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Survival Experiences of Mapuche Parents in Multilevel Schools in La Araucanía

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how colonial legacies shape parents' schooling experiences in multilevel schools within the Mapuche context of La Araucanía, Chile, also known as WallMapu. Authorities built schools to evangelize Indigenous people into Christianity. Researchers used biographical narratives to reflect the importance of orality for the Mapuche. The findings show that the physical and psychological violence endured by Mapuche children has widened the educational gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. The study concludes that recognizing the harm caused by the school system is essential to rebuild trust and improve educational outcomes for Indigenous children.

KEYWORDS

Educational pathways; rural education; multilevel schools; indigenous education

Introduction

The school education system has been characterized by teaching and learning processes that set out to transmit social and cultural capital to new generations in order to drive the productive, social and cultural development of the country (Olivares & Torres, 2017). In the case of Chile, different types of schools exist within the education system, both in terms of their administrative and operational dependence. From an administrative perspective, we can find State-funded schools, which are called municipal, public and/or State schools. There are also privately-operated schools that receive State support, which are called private subsidized schools. Finally, there are paid private schools, which do not receive State support (Ministerio de Educación de Chile [MINEDUC], 2021, 2022). In terms of forms of operation, there are conventional schools, i.e., schools with one educational level per classroom, with different teachers per subject (Olivares & Torres, 2017); there are also multilevel schools that serve students of different age ranges in the same classroom with the same teachers, who are responsible for developing the teaching and learning process (Freire-Contreras et al., 2021). In general, multilevel schools are located in rural Indigenous territories with a historical presence in the Mapuche territory in La Araucanía, Chile.

The historical legacies of colonization in Chile have left signs of oppression and subjugation, using education as an effective tool for these purposes. Thus, the colonization of the Americas has given evidence of educational experiences that materialized through boarding schools, also known as school-missions or student residences, among other names. These boarding schools in Chile began to operate in the mid-1500s through religious orders that contributed to the beginnings of education in the country (Egaña, 2000; Labarca, 1939). These processes of territory colonization by means of boarding schools had a double function: to dispossess the indigenous people of their lands and to evangelize them in order to satisfy the spiritual needs demanded by faith for the salvation of their souls (Paillalef, 2019).

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It is for this reason that the subjugation of indigenous peoples has taken place through education in general. Progress has been made in this area in recent decades, in that bilingual educational programs have been provided for the teaching of indigenous languages in the educational system, at least in Chile, however, this has not been in full agreement with these peoples. In addition to that, the structure of the programs of the indigenous language curricula correspond to a western structure that has little coherence with the indigenous cosmovision. Thus, we may ascertain that the processes of colonization and oppression still exist (Del Pino et al., 2024). On the one hand, the Chilean State does not promote a situated educational development, so there is no autonomy for indigenous peoples to develop their own educational projects. On the other hand, the current interculturality program in the country is aimed at those educational contexts with a higher concentration of indigenous population, in other words, interculturality is for indigenous people, not for Chileans. Both points favor the argument that a logic of invisibilization of the indigenous language and culture continues to exist, and that education continues to be a means to that end (Arias-Ortega, Villarroel, et al., 2023). For this reason, it is interesting to review the educational experiences of Mapuche students in multilevel schools, in order to reveal the impact of the historical and colonial legacies in their educational meanings and experiences.

Through a review of the state of the art on multilevel schools located in rural Indigenous territory in countries such as Botswana and Mozambique (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019), United States (Thier et al., 2021), Canada (Bousquet, 2016), Spain (Álvarez-Álvarez et al., 2020), Colombia (Cuesta, 2008), Ecuador (Garofalo & Villacrés, 2018), Peru (Pérez et al., 2022), and Chile (Arias-Ortega et al., 2020, 2022; Núñez et al., 2022), we have been able to observe common benefits and problems that have historically characterized this type of school. In terms of benefits, we can see that: 1) school education developed in these schools offers an environment that is conducive to learning, characterized by a familiarity and closeness between the actors in the educational and social environment (Ministerio de Educación de Chile [MINEDUC], 2019); 2) there is an adequate school coexistence among peers, which facilitates collaborative teaching and learning strategies (Freire-Contreras et al., 2021); 3) teachers are respected, which facilitates adequate trust-based relationships with the parents and grandparents of the students, considering that in Indigenous territory, it is the latter who accompany children in their schooling processes, because parents work outside the territory (Torres & Friz, 2020); and 4) there is an adequate educational relationship between both family and school within the framework of the responsibilities assumed by each, which favors the teaching and learning processes (Arias-Ortega, Alvarado, et al., 2023).

When it comes to problems in multilevel schools, we found that: 1) these were built in rural Indigenous territory in order to develop evangelization and transformation processes among Indigenous farming communities so as to convert them into Christians who pursue the social, moral and cultural values of Christianity, abandoning their own epistemic frameworks (Arias-Ortega, 2022); 2) the multilevel school is an educational space that forms generations of Indigenous farming children through a school education that is decontextualized from the local and territorial ways of learning of the families and communities involved (Contreras & Ramírez, 2009; Thier et al., 2021). This has led to the formation of new generations who generally feel alienated from their culture of origin even though they continue to inhabit the same territorial space, because the school has distanced them from their own language, culture and knowledge (Dillon et al., 2022). Throughout their educational pathways, intergenerational ties have weakened and there has been a disconnect with the environment and their own epistemic frameworks; 3) this educational space values and legitimizes a monocultural discipline that is far from the local Indigenous farming reality, commonly found in the existing social and cultural diversity in the rural territory (Freire-Contreras et al., 2021; Prével & Arias-Ortega, 2021); 4) these schools are characterized by inadequate infrastructure and lack of economic resources for the purchase of didactic and pedagogical materials, which limits the provision of quality teaching and learning processes for all students, regardless of their geographic location and socio-cultural origin (Osborne et al., 2022); 5) these schools have historically been disadvantaged and excluded from public policy, and they therefore lack the resources to position themselves at the

same level and quality as urban schools (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019); 6) students in these schools generally have lower academic performance than urban students; 7) there is a low retention rate among qualified teachers and there are less incentives to encourage their permanence in the territory (Torres & Friz, 2020); and 8) teachers working in rural Indigenous territories are not familiar with the social and cultural ways of learning that are unique to the territory, which makes it difficult to establish teaching and learning processes contextualized to the territorial and geographic reality (Martin et al., 2021). In short, schools in rural Indigenous territories present nuances that may offer the possibility of education to new generations, but these processes are not necessarily appropriate for Indigenous territories.

Our study is focused on rural schools located in Indigenous territory in La Araucanía, Chile. We mainly focused on multilevel schools that have been present for more than 100 years in Indigenous communities, which have marked and enabled the construction of meanings in the Mapuche parents who attended these multilevel schools and who currently continue to send their children to these same schools. This article uncovers the impact of colonial legacies on the meanings and experiences of education for Mapuche parents in La Araucanía, Chile.

Rural multilevel schools in La Araucanía, Chile

Regarding the contextualization of multilevel schools in La Araucanía, we hereby provide some background information that helps to understand the characteristics of the region. The total population of La Araucanía is 957,224, based on the 2017 census. The population density is 31.3 inhabitants per km2. 70.9% of the population is distributed in urban areas and 29.1% in rural settings, making La Araucanía one of the three regions in Chile with the highest rural population (Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional [CASEN], 2017). Likewise, according to that CASEN (2017) data, La Araucanía is one of the regions with the highest poverty rates on a multidimensional level; that is to say, in health, education and housing, which increases in rural areas.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the main characteristics of La Araucanía are: 1) the Mapuche population that inhabits these territories forms part of the largest Indigenous group in the country, representing 79.8% of the Chilean indigenous population, or 1,745,147 inhabitants (CASEN, 2017); 2) the Mapuche Indigenous population represents 34.4% of the population in La Araucanía, equivalent to 329,285 inhabitants, making up one of the largest concentrations in the country; 3) the La Araucanía region presents the largest number of Mapunzugun (vernacular language of the Mapuche people) speakers in the country (Arias-Ortega et al., 2018). This vernacular-speaking population varies within the Mapuche population, depending on age, location (urban-rural) and territoriality. In 2015, CASEN identified that among Indigenous populations, the level of proficiency in their vernacular language, according to age, is as follows (see Table 1).

In terms of education, in the region of La Araucanía, children over 15 years old have fewer years of schooling and higher illiteracy rates than children in urban sectors (Observatorio Social, 2018). The region has historically been characterized by low academic performance on standardized tests such as the Quality Measurement System (Sistema de Medición de la Calidad, hereinafter SIMCE), ranking below the rest of the country (Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional [CASEN], 2013). Likewise, on a national level, the region presents a lag of more than 20 years in educational indicators (Arias-Ortega, Alvarado, et al., 2023). It also presents an illiteracy level of 6.9% compared to 3.5% nationwide (CASEN, 2017).

This is the reality for most multilevel schools, mainly in areas with a high Indigenous population density. According to data from the Chilean Ministry of Education, in 2021 there were a total of 3,299 rural schools. This is equivalent to 29.2% of the country's establishments. Total enrollment in these rural schools is 277,844 students, equivalent to 7.7% of the total student population in Chile (MINEDUC, 2021). Of these, 476 schools are located in urban areas and 676 in rural areas, making La Araucanía the region with the largest number of schools in rural areas

Table 1. Proficiency in the vernacular language among the Mapuche population.

Age range	Proficiency in the vernacular language
0-14 years	5% of the population speaks and understands Mapunzugun
	6.4% only understand
	88.6% do not speak and do not understand
15-29 years	7.1% speak and understand
	10.3% only understand
	82.2% do not speak and do not understand
30-44 years	12% speak and understand
	14% only understand
	74% do not speak and do not understand
45-59 years	14.2% speak and understand
	13.9% only understand
	71.9% do not speak and do not understand
60 and older	24.9% speak and understand
	13.1% only understand
	62% do not speak and do not understand

Source: Prepared with data provided by Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional [CASEN] (2015).

nationwide. In the same region, a total of 14,784 teachers works with these students; 11216 in urban areas and 3,568 in rural areas. According to figures from 2020, rural school teachers in 2019 account for 12% of the country's teachers, and rural students account for 8% of enrollment in Chile.

From this perspective, these schools were historically set up in Mapuche territory in order to drive the evangelization process through missionary schools, in which Indigenous boys and girls, together with farm children of different ages, were trained in the Catholic faith (Prévil & Arias-Ortega, 2021). Through schooling, Mapuche children and youth are educated within the framework of a monocultural school education rooted in the moral values of the Catholic and Evangelical religion, through a monolingual school education in Spanish (Arias-Ortega et al., 2022). As the years went by, these schools became deep-rooted in Indigenous territory, and their multilevel logic of one-, two- or three-teacher schools persisted, where one or more teachers are in charge of the teaching and learning process in combined elementary and middle school classes or all levels in the same classroom. According to Ministry of Education guidelines and discourse, rural education in general and multigrade rural education in particular face greater challenges to ensure the school and educational achievement of the students they serve while ensuring quality learning for all. This means ensuring that all children have equal access to learning experiences. This complex reality is a historical problem with schools located in rural settings in La Araucanía.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study, which enables us to understand the meanings and significance of the participants regarding the purpose of multilevel schools in the context of their educational pathways in Indigenous territory. This involved biographical narratives with Mapuche parents from La Araucanía to reconstruct the meaning of their passage through this educational scenario, from their own social and cultural frames of reference. We used biographical narratives in an effort to delve further into the records and understanding behind the thoughts and actions taken by Mapuche parents in the past, within the context of a given sociohistorical period (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The use of these narratives is justified as a means to capture the genuine knowledge that parents construct from their schooling experience in the context of a given sociohistorical space and time, enabling them to reconstruct and understand the true essence of school and school education in a Mapuche context (Landín & Sánchez, 2019; Morales & Taborda, 2021). According to Landín and Sánchez (2019), conducting research from this approach implies that knowledge is constructed differently, since the

researcher is merely an agent who connects the field, the research and the community, to ensure that these voices are heard. It is a baseline for the ways of knowing and knowledge that can provide a reconstruction of the history of the school in Mapuche territory. Through narratives, we can recognize the strengths and limitations that school education has had toward Mapuche populations, to prevent the recurrence of racist and discriminatory practices in these educational spaces.

Operationally, the narratives were constructed in the participants' homes, which implied at least two sessions with each participant. The narratives involved approximately two hours of conversation, which were recorded in mp3 audio, to facilitate a verbatim construction of the narrative and its subsequent analysis. In this conversation, participants took a trip down memory lane to bring to light their experiences from their time at school. This implied recalling images, memories, feelings, smells and ideas that come to mind when they try to remember their formal schooling processes in the Chilean monocultural school. This enabled participants to generate states of reflection and awareness about their experiences, generating participation and dialogue between participants and researchers.

The previous process helped to deepen the educational experiences of the participants, in order to understand their experiences (Landín & Sánchez, 2019) and, based on them, identify the meaning that these people give to education in a Mapuche context.

Within the framework of this study, we focus on educational pathways in multilevel schools to illustrate their educational experiences in the formal schooling process. The participants include 5 Mapuche mothers and 1 Mapuche father who decided to participate voluntarily in the study prior to signing the informed consent form (see Table 2).

We developed a process of thematic analysis with each biographical narrative, to identify the core explicit and latent meanings and significance that emerge from the narratives of Mapuche parents. Operationally, the thematic analysis considered biographical narratives that were transcribed verbatim and analyzed through coding (Creswell, 2014). Coding involves inductively reviewing participants' testimonies in a detailed and in-depth manner to identify ideas, phrases and meanings attributed to the experience in multilevel schools within the framework of their educational pathways. This made it possible to identify recurrent themes and assign codes to key concepts (Creswell, 2014). In keeping with Miles and Huberman (1994), the different fragments of the participants' narratives were considered as one unit of analysis. This identified a series of emerging thematic categories which were segmented and classified according to the specific ideas contained therein, and those with similar contents were joined together. For example, the category of the school's origin in Indigenous territory made it possible to combine the positive and negative experiences of its construction in Mapuche territory. Themes are recognized by the key issues identified from the codes collected (McMillan, 2014).

In order to ensure the scientific rigor of the study, the results and the information gathered from the different narratives were triangulated and compared with the theory. Likewise, the study considered criteria of dependability, which ensures that the results represent something true and unambiguous, in which the participants' responses are independent from the circumstances of the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The present study considered the credibility that connects findings based on the interpretations given by the participants to the study object within the context of their biographical narratives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Finally, we confirmed that we applied ethical safeguards at all

Table 2. Description of participants.

Interview No.	Role	Ancestry	Age	Proficiency in Mapunzugun
1	Mother	Mapuche	45	Understands
2	Mother	Mapuche	40	Understands
3	Mother	Mapuche	38	Speaks
4	Father	Mapuche	40	Speaks
5	Mother	Mapuche	52	Understands
6	Mother	Mapuche	38	Understands

Source: prepared by the authors

times in terms of the independence of researchers, confidentiality of information, and anonymity of participants in coherence with the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity.

Results

The results of this research identify recurring themes in the narratives of Mapuche parents, which help us to understand and explain their experiences in their educational pathways in multilevel schools in their territory. These themes refer to the origins of the construction of the school in the rural territory and identifying both positive and negative aspects of its construction. They also refer to memories from their educational pathways within the framework of the educational relationship they established with their teachers and peers. The biographical narratives of Mapuche parents illustrate how the multilevel school marked the construction of meanings and forms of engagement between these parents and actors in the educational environment, which currently have a direct and indirect impact on the forms of engagement that they establish with their children's teachers.

Origins of the construction of the school in rural areas

The first recurring theme that emerges in the biographical narrative of Mapuche parents from La Araucanía indicates that the multilevel school built in rural Indigenous territories has been characterized from its outset by the precarious infrastructure and educational resources it has to develop the teaching and learning processes. Likewise, this educational space has been identified from its early years of construction in the territory to be lacking in aspects that ensure a safe and enjoyable space for students to learn. For example, there was a lack of food, which affected the safety and permanence of Indigenous children and youth in the classroom. One testimony indicates that "*in those days, children went hungry at school, they suffered, there was no food, no water, no heating, nothing. We had to bring water, firewood and food so that they could cook and feed everyone there*" (interview 1).

From the parents' perspective, the school has been characterized from its outset by the precariousness of basic supplies such as food and heating. The following testimony adds that "*we were very hungry, because we had to bring a snack, for example, which at that time was toasted flour with sugar. That's what we ate, the parents made donations so they could make our food [at school]*" (interviewee 5). Rural schools have systematically experienced a lack of financial resources to provide an environment conducive to learning that ensures the basic needs of the children and young people they serve.

However, on the other hand, the participants recognize that the school has historically been used as a physical meeting place to resolve particular problems in the territory. One of the interviewees says that "*when they [their parents] needed a document, they would go to school and the principal would get it for them. They did those things for you at school*" (interviewee 2). This form of engagement and support generated in the parents a sense of belonging and commitment to the school, as they felt that there was a concern for the problems they were going through. As a result, parents continue to send their children to these schools, as they consider them part of the territory. An interviewee expresses that "[*the school] has been here for a long time, many years. Many in the community, children from the community studied here, including my husband and my children*" (interviewee 3).

From this same perspective, the participants recall that even when things were quite precarious during their school years, due to a lack of economic resources, problems with school infrastructure and lack of transportation, they nevertheless consider the school as a space where children were able to strengthen their ties and bonds with each other. They recognize that peers established an informal education among themselves, helping and accompanying each other in school and watching out for each other on the way to school. An interviewee indicated the following:

> All my life I walked to school, we would all play, talk, some walking ahead, others behind, women, men. There was a canal that would fill up with water in the winter and not even the older ones could jump across.

> We all helped each other and took care of each other. We were all wet, there was a lot of suffering... but we all arrived together. (interviewee 4)

In the same sense, they recall that sharing a classroom among children of different ages was justified due to the lack of schools in the territory, and the "older" children didn't have the opportunity to attend other schools. Children from 7 to 18 or older shared the same classroom, learning basic lessons in reading and mathematics. One testimony indicates that "*there were a lot of people over eighteen, twenty years old. Since it was the only school here in the area, there were a lot of people. We all studied together, whoever did the best helped the ones who didn't understand as much*" (interviewee 5). Through this testimony, we can infer that even though the age ranges of the children and young people varied, there was a relationship of accompaniment and collective well-being among them, whether on the road to school or in the teaching and learning processes. Similarly, the participants recalled that in the beginning the structure and functioning of the school was not so standardized, which justified the fact that different ages shared the same spaces. There was no monitoring of school attendance, and classes were even held in sheds loaned by parents from the community. One testimony mentions that "*the families loaned their sheds, their space, so that they could teach the children. Sometimes schools moved location. The important thing for the parents was that their children would learn and were not made to look like fools*" (interviewee 6). In short, we can infer from the participants' testimony that the school in the territory was initially installed without any conscious planning, but rather it operated on intuition. It took root in the Indigenous territory as a result of the need for its persistence which was demanded by the Indigenous communities and families of La Araucanía.

School experiences in Mapuche territory

The content analysis of the narratives identifies some positive experiences and happy memories, but the testimonies also relay negative experiences that parents remember from their time in formal schooling. For example, they have a positive memory regarding the fact that the school taught them to read and write as elements of vital importance in the development of their lives. According to one testimony, "*the good thing is that I learned how to read when I was quite young, when I was six, and that helped me to learn the other subjects and finish school*" (interviewee 3). Likewise, another testimony adds that "*I learned how to add and subtract. I couldn't learn how to divide; what I didn't learn at home, I went to school to learn*" (interviewee 6).

Some parents consider that a positive element of their schooling process was that it allowed them to develop confidence in themselves and their abilities, which is reflected in the following testimony: "*I think the positive thing, at least for me, is that it helped me to have a lot of confidence in my abilities. Since I was a child, [teachers] always pointed me out as a good student, it was not hard for me. That made me aspire to more things professionally and to believe in myself [that I was capable] as well*" (interviewee 6).

In short, the positive aspects that the participants highlight about their school education are based on attitudinal aspects, beyond the academic achievement or certification of their learning at school.

Negative experiences at school in indigenous territory

The results reveal negative experiences in the context of the educational relationship between the participants and their teachers, which in some ways have marked the current relationship with the school and their children's education. The experiences reveal the loss and discontinuity of their own educational knowledge and ways of knowing, as a result of the overvaluation placed on Western knowledge. One testimony mentions the following:

> Building a school inside Mapuche territory brings negative things, because [local] knowledge is annulled. They are Christian schools, very Evangelical (...) when we were little, they instilled in us a belief in God, they made us believe

> that everything related to our [Mapuche] culture was bad. It was a sin, it was demonized. We gradually distanced ourselves from the Mapuche philosophical belief. That happened in my generation and in my parents' generation. They made us believe that what we were doing [living the Mapuche culture] was negative, it was bad. (interviewee 3)

From that testimony, we can infer that through their schooling processes, the school transmitted to these parents that they had to abandon the "bad" [their culture] if they wanted to become Chileans. Likewise, it was instilled in them that family education would be discontinued, to prevent their children and young people from learning "this" associated with their own culture, which was frowned upon in school education. The school held such credibility for the parents that it put an end to the transmission of unique Mapuche educational knowledge and ways of knowing. Another testimony indicates that "*the school holds such credibility for many people. This affected the territory, many people were evangelized, the gijatuwe [sacred ceremonial space] was eliminated from the territory, the language was lost"* (interviewee 4). Through testimony, we can infer that the school is one of the institutions that has had the greatest impact on the discontinuity and dispossession of Indigenous knowledge and educational knowledge in children and youth. This problem has been transmitted from the grandparents to their children, who are now parents and, in some way, have also denied the transmission of knowledge and ways of learning such as language, and have denied their children's participation in socio-cultural and socio-religious practices to prevent them from experiencing discrimination in school education.

In addition to that, parents maintain and recognize as a negative experience the fact that the school and educational processes of their times were of better "quality." In their voices, "quality" was ensured through practices of punishment and submission, which in those times was justified as necessary for academic performance. This was because the fear of being hit and teased forced them to learn the content. According to the testimony, we can infer that parents justified punishment as a pedagogical strategy that ensured the quality of learning and granted them access to this non-Indigenous world, which would "assure" them a better future. According to one testimony, "*well, it meant something good, because if I had not gone [I would not have learned], because I went to school even though I suffered and all that. I still learned; I learned as best as I could"* (interviewee 4). In the same vein, another participant adds that *"the good thing is that people still learned the content, they learned about the other culture. Parents wanted their children to go to school, to learn the culture of the Wigka [meaning the Chilean person] so that they could get along well, to learn to read*" (interviewee 1).

In the same sense, when participants take a deeper look at the memories they have of their educational relationship with teachers, traumatic and survival aspects of their schooling process instantly emerge. For example, when a father is asked about his positive memories of school education, he tells us that there are none, even when he makes his greatest effort to remember. This is seen in the following testimony:

> No matter how hard I try to look for something [positive], I can't find it, because I don't have any nice, happy memories. . . either with my teachers or with my classmates, even though we were in the same room, we shared recess. There was nothing nice, they teased me, they hit me, and the teachers, both Mapuche and non-Mapuche teachers, looked on and did nothing. (interviewee 4)

From the same perspective, another mother adds that her passage through school and her relationship with her teacher were based on physical punishment for the sole fact of her "being" Mapuche, which she believes generated rejection from her teacher. She expresses that "*the bad thing, the language issue, you suffered, they beat you because you spoke your language, but you did not know how to speak Spanish. When I went to school I learned [to speak Spanish]*" (interviewee 6). She adds that even some Indigenous and non-Indigenous classmates were the ones who told the teacher when Indigenous students spoke the Mapunzugun language at recess. She added that "*you went to school there, but it was not your language, so at recess you spoke your language among all your classmates and there was always someone who would tell on you and then the Mapuche and Wigka teacher would beat you at school, they would beat you for speaking your language*" (interviewee 6). From this testimony, we can infer that there is an institutionalized denial of the use of

the Indigenous language in school education, regardless of whether the teacher is Indigenous or not. It is a space in which the Indigenous culture was not allowed. This is seen in the following testimony:

> That was bad and it was not only Wigka teachers; there were also Mapuche teachers who beat you for speaking Mapuche. [The Mapuche teachers] treated us just as badly, as if the Mapuche language did not fit in at school, and if you were there [at school] you had to learn the other language [Spanish]; well, the other [Mapunzugun] was forbidden. (interviewee 4)

Finally, when these negative experiences are addressed in the context of educational relationships, we can see the mistreatment, whether verbal or physical, of Indigenous children. This is reflected in asymmetrical relationships where there is a fear of the teacher figure, both in terms of physical punishment and verbal and nonverbal discrimination. One testimony mentions that "*before, the teachers were stricter with you, they could pull your ears, they could pull your hair, but now those things don't happen*" (interviewee 1). This type of relationship caused the participants to relate to their teacher with fear, avoiding any questioning or misunderstanding of the teacher for fear of punishment. According to one testimony, "*the bad thing in my time is that there was a lot of punishment. Classmates were punished because they couldn't learn, because it was difficult for them or because they were Indians*" (interviewee 6). The testimony continues to show that these practices by the teacher were justified, because the children were not able to learn and that was the fault of the children and their families, turning beating into an institutionalized and validated teaching strategy in the classroom. The following testimony expresses this:

> They always blamed and hit the children who could not learn. The children were always to blame for not knowing how to read, it was the child's fault for not having brought the material they had asked for, the teachers had no empathy, they beat them. (interviewee 6)

In short, the testimony of Mapuche parents about their formal schooling process reveals the existence of negative memories in their school experience. The participants recall episodes of pain, because they were unable to meet the goals set by the teacher, which ended up affecting their self-esteem and self-worth, viewing themselves as incapable of learning, even when they acknowledge that they dedicated hours to studying and learning the contents addressed in school. One of the mothers interviewed remembers the following:

> There was so much pain on my part. I don't remember being happy at school. . . (. . .) I have always been like that, I have very low self-esteem, I feel like I didn't really achieve anything at school, (. . .), I always studied the material they gave us when I got home. . . and then I got there [to school], and I forgot everything, and it was always like they [the teachers] left me out, I don't even like to remember that. (interviewee 3)

These types of practices of explicit and implicit violence caused many parents to abandon or suspend their studies, since it was an economic burden for their parents, and "apparently" they were not capable of doing well at school. This is why many of them finished their school education as adults when it was required for certain types of jobs. One testimony mentions that "*I had to stop my primary education; I didn't finish it at the age I should have. It was hard for me; my mother didn't want me to continue studying. I finished my education on my own when I was older [adult education]*" (interviewee 5). The discourse from parents also shows how the teachers' comments constituted elements that marked their decisions and had a negative impact on the construction of their own self-worth, leading them to see themselves as subjects incapable of achieving their goals. Likewise, these were comments that were mentioned in front of peers, which generated embarrassment and ridicule toward the person. This can be seen in the following testimony:

> I tried really hard to study, but when I got there [to school], I forgot everything (. . ..), the worst memory I have is that my mother was going to send me to an aunt's house to study in Santiago and when we had a test, that demanding teacher said, 'And you want to go to Santiago, but you don't know anything!' It hurt me so much, he said it in front of everyone, I remember it and it makes me feel so bad. (interviewee 2)

The testimony shows how verbal abuse and mockery toward Indigenous children has been one of the factors that have resulted in educational gaps. Faced with these situations of discrimination, children and young people decided to drop out of school to avoid mistreatment, because they considered themselves incapable and preferred to stay at home to help with the household, where they felt efficient.

Another element stressed by the participants was the poor pedagogical support they had in those times, compared to the support their children receive today, which from their perspective would undoubtedly have had an impact on their academic performance. One testimony expresses this: "*Honestly, when I was a child, I didn't have a very good time at school (. . .), I had a learning problem. At the time there were no PIES [School Integration Program], psychologists, assistants, or anything like that*" (interviewee 2). Through the testimony, we can infer that the participant mentions that they had learning problems, although we cannot be sure if they are referring to problems that could have been diagnosed as special educational needs. However, it is relevant when the participant alludes to the fact that at that time there was no pedagogical support from psychologists and education assistants as there is today; taking this into consideration, it can be inferred that they may indeed think that they did have a learning problem that could have been treated with the support of specialists. In addition to this, teachers were not prepared to assume these "learning problems" as something medical, but only as "laziness" or reluctance on the part of the students, which undoubtedly caused a negative learning experience. Today, progress has been made in this area in schools, where a team of specialists may help diagnose and address learning problems with different educational strategies and support for teachers.

Another testimony adds the following:

> The way of teaching was different, the teachers were not very patient, if you didn't understand they wouldn't explain it again. So, that frustrated me, it frustrated my mom who studied with me all day and then we would go to the test and I didn't do well, so I think that was bad. (interviewee 3)

In short, generally, Indigenous parents see themselves as subjects who have had learning problems or have assumed these problems as a result of the comments made by their teachers. Likewise, the testimonies reveal that these problems were accompanied with beatings and physical punishment:

> Look, there were children, little children who had a hard time reading, learning to read, and the teachers didn't have this romanticized idea of the world. I remember that in that generation they used to beat us with rods, with their fists. I remember suffering that physical violence. I had a hard time reading in first and second grade, I finally learned to read in third grade. I didn't understand why they were yelling at me. I was scolded, mistreated, and insulted by teachers because I had trouble reading. I didn't know, I had a problem, I still have a problem reading, dysglossia I think it's called (. . .), so I kind of have [hatred], I am scared of the Western world. (interviewee 4)

From the parents' perspective, these negative memories and the physical mistreatment toward them have generated a relationship of mistrust and tension toward education professionals, because when they look back, it is not nice to see how they or their classmates were mistreated, solely because they belonged to a culture that was frowned upon in school education. Likewise, they are memories that marked them and at that time, when they were 7 or 8 years of age, they were unable to react, only to be punished and to assume that they deserved it. One testimony mentions that "*if you approach it now, you start looking inward and backward. It was like an ordeal, for my brothers, my neighbors, we were all mistreated*" (interviewee 4). Another testimony adds the following:

> I went to school to suffer, in addition to what the teacher did to me [hit me], because I was very shy (. . .), the teacher would stand me in front of the blackboard, in front of all my classmates and I wore long braids, my mother always braided my hair, and [the teacher] would take my braids, and she would start spinning me around in a circle (. . .) she would say to my classmates 'look at the Chinese girl, look at the Chinese girl,' and all I could do was cry, I couldn't defend myself. (interviewee 5)

Finally, parents recall that they lived this pain in silence, since in family education, adults were the ones who had the final word and credibility. For example, if they commented on these mistreatments to their parents, the parents justified these, assuming that they had done something wrong, so they deserved the punishment doled out by the teacher since it would prepare them for life. The pain that reminds them of their schooling marked the development of their physical, emotional and cognitive well-being, limiting their development in school, and it has been one of the factors that has led to the educational gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Discussion and conclusions

The results of the research lead us to conclude that the history of schooling of Mapuche parents in La Araucanía is one of survival that spans time yet is invisible in the social memory of the Western Eurocentric culture of Chile. These narratives of survival in educational pathways stress the urgency of teaching the true history of school education in Indigenous territories to new generations of children and young people, to teachers in pre-service teacher education, and to those who are already in practice. Through this, we can question and provide evidence of the marks and consequences left on Indigenous children by their formal schooling process. We can also prevent the recurrence of these practices of implicit and explicit institutionalized violence in educational systems.

Upon reviewing the school and the meanings it has for the Mapuche parents of La Araucanía, we identify that the school is seen as an institution of the territory itself, which came into the territory as a result of the demands of the Indigenous leaders and parents at the time. This educational space was seen as a form of integration into the dominant society, which would provide a better future in the social, cultural and economic spheres. However, this conception of school and educational purposes, from the logic of Indigenous parents, needed to maintain a strong socio-cultural dominance in their children and youth in order to strengthen and maintain their own language and culture. Nevertheless, at the time of its installation in the Indigenous territory, the educational purposes of the State institutions did not necessarily meet the needs of Indigenous families and communities.

This also reveals the concealment of a school history characterized by traumatic and dark experiences of Indigenous children in this educational setting. At the same time, these experiences show the resilience of Indigenous children and youth, now adults, who kept going and struggled to recover their own language and socio-cultural practices, to reconnect with their grandparents' generations. These educational stories of Mapuche parents raise the challenge of telling these realities, histories and narratives, creating a sense of presence and belonging, in order to rethink the rural school and rural school education, particularly in Indigenous territories. We believe that this could be a first step toward the recognition and practices of social justice toward Indigenous people which would allow us to explore spaces for reconciliation and prevent the recurrence of deep-rooted racism in school education. This invites us to rethink pre-service teacher education and its formative itineraries, to understand the school and school education from its historical bases, delving into its dynamics and moving into the present by questioning the persisting colonialism in school education systems and in society. The article contributes to the generation of reflection and self-reflection from the experience, recognizing the pedagogical practices of teachers in the past as a way of identifying those elements that we do not want to repeat with Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. A recognition of the strengths and weaknesses that multilevel rural education faced and faces can enrich evidence-based decision making and propose other forms of educational relationships in Indigenous territories. It also brings visibility to the educational problems in this type of school that historically have been invisible in public policies on school education, thus, turning them into forgotten schools in Chile. This aspect is also reflected in pre-service teacher education, which does not prepare future education professionals to work in these territories with the characteristics of a multilevel school. Working with six levels in the same

classroom, in a highly diverse socio-cultural setting with high levels of social vulnerability requires a different set of abilities.

And so, based on the above and from the findings of this research, what are the historical colonial legacies present in the educational experiences of Mapuche parents? In the first place, we can rescue the positive experiences of the narratives: learning how to read and write and the main subjects, which allowed parents to develop these skills, something that in turn leads to the fact that the school allowed them to create labor expectations for the future, thanks to these abilities. However, although the research participants put it in positive terms, learning a hegemonic culture in order to be able to develop culturally, religiously, linguistically and occupationally, leaving aside their own culture is still highly assimilationist. These experiences could be considered positive in the sense that these people were able to communicate with the other culture (but they had to abandon their own). This is why, secondly and consequent with the above, many more negative experiences can be observed which demonstrate an institutionalized violence in the educational system, from the fact that the school was established as a control and evangelization device in indigenous territory. Although it can be said that progress has been made by now in terms of interculturality, as mentioned above, intercultural bilingual education in Chile has been questioned for being functional to neoliberalism and the market system in the country, another form of control and colonialism not only of the indigenous people but also of the population in general (Del Pino et al., 2024). Another form of historical legacy is that the current school subjects of indigenous language and culture are built on Western-Chilean logic, making invisible the Mapuche ways of teaching and indigenous skills for learning their language (Rivas and Del Pino, 2023). Thus, these educational programs, in multilevel schools and in rural and indigenous sectors, respond to a historical indigenous demand, from a functional and instrumental point of view, thus perpetuating their invisibilization. Undoubtedly, it would be interesting to delve deeper into this idea in further studies.

In short, we argue that telling the histories-narratives of Mapuche parents is an important factor that can be a disruptive element from the perspective of social isolation. It decentralizes and destabilizes those hegemonic stories of education as an idyllic place where everyone in attendance has access to the same tools and quality education, and which fail to recognize education's violent legacy toward Indigenous people. Through the narratives of Mapuche parents, we are able to question the normativity of Western Eurocentric power and the neutral stance taken toward systemic racism in formal schooling. This is also a space for people to share their pain, thoughts, feelings and experiences, acknowledging the mark that has been left by schooling as a way of self-recognizing, self-validation and looking toward a relationship of reconstruction between Indigenous and Western knowledge expressed in school education, which poses the challenge of continuing to reconstruct the history of rural education in Chile.

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