

Competency assessment for intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Exploratory study among secondary school students in Barcelona

Evaluación de competencias para el diálogo intercultural e interreligioso. Estudio exploratorio en estudiantes de secundaria de Barcelona

Avaliação de competências para o diálogo intercultural e inter-religioso. Estudo exploratório em estudantes do ensino secundário de Barcelona.

跨文化和跨宗教对话能力评估：对巴塞罗那中学生进行的探索性研究

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Abstract

The presence of unaccompanied minor migrants in our communities and the consequent mutual impact with the foster society is a phenomenon of great educational relevance. An imaginary is configured around these young people, on which a good part of the islamophobic, xenophobic and racist discourses, present in our media and in the political arguments of the most radical parties of the state, are argued. In this context, the present article addresses the issue of adolescents' perceptions of young people who migrate alone and the development of intercultural competencies for interreligious dialogue. For this purpose, a survey study was carried out with the participation of 942 students from 9th and 10th grade compulsory secondary education in high schools in the city of Barcelona. In general terms, results show that participants are at a stage of acceptance of religious diversity. On the other hand, young people tend to engage in conflict situations with people who are different from them, using strategies typical of their coping style in relation to others. Finally, it is observed that students hold attitudes that moderately overcome prejudices towards young people who migrate alone. Findings reveal the importance of educational institutions and, specifically, secondary schools, working to build a culture of peace and a more inclusive society.

Keywords: intercultural and interreligious dialogue, skills, secondary education institutes, contexts of diversity, young migrants, conflict resolution.

Resumen

La presencia de migrantes menores no acompañados en nuestras comunidades y el consecuente mutuo impacto con la sociedad anfitriona es un fenómeno de gran relevancia educativa. En torno a estos jóvenes se configura un imaginario sobre el que se argumentan buena parte de los discursos islamófobos, xenófobos y racistas presentes en nuestros medios de comunicación y en los argumentos políticos de los partidos más radicales del estado. En ese contexto, el presente artículo aborda la problemática de la percepción de los adolescentes sobre los jóvenes que migran solos y el desarrollo de competencias interculturales para el diálogo interreligioso. Para ello se realizó un estudio por encuesta donde participaron 942 estudiantes de 3º y 4º de educación secundaria obligatoria de institutos de la ciudad de Barcelona. En términos generales, los resultados muestran que los y las participantes se encuentran en un estadio de aceptación de la diversidad religiosa. Por otro lado, muestran que los y las jóvenes tienden a actuar frente a situaciones de conflicto con personas diferentes a ellos/ellas utilizando estrategias propias del estilo de afrontamiento en relación con los/las demás. Por último, se observa que las y los estudiantes tienen actitudes que superan moderadamente los prejuicios hacia los jóvenes que migran solos. Los resultados muestran la importancia de trabajar desde la educación y, concretamente, desde los centros educativos de secundaria para la construcción de una cultura de paz y una sociedad más inclusiva.

Palabras clave: dialogo intercultural e interreligioso, competencias, institutos de educación secundaria, contextos de diversidad, jóvenes que migran solos, resolución de conflictos.

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Resumo

A presença de migrantes menores não acompanhados nas nossas comunidades e o consequente impacto mútuo com a sociedade de acolhimento é um fenómeno de grande relevância educativa. Estes jovens originam um imaginário em torno do qual se baseia grande parte dos discursos islamófobos, xenófobos e racistas presentes nos nossos meios de comunicação e nos argumentos políticos dos partidos mais radicais do Estado. Nesse contexto, este artigo aborda a problemática da perceção dos adolescentes sobre os jovens que migram sozinhos e o desenvolvimento de competências interculturais para o diálogo inter-religioso. Para isso, foi realizado um estudo de inquérito com a participação de 942 estudantes do 3.º e 4.º anos do ensino secundário obrigatório de escolas de Barcelona. Em termos gerais, os resultados mostram que os e as participantes se encontram numa fase de aceitação da diversidade religiosa. Por outro lado, mostram que os e as jovens tendem a agir em situações de conflito com pessoas diferentes deles/delas utilizando estratégias próprias do estilo de confronto em relação aos outros e às outras. Por último, observa-se que os e as estudantes têm atitudes que ultrapassam moderadamente os preconceitos em relação aos jovens que migram sozinhos. Os resultados mostram a importância de trabalhar através da educação e, concretamente, nas escolas secundárias para construir uma cultura de paz e uma sociedade mais inclusiva.

Palavras-chave: diálogo intercultural e inter-religioso, competências, escolas secundárias, contextos de diversidade, jovens que migram sozinhos, resolução de conflitos.

摘要

没有陪伴的未成年移民在我们社区的出现以及接受国社会与移民相互间的不断冲击都是与教育相关的重要议题。围绕这些年轻人，我们的社交媒体和我国一些极端政党的说辞里都出现了仇视伊斯兰教、仇外、带有种族歧视的言语，而这些言语极大地滋养了人们对这些年轻人的不实想像。在这样的背景下，该文章一方面试图阐释青少年对于独自移民青年所持有的问题思想，同时也试图涵盖促进跨宗教对话的跨文化能力的发展。以此为目的，我们对 942 名巴塞罗那中学义务教育阶段三年级和四年级的学生的问卷进行研究。整体来说，研究结果显示问卷参与者对宗教的多元性持接受态度。同时结果也表明年轻人在与自己有差异的人产生冲突时，他们会使用自己的问题应对策略。最后结果也显示了学生对于无陪伴移民青年的轻微歧视态度。综上所述，研究向人们展示了从教育着手，特别是从中学开始努力解决这一问题的重要性，因为只有这样才能创建一个和平和包容的社会。

关键词: 跨文化和跨宗教对话、能力、中学、多元化背景、独自移民青年、解决冲突

Introduction

The presence of unaccompanied migrant minors in communities and the resulting mutual impact on minor and host society is a phenomenon of great educational importance. This is because it brings into play aspects such as the vulnerability of minors, as well as the political, legal, social and educational resources needed for the inclusive, democratic and socially just society that Spain aspires to as a society to materialise. These young people, most of whom come from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa and identify as Muslims, have become the focus of much of the Islamophobic, xenophobic and racist discourse present in the media and political arguments of the state's most radical parties. Thus, due to evidence of social interest in this phenomenon, the Spanish Ministry of Science

and Innovation funded the project "Intercultural and interreligious dialogue to promote a culture of peace in young people and unaccompanied foreign minors (MENA) in Barcelona and Melilla" (RTI2018-095259-B-I00, MCIU/AEI/FEDER, EU). This project is being developed by the Faculty of Education of the University of Barcelona and the University of Granada - based in Melilla - and focuses on adolescent perceptions of this group and the development of intercultural competencies for interreligious dialogue. Such competencies will be a key component in the promotion of a cohesive society, especially among young people. This forms the basis of the present article, which presents findings of a questionnaire that was widely administered in

secondary schools that form part of the Barcelona Education Consortium.

Intercultural and interreligious dialogue competencies are crucial in today's world, where relations with diverse people from different cultural and religious backgrounds are part of reality. They are also key tools for conflict resolution and building a culture of peace. Intercultural competencies, as both an attribute and as evidence of a person's ability to function in today's diverse, complex and democratic society, form part of training curriculums at all levels and are demanded by all organisations. Their conceptualisation has been addressed by various authors such as UNESCO (2013), Barrett, Byram, Lázár, Mompoin-Gaillard & Philippou (2013), the Council of Europe (2018) and OECD (2019). All models of intercultural competence propose an integrative view of various components and dimensions such as knowledge, behaviours, attitudes, values and personality traits. However, assessment of these epistemological approaches poses a complex methodological challenge.

Competency assessment is one of the topics that attracts most attention in current evaluative research. Summaries made by Rodríguez (2008) and Aneas (2013) identify three major models of competency assessment, which are congruent with their epistemological conceptualisation. Firstly, (A) rationalist models regard competencies as units of abilities, traits, or aptitudes, which are assessed from a classical psychometric approach (Seligman, 2019), in which assessment is carried out by means of objective instruments such as inventories and tests (Blanchard, Kerbeykian & McGrath, 2020; Mandal & Buragohain, 2022). B) Secondly, inter-subjective competency models are found, in which competency is constructed and expressed from individual experience and whose assessment has a phenomenological and, therefore, individual and subjective quality. According to these models, assessment strategies can be individual, such as through portfolios and competency checklists (Messuri, Santilli and Petruccelli, 2012), as indicated by

authors such as Burgoyne (1989) or Laberon, Lagabrielle & Vonthron (2005); or collective, such as through DACUM or STAD (DeOnna, 2002; Suswanto, Hamdan, Mariana, Dardiri, Wibawa, Nafalski, & Vianiryzki, 2017). Finally, C) integrative models integrate the aforementioned dimensions and are expressed in specific contexts with relative performance criteria. This requires the presence of an external agent who judges whether performance is in line with contextual conditions. A typical example for assessing competencies within the framework of these models can be seen in competency assessment centres, also known by the term assessment centre (Ricardo, Hernández, Zumba, Márquez, & Ballas, 2019; Gumucio, 2010). Integrative models, including that adopted by González & Wagenaar (2003) and González, Wagenaar, & Beneitone (2004), are the most widely applied models in educational curricula. However, these models also present the most methodological difficulties when it comes to applying an evaluative system that allows decisions to be made on an individual (pupil) and a collective level (regarding the curriculum or the system itself). The challenge is being able to meet validity and reliability criteria, on the one hand, and, on the other, produce objective and generalisable outcomes (Olaz, 2011). Among the many methodological challenges faced by integrative models, the following stand out: a) difficulty achieving a satisfactory level of reliability based on factor analysis, particularly given that evidence of competency aims to integrate its cognitive, affective and behavioural dimensions; b) difficulty in devising a measurement instrument with objectifiable criteria when behaviours are related to context and performance requirements; and c) difficulty creating a viable instrument, in terms of internal and external validity, as well as sustainability in terms of scope and ease of completion. In an attempt to resolve these difficulties, some possible sustainable and viable empirical solutions have been suggested that are based on methodological rigour and epistemological eclecticism. Of these, the following stand out: a) Disaggregating competency dimensions so that they can be

assessed separately, for example, attitudes, communication, etc. b) Using the instrument in a self-report format, where rather than objectively assessing performance, subjective assessments are requested with respect to some of the specific components, attitudinal, cognitive, etc. c) Finally, rather than assessing objectively correct or desirable responses, scales measuring frequency, agreement or temporality with respect to some specific components (attitudinal, cognitive and behavioural) have been used.

In light of this background, the research team identified a number of components and dimensions from the literature that could be present in a possible model of intercultural and interreligious competencies. This model outlines ways in which young people can engage in intercultural and interreligious dialogue, in order to function in an intercultural and democratic society and promote a culture of peace, especially in relation to unaccompanied migrant minors. The factors that were considered relevant to this intercultural and interreligious relationship and behaviour were: a) prejudice towards migrants, especially minors; b) conflict resolution strategies supported by relevant social, cultural and religious factors; and c) attitude towards forming relations with those from other religions.

Finally, a literature review revealed that one of the most relevant aspects when analysing and explaining the nature of the relationship between people from different ethnic, cultural and/or religious backgrounds, whether from migrant or minority groups, are the attitudes they have towards each other (Borghetti, 2017; Robertson, 2008; Dearnorff, 2006). In this regard, prejudices and stereotypes play a central role, insofar as they constitute a first step towards understanding the other and provide a first idea regarding the contact and relationships that should be established with that which is unknown (Puerta-Valdeiglesias, 2004; Trujillo, Moyano, León, Valenzuela & González-Cabrera, 2005; Jensen, Reeh, Nøddeskov, Bulian & Lapis, 2018). In the socio-educational

contexts in which the present research project was conducted, such attitudes were not usually expressed as hateful or overtly racist behaviour, but in more subtle manifestations such as unease, insecurity and feelings of threat (Andreu & Ouhamid, 2021).

Positive management of the conflict (Leiva, 2007) that may arise as a consequence of relationships between people from different cultural, ethnic and/or religious backgrounds was established as a central dimension of the propose model. In this regard, of particular interest were the contributions made by Frydenberg & Lewis (2000), who identified various coping strategies that fit perfectly with the reality of the population under study. Specifically, these authors established three types of conflict management strategy. The first of these focuses on solving the problem and is characterised by attitudes focused on resolving conflict by maintaining a positive attitude. It includes strategies such as concentrating on finding solutions to the problem, seeking ways of belonging and focusing on positive aspects. The second type of strategy is characterised by coping with the conflict by seeking and using the support and resources provided by others, whether friends, professionals and/or beliefs. This includes strategies such as reaching out for social and/or spiritual support, and seeking help from professionals. Finally, unproductive coping strategies are characterised by inability to cope with conflict and avoiding and distancing oneself from the problem. These include behaviours such as worrying, ignoring the problem, keeping the problem to oneself, and blaming oneself.

Finally, because of the fact that unaccompanied minor migrants are identified with the Islamic religion, the interreligious dimension was deemed to be relevant to the present study. To this end, it was necessary to identify the opinions of young people and their responses and attitudes towards different religions and beliefs as the basis of their intercultural and interreligious competencies (Sánchez, 2018; Maudarbux, 2016; Abu-Nimer & Smith, 2016; Dervin & Hahl, 2015;

Ramarajan & Runell, 2007). In this context, the proposal made by Holm, Nokelainen & Tirri (2012) was chosen. According to these authors, the stages for interreligious dialogue can be defined as follows: (1) Denial: People at this stage find it difficult to recognise religious differences, even when they are apparent, and act by avoiding or dismissing the religion of others. (2) Defensive: People at this stage idealise personal beliefs and their own religion, with allegiance to the peer group emerging. They denigrate other religious stances and beliefs through prejudice and stereotyping and often perceive themselves to be threatened by outside groups. Differences are perceived as a threat to their own beliefs. (3) Minimisation: People at this stage subsume the other people's benchmarks and categories into familiar religious ideas (e.g., "All religions say the same thing"). This emphasis on similarity often hides or obscures the acknowledgement of important religious differences. People ignore differences between faiths and, in this way, minimise the distinctiveness of each. (4) Acceptance: People at this stage, through greater cognitive complexity and emotional flexibility, are able to shift their frames of reference and recognise and appreciate religious differences, while remaining aware of their own religious preferences and perspectives. There is an acceptance, respect and acknowledgement of the right of others to hold and practice different beliefs. Finally, (5) adaptation/integration: People at this stage, in addition to accepting the beliefs of others, have the capacity to change behavioural codes and act respectfully and appropriately towards different beliefs and religions. Adaptation involves the practice of empathy and pluralism. This involves "living" the adaptation and commitment to healthy interfaith relationships, while accepting the stress and marginalisation that often come with such commitments.

The aim of the present article is to identify the intercultural and interreligious dialogue competencies of adolescents, based on three dimensions: prejudice, conflict resolution and interreligious sensitivity. The following

objectives were established in order to address the research issue:

- Explore information gathering strategies for the assessment of competencies for intercultural and inter-religious dialogue applied, in this case, towards unaccompanied migrant minors.
- Describe aspects related to coexistence within contexts of cultural and religious diversity in schools.
- Identify the degree of inter-religious sensitivity held by teenagers.
- Analyse adolescents' conflict management competencies within a diverse setting.
- Identify prejudices of young people towards young people who migrate alone.

Method

Based on these theoretical dimensions and taking into account the difficulty of constructing an objective and standardisable ad hoc evaluation instrument, in addition to the tight timeframe for the project, a self-report questionnaire was opted for. This integrated various previously validated instruments and could be adapted to the target group and object of the project. A survey study was carried out using a questionnaire to gather data from adolescents enrolled in compulsory secondary education.

Population and sample

The study population is made up of students in the 3rd and 4th years of compulsory secondary education in public and semi-private schools in the city of Barcelona.

The sample was selected by random cluster sampling, with clusters corresponding to schools delivering compulsory secondary education in each of the 10 districts in Barcelona. Schools were accessed through the Barcelona Education Consortium. Of the total number of students included in the sample, 942 adolescents ultimately responded, with a confidence level of 95.5% for the population of third and fourth year

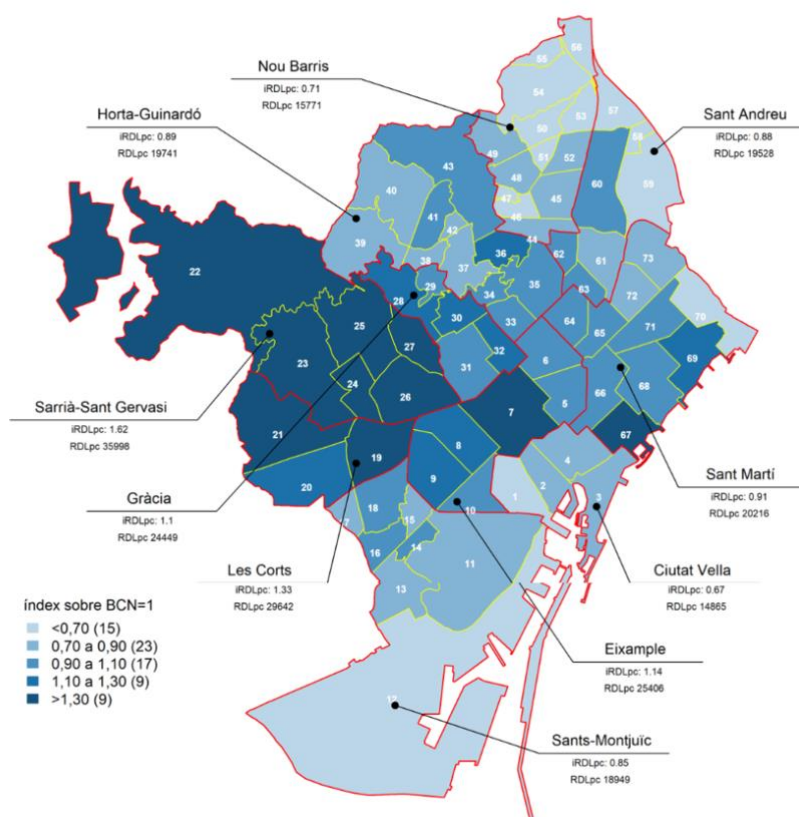
of ESO (compulsory secondary education) in Barcelona (28,462), where p and $q = 0.5$, meaning a margin of error of ± 0.032 .

The sample consisted of 942 students from 12 public or semi-private secondary schools in seven of the ten districts of the city of Barcelona.

In particular, 55.7% of students were attending state schools, whilst 44.3% were

attending semi-private schools. Schools were from the districts of Ciutat Vella, Sarrià-Sant Gervasi, Gràcia, Horta-Guinardó, Nou Barris, Sant Andreu and Sant Martí (table 1). The representativeness of different socio-economic levels was ensured as the sample included high, medium and low-income districts (Figure 1).

Figura 1. Per capita disposable income index 2019



Note: Obtained from Barcelona City Council.

The average age of participating students was 14.8 years old. 53.9% were 3rd year ESO students and 44.4% were 4th year ESO students. In relation to gender, a total of 504 students (53.5%) identified themselves as female, whilst 409 students (43.4%) were male and 29 students (3.1%) identified as other.

In relation to family origin, understood in the present study as the origin of the students' mother and/or father, 54.1% stated Catalonia or Spain as their origin, 5.9% said other European countries and 39.9% stated countries from the rest of the world.

Table 1. Participating schools and student data overall and according to academic year

District	School	Status	Students	Total % participants	Third-year students	Fourth-year students
Ciutat Vella	School 1	State school	111	11.8%	86 77.5%	25 22.5%
	School 2	Semi-private	43	4.6%	7 25.9%	20 74.1%
Sarrià-Sant Gervasi	School 3	Semi-private	72	7.7%	34 47.2%	38 52.8%
	School 4	Semi-private	36	3.8%	18 50.0%	18 50.0%
Gràcia	School 5	Semi-private	82	8.7%	11 13.4%	71 86.6%
Horta-Guinardó	School 6	State	95	10.1%	43 45.3%	52 54.7%
Nou Barris	School 7	State	98	10.4%	49 50.0%	49 50.0%
	School 8	Semi-private	34	3.6%	21 61.8%	13 38.2%
Sant Andreu	School 9	Semi-private	53	5.7%	41 77.4%	12 22.6%
	School 10	Semi-private	96	10.2%	67 69.8%	29 30.2%
Sant Martí	School 11	State	157	16.7%	87 55.4%	70 44.6%
	School 12	State	61	6.5%	44 72.1%	17 27.9%

Instrument

A self-report questionnaire was developed in order to identify the intercultural and interreligious dialogue competencies of adolescents (table 2). The questionnaire was made up of four components: a) socio-demographic and identification data, b) Abu-

Nimer's (2001) scale of interreligious sensitivity, c) Frydenberg and Lewis' (2000) scale of conflict management in the context of diversity and d) Etxeberria, Murua, Arrieta, Garmendia & Etxeberria (2012) scale of prejudice towards young people who migrate alone. All of the above formed a 60-item instrument.

Table 2. Dimensions of the intercultural and interreligious dialogue competence questionnaire

Items	Scale	No. of items	Cronbach Alpha
Socio-demographic and identification data (family background, academic year, friendships, school, knowledge of religion and coexistence and spirituality).	Nominal scale	7	-
Interreligious sensitivity scale (Abu-Nimer, 2001)	Likert -5 points	15	0.671
Conflict management scale in a setting of diversity (Frydenberg Lewis, 2000).	Likert-5 points	17	0.701
Scale of prejudice towards young people migrating alone (Etxeberria, Murua, Arrieta, Garmendia and Etxeberria, 2012).	Likert-5 points	21	0.871

All questionnaires had been previously validated and had reliable scale in relation to Cronbach's internal consistency index (table 2).

Questions on socio-demographic data aimed to gather contextual information on the independent variables in order to make comparisons based on contact with diversity, formal training received, and so on.

With regards to the interreligious sensitivity scale, the IRRSS, this scale was proposed by Mohamed Abu-Nimer (2001) and provides a reference for the exploration of young people's perceptions regarding their orientations towards religion and different beliefs. This scale is based on Bennet's (1986) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS). Bennet's model, in general terms, proposes that young people move along a continuum from ethnocentric to ethnorelative cultural positions. Abu-Nimer's proposal takes these stages and adapts them to the more specific context of religion and interreligious dialogue, moving from more religiocentric to more religiorelative orientations. In other words, from views that regard one's own beliefs as valid and, therefore, ignore other options, towards positions that understand that each belief is valid in its own right. In this way, other beliefs are accepted and there is a willingness to adopt diverse cultural and religious frames of reference (Abu-Nimer, 2001). In this regard, application of the interreligious sensitivity scale sought to identify students' views of different beliefs, based on individual identification of personal attitudes towards religious differences. It is important to mention that, as explained in the questionnaire and at the time of its implementation, beliefs were defined in a broad sense, including religious beliefs but, also, spiritual, agnostic and/or atheistic beliefs.

The conflict management scale was based on the Spanish version of the adolescents coping scale (ASC) developed by Frydenberg & Lewis (2000). This self-report instrument enables young people to analyse and examine their coping behaviours when faced with conflict.

Finally, the scale for overcoming prejudices developed by Etxeberria, Murua, Arrieta, Garmendia & Etxeberria (2012) assesses prejudices and stereotypes towards migrants. The scale was developed based on the contribution of several studies carried out by the Red Cross, Barcelona City Council, the Basque Government and the Council of Europe.

Data collection and analysis procedures

The questionnaire was administered during the months of May, June and November 2021, with the support of the Barcelona Education Consortium, which facilitated contact and access to the schools. The Education Consortium is an organisation that oversees the educational remit of non-university formal education, in which Barcelona City Council and the Department of Education of the Generalitat de Catalunya take part. In order to meet the University of Barcelona's ethical research requirements and protect the rights of students and teachers, a cooperation agreement was signed between the University of Barcelona and the Barcelona Education Consortium. The Consortium handled access to eligible schools and obtained consent from families since the study required the participation of minors. This collaboration allowed the research team access to school classrooms and made it possible for the questionnaire to be administered in person. In other words, researchers were present in the classrooms, with the aim of informing the young people about the objectives and aims of the questionnaire and clarifying any doubts that might arise during its implementation. It is important to mention that the questionnaire was answered anonymously and that, as explained to students, collected data were used only for academic and research purposes. Following piloting and validation of measurement instruments, the first processing of final data took place during the months of November and December 2021.

From this, a descriptive analysis of all study variables was carried out, according to measures of central tendency and deviation, in the case of quantitative variables, and frequencies, in the

case of categorical and qualitative variables. Hypothesis testing (t-Student for two independent groups and one-factor ANOVA) was also conducted in order to establish differences in questionnaire outcomes according to socio-demographic characteristics. All analyses were performed using the SPSS statistical package, version 20.

Results

In order to assess instrument effectiveness and feasibility, it is important to characterise the context of the performance of competencies for intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

The results obtained from student responses in relation to diversity and perceptions of competence are summarised below.

Living together amidst diversity

With regards to the relationships and dynamics reported by participating students, it was highlighted that 64.3% had not had dealings or made friends with other young foreigners. This data is not consistent with the demographic reality of the city in which the presence of citizens from other countries is a reality at all social levels. This is especially the case given that there are, not only young people from migration and refugee backgrounds but, also, families whose parents are international working professionals from various business sectors and cultural origins.

75.3% reported that they had been taught at their educational institution to live with people from other countries and origins. In relation to cohabitation with people of different beliefs, meaning religious, spiritual, agnostic and/or

atheist beliefs, the majority of students (76.8%) reported that their secondary school had taught them to cohabit with people of different beliefs.

With regards to religion, the majority of students (65.7%) reported that they had received religious education. Of those who had received religious education, 28.6% did so both at school and in other contexts, 18.9% did so only at their educational institution and 16.9% did so outside of educational centres.

With regards to work on spirituality in secondary schools, 59.9% of pupils stated that they had studied spirituality at school.

On the basis of these outcomes, it can be concluded that, in general, students attending secondary schools in the city of Barcelona, where there is a high degree of cultural diversity, perceive that they receive sufficient training to live with diversity and the challenges it entails. However, with regard to religious education, whether at school or in other settings, the number of students who perceive that they have received such training is low. This is even more the case when it comes to spiritual education, a subject which, according to 40% of young people, is not addressed.

Competencies for intercultural and interreligious dialogue

Interreligious sensitivity among adolescents

Turning attention to the average scores reported by students, in accordance with scale reference values (table 3), it can be established that responses generally indicate acceptance. Nonetheless, some small differences emerge.

Table 3. Interreligious sensitivity scale outcomes as a function of school and student characteristics

	N	Theoretical min. score	Theoretical max. score	Observed mean	SD
<i>Interreligious sensitivity scale</i>	942	15	75	54.5255	7.41304
Significant factors		Mean	SD	Statistical contrast	P-value
<i>Sex</i>	Girls	55.59	6.53	t = 4.377	.000
	Boys	53.42	8.10		
	Other	51.59	8.82		
<i>Have you been brought up to live with people from other countries and backgrounds?</i>	No	52.48	8.30	t = -4.512	.000
	Yes	55.20	6.97		
<i>Have you been brought up to live with people of different faiths?</i>	No	51.72	8.50	t = -5.818	.000
	Yes	55.37	6.83		
<i>Have you studied spirituality?</i>	No	53.84	7.46	t = -3.485	.001
	Yes	55.55	7.24		
<i>Have you received any religious education?</i>	No	53.20	7.25	t = -3.992	.000
	Yes	55.22	7.41		
Non-significant factors		Mean	SD	Statistical contrast	P-value
<i>Ownership</i>	State school	54.15	6.66	t = -1.940	.053
	Semi-private school	55.11	8.15		
<i>Have you interacted with young people who have migrated on their own?</i>	No	54.72	7.53	t = 1.060	.289
	Yes	54.18	7.20		
<i>Where have you had any religious education?</i>	School	55.34	7.43	t = 1.697	.091
	Others	53.96	7.48		
	School and others	56.08	7.26		
<i>Academic year</i>	Year 10	54.40	7.32	t = -0.227	.821
	Year 11	54.51	7.50		
<i>Place of birth</i>	Spain	54.35	7.52	F = 1.530	.217
	Europe	55.22	6.99		
	World	55.19	6.86		

Specifically, statistically significant differences can be observed according to gender, perceptions of training received at school regarding intercultural and interreligious coexistence, spirituality, and religious training (either at or outside of school). In this sense, the following characteristics were related with having more developed interreligious dialogue:

- Girls relative to boys.
- Young people who perceived that they had been prepared by their schools to live with people from other countries and backgrounds.
- Students who perceived that they had been prepared by their schools to live with people of different faiths.

- Students who perceived that their school worked on spirituality or their inner world.
- Students who stated that they received religious education from school or other sources outside of school.

On the other hand, no statistically significant differences were observed as a function of school ownership public or subsidised), whether or not students interacted with young people who had migrated alone, the source of religious training (at or outside of school) or academic year (year 10 or 11 of compulsory secondary education). Finally, no statistically significant differences were observed in terms of interreligious dialogue

competencies between pupils born in Catalonia/Spain and those born elsewhere.

Conflict management amidst diversity

In general terms, present outcomes reveal that, when faced with conflict situations with

others, students tend to respond by turning to other people, whether friends, teachers or other professionals. In other words, personal coping strategies are used in relation to others (Table 4).

Table 4. Intercultural conflict management scale outcomes and differences according to student or school characteristics

	N	Theoretical min. score	Theoretical max. score	Observed mean	SD
Conflict management scale	942	17	85	55.5828	8.41669
		Mean	SD	Statistical contrast	P-value
Significant factors					
<i>Sex</i>	Girls	57.39	7.84	t = 6.722	.000
	Boys	53.72	8.61		
	Other	50.48	7.75		
<i>Have you been brought up to live with people from other countries and backgrounds?</i>	No	52.92	8.80	t = -5.651	.000
	Yes	56.46	8.10		
<i>Have you been brought up to live with people of different faiths?</i>	No	53.82	8.97	t = -3.556	.000
	Yes	56.12	8.17		
<i>Have you studied spirituality?</i>	No	54.81	8.32	t = -3.469	.001
	Yes	56.74	8.43		
<i>Have you received any religious education?</i>	No	54.74	8.50	t = -2.225	.026
	Yes	56.02	8.35		
Non-significant factors					
<i>School type</i>	State	55.27	8.13	t = -1.350	.177
	Semi-private	56.02	8.78		
<i>Have you interacted with young people who have migrated on their own?</i>	No	55.93	8.32	t = 1.722	.085
	Yes	54.95	8.56		
<i>Where have you received religious education?</i>	School	56.04	8.40	t = 1.038	.300
	Other	55.12	7.90		
	School and other	56.65	8.59		
<i>Academic year</i>	Year 10	55.37	8.58	t = -0.651	.515
	Year 11	55.73	8.18		
<i>Place of birth</i>	Spain	55.76	8.04	F = 0.631	.532
	Europe	54.41	8.38		
	World	55.63	8.88		

From the gathered data, statistically significant differences can be observed according to gender, student perceptions of the training received at their school in terms of intercultural and interreligious coexistence, spirituality, and the receipt of religious training (at or outside of school). In this sense, the following characteristics were associated with

greater conflict management skills in diverse environments:

- Girls relative to boys.
- Young people who perceived that their school had prepared them to live with people from other countries and backgrounds.

- Students who perceived that their schools had prepared them to live with people of different faiths.

- Students who perceived that their school worked on spirituality or their inner world.

- Students who stated that they received religious education from school or other sources outside of school.

On the other hand, no statistically significant differences were observed as a function of school ownership (public and subsidised), previous interaction with young

people who had migrated alone, the source of religious education (at or outside of school) or academic year (year 10 or 11 of compulsory secondary education). Finally, no statistically significant differences were observed in terms of conflict management competencies between pupils born in Catalonia/Spain and those born elsewhere.

Prejudice towards migrant minors

Overall, students report attitudes that moderately overcome prejudices towards young people who have migrated on their own (Table 5).

Table 5. Outcomes and comparative analysis pertaining to the scale for overcoming prejudice towards young people who migrate on their own

	N	Theoretical min. score	Theoretical max. score	Observed mean	SD
Scale for overcoming prejudice towards young people migrating on their own	942	21	105	77.1964	13.13207
Significant factors		Mean	SD	Statistical contrast	P-value
<i>Sex</i>	Girls	79.50	12.43	t = 5.478	.000
	Boys	74.80	13.25		
	Other	71.00	15.63		
<i>School type</i>	State	79.00	12.45	t = 4.591	.000
	Subsidised	75.09	13.58		
<i>Have you been brought up to live with people from other countries and backgrounds?</i>	No	74.39	14.56	t = -3.513	.001
	Yes	78.12	12.50		
<i>Have you been brought up to live with people of different faiths?</i>	No	73.77	14.71	t = -4.070	.000
	Yes	78.23	12.44		
<i>Place of birth</i>	Spain	75.22	13.60	F = 19.079	.000
	Europe	76.78	9.4		
	World	80.65	11.88		
Non-significant factors		Mean	SD	Statistical contrast	P-value
<i>Have you studied spirituality?</i>	No	77.55	13.64	t = -0.921	.357
	Yes	76.67	12.34		
<i>Have you interacted with young people who have migrated on their own?</i>	No	77.06	13.58	t = -0.414	.679
	Yes	77.43	12.30		
<i>Where have you had any religious education?</i>	School	76.35	12.52	t = -1.027	.305
	Others	79.75	13.43		
	School and other	77.42	13.01		
<i>Academic year</i>	Year 10	77.65	13.58	t = 1.211	.226
	Year 11	76.60	12.68		

From the gathered data, statistically significant differences were observed according to gender, school type and student perceptions of the education received at their

school in terms of intercultural and interreligious coexistence. From this, the following characteristics were related with

better skills for overcoming prejudices towards young people who migrate on their own:

- Girls relative to boys.
- State schools relative to subsidised schools.
- Young people who perceived that their school had prepared them to live with people from other countries and backgrounds.
- Students who perceived that their schools had prepared them to live with people of different faiths.
- Pupils born in non-EU countries, as compared to pupils born in Catalonia, Spain or elsewhere in Europe.

Surprisingly, no statistically significant differences were found in terms of perceptions of having worked on spiritual aspects or one's inner world at school, or interacting with young people who had migrated on their own. Nor were statistically significant differences observed in overcoming prejudices towards young people who had migrated alone as a function of the source of religious education (at or outside of school) or academic year (year 10 or 11 of compulsory secondary education).

Discussions and conclusions

A total of 942 students undertaking the 10th and 11th years of compulsory secondary education at different secondary schools in the city of Barcelona took part in the questionnaire. Participants came from 7 of the city's 10 districts, meaning that the sample was representative and diverse.

The questionnaire addressed three interrelated areas, namely, prejudice and stereotypes towards minorities, especially unaccompanied migrants, conflict management strategies and sensitivity towards interreligious dialogue. A different scale was used for each area. All scales met standards of reliability and validity and, in this way, constituted valid and reliable instruments for collecting information and measuring the reality of interest.

Administration of this instrument and the results obtained enabled assessment of competency regarding intercultural and interreligious dialogue which, despite not having absolute internal validity, due to the aforementioned epistemological difficulties, has sufficient levels of external validity and reliability to be able to provide a first overview. In other words, the instrument provides sufficient information to be able to inform educational measures based on a well-founded approach. Findings provide insight into the general situation of adolescents in the city of Barcelona in relation to unaccompanied migrant minors and their competencies for intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

With regards to prejudices towards young people who migrate on their own, students were observed to have moderately overcome the main prejudices towards this group. However, this reality cannot be generalised to all students, nor was this outcome observed to the same extent in all educational centres. Students in state schools had a better capacity to overcome prejudices towards unaccompanied migrant minors. It should be remembered that the sample was made up of both state and subsidised schools from most of the city's districts. In other words, state and subsidised schools from low, medium and high socio-economic neighbourhoods took part in the sample. Thus, explanatory power comes from the third variable of interest, namely, the educational approach to living with people from other countries and cultures. In this sense, statistically significant differences were observed as a function of whether students had been taught to live with people different from themselves. This could lead to the hypothesis that differences between state and private schools are due to the fact that the former work more explicitly or effectively on these issues, or at least that is what is perceived by students. This aspect reminds us of the importance of the role of education professionals (Vilà, Rubio & Escofet, 2020) and the directors of educational centres (Vilà, Freixa, Sánchez & Rubio, 2019).

A notable finding was that pupils of non-EU origin were better at overcoming prejudices towards young people who had migrated on their own. In the absence of complementary data, this could be interpreted as meaning that Catalan society is more prejudiced than other foreign societies. If we consider that the latter, due to their family history, have had to go through transitions, grieving, adjustments and difficulties, it is understandable that they have lower levels of prejudice towards young people who migrate by themselves. This conclusion is supported by the empirical outcomes of the present study.

Empirical results, in particular the fact that no significant differences were found in the level of prejudice as a function of interaction with unaccompanied minor migrants, confirm Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis theory. This states that contact in itself is not a guarantee of a satisfactory intercultural relationship. Thus, what matters is not the quantity but the quality of the relationship (Paluck, et al. 2019 and Zhou et al., 2019) and, therefore, in consideration of the data presented here from Barcelona, the existence of diversity in the city and in the classroom is not a predictor of competence (Zhou, Page-Gould, Aron, Moyer, & Hewstone, 2019; Paluck, Green, & Green, 2019).

With regards to conflict management, it can be seen that secondary school pupils do not employ the strategy of conflict avoidance. Instead, the most frequently applied strategy was support seeking. Present findings show the need to introduce this type of strategy more explicitly or to work on it more efficiently, as the data shows that pupils are aware that they need tools that they do not have. These conflict resolution strategies should enable adolescents to have positive and proactive attitudes, on a personal level, towards problems, especially in contexts of diversity.

In general terms, with regards to interreligious dialogue, it can be established that adolescents are in an intermediate position when it comes to accepting religious differences. However, not all pupils have the same level of competencies for interreligious

dialogue. In this respect, a discussion is needed around whether the education system should work to enable adolescents to reach more advanced competence stages, such as those of adaptation and integration.

Present findings are of fundamental importance and identify the need to work through education and, in particular, through secondary schools in order to build a culture of peace and a more inclusive society. However, they also show the value of education received outside the educational centre. In fact, the significant influence of training related to living together, spirituality and religion on intercultural and interreligious dialogue competencies was found not to be restricted to the formal system and the official curriculum. Indeed, as revealed here, training received outside of school, in other words, from family, religious communities and non-formal education bodies, is also important.

Present findings suggest further prospective lines of work. The first of these is the large and significant difference between genders. It is worth asking why it is that adolescent females are less prejudiced, have more conflict resolution strategies and are at a more advanced stage of inter-religious sensitivity than their male peers. Why?

On the other hand, it would be interesting to explore the relationship between education concerning spiritual aspects and religious culture and civic competence. This education involves multiple and complex debate around the best way to articulate the premises of a state that declares itself to be non-confessional but in which the right to receive a religious education is recognised by law. The dilemma of whether or not to apply these apparently contradictory, or, at least, complex legislative frameworks in the education system is present in various Western countries (Vilà, Freixa & Aneas, 2020; Vilà, Freixa, Sánchez & Mateo, 2021).

In this context, it is felt that present findings illustrate the beneficial influence of having training activities that deal with a transcendental understanding of spirituality, in addition to

content around religious culture and values. Identification of specific content and activities, namely what is dealt with and how it is dealt with in the classroom, constitutes a further line of research. This would allow us to understand the reasons for this positive influence on the development of competencies for intercultural and interreligious dialogue and a culture of peace.

Finally, an examination of the way in which young people position themselves and act within this sphere is vital for working on intercultural and interreligious dialogue, on the one hand, but, also, for building a culture of peace in a diverse world and in a city like Barcelona, where people from different cultural backgrounds and with different beliefs live alongside each other.

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