

Original Article

“The bug, that little guy” in the Colombian indigenous territories: weaving dialogues with the Kankuama community in pandemic times

“O bicho, aquele pirralho” nos territórios indígenas colombianos: tecendo diálogos com a comunidade Kankuama em tempos de pandemia

“El bicho, ese chiquito” en los territorios indígenas colombianos: tejiendo diálogos con la comunidad Kankuama en tiempos de pandemia

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Abstract

This paper aims to reflect on the experiences involved in affirming life and preparing for the death of the indigenous Colombian Kankuama community, in the face of the pandemic and physical, sociocultural, ecological, and spiritual effects that underlie and impact their identity, visibility, awareness, and occupational participation. Through collaborative ethnic-national research based on indigenous thought, "Yarning" or fabric was used to recover the narratives of three kankuamos through two semi-structured face-to-face and one virtual interview, recorded and transcribed between April and August 2020. The narratives allowed to weave reflections linked to the struggle for the preservation of their intercultural health dynamics, recognizing elements linked to its history, the resignification of the virus as a phenomenon for the learning of humankind in the relationship with Mother Earth, and the land. The paper also addresses the occupational processes linked to death, emphasizing the learnings of the loss and awareness of the spiritual legacy of the elders, seniors, and sages for the interpretation and guidance of mortuary practices towards the "Chundwa". The Kankuamos' perceptions on the current health situation, health, and well-being concepts are presented, based on the "Ley de Sé" and its relationship with death-related occupations related to social, cultural, and natural equilibrium, which must be considered within occupational therapy and occupational science in Latin America.

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Keywords: Indigenous Culture, Coronavirus Infections, Intercultural Health, Attitude to Death.

Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo refletir sobre as experiências de afirmação da vida e preparação para a morte da comunidade colombiana indígena Kankuama, diante da pandemia e dos efeitos físicos, socioculturais, ecológicos e espirituais que fundamentam e impactam sua identidade, visibilidade, consciência e participação ocupacional. Por meio de pesquisa étnico-nacional colaborativa com base no pensamento indígena, o "Yarning" ou tecido foi utilizado para recuperar as narrativas de três kankuamos por meio de duas entrevistas semiestruturadas presenciais e uma virtual, gravadas e transcritas entre abril e agosto de 2020. As narrativas permitiram tecer reflexões vinculadas à luta pela preservação da própria dinâmica intercultural da saúde, reconhecendo elementos vinculados à sua história, além da resignificação do vírus como fenômeno de aprendizagem do ser humano na relação com a Mãe Terra e com o território. O artigo também aborda os processos ocupacionais vinculados à morte, enfatizando os aprendizados da perda e da consciência do legado espiritual dos mais velhos, decanos e sábios para a interpretação e orientação das práticas mortuárias da passagem ao "Chundwa". Resgatam-se as percepções que os Kankuamos possuem sobre a situação atual de saúde, conceitos de saúde e bem-estar, com base na "Ley de Sé" e sua relação com as ocupações relacionadas à morte, ao equilíbrio social, cultural e natural, que devem ser consideradas dentro da terapia ocupacional e da ciência ocupacional na América Latina.

Palavras-chave: Cultura Indígena, Infecções por Coronavirus, Saúde Intercultural, Atitude Frente a Morte.

Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre las experiencias de afirmación de vida y preparación para la muerte de la comunidad indígena Kankuama colombiana, frente a la pandemia y los efectos físicos, socioculturales, ecológicos y espirituales que subyacen e impactan en su identidad, visibilidad, conciencia y participación ocupacional. A través de investigaciones colaborativas étnico-nacionales basadas en el pensamiento indígena, se utilizó "Yarning" o tejido para recuperar las narrativas de tres kankuamos a través de dos entrevistas cara a cara semiestructuradas y una virtual, grabadas y transcritas entre abril y agosto de 2020. Las narrativas permitieron reflexiones vinculadas a la lucha por la preservación de la propia dinámica intercultural de la salud, reconociendo elementos vinculados a su historia, la resignificación del virus como fenómeno del aprendizaje del hombre en la relación con la Madre Tierra y el territorio. El artículo también aborda los procesos ocupacionales vinculados a la muerte, enfatizando las lecciones aprendidas de la pérdida y conciencia del legado espiritual de los ancianos, los mayores y los sabios para la interpretación y orientación de las prácticas mortuorias para el mundo "chundwa". Se recuperan las percepciones de los Kankuamos sobre la situación de salud actual, conceptos de salud y bienestar, a partir de la Ley de Sé y su relación con ocupaciones relacionadas con la muerte, el equilibrio social, cultural y natural, que deben ser considerados dentro de la terapia ocupacional y la ciencia de la ocupación en América Latina.

Palabras clave: Cultura Indígena, Infecciones por Coronavirus, Salud intercultural, Actitud Frente a la Muerte.

Introduction

"The grain of corn on the cob is accommodated and does not fight to occupy all the space, the resistance in the battle makes us aware of preparing ourselves for spiritual freedom and not continuing to be submissive to slavery and suffering due to attachments to the material world" (Message for the original peoples of the Spiritual Parents during the pandemic, Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia, 2020).

During July 2020, the pandemic in Colombia presented the highest peak of concentration after six months of spread, with a lethal outbreak of 7,691 positive cases and 272 deaths in indigenous communities, presenting 55 new daily cases and with a doubling increase in cases every 10 days. The evolution of the spatial risk levels of contagion shows that each time and gradually the number of indigenous communities that are at a low or moderate level of risk go to a condition with a higher probability of contagion, exposed to affect their lives. rights to health and life, estimating 464 deaths in the medium term due to the virus, the bug (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia, 2020). The virus will be referenced in the same way that the Colombian indigenous communities call it: "the little bug" on the orientations of the Mamos (traditional spiritual and political authorities) and Sagas (the Mamos' wives and counselors). Therefore, it will not refer to the scientific name of the virus throughout the article.

Before the bug reach the Colombian indigenous communities

Before the pandemic, the health situation and the epidemiological profile of indigenous peoples in Colombia showed differences compared to the general health situation of the rest of the population, being in unfavorable indicators of mortality and morbidity (Buitrago, 2012). The incidence of chronic and communicable diseases resulting from the processes of territorial violation, ethnic exclusion, environmental contamination, political and armed conflict (Del Popolo et al., 2014; Bacigalupo et al., 2019) have impacted the not only biological matrix but cultural, spiritual and occupational of their worldview and well-being. Colombian indigenous peoples are experiencing a double phenomenon of ethnocide, and the accentuated violence for the control of indigenous territory, with an increase in the forced displacement of communities and the number of murders of their leaders (Ávila & Guereña, 2020). They also confront an invisible enemy that, without fire bullets, puts the nation's legacy and the guardians of ancestry at risk, due to the marked mortality from 60 years onwards (corresponding to 68.5% of deaths), which represents a significant loss for Indigenous Peoples, being aware that the Wise, Older and Elderly¹ are in charge of transmitting the millennial knowledge from generation to generation (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia, 2020).

Like corn, how have Indigenous Peoples withstood a thousand battles to survive? (Message for the original peoples of the Spiritual Parents during the pandemic. Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia, 2020).

¹ The Colombian Indigenous Organization names them in the feminine and masculine version, so it will be used during the development of the article.

The historically built “deep cultural dissonances” between indigenous and non-indigenous beliefs regarding death, disease management, health, and medical care (Thompson et al., 2019) mean that the current battle is not only with the virus. The health crisis has reinforced social inequalities and geographical, economic, linguistic barriers to accessing basic and health services that are poorly integrated and differing in the worldview of care, health, and life (Ávila & Guereña, 2020).

They are territories that, lacking an adequate health infrastructure (Ratima et al., 2019), have advocated for the strengthening and maintenance of their knowledge and practices based on traditional medicine to heal, relieve, and say goodbye to their brothers and sisters (Caballero, 2018), bearing in mind the Law of Origin as a symbolic concept that has guided its actions in different areas (Fijal & Beagan, 2019; Velez et al., 2020). Thus, the call of Mother Earth to identify actions typical of each people such as the use of plants and herbs, family rituals to avoid meeting many people at the same time, spiritual protection to avoid material, spiritual and human disharmonies. Thought and finally the care of *Mayores* and *Mayoras* so that they protect and exercise with care with the bug (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia, 2020), are some examples of the dynamics of traditional health care services in times of pandemic.

Understanding the importance of the community, familiarity and the territory in the transmission of knowledge among the indigenous peoples of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta², the approach to the Kankuama community stems from the belonging of the author MMAO. She is originally from the community and living in the sacred territory in the reservation located in Valledupar in the department of Cesar that according to the last Census it has a population of 16,139 Kankuamos indigenous (Portal Único del Estado Colombiano, 2020). To date, it has registered 360 cases of contagion of the 456 that have occurred in Indigenous people of the Kankuama community due to the bug and 6 of the 9 deaths (Organización Indígena Kankuama, 2020).

Considering that both the approach to death and the experience of grief can be a moment of great importance in the expression of human relationships and the environment through occupation (Pollard, 2006), in this article we intend to listen and give voice to the experiences involved in the affirmation of life as well as in the preparation of death from an indigenous paradigm under a decolonizing perspective (Lucchi et al., 2020; Essential & McColl, 2019; Bye, 1998) in the context of a pandemic. Also, we proposed to focus on the underlying occupational processes, not from a supposedly Eurocentric colonial view (Hammell, 2020; Magalhães et al., 2018) and romanticized of the “good death” but from an ethnic-national perspective, taking up the lived experiences of inhabitants of the Colombian Kankuama Indigenous community (Organización Indígena Kankuama, 2020). Thus, we will bet to identify not only the perspective of this community on the trajectory of becoming ill and dying from the virus but also how this construction permeates the ties with its social, cultural, and ecological environment in times of pandemic, through a first approximation of the roots of the particular history of the community with its multiple layers of sensitivities, persuasions, assumptions, and choices linked to this new historical moment (Trouillot, 2011). Therefore, we do not intend to normalize or problematize their occupational perspective or to project

² The Kankuamos live in the north of Colombia and inhabit the foothills of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, sharing culture and tradition with other peoples that coexist such as the Kággaba (Koguis), Iku (Arhuacos) and Wiwa. Within their cosmology, these four peoples are the **guardians of the balance of the world**. This territory was declared by UNESCO as a Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site in 1979 due to the network of ecosystems they host (Organización Indígena Kankuama, 2020).

an academic construction of the determinants of well-being, but rather to describe that search towards identity and occupational awareness of their health (Mahoney & Kiraly-Alvarez, 2019). It is understood as a process that includes determinants linked to the social, economic, political, cultural, and mainly spiritual context (Wilcock, 2006), in the valuation and support of their ancestral knowledge (Ramugondo et al., 2017) and the visibility of the occupational participation that reflects the cultural way of knowing, being and doing (Emery-Whittington & Maro, 2018) in their local discourses in front of the bug.

Methodology

This study is a communal contemplation, a configurative reflection framed within the indigenous paradigm or native science, which privileges the decolonizing processes and constitutive traces (Rocha-Buelvas & Ruíz-Lurduy, 2018; Daza, 2017; Smith, 2013) of three indigenous participants selected from the Kankuama community, in front of their feelings and experiences during the current pandemic. We investigated the connection of this new daily life with their ancestral practices, their knowledge, and worldview of health, disease, and death. Daza (2017) interprets native science as the processes of perceiving, thinking, knowing, acting, and systematizing the learning of indigenous peoples. For Cajete (1999) the concept of native science

[...] includes spirituality, community, creativity, and technologies to maintain the environment and take care of human life, involving aspects such as space and time, language, thought and perception, human nature and feelings, the relationship of human beings and the cosmos and all the aspects revealed with natural reality (Cajete, 1999, p. 2).

Participants

We (invited) the participants by their professional approaches to the context of education, health, and spirituality, having an important role -political, social, and cultural- within the community as leaders of the Kankuama legacy. They are:

Víctor Segundo Arias Arias, a Kankuama indigenous. He is part of the council of *mayores* (authorities) of the Kankuama community of Chemesquemena and is an ethnic-educator in the Mixed rural school of Chemesquemena, in the second and third grades of primary school, in favor of meaningful learning and traditional of his students. He is a researcher, musician, and historian of the narratives of the indigenous peoples of the Sierra Nevada.

Yidid Ramos Montero, Kankuama indigenous, Kankuamos health coordinator in Bogotá and responsible for the Traditional and Intercultural Medicine Component of the contingency plan of the *Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia*. She receives all the recommendations, advice, and knowledge of the *Mayoras* (traditional doctors) of the country, to spread it in the indigenous communities.

Diomedes Rafael Arias Arias, Kankuama indigenous, a teacher in social sciences, currently a rector in the Educational Institution Social Promotion Guatapurí-Chemesquemena, secretary of the council of *mayores* (authorities) of the Chemesquemena community, traditional musician, leader, and researcher of the Kankuama language.

The Kankuama community is collectively organized to comply with and respect the precepts of the *ley de Sé* or *Ley de Origen* (Law of Origin). Thus, the voice of authority

represents the voice of the entire community. Therefore, the number of participants does not interfere with the quality of the information collected, as explained by one of the participants:

[...] In our worldview as an original indigenous people, we have a law of origin that is the one that governs us, in such a way that we cannot get out of that because that is what has been there from the beginning, all the people of the community is going to tell you the same thing even though it may be in other words, [...] we cannot change things, we cannot change the order as we were raised from beyond that ancestral world (Victor).

Generation of data

Based on respect and defense for the importance of indigenous research methods, within respectful alliances of collaboration with non-indigenous researchers (D'Antoine et al., 2019), these community members are recognized as experts in the ethical sense and epistemic of the research process towards an ecology of knowledge (Daza, 2017) that involves the elements and tools that have traditionally helped to facilitate learning, understanding the world and that is part of everyday life (Cajete, 1999).

Yarning³ (weaving) is incorporated as a qualitative, practical, and safe method of collecting information, by using indigenous narratives to achieve a culturally appropriate, respectful understanding from a two-way and collaborative approach. The weave is the integration and collective and reciprocal construction from the exchange of conversations in the framework of narrative research, which takes up valuable historical elements, values, behaviors, and attitudes in the experience of the life of the indigenous individual, which is relevant for research (Smith et al., 2020), relating it to the interpretation of tissue that the Kankuama community has that metaphors

[...] weaving the thought and strengthening the cultural identity of the people, family, and ancestral values, and the knowledge of the spiritual principle of things and situations (Vivas Sánchez, 2018, p. 22).

The Yarning has the potential to produce findings and conclusions that are not always possible through traditional research based on archives and empirical sources (Osmond & Phillips, 2019), allowing the recognition and incorporation of indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and axiologies (Barlo et al., 2020; Walker et al., 2012) that support the knowledge and ways of being, doing and belonging of the Kankuama community in the face of the pandemic, rescuing the resilience and strengths inherent in their holistic care process, instead of problematizing them. This knowledge can offer social implications and for clinical practice visible among indigenous populations as an important complement to the health system and biomedical approach (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Dean, 2010; Geia et al., 2013).

Bearing in mind that the narratives with the use of this methodology are given as an interactive process in different conversational moments in a personal and direct way (Figure 1), their development is rescued and adapted due to the current health problem that does not allow face-to-face meetings. We focused on the development of the weaves towards a character of investigative-collaborative type, highlighting that the cultural

³For the article, we are going to use the word in English, responding to that interest in producing an investigation appropriate to the cultural context and the language used by the indigenous people.

approach of one of the authors with the community already ensured the relational/social connection with the participants.

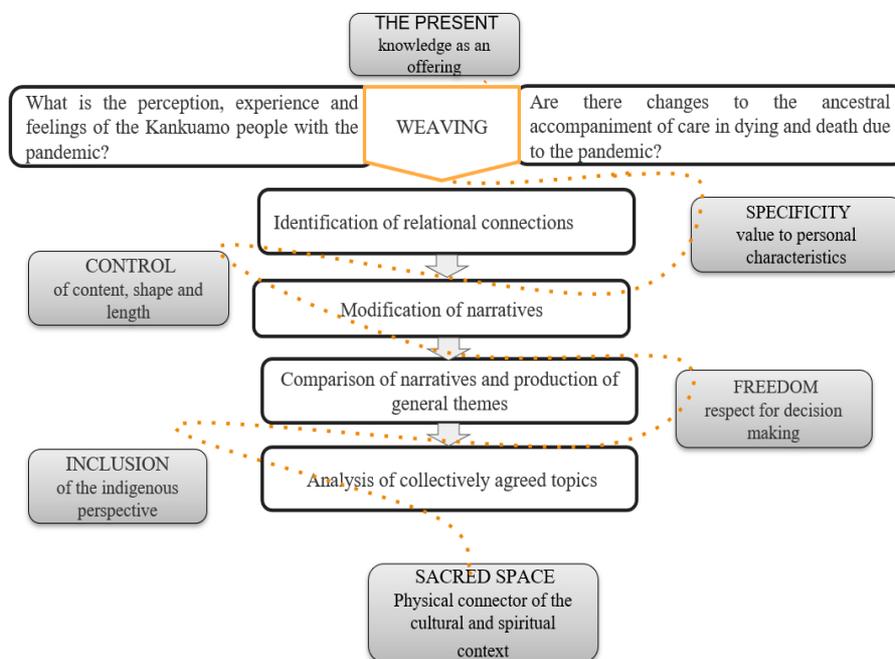


Figure 1. Types of weaving. **Source:** Adapted from Bessarab & Ng'andu (2010), Dean (2010).

Thus, two of the dialogues were conducted personally (maintaining all biosafety protocols) by the indigenous researcher belonging to the community, through semi-structured interviews which were recorded and transcribed by the same author, obtaining two initial narrations. While another of the interviews was virtualized through the WhatsApp platform because the participant was not in her community at the time of the invitation. In all three cases, the oral consent previously approved by the *Cabildo Menor* of the Kankuama community and the participants was obtained, taking place between April and August 2020.

Data Analysis Process

After the interviews, all the authors participated in the collaborative relational analysis (Barlo et al., 2020) which was divided into four stages:

1. To identify relational connections, we initially separated shared narratives;
2. We consulted each participant about the connections and descriptions made based on their original narrative so that it is possible to add, remove or modify elements of it.
3. We compared and integrated the stories of all the participants, producing a set of themes linked to the guiding questions of the research, on which the participants were consulted, collaboratively initiating the constructions of the tissues;
4. Both the participants and the researcher observed the importance of these general themes throughout the process of construction of the tissues without making judgments or problematizing them outside of their local context.

The transmission of this knowledge was a gift that we carefully kept them throughout the process, incorporating ethical parameters, culturally safe and linked to its principles to guarantee participants a reciprocal, egalitarian, responsible, dignified experience and integrated into their history, knowledge, and memories linked to the purpose of the meeting (Figure 2). The narratives, in the towns of the Sierra Nevada, refer to the transmission of knowledge by sharing the word, verbalizing facts, stories, myths, tales, songs, which are part of the culture of the communities, with the particularity that these narratives leave a moral in the listener. As Victor, one of the participants refers:

[...] when talking about a weave, it is not only the one that we see in any object, but the fabric of thought, which among other things, our thought is not even square, it is not rectangular but is shaped like a spiral, it is cyclical, it works, it goes, just as the Earth revolves around the sun, around the universe, this is how our thought revolves because that is how our spiritual parents raised us [...] (Victor).

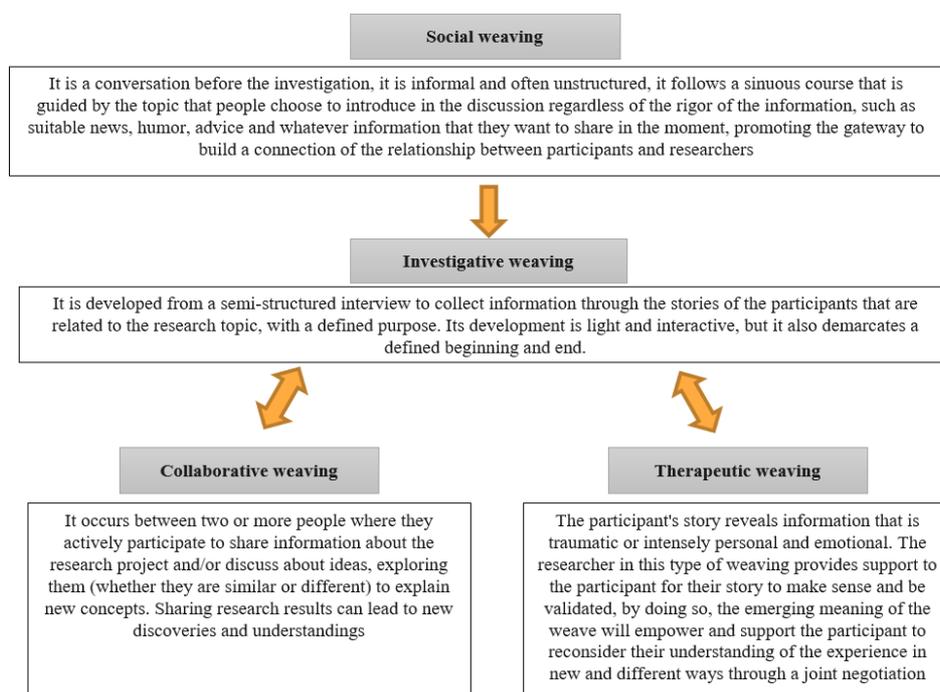


Figure 2. Methodological interpretation of the collaboration for the generation of data based on Barlo et al. (2020). **Source:** Made by the authors based on Barlo et al. (2020).

Results and discussion

The participants shared aspects of their experiences during the Bug pandemic, through dialogues that rescued the timelessness of ancestral knowledge and connection, jointly spinning two tissues made visible from the notion of health and the notion of death by the bug. All narratives maintain the originality of the discourse, including the original terms, suprasegmental and sociolinguistic characteristics of the indigenous community.

Thus, a first weave is presented, called *The struggle for the preservation of their intercultural health dynamics in times of pandemic*, in which the bug is evidenced as a message of learning, awareness, and resistance, understanding the impact it has generated in the territory as a physical space of spiritual and cultural connection. This process is linked to respect and tribute to the resources of Mother Nature as the first instance of self-care in the face of the pandemic and its implications in intercultural processes projected in the preventive health measures taken locally.

And a Second Weave called *Respect for the occupational processes that imply the death of indigenous people beyond the pandemic*, which contemplates the reflections of the participants about death in their territory as an instance of affirmation of life and ancestry, seen in the Funeral Rituals as the path of the Mortuary to reach the world called "Chundwa". This emphasizes the learning that the pandemic has given through the loss as an awareness of the ancestral legacy and the adaptations of the ancestral practices around the care of death by the bug.

First weave: The fight for the preservation of their dynamics of intercultural health in times of pandemic

Health from the worldview of indigenous communities is given by a balance or harmony from the interrelation of the community, the land, and physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual conditions (Fijal & Beagan, 2019). In particular, the Kankuama community has its Kankuamo Intercultural Health Model, in which health is based on the Law *Ley de Sé* or *Ley de Origen*, from an integral vision that especially involves the territory, nature, and the community, taking the health beyond the physical, to attribute collective and spiritual properties (Caballero, 2018). According to Wilcock (2006), their cultural elements are underlying determinants of health through doing. In the Kankuama Community, they are present in all the traditional and ancestral practices, activities, and occupations that identify them.

The history of the Kankuama community shows how other health determinants proposed by Wilcock (2006) such as changes in the [Mother Earth] ecosystem, political and economic interests, have generated effects on the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health of the Kankuama community. Some of the situations that have marked its history are:

[...] The Spaniards brought the virus a lot when they arrived at one time, black pox was one of the things, yellow fever, then the sexually transmitted diseases [...] and that was a hundred million, about 90 million died at that time of native and native indigenous people, that is why it is necessary to obey the orders from there and from here to there, as well as how to clean and wash [...] (Victor).

As a people, we have suffered many deaths from the pandemic of violence and now this silent virus has us all cowering so that death in this sense makes us uneasy and makes us think about how we are going to face it (Yidid).

As Restrepo mentioned, cited by Valtierra Zamudio & Illicachi Guzáy (2019),

[...] history is an identity that is continuously formed and transformed in how we are represented or challenged in the cultural systems that surround us because identity is defined historically and not biologically (Valtierra Zamudio & Illicachi Guznay, 2019, p. 5).

History is part of the cultural and collective identity of a people, it shows the learnings and struggles that built what they are, giving a sense of collectivity, in the interaction with others and with the environment, around specific realities social, political, cultural, economic, among others.

Ancestrality is a central element in the history and life of the Kankuama indigenous community. From the knowledge of the ancestors, the people understand the various realities they are faced with and manage to resignify their thoughts based on their experiences. Victor talks about the current health emergency, as an event that is also part of the life of the Kankuama community and the understanding that it has given him:

These cycles always repeat themselves, the earth heals, cleanses, the environment, the environment cleanses [...] From time to time, these phenomena come, we perceive it as advice (Victor).

The virus also represents a cycle, to which the Kankuama community has given its meaning and which has a mission in its history. It does not represent only a threat, but amid the difficulty and negative perceptions facing it, they find opportunities for Mother Earth to heal and to strengthen as a community. In this way, Victor makes a metaphor for the virus, exemplifying with everyday situations of his interest, how the very essence of the bug spreads like a seed that gives rise to life and is in charge of nature, to do the physical, mental and spiritual cleansing that they need:

As many things enter through the eyes, that chubby girl, that beautiful car enters through the eyes, that food that smells tasty enters through the nose [...] this man also enters through the nose, through the mouth, also from what he says, he is hearing what I say here in the Sierra [...] not be calling him so much and even do the distraction, even in the christening seed⁴ the more the Mamo say it, the more he comes, but he is fulfilling the order that is commanded. That little boy has a history of origin, that's how life was born, all that seed that is spoken negative and positive was born (Victor).

That one, that little one, that governs, nature was already suffocated, sick! Who makes her sick? We do! Then she, she was about to collapse and she said to herself: well, let's do something here, let's clean, then, of course, they do not care, those who believe themselves government do not care, then it will send (Victor referring to the virus as the government).

[...] I also saw that the families were not getting together, suddenly, there was no sharing in the house, sometimes or, for example, in the cities they did not even know how to cook a potato or cassava or rice, not even that. They didn't

⁴ Spiritual ceremony, to clean and recognize all the elements of nature.

even know where they put the dresses, the children's notebooks; So that also in the social sphere has allowed in one way or another that people, mother, and father, uncle, nephew meet, meet and talk about their daily lives, about life, to know the likes and dislikes of their children, of the daughters, that has also allowed that [...] It has allowed using more words, greetings, affection from the word, how did you wake up? How are you? (Victor).

However, it is necessary to recognize that Yidid questions and makes a personal reflection, which takes up the repercussion and accentuation that the spread of the virus brings with it in mainly socioeconomic terms, on the interest that people outside these communities have in taking advantage of their territories to generate personal wealth that does not benefit its inhabitants at all, regardless of the risk of their health, and even life, and blurring the cultural and spiritual value of the territory, considering it only a material resource of the which to profit from, and making the collective struggles of that space invisible (Garcia, 2013).

Before answering, I would like to specify that the indigenous peoples in Colombia think that this virus is used by foreigners as a lucrative business [...] manifested in the general fear of the virus causing terror and paralysis of the agenda of the Kankuamo people, the Kankuamos stigmatize that this virus is going to kill us and this is the end of the world, not allowing us to see exit strategies and dynamics that strengthen the safeguard of the Kankuamo people (Yidid).

Inevitably, the recognition of the new customs of human beings has been influenced by the responsibility of economic developments, and public policies that do not certify the reduction of inequalities, or safe social actions in times of pandemic (Malfitano et al., 2020). Both occupational awareness and decolonizing occupations discuss how the occupations of the colonizers are valued and their influence on the occupations of indigenous communities (Emery-Whittington & Maro, 2018; Ramugondo et al., 2017) that have implied changes in the environment and the loss of community values. Victor in detail exemplifies the impact on the natural world and ecosystem, linked to his daily life:

[...] nature has also felt calm from so much bustle, so much car whistle, so much factory smoke, motorcycle smoke, it has also been able to breathe and has allowed the plants to process and turn that air into negative-positive air [...] it has made people pause, the more they accelerate, the more oxygen we consume, the more energy we consume, also wearing out nature, that is, so much energy, so much energy, not only electrical energy; also the water, it has also been cleaned, they have left so much sancocho⁵ on the river bank, the sea, that you could see a lot of garbage and everything has been cleaned by breathing, the pause was good, it was good [...] (Victor).

⁵ Family custom of indigenous and non-indigenous people in which they make a soup made with meats, tubers, vegetables and condiments on the river bank.

Assuming the responsibility of caring for natural resources and the spirits that live there, needs to be conceived as a basic principle to promote balance and occupational relationships with the ecosystem. It is not only about continuing to follow biosafety protocols, such as washing hands if you are not aware of respect for water (Torres, 2020). There is no doubt that for indigenous communities, occupations are aligned with the natural world (Montaño, 2011). For Víctor and Diomedes, it is essential to rescue, in times of pandemic, the teaching of nature, to observe and understand the true message.

[...] strengthen that kind of reading, not only reading books but also reading nature and finding the hidden messages in stories, thus, everything is born from Mamo always says that looks for history, there it is all scientific knowledge, that is also scientific knowledge and we also must interpret it, understand it, understand it and listen to it [...] (Victor).

[...] you know that for the Kogis, it is hard to cry, that of us, that if we cry, but they very little. But look, he felt very strong and nature speaks against it, so look, but here already, according to the same tremor I know that it will come out that the tremor, strong, that said the rising of the Guatapurí river day before, then that, that is to be consulted to define well what happened (Diomedes).

The pandemic seems to be a call to reflect on those westernized and tax-appropriate ways of life to which the community has been compromised by the way of life of non-indigenous people. The recent transformation of the daily lives of human beings due to isolation and the lack of social and environmental contact (Malfitano et al., 2020) also creates a new opportunity for indigenous communities to ratify the importance of their original practices and ancestral knowledge (Ávila & Guereña, 2020).

In the same way, the territory has a symbolic and spiritual, individual and collective value for indigenous peoples, which is why it is part of their identity as people and peoples, it represents what they are and will be, as mentioned by Bonnemaïson & Cambrézi cited by Kolling & Silvestri (2019). When a community is dispossessed of its territory, there is a risk that it will disappear. However, the current health emergency has accentuated inequity in health care in various ways, particularly in rural areas and vulnerable population groups, as expressed by Víctor:

It has also allowed the animals to rescue their territory a little, to return to their territory, they still remember the paths where their ancestors walked, so it has allowed them that, to arrive and visit and also remember where they lived and yearn, yearn that life so calm [...] (Victor).

The Kankuamo people, faced with this devastating reality, have to continue taking care of themselves and preventing the virus to avoid the maximum process of death. But this reality also allows us to have a panorama and to anticipate strategies that safeguard the right to mourning since the relationship between the territory and the life of indigenous communities has been blurred due to the structural deficit that forces people with the virus

to come out of their Territory has implications on a physical, social, spiritual and mental level, as expressed by Victor and Yidid:

[...] I had the experience of my mother, (prolonged silence) and she prepared herself, she was already aware and said not to take her out of her territory, not to take her to die that she saw that this was torture, that is, she died with joy because she was here (Victor).

[...] people who enter the healthcare center for another reason, in cases of death, are treated as the cause of death by the virus. This implies that we must prepare in addition to a legal battle so that they deliver the result of the virus examination, the death certificate, and the non-cremated body [...] the Spiritual Parents have indicated that when a person is born; the navel and the placenta are sown, likewise, when the person dies, they must return to the mother's womb that guarantees the strengthening of the ancestral territory and provides the strength of the sacred sites in the black line, our bodies are the food of payments for our ancestors guide us in the future of the Kankuamo People (Yidid).

Wilcock (cited by Rojas et al., 2011) affirms that occupation stems from the interaction between doing with being and becoming. Doing refers to the opportunities or restrictions of an individual or group that meet her interests, and to that extent will have a positive or negative impact on health. For the Kankuamo people, the main interest, that is, becoming, is the balance between life and nature, which is achieved through various practices, mainly payment. In this regard, Yidid comments that:

[...] when the person dies, he must return to the mother's womb that guarantees the strengthening of the ancestral territory and provides the strength of the sacred sites in the [...] is the food of payments so that our ancestors guide us in the coming of the Kankuamo People (Yidid).

These practices are also related to errors or faults towards Divine Mother Nature and her demands, as well as not abiding by the rules, which allow us to regain that harmony. Concerning this Diomedes shares that:

[...] it will be necessary, what if it comes is that in the case of the Kogis have to make a very big confession, big that is, to consult in the ezhuamas⁶ what happened, that caused that life to be lost and look at what failure, suddenly there was a failure of a Mamo because he did not tell him how he had to take care of himself or he did not comply with the order (Diomedes).

[...] you have to collect some elements of nature, elements that are collected in the lagoons especially and in the sea to do that, and then, it is done as the cleaning of that, there you start talking about all the diseases, when cleaning all that, to confess, if it is possible to confess also for him, what the bad guy did,

⁶ Sacred space to order the life of human beings

that also falls to the family (Diomedes speaking about the death of the governing council of the Kogi people José de los Santos Sauna)

Spirituality also identified as the representation of the true personal essence that connects all living beings as an expression of their nature (Egan & Delaat, 1994) is integrated with the vision of territory as a spiritual and sacred language in the community, which rooted in all ancestral practices and traditional activities. It has strengthened the collective construction of beliefs and values with a sense of meaning in each member linked to nature and the universe (Tse et al., 2005). Concerning elements linked to spirituality in the death process, Victor and Yidid share that:

[...] where the story says that one goes to Chundwa⁷, from where one leaves, Gonabindwa⁸ and passes to that dimension, to another dimension the spiritual dimension, so it has allowed us to reflect today (Victor).

Emotional life, with only one person dying from the virus, causes disharmony in the Kankuamo population (Yidid).

In the process of guaranteeing the health of the Kankuamo people from all the elements mentioned above, the National Authority of the Colombian Indigenous Government with the objective of "contributing to the making of timely and pertinent decisions by the Traditional Authorities, which are acting in Own Right for the protection of territories and communities, as well as social and ethnic organizations" created a support network with cooperation entities and government institutions to concentrate efforts that guarantee the continuity of the integrity of the 115 Indigenous Peoples and Nations during the pandemic (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia, 2020).

Therefore, the specialized health program proposed to work and adjust to the needs of indigenous peoples, state health insurance and services, and the adaptation of national legislation to cultural needs and procedures, including the training health agents given the problems that are identified in health matters, such as discrimination against members of the indigenous community in the provision of state health services and the search for traditional medical knowledge. In this way, Victor and Yidid highlighted the importance of continuing with health care as prevention of contagion and a possible increase in deaths:

[...] it has allowed one to be more careful about hygiene and that is important, and you have to abide by that rule, you know that this is the case, so wash your hands, if you look, you can see that when you do a job here in one of the kankurus⁹ used to send him to wash his hand as to clean and that dirty one will not remain (Victor).

The Kankuamo people, faced with this devastating reality, only have to continue taking care of and preventing the virus to avoid the maximum process

⁷ Place and spiritual space, where one passes to the other life

⁸ Sacred mountain in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada

⁹ Sacred ceremonial house

of death. But this reality also allows us to have an overview and anticipate strategies that safeguard the right to mourning (Yidid).

From the guidance of spiritual parents for cases with mild symptoms, they recommend using natural antibiotics such as garlic, wormwood, onion, turmeric, eucalyptus, oregano, rosemary, aloe, dandelion, nettle, cat's claw, echinacea, ginger, lemon, honey, propolis, and apple cider vinegar (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia, 2020). Yidid and Diomedes expressed it since this traditional medicine starts from the Law of origin, avoiding as much as possible, assistance to medical centers far from their shelters:

[...] some communities have decided to prevent and treat only with traditional medicine and not go to health centers (Yidid).

At this time, as I told you, a case of those had not occurred, this is a novelty (denoting concern) so it is going to start consulting now, first what happened with that situation, second that it will be faced to that panorama because the Mamos, what they think is that how the methodology that has always existed here is changed if that is from the origin [...]. (Diomedes).

When services are provided in an intercultural context, a deep understanding of people's underlying beliefs and desires, their worldviews, and their human and non-human relationships is needed as part of understanding how services might respond to these needs. Unfortunately, at the epidemiological level, it is recognized that the increase in chronic diseases and mortality rates affect the indigenous population more compared to the non-indigenous (Shahid et al., 2018).

Learning about intercultural health and its inseparability from social conditions (Hammell, 2020) is transversal to the spiritual message of all beings in the natural world, history, territory, nature, and spirituality as central axes, preserving its language through respect and conservation of ancestral occupations to guarantee that right to their health practices, which guarantees the care of their community in life and death.

Second Weave: Respect for the occupational processes that imply the death of indigenous people beyond the pandemic

Death presupposes an inherent culmination of human existence. In the case of indigenous communities, it represents only the culmination of the physical presence on the earthly plane of a world called earth, since from there a new life begins, in the which is lived only on a spiritual plane, as Yidid mentions:

In the spiritual life for the Kankuamo people, death is perceived as the meeting of the earthly with the spiritual, the funeral ceremonies have great value of harmony in the relationship between the Kankuamo man and the Divine Mother Nature (Yidid).

Thus, before this, they must carry out a series of activities determined from the Law of Origin, to start a full spiritual life when the earthly life ends, in which the care of mother earth represents to a great extent a fundamental part of this life process. The daily life then is related to the life project of the community where the occupations are closely related to the territory. Diomedes exemplifies the above and reflects on a lived situation:

So look, for example, in the case of Mr. Juan and he is there, because he was strongly sought out with the Mamos of the basins and they contributed so that he still resisted [...] he controlled himself but he could no longer, and there he has to resign himself because precisely death is also life, so we have thought for a long time that no, that death is a disaster is a horrible thing that does not make sense, but we here in the Sierra do because he will continue working from there [...] (Diomedes).

The above, in the words of Kolling & Silvestri (2019, p. 213) refers to that territory as "a space for survival and reproduction of a people, where culture takes place, where the world was created, where ancestors rest", is a sacred space where life is linked to the earth and is part of being; of course, they are spaces where positive and negative aspects take place and that must be corrected through traditional work¹⁰.

Such works that the community undertake as healing activities to support any loss, pain, and trauma experiences, reestablish the connections between the natural human and non-human life weaves. Through ritual that the walking of the spirit literally and metaphorically connects, traveling the path and the sacred spaces to represent, remember and present their earthly life, allowing in these ritualized practices to include material goods and more valued possessions (Do Rozario, 1998). Diomedes details his recent experience at the mortuary after the passing of a community leader:

[...] That has not changed, nor is it going to change because that has been the case from the beginning, when a person dies here passes to another life to another state, and there what is done is mortuary, and mortuary is not immediately, that is consulted, here it has always been seen that everything that the person has left out there is collected, thinking about everything that he has done, and then the Mamos consult when the mortuary can be done and some elements that must be collected are collected in different parts of the territory after they are collected, the work is done and they begin to confess everything that person did, how he was, that he liked, that [...] is delicate, from tomorrow it is that is going to be consulted, they have already sent the message from there that you have to work 9 days and 9 nights, and the jobs to be done have to be new, they have to start from now on in the distance) [...] (Diomedes).

The Mamos facilitate this interpretation of the death of the person and the influence in the earthly world with families and communities, and they support the

¹⁰ Practice that is done to pay from the thought for different reasons.

passage of the brother to the next spiritual level called "Chundwa", as Diomedes emphasizes:

[...] Mortuary is important because there in that I confess the Mamos listen to the woman to the children who are the ones who are the most intertwined, so this does not happen, this, this, so the idea is to consult, then you have to work this so that he gets there let's say he won't get there so affected because here already, let's say the state, that he passes to the other life, that he arrives at a place here called "Chundwa", Chundwa is as if out of heaven for us, as here in Christianity that says that it goes to heaven then here it goes to chundwa and there in chundwa then the other life begins (Diomedes).

Thus, the responsibility of being a Mamo or Saga, among many others, prevails the example exercised from the experience of the person, their role as a spiritual guide because in addition to leading a life in harmony with Mother Nature, they are the ones who receive the messages directly from the sacred sites, from the spiritual parents and they are in charge of transmitting it to the community. It is the mother herself who collects the actions carried out outside the guidelines of the Law of Origin, which is exemplified in what Diomedes mentioned.

[...] in the cases of the Mamos, the elderly almost always die from an improper act that they should not do [...] spirituality here in the Sierra is quite delicate, if a Mamo has been working in a part and leaves his guidelines may run the risk that he dies, that he dies or a close relative dies, with that he pays that is a way of paying that the mother charges him if she does not leave him with a situation and he can no longer do more anything (Diomedes).

Social and emotional well-being may be an appropriate concept to use when considering the role, responsibilities, and occupations of elderly people in the dying process. Their roles and responsibilities reflect how important their participation in occupations of grief and pain is, as they continue to transmit knowledge to the family and the community. For this reason, the arrival of the bug to the Kankuamo peoples has reinforced the reflection on the knowledge of the life cycle and the appropriation of knowledge around the non-permanence in the earthly world of the guardians of wisdom, being the responsibility of the following generations lower the barriers that prevent their participation in the tasks and responsibilities of the legacy (Gibson, 2020). This can be seen in what Yidid mentioned:

The most vulnerable population corresponds to our elders, knowledgeable about ancestral knowledge. The future of the Kankuamo people is uncertain once the strength we have in ancestral indigenous culture and wisdom is lost (Yidid).

These characters are the most esteemed members of the culture for all the applied cultural knowledge and the guardians of the wisdom of the legacy, in them the trust, hope, and continuity of the present and future of ancestral practices rest (Do Rozario, 1998). Considering the adaptation processes due to the virus and its health implications, Yidid mentioned that:

Not having contact with the body is an emotional blockage that we must heal and harmonize not only, but with the help of the greatest knowledge of the tradition, because a healing strategy is to face reality with visualization and contact (Yidid).

Awareness of death appears to involve specific occupational choices, both for people who are dying in the community and for those around them. Before the pandemic, they prepared for their death, actively participating in accompanying the disease with traditional practices and organizing funeral rituals. As Pollard refers: "Although dying may not be seen as an occupation, clearly people attribute the event of death an intense occupational significance" (Pollard, 2006, p.151). About those occupational processes around death, Yidid and Victor shared that:

Social life, because the funeral ceremonies despite the feelings of pain and sadness for the loss of the loved one, this moment in normal conditions allows the reunion of indigenous Kankuamos brothers and sisters who for multiple reasons have not been able to see each other, the reunion from family and friends to offer condolences, to catch up on everything that has happened, but today during the virus social reunion is not allowed, the embrace of solidarity and condolences leaving a void and a tasteless in the relatives and even more, the mourners (Yidid).

That is complicated, (silence) a person even though he can't be there, let's say you can't be on top of him, later on, you have to do that to him. What has changed suddenly is that at the moment you cannot be with the corpse, look at what happened with Lucia anyway they brought her here and the wake was held [...] (Diomedes).

The importance of symbolic and material exchanges has been made invisible by processes of homogenization and power, which has had an important influence on the construction of identity and, therefore, loss of occupational meaning (Trujillo et al., 2011). The spaces for reflection and company around the family when a person leaves, suppose dialogues that strengthen intercultural ties between the families of the Sierra Nevada. Yidid affirmed the following:

Political life, if we continue to allow death their funeral ceremonies to change due to the context of the virus, we consider that the autonomy and the exercises of self-government that the Kankuamos indigenous people have is in danger (Yidid).

The reconnection between the community and its tribal properties during the pandemic is relevant to strengthen their occupations linked to mourning processes linked to the expression of real meaning about the complexity of the relationship between people and the natural environment (McNeill, 2016).

Final Considerations

The results of this research study should be seen as a contribution to history and cross-cultural dialogue, to deepen the understanding of indigenous communities about the culturally appropriate understanding of this health emergency through approaches from their feelings. Also, in front of the occupations as mediators of the meetings between the

socio-cultural, spiritual, and ecological systems with the virus, in addition to making territorial management and local organization visible as a decolonial commitment to preventive care, curative care, and palliative care.

Considering this broad and holistic attitude towards health and good living, occupational therapy can learn, support, and give voice to the intercultural dynamics of Colombian indigenous health through new collaborative weaves that favor the identity and occupational awareness also of good dying, understood from the timelessness, harmony, and ancestry of these populations.

Learned lessons

This study does not represent the opinions of all indigenous Colombians. It was an enriching meeting that corresponds to a specific people and a specific moment, being relevant to approach from collective and respectful learning to the indigenous occupational conceptions of other communities affected by the pandemic. The methodological process is also affected, being a challenge to execute a dynamic approach with the participants from a distance and to adopt a listening and observation posture throughout the research development process, outside of tangible and physically concrete space. Therefore, each narrative and construction of the weaves were respected and appreciated, identifying that it is a first approach to the methodology and the community from the professional category.

Therefore, this is not a finished work, it requires continuing to be discussed and thought about the transformation of the virus and the transmission mechanisms, the traditional care measures adopted and the local and regional health partners to find other weaves that suddenly escaped the perceptions and learning of the researchers.

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Author's contributions

VMLP carried out the conception, writing, organization of sources, and analysis of the text data. DKCP and BDMC wrote the text, organization of sources, and analysis of the data, MMAO carried out the writing, collection, and analysis of the data. LM guided the work and final review of the text. YRM, VSAA, and DRAA participated in the data analysis and approval of the final text. All authors approved the final version of the text.

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