



PEACE BUILDING THROUGH THE YOUTH CAMPS PROGRAM

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the Youth Camp Program as a social practice that plays a pivotal role in fostering peace among young people in Manizales, Colombia. Utilizing a qualitative approach and a complementary research design, the perspectives of program leaders and participants through interviews, field observations, and content analysis are examined using tools such as Atlas.ti. The results of the study identified seven categories deemed essential to the definition of peace: life skills training, community social work, values education, coexistence, inclusion, recognition, and the participation of young people as political subjects. These categories illustrate the transformation of the participants' social realities, emphasizing the program's impact on promoting values, fostering social leadership, and strengthening community cohesion. The research is grounded in the social constructionism approach, which serves as the theoretical framework. This approach underscores the concept of peace as a collective and dynamic process within youth contexts.

Keywords: Peace building, social constructionism, social practices, youth camps, Colombia, community social work.

1. Introduction

Colombia's historical landscape is characterized by the prevalence of various forms of violence that manifest in structural, symbolic, and direct ways, affecting all levels of society. This violence, which ranges from armed conflict to social exclusion, has become a persistent phenomenon that particularly affects young people, who are considered one of the groups most vulnerable to inequality and the lack of real opportunities to participate and develop (Bauman, 1999; DANE, 2020). In this context, many young people have found violence to be a means of

expressing their frustration with a society that marginalizes them. This phenomenon can be observed in both urban and rural areas of the country (Borda, Luna, and Campos, 2016).

Adolescents from Colombia encounter numerous impediments that impede their access to fundamental rights, including education, health care, political engagement, and cultural venues. This situation serves to exacerbate the existing inequality gap. This exclusion is not only rooted in economic factors, but is also influenced by territorial, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic, and political ideology factors. This dynamic, in turn, contributes to the normalization of violence as the primary means of achieving recognition and belonging (Congress of the Republic, 2013; 2018).

In light of these circumstances, it is imperative to establish and fortify alternatives to formal education that enable young individuals to perceive themselves as historical and political actors with the capacity to transform their circumstances through collective action. In this regard, the Youth Camps Program emerges as a noteworthy social practice that integrates values education, coexistence, social leadership, and community work, all with a pronounced focus on inclusion and participation. This initiative is supported by Law 375 of 1997 by the Ministry of National Education. It provides a free and accessible environment for young people between the ages of 13 and 28, primarily from vulnerable sectors. The initiative promotes the constructive use of free time for educational, recreational, and social purposes.

A review of the extant academic literature reveals a paucity of analyses of approaches such as Youth Camps. At the international level, research such as that of Beruete and Rejón (2013) highlights community social work as a strategy for promoting a culture of peace, and the study by Hilário and Chagas (2014) addresses scouting from an ecological and educational perspective. However, while these studies are valuable, they do not specifically analyze youth social programs from the perspective of symbolic peacebuilding or from a Latin American perspective.

At both the national and local levels, extant studies on this subject tend to focus on school or university settings (Dussán, 2017; Zuleta, 2017). This neglects to consider non-institutional community practices that play a crucial role in the development of citizens. Research conducted by Murcia and Murcia (2019) and Arenas (2018) has examined social practices with the potential for pacification. However, these studies have not yet explored the impact of programs such as Youth Camps on the lives of young people.

This lacuna in research signifies a significant opportunity to examine the social dynamics that emerge from these initiatives, thereby facilitating an exploration of peacebuilding as a symbolic, collective, and ongoing process (Muñoz, 2001). From a social constructionist perspective, peace is defined not only as the absence of conflict, but also as the ability to develop more just, inclusive, and empathetic relationships through recognition of the other, equity, and active participation in community life (Lederach, 2007; Camacho, 2018).

The present study is predicated on the notion that the cultivation of values such as respect, tolerance, fraternity, community social work, and inclusion is of paramount importance in fostering peace among young people. Moreover, the argument is posited that the formation of the political subject—endowed with the capacity to understand, question, and transform their environment—is imperative for the promotion of sustainable processes of reconciliation and social justice (Freire, 2009; Levinas, 1977).

From this perspective, the objective of the study is to identify the social dynamics present in the Youth Camp Program that support peacebuilding in youth contexts, using a qualitative methodology with a complementary approach (Murcia and Jaramillo, 2008). The objective of this study is to contribute to the field of peace education and public policies aimed at youth by proposing an alternative educational model that goes beyond traditional school logic and is based on experience, community action, and mutual recognition as transformative elements.

1.1 Objectives of the research

The general purpose of the study is to identify the social dynamics that enable peace-building processes in youth camps in the city of Manizales. For this reason, the following specific objectives were established as a guide for the research process: a) Describe the categories through which peace is objectified in Youth Camps; b) Configure networks of meaning around the significance that social actors give to peace in the social practice of Youth Camps; and c) Specify the meanings that social actors in the Youth Camps program give to peace.

2. Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study was qualitative in nature, with a design that falls within the qualitative paradigm. Specifically, the methodological complementarity approach proposed by Murcia and Jaramillo (2008) was utilized, which allows for addressing the complexity of social practices from a holistic, reflective, and interpretive perspective. This

approach acknowledges the plurality of meanings that emerge in the cultural and symbolic dynamics of social subjects. It seeks to understand these realities in their historical, affective, and political dimensions.

The study was theoretically based on social constructionism, insofar as it recognizes that social reality is produced from symbolic interactions, shared meanings, and collective imaginaries that shape the meaning of lived experience (Berger & Luckmann, 1968; Castoriadis, 2010). From this perspective, peace is understood not as an ideal or final state, but as a situated social construction that is expressed in everyday practices of inclusion, recognition, coexistence, and transformation.

2.1 Research design

The research was structured around a qualitative ethnographic design with a comprehensive approach, focusing on the analysis of a non-school-based social practice among young people: the Youth Camp Program in the city of Manizales. This design was developed in three main stages, in line with the principles of complementarity: Preconfiguration of reality, Reality settings, and Reconfiguration of reality, which are explained below.

a) Preconfiguration of reality: An initial immersion in the study setting was conducted to define the scope of the research and establish relationships with social actors. This process involved exploration interviews with the program leader, direct observation, and a review of institutional documents.

b) Reality settings: The main data were collected through qualitative techniques such as semi-structured interviews with 10 young participants in the program and the leader of the “Bosque Campista El Ruiz” group, as well as field diaries produced during participant observation sessions. The purpose of this stage was to identify emerging categories related to peace practices from the perspective of social actors.

c) Reconfiguration of reality: At this point, an interpretive triangulation was carried out between the participants' discourses, the substantive theory generated from the field, and the reviewed theoretical frameworks. Atlas.ti software was used for the processing and analysis of the interviews, using open coding, saturation categorization, and the generation of semantic networks.

2.2 Participants

The unit of analysis consisted of a group of 40 young people, men and women between the ages of 13 and 28, who are part of the Youth Camp Program, focusing on members of the “Bosque Campista El Ruiz” group. An intentional sample of 10 participants was selected for in-depth interviews, as well as the group leader, considering their experience, availability, and level of involvement in social practice.

3 Results

3.1 First Moment, Pre-configuration of Reality

“Pre-configuration is what allows the researcher to take an initial direction in the selection of the topic, gradually condensing and narrowing it down. The researcher, supported by an initial action plan, must engage in processes of interaction with the group under study, from which the first pre-configuring elements of that reality will emerge. These will be enriched by theoretical research processes carried out in parallel” (Murcia, 2008).

I had my first exposure to different social practices, where I first decided that it would be an extracurricular activity. secondly, that it would be focused on young people, and thirdly, that there would be no cost to participate. This last point would ensure that young people would be motivated to belong and attend voluntarily. Once I had these criteria clear in my mind, I decided on youth camps because they met all of these characteristics. Below are details of this population definition and concepts that are important in the current research.

Youth Camps is an extracurricular education program for young male and female volunteers between the ages of 13 and 28, which seeks to contribute to the improvement of their education and overall development, reinforce values through recreational, sports, and cultural activities, with a philosophy of service to others, love for nature, and for our nation. These activities are carried out in contact with nature for the enjoyment and use of free time.

General objectives

- To promote fellowship among young Colombians through camping activities that encourage personal development and the reinforcement of values and concepts.

- Train young volunteers with altruism and leadership skills to guide, direct, and implement community social plans, programs, and projects in the area of recreation.
- Train young volunteers throughout the country on topics of social interest that enrich their knowledge in different areas and encourage participation in the social, political, economic, cultural, recreational, and athletic development of their own region (Coldeportes, 2015, p. 16).

CAMPER'S PROMISE This is done in a respectable position. The camper stands firm, with their left hand on their heart below the badge and their right hand clenched behind them at waist level. Camper... peace is brotherhood and sisterhood, now and forever! (Coldeportes, 2015, pág. 24)

TOPIC 2: Life skills What are life skills? They are skills for behaving in a certain way, according to individual motivation and the field of action that the person has, within their social and cultural possibilities. Life skills are LEARNED - They facilitate relationships with others - They enable individuals to assert their rights without denying the rights of others (respect for difference) - They prevent anxiety in difficult or new situations - They facilitate emotional communication and problem solving (Coldeportes, 2015, pág. 29)

MANAGING EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS Emotional intelligence involves: - Recognizing emotions by identifying biological changes. - Using emotions to our advantage rather than against us. (Self-control) - Controlling our own emotions improves relationships with others by putting ourselves in their shoes. - All emotions can be controlled. - That all emotions pass. - Understanding that emotions are neither good nor bad. - Recognizing that my emotional control cannot depend on the emotional control of others. - Knowing that all emotions go through three components: biological, cognitive, and motor. EMPATHY - It is the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes, recognizing differences, to improve social interaction.

- Helps foster caring and supportive behavior in interpersonal relationships INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS Represents the possibility of working for the common good by generating processes that promote social bonds. Involves: - Emotional intelligence - Ability to interact PROBLEM SOLVING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION Seeing differences as opportunities rather than sources of conflict Promotes values such as:

- Respect for plurality and diversity - Equity - Inclusion CRITICAL THINKING - The ability to analyze information and experiences objectively. - Recognize and evaluate factors that

influence one's own attitudes and behaviors and those of others. - Deal with external pressures.
 - Involves being mentally active and having a proactive vision (Coldeportes, 2015, págs. 31-32).

After defining the population and establishing the basic elements of the social practice, I conducted a semi-structured interview with the leader of the practice to gain a better understanding of the reality. The interview did not limit the expression of ideas and allowed for in-depth discussion of different topics without restriction. The program was discussed from different angles, and it was possible to obtain general concepts of the practice and its possible contributions to peacebuilding.

This section refers to reality as seen by the leader of the youth camp program. Although individuals define their world from their own perspective, they are nevertheless social beings rooted in an intersubjective reality, which is the key to social reality (Schütz, 1979).

The following semantic network shows all the concepts that could be obtained from the interview with the social practice leader, concepts that were related to peacebuilding from the Youth Camps program and that I, as a researcher, consider important.

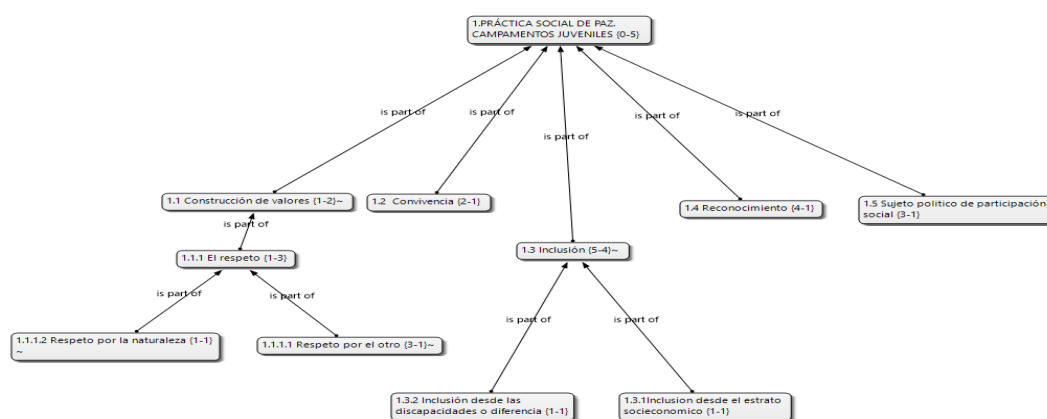


Figure 1. Interview with a social practice leader

As can be seen in the semantic network, for the leader, the concepts of peace that are evident in practice are: building values, where the main value highlighted is respect for others despite differences and for nature, coexistence, inclusion seen from the perspective of differences in physical abilities and socioeconomic status, recognition, and political subject of social participation. We will take all these codes as a category of peace since they are meaningful and relevant, and he adopts them in his discourse as important. However, I will take the category of recognition and political subject as a single category because, in the leader's voice, recognition

is given to the subject from his participation as a political agent of social change, which makes the latter stronger. Accordingly, the following four categories will be presented, which I will mention with a semantic network generated from the TI Atlas, where I organized the information, along with a general analysis as a researcher and text from the interview where the leader mentions this concept.

3.1.1 Reality from the Leader's Perspective: Building Values



Figure 2: Reality from the leader's perspective. Building values

For the leader, building values is important in building peace, and respect is a core value in his discourse. He sees respect as accepting differences in others' thoughts and also includes respect for nature, but in our study we will only consider the former relevant to our research interest.

The youth camp program is a non-formal education program. I do think that young people should participate because it is an opportunity provided by the government to access recreational and leisure activities that are also focused on building values.

In fact, I think there are many values that can be seen in the program. I think that, first and foremost, because of the symbolism and other aspects, it is respect: respect for others, respect for nature, peaceful coexistence, and consensus building. But there are many other things here in terms of the opportunity young people have to interact with each other, to live in a camp, to respect others, to recognize themselves as equals, as human beings with rights, participatory, argumentative, rebellious in some ways, speaking with respect and acceptance of differences (E.L.P.S).

3.1.2 Reality from the leader's perspective: Coexistence

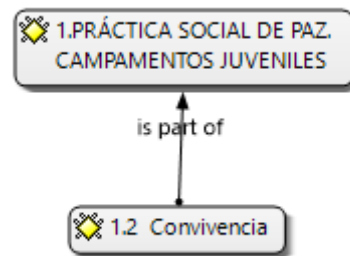


Figure 3. Reality from the leader's perspective: Coexistence

For the leader, coexistence is also important as a category of peace, based on experience, because in every Youth Camp activity, there is a theme of equal treatment and where everyone participates equally. This is seen as a way to encourage citizen participation and build social fabric, which is lacking in this country. The theme of coexistence is one that arises in all the spaces where we offer camps. Camps are not just about tents and camping, but also about all the social relationships that are woven around the program, such as planning, training, walks, etc. This issue strengthens human possibilities and allows us to use coexistence as a means of advancing the social fabric for young people and adolescents in the country.

In the training program, it is essential to promote healthy coexistence and peace building through social participation and a focus on equity and equal opportunities for all citizens of this country.

3.1.3 Reality from the Leader's Perspective: Inclusion

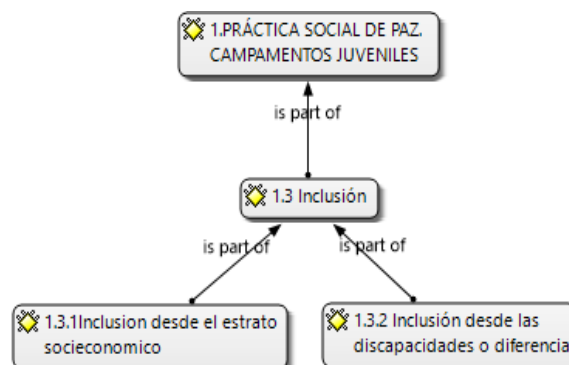


Figure 4. Reality from the leader's perspective: Inclusion

The third category of peace, according to the leader, is inclusion and taking two perspectives. The first relates to peace, because, according to the leader, it is necessary to reach strata 1 and 2, where the influence of violence is most evident, and the issue of inclusion is seen from the perspective of including people with disabilities in practice.

There are many contributions because we are convinced that adolescence and youth are one of the most important areas to focus on to prevent members from joining criminal gangs or violent groups. This means that if a young person belongs to youth camps, these kids are not going to belong to these groups.

I think that our program is a program for young people, generally for young people from socioeconomic strata 1 and 2 with few resources. Scouting requires a little more resources, where families make a significant contribution (E.L.P.S).

3.1.4 Reality from the leader's perspective: Subject of social participation.

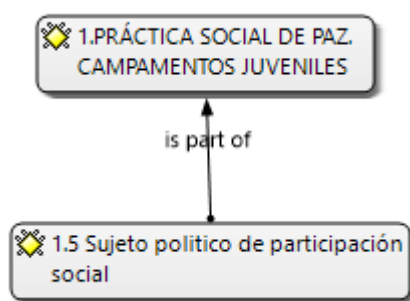


Figure 5. Reality from the leader's perspective. Subject of social participation.

The fourth category of peace, as posited by the author, pertains to the recognition of young people as political subjects of social participation. This recognition is predicated on the premise that young people possess the capacity to comprehend government dynamics and thereby contribute to peace processes from each of the scenarios in which they operate. Consequently, young people are endowed with a voice and a vote, signifying their inclusion as active participants in society. It is the possibility of self-acceptance as a young person, endowed with the right to self-determination and the capacity to advocate for one's rights. In this particular instance, the argument is made for the role of the individual as an agent of change within the context of peace dynamics.

The program has identified this as a scenario for participation. The objective of the initiative is to imbue participants with a sense of agency in promoting political transformation and social

change. This indicates that it becomes a scenario for participation. When I participate and am listened to, I can generate peace processes because I can understand government dynamics, municipal dynamics, and also understand myself as a young teenager as an actor in a rural community, family, and institutional environment. The community, the family, and the institutional sphere.

A multitude of opportunities exist for young people to establish interpersonal connections, reside in a communal setting characterized by mutual respect, and acknowledge one another as equals. This environment fosters the capacity for active participation, constructive dialogue, and, to a certain extent, rebellious behavior. These interactions are underpinned by a foundation of respect and acceptance of diverse perspectives.

The concept of recognition is closely associated with the extent to which an individual identifies as a political subject endowed with rights. In the context of a young teenager, this identification is accompanied by the capacity to articulate their needs and aspirations. The objective is to enhance this capacity through active engagement and participation in political processes. This is the foundation of our recognition generation process (E.L.P.S).

The initial approach to reality, as outlined in the interview with the leader, gave rise to numerous inquiries, including the following: The concept of "values" is a multifaceted and subjective one. What values are most widely applied in Campamento Juveniles? The term "respect" is a multifaceted concept with numerous interpretations. The following inquiry is posited: What are the various forms of respect? The concept of inclusion is examined in this study. The concept of coexistence is examined, with an emphasis on its definition and implications. Types of coexistence? Which forms of inclusion are to be considered? The concept of a political subject is a fundamental one, yet it is one that is often misunderstood. The present study seeks to explore the relationship between peace and the aforementioned concepts.

3.2 Second Moment: The Configuration of Reality

The configuration of reality is defined as the process in which: "Based on the pre-existing structure, a second guide is developed to help us search for the actual structure of the reality under investigation, through an in-depth fieldwork process." (Murcia & Jaramillo, 2011)

At this stage of the research, it was determined whether the selected social practice met the requirements of social-symbolic representation, based on complementarity. To this end, this part of the research was divided into three sub-stages, which were as follows:

Sub-stage one: Field observations of the social practice were carried out, and this information was collected in field journals, looking for categories expressed in social actions that had to do with the characteristics of a contribution to peace.

Sub-phase two: (defining imaginaries). The motivations, beliefs, and convictions regarding the actions observed were investigated. These inquiries were based on Schütz's (2008) theory of the reasons why and for what purpose actions are performed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the social actors and processed using Atlas.ti, forming categories through codes provided by the interviews.

- Sub-moment three: With the information obtained above, the central and peripheral imaginaries were defined, taking as a reference the dynamics of social coordinates (Murcia, 2012). To this end, the levels of objectification, anchoring, and social significance were taken into account. In order to define the level of objectification of social practice, the referential function of discourse was taken into account, through which hegemonic social practice was identified; that is, the social weight that this practice represents for the participants, as found in the interviews with social actors. Social anchoring was defined based on the history of the social practice. In the case of youth camps, which have been in existence for more than 35 years, this allowed the research to proceed, and they were therefore considered a social practice. The meaning had to be related to the teleology of the dynamic school, that is, to equity, peace, coexistence, and conflict resolution. The dynamics of this dimension were assumed from the expressive and pragmatic functions of the discourse of the social actors.

At this stage of the research, 10 interviews were conducted with social actors involved in youth camps in the city of Manizales, specifically with a group of 40 young people called Bosque Campista El Ruiz. These interviews were conducted at the Caldas Departmental Sports Secretariat, taking advantage of weekly meetings. They were conducted in a pleasant setting, without pressure of any kind. They were guided by a set of questions but did not limit the responses or experiences provided by the actors through semi-structured interviews, which were then processed using Atlas TI.

The interviews focused on identifying different elements of the practice related to peacebuilding. These elements were classified into categories and codes as determined by the Atlas TI program, which we used to process the information.

3.2.1 Peace in the Voice of Social Actors

After conducting semi-structured interviews with social actors (E.A.S), the information is processed in Atlas.ti, which generates categories based on information saturation. These categories are shown in the following semantic network. Each category will first be developed by mentioning a general analysis by the researcher and then some of the interviews where social actors mention that category and how they relate it to peacebuilding.

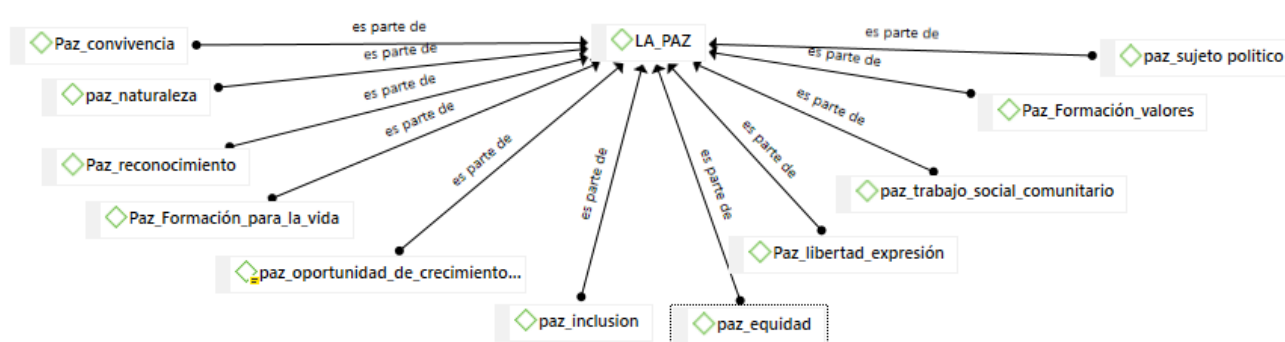


Figure 6. Semantic network: Peace according to social actors

In this semantic network, some categories emerged according to the testimonies of the participating social actors, which were: inclusion, recognition, freedom of expression, coexistence, life skills training, values education, nature, opportunities for personal growth, political subjectivity, and equity. Below, we will provide a more detailed description of these categories, using some examples from the interviews conducted.

3.2.2 Peace in the Voices of Social Actors. Community Social Work

The initial category is referred to as community social work. As elucidated in the interviews conducted with social actors (E.A.S.), peacebuilding is conceptualized as a multifaceted endeavor encompassing initiatives within their respective communities and particularly in less privileged communities. Campers consistently demonstrate a conscientious approach to contributing to the collective good, employing social strategies such as recreation. The belief that merely verbal expressions are insufficient for achieving peace motivates their commitment to tangible action. This phenomenon is discernible in the discourse of the social actors involved.

The organization's motto, "peace is brotherhood and sisterhood now and forever," encapsulates its commitment to this ideal. The objective is to emphasize the sense of community and solidarity among campers in relation to broader societal issues. The concept of peace is intricately linked to the notion of helping others. We have provided assistance to individuals experiencing homelessness and vulnerable populations, and we endeavor to pursue peace through concrete actions rather than mere rhetoric (E.A.S.).

Individuals who participate in camping activities tend to possess a strong sense of social responsibility, often seeking ways to contribute to and make a positive impact on their communities. They demonstrate a readiness to offer assistance and encouragement to those in need. There is invariably an opportunity for assistance (E.A.S.).

3.2.3 Peace in the Voice of Social Actors: Opportunity for Growth

The next category is personal growth opportunities. From the interviews conducted, social actors assume that peace is based on having real opportunities in life, such as those offered by youth camps, which keep young people away from joining criminal gangs and becoming pregnant at an early age and keep them occupied in a healthy way in their free time. This is evident in the voices of social actors in the following way:

It is important for young people to belong to youth camp programs because moments like these in the life of hypermodernity, in the life of technology, in this life that presents us with so many variables, where young people have several paths that are not so good, where consumerist society and the desire for an easier life lead them to believe that life means choosing paths that are not so good, youth camps appear as an opportunity, an opportunity for precisely these young people to have experiences in the world of leisure, recreation, and free time, time that can be used in a healthy way, and that is where many of these young people can be guided. (E.A.S)

It has many characteristics that catch my attention, among others, community work, learning to work with different vulnerable segments of the population. This is because I come from a very poor neighborhood and saw camps as an opportunity to grow as a person, to grow as a professional, and to be able to contribute significantly to society, just as the program once contributed to me (E.A.S).

3.2.4 Peace in the Voices of Social Actors. Training for Life

The next category is life skills training. Based on the interviews conducted, social actors believe that peace is closely related to the development of each individual within society, and the camp provides this type of training: training to be a social leader, a better son, a better brother, a better father, and to be well-rounded. This is evident in the voices of the social actors:

After participating in the program on a personal level, I have gained a lot more confidence when it comes to doing any task, I am much more independent, I have gained an inner voice that sometimes leads me to offer ideas without imposing them, and it has also allowed me to understand and explore the diversity of personalities around me (E.A.S).

3.2.5 Peace in the Voice of Social Actors. Values Education

The next category is values education. From the interviews conducted, social actors assume that peace is the application of values in any environment. They identify core values such as respect and tolerance, respect for others, respect for rules, respect for nature, respect for elders, respect for oneself, and tolerance as acceptance of others even if they think differently. This helps to promote the healthy coexistence that is always experienced in camps. This is evident in the voices of the social actors in the following way:

For me, the essential characteristics of camp life lie precisely in the experiences that are had so peacefully within the processes, such as the experience of being able to camp, but camping is a factor that mediates the processes behind it. The special characteristics are precisely what they are going to experience in community. What has been gained is depth, which is simply learning and relearning not only about life in nature but also about life in camaraderie, about being a better person, from the moment you get out of bed with your family, with your studies, or with your work, being a brother to everyone, radiating discipline and honesty. (E.A.S)

Peace with camps is related to everything, I think, because as we are such diverse people, we are always implementing different values such as companionship, tolerance, respect, fraternity, brotherhood, and other values that make peace totally related to camps (E.A.S).

3.2.6 Peace in the Voices of Social Actors: Coexistence

The next category is coexistence. From the interviews conducted, social actors assume that peacebuilding is related to coexistence because campers understand each other's situations and try to put themselves in each other's shoes to understand reality, understanding that there are different realities that must be accepted. Campers deal with issues of fraternity and

brotherhood within their mystique, which greatly helps to improve this aspect. This is evident in the voices of the social actors in the following way:

Of course, it is clear that the program contributes to peacebuilding. A clear example is when, in x or y activity, everyone has to give their opinion, but they think very differently, and what happens is that, by putting everything together, we arrive at the right answer without the need to enter into conflict with the team members (E.A.S).

Peace in camps is about accepting others, understanding that we are different but that, as our motto says, peace is brotherhood and sisterhood, it is loving others and feeling happy for their contributions that are different from mine and being accepted and respected (E.A.S).

3.2.7 Peace in the Voice of Social Actors: Inclusion

The next category is inclusion. From the interviews that were conducted, social actors assume that peace means making everyone participate, including those most in need, including people with disabilities, including young people from rural areas, including different sexualities or races, without discrimination and accepting their realities. This is evident in the voices of social actors in the following way:

Coexistence in the program is quite pleasant, because it is based on values, always with the aim of leaving the best moments and memories of each experience for everyone in the Youth Camps program. It is a program where we can see that there is no discrimination or exclusion whatsoever (E.A.S).

Understanding that we are a nation, that we are a country, and also understanding that others are different, that is, always including the weakest and most needy people, seems to me to be something that the campers have really grasped (E.A.S).

3.2.8 Peace in the Voice of Social Actors. Care for Nature

The next category is nature. From the interviews conducted, social actors assume that peace has to do with caring for nature and the environment. They see nature as an environment that has rights to be cared for, that human beings have a responsibility to improve their environment, and that through concrete daily actions of care, they contribute to peace. This is evident in the voices of social actors in the following way:

The relationship is that campers always leave the place as they found it or better than they found it, so if I see a piece of trash, I pick it up, if I see a small tree that is being eaten by the grass, I clear a little space around it so it can breathe. I don't step on a growing tree, I walk along a path, I don't try to damage nature by stepping on it. I don't walk over them and pick flowers because they are very pretty. I don't touch everything I see because I also know that in nature there are certain plants and animals that are poisonous. So, it's healthy to live with nature, but you don't go so far as to destroy nature or the habitat of other animals. It's like living with nature but also respecting it (E.A.S).

Nature also has rights. Here, you learn that just as you have rights and duties, nature also has rights (E.A.S).

3.2.9 Peace in the Voice of Social Actors. Political Subject

The next category is political subjects. From random interviews with young people in the Youth Camp program in the city of Manizales, where a sample was taken, social actors assume that peace is built if there are political subjects in society who transform society because they understand their realities and are participants in them, because they can reach consensus through participation and the discussion of ideas. This is shaped by the camps through their plurality of ideas, where I listen and am always listened to, actively participating. This is evident in the voices of social actors in the following way:

They see it as a stage for participation. The program seeks to make those who belong to it feel like political agents of change and social transformation. This means that it becomes a potential stage for participation. When I participate and they listen to me, I can generate peace processes because I can understand government dynamics, municipal dynamics, and also understand myself as a young teenager as an actor in a rural, community, family, and institutional environment. (E.A.S)

The best way to reach consensus within the program is by presenting valid or justified arguments for the pros and cons, taking into account the opinions of each of the party leaders who disagree, analyzing the pros and cons, and adding up the similarities between them. Then, a popular vote is held, taking into account the similarities between the proposals and the best arguments in favor of the best option for everyone (E.A.S).

3.2.10 Peace in the Voice of Social Actors: Equity

The next category is equity. From the interviews conducted, social actors assume that peacebuilding means facilitating participation in the program for those who face the most difficulties, whether due to their location, economic issues, disability, etc., without discrimination of any kind. It means accepting these differences and including everyone in the program without difficulty. All young people in the country should have the same rights. This is evident in the voices of social actors, who say:

In our training, we promote healthy coexistence and peacebuilding through social participation and a focus on equality and equal opportunities for all citizens of this country (E.A.S).

The Youth Camps program is a program exclusively for young people that I believe opens doors, gives hope, initiates processes, and provides opportunities to live a different life, a life of camaraderie, altruism, community, and service to the most vulnerable sectors of society (E.A.S).

3.2.11 Peace in the Voice of Social Actors: Recognition

The next category is recognition. From the interviews conducted, social actors assume that peace is built when young people are recognized as valuable human beings capable of transforming their reality. Young people must be given the importance they deserve in society because they are eager for experiences that will help them serve others and want a different reality, and youth camps provide these experiences. This is evident in the voices of social actors in the following way:

The adolescent and young population seeks several things at the age targeted by the program. One is social recognition, recognition in the neighborhood, in the group, in the family, which is made possible by the youth camp program. In terms of leadership, this is enhanced by the different training strategies that are available and basically serving others. Being useful to others is another of the strong objectives. It is a non-formal training space that, in terms of knowledge and skills, is a strong desire in the development of the population at these ages (E.A.S).

I think that peace is seen in the program through recognition of others, respect for beliefs regarding gender, ideology, race, and religion, and where we work from a horizontal rather than vertical approach to coexistence (E.A.S).

3.3 Third Moment: Reconfiguring Reality

“The reconfiguration of reality is defined as the moment when: “The findings of the research are presented, where the sociocultural structure is resized based on the relationship between theoretical elements, the researcher's interpretation, and cultural data; that is, the understanding of meaning within a sociocultural structure begins” (Murcia & Jaramillo, 2008)

At this stage of the research, the information is triangulated. In this particular instance, the data furnished by the social actor was amalgamated with the researcher's discernment and the findings derived from prior studies.

In this methodological section, the objective is to enhance comprehension by means of the classification of all codes into more general peace categories. This was achieved by means of the discourse of practice leaders, social actors, and the saturation of information processed in the Atlas.Ti. The aforementioned categories comprise political subject, inclusion, recognition, values education, coexistence, life skills training, and community social work. The subsequent phase of the study involved triangulating the voices of the social practice leaders, the social actors, my role as a researcher, and accounts of formal peace-oriented theory.

The present study employs a methodological approach that emphasizes complementarity, with the data from my description of the testimonies of social actors serving as the foundation. According to Taylor and Bogan (cited in Murcia & Jaramillo, 2008), the following statement was made:

The objective of the researcher is to provide an accurate representation of the content of the participants' verbal statements and the manner in which they behave. This approach is characterized by a minimal use of interpretation and conceptualization. The data is presented in a manner that enables readers to formulate their own conclusions and generalizations. In this sense, there is minimal interpretation, as it is generally accepted that the data are self-explanatory; consequently, the research is presented as a list of data for the reader to interpret. This approach to qualitative research precludes the possibility of interpretation by the researcher, as it considers their intervention to be inherently subjective. Consequently, it presents a reality that is biased by the researcher's intervention, thereby devaluing the concept of objectivity as the foundation of scientific knowledge (p. 153).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) posit that in the process of constant comparison required by theory construction, it is necessary to establish a relationship between formal theory and substantive

theory. The former is achieved from bibliographic reviews of the phenomenon studied, and the latter is the result of the interaction and understanding of the realities investigated.

As indicated above, the analysis demonstrates that youth camps, regarded as a social practice for young people, contribute to peacebuilding through the application of the following terms: values education, political subjectivity, inclusion, recognition, coexistence, life skills training, and community social work.

3.3.1 Values Training

Values education is one of the ways in which peace is built in social practice youth camps, through social actors sharing their testimonies and experiences with their peers. Together with their leaders, they explain that peace is built through respect and tolerance, and that respect is demonstrated when we respect opinions that differ from our own, as well as differences in age, gender, race, social class, and nature. Tolerance is evident when, despite expressing these different thoughts, we show respect without taking negative action. This is supported by the following account from a social actor:

Tolerance is a very important value that I have strengthened a lot through the program, because, as we know, it is sometimes difficult for us to understand that we are all different and that we think differently from others, and instead of accepting these differences, we sometimes take them the wrong way, without realizing that by bringing them all together we can create wonderful things, as we do through the program, tolerating and accepting that no matter how different we are, we can always reach a consensus with love and respect. (E.A.S)

Quoted in (Pinzón, 2016) Specifies that: An education for peace must promote identification with others, recognition of other people as equals, which is all the more necessary when others oppose us, facilitate all opportunities for encounter, exchange, and sharing, and emphasize what unites rather than what divides. (p. 79)

The United Nations, in Article 1 of Resolution A/RES/53/243 (UN, 1999), affirms that a culture of peace consists of a set of values, attitudes, traditions, behaviors, and lifestyles based on: a) Respect for life, the end of violence, and the promotion and practice of nonviolence through education, dialogue, and cooperation. b) Full respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of States and non-interference in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of States, in accordance with the Charter of the

United Nations and international law. Full respect for and promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. d) Commitment to the peaceful settlement of conflicts. e) Efforts to meet the development and environmental protection needs of present and future generations. f) Respect for and promotion of the right to development. g) Respect for and promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and men. h) Respect for and promotion of the right of all people to freedom of expression, opinion, and information. i) Adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue, and understanding at all levels of society and among nations; and encouraged by a national and international environment conducive to peace.

In accordance with the above, one must respect the rights of others as individuals, respect equality, respect the opinions of others, respect the environment, understand the diversity that exists in any environment, including youth camps. The above is clear in the following testimonies, which can be related to accepting others, because we are all important, we are valuable people who contribute significantly to everything. It is simply a matter of accepting that everybody think differently, everybody are brothers and sisters and that everyone can help each other in everything, thus achieving peace.

3.3.2 Community Social Work

In the social practice of youth camps, helping others, always being willing to contribute, to join in actions, and to establish clear actions for community improvement is identified as generating peace. In the accounts of social actors, they say that:

We see peace as helping others. We help street dwellers and vulnerable populations, so we seek peace indeed, not just in words but in actions (E.A.S).

It has many characteristics that catch my attention, including community work and learning to work with different vulnerable segments of the population. This is because I grew up in a very poor neighborhood and saw the camps as an opportunity to grow as a person, to grow as a professional, and to be able to contribute significantly to society, just as the program once contributed to me (E.A.S)

Incidentally, Lillo & Rosselló, (2001) state that: Community social work includes the process carried out to achieve the social welfare of the population, with their direct and active

participation in the analysis, awareness, and resolution of the problems that affect the community, starting from the community itself and the use, enhancement, or creation of its resources (p.19).

From this perspective, the community is the perfect place to work for peace because it is where processes of coexistence are generated, where campers, through their altruism and empathy with others, and using the tools they have acquired through their training, contribute significantly to issues such as conflict resolution, agreements, and social leadership.

3.3.3 Acknowledgement

Social actors and their leaders identify recognition as accepting myself as a person who affects the reality of others and others affect my reality, accepting others despite their differences, respecting their beliefs and valuing them regardless of whether they are contrary to my own, and understanding that even though we are different, we must treat each other equally.

In the words of social actors:

“I think that peace is seen in the program through recognition of others, respect for beliefs regarding gender, ideology, race, religion, and where we work from a horizontal rather than vertical perspective in terms of coexistence” (E.A.S).

3.3.4 Inclusion

Social actors assume that inclusion helps real processes of coexistence in the program because it is understood that we are all part of it, there is no exclusion, there are no closed circles where some can act and others cannot, but rather it seeks integration and unity, where disabilities do not matter, where it does not matter where you live, whether you are from a high or low social class, whether you live in the municipal capital or in a rural area, thereby teaching young people that they can relate well to anyone regardless of where they come from. This is expressed in the words of social actors:

Youth camps are the vehicle, the educational tool that allows us to reach the most vulnerable and affected people, to welcome processes that have been very hostile and very shielded from institutional presence, and to benefit the community through this program. We have started to work and have been able to reach areas that we could only reach with youth camps (E.A.S).

This is supported by the current UN Secretary-General Antonio Manuel Guerras de Oliveira (2021) with the following: “The void created by inequality, exclusion, and weak governance is easily filled with voices of intolerance and extremism that often lead to violent conflict.”

Youth camps accept everyone regardless of their physical condition, social status, or gender. In this regard, the youth camp booklet on personal growth, volunteering, and leadership states:

The light of my joy Is sharing my humble bed (repeat) With the white, with the black It's singing or crying with them (repeat) CHORUS. Youth camp booklet. Payment 27

Camper... peace is brotherhood and sisterhood now and forever! Youth Camp Handbook. Payment 24.

3.3.5 Coexistence

Coexistence among social actors is clearly identified in their accounts, which shows that in practice, peace is built on fraternity, brotherhood, and conflict resolution. The first of these is related to seeing the other person as a brother, as someone very important, with equal rights. In youth camps, there is a constant atmosphere of camaraderie that encourages peace, according to the social actors.

It is a coexistence of brotherhood and fraternity, where we see differences as an opportunity to learn from each other, as each person always brings valuable experiences to contribute (E.A.S)

In line with the above, Muñoz, cited in (Mulera, 2010), mentions that:

The reflective capacity of human beings, insofar as it shapes realities and leads to the acceptance of different social norms, values, and personal attitudes as one's own (constructing them within oneself), as well as the mechanisms of constant adaptation to new constructed realities, defining the appropriate connections that will give rise to networks and community coexistence (P. 110)

In the words of social actors:

“Peace in camps is acceptance of others, understanding that we are different but that, as our motto says, peace is brotherhood and sisterhood, it is loving others and feeling happy for their contributions that are different from mine and being accepted and respected” (E.A.S).

For campers, coexistence is achieved by creating bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood regardless of who the other person is; they will always be welcome to join the team and be part of their reality (E.A.S)

Mulera, (2010) states that “the evident dynamism of the conflict process gives it the special capacity to be the driving force of society, to develop and transform it... From this, results can be obtained that are capable of deepening the key to peace in a community, through the construction of new sets of actions and the participatory design of concrete strategies and actions to improve existing socio-community problems” (p. 111).

3.4 Analysis

After developing the research methodology, which focused on complementarity and was adapted to the research objectives, and using the Atlas TI tool to process information from interviews and field journals, information codes were generated and categorized, yielding the following research results:

3.4.1 First result Peace categories

The categories that objectify peace in the social practice of youth camps developed in the city of Manizales were defined through the responses provided by the interviewees, in this case social actors such as leaders and participants, which were processed using the Atlas-TI instrument. Through the number of codes, categories were formed by information saturation, and the following categories were obtained: life skills training (C1) community social work (C2), values education (C3),

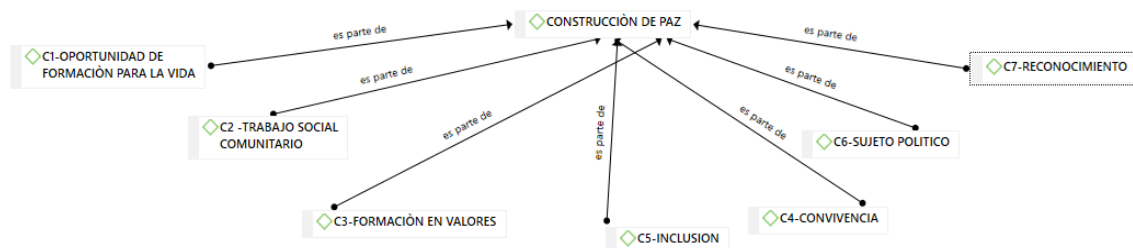


Figure 7. Semantic network atlas ti. Categories that objectify peace in Youth Camps.

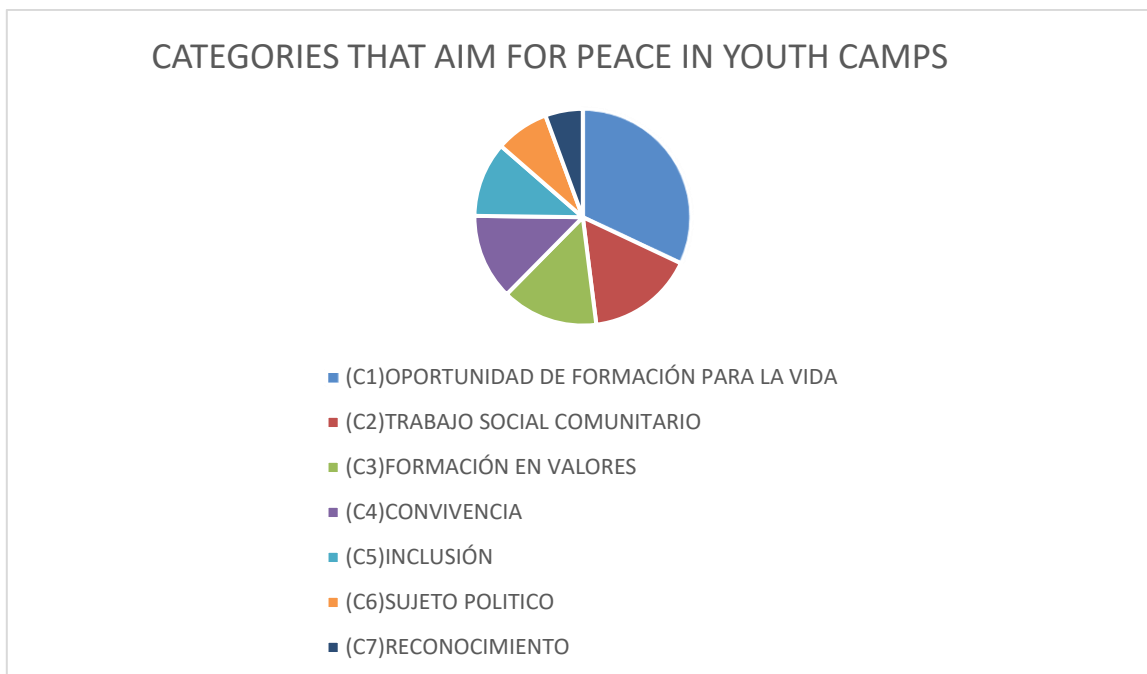


Figure 8. Illustrative graph showing information saturation in categories that target peace in youth camps.

There were seven (7) categories of peacebuilding in the youth camp program. which, due to information saturation through interviews where information was cross-referenced between leaders and participants, field observation, and analysis, emerged as categories in the current research. We will analyze each of them, presenting them through an image from the atlas ti and a dialogue between substantive theory resulting from the current research and formal theory, mentioning authors related to the topic.

3.4.2 Second Semantic Network Result

After identifying each category, each one was developed according to a semantic network generated by the Atlas.ti and a theoretical component. For participants in the youth camp social practice, peace means having opportunities for personal growth, opportunities to develop transformative leadership skills, and opportunities to complement their professional training.

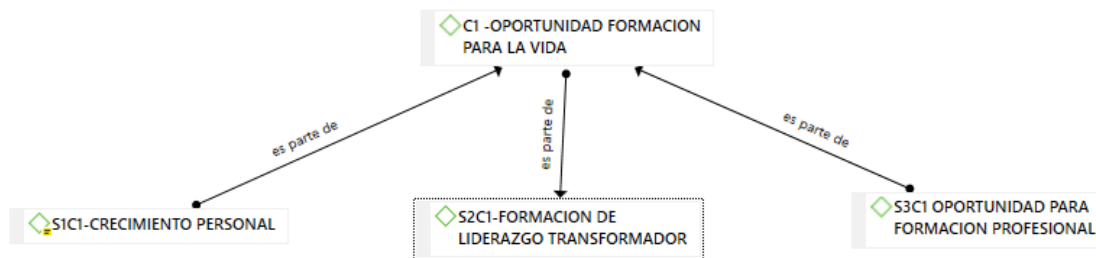


Figure 9. Social meanings for the category of educational opportunities for life.

The first category was Training for life. Young participants in social practice within their social imagination feel that opportunities are minimal and that the state and society do not provide them with sufficient opportunities.

Adolescents and young rural people did not participate in other sports that would channel their physiological need for movement. It seems that they found in violence an almost irresistible psychological compensation for adventure, wandering, and assault as a substitute for play and an affirmation of their manhood (Fals et al., 2019).

Young people feel that the significant contribution made by the program in preventing all types of violence is to provide opportunities. According to current research, the program offers opportunities for personal growth, the formation of transformative leadership, and the opportunity to complement their professional training. When young people feel that they are part of something, they avoid participating in gangs and groups on the margins of the law and channel their energy into achieving personal and professional goals.

Social issues are paramount in his discourse. That is why he sees collective mobility as the true embodiment of peace. He refers to opportunities, because it was precisely their absence that led him and many others, he met along the way to decide to join the insurgency.

Peace implies respect, will, and opportunities. Respect for life, ways of thinking, contexts, cultural, social, and political conditions... The will of individuals to contribute to its construction. And opportunities to end poverty and inequality. To the extent that all of this is achieved, it would be possible to imagine a just, equitable, and peaceful society. (Former ELN combatant, 2017)

It was identified that the youth camp program, within the opportunities for life skills training, always seeks to train transformative leaders in their communities to contribute to social fabric and peacebuilding, understanding that this is the path to change. Young leaders with expertise and professionals with critical and proactive analytical skills are needed for peacebuilding.

The driving force behind this action seems to go hand in hand with transformative leadership, in this case community leadership, which serves as a reference point and source of inspiration. To give an example that illustrates this idea, it would be useful to look at the social revolution achieved in India in the mid-20th century: “nonviolence.”

Leadership is relevant in the formation and dynamics of groups as drivers of change in institutions, organizations, projects, and programs. It is also important in the comprehensive development of individual potential. The above statements are closely connected: they represent the three levels from which the issue of leadership can be analyzed: • society, • organizations and groups, • individuals (Pan American Health Organization, 1998).

4. Conclusions

The results and analysis indicate that the Youth Camps program fosters a conducive environment for peacebuilding. This finding is corroborated by empirical evidence and is further validated by the discourse among leaders and social actors. Moreover, the program's approach is substantiated by formal theoretical frameworks, underscoring its significance and potential impact on peacebuilding initiatives. The program's efficacy stems from its provision of opportunities for young individuals to acquire life skills, engage in community social work with the objective of making a positive impact, cultivate values, learn to coexist, foster inclusivity, develop political awareness, and garner recognition for both them and others.

This conclusion was reached thanks to substantive theory, supported by the discourse of social actors and testimonies provided in interviews, identified through two frameworks of understanding based on the central imaginaries of social practice leaders and the voices of social actors who are part of youth camps. A comprehensive cross-referencing process was undertaken, resulting in the acquisition of pertinent information. This information, when thoroughly analyzed, led to the identification of categories pertaining to the investigation of youth camps' potential contribution to the promotion of peace.

The initial framework for understanding the interviews with the social practice leader yielded highly defined concepts, including the construction of values, coexistence, inclusion, recognition, and political subjectivity. For the social actors, the emergence of these frameworks was due to information saturation, compounded by opportunities for training in life and community social work.

The contribution of youth camps to peacebuilding is evident for both social practice leaders and social actors. Each category for both groups of understanding focuses on the formation of values, specifically respect, tolerance, and fraternity, which are fundamental for peace; coexistence through social agreements, equity, and brotherhood; and inclusion, as the program is completely free and accepts everyone regardless of physical or social condition. The concept of recognition is understood as the ability to influence the perception of others and to be influenced by them. The formation of young people as political subjects is crucial, as it equips them with the tools necessary to intervene in their communities through the implementation of public policies and the execution of community activities. Finally, training young people for life is paramount.

In addition to these points, these conclusions are also supported by formal theory. This is because authors such as Lederach, Murcia, Levinas, Freire, Bouché, and Beruete, among others mentioned in the current research, understand that peace is a social construct arising from encounters with others, from the formation of the individual, from personal development, and from the application of values. These elements can be found in youth camps, as well as in the speeches of leaders and social actors. This supports the results and conclusions of the current research.

5. Recommendations

In light of the findings from this research, the following recommendations are hereby proposed for consideration by the community at large, emerging leaders, youth organizations, and governmental entities: The allocation of resources towards research initiatives pertaining to social practices associated with healthy leisure activities, extracurricular training, and all initiatives related to culture and sports should be prioritized, as these endeavors represent a tangible solution to pressing social challenges, such as violence, which is of paramount importance in a nation like Colombia.

As a preliminary recommendation from an academic perspective, this research suggests that classroom teachers identify the elements of extracurricular activities that appeal to young people and generate motivation. These elements can then be integrated into the classroom environment to address issues that may arise in educational institutions in settings characterized by conflict, such as bullying and fighting.

A secondary recommendation from a methodological perspective suggests that researchers should employ an array of qualitative and ethnographic methodologies, incorporating a variety of techniques. This approach would not only facilitate the identification of peace processes but also enable a more profound exploration of related topics, such as the impact of social practices on meaningful learning processes.

Future research in this area of knowledge should prioritize the incorporation of the voices of social actors as the primary subjects of study, given their unique perspective on peacebuilding derived from their significant life experiences. Furthermore, it is recommended that the scope of research participants be expanded to encompass not only young people or individuals involved in the practice, but also their family units, communities, and social networks. This approach would facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors that contribute to the manifestation of specific social behaviors.

Biographical Note

Cristian Alberto Franco Franco is a researcher in the area of human and social sciences, with emphasis on philosophical and linguistic studies. He currently works as a teacher and researcher at the Universidad de Caldas, participating in academic projects that explore the relationship between language, thought and contemporary culture.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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