories*, which generates as a consequence the *forced displacement* of people from the community and which is strongly determined by the formation of *criminal bands* within the territory due to the economic interests or the *corruption* of its leaders. This definition is supported by Meneses, Arias and Espinel in their article Exposure to Armed Conflict and Academic Achievement in Colombia, who in their argument state that the **armed conflict** is characterized mainly by the presence of illegal armed groups that exert different types of violence against vulnerable populations, mainly against young population, such as harassment, ambushes, assaults, acts of terrorism, etc., and which, among different consequences, forcibly induces people to displaced to other places (Meneses, et al., 2019).

Bearing in mind the concept of **armed conflict**, now it is possible to refer to the codes in this category. In this case, the code that stands out the most is *violence*, being the most marked in the analysis with a total of eighteen references; nevertheless, to talk about *violence* it is important to take into account its main actor in these territories, the *criminal bands* or armed groups, which is another of the codes belonging to this category being addressed fifteen times. In the interview they are represented as follows:

Excerpt 8. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

Ese es un territorio bastante golpeado por la violencia, es un territorio que queda muy cerca del Golfo de Urabá y muy cerca a Panamá, entonces por ahí sale narcotráfico y contrabando. Digamos que en Colombia uno de los factores por los que se ha dado, o sea el conflicto armado, es el control territorial por bandas delincuenciales, es decir, donde está el control de estas tierras, es una salida al mar y a un paso por Panamá, a norte América.

Excerpt 9. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

En Colombia es el actor más fuerte. ¿No? Ahí hubo presencia de las FARC, creo que el frente quinto de las FARC, que era uno de los más violentos del territorio y, bueno, paramilitares, narcotraficantes y el mismo ejército disputándose ese territorio, ¿no?, ayudando esos intereses, por ejemplo, ahí en Ángeles California hay una montaña que está en disputa, también hay uno de los parques más grandes y hermosos y no se puede explorar debido a la dinámica de los grupos armados.

Although it is understood that the presence of armed groups affects the entire population, as Meneses, et al (2019) mention in their argument, the youngest population is the group with the greatest vulnerability to acts of violence in a community, the school-age population is the most affected by high crime rates. This violence can be seen below.

Excerpt 10. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

En la mayoría de los colegios los niños eran reclutados por las fuerzas armadas, hoy en día, el año pasado y este año han sacado más o menos como 115

niños a escondidas con ayuda de algunas instituciones que los quieren reclutar forzosamente.

Excerpt 11. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

Entonces si ves la desolación, casas abandonadas, tiros en las en las escuelas, pues eso genera una irrupción en el proyecto de vida de las personas y los estudiantes.

One of the main reasons why these populations are *vulnerable* to conflict is the *corruption* by public entities and economic interests in the natural resources. Within the interview this is evident, therefore, *vulnerability* and *corruption* are marked as part of the analysis, *vulnerability* was marked five times and *corruption* fourteen. In the interview it is understood as follows:

Excerpt 12. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

Hay lugares donde no existen y no se respetan los derechos, por ejemplo, en Ríosucio sucede que la gente no confía en la fiscalía, porque la gente de la fiscalía está aliada con los actores armados, entonces la institución juega esos dos papeles, como a no proteger o a beneficiar a los actores o intereses económicos; el ejército es una forma de eso, ¿no? ellos son los guardas de seguridad de la mayoría de las multinacionales en los territorios.

Excerpt 13. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

Yo creo que el ejercicio también de ese desarrollo del conflicto armado y la pobreza y estas cosas estructurales son los malos gobiernos, porque han tomado beneficio.

In this sense, by not seen protection from public entities or directly from the state, violence by armed groups forces people to leave and abandon their lands. In the analysis it is coded as *forced displacement* and it is marked five times, this is evidenced as follows.

Excerpt 14. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

Los ciclos de violencia que vivió el país han generado que la gente se vaya de sus territorios a las ciudades por un futuro mejor, entonces no hay nada en esos territorios que los motive.

Excerpt 15. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

Hay una cosa que a mí siempre me pareció demasiado simbólica y muy fuerte en Riosucio, y es que el lugar donde dejan la madera que sacan de la selva, debajo de esa madera, estaba la fosa común del pueblo donde están todos los hombres asesinados, ¿no?, la mujer botín de guerra, el hombre, pues, el arma letal de la guerra, y pues eso es lo que ha generado es desplazamiento.

To properly understand why the educational community has been one of the most affected by the **armed conflict**, it should be taken into account the social environment in which education is taking place, since the attacks and affections to schools are not the only reason students' academic performance is being affected. This is why the third category established in the analysis is strongly linked to the first two.

In this category, **rural population** is adapted for the research as small communities marked by the *amphibian culture* that are commonly recognized by their geographical *isolation* from the urban areas, therefore, they have to face social difficulties such as *state abandonment*, *inequality*, and in some cases, *poverty*.

This definition can be associated with the explanation of Aguilar et al (2019) who point out that **rural communities** present a number of features that distinguish them from other population centers, such as low population density, low social mobility, personal ties to nature and isolation of urban areas. In the same line of ideas, they express that due to their isolation, in some cases, they experience a social vulnerability where there is a scarcity or absence of possibilities to access quality food, health, education and housing services, which prevents the satisfactory performance of economic and social activities and puts in disadvantaged the inhabitants in terms of their cultural traits, economic needs, physical, emotional and community well-being (Aguilar et al., 2019).

Within the codes of this last category, it is found *amphibian culture*, which was mentioned eight times in the interview and is comprehended as follows:

Excerpt 16. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

Ese sitio de Riosucio Chocó me parece muy bonito, es como Orlando Fals Borda alguna vez lo llamaba: las comunidades anfibia, queriendo decir que esas comunidades anfibia pasan en la costa pacífica, atlántica, y es que las personas se desarrollan al territorio, entonces Riosucio tiene la particularidad de que, digamos, su ordenamiento territorial, aunque a veces no es pensado como en las ciudades, que en la ciudad es centro-periferia, en el Chocó es algo más lineal y es alrededor del río.

As suggested by the specialist, the **amphibian community** or culture explains the linear settlement of the slopes, hamlets, and many riverside villages, as well as their persistence: they are villages in line built in the dry and narrow ravines that border the river currents. (Fals-Borda, 2002, p. 23b). In this sense, this characteristic goes hand in hand with the *isolation* from urban

populated centers, which consequently presents a *state abandonment*, and therefore, the presence of *poverty*. Within the analysis, this category takes into account these concepts that help to understand the social context. *Isolation* for its part was mentioned six times during the entire discussion; *state abandonment* was addressed eighteen times, and *poverty* was marked ten times. Below, a fraction of these codes can be evidenced:

Excerpt 17. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

También se debe al abandono estatal, tú allá, en una región como, por ejemplo, Ángeles California, no encuentras un hospital, un centro médico está a 3 horas, 4 horas, 5 horas del casco urbano donde sí los hay, porque, por ejemplo, en el casco urbano el centro médico queda a la orilla del río y cuando el río se crece se inunda, entonces es el abandono estatal; la no presencia de las instituciones, y por lo tanto, pues la no garantiza los derechos, y en esa medida pues ahí cabe cualquier actor armado.

Excerpt 18. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

En el Chocó hay enfermedades cutáneas tropicales en las que no hay investigación, no se sabe ni porqué dan ni mucho menos su cura, entonces hay un descuido en la región, tu encuentra las gaseosas de todos los sabores, como gaseosas de coco, pero no hay agua potable, aunque están inmersos en el agua.

So, within the *state abandonment* and neglect that these communities face, several public institutions such as schools are affected, and consequently, the learning and academic performance of students; it is at this point that an academic gap is built up between rural and urban students, and highlights the last code of this category: *inequality*, which was marked sixteen times and is related to the previously codes as follows:

Excerpt 19. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

Allá hay un colegio central por municipio... las estructuras abandonadas, los baños no sirven, los jóvenes deben hacer del cuerpo en el monte, cosas como que hay muchachos que se tienen que trasladar de lunes a viernes hasta el colegio y dormir en casas de los amigos porque viven muy lejos.

Excerpt 20. Open interview October 20th, 2021.

En los colegios las estructuras nada más... cómo es posible que desde noviembre ellos tengan que abandonar el colegio porque el río se crece, el colegio es inhabitable... Entonces ese atraso, la corrupción y al lado de la guerra hace que la educación no sea fuerte y pues que no se tenga un segundo idioma previsto en el proyecto curricular afecta las pruebas estatales.

In question, this set of problems affects education and deprives students from being part of state initiatives such as bilingualism. This is supported by Lilian Yaffe in her investigation *Armed conflict in Colombia: analyzing the economic, social, and institutional causes of violent opposition*, she mentions that state capacity becomes a fundamental factor in explaining violence and elements such as the lack of political participation, the lack of governance, the mismanagement of the income from natural resources, and the absence of the State in parts of the territory facilitate the appearance of the armed conflict. It seems clear that violence is not only rooted in socioeconomic elements, such as inequality or economic growth, nor in political factors such as the nature of the political regime, but in the conjunction of several of these elements (Yaffe, 2011, p. 202).

In relation to the theoretical and background review developed for this research, the qualitative data indicate that historically during the nineties the highest rate of displaced

population was registered in Urabá with thousands of people affected, and that the most injured municipalities were those near the Atrato river, including municipalities and regions from both Antioquia and Chocó departments. Additionally, in the analysis as well as in the background it is evident how impunity allows armed groups to act without any problems against population bearing in mind the state abandonment and corruption that these rural communities have to face.

As a consequence of this, another aspect is highlighted and that is the control of territories and the dispute over the control of drug trafficking, which occurs specifically in these regions for the privileged geographical location since there is a land connection with Panama and an outlet to the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, where arms trafficking circulates, and drugs are exported to international markets.

In relation to the object under study, it is possible to confirm that in the country only a part of the student community has access to bilingualism initiatives, considering that there are students belonging to isolated regions that do not have educational tools, such as internet connection, which deprives them of achieving the same knowledge in educational terms. In addition, it is found that the educational population is undoubtedly one of the most affected areas when there is presence of armed conflict due to crime rates and violent acts, like the recruitment of minors. Likewise, it is evident that the performance of students is significantly interrupted when violent acts occur during the academic period, like the recruitment of students in school centers by illegal groups outside the law, outcoming as a low score in standardized state tests.

To conclude this chapter, it was decided to take a look at the findings of the two phases at the same time to complement the discussion and relate the data obtained, therefore, after a general review, it was possible to observe an important issue regarding inequality, taking into account that in the two phases it was strongly evidenced that in rural areas students had fewer

educational resources compared to urban students, a clear example of this problem is connectivity, considering that the graphs revealed a huge gap between the rural and urban educational population in terms of internet connection. This is in fact one of the main obstacles preventing rural students from improving their performance on the Saber 11 English test.

In addition to the aforementioned, the interview allowed us to understand that the presence of armed groups is one of the reasons why rural students find it difficult to access the Internet, since these groups take advantage of circumstances such as isolation and state abandonment to carry out illegal activities with total freedom and to commit attacks on schools. According to the theory, although some regions have access to the internet this is normally found in educational centers, which are usually isolated from the communities the students live in and, in many cases, are attacked or used as recruitment centers.

On the other hand, the data from the two phases also coincide in that the rural educational community has an important poverty condition that undoubtedly acts as a variable when viewing the results of the English test, since in both analyzes it was evident that the participation of these regions is mainly represented by students of socioeconomic stratum 1, while in the urban area there is participation of students up to stratum 6. Additionally, the two phases made it possible to show that although students in urban areas have more educational resources and initiatives that encourage bilingualism, in some periods the rural results were similar to those in urban areas, which allows us to understand that even though the urban educational community has more learning resources, its results did not stand out as expected.

Regarding participation, the quantitative data showed that more women took the test compared to men, which is understood in this case, according to the qualitative analysis data, as a consequence of the armed conflict, since male students tend to be recruited even in the same

schools. Additionally, the participation data of all the graphs of phase one showed a significant increase during the 2014-2017 period, nevertheless, after 2017, participation decreased significantly in all rural municipalities of the three subregions analyzed, which could be connected to the analysis performed in phase two and what was seen in the theory review, when showing that during the second presidential term of former president Juan Manuel Santos (2014-2018) the Kioscos and Vive Digital program was implemented, which managed to connect a large number of the country's rural schools; however, once the program finished its first stage in 2018, participation dropped exponentially.

In addition, in terms of conflict, in the regions of Bajo Cauca it was evident that the performance of all municipalities presented low scores in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013, which coincides with the increase of the intensity of conflict seen in the historical framework of this subregion; this same trend was evident in the municipalities of Atrato, which also achieved low scores in recent years (2019-2020) that are consistent with the increase of conflict intensity reported in recent years regarding the confrontations between the ELN and the AGC for territorial control and with the suspension of the peace agreements with the ELN in 2018.

An example of the aforementioned is Riosucio, a municipality of the Urabá subregion, in which, according to the interview with the specialist and the historical framework, in 2019 and 2020 violence by groups outside the law raised up, leaving as a consequence the displacement of hundreds of people; during these events, the statistics showed a significant drop in participation and the scores also showed a decline. Finally, when comparing the data, a lack of knowledge was found on the part of the specialist since he mentioned that he was unaware of the existence of bilingualism initiatives in Riosucio, while in the statistics, bilingual schools were actually found

in this region, which although they did not stand out compared to the scores of non-bilingual schools, they did exist.

Conclusions

This research sought to analyze the incidence of armed conflict on the performance of students from rural Colombian educational institutions in the English test of the Saber 11 exit exam over the last 10 years. Studying this relationship is relevant due to the increasing intensity of armed conflicts in the world and the importance that education has in the well-being of students and rural communities. In this section are found the conclusions and final reflections built up from the analysis of the data discussed previously, besides, the limitations of the study are also taken into account which can be considered for further investigations.

From the information collected it can be confirmed that the rural educational communities of the departments of Chocó and Antioquia have indeed presented negative variations in the performance of the English test due to the existence of different social issues such as the armed conflict over the last ten years. According to the findings of this study, it is evidenced that in the periods where there was a presence of armed conflict in regions such as Urabá, Atrato and Bajo Cauca, a low participation in the tests was evidenced and therefore low scores in some municipalities, complementing what was mentioned in the literature by stating that the educational population is one of the most affected by the rates of violence by armed groups. It should be noted that although there may be other circumstances that affect academic performance, in this case the armed conflict is found and adapted as one of the reasons.

Additionally, it was also found that conflict affects the educational community in terms of gender, since according to the data, the participation in the test was always mostly female and male students were commonly recruited due to their ethnic characteristics. On the other hand, the data of this research allowed to note different gaps between rural and urban performance, taking into account that, although the geographical location is in fact an obstacle due to the isolation, It

is found that gaps such as internet connectivity are considered possible barriers that cause rural schools not to achieve better performance, since, in terms of connectivity, it was found that 64% of rural students in Antioquia and 84% of rural students in Chocó did not have internet access, which, according to the theoretical review, prevents the development of communication competences since in bilingualism accessing to information is considered important in terms of globalization.

Precisely due to conflict problems, the connectivity gap and the lack of educational tools, there are fewer bilingualism initiatives, as seen in the case of Riosucio, which although it did have bilingual schools, their performance did not stand out over non-bilingual schools, in comparison with the urban population, which, according to this analysis, presented a significant participation of bilingual schools, which although they did promote academic performance in the general average, they did not stand out as expected, which also confirms the low level that Colombia has in terms of bilingualism, nonetheless, although urban students did not represent a very remarkable score, they were always above rural students.

Finally, it is found that the interests of the armed groups in these departments are due to the advantages they have in geographical terms for the development of illegal activities, since these are generally isolated territories that do not have protection from public authorities, Furthermore, it can be concluded, according to the theoretical review of one of the aforementioned authors and the data obtained in this research, that the high incidence of violence could reduce the chances of passing state exams (Meneses et al., 2019), corroborating that there is a negative relationship between violence in the community and educational achievement measured through standardized tests.

Further research

To finish this study, here are some recommendations in case future researchers want to foresee these situations. It could be taken up again by specifically delving into the years where the conflict was most acute and seeing what happened to the tests in those years specifically in the main affected municipalities. On the other hand, a line of research could be created from a conflict-gender context, since in this research it arose during the process but was not really taken into account within the objective.

Additionally, the issue of conflict-ethnicity could also be complemented since it is an element that was visualized but not reviewed in depth. This line of work would be interesting since these areas of Colombian territory are populated mainly by communities belonging to afro and indigenous ethnic groups, so it could be examined if there is a relationship between conflict and race. The study phenomenon could also be investigated from a purely qualitative perspective, since the quantitative approach does not allow to go into detail in depth, it should be noted that in this case it was not done because it was not within the main purpose of the research, since, although the context was taken into account, the idea was to take a general look.

Finally, this study could be continued by analyzing other contexts in Colombia, since the conflict has developed differently across the country. This, in order to see if the same results are achieved and confirm if they apply equally to other departments and in which way.

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Annexes

Appendix 1. Interview Protocol



Protocolo Entrevista

El presente protocolo tiene como objetivo recolectar investigación académica frente a la perspectiva de un especialista en trabajo social al analizar la relación entre el conflicto armado y el rendimiento académico de los estudiantes en las pruebas ICFES Saber 11 en el área de inglés pertenecientes a zonas rurales de los departamentos de Antioquia y Chocó. La información será manejada bajo criterios de confidencialidad, los datos serán usados únicamente bajo fines académicos y el entrevistado firmará un consentimiento informado antes de la entrevista.

- **Participante:**
- **Fecha:** 19 de octubre del 2021
- **Hora:** 9:00 pm
- **Método:** entrevista
- **Técnica:** abierta
- **Duración:** entre 30 y 50 minutos
- **Herramienta:** [Google Teams](#)

En la entrevista se llevarán a cabo los siguientes ejes temáticos: experiencia como trabajador social en la subregion del Urabá, percepciones sobre el contexto social y político de la región, percepciones frente al contexto en el que se da educación, opinión sobre la incidencia del conflicto armado en las escuelas en las que trabajó, percepciones sobre iniciativas de bilingüismo en los municipios del chocó en donde estuvo y factores que considera que podrían estar relacionados con los resultados de las pruebas ICFES, específicamente en la prueba de inglés.

Appendix 2. Informed consent



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Consentimiento Informado

Yo _____ declaro que he sido informado e invitado a participar en el proyecto de tesis de grado perteneciente a la investigación denominada “Evaluación Diagnóstica de los Resultados de las Pruebas Saber 11 en el Área de Inglés y su Relación con los Datos de Conectividad en Colombia”, la cual dentro de sus objetivos pretende analizar la relación entre el conflicto armado y el rendimiento académico de los estudiantes en las pruebas ICFES Saber 11 en el área de inglés pertenecientes a zonas rurales de los departamentos de Antioquia y Chocó.

Estoy al tanto de que la investigación es mixta-correlacional, que cuenta con la dirección de la docente Olga Camila Hernández Morales (ohernandezm@ecc.edu.co), la investigación del estudiante Diego Stiven Virgüez Corzo (diegos.virguezc@ecc.edu.co) del programa de Lenguas Modernas y está respaldada por la Universidad ECCI.

Entiendo que este estudio consistirá en la realización de una entrevista virtual con preguntas abiertas que se aplicará una sola vez y conozco el riesgo de la posible sensibilidad a las preguntas, aunque que en dado caso cuento con la opción de no responder. Estoy al tanto de que la investigación es de tipo académica, que la información registrada será confidencial por lo que solo la directora y el investigador tendrán acceso a esta y que los nombres serán anónimos en la fase de publicación de resultados.

Estoy en conocimiento que los datos no me serán entregados y que no habrá retribución económica por la participación en este estudio, ya que tiene un beneficio para la sociedad dada la investigación que se está llevando a cabo. Asimismo, sé que puedo negar la participación o retirarme en cualquier etapa de la investigación, sin expresión de causa ni consecuencias negativas para mí. Sí. Acepto voluntariamente participar en este estudio y he recibido una copia del presente documento.

Firma del participante:

Fecha: _____

Firma del investigador:

Fecha: _____

Si tiene alguna pregunta durante cualquier etapa del estudio puede comunicarse a los correos mencionados previamente.

Appendix 3. Interview coding process

[Interview transcript.docx](#)

Appendix 4. Graphs quantitative analysis

[Graphs quantitative analysis.xls](#)