ISSN:
3091-1796
Vol. 4 No. 10 PP. 202-215

DOI:
https://doi.org/10.56519/drsy6s45
Agosto 2026

LA MEDIACIÓN COMO MEDIO ALTERNATIVO EN LA SOLUCIÓN DE CONFLICTOS
MEDIATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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Fecha de recepción: 14/07/2026 / Fecha de aceptación: 15/08/2026 / Fecha de publicación: 25/08/2026

RESUMEN: El sistema de justicia ordinario ecuatoriano, con una alta carga procesal y presupuestal para el Estado, se ha convertido en un sistema anacrónico e ineficiente a la hora de ofrecer respuestas oportunas a sus ciudadanos ante sus demandas de justicia. Frente a esta problemática, la mediación, con procesos más simples, se presenta como una urgente y necesaria respuesta para el acceso, desde la voluntad y aprobación de los conflictuados, a la solución pronta y oportuna de sus controversias. El objetivo de esta investigación persigue precisamente, determinar la influencia de la mediación como procedimiento eficaz en la solución de conflictos en el sistema de justicia ecuatoriano y su repercusión sobre su carga procesal. La metodología aplicada tuvo un enfoque mixto, documental, descriptivo, cualitativo no experimental y cuantitativo analítico, sustentado en la recopilación y revisión de normas jurídicas (Constitución, Ley de Arbitraje y Mediación, COGEP, entre otras), artículos científicos, libros, tesis y estadísticas secundarias del Consejo de la Judicatura. Los resultados de la presente investigación muestran que la mediación como método alternativo en la solución de conflictos está amparada en el ordenamiento jurídico ecuatoriano por la Constitución y la ley y se puede aplicar en diferentes materias y asuntos transigibles. No obstante, la normativa no delimita expresamente los ámbitos de procedencia de la mediación, por lo que se requiere trabajar en su delimitación con una data dinámica unificada y actualizada en tiempo real. Se recomienda promover y fortalecer los mecanismos de mediación mediante políticas públicas, difusión institucional y capacitación especializada para consolidar su utilización como vía preferente de solución de conflictos.

Palabras clave: Mediación, métodos alternativos de solución de conflictos, acceso a la justicia, carga procesal, justicia ecuatoriana

ABSTRACT: The Ecuadorian ordinary justice system, burdened by a high procedural and budgetary load for the State, has become an anachronistic and inefficient system

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ISSN: 3091-1796
Vol. 4 No. 10 PP. 202-215
DOI: https://doi.org/10.56519/wt5jt088
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in providing timely responses to citizens' demands for justice. Faced with this problem, mediation, with its simpler processes, emerges as an urgent and necessary solution, enabling access to prompt and timely resolution of disputes based on the will and approval of the parties involved. The objective of this research is precisely to determine the influence of mediation as an effective conflict resolution procedure within the Ecuadorian justice system and its impact on its procedural workload. The methodology employed a mixed-methods approach, combining documentary, descriptive, non-experimental qualitative, and analytical quantitative methods. This approach was based on the compilation and review of legal norms (Constitution, Arbitration and Mediation Law, COGEP, among others), scientific articles, books, theses, and secondary statistics from the Council of the Judiciary. The results of this research show that mediation as an alternative dispute resolution method is protected under Ecuadorian law by the Constitution and other legislation and can be applied to various matters and issues subject to negotiation. However, the regulations do not explicitly define the scope of mediation, thus requiring further work to delimit it using unified, dynamic, and real-time updated data. It is recommended that mediation mechanisms be promoted and strengthened through public policies, institutional outreach, and specialized training to consolidate its use as the preferred method for conflict resolution.

Keywords: ***Mediation, alternative dispute resolution, access to justice, procedural burden, the Ecuadorian justice system***

INTRODUCTION

Humanity needs to coexist in harmony in the different activities we carry out; However, we are constantly in disputes and conflicts, many of which, in order to find justice, undergo complex and economically, socially and psychologically exhausting legal processes, in the midst of an anachronistic, collapsed, ineffective system, with a high procedural burden and a high budget burden for the State. Faced with this problem, mediation, with shorter, direct and simpler processes, is presented as an urgent and necessary response for access, based on the will and approval of the conflicted parties, to the prompt and timely solution of their disputes, with rapid access to justice and the effective protection of their rights, with agreements that constitute enforceable sentences with the force of res judicata.

When addressing mediation and reviewing its origins, we see that this legal institution is not new, we have found it since ancient times, so in Greece it was known by the name “mesiteuontes”. The publication The Pioneers of Mediation takes us to ancient Rome, mentioning that mediation was also used there, and at this time they already had “judices pacis” (justices of the peace) in their legal system. In Ecuador, through Supreme Decree No. 735 published in the Official Registry No. 90 of October 28, 1963, the Commercial Arbitration Law was promulgated, which became the first Special Law for the resolution of conflicts between merchants of the time. During the government of Fabián Alarcón, the Arbitration and Mediation Law, currently in force, was published in the Official Registry No. 145 of September 4, 1997, and which incorporates mediation

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into Ecuadorian regulations as a conflict resolution procedure, recognizing a neutral third party as a mediator, who seeks voluntary agreements on transmissible matters, of an extrajudicial nature and which puts an end to a conflict, as established in its Art. 43 “Mediation is a procedure of conflict resolution by which the parties, assisted by a neutral third party called a mediator, seek a voluntary agreement, which deals with transmissible matters, of an extrajudicial and definitive nature, that puts an end to the conflict. In the Official Registry No. 417 of December 14, 2006, Codification 014 of the Arbitration and Mediation Law is issued, which repeals the Commercial Arbitration Law issued in 1963, its application regulations were promulgated in the government of Guillermo Lasso through Executive Decree No. 165 published in the Official Registry No. 524 of August 26, 2021, First Supplement.(1) (2) (3) (4)

With this brief historical review, this research, in its first objective, analyzes the current regulations on mediation in Ecuador; and thus we have that, from the Constitution of the Republic, it is recognized as a peaceful and consensual way to resolve disputes, its Art. 190 states "Arbitration, mediation and other alternative procedures for the resolution of conflicts are recognized. These procedures will be applied subject to the law, in matters in which due to their nature they can be compromised...", Likewise, the Arbitration and Mediation Law in its articles 44 and 45 establish the requirements, subjects of mediation and the entities before which must be appealed by requesting the establishment of hearings, recognizing mediation centers and authorized independent mediators, with the capacity to mediate as neutral third parties in transmissible matters. The Regulations to the Law in its Art. 1 shield the Arbitration and Mediation Centers with the principles of independence and autonomy, stating that they are not subject to a provision or authority that seeks to undermine their powers, exercise control or interfere in their functions; Therefore, the parties in conflict enjoy the freedom to compromise and reach agreements with their sole voluntary acceptance of everything that the law authorizes them to do.

For its part, the Organic Code of the Judicial Function recognizes in its article 17 Arbitration and Mediation as a form of public service of administration of justice and within the jurisdictional powers established in its Art. 130 grants judges in its number 11, the possibility that the parties can conciliate and agree on everything that the law allows them, therefore, if actor and defendant If they consider it pertinent, the judge, at the appropriate procedural moment, will refer the case to a Mediation Center recognized by the Judicial Council, whose effect after signing the mediation record is the solution of the conflict in dispute and the motivation for the resolution of the definitive file of the case. In matters of childhood and adolescence, Ecuadorian regulations allow mediation, respecting the inalienable rights of the child or adolescent as established in articles 294 and 295 of the Code of Children and Adolescence.

In its second specific objective, to determine the impact of mediation in the ordinary justice system, quantitative analyzes were carried out based on information contained and reflected by the Judiciary Council on its informative web pages.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research methodology

This research was carried out under a mixed modality methodology, which combines non-experimental qualitative documentary analysis with secondary quantitative-statistical analysis. Based on non-experimental qualitative documentary analysis, an analysis of the current regulatory framework applicable to mediation is examined and carried out with a brief historical synthesis of this institution. From the quantitative approach, the research has an analytical nature supported by the description and interpretation of secondary statistical data published by the Judicial Council of Ecuador, which made it possible to evaluate the impact of mediation in reducing the procedural burden of the ordinary justice system in the period between 2019 and 2025. The articulation between both approaches made it possible not only to describe and analyze the regulatory and institutional framework of mediation; but also, contrast its application with empirical evidence from official sources.

Population and sample

The population under study constituted current legal norms regarding mediation, academic literature (articles, magazines, theses and books with a scientific basis) and statistical and institutional records of the Judicial Council of Ecuador. The sample was selected through intentional non-probabilistic sampling, prioritizing those sources directly linked to the object of study, updated and with verifiable academic and institutional rigor, specialized in mediation as an alternative method of conflict resolution.

Research environment

The research was developed in a documentary and bibliographic environment using secondary sources of a legal nature. The main data sources and tools used are summarized in the following:

- Specialized academic databases such as Scielo, Google Scholar.
- Current regulations applicable to the institution of mediation.
- Management reports, statistics portals and information pages published by the Judicial Council of Ecuador, which served as the basis for the preparation of descriptive tables and statistical graphs.
- University institutional repositories.

The selection of these sources was based on the following criteria:

- Linkage, timeliness and relevance in the approach of the institution of mediation as an alternative means of conflict resolution.
- Verifiable academic and institutional support and rigor.
- Reliability and specialization.

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These sources allowed access to reliable and updated information about the institution of mediation as an alternative method of conflict resolution in Ecuador.

Collection of information

The collection of information was structured in two complementary levels:

First, the current and applicable regulatory framework was examined, made up of the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, the Arbitration and Mediation Law of 1997 and its Codification of 2006, its subsequent reforms, Code Organic of the Judicial Function and the Code of Children and Adolescents.

Secondly, indexed academic and documentary sources were used, including scientific articles published in specialized journals, degree theses available in university institutional repositories. Additionally, sources of a statistical and institutional nature were incorporated, such as management reports, statistics portals and information pages published by the Judicial Council of Ecuador, corresponding to the different centers and mediation matters.

RESULTS

Once the regulatory framework that supports mediation has been analyzed, regarding its application, it indicates that it proceeds in transmissible matters, without specifying them; However, the National Mediation Center of the Judicial Function in Ecuador, on its website, refers to the matters on which a compromise must be made; and based on which in this article, the following table has been prepared that details the subjects and their transmissible issues, as well as the type of procedure to be applied in each topic. (See Table 1.)

Table 1. Transmissible subjects.

SUBJECT	SUBJECT	No. SUBJECTS	PROCEDURE
FAMILY	• Food • Visitation regime • Tenancy for divorce by mutual consent without opposition • Food for older people • Food for pregnant women • Consistent and/or necessary foods • Voluntary division of inheritance assets by mutual agreement • Liquidation of the marital partnership by mutual agreement	8	SD
	• Liquidation of the marital partnership with opposition	3	DJ

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	• Tenure with opposition • Voluntary division of inheritance assets with opposition		
TENANCY	• Vacancy of property • Return of guarantee • Breach of contract • Payment of rental fees	4	SD
LABOR	• Payroll settlement • Employer retirements • Form of late salary payments • Partial or hourly remuneration • Overtime or supplementary hours • Bonuses and profits • Compensation	7	SD
TRANSIT	• Traffic referrals regarding violations without the result of death or serious injury that causes permanent disability, loss or disablement of any organ.	1	SD
CIVIL	• Demarcation of boundaries • Easements • Replacement of Boundaries • Accountability • Partition and allocation of civil society assets • Inventory • Bankruptcy • Breach of contract • Debt collection • Compensation for damages	10	SD
	• Vindicatory action, • Possessory protection • Acquisitive prescription of ownership • Moral Damage • Execution of judgment of mediation record • Execution of judgment of transactional record • Execution of judgment of arbitration award • Execution of mortgage judgment	8	DJ
SOCIAL OR NEIGHBORHOOD COEXISTENCE	• Small amounts of damages • Formula for payment of arrears rates • Respect for rules of community coexistence and/or use of communal areas	4	SD

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	• Damage caused to private property by animals domestic or breeding.		
ADOLESCENTS IN CONFLICTS WITH THE LAW	Comply with the provisions of articles 345 and 348-c of the Organic Code of Children and Adolescence. Adolescent offenders	1	DJ
CONSUMERS AND USERS	• Payment for basic services • Claims about quality of goods • Claims for misleading advertising • Claims for poor quality of services	4	SD
PUBLIC PROCUREMENT	• Breach of contract • Fines • Declaration of early termination of contract	3	SD
TAX	Comply with the requirements stipulated in articles 56.6 and 56.7 of the Law Organic for Economic Development and Fiscal Sustainability after the Covid-19 Pandemic, in accordance with article 119 of the Organic Tax Code; as well as, with the provisions of paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of article 25 of the Regulations to the Organic Law for Economic Development and Fiscal Sustainability after the Covid-19 Pandemic, and other related current legal regulations.		

Source: National Mediation Center of the Judicial Function (10 – 19)

Note: SD = Direct request; DJ = Judicial Derivation

Of the matters transmissible in mediation and indicated in the table above and considering also that each matter contains one or more matters susceptible to mediation (except for tax matters in which the National Mediation Center does not specify matters and procedure); We have that, of the 53 topics subject to mediation contained in the different transmissible matters, 41 of them, that is, 77.36%, can be requested directly by the parties or one of them; while 12, representing 22.64%, are due to judicial referral DJ.

It is important to highlight that in civil matters of 18 matters susceptible to mediation, 10 of these can be carried out with the direct request procedure SD and 8 with judicial referral DJ; In family matters, of 11 transmissible matters, 8 proceed with a direct request SD and 3 with judicial referral DJ; Considering that, adding civil and family matters, these concentrate 54.71% of the matters that, being transmissible, can be resolved through mediation.

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The Ecuadorian justice system to meet the demand for solutions to conflicts transmissible through mediation, has at the national level with 229 mediation centers approved by the Plenary and the General Directorate of the Council of the Judiciary, according to the information published by this public entity as of April 24, 2026, which are distributed in different provinces; and, some of them, such as the case of the mediation center of the Judicial Function, maintains 141 offices open in most of the cities of the country according to the information published by the Council of the Judiciary through its website as of August 11, 2025. These mediation centers in Ecuador have been experiencing sustained growth over time and that for the period between 2019 and 2024 has meant an increase in 126%; and if we consider that, according to the information published by the Judiciary Council as of April 24, 2026, it registers 229 approved mediation centers nationwide, we would then have an increase of 172% for the last seven years taking into account the same base year 2019. (See Figure 1.)

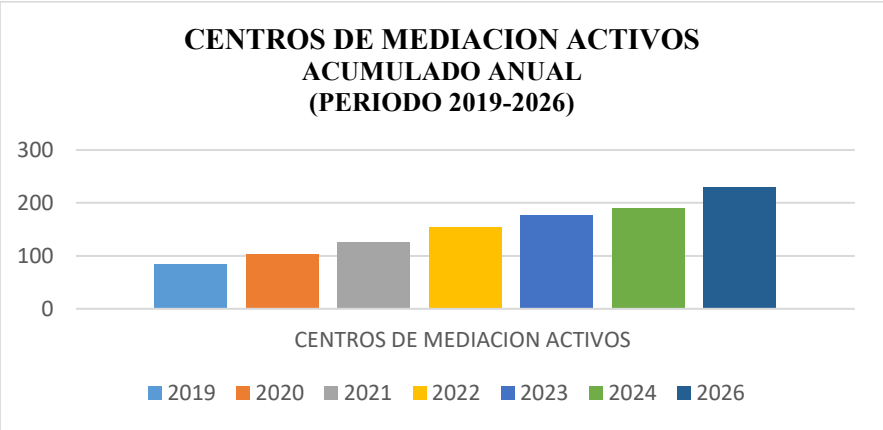


Figure 1. Annual accumulation of active mediation centers

Sources: Judicial Council of Ecuador, National Directorate of Access to Justice Services (20); Council of the Judiciary of Ecuador. Judicial Council (21 – 22).

Regarding the requests entered at the national level for the provision of the mediation service, the information provided by the Judicial Council through its website and which contain direct requests, judicial referrals and referrals in transit; We have that, for the period between the years 2019-2024, these have experienced a growing curve with the exception of the year 2020 where we have a decrease of 31.72%, a trend that is reversed between the years 2021 to 2023 where there is an average growth of 15.97%; between 2023 and 2024 there is a slight decrease of 0.3%. For the year 2025, mediation requests total 34,386 with the consideration that these correspond to information published until July 2025. These trends demonstrate the degree of incidence of the institution of mediation within the justice system of Ecuador, directly impacting the decongestion of its procedural load. (See Figure 2.)

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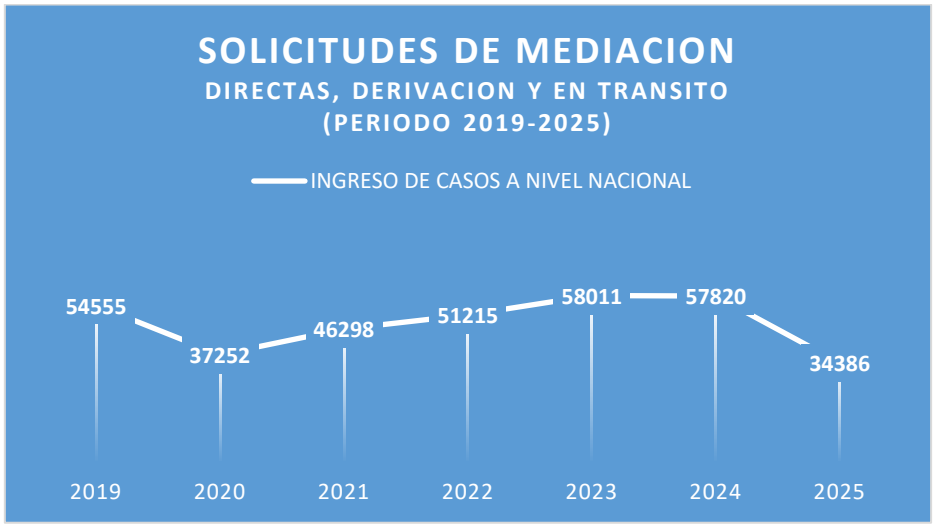


Figure 2. Mediation requests

Source: Judicial Council of Ecuador, National Mediation Center of the Judicial Function (23)

Regarding the hearings installed in relation to the cases presented for mediation in the period 2019-2025, We have a growing trend with the exception of 2020; Thus, we have that, for the year 2021, the percentage of installed audiences is 65%, 2022 68%, 2023 and 2024 71% and 2025 73% with an annual average of installed audiences between the years 2021-2025 of 69.6%. (See Figure 3.)

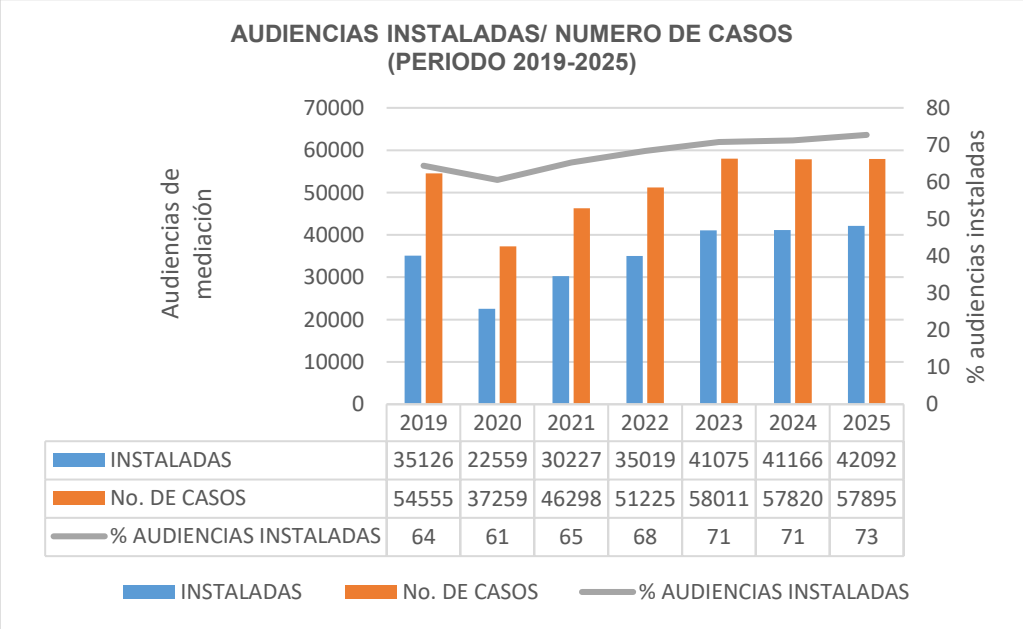


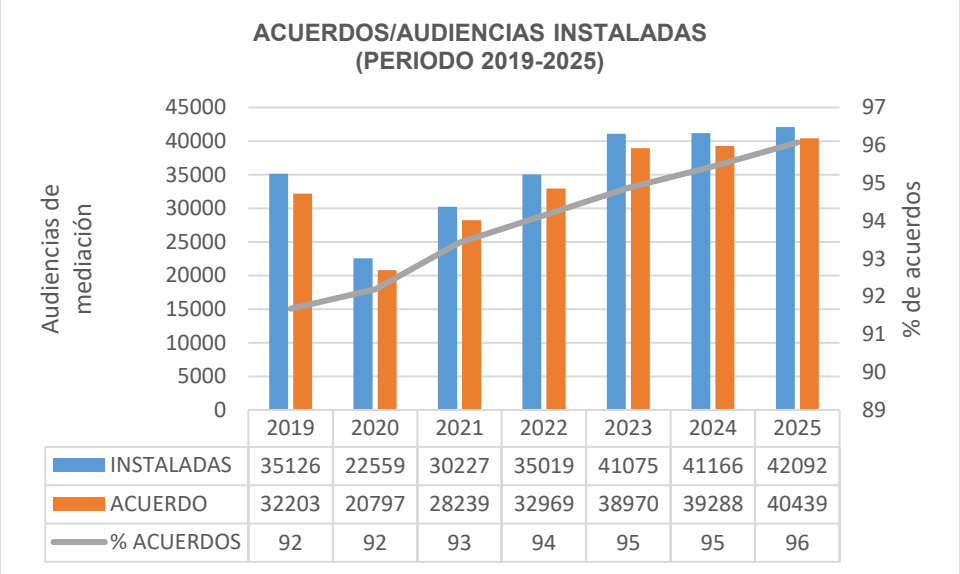
Figure 3. Hearings installed/number of cases

Source: Judicial Council of Ecuador. Judicial Statistics Portal (24)

From the agreements reached in mediation in relation to the installed hearings, we have that for the period 2019-2025 there is a growing trend in all these years; Thus, in the years 2019 and 2020 the percentage of agreements reached in relation to the number

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of installed audiences is 92%, for 2021 93%, 2022 94%, 2023 95%, 2024 95% and 2025 96%, with an annual average of agreements reached in this period of 93.86%; and that involves the solution to conflicts that may have added to the procedural burden of the ordinary justice system, but were resolved through mediation in a faster and more efficient manner. (See Figure 4.)



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
INSTALADAS	35126	22559	30227	35019	41075	41166	42092
ACUERDO	32203	20797	28239	32969	38970	39288	40439
% ACUERDOS	92	92	93	94	95	95	96

Figure 4. Agreements reached through mediation/installed hearings

Source: Judicial Council of Ecuador. Judicial Statistics Portal (24)

DISCUSSION

In this research work, the results obtained show that mediation as an alternative method in conflict resolution is protected in the Ecuadorian legal system by the Constitution and the law and can be applied in different subjects and transmissible matters.

Its endorsement in article 190, together with its development in the Arbitration and Mediation Law, shows that it is not an accessory route, but rather a legal institution fully incorporated into the system of administration of justice. In that sense, mediation responds to the principles of speed, procedural economy and effective access to justice. Patricia Balbuena, author of the article (Justice does not have a woman's face), finds two meanings of the concept of access to justice, pointing it out as “The right of every person to go to the justice system (formal and alternative) and obtain an adequate response”; and, “The duty of the State to provide a public service that complies with the guiding principles of continuity, adaptability of the service, equality, speed, and free of charge.” (5)

Mediation has legal force but its essence lies in voluntariness; And then a question arises: What makes an individual or community oppose solving their conflicts through peace and harmony? Dragging them into complex legal conflict in the search for justice

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.56519/wt5jt088
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and satisfaction of their interests and demands; The answers could have different meanings, but probably all have the same common denominator, which lies in the lack of cultural persuasion regarding the benefits of applying mediation. According to Francisco Javier Gorjón Gómez "persuasion identifies and highlights people's needs and desires and focuses on achieving trust." It is imperative, therefore, socially to move towards the culturalization of peaceful alternative methods of conflict resolution through the identification of reliable responses to constantly evolving individual and social needs and desires. (6)

From a functional perspective, the findings show that mediation contributes to judicial decongestion by allowing early resolution of disputes without the need to exhaust an ordinary process. This is particularly important in a context of high procedural burden, in which self-composition mechanisms represent ideal responses to optimize public resources, reduce processing times and strengthen effective access to justice. Consequently, mediation not only resolves specific conflicts, but also produces a favorable institutional impact on the public justice service.

Likewise, the voluntary, extrajudicial and definitive nature of the mediation record reinforces its legal effectiveness. The possibility of judicially demanding compliance in the event of non-compliance confirms that the agreement reached does not constitute a simple informal understanding, but rather an act endowed with binding force and executive capacity. This feature strengthens legal security and explains why mediation can be considered an ideal mechanism for the protection of rights in disputes that can be settled.

On the other hand, the legal delimitation of the matters in which mediation proceeds demonstrates that the Ecuadorian legislator has sought to balance the autonomy of the will with the protection of unavailable rights. The specific regulation in areas such as family, childhood and adolescence, labor, tenancy, civil and transit shows that the origin of the mechanism responds to precise legal criteria and not to an indiscriminate liberalization of conflict. To this extent, the research confirms that mediation is not only compatible with the Ecuadorian regulatory framework, but also represents a necessary tool for more agile, accessible justice oriented toward social pacification.

CONCLUSIONS

The institution of mediation in the Ecuadorian legal system constitutes an alternative conflict resolution mechanism fully recognized by the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, the Arbitration and Mediation Law, the Organic Code of the Judicial Function and other applicable regulations, which is why its legal nature is duly consolidated within the system of administration of justice, responding to the principles of voluntariness, speed, procedural economy, impartiality and self-composition and allowing the parties, assisted by a third party neutral, reach valid, effective and definitive agreements on transmissible matters without the need to submit the controversy to an ordinary judicial process; However, it must be considered that the regulations as such do not expressly

and specifically delimit the areas in which mediation proceeds; Therefore, it is necessary to work on its delimitation and with unified dynamic data updated in real time.

The analysis based on the statistics presented allows us to affirm that mediation has a positive impact on decongesting the procedural load of the Ecuadorian judicial system, as it avoids the judicialization of certain conflicts and contributes to a more agile, efficient and timely administration of justice, for the benefit of the mediators and the State.

Mediation stands as an ideal legal institution for the peaceful resolution of disputes, to the extent that it not only preserves the autonomy of the will of the parties, but also strengthens the culture of peace, access to justice and the effectiveness of the Ecuadorian jurisdictional system. It is imperative to continue promoting and strengthening mediation mechanisms through public policies, institutional dissemination and specialized training, in order to consolidate their use as a preferred means of conflict resolution and a means of optimizing the public justice service.

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