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The impact of virtuality on the English teaching and learning process in rural contexts during the COVID-19 pandemic

Trabajo de Titulación para optar al título de Licenciada en Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros

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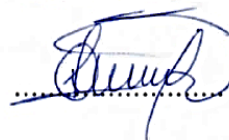
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DEDICATORY

My thesis is dedicated first to God, who has guided me to this stage of my professional career. Also, it is dedicated to my parents and siblings, who supported me and reinforced me through good and bad times. Moreover, I dedicate this work to my few friends who have motivated me to continue my studies. Additionally, I reserve this research to my pet Akira, who has accompanied me throughout this process. Finally, I saved this work for my thesis tutor, Mgs. César Narváez, who has helped and guided me to complete this work.

Evelyn Yupangui

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GENERAL INDEX

INDEX OF FIGURES

RESUMEN

La pandemia del COVID-19 desencadenó innumerables fenómenos que obligó a la humanidad a transformar y reestructurar sus actividades cotidianas. Los cambios más radicales se experimentaron en el campo educativo donde tanto profesores como estudiantes se vieron obligados a adoptar la modalidad virtual como medio para mantener el derecho humano a la educación. Hecho particular que generó retos tecnológicos, sociales, políticos, económicos académicos, culturales y psicológicos, que afectaron de una u otra manera el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje del idioma inglés; en mayor medida en instituciones educativas del sector rural ecuatoriano. En este escenario, la presente investigación tiene como objetivo analizar el impacto de la virtualidad en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés en contextos rurales durante la pandemia del COVID-19, en los estudiantes que cursan el séptimo año de Educación Básica de la escuela "Estados Unidos" de la parroquia Quimiag, Cantón Riobamba. Para el efecto, el estudio se desarrolla al amparo del enfoque mixto de la investigación científica. En efecto, para la recolección de datos se utilizaron encuestas y entrevistas semiestructuradas aplicadas a los estudiantes y docente. Los resultados reflejan un alto índice de ausentismo a las clases virtuales, debido a la falta de recursos tecnológicos, internet y el número de estudiantes por familia. Esta realidad causó que no todos tuvieron la oportunidad de continuar con sus estudios, desencadenando complicaciones académicos, psicológicos, sociales y económicos. Así también los resultados sugieren que los desafíos a los que se enfrentaron los profesores fueron el manejo de los recursos tecnológicos y las cambiantes innovaciones curriculares establecidas para la emergencia. Dinámicas que desafiaron a los docentes y estudiantes a desarrollar nuevas estrategias académicas que, en cierta medida se podrían considerar como factores positivos derivados de la pandemia. Se concluye que la virtualidad generó brechas negativas que afectaron el proceso de aprendizaje, pero a la vez brindó beneficios que ayudó a la población educativa a sobresalir la emergencia sanitaria.

Palabras claves: pandemia, educación rural, enseñanza, aprendizaje, inglés, efectos, beneficios

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic unleashed countless phenomena that forced humanity to transform and restructure its daily activities. The most radical changes were experienced in the educational field, where teachers and students were forced to adopt the virtual modality to maintain the human right to education. This particular fact generated technological, social, political, economic, academic, cultural, and psychological challenges, which affected, in one way or another, the teaching and learning process of the English language to a greater extent in educational institutions in the rural sector of Ecuador. In this scenario, the present research aims to analyze the impact of virtuality in the process of teaching and learning English in rural contexts during the COVID-19 pandemic in students de séptimo año de Educación Básica de la escuela "Estados Unidos" de la Parroquia Quimiag, Cantón Riobamba. For this purpose, the study was developed under the mixed scientific research approach. Surveys and semi-structured interviews were applied to students and teachers to recollect data collection. The results reflect a high absenteeism rate to virtual classes due to the lack of technological resources, internet, and the number of students per family. This reality caused that not all of them had the opportunity to continue their studies, triggering academic, psychological, social, and economic complications. The results also suggest that the challenges faced by teachers were the management of technological resources and the changing curricular innovations established for the emergency. These dynamics challenged teachers and students to develop new academic strategies that, to a certain extent, could be considered positive factors derived from the pandemic. It is concluded that virtuality generated negative gaps that affected the learning process but, at the same time, provided benefits that helped the educational population overcome the health emergency.

Keywords: pandemic, rural education, teaching, learning, English, effects, benefits.

Reviewed by:

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CHAPTER I.

1.1 INTRODUCTION.

When the COVID-19 pandemic appeared, an unprecedented crisis spread in all areas, especially education. This emergency has led to the massive closure of face-to-face activities of educational institutions in more than 190 countries, including Ecuador, where all educational levels have been affected and were forced to respond to an entirely new learning style. This unexpected event highlighted rural institutions' academic, social, economic, and psychological difficulties.

In this concern, this study aimed to analyze the impact of virtuality in the process of teaching and learning English in rural contexts during the COVID-19 pandemic since, unfortunately, the problems above were evidenced in the Escuela "Estados Unidos" de la Parroquia Quimiag, Cantón Riobamba, where students attended one or two days per week. For this reason, this research proposed to elucidate how virtuality impacted the teaching and learning processes in the mentioned context, identifying and knowing the implications of the sudden adoption of the new learning style as a teaching and learning modality. At the same time, it illustrates the educational hindrances and benefits resulting from the pandemic. Also, it describes students' narratives of the psychological and academic effects.

In this regard, the following data collection techniques were used: surveys and interviews were applied with students and teachers of the institution. The research was descriptive since it is the one that describes the population situation around which the study is focused and seeks to provide information about the what, how, when, and where related to the research problem without giving priority to answering the "why" the problem occurs. Additionally, this research is unique because it focuses specifically on the effects of the pandemic on English language teaching in the rural sector. It can benefit future or possible research related to this study and thus expand the information.

The study has been divided into four chapters.

Chapter I. This chapter presents the referential framework. It is the Introduction, problem statement, and general and specific objectives.

Chapter II. The theoretical framework and all the scientific foundations of books, articles, repositories, publications, and reports that sustain the variables are presented.

Chapter III. This chapter will present the method, type, and design of the research, instruments, data collection procedures, population, and sample.

Chapter IV. The results achieved with the research and their analysis are shown.

Chapter V. Suggestions and recommendations are exposed in detail.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Paulo Freire, the greatest pedagogies and activist of rural education, stated that the main task of education is to train students for a future rural society (Buitrago Pérez, 2017). Unfortunately, this philosophy continues to be part of the political discourse. This has been demonstrated in many studies in which it is determined that rural areas were the most spoiled by the COVID-19 pandemic. It caused the most considerable disruption of education systems worldwide, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. Closures of schools and other learning spaces have impacted more than 94% of the world's student population (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), by mid-May 2020, more than 1.2 billion students, equivalent to 94% of them at all levels of education, had stopped attending classes in institutions. Most of these students were from rural areas. Of these, more than 160 million were students in Latin America and the Caribbean (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2020).

The virtual modality was adopted to respond to children's human rights to education worldwide, and some political decisions were taken. In the case of Ecuador, the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) proposed the Educational Plan "*Aprendemos juntos en casa.*" It developed an Emergency Curriculum in which teachers were forced to implement virtual platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Classroom without, in some cases, any previous knowledge (Creamer et al., 2020).

Consequently, students and teachers struggled with many challenges that became even more dramatic in the rural areas. For example, connectivity problems, lack of technological tools, knowledge of device management, geographic location, and parents' availability. These factors negatively influenced learning outcomes, particularly in English as a foreign language. Furthermore, the psychological and emotional parts of the students were also affected.

Explicitly, the mentioned issues were empirically evidenced in the Escuela "Estados Unidos," which students attended two days a week due to a lack of technological devices and internet connection. This study aims to elucidate how virtuality impacted the teaching and learning processes in the mentioned context; subsequently, the learning could not be achieved effectively. The study roots itself into the mixed scientific research approach in this framework. Furthermore, it has the characteristics of a descriptive work in which a survey and two interviews were applied to teachers and students for the data collection stage.

1.3 PROBLEM FORMULATION

How did virtuality influence the English teaching and learning process of students coursing the 7th EGB at Escuela "Estados Unidos" de la Parroquia Quimiag, Cantón Riobamba, during the academic period 2022-2023?

1.4 JUSTIFICATION

The principal goal of this research is to analyze the impact of virtuality on the English teaching and learning process of students coursing the 7th EGB at Escuela "Estados Unidos" de la Parroquia Quimiag, Cantón Riobamba, during the academic period 2022-2023. This is important because students and teachers have been on the line during the pandemic and have faced unique and often stressful challenges.

For this reason, the study aims to identify the principal educational, social, and economic implications of the process of teaching and learning English during the COVID-19 pandemic since it is relevant because this will help the audience to know the realities of each of the students and teachers who lived during this period. This situation is placed in the broader context of the pandemic and its general effects on the teaching process. With this basis, we plan to provide more information about the reality of the rural sectors and what the whole process was like during the emergency.

The purpose of this project arose due to the impact of virtuality on online education because the learning process is an important topic that has received little attention. In addition, the research results can help promote educational public policies that favor the welfare of the rural academic community. However, this research is original because it focuses specifically on the effects of English language teaching in the rural context. This contribution would benefit future or possible breakdowns related to this study and thus expand the information.

Finally, to develop the research, we had the support of the rector, teachers, and students of the "Estados Unidos" primary school as human resources. Also, technical resources such as surveys and interviews, technological devices: Cell phones and tape recorders, economic and self-financing resources, and bibliographic resources with information from other authors were also available. All these resources together made it possible to carry out the study.

1.5 OBJECTIVES

1.5.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the impact of virtuality on the English teaching and learning process of students coursing the 7th EGB at Escuela "Estados Unidos" de la Parroquia Quimiag, Cantón Riobamba, during the academic period 2022-2023.

1.5.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To identify the educational, social, and economic implications of teaching and learning English during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To elucidate the educational hindrances and benefits of the virtual modality adopted during the pandemic.
- To describe from students' narratives the psychological and academic effects of virtuality on teaching and learning English.

CHAPTER II.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INVESTIGATIVE BACKGROUND

From ancient times, pandemics have challenged humans to restructure their logic, visions, and activities. Some have forced them to adopt completely different dynamics to maintain themselves alive or conserve their rights, such as health and education. Some of these facts are presented as follows.

The historical sequence of pandemics starts with the Plague of Athens (430-426 BC) and ends with COVID-19. They dramatically affect the political, economic, social, and educational systems (Hernández et al., 2020). In the case of education, the current pandemic has triggered several complications. With mandatory social confinement, education adopted virtuality, a non-conventional modality that challenged governments, the educational community, and families. The poor connectivity in the country, the lack of technological platforms and devices, and the scarce knowledge on the usage of tech-tech tools provoked two principal phenomena.

The first describes how the cognoscitive gaps between poor and wealthy students have broadened, which became even more dramatic if the student lives in urban and rural zones. Pacheco and Zabdi (2022) expose that in the Ecuadorian rural sector, in the best of cases, students have minimal access to the internet, so carrying out virtual classes turned impossible; thus, learning outcomes were hardly accomplished during these emergency times. Furthermore, the digital skills acquired by students in this educational sector are unequal to those of the urban area (Murillo et al., 2020).

The problem occurred nationwide, and different educational policies were implemented in the rural context. An example is the Educational Plan "Aprendamos juntos en casa". It was implemented due to the difficulties in rural areas with Internet access and to guarantee these students their right to education. The proposal included academic activities for being developed at home, supported by a pedagogical guide and a weekly pedagogical plan for each sub-level (Chugá, 2022).

Moreover, at the end of each unit and partials (five-month academic periods), a school project had to be carried out where students were challenged to develop their creativity and social, cultural, and cognitive skills. Unfortunately, this plan did not consider the vast complexity of rural students; thus, learning targets were hardly accomplished (Chugá, 2022).

Many studies have focused on identifying the benefits and hindrances of virtuality, some of which will be considered for constructing the epistemological basis of this research. The principle is presented as follows:

Cavallo et al. (2021) argue that thanks to virtuality, students perceive that education is focused on aspects related to the convenience of studying from home and economic factors, as they imply cost savings. Whereas to Suárez Carvajal (2022), the main benefits for teachers and students of public and private institutions were to use the networks and interact with peers through chats, forums, e-mail networks, and blogs. Moreover, teachers had to investigate different teaching strategies through virtuality by sending information to

their students from the workshops or guides. Additionally, they had to watch videos explaining the contents to be covered. Teachers had in mind the didactics that they would carry out in the virtuality so that the students did not get into monotony or boredom, receiving classes motivated and interested in learning day by day.

For Iñiguez et al. (2021) the main hindrances to education in rural areas during the pandemic are that due to a lack of economic resources and technological infrastructure that did not guarantee the availability of computers and devices connected to the Internet, the students did not connect to the synchronous classes. As a result, there is a significant imbalance between education in cities and those living in rural areas. COVID-19 was a break from teaching and learning English, causing many students to abandon their studies due to economic conditions and presenting some technological and internet access problems for virtual class connectivity. In addition, it reveals that most parents have not completed their basic levels of study, so they cannot help their children with homework from home. With English being a foreign language, it has been complicated for parents to help contribute to this training.

2.2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.2.1 Paradigms and Theory in Education in the Pandemic

The humanism paradigm, within the virtual educational perspective, postulates the student as the central actor of the teaching and learning process and recommends the study of the human being as a whole, that is to say, in its totality, involving cognitive, affective, spiritual, communicative, ethical, aesthetic and corporal processes, the latter being of vital importance in the current pandemic situation that threatens the entire population, without any distinction. It is the possible way in the integral formation of the human being, retaking the sense of the educational activity, creating a sense of meaningful relationship, and considering the cognitive, affective, and social aspects, not only of the student but also of the teacher(Rojas & Barajas, 2021).

Connectivism proposes a new learning paradigm in education due to the pandemic, which recognizes the extraordinary capacity of new technologies and their contribution to the knowledge society. The pandemic has forced us to acknowledge the multiple existing applications such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, etc.; it has demonstrated different learning skills where connectivity and processing were prioritized over the accumulation of content. In addition, they have brought about a significant change, giving rise to new modalities such as e-learning and b-Learning that are revolutionizing teaching and learning. As a result, it is promoting highly connective learners(Torres et al., 2022).

2.2.2 Educational Policies during the pandemic

The educational policy guidelines that emerged as the crisis progressed were not always according to the constitutional statement, namely that the conditions of the students and learners were not fully assured. Educational policies implemented by the Ecuadorian government did not consider the technological access and connectivity of teachers and students, which caused a situation of uneasiness in these two among the educational system(Villagómez & Llanos, 2020).

For example, a study elaborated by Molina and Mesa (2018) indicated that there is very little investment and poor management regarding innovation and application of technological resources in rural schools, suggesting that the State should generate educational policies that allow more significant investment in innovation and teacher training for the promotion of specialized programs that will enable the development of students, mainly at the basic levels. Therefore, rural schools have tried to improve their infrastructure and internet access; this access is neither permanent nor quality. Thus, the development has not been achieved optimally and effectively.

2.2.3 Emergent Curriculum

The Ministry of Education has designed the Emerging Prioritized Curriculum for the emergency, which is applicable in all national contexts and provides continuity to the educational process until the end of the 2020-2021 school year. It prioritizes the approach of essential learning that can be developed through active methodologies such as Project Learning, Problems and Questions that promote creative capacity, imagination, and problem-solving, as well as the development of oral communication skills, text comprehension, written production, and mathematical calculation, always considering the needs, interest,s and problems of the student who is the protagonist of learning, with the support of the teacher and families as mediators, motivators and process guides(Creamer et al., 2020).

2.2.4 Curriculum "Aprendamos juntos en casa"

The current situation that the country is going through due to the pandemic has generated the implementation of remote education. For which the Ministry of Education has created the program "Aprendamos juntos en casa." Plan to teach various subjects, disseminated through multiple media such as radio, television, and social networks. However, there were breaking points in implementing this plan because not all students had the resources and means to receive the classes. This generated a more significant gap since some students were left without studying. Many scholars were left without learning, and others dropped out because they did not understand the subjects or pay attention due to the lack of ICT management for teachers to develop competencies(Espinoza & Soledad, 2021).

2.2.5 Teaching-Learning methodologies used during the pandemic

2.2.5.1 Problem-based learning

The problem-based learning methodology enhances the procedures that allow the assimilation of knowledge used daily by people since these are the ones identified as the most effective. These can be summarized as follows: the reflective stage on a problem, where the parts of the problem that the individual does not know are identified; The approach to the problem with the support of resources that allow the individual to determine how to solve the problematic elements; Application of the acquired knowledge and concretion of the solution and, finally, Analysis of the solution and its process. This type of learning seeks that students build from reality a real education of specific and general skills and abilities instead of starting from the theoretical models of traditional approaches(Aza et al., 2021).

2.2.5.2 The flipped classroom

This methodology aims to invest in the practice and application of content if students accessed online study resources from their homes and then brought their doubts to the school so that, through the interaction of everyone in the class, they could clarify their doubts. Students can move the learning space from a collective environment, such as a classroom, to an area where the individual student can access learning resources developed for their assimilation, allowing the classroom to become a dynamic space for multidirectional exchange where the teacher clarifies doubts and guides students to the creative discovery of knowledge (Aza et al., 2021).

2.2.5.3 Gamification

The learning methodology through gamification implements the dynamics and characteristics of games and video games in educational contexts to motivate students. When studying the structure of a game, it can be observed that they develop through their playful character, motivation to achieve objectives, commitment to the game system, and desire to improve(Aza et al., 2021).

2.2.6 Apps for teaching and learning process on virtuality

Barry et al. (2021) argued that several tools, such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp, were employed to teach and interact during the virtuality. Microsoft Teams platform allows faculty, staff, and students to belong to teams that include separate channels. It has built-in meeting features to hold classes and share documents successfully. The Zoom platform allows instructors to meet online with students for virtual face-to-face instruction and synchronize lessons. In addition, the Google Classroom resource, where the teacher could upload PowerPoint presentations, interactive websites, videos, and e-books, can be attached to posts. Finally, WhatsApp was used to communicate and send tasks to them, and they have a guide (Vidal et al., 2022).

2.2.7 Virtual Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the educational system worldwide, causing the closure of academic centers, becoming one of the biggest challenges to be faced by educational institutions, where they went from a face-to-face education modality to the adaptation of their environment to the digital world. All academic levels have been affected and were forced to respond to an entirely new situation, such as the mandatory isolation focused on non-face-to-face. To give continuity to the learning development of students at all levels, they have found it necessary to carry out their activities virtually. Virtual education is the option that best adapts to the isolation measures decreed by governments worldwide. Due to the pandemic, virtual education has acquired great importance within the educational system, which was reflected in the pedagogical practices and educational systems worldwide (Ochoa & Torres, 2021).

Due to implementing the modality adapted to the educational system, school dropout and child labor increased due to the coronavirus. Millions of children have left their studies worldwide, and the future is uncertain; the pandemic has had a disastrous impact on the educational field, and few could resume classes at a distance. On the other hand, with the

obligation of parents to work at a young age to contribute to the family income, children who drop out of school are vulnerable in terms of health.

According to Tene (2022), 26.6% of the population from 3 to 29 years old did not register in the 2021 cycle, 25.3% dropped out of school because their parents were unemployed, while 21.9% did not continue studying because they did not have a computer, tablet, cell phone or internet connection, on the other hand, 19.3% dropped out of school because it closed permanently; 4.4% because their parents could not take care of the student, among other reasons.

2.2.8 Consequences of teaching and learning English in a rural area during the Pandemic

Due to the pandemic, the most complicated thing for the educational system has been the poverty level in rural areas due to their living conditions. They do not have access to the internet and technological resources. This makes learning and teaching English more difficult since the teachers do not have direct contact with the students, causing more deficiency in the knowledge of this language; however, this is different due to the conditions of each one. The English teaching-learning process in rural areas has always been slow due to a lack of interest in the language. Similarly, there is little participation of teachers in rural areas; in many cases, they are not teachers with a degree in a foreign language. However, the presence of COVID-19 in the country was an obstacle to the education and learning of English, causing many children and young people to abandon their studies due to economic conditions. The new modality of virtual education did not generate good results in this educational sector. Therefore, parents could not help them with their homework; even if it was English, they could not provide practical support (Alvarado et al., 2021).

In fact, in a rural school, it was found that girls had more difficulties than boys in adapting socially. According to the work carried out by Toscano (2021) in the city of Ambato, Ecuador, this author presented a very different scenario by identifying that, although most of the boys wanted to return to face-to-face classes because they missed their teachers and classmates, the same did not happen with the girls, who argued that they did not want to return to school because they were victims of mistreatment by their classmates. Consequently, those students who had no contact through technological devices with their teachers went to ask for help directly at the homes of the teachers who lived in the parish "El Chical," where the school is located, to have them explain the handouts or work activities. This practice was prevalent among elementary school students.

2.2.9 Teacher Role

During the pandemic, the central role of the teacher was a mediator of the content and the constructivist activity that students deploy to assimilate it. The responsibilities of the teacher were grouped into four categories: pedagogical, social, administrative, and technical. Pedagogical: The teacher was a facilitator who contributed specialized knowledge and focused on developing learning materials in different formats characterized by interactivity and customization. Socially, the teacher created a collaborative atmosphere to generate a learning community. On the administrative, knew the software to be able to develop sub-conferences and work groups and to be able to move or delete messages from

the conference. Moreover, technical support was provided technical support for possible difficulties that students may encounter in the development of the course (Rizo, 2020).

During the pandemic, teachers had to follow a protocol of teacher self-preparation for teaching in covid-19 times; teachers had to personally analyze their self-preparation in the following aspects that articulate the cognitive, affective, somatic, interpersonal, and behavioral aspects to work on their state and reach the optimal level to carry out the educational processes in the new scenario. In addition, teachers must comply with the curricular/syllabus planning stage to anticipate the facts and make definitions in selecting the didactics, resources, sequences, teaching, and learning times. Also, in the execution of classes, Teachers had to follow the following instructions: Brief greeting and presentation of the topic exposing the concepts and fundamentals that should be known; clear instructions for autonomous learning: bibliography or videos, listening to the student about doubts or points that he does not understand, explain the project, homework, and other evaluation mechanisms to be used and, indicate the delivery time of the work(Villafuerte et al., 2020).

As well as the teacher fulfilled their assigned roles, they maintained a more significant concern that even though every effort was made for the students to achieve the expected learning, they were not learning everything that should have been learned, this was even worse; they did not know the few contents they wanted to teach so as not to delay the development skills of the students. Many teachers felt anxious that they could not do everything necessary for the students to receive support. Most students needed help, so the objectives were not entirely met. This created a negative gap in educational inequality (Albornoz et al., 2021).

2.2.10 Students Role

The role of the students was focused on their self-discipline. It enhances the ability to allocate their time and allows freedom and flexibility to use learning to achieve their goals. It was oriented to the improvement of self-learning as the capacity developed by the individual to learn in an autonomous, active, and participative way, acquiring knowledge and skills and fostering his values, which results in the self-formation of the subject (Rizo, 2020).

2.2.11 Parents Role

Chacha (2020) determined in his study several points of view of parents regarding the education of their children during the COVID-19 pandemic, where there is clear evidence of the lack of resources that exist in the rural sector and the limited access to the Internet, which prevented to continue with the educational process. Parents had to play a fundamental role in virtual education since they have been forced to guide the educational process. Still, it is unfortunate that most of them have only finished elementary school, making it difficult for them to be successful in learning.

2.2.12 Benefits of Virtuality

In addition to the challenges, virtuality has brought some benefits, and one of the most important that has been experienced during the pandemic was the desire to change, innovate, to go beyond the conventional and the magistral. It allows the student to use new

tools to build their knowledge, awakening the desire to investigate and create, focusing on their life project (Suárez, 2022).

Teachers and students from public and private institutions were able to make use of the networks and interact with peers through chats, forums, e-mails, blogs, and research pages such as Google and Google Academic. research sites such as Google and Google Academic. Teachers have researched and created different teaching strategies through virtuality, sending information to their students about the workshops or guides students of the workshops or guides made from home through educational capsules, infographics, and explanatory videos of the contents to be covered (Suárez, 2022).

The teacher-researcher had to lose his fear, leaving aside the digital gaps, training himself, and forming people of integrity, builders of their knowledge, capable of creating with critical thinking, autonomy, and leadership. According to the strategies proposed by the teachers and activities developed by the students, the teacher should carry out a process of accompaniment and feedback to students, especially those who require it (Suárez, 2022).

2.2.13 Challenges of Virtuality

For Becerra (2017), virtual education has transformed the education method. It has impacted society, science, the economy, and industry, allowing the progress of countries and, above all, responding to the labor market, which today demands new profiles, new competencies, and technological skills; the use of virtual platforms to perform their professions; the discipline and flexibility to work remotely when organizations today demand more telework. Consequently, in most official institutions, especially those in the rural sector, there were very few technological tools available technological tools. Therefore, there were no personnel trained in the use of ICTs.

During the pandemic, the teaching-learning process through virtual spaces has been managed as a trial-and-error test, taking into account its starvation, which has led to poor results in terms of little deepening of content, lack of control in the development of student competencies, inhibition in the use of digital platforms to consolidate learning; poorly reflective tasks and assessments; etc., thus impairing the quality of education. Likewise, the challenge for teachers is not limited to transmitting the contents of each subject, where the teacher and the student can intervene on equal terms to develop different competencies in the student (Arteaga et al., 2021).

Teachers were not prepared to face a change in teaching style, changing the classrooms for corners of the house, adapting them, and converting them into classrooms; the family took a back seat because they did not have time to be with them since they did not have time to be with them. Family took a back seat because they did not have time to be with them, from the preparation of the classes with digital tools to the practice of the classes with digital tools and with a motivating didactic to awaken the student's interest in the student's interest and motivation before, during and after the synchronous process(Suárez, 2022).

2.2.12 Psychological and interpersonal effects

Quarantine or social isolation, which has been determined to prevent the disease in many countries, brings adverse psychological reactions such as confusion, anger, exhaustion, detachment, impaired performance, and reluctance to work. These feelings generate anxiety and signs of depression and stress, which are also affected by the limited possibilities of social and educational support. Boredom and frustration may be secondary factors of the new living conditions imposed by the pandemic due to the long time spent in front of a computer(Cazares, 2021).

CHAPTER III.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Approach

This study was developed under the principles of the mixed scientific research approach. Halcomb and Hickman (2015) explain that this approach focuses on quantitative and qualitative approaches, where quantitative methods include information used to measure attitudes using rating scales. In contrast, qualitative ones are information that the researcher usually collects through interviews or observations. In this research, through a survey, it was identified the educational, social, and economic implications resulting from the study phenomenon. The interview was applied to elucidate the educational hindrances and benefits resulting from the virtual modality adopted in the pandemic and to describe from the narratives of teachers and students the psychological and academic effects derived after it.

3.2 Research modality

This research fits the field modality. As Arias (2012) mentioned, it consists of collecting everything directly from the investigated subjects or from the reality where the facts occur. In these terms, to discover the events during the pandemic, data collection instruments, such as surveys and interviews, were directly applied to the participants in the study context.

3.3 Level or type of investigation

The study owns the characteristic of descriptive research, which, in terms of Siedlecki (2020), aims to depict the population, situation, or phenomenon around which the study is centered. It seeks to provide information about the what, how, when, and where related to the research problem without prioritizing answering the "why" it occurs. In our case, the subjacent issues regarding education during the Covid-19 pandemic. Besides, it also fits Interpretative research to uncover meaning toward a better understanding of the issues involved(Alvermann & Mallozzi, 2010).

3.4 Research population

This research was carried out in the rural school "Estados Unidos" in the Quimiag parish of the Chimborazo province. It was working with students at 7th EGB and their English teacher. The principal reason for selecting this population is that this institution was affected during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, it was noticed that even though people were confined, these students had to attend school twice a week due to the lack of technological devices and internet connection in their homes. These facts show our interest in elucidating the impact of virtuality on the English teaching and learning process.

3.5 Sample size

Taking a sample was unnecessary since the population was relatively small.

3.6 Data collection techniques and instruments

The techniques and instruments of data collection are closely related to data analysis, which allow the researcher to collect, examine, analyze, and expose the information or data from a sample about the research problem; consequently, it should be in concordance with the study objectives (Contreras et al., 2015).

For the first specific objective, a survey was conducted to, as explained by Taherdoost (2016), obtain relevant information regarding the study problem. It included open-ended questions, closed-ended questions, and a combination of both. Our proposal was focused on gathering educational, social, and economic data to identify the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning English.

 To accomplish the last two specific objectives, two interviews were applied. For Montagud Rubio (2020), an interview is a technique-oriented to obtaining data from the dialogue between two people: the interviewer and the interviewer. In this respect, the first interview was applied to teachers to learn the hindrances and benefits of the virtual modality adopted during the pandemic. The second one was carried out with students aiming to describe the psychological and academic effects they have experimented with in this emergency.

To conclude this section, data collection from the students, the surveys, and interviews were conducted in Spanish due to their limited knowledge of English since they are only in the 7th grade of EGB. Thus, to respond to the principles of research ethics and guarantee compliance with the principle of personal autonomy and confidentiality of the population, Informed Consent forms were filled out, in which the participants accepted that their contributions would be used in the study. At the same time, they authorized the use of their names to socialize the results.

3.7 Information analysis and interpretation techniques

For the analysis and interpretation of the information, it was necessary to use data triangulation, which allows the researcher to seek convergence between multiple and different sources of information and offers an opportunity for a broader perspective to be developed in terms of the interpretation of the phenomenon, which in turn enriches the study and provides the opportunity new approaches (Carter et al., 2014). In this regard, it was possible to use various data from different authors and exhaustively review their work.

The information collected from the surveys and interviews was classified to find common themes or categories to facilitate discussion and comments on the study results. Then, they give way to the development of the conclusions of this research that perceives analyzing the impact of virtuality on students and how it had complications in teaching and learning English as a foreign language, especially in rural areas.

CHAPTER IV.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 RESULTS

The factual reality of education during the pandemic in rural areas

This research was principally focused on analyzing virtuality's impact on the English teaching and learning process in rural contexts during the COVID-19 pandemic. To comprehend this situation, three specific objectives were established to gather information about the educational, social, and economic realities faced by the population during the pandemic; furthermore, to elucidate the hindrances and benefits resulting from the virtual modality adopted during this period, and to describe from the narratives of students the psychological and academic effects of virtuality on teaching and learning English. With this basis, the principal findings derived from the first specific objective are presented as follows:

The results show that one of the most remarkable problems in rural areas was the number of students who had to join virtual classes simultaneously in homes where the number of technological devices and internet access were threatened (Iñiguez et al., 2021).

Figure 1. Number of students at home during the COVID-19 pandemic
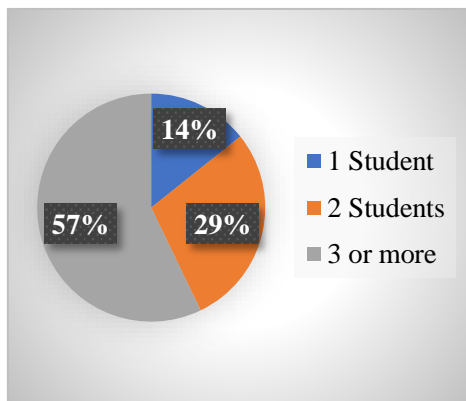
Author: Yupangui E, 2023
Source This figure shows the number of students who studied during the pandemic per family.

Figure 2. Available technological devices
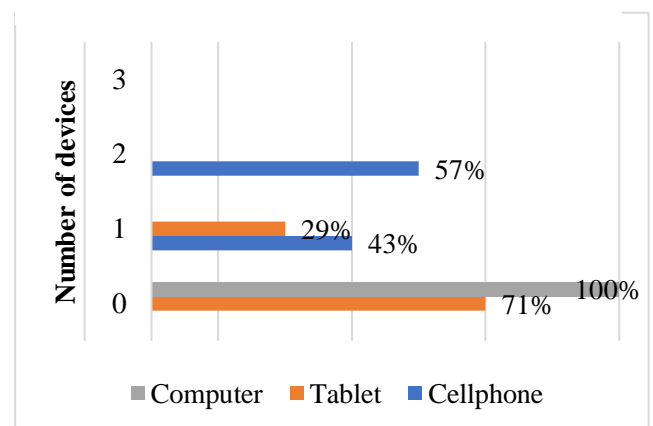
Author: Yupangui E, 2023
Source: These graphic illustrations show the availability of technological devices per family.

As Alvarado, et al. (2021) stated that poverty mainly affected the pandemic's educational system in rural areas. This may be understood in terms of limited access to technology, deficient knowledge about their usage, deprived living conditions, and the huge percentage of school desertion in Ecuador (28%). This situation particularly hindered the process of learning and teaching English since, in these contexts, the number of students appears to be significantly higher in contrast to the disposal of tech devices (Barre & Castro, 2021).

Figures 1 and 2 show that most of the population (57%) belongs to families with three or more students but with only one or two technological devices, principally cell phones. This reality suggests that not all of them had the opportunity to receive synchronous classes, triggering other academic problems such as excessive dependence on older siblings, deficiencies in the learning process, and others related to the students' socio-economic stability, as revealed in Figure 3 and 4 (Quiñones, 2022).

Figure 3. Academic accompaniment
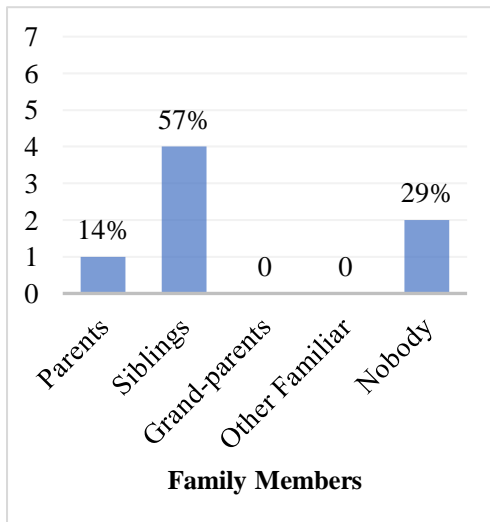
Author: Yupangui E, 2023
Source: This graphic displays data about those who assisted students in their learning process during the pandemic.

Figure 4. Frequency of economic stability
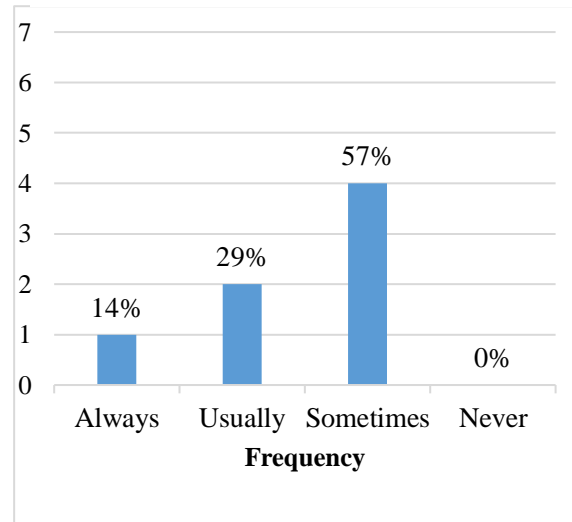
Author: Yupangui E, 2023
Source: This figure recovers information about the family's economic stability in terms of the steady jobs of the parents.

All the drawbacks described above have caused the academic level and proficiency in English language learning to decline, as not everyone could continue their studies at home during this period. This phenomenon occurred also to those students who can, in some way, assist in virtual classes. Their testimonies suggest regular and deficient language learning.

Lastly, the economic crisis that has occurred in Ecuador in recent years, as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, provoked a problem that was already being experienced with the lack of employment and the drastic drop in the labor market (Becerra et al., 2021).

Figure 5. *Performance during the pandemic*
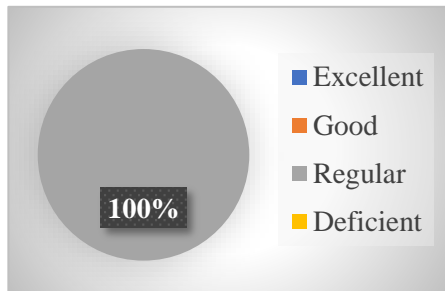
Author: Yupangui E, 2023
Source: This graphic shows students' academic performance along the virtuality.

Figure 6. *English language proficiency*

Author: Yupangui E, 2023
Source: These graphics confirm the level of language learning that the students consider they have gotten during the pandemic.

Learning the English language has been fraught with difficulties. After the pandemic, plenty of academic limitations and gaps were identified in students. For instance, Arias et al. (2021), discovered that speech is one of the talents that has been dramatically impacted. This data is echoed in st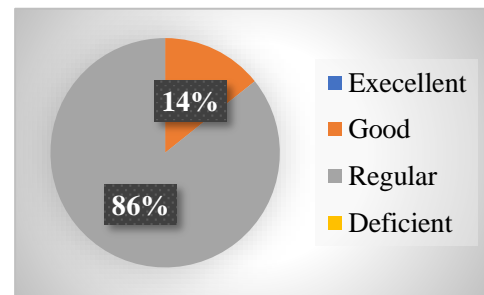udents' performance and English proficiency, 100% of them consider they have limited roles in virtuality. As a result, the ability could hardly be improved. That is why it is believed that connectivity was hampered, not only because many students have Internet hitches but also because many have had to become acquainted with various educational platforms. Moreover, not all of them generally had a consistent accompaniment (Arias et al., 2021).

Another awkward fact experienced in the emergency was the level of English quality and the scholar schedule. It was prejudiced by the time established in those periods. Also, because some students had very restricted access to the internet, carrying out virtual classes became impossible; thus, learning outcomes were hardly accomplished in this situation. That is why the English skills acquired by students in this educational sector are unequal to those of the urban area (Rizo, 2020).
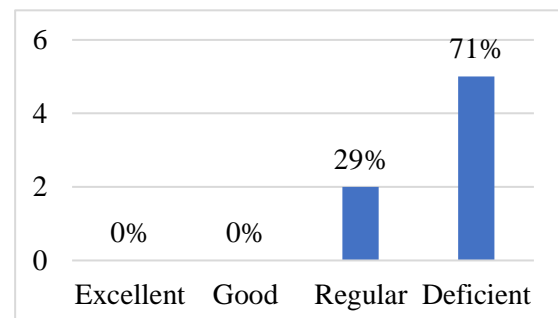
Figure 7. *English class hours per week*
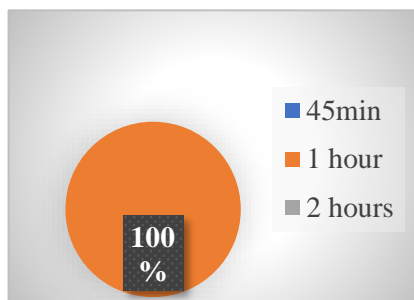
Author: Yupangui E, 2023
Source: This image illustrates the number of class-hours students received.

Figure 8. *Quality of English classes*

Author: Yupangui E, 2023
Source: This picture evidences students' perceptions regarding the quality of English classes during the pandemic.

García et al. (2019), recommend that, for meaningful learning of the Anglo-Saxon language, students should be exposed to at least 5 hours a week since this foreign language requires extended practice and training accompanied by the teacher or other types of people who help them. However, with the pandemic, the number of hours was drastically reduced to only one hour weekly for the participants. For this reason, the quality of English classes was not satisfactory for students; it generated gaps in knowledge, doubts, and concerns.

Furthermore, students had difficulties with their grades. Based on the results, this problem could be generated by the limited feedback received from the teacher and the restricted support given at their homes. Consequently, the curricular objectives expected by the institution were not achieved (Falcón et al., 2022).

Figure 9. *Frequency of teacher feedback*   **Figura 10.** *Academic accompaniment*
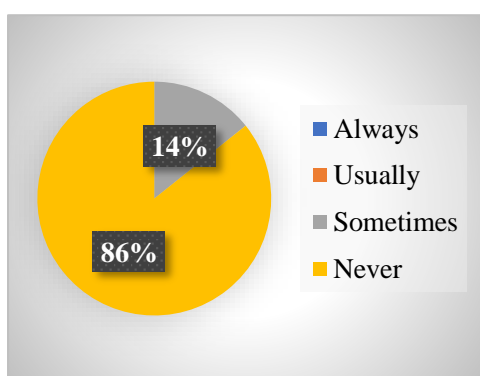
Author: Yupangui E, 2023
Source: The graph shows the level of teachers' feedback to children.
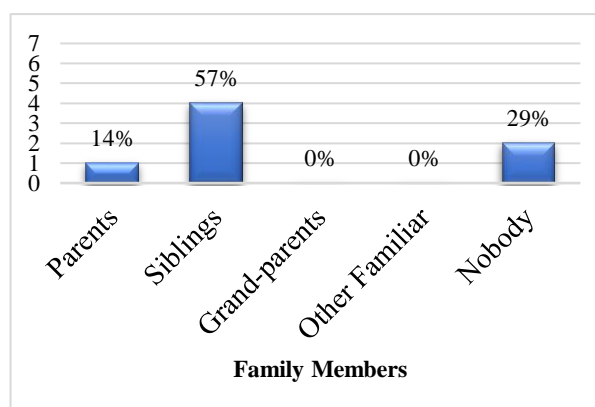
Author: Yupangui E, 2023
Source: This figure is about academic accompaniment during the teaching and learning process.

Even though in the National Emergency Curriculum, as stated by Creamer, et al (2020), it is stipulated that teachers must provide adequate accompaniment to ensure good scores. According to 86% of the participants, this rarely happened. The English teacher hardly ever gave assistance or feedback in virtual sessions. This may be because teachers needed to create several activities and did not have the time to do so. Another factor for this to happen may be related to the kind of support students receive; 57% of them argue that their siblings were those who pretended to accompany the learning process. However, for Rizo (2020), these deficiencies might also be attributed to student apathy, a lack of desire, technical challenges, or geographic remoteness.

Regarding the last factor, the academic process became further problematic due to students' living conditions. Students started to experiment with some social and psychological disruptiveness. This results from a lack of personal interaction and communication with their teachers and classmates (Alvarado et al., 2021).

Figure 11. Social interaction between students
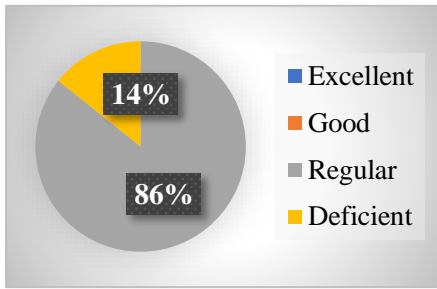
Author: Yupangui E, 2023
Source: The image exposes students' interaction with their mates along the virtuality.

Figure 12. Communication between teacher and students
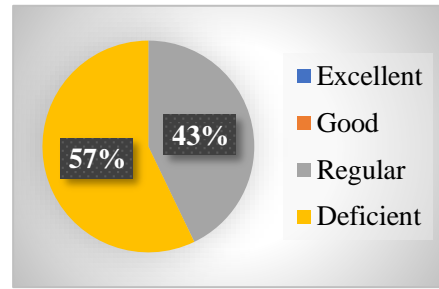
Author: Yupangui E, 2023
Source: This figure exposes students' interaction with their teachers along the virtuality.

Students, professors, and parents had to play an important role in virtual education's teaching and learning process, but most educational institutions did not accomplish this. For example, in the study context, because not all students had an optimum internet connection to access the virtual classrooms, they could not see or interact with their mates. This explains why the learning process was insufficient to fulfill the learning objectives owing to a lack of communication and engagement.

Additionally, Cazares (2021), discovered that the pandemic impacted the mental health of the Ecuadorian population, especially in anxiety, stress, depression, anguish, confusion, etc. From the participants' view, this reality affected them academically and personally.

Figure 13. Emotional Effects of the Pandemic
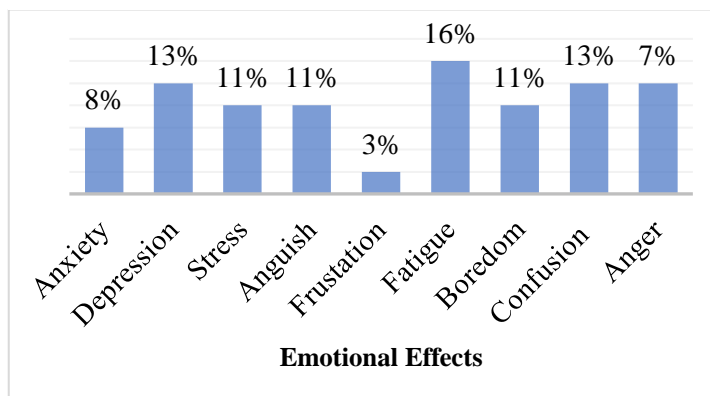
Author: Yupangui E, 2023
Source: The graph evidences the significant emotional effects caused by COVID-19.

Figure 14. Factors attributing to emotional effects
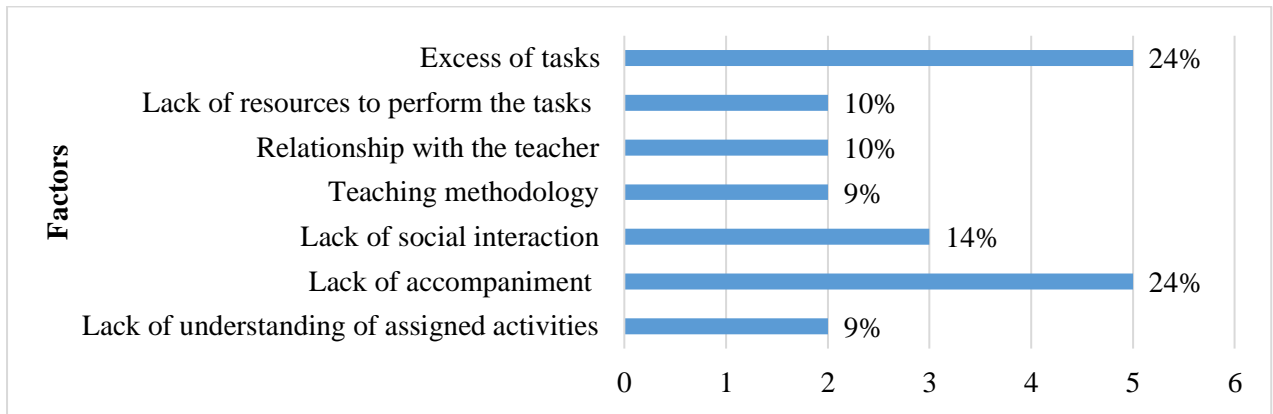
Quarantine caused adverse psychological effects such as despair, weariness, perplexity, tension, misery, and boredom. An abundance of work, insufficient social and educational support options, and a lack of comprehension of given responsibilities impacted these. Other variables may include the altered living conditions imposed by the epidemic due to the lengthy time spent in front of a computer or mobile phone, as most people did not know how to use technology equipment. Furthermore, not all parents could help them in this regard (Cazares, 2021).

Lastly, the economic crisis that has occurred in Ecuador in recent years, as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, provoked a problem that was already being experienced with the lack of employment and the drastic drop in the labor market (M. Becerra et al., 2021).

Figure 15. Frequency of financial problems in performing tasks
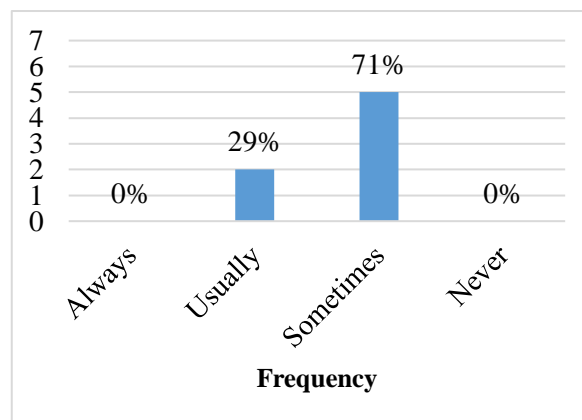
The COVID-19 epidemic had a significant influence not just on people's lives but also on local business and education, particularly in rural areas. The absence of consistent employment caused an emotional, familial, and economic catastrophe. It is clear because most people (71%) stated that their parents did not have stable work. As a result, the parents could not afford all the essential home costs. This explains why they failed to offer the supplies their children need for schoolwork (Becerra, et al., 2021).

The abovementioned factors demonstrate that all the educational, social, and economic realities faced by the population have been unfavorable to the learning process during the pandemic. In other words, the lack of technological devices, access to the internet, and parental support; the deficient socioeconomic stability of families in the study context; the poor social interaction between teachers, students, and parents; the limited class time; and the psychological and emotional effects, contributed to the low academic performance of rural students in the area of foreign languages teaching and learning.

Principal Benefits and Challenges for Teachers During the Pandemic

The second goal of this study was to elucidate the hindrances and benefits resulting from the education virtual modality and, thus, to determine this influence on the English teaching and learning process in rural settings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The principal findings are presented as follows:

The Challenging Face

First, it was discovered that one of the biggest problems teachers faced during the pandemic was the management of technological resources. That is why knowing if the participating teacher had previous preparation in virtual education was essential. Remember that, particularly in rural areas, teachers were not fully trained to teach virtual classes, as Guerrero et al. (2023) stated. The author affirms that, due to this fact, teachers limited themselves to sending academic reinforcement activities and merely fulfilled the weekly planning promulgated by the Ministry of Education. Similarly, Guimaraes (2022) underlines the lack of technological infrastructure and the drastic shifts in teaching that forced a re-construction of teaching methodologies. This conception is shared by the interviewee, who conceives that:

> Most English teachers did not have previous preparation for virtuality. We had to learn to manage the technological resources by ourselves…. for example, we [had to] watch videos on YouTube to familiarize ourselves with those resources. Besides, I did not know enough about using tablets, computers, and educational platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams (Lopez, H., Interviewed Teacher, 2023).

What was expressed reflected teachers' concern and diligence to help students achieve the expected learning; unfortunately, it was insufficient. Students did not learn everything that should have been discovered (Villafuerte, et al., 2020).

When Ecuador was going through the pandemic, the Ministry of Education created the program "*Aprendamos juntos en casa*". It aimed to teach various subjects and disseminate many topics and contents on an interdisciplinary basis. Along with this implementation, there were breaking points because not all students had the resources and means to receive the classes. This generated a significant gap since some students were left without studying (Espinoza & Soledad, 2021). That is why the interviewee argues that:

> …this curricular proposal was not a satisfactory resource to continue the teaching and learning process because it did not have enough information about integrating the English subject with the others. However, I consider this plan convenient for facing the situation at that moment since it was designed to allow students to develop their activities at home with the guidance of their parents. However, not all parents knew enough about the subject to support the students (Lopez, H., Interviewed Teacher, 2023).

Due to the lack of Internet access in those places, the lack of students' and teachers' technological knowledge, the lack of motivation, and the appearance of different psychosocial problems in students, the plan mentioned above guarantees educational continuity to only 50% to 60% of students in rural areas in Ecuador. This means that not all of them could continue their studies from home (Demera, et al., 2021). Thus, academic gaps and problems were triggered. Regarding the participants,

> … the goals were not achieved because of insufficient social interaction. We needed to be face-to-face to identify the necessities and doubts of the students in their English skills, such as reading and speaking. Moreover, students needed more face-to-face interaction with their peers to express their emotions. For these reasons, I consider the level of the students was low, and today, the level is the same (Lopez, H., Interviewed Teacher, 2023).

Benefits Resulting after the Pandemic

Although the pandemic brought complications, it also carried some benefits to education. Thus, one of the essential advantages experienced during the pandemic is the desire to change and innovate education; it is to allow the students to utilize new digital tools for building their knowledge, as stated by Suárez (2022). This author affirms that teachers from public and private institutions can use the networks and interact with students through chats, forums, e-mail networks, blogs, etc. Also, teachers have researched and created different teaching strategies through virtuality by sending information to their students from workshops or guides made from home through educational capsules, infographics, and explanatory videos of the contents to be covered, as expressed by the interviewee:

> In my opinion, the positive aspects for students were the opportunity to spend time with their family and be supported in some academic activities by their parents. It allowed teachers to find different techniques, activities, worksheets, and dynamic games. With these resources, we tried to keep the class more active during the emergency (Lopez, H., Interviewed Teacher, 2023).

After having gone through the pandemic with changes in the educational system, today it can be determined that technology goes hand in hand with the learning process no longer as a support but as an essential complement to it; thus, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the educational system, as it would be a perfect key in this digital era for the development of the society of the future. In addition, knowing and managing new digital applications or teaching methodologies and strategies can be crucial for developing the next generations with different capabilities, such as critical thinking (Laro, 2020). That is why the interviewee recommends the following:

> … to be prepared with the usage of technological resources. …future teachers should know the process for adopting different teaching methodologies. They need to know the new apps and websites that can appear. Moreover, I suggest they have a positive mentality and attitude to face any emergency (Lopez, H., Interviewed Teacher, 2023).

What has been said leads us to conclude that virtual education has tried to create an environment similar to the conventional classroom environment in which students can access and develop a series of actions typical of a face-to-face teaching process. Still, along the way, several factors, such as challenges, have prevented education from being effective, particularly in the rural sector. All these implications resulted in a low quality of the teaching process during the pandemic.

Academic and Psychological Effects of Virtuality

The last specific objective of this study was to describe from students' narratives the psychological and academic effects of virtuality on teaching and learning English and, thus, to determine the consequence of virtuality on the English teaching and learning process in rural contexts during the COVID-19 pandemic. The main results are presented as follows:

Academic Effects

In the first specific objective, students argued that the quality of English classes in the virtuality was deficient. With the basis therein, it is essential to realize to what extent students learned along this modality. Keep in mind that, particularly in rural areas, there were plenty of limitations regarding academic usage of digital tools, internet connection, parents' accompaniment, and social interaction (Pérez, 2022). These challenges have made students learning even more difficult; consequently, learning goals could hardly be accomplished. This conception is shared by the interviewees who, in this regard, state that:

> …a veces no le entendía al profesor porque mi internet cada rato se iba. También, no entendía cuando explicaba la clase porque usaba solo lecturas muy largas. Por eso las clases eran aburridas y yo casi no participaba… (Guashco, M., Interviewed Student, 2023)

> Las clases fueron aburridas porque no había muchos estudiantes en las clases virtuales, solo nos reuníamos tres o cuatro niños. También, en algunos temas me confundía mucho y no podía hacer bien mis deberes de inglés (Murillo, A., Interviewed Student, 2023)

What was stated reflected students' concern to help themselves achieve the expected learning; unfortunately, students did not learn everything that should have been learned during the pandemic. This meant that education was not effective during those academic periods.

It was believed that students were not prepared to handle the technology. Still, unfortunately, this was not the case since the new modality was a drastic change in which students had to face the various challenges of virtual education, especially in rural institutions, as revealed by Bravo et al. (2022). The author states in his study that (83%) of students' academic performance was affected during online classes, and the factors that influenced the change in their academic performance were especially the lack of internet access, lack of knowledge of technological tools, distractions, and not having adequate space to study. That is why the participants argue that:

> …las clases virtuales no me ayudó mi desempeño en inglés, porque mis notas bajaron mucho porque no entendía al profesor o a veces no entraba a las clases. Por eso no aprendí inglés como antes, cuando estuvimos en clases presenciales en la escuela, mis notas eran un poco mejor, porque ahí si le entendíamos un poco mejor al profesor (León, J., Interviewed Student, 2023)

> En las clases me sabia distraer muy rápido porque a veces no entendía algunos temas. Por eso, participar en clases era muy difícil porque no podía leer ni pronunciar bien las palabras en inglés. Cuando la profesora dictaba las palabras siempre escribía mal, tenía muchos errores… (Vigme, C., Interviewed Student, 2023)

Students are very conscious that virtual education affects the learning process, for instance, their academic performance. For this reason, the plan "*Apredamos juntos en casa*," implemented by the Ministry of Education, was not as effective as expected. There were many difficulties, such as the limited knowledge of parents to support their children in their academic tasks, especially in the English language, since most of the parents, in the rurality, had only concluded primary school.

In addition, parents could not take care of their children because they were often away working. For this reason, the older siblings were the ones who helped the younger ones. Those complications worsened learning (Guerrero Casquete et al., 2023). As reflected by the participants:

> Mis papás no podían ayudar porque sabían salir a pastar los animales o a trabajar y no tenían tiempo, tampoco sabían entender el inglés porque no terminaron el colegio. Ellos decían que inglés era muy difícil y por eso no me podían ayudar. Por eso, mi hermana mayor me ayudaba mis deberes de inglés, ella sabía buscar en el diccionario para entender los deberes (Yupangui, A., Interviewed Student, 2023)

> … a veces mis hermanos me ayudaban a recibir las clases, pero a veces ellos también estudiaban no podían ayudarme siempre. Pero mis deberes de inglés me ayudaban mis hermanos porque mis padres no sabían el inglés (Suica, A., Interviewed Student, 2023)

> A veces hacia solo mis deberes, solo hacia lo que entendía o a veces no hacía nada porque no tenía a alguien en mi casa que sabia inglés y…. era triste para mí por no tener a alguien que me ayude con mis deberes (Colcha, J., Interviewed Student, 2023)

Parents had to play a fundamental role in virtual education since they had to guide the educational process of their children. Still, it is unfortunate that most of them have only finished elementary school, making academic monitoring and support complex for them (Chacha Murillo, 2020). Consequently, the academic performance of rural students has not been as expected. In other words, during the pandemic, the educational process was low in quality and efficiency in English teaching and learning.

Psychological Effects

The results reflected that the pandemic also impacted the mental health of Ecuadorian students. Principally, it generated psychological effects such as high levels of anxiety, stress, and depression. The participants' contributions also evidenced that these effects have been caused by the lack of social interaction between classmates and teachers, the economic instability of parents, and family problems, among others.

This was more problematic in rural areas since students had several difficulties continuing their studies during the pandemic as mentioned by Livia et al. (2021), 69.31% of students had experienced psychological problems such as anguish and stress triggered by factors such as lack of connectivity, not having enough materials for their schoolwork, not having an accompaniment, and in their pedagogical activities. This conception is shared by the interviewees, who consider that:

> … a veces no podía entrar a las clases porque mis hermanos también tenían clases a la misma hora. Por eso, no estaba aprendiendo casi nada inglés y…. a veces el internet no valía bien por eso nosotros solo hacíamos recargas para entrar a las clases o consultar algo que no sabíamos entender bien (Murillo, A., Interviewed Student, 2023)

> Mis papás sabían discutir porque no sabían trabajar todos los días y no teníamos plata suficiente para la casa y… no teníamos muchos celulares para entrar a las clases. A veces, no entraba a las clases y me sabia atrasar con los deberes (Guashco, M., Interviewed Student, 2023)

> … a veces teníamos miedo de contagiarnos del virus, por eso casi siempre sabiamos estar en la casa y… era muy feo porque no podía hablar con mis vecinos ni con mis amigos. Y a veces para hacer mis deberes en la casa no tenía muchos materiales porque éramos tres hermanos que estuvimos estudiando (León, J., Interviewed Student, 2023)

Just as emotional problems ascended, regrettably, family problems arose, too. For instance, in some cases, parents could not cover all the house expenses. It was due to a lack of economic income since they did not have stable jobs. This means they also did not supply all the resources for the children to continue their studies during virtuality. Another aspect that must be emphasized is that the students suffered from fear of contagion from COVID-19. For this reason, the students almost always stayed home, which could have generated stress for them due to the lack of interaction with other people.

The participant's contributions have disclosed many changes brought about by virtuality, both good and bad. For instance, virtuality fostered the idealization of new technological resources and methodologies but, at the same time, an abrupt breaking of

social interaction between the teacher and student. That is why face-to-face education always provides a better learning experience than virtual education (Valverde, 2021). For this reason, the interviewee mentioned that:

> …en las clases presenciales puedo preguntar al profesor cuando no entienda y para que me explique… participar en clases y hacer trabajos grupales con mis compañeros…y yo puedo jugar con mis compañeros en el recreo todos los días (Suica, A., Interviewed Student, 2023)
>
> …elijo las clases presenciales porque ahí estamos todos los niños y el profesor…. Ahí compartimos más en clases, nos prestaríamos nuestros esferos y colores para hacer las tareas y deberes… y en la escuela hacen programas como de Navidad (Vigme, C., Interviewed Student, 2023)

What is being said elucidate students' preferences for face-to-face education. The principal reasons is attributed to social interaction with classmates and teachers. In this type of environment, the probability of interactions between students increases, learning to speak in public, generating questions, or reducing shyness.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unexpected crisis in several fields, such as education and psychology, where teachers, students, and parents' mental health has been badly impacted. These impacts were associated with social, economic, and academic issues. Moreover, particularly in rural areas, this scenery was even more marked. In this regard, it can be concluded that all these problematic factors contributed to the scarce accomplishment of academic goals around foreign language teaching and learning.

4.2 DISCUSSIONS

Along this study, the effects triggered by COVID-19 in Ecuadorian rural schools have been broadly elucidated. Ortiz Castellano (2022) showed that digital educational platforms in institutions with vulnerable populations were not used adequately during the virtuality. Particularly at "Estados Unidos" school, this phenomenon increased due to most students' lack of technological devices and access to the internet. Besides, parental support, the deficient socioeconomic stability of families, the poor social interaction between teachers, students, and parents, the limited class time, and the psychological and emotional effects made teaching and learning English a very problematic activity.

It is evident that in this institution, the learning process was affected by the emergency; in this case, teachers have tried to create a space similar to the conventional classroom environment in which all students can access and develop a series of actions that are typical of a face-to-face teaching encounter; there have been some issues such as challenges that have prevented education from being effective. During this process, each teacher took on the challenge of quickly reinventing and starting to work differently, designing learning and evaluation activities in the remote classroom, as Chanto Espinoza et al. (2021) mentioned. All these consequences occasioned a low quality of the teaching process during those periods.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has specific characteristics that may increase stress response levels in the general population and students and teachers, as confirmed by Palomino and Huarcaya (2020). It has produced an unexpected crisis in different fields, such as education and psychology, where students and teachers have been negatively affected by their mental health. In the case of those belonging to the "Estados Unidos" school, the principal effects they suffered are linked to social, economic, and academic problems. These factors affected them personally and academically.

Finally, it is essential to mention that virtuality also allows educators and learners to idealize and find different advantages. The participants highlight the comfort of studying at home and fewer family expenses. Given this situation, people just had to try to face each problem with their abilities to learn and reflect.

CHAPTER V.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

- The principal educational, social, and economic implications identified were low-quality English learning, a lack of technological devices and internet access, deficient parental accompaniment, the deficient socioeconomic stability of families, poor social interaction between teachers, students, and parents, and limited class time. All of those complications were determined in the students of the 7th EGB at Escuela "Estados Unidos" de la Parroquia Quimiag, Cantón Riobamba

- The educational hindrances resulting from the virtual modality for the population studied were the management of technological resources and difficulty adapting to the curriculum established by the pandemic. At the same time, the advantages were the use of digital tools to create different teaching activities and interact with their students.

- The psychological and academic effects of virtuality for the participants were high levels of anxiety, stress, and depression due to the lack of technological devices, poor parental accompaniment, and not having enough materials to do homework. Those challenges have made students learning even more difficult since learning goals can hardly be accomplished.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that teachers provide exceptional support to the students who need it most and be more aware of their living conditions since, in the rural sector, not all parents know the English language. Moreover, this avoids generating complications such as educational and social ones that undermine the teaching and learning process.

- It is suggested that the teachers try to prepare themselves more for using new technological tools, which are evolving faster and faster. In turn, put this into practice in case of a new health emergency similar to COVID-19. In this way, they do not face any challenges affecting the teaching process.

- Educators must continue to create different activities in which students are active and dynamic and not just wait for an emergency to do so. Therefore, an interactive class should be maintained so children do not get bored or tired. Therefore, avoid generating psychological or academic problems since, in children, it is complicated to deal with this type of case.

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Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo

Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación, Humanas y Tecnologías

Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros

Encuesta

El propósito de esta encuesta es identificar las implicaciones educativas, sociales y económicas en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés durante la pandemia de Covid-19.

Informacion General del estudiante

Curso:…….. **Sexo:** **Masculino:** ( ) **Femenino:** ( ) **Edad**:

Etnia:…………..

Instrucciones:

- ✓ Lea cada ítem detenidamente

- ✓ Responder con sinceridad

Preguntas:

Sección 1: Implicaciones educacionales

1. **Durante la pandemia, ¿Cuántos estudiantes normalmente estudiaron en su hogar?**

- 1 estudiante ☐

- 2 estudiantes ☐

- 3 o más ☐

2. La realidad expuesta en la pregunta anterior ¿Cómo influenció en su rendimiento acdémico?

- Muy Bueno ☐
- Bueno ☐
- Regular ☐
- Deficiente ☐

3. ¿Cuántos horas a la semana recibía clases de inglés?

- 45min ☐
- 1 hora ☐
- 2 horas ☐

4. ¿Cómo calificaría la calidad de las clases de inglés impartidas durante la pandemia?

- Muy Bueno ☐
- Bueno ☐
- Regular ☐
- Deficiente ☐

5. ¿Cómo fueron sus calificaciones en la signatura de inglés durante la pandemia?

- Muy buenas ☐
- Buenas ☐
- Regular ☐
- Bajas ☐

6. **¿Cómo evaluaría su nivel de inglés en la virtualidad?**

- Muy bueno ☐

- Bueno ☐

- Regular ☐

- Deficiente ☐

7. **¿Con que frecuencia recibía tutorías por parte del docente?**

- Siempre ☐

- Casi siempre ☐

- A veces ☐

- Nunca ☐

8. **De los siguientes miembros familiares ¿Quiénes fueron los que mayor apoyo e brindaron en sus clases de inglés?**

- Mis padres ☐

- Mis hermanos ☐

- Mis abuelos ☐

- Otro familiar………………. ☐

- Nadie ☐

Sección 2: Implicaciones sociales

9. **¿Como calificaría la interacción con sus compañeros durante las clases virtuales?** ☐

- Muy Bueno ☐

- Bueno ☐

- Regular ☐

☐

- Deficiente

10. ¿Como calificaría la comunicación con su profesor durante las clases virtuales?

- Muy Bueno

- Bueno

- Regular

- Deficiente

11. ¿Como calificaría la comunicación con su familia durante las clases virtuales?

- Muy Bueno

- Bueno

- Regular

- Deficiente

12. ¿De los siguientes problemas emocionales, seleccione aquellos que experimentó durante la pandemia?

- Ansiedad

- Depresión

- Estrés

- Angustia

- Frustración

- Cansancio

- Aburrimiento

- Confución

- Ira

13. ¿A qué factores atribuye los sentimientos identificados en la pregunta anterior?

- Falta de comprensión de las actividades asignadas ☐

- Falta de acompañamiento ☐

- Falta de interacción social ☐

- Metodología de enseñanza ☐

- Relación con el/la docente ☐

- Falta de recursos para realizar las tareas ☐

- Exceso de tareas ☐

Sección : Implicaciones económicas

14. ¿Cuántos de los siguientes recursos tecnológicos disponía en su hogar para acceder a las clases virtuales?

- Celular   0 1 2 3 4 o más

- Tablet   0 1 2 3 4 o más

- Computadora   0 1 2 3 4 o más

- Ninguno de los anteriores ☐

15. Durante la Pandemia ¿Dónde usted recibía sus clases síncronas?

- En el hogar ☐

- En casa de un familiar ☐

- Wi-fi de un lugar publico ☐

- No recibía clases ☐

16. Si su respuesta en la pregunta anterior son los literales 2, 3, o 4; ¿A qué atribuye esta realidad?

☐

- Bajos recursos económicos

☐

- Falta de acompañamiento

☐

- Acceso a internet

☐

- Disponibilidad de dispositivos tecnológicos

☐

- Existencia de varios estudiantes en el hogar

☐

- Ubicación geográfica

17. ¿Sus padres tenían un trabajo estable en el tiempo del confinamiento?

☐

- Siempre

☐

- Casi siempre

☐

- A veces

☐

- Nunca

18. ¿Con qué frecuencia experimentó problemas económicos para realizar las tareas escolares asignadas?

☐

- Siempre

☐

- Casi siempre

☐

- A veces

☐

- Nunca

Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo
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Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros
Interview for teacher

This interview aims to elucidate the educational hindrances and benefits of the virtual modality adopted during the pandemic.

Questionnaire:

Icebreaker questions

1. **How do you feel working in this institution?**

…………………………………………………………………………………………

2. **Why did you decide to be an English teacher?**

…………………………………………………………………………………………

Focused questions

3. **How prepared were you for managing the technological resources required for the virtuality?**

…………………………………………………………………………………………

4. **What were the main challenges you faced during the pandemic?**

…………………………………………………………………………………………

5. **How did you face them?**

…………………………………………………………………………………………

6. **Considering the curricular proposal "Aprendamos Juntos en Casa," what were your challenges during its implementation?**

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

7. Having in mind the reality of your students, How effective do you consider this curricular proposal was?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

8. In the virtuality, do you consider students accomplished their educational goals (level of English)? Why?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

9. Do you consider virtuality triggered any positive effects on education? Describe them.

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Projection Questions

10. What would you recommend to future professionals in the case of a new global emergency?

…………………………………………………………………………………………………

Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo

Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación, Humanas y Tecnologías

Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros
Entrevista a los estudiantes

La intención de esta entrevista es describir a partir de las narrativas de los estudiantes

los efectos psicológicos y académicos de la virtualidad en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del

idioma inglés.

Cuestionario:

Preguntas rompehielos

1. **¿Cuál es su deporte favorito?**

………………………………………………………………………………………………

2. **¿Qué profesión le gustaría estudiar?**

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Preguntas de enfoque

3. **¿Como describiría las clases de inglés durante la pandemia?**

………………………………………………………………………………………………

4. **¿Las clases virtuales mejoraron su desempeño académico o fue igual o peor que antes de la pandemia? Por qué?**

………………………………………………………………………………………………

5. **¿Considera que en la virtualidad usted sí aprendió inglés? ¿Por qué?**

………………………………………………………………………………………………

6. **¿Quién le ayudaba a recibir sus clases y hacer las tareas de inglés? ¿Cómo fue este proceso?**

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

7. **¿Durante la virtualidad, usted experiment algún tipo de problema emcocional?**

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

8. **¿Cuáles cree fueron los motivos que generaron esto?**

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

9. **¿Qué tipo de problemas percibía en su hogar durante la pandemia?**

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

………………

Preguntas de proyección

10. **¿Qué responsabilidades o habilidades desearías adquirir frente a situaciones como una nueva pandemia?**

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

11. **¿Si tuviera que elegir entre clases virtuales y presenciales; cuál elegiría? ¿por qué**

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

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CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo; (……………………………………………………………) con C.I (……………………………), declaro que he sido informado e invitado a participar en la investigación titulada "**Impacto de la virtualidad en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés en contextos rurales durante la pandemia del COVID-19**", la misma es un trabajo de investigación científica auspiciado por la Universidad Nacional de Chimborazo.

Entiendo que este estudio busca analizar el impacto de la virtualidad a partir de las narrativas de los estudiantes que cursan el 7° EGB del colegio Estados Unidos y sé que mi participación se llevará a cabo en esta institución en el siguiente horario (…………………………………) y consistirá en una entrevista en profundidad que durará alrededor de 30 a 45 minutos. Me han explicado que la información registrada con mi autorización será consignada a mi nombre. (…………………………..) caso contrario (………………………..) será confidencial, y que los nombres de los participantes serán asociados a un número de serie, esto significa que las respuestas no podrán ser conocidas por otras personas ni tampoco ser identificadas en la fase de publicación de resultados. Soy consciente de que los datos no me serán cedidos y que no habrá remuneración por la participación en este estudio, pero que esta información puede beneficiar indirectamente y por tanto tiene un beneficio para la sociedad dada la investigación que se está realizando.

También sé que puedo negarme a participar o retirarme en cualquier etapa de la investigación, sin expresión de causa o consecuencias negativas para mí.

Sí, acepto voluntariamente participar en este estudio y he recibido una copia de este documento.

Firma del participante: _____

Fecha: _____

Si tiene alguna pregunta durante cualquier etapa del estudio, puede comunicarse con Evelyn Gabriela Yupangui Cayambe, a los teléfonos evelyn.yupangui@unach.edu.ec o gabrielayupangui2017@gmail.com.

Nro: Celular
0969946426

Photographic Evidence