Colourful
Childhoods

EMPOWERING LGBTIQ CHILDREN
IN VULNERABLE CONTEXTS TO COMBAT
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ACROSS EUROPE

National Report

Spain

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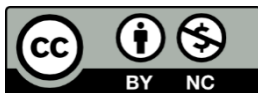University of Girona and Rey Juan Carlos University, Spain.

Project Information

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Introduction – Research Design and Sample

This Spanish National Report is built on the joint work of the King Juan Carlos University (URJC) and the University of Girona (UdG). The fieldwork data was gathered using three different research techniques: 34interviews with stakeholders (19 by the URJC, and 15 by the UdG), 4 focus groups with children and teenagers (2 by the URJC, and 2 by the UdG), and an online survey aimed at teenagers aged 15 to 17 (with 976 valid responses).

Recruitment for interviews was carried out using the snowball technique. Both the URJC and the UdG had previous contacts with stakeholders due to our expertise in the field and to previous research projects. Contacts were made through key professionals as well as institutions. Recruitment for interviews went quite smoothly, which is the reason why the final number of interviews was bigger than expected (30). Interviews were about one hour long. The shortest interview was fifty minutes, and the longest one took one hour and twenty minutes. Some of the interviews were carried out via videoconference (using the TEAMs or Zoom platforms), and others were held in person. The main difficulties in locating interviewees included finding a free spot in some professionals' schedules and engaging with male professionals from the field of social intervention, since the vast majority are female. Most interviewees were eager to participate as soon as we contacted them.

As for the second element of the fieldwork, focus groups, the biggest recruitment problems were different for each partner involved. The URJC organised two focus groups with children aged between 12 and 17. The first took place in a bookshop in the centre of Madrid and had 7 participants. The second consisted of 8 children from a high school with a pro-LGBTIQ policy and a community support group from a suburban neighbourhood. One of the main difficulties was access to schools with higher restrictions in carrying out LGBTIQ related activities. In addition, in the case of the second focus group, the children were very tired because the meeting was at the end of the school year. However, we found different ways of contacting them that made the work possible: firstly, through the involvement of some of the participants' families in an NGO for trans and non-binary children. Secondly, through the connections of some of the families with researchers. Finally, from previous contacts with professionals working with children.

To form the groups of children, we had the help of professionals from three different offices of the Comprehensive Care Service (SAI) for sexual and gender diversity, which are located all over the region of Catalonia. Once we realised that forming two groups of children aged 6-12 would not be possible within the timeline of the fieldwork for the project, we decided to widen our age group to 17 years old. With the help of the three professionals of the SAI offices we were able to set up two focus groups, one made up of 6 teenagers, and the other one made up of 3 teenagers, in different towns both in the province of Girona.

The average length of focus group meeting was 1 hour and 12 minutes. The shortest focus group meeting was 45 minutes, and the longest one was one hour and a half.

The third element of this fieldwork was the online survey. The URJC and the UdG teams worked together in the application of the survey. We created a joint strategy for dissemination, designing a flyer specifically for this purpose which we shared using

different methods, including: 1) Sharing the flyer of the survey with all of our contacts, via WhatsApp, email, and DM, so that it that could be passed on to teenagers aged 15-17; 2) Posting the flyer in both our institutional social networks as well as the project ones; 3) Posting the flyer in all the personal social networks of the researchers involved; 4) Asking related institutions to share our flyer in their social networks; 5) Hiring two different influencers (one Spanish speaking and one Catalan speaking) so they could share the information of the survey with their teenage audiences; 6) Putting up printed flyers in high schools, and community centres.

The Spanish survey swiftly received a very good response, although many of the responses that the online survey server (LimeSurvey) registered were blank (meaning many people just opened the link but didn't answer it). LimeSurvey registered 2,103 responses for Spain, although 884 of them were blank answers (mostly), or troll/fake answers (some). Once we eliminated these, we were left with 1,219 answers. Out of these, only 976 fell into our target -LGBTIQ teenagers-, but we decided to keep the 243 responses by cisgendered and heterosexual teenagers to contrast the answers with the LGBTIQ respondents.

1. Legal and political context regarding LGBTIQ rights

1.1. Context

The legal context that regulates LGBTIQ rights for children, is very recent. It was not until 2014 that a Spanish regulation included matters regarding LGBTIQ children specifically, and it wasn't until 2019 that there was a regulation only aimed at children. Nevertheless, LGBTIQ regulations that relate to children are not created in a void, but rather, they are part of a broader context of LGBTIQ regulations. It is for this reason that we present a genealogy of the legal and political context of LGBTIQ rights that does not focus on children exclusively but rather on all LGBTIQ matters.

Spain has a long history of punishing sexual behaviours that departs from heteronormativity, although there are some periods in the 19th and the 20th centuries where homosexuality was not forbidden. Beyond the legal framework, some of Spain's biggest cities, particularly Madrid and Barcelona, have a long history of sexual dissidence, mostly related to the performing arts as well as sex work. In any case, data (Mira, 2004) shows that at the beginning of the 20th century there were some spots in the country where homosexuality or "transvestism" was not strongly censored by the local population.

The first harsh regulation of homosexuality in the 20th century was implemented during Franco's dictatorship. Same-sex encounters had been eliminated from the Criminal Code during the Second Republic (1931-1936), and in this same period the Vagrancy Act (Ley de Vagos y Maleantes) was passed. It was supposed to be put in place for "the control of beggars, ruffians without a known trade and pimps"). Nevertheless, society showed rejection of non-heterosexual practices (Aresti, 2010). Despite that, during this period, cultural productions appear that reflect the homosexual community, such as the works by Lucia Sánchez Saornil, Luis Cernuda or Federico García Lorca.

In 1954, when Franco had already been in power for 15 years, his government passed a modification of the Vagrancy Act, which reintroduced homosexuality as a crime. The Vagrancy Act was replaced in 1970 by the Danger and Social Rehabilitation Act (Act 16/1970) which, in article 6, defined the following measures for homosexual persons: (a) internment in a re-education institution; (b) a ban on residing in specific places or on visiting certain public places or establishments, and (c) submission to the supervision of "delegates". In the 1973 Penal Code, the section on "crimes against honesty" (title IX) provided for arrest, fines and disqualification for the crimes of "public scandal", crimes usually applied to homosexual and transsexual persons.

As an act of resistance, in 1970 a reduced number homosexual people created the Homophile Group for Sexual Equality: *Agrupación Homófila para la Igualdad Sexual*, AGHOIS, which changed its name in 1971 to Spanish Homosexual Liberation Movement: *Movimiento Español de Liberación Homosexual, MELH* (Mira, 2004). The homosexual liberation movement *per se* had more representation of gay men, although also many trans* women -at some point considered as transvestites- and lesbian women were also present. Because of certain political tensions, many lesbian women led their activism from Feminist and women only spaces, even though lesbian women also had struggles within Feminism for political recognition (Mérida Jiménez, 2016; Trujillo, 2009; Pineda, 2008; GLF, 2000).

From 1975 to 1982, several legal reforms abolished discrimination laws against homosexuals. The National Constitution approved in 1978 banned the discrimination for any reason. The Law 46/1977 of October 15, 1977, amnestied crimes related to political acts, rebellion and sedition committed before December 15, 1976, but did not include persons convicted of homosexuality. The first Pride demonstration was held in Barcelona on June 26, 1977, called by the Gay Liberation Front of Catalonia: *Front d'Alliberament Gay de Catalunya*, FAGC, a splinter of the MELH. Between 1975 and 1977, groups and fronts of homosexual liberation were created in the main cities of Spain. These groups constituted in 1977 the Coordinating Committee of Homosexual Liberation Fronts of the Spanish State: *Coordinadora de Frentes de Liberación Homosexual del Estado Español* (COFLHEE). In 1978 there were Pride demonstrations against the Vagrancy Act in Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao and Sevilla. In this same year, the Act 77/1978 modified the Act on Danger and Social Rehabilitation and suppressed homosexuality as a reason to be declared "dangerous." Thus, homosexuality was officially decriminalised. In 1980, FAGC was the first LGBTIQ association to be legally recognized and in 1983 the legalization of lesbian and gay associations became widespread.

During the socialist's period in office between 1982-1996 with Felipe Gonzalez as president, while the recognition of lesbian and gay groups continued, trans* activism emerged and solidified. The Law 5/1988 changed the crime of "public scandal" to "exhibitionism and sexual provocation", restricting it to obscene exhibition to children under sixteen years of age or the mentally deficient (the crime of "public scandal" was often applied to trans people). During the same period, the HIV pandemic spread in Spain, as in other countries around the world. HIV had a strong impact on the gay community in particular, and during this social and health crisis the Spanish government did not provide support to the pandemic victims. This is the reason why many self-support organisations were created in Spain, as was happening in many other European countries.

From 1996 and 2004, the right-wing party Partido Popular was in power led by José María Aznar. During this period, the Spanish government did not provide any kind of support to LGBTIQ issues, in a moment when the HIV pandemic was still a big issue. As a consequence, social movements got stronger and peer to peer support remained crucial.

Once the socialist party came to power again, in 2004, with José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero as president, several legal changes strengthened the rights of the LGBTIQ community. In 2005, same-sex marriage was approved. In 2007, Act 3/2007 allowed a person whose gender identity does not match his or her assigned legal gender to modify the gender marker in the Civil Registry and change their name, although they had to include a psychiatric diagnosis of mental illness, be 18 or over, and have Spanish citizenship (Platero, 2011).

During Mariano Rajoy's conservative government (2011-2018) the Penal Code was modified, through the Organic Law, 1/2015, to include hate crimes into the national legislation. Additionally, numerous actions at the regional level aimed at protecting the rights of the LGBTIQ community, such as the Act 14/2012 on-discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and recognition of the rights of transsexual persons in the Basque Country or the Act 2/2014 on equal treatment and non-discrimination of lesbians, gays, transsexuals, bisexuals and intersexuals in Galicia. Similar laws were passed in at least 11 out of the 17 Spanish regional governments, including Andalusia (2014), Catalonia (2014), Canary Islands (2014), Madrid (2015), Extremadura (2015), Murcia (2016), Balearic Islands (2016), and Valencian Community (2017).

In 2018, the year socialist Pedro Sánchez came into power, the Ministry of Justice instructed Civil registry offices to enable the change of name and sex mention for trans children due to the best interest of the child that is enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the Spanish Government in 1990. This decision was ratified by ruling 99/2019 of the Constitutional Court.

On December 22 of 2022 a new national LGBTIQ Law was passed, granting new rights for LGBTIQ children, such as the right to modify their name and sex in all documents with no requirement of medical records of gender dysphoria or parental permission if they are 16 years old, and between 14 and 16 with parental support. Children aged 12 and 13 are required to have legal permission. Also, people -including children- without Spanish nationality are also be able to change their name and sex in their Spanish documents. The 2-year long debate prior to approval of the law took place with a great deal of controversy due to the resistance from both far-right parties and trans-exclusionary feminists (Willem, Platero, and Tortajada 2022).

1.2. Relevant statistical data about LGBTIQ situation in Spain

During the past couple of decades, interest has grown in Spain as an LGBTIQ friendly country. While not all citizens support sexual and gender diversity, statistics regarding Spanish LGBTIQ-friendliness are quite promising. According to the last Eurobarometer on the social acceptance of LGBTIQ people (2019), only 1% of Spanish respondents

identify themselves as being a part of a sexual minority. Even so, the vast majority of people responded positively in accepting LGBTIQ people: 81% would feel comfortable having a gay, lesbian or bisexual person in the highest elected political position in the country (74% in the case of a transgender person and 72% in the case of an intersex person), and 89% agree or tend to agree that there is nothing wrong with same-sex couples.

When asked whether, in their opinion, school lessons and material should include information about diversity in terms of sexual orientation, being transgender and being intersex, although those that "totally agree" make up roughly half the population, when we add those that marked the "tend to agree" option, the percentages raise up to 84% related to sexual orientation, 81% to being transgender, and 80% to being intersex. However, the agreement is not as high in relation to showing affection in a public space. 81% were fine about it when talking about heterosexual couples, but only 63% in the case of two men and 66% when talking about two women.

If we look at the data from the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) LGBTI +survey (2019), we can see some discrimination statistics regarding LGBTIQ teenagers in Spain. According to this survey, 42% of LGBTIQ teenagers aged 15 or older felt discriminated against in at least one area of life in the year before the survey. A remarkable 17% of trans and intersex people reported being physically or sexually attacked in the five years before the survey, double the rest of the LGBTIQ identifications.

The FRA's survey also shows interesting data regarding LGBTIQ youth. Those who hide being LGBTIQ at school dropped from 47% in 2012 to 41% in 2019. 66% of LGBTIQ students (15-17 years old) say that in school someone often or always supported, defended or protected their rights as an LGBTIQ person, and 42% say at some point their school addressed LGBTIQ issues positively or in a balanced way. On the other hand, according to the report on hate crimes published by the Spanish Government, among the victims of all reported hate crimes in 2018, 6.7% were under 18 years old. In this age group, sexual orientation and gender identity was the main cause of victimisation (31.4%), followed by racism/xenophobia (30.7%).

2. Children's rights and LGBTIQ diversity in childhood – brief overview

2.1. Context

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted on 20 November 1989 (UNICEF Spanish Committee, 2015) and was ratified by Spain on 30 November 1990, entering into force on 5 January 1991 (Plataforma de Infancia, n.d.). Its 54 articles constitute a fundamental document that aims to ensure the rights of children for the protection, care,

and well-being of their 'physical, mental and social development' (UNICEF Spanish Committee 2015:5).

With regard to the legislative context of the European Union, the Treaty of Lisbon sets out in Article 3 the importance of the 'protection of the rights of the child'. Similarly, there are international agreements such as the Lanzarote Convention against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of Children, the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, the Convention on Action against Human Trafficking or the Convention on Cybercrime. Furthermore, the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) calls for the eradication of all forms of physical punishment of children.

With regard to the national legal framework, the protection of minors is enshrined in Article 39 of the Spanish Constitution as a priority obligation of the public authorities. Among the legislative progress developed for the protection and defence of the rights of children are Organic Law 8/2015, of 22 July, and Law 26/2015, of 28 July, which sought to make a series of improvements in the system for the protection of minors. However, the review conducted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Spain in 2018 identified the need for new legislation, the result of which is the Organic Law 8/2021 of 4 June on the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents from violence. Reference is made below to two of its articles given their connection with the objective of this report.

Title One includes Article 11.1., which states that 'public authorities shall guarantee children are heard and listened to with all guarantees and without age limit, ensuring, in any case, that this process is universally accessible in all administrative, judicial or other procedures related to the accreditation of violence and the reparation of victims. A children's right to be heard may only be restricted, in a reasonable manner, when it is contrary to their best interests' (Organic Law 8/2021). This emphasises the right of child victims to be heard, in order to avoid adult-centric bias.

Title Two, Article 16, includes the duty of persons with minors in their care to ensure their care, education, and protection. This includes 'qualified staff of health centres, schools, sports and leisure centres, child protection and criminal responsibility centres for minors, asylum and humanitarian care centres of the establishments in which they usually or temporarily reside (...) and social services (Organic Law 8/2021). Such qualified personnel must immediately report any act of violence suffered by an elderly person, as well as provide the necessary care, facilitate the available information and collaborate as much as possible with the competent authorities. These articles emphasise the contexts of vulnerability among children in which the importance of listening and the role of their caregivers in reporting situations of violence are fundamental.

Along these lines, the Ministry of the Interior's (*Ministerio del Interior)* crime statistics portal, in its section on 'Hate crime', provides significant data to be considered in terms of prevention work. It shows that victimisation of minors due to hate crimes for reasons of racism/xenophobia had the highest number of victims last year, a total of 87, followed by those committed for reasons of sexual orientation and gender identity, with 71. Similarly, arrests and investigations of minors for these offenses follow the same pattern, with 38 in the first case and 36 in the second. Therefore, racist and LGBTIQ+phobic aggressions are the most repeated in this population group, that is to say, not only among those who suffer them but also those who carry them out.

Because bullying is a central problem in educational contexts, all autonomous communities have protocols against bullying that also ease gender transition in trans children. In some cases, these documents include issues related to cyberbullying. Despite this, these protocols still have their shortcomings such as their slowness, their low efficiency or a lack of preventive approach in the work against bullying (Del Álamo Venegas, Yuste Tosina, and López Catalán 2021).

The White Paper *(anteproyecto)* for the real and effective equality of trans people and for the guarantee of rights of LGBTIQ people, 12 September 2022, states that in Spain, 42% of LGBTIQ people have suffered discrimination in the last year according to the European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA). This is transformed into aggressions, with 8% of people belonging to the group having been victims of attacks in the last 5 years. It is also pointed out that this discrimination is present in educational centres, where, according to the State Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Trans, and Bisexuals (FELGBT), half of LGBTIQ children are bullied at school.

Among the articles that allude to LGBTIQ children, Article 19 refers to comprehensive health care for intersex people to guarantee their rights and provide a legal regulatory framework around genital modification. Article 29 focuses on protection measures against cyberbullying, and explicitly mentions the need for greater attention to these cases on social networks affecting LGBTIQ children and young people. Articles 30 and 31 are dedicated to the protection of those living within an LGBTIQ family.

Title II, 'Measures for the real and effective equality of trans people', Chapter I 'Rectification in the register of the mention of the sex of persons and documentary adequacy', includes a series of articles that include the right to change the Civil Registry concerning mention of sex. With regard to this issue, a previous ruling of the Constitutional Court in STC 99/2019, 18 July, declared Article 1.1 of Law 3/2007 unconstitutional, 15 March, which does not guarantee the change of registration of children and youth as it is subject to the subjective consideration that they have 'sufficient maturity', and are in a 'stable situation of transgenderism'. This is a right set out in Articles 10.1 and 18.1 of the Constitution, which respectively reflect the principle of free development of the personality set out in Article 10.1, and the fundamental right to personal privacy.

Article 38 of the current White Paper establishes that persons over sixteen years of age may themselves request the rectification of their registration of sex in the Civil Registry, those between fourteen and sixteen may do so with the assistance of their legal representatives, and those between twelve and fourteen may do so by means of judicial authorisation for the modification of the registration of sex (under the terms of Chapter I bis of Title II of Law 15/2015, 2 July, of Voluntary Jurisdiction).

However, despite the improvements with respect to the previous law, a new age limit at six years old children has been proposed by a report of the Ministry of Justice dated 15 October 2018 to reform Law 3/2007. This age limit allows children to change their name in the Civil Register, only if children have their family's support.

2.2. Relevant statistical data Childhood situation

The Spanish population is an ageing society, whose natural growth is very low. According to figures from *Datosmacro.com*, in December 2021, 13.97% of the population was aged between 0 and 14 years compared to 20.09% over 64 years.

On the other hand, the number of minors under the public child protection system fell from 50,272 in 2019 to 49,171 in 2020. Guardianships also decreased, from 33,208 in 2019 to 31,738 in 2020 and from 5,803 in 2019 to 3,870 in 2020. As for the figures for residential foster care, there is a considerable decrease from 23,209 in 2019 to 16,991 in 2020. Foster care with families adds to this trend with 18,892 in 2020, down from 19,320 in 2018 (Childhood Observatory 2020).

Regarding the use of technologies, the study 'Impact of technology on adolescence' (UNICEF 2021) states that the average age at which children have their first mobile phone is 10.96 years old. In terms of connectivity, 98% have Wi-Fi at home, 94.8% have a mobile phone with an Internet connection, and 90.8% go online every day, or almost every day. 31.5% are on the Internet for more than 5 hours a day during the week, and 49.6% spend the same hours surfing the Internet during the weekend. 99% use one, or more instant messaging applications, and 98.5% have a profile on at least one social network. As for the reasons why they go online, 4 out of 10 adolescents do so to avoid feeling lonely (UNICEF 2021).

While bullying victimisation stands at 33.6%, with victims making up 18.2% and aggressor-victims 15.4%, in the case of cyberbullying the rate is 22.5%. The difference in this case is that the aggressor-victims are 11.8% and the victims are 10.7%, which means that in the digital context the dynamics are different, as more than half of the children who are bullied are also bullying. Among the reasons mentioned as an explanation for these aggressions, the following causes are given: 'because of my physical appearance', 'because I am different', 'because they hold a grudge against me' or because 'it was a joke' (UNICEF 2021).

In relation to the perception of body image, 28.8% of boys and girls perceive their body as a little or too fat, a figure that is higher in those who belong to families with lower income levels. Regarding adolescents' satisfaction with their body image, 7.4% show a low level of satisfaction, again higher in families with fewer resources (Moreno et al. 2018).

Regarding psychosomatic physical discomfort, this is higher among girls (48.1%), than boys (30.6%). As in the case of body image, this discomfort is higher among adolescents whose families have lower economic background (42%) compared to those with higher economic background (37.6%). With regard to psychological distress, 53.3% of adolescents have suffered from it in the last six months. Again, the differences show a higher percentage among girls (60.1%), than boys (46.3%), which is constant in all age groups (Moreno et al. 2018).

The report '*The State of the World's Children 2021*'. On My Mind: Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health' (UNICEF 2021) highlights the existing suffering among the younger population. The document states that, according to data from the Changing Childhood Project, 11% of the Spanish population between 15 and 24 years

of age often feel depressed, or have little interest in daily activities of any kind (UNICEF 2021).

The social reconfiguration brought about by the pandemic, and the difficulties of the economic situation contribute to contexts of greater vulnerability for the younger population. In particular, among the LGBTIQ children, this has had repercussions on the experience of the free expression of their gender identities and sexualities. As a consequence of this scenario, LGBTIQ children and adolescents have faced a reduction in their social interactions at an age when they are fundamental. This, in turn, has led to an increase in discomfort, and a search for strategies to deal with stress and discomfort (Platero Méndez and López-Sáez 2020).

3. Findings

3.1. Children's needs to combat LGBTIQ-based violence

The needs expressed by the children in our focus groups can be summarised as being in five fundamental areas: 1) the lack of LGBTIQ role models among the adults who teach them; 2) the urgency of training for teachers and families on LGBTIQ issues; 3) the improvement of sex education in high schools; 4) the need to be heard; and 5) the need to create safe spaces in which children feel supported. Below, each of the five fundamental areas are explored.

Firstly, the participants emphasize that they do not count with enough -or any- adult LGBTIQ models. Most participant children explain that they count with some adult LGBTIQ role models in the social networks, who are relevant to them. Nevertheless, participant children insist on the importance of having LGBTIQ role models who are part of their everyday life. They stressed the need to have young adult role models as well as older adult role models that they can look up to. In this sense, they highlighted the importance of LGBTIQ visibility in educational settings and high schools. There is a consensus that the presence of LGBTIQ teachers is an advantage, as this provides support in their different experiences.

Participant children mention specific examples where the presence of LGBTIQ teachers was positive, either because it makes these identities visible, or because they are role models to rely on. Two of the participant children also explained that they have an "LGBTIQ club" in their high school, led by two LGBTIQ teachers. This is a space of trust for them, and they have built a close relationship with the leading adults in the club, with whom they can share any concerns they may have. Children argue that having LGBTIQ teachers around is beneficial because this legitimises their identities. Otherwise, their experiences could become infantilised.

The second recurring issue in the focus groups with children is the need for training for adults around them - including teachers and their own families. Students demand that adults around them have more knowledge about the experiences that affect them, as well as more openness to listening and more space to talk about LGBTIQ issues. In addition, emphasis is placed on the importance of not abusing the teacher's position of

power. In this line, they point out that this is the result of an adult-centred stance that limits itself by giving them orders without listening to them. Some of the participant children explained that their views on their own experience of gender and sexuality are often disregarded and treated as immature. In this sense, they report that parents and teachers often tell them that they are too young to know certain things about themselves or to understand some matters.

One of the most repeated examples provided in the focus groups is the lack of respect for the names and pronouns with which either they or their friends are comfortable with. Some examples of this from the focus groups are times when teachers address children using their deadname, or when teachers reprimand them for not responding to it. Moreover, children informed that the use of neutral language is ridiculed by some classmates and a cause for bullying, and even penalised by some teachers for not following the official linguistic regulations.

The situation with children's families was rather heterogeneous. Some participants regard their parents as support figures to whom they would turn if they had any problems. However, for other participant teenagers, the family is a source of stress similar to that of school. Some of the participants related a fear of being kicked out of home if their parents learnt about their sexual orientation, and a feeling of responsibility towards younger siblings. In one particular case, a participant feared that if his younger sister grew up to be LGBTIQ he should be around to protect her, so he does not want to risk being estranged from his family in the future. In this sense, children raise the need for parents to have more training in sex education, since children are exposed to situations in which they are questioned because of their gender identities or expressions.

The third area that participant children focused on is the need to improve sexual education offered in schools. Children consider that the sessions provided by schools, nurses and/or NGOs are not enough, and that they come late in many cases, when they are already sexually active. It is relevant to acknowledge that teachers often do not provide sex education, and instead LGBTIQ organizations or feminists groups or nurses from the primary health centres offer this training. Participant children emphasise the importance of not limiting these training sessions to sexual practices, but also using these spaces to share the different sexual orientations and gender identities that exist. In addition, they insist on the need to update these talks far away from a heterocentric perspective.

The fourth area that participant children highlighted is the need to be heard. All participant children explained that their opinions and experiences are often disregarded and that adults often do not ask or listen to their opinions, even if these are about themselves. Because of this, participant children express a feeling of distrust towards many adults, including their families and close teachers. This adult behaviour is present in general in all spheres of their lives, including everything that has to do with their gender and sexuality. Also, participant children expressed the need to be heard without being judged, and having the assurance that they will be loved and accompanied regardless of their SOGIGE.

These experiences are in line with the information gathered from many of the interviews to stakeholders. In this sense, some schools or children-oriented activities are trying to change this situation through implementing programs or activities that get teachers to

leave more space for students' feelings and experiences and that empowers children and teenagers to use their voice.

The fifth and final area is the need for safe spaces for children, in which they could talk not only about LGBTIQ issues, but also about other things that affect them in general. It is relevant that in most cases they do not consider teachers as support figures, hence they would not turn to them if they had any problems, with a few exceptions. In fact, according to the conducted survey, 40% of participants felt discriminated against at the school because of being an LGBTIQ person.

This is probably related to the fact that sometimes teachers do not take their students' identities, or sexualities seriously. It means that they are not considered to be helpful figures. In this line, when the young people were asked about which people helped and accompanied them during the pandemic lockdown and restrictions, teachers were scored 2.4 (1 = Not at all; 2 = A little; 3 =Somewhat; 4 = Quite; 5 = Totally). Also, the idea of a safe space for children is useful when they do not count with enough support at home or in class, and would mean having a space where they can be themselves.

3.2. Children's strategies of resistance against LGBTIQ-based violence

Throughout the various focus groups we have conducted, there seems to be a certain consensus on the resistance strategies used by children and teenagers. Depending on the type of aggression, they tend to reach out to different people. When it comes to insults and name calling, homophobic messages or comments from their environment, they tend to reach out to their friends, mainly LGBTIQ friends, as they feel more comfortable with them.

Those participant teenagers who have a good relationship with their parents, those who feel they have received support from their families, and that their parents do not judge them, also tend to turn to them to unburden themselves, or to talk when they have suffered any kind of violence. Some of the participants reported that they had turned to their parents for support when they were being bullied by classmates. In fact, two different participants explained that they reported their classmates to the police with the help of their parents, because they were receiving serious threats at school.

There is a fair consensus among participants in the focus groups that when they have suffered aggressions they do not feel supported by their schoolmates by most of their teachers, or school counsellors. Either because teachers did not act upon LGBTIQphobic aggressions when they see them, do not react when children report to them, or because when teachers try to help they do it in the wrong way, or in a way that is harmful to the children. In addition to talking about what is happening with other people, teenagers also react to aggressions and try to gain some control over the situation. Some of them choose to take LGBTIQphobic comments with humour, as a way to respond to their peers. Other children confront their aggressors verbally or physically, as they have perceived that when they confront them, they usually stop these aggressions towards them and therefore, the bullying they have received disappears. Therefore, the strategy of confrontation is used by some LGBTIQ children.

One salient example was explained by two participants of the focus group, a lesbian girl and a non-binary person who attend the same high school. They suffered harsh bullying because they had brought a rainbow flag to school. In their case, the school set a mediation between them and the aggressors, all young cisgender boys who portrayed hegemonic sexist behaviour and proffered insults. The mediation consisted of a talk by a teacher, who then asked everyone to say sorry to the rest, and then closed the matter. The following March 8 –International Women's Day– the two teenagers used the town's events as a field for resistance through publicly reporting the school's actions.

Although in Spain there are different protocols and resources to deal with bullying in schools, many participants report that they do not find anyone to talk to at school, so they don't often tell anyone about this type of aggression and these protocols aren't activated. These children tend to keep quiet, isolate themselves and even turn to the Internet rather than to people who are in their daily lives.

In fact, the Internet is one of the strategies of resistance that participant children use to both report attacks and elude reality, particularly social networks. They express using social networks for a great deal of their social interactions, including speaking to unknown teenagers and adults of similar interests. Also, many of their role models are Internet figures, including famous people and influencers. In fact, one of the participants explained that he learnt about the term LGBTIQ after listening to Lady Gaga use it in an interview. Also, one of the participants realised they were a trans person during the pandemic, when she had lots of free time, and ran into some videos on YouTube of people explaining their transitions and gender discomforts. In this sense, we consider that the Internet is one of the key strategies for children in relation to SOGIGE.

Participants also talked about using specific services and LGBTIQ feminist projects as spaces of resistance, which highlights the importance of having those services and projects in place. In one of the focus groups, all participants were aware of a youth office, run by the local administration, that offers free psychological assistance to teenagers with an LGBTIQ-friendly perspective. The participants of another focus group explained that their county had hired a team of feminist and LGBTIQ social workers that were carrying out a project for empowering young people, in which they participated. Both cases are services/projects funded by the local administrations, which stresses the importance of public services that support youth in general and LGBTIQ youth in particular.

3.3. Professionals' good practices in empowering LGBTIQ children to combat violence

There seems to be a consensus among the professionals interviewed that it is of key importance to have regional anti-discrimination legislation and services available for LGBTIQ children and their families. In Spain, each region has an anti-bullying protocol for schools, as well as protocols to facilitate social transition for trans students. Furthermore, some schools have their own protocols in place. These laws and protocols help children to be able to change their name and sex in children's services, to report homophobic bullying or lack of parental support and the need for social services to intervene. The professionals interviewed pointed out that these laws and protocols do

not prevent all discrimination from occurring, but for some participant professionals, protocols are still useful for reporting anti-LGBTIQ bullying when it does occur, providing guidelines on what is right and wrong, and legitimation for their work supporting LGBTIQ children. However, some other professionals pointed out that many protocols do not go far enough, and stated that protocols often lead to tagging the victim as a problem, treating them as an individual issue, instead of treating the matter as an issue concerning the class or school community.

Secondly, according to our interviewees, LGBTIQ NGOs play an important role in raising awareness in society and providing services for LGBTIQ children and their families. For example, these NGOs provide free training for secondary school students, with basic information on LGBTIQ issues, sexuality and gender, etc. Also, some NGOs offer that their professionals can go with the children to the places where they encounter discrimination, such as the health centre, and mediate with the professionals who are discriminating against them. In addition, in the case of families of trans children, NGOs offer activities and meetings for children and young people, as well as for their families, where they break isolation, learn coping strategies and learn about trans rights, etc.

This is particularly important in those Spanish regions that don't have public services directed to an LGBTIQ audience. In the case of Catalonia, there is a public service (called SAI) that assists LGBTIQ people -including children and teenagers- in whatever needs they may have -reporting an attack, discussing their options to transition, or getting guidance and advice. These services, which are spread throughout the whole of Catalonia, also organise awareness raising activities in some cases.

So, even within Spain, the region where children and teenagers live is key to the kind and quality of services that they may receive. While the professionals that know of these services and LGBTIQ NGOs believe they are really helpful, some of the professionals interviewed did not know of the existence of any of these good practices.

Some mainstream LGBTIQ-friendly children's NGOs have open, visible LGBTIQ professionals who are seen as role models. In these organisations, LGBTIQ professionals have created formal LGBTIQ groups, departments or similar bodies. They anticipate how to solve future problems, facilitating if children want to use their chosen names and pronouns while they are in activities, providing volunteers with specific training on LGBTIQ issues, as well as designing activities for children of different ages that include LGBTIQ issues which are also available on their websites. Some of these NGOs include "participatory democracy" for children, where children's voices are heard and children are involved in certain decisions, such as voting on one of the two possible locations for the summer camp, for example. These NGOs organise activities on certain days, such as Lesbian Visibility Day, or Pride Day. They take part in the LGBTIQ Pride March wearing rainbow neckers, and they also go to international meetings to talk about LGBTIQ issues, amongst many other activities.

Thirdly, some good practices related to schools are the 'Rainbow Meeting Points' or 'Purple' in the school playground, a safe space during school recess which is when violence often arises. In addition, teachers talked about other LGBTIQ school activities, such as raising rainbow flags for Pride, organising round tables, exhibitions, and having children talk about their experience in small conferences. Other teachers use tutoring time, one hour a week, to talk about discrimination and all kinds of issues that interest pupils, including LGBTIQ issues. In one high school in Catalonia, that two focus group

participants attend, there is also an LGBTIQ club. The club is led by a lesbian teacher and a gay teacher, and everybody can take part in it regardless of their sexual orientation. In this group they organise visibility activities and, most importantly, it works as a safe, trusted space for teenagers. Similarly, many high schools have a Gender Commission, that in some cases include LGBTIQ issues. Some teachers have tried to open these commissions to students, but school directors have not yet approved this initiative.

Teachers in some high-schools are also introducing specific LGBTIQ projects within their subjects, addressing key concepts; or they openly discuss LGBTIQ issues within their classes as part of the curriculum, such as in ethical values or philosophy classes, and mainstreaming LGBTIQ and gender issues in their lectures. One particular example of mainstreaming LGBTIQ issues in their lectures was explained by a social sciences teacher that we interviewed. He was explaining to his students how to do a genealogical tree. He had observed that one of the students was doubtful about their own gender. So, during the explanation of the genealogical tree, he said that he was adding another symbol, a triangle, for non-binary people, that is, people who don't identify as either a man (square) or a woman (circle), and so making a teaching opportunity on LGBTIQ issues and opening a conversation in the midst of a regular class.

In some cases, when teachers encounter LGBTIQ children with specific needs, they turn to other professionals outside schools. As some teachers interviewed are LGBTIQ, they stated that they can become role models for children. Also, during the pandemic, teachers who created small digital groups for their classes found this strategy particularly useful to address LGBTIQ issues among their students. Also, there is an organisation formed by LGBTIQ teachers, which can be considered an example of good practice against discrimination.

Here, we'd like to stress two examples of good practices in one particular school in Catalonia, located in a small town in a rural, farming area. This is the only primary school in the whole town, since it's a very small one, so whatever happens in the school has a strong influence on the town, and vice versa. One of the boys at the school received homophobic bullying and ended up changing schools, which meant attending school in another town. But this meant a disconnection of the boy from his own town, and it also meant that the bullying went on in town, even after he had left the school. Because of this, the school is currently working on reparation, and the boy is attending his old school for specific activities that are meant to repair the relationship between him and the rest of the class. This school also teaches coeducation as a subject 1.5 hours a week for all students aged 8 to 12, which constitutes a very successful example of a good practice.

Professionals in children's services mentioned that it was important to provide training for their staff on LGBTIQ issues, as well as training for other professionals, such as the police (who have a unit for LGBTIQ discrimination) or psychologists, among others. In fact, we interviewed a scouting leader who explained that all scout group leaders in his region receive training on LGBTIQ issues in their basic training.

Finally, during the pandemic, some LGBTIQ services offered online accessibility (through WhatsApp and video calls), which was a great solution that helped them to be in contact with children in vulnerable situations. These online services can be considered good practice, and not just for the duration of the pandemic.

In the area of health, we identified fewer examples of good practices. We need to highlight specific services for trans health, present in only a few regions. An interviewee from one of these services stated that they accompany both children and their parents, even in the cases where children are too young to receive gender affirmation treatments, where they just hold conversations.

3.4. Professionals' (training) needs to combat LGBTIQ violence against children

Often, the professionals interviewed perceive their own intervention as limited, due to a lack of specific training on LGBTIQ issues. However, there are professionals who do not see the need to incorporate a specific LGBTIQ professional perspective, thinking that they can support and guide children and teenagers regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Such statements indicate the need to incorporate a high level of monitoring of explicit and implicit attitudes (especially among heterosexual professionals), given that they are not considering lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans idiosyncrasies and their relevance can be a good indicator of LGBTIQ-phobia. When differences associated with sexual orientation/gender identity are ignored, perspectives are adopted that relegate them to incomplete and insufficient readings.

On the other hand, most of the professionals interviewed recognised the existing lack of specific training, with some even considering the lack of personal self-reflection as elements of malpractice. Despite these shortcomings, they tend not to assume their own responsibility in this respect and place this responsibility on the institution or administration where they work, which does not provide adequate training in this respect.

Furthermore, those professionals who have specific LGBTIQ training find it difficult to offer support from an intersectional perspective that can understand the complexity of the situation they are facing. We can see this particularly in the case of migrant and racialised youth, or those in the foster system.

On the other hand, some of the interviewees indicate that despite their training, another limitation is how the programmes in which they work are designed from this heteronormative perspective. They find themselves without materials or guidelines on how to support LGBTIQ people, and they have to create them or demand a change of perspective that is not always successful.

In addition to this, some trained professionals find that their colleagues or superiors contradict or question their training in this area, due to their conservative ideological biases, or lack of keeping up to date in professional and legal matters. In this sense, the lack of allied colleagues is an extra handicap, which not only influences the people they are trying to support, but also the LGBTIQ professional who is exposed to methodological or epistemological violence.

Because of this, it is our recommendation to devise training materials based on the following main needs: 1) Basic training, 2) Existing resources, 3) Deconstructing cisheteronormativity, 4) Guidance and Practical skills.

The first need, basic training, should be focused on terminology. Many professionals lack knowledge on specific terminology. Even while conducting interviews for this project, when asked about demographic data, some participants would mix up "gender identity" with "sexual orientation". Basic training should also include an explanation of how gender is a social construct, how gender norms affect children in their everyday lives, and how children learn to reproduce gender roles and expectations.

The second need, existing resources, should cover those already existing resources that professionals have at hand. We believe there are several resources available for all professionals who work with children in Spain, and from the interviews we held, we can see that many professionals either don't know that these exist, or else they are not using them. In relation to existing resources, some professionals that are aware of them point to their variability. There are no institutional resource guides, and in some Spanish regions many of these resources and services are not stable and depend on political decisions.

The third need is related to deconstructing cisheteronormativity. Some interviewees point out that everybody joins in during visibility days -like Pride events-, but that nothing else is done during the rest of the year. Because of this, we believe there is a need to teach how to reflect upon our own cisheteronormativities, as well as how our institution upholds cisheteronormativity. From this it is clear that there is a need to question the base upon which LGBTIQ-phobia lies.

The fourth need is related to practical skills that can help professionals react to certain situations. Some interviewees explained that they and their co-workers don't always know how to act when they witness an act of LGBTIQ-phobia, either among children they oversee, or by one of their co-workers. In this sense, professionals need practical skills to help them in everyday situations. Additionally, these skills should include how to properly guide LGBTIQ children and teenagers who are suffering because of LGBTIQ matters.

Also, professionals often have doubts about what to do with families, as they often focus their intervention solely on the child and do not find the possibility of working with families that may have an impact on the increase of risk factors for the child. This should also be addressed in this dimension of professional training.

3.5. Exemplary quotes from interviews with professionals

Quotes from interviews with professionals:

Children's needs:

- LGBTIQ people and their families need support spaces for their social trajectories. Why do we only care about the medical part of the transition, and not care about the social part? (INT1, Gay Cis Male, Spain, 42 years old).

Good Practices:

- In class, I try to offer the maximum amount of possible representations of families and realities. (INT26, 42 years old, polysexual transgender high school teacher).

Professionals' (training) needs

- What I would do is train the staff, not only about gender equality, but on the social construction of gender, and this would go so far. (INT28, 37 years old, non-binary and gay social educator).

Quotes from focus groups with children:

Children's needs:

- I just ask for more representation, that occasionally we just say: 'oh, do you know that trans people exist?' (FG2_L., Trans Boy, sexual orientation not defined, Spain, 14-year-old).

Children's strategies of resistance

- In third grade, during Halloween, in the first year I was out at school as a trans person, some people started using my deadname. And I hit one of them. And since then, no one has ever messed with me (FG1_O., Trans Girl, sexual orientation not defined, Spain, 14-year-old).

4. Overall evaluation: tendencies and absences re: empowering LGBTIQ children to combat violence in Spain

4.1. SWOT re: combating violence against LGBTIQ children in Spain

Strengths

- There are laws, regulations, and resources in place that are useful for LGBTIQ children.

- Some LGBTIQ professionals are already working in the field of children and teenagers.

- There is a specific trans and LGBTIQ visibility for children.

- There are teachers that are perceived as support figures because of their visibility within the LGBTIQ community.

- Some professionals are trained and sensitised on the matter.

- Some regions have specific services for trans people, including children and teenagers, as part of the public health system.

Weaknesses

- A significant part of professionals does not know the laws, regulations, and resources in place, including those regarding children.

- Instability of social intervention programs with LGBTIQ children.

- Geographical differences in the implementation of rights for LGBTIQ children, including cross-country and rural vs urban.

- Professionals don't often listen to children and teenagers.

- Transgender and non-binary children and teenagers have a worse situation than other LGBTIQ children and teenagers.

- Intersex issues do not show up as often as other LGBTIQ issues.

- Sex education comes late, is not often based on children's experiences, and is highly cisheterocentred.

- Lack of safe spaces for children in general and LGBTIQ children in particular.

- A significant number of professionals don't want to put extra effort in getting trained.

Opportunities

- There's high global visibility of LGBTIQ issues, including children.

- Spaces and proposals to listen to LGBTIQ children are growing.

- Adult-centred dynamics are starting to be questioned.

- EU policies to fight against LGBTIQ violence, including against children.

- Teenagers are making diversity more visible.

- The Internet reaches most teenagers, sharing with them first hand experiences, terminology, and role models.

- Social networks help grow the social networks of children that receive bullying at school.

Threats

- Conservative sectors of society, far right, and anti-trans feminism.

- Some families and parents' associations are against training and making LGBTIQ issues visible in schools.

- Many schools are partly private and religious, and these reject LGBTIQ programs in their schools.

- Current climate of confrontation and resistance towards LGBTIQ children, particularly towards trans and non-binary ones.

- Lack of social culture on respecting children's rights and LGBTIQ childhoods.

- Adultcentrism of the professionals who work with children and their families.

- Not listening to children and their needs.

- Some services for LGBTIQ people might get defunded in the case of an economic crisis.

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