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# A Collective Case Study in Spain about the LGBTI Community in Sexuality Education

Alejandro Granero-Andújar<sup>1</sup> & Celia Moreno-Morilla<sup>2</sup>

1) University of Almería, Spain

2) University of Sevilla, Spain

# **Abstract**

This study aims to gain in-depth knowledge of the presence of the LGBTI community in sexuality education, and how it is being addressed. To this end, Qualitative research was carried out, using the collective case study as a research strategy within the framework of sexuality education activities carried out in two secondary schools in the province of Almería (Andalusia, Spain). The procedures used in the data collection process were based on non-participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and an analysis of documentary sources. The results show a strong presence of exclusionary views, transmission of discriminatory conceptions, and silencing. They also reveal the LGBTI community is addressed in a superficial manner. Sexuality education is thus not regarded as a space to address non-hegemonic identities and corporealities, nor are those realities considered part of the diverse field of sexuality. This conception contributes to the reproduction and legitimisation of a stigmatised view, as non-hegemonic identities and corporealities are perceived as abnormal, uncommon, exceptional, and taboo.

# **Keywords**

Corporealities, sexuality education, collective case study, secondary school, LGBTI youth

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**Corresponding author(s):** Alejandro Granero

Contact address: aga848@ual.es





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# Un Estudio de Caso Colectivo en España sobre el Colectivo LGTBI en Educación Afectivo-Sexual

Alejandro Granero-Andújar<sup>1</sup> y Celia Moreno-Morilla<sup>2</sup>

- 1) Universidad de Almería, España
- 2) Universidad de Sevilla, España

#### Resumen

Este estudio pretende conocer en profundidad la presencia y el tratamiento del colectivo LGTBI en las prácticas de educación afectivo-sexual. Para ello, se ha llevado a cabo una investigación cualitativa, utilizando el estudio de caso colectivo como estrategia de investigación en el marco de las actividades de educación afectivo-sexual realizadas en dos centros de Educación Secundaria de la provincia de Almería (Andalucía, España). Los procedimientos utilizados en el proceso de recogida de datos se han basado en la observación no participativa, entrevistas semiestructuradas y análisis de fuentes documentales. Los resultados muestran una fuerte presencia de concepciones excluyentes, transmisión de valores discriminatorios, silenciamiento y un trato superficial al colectivo LGTBI. De esta forma, la educación sexual no es concebida como un espacio para abordar identidades y corporalidades no hegemónicas, ni estas realidades son consideradas como formas que constituyen también el campo diverso de la sexualidad. Esta concepción contribuye a la reproducción y legitimación de una mirada estigmatizada en la que las identidades y corporalidades no hegemónicas son percibidas como anormales, puntuales, excepcionales y tabú.

#### Palabras clave

Corporalidades, educación afectivo-sexual, estudio de caso colectivo, educación secundaria, juventud LGTBI

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Correspondencia Autores(s): Alejandro Granero

Dirección de contacto: aga848@ual.es

his study shows the reflections and results of the research work the authors of this paper have been conducting for the past six years with the aim of acquiring knowledge and understanding of the possible reproduction of discriminations, invisibilisation, stigmatisation, and violence towards non-heterosexual (gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.), transgender and intersexual people. Our research also aims to find out if actions are being carried out towards their inclusion in the school curriculum and in society in the field of sexuality education.

This study was conducted within the framework of the *Forma Joven* programme. This programme was chosen because it is the only institutionalised space within the context of formal education in Andalusia where sexuality education is being addressed beyond individual, isolated and voluntary efforts of teachers. It was established by the Ministries of Health, Education, Equality, and Social Policies, and Governance of the Regional Government of Andalusia during academic year 2001-2002. In practice, the *Forma Joven* programme is developed through workshops, and it follows four lines of action:

- 1. Healthy lifestyle: aimed at preventing addictive habits, promoting healthy nutrition and physical activity
- 2. Sexuality and egalitarian relationships: according to the website of the programme, it seeks to address content relevant to our object of study (i.e., heterosexuality, homosexuality, the LGBTI community, and respect for differences). This specific area is of great interest to our study.
- 3. Mental health: psychological well-being and balanced mental health
- 4. Living together: meant to prevent gender violence and peer violence

A review of the literature revealed the lack of scientific studies on the LGBTI community within the field of sexuality education. Research addressing experiences related to non-heterosexuality and/or transgender identities within sexuality education is scarce at the international level, and no research work has been found on intersexuality in sexuality education.

Scientific-academic contributions worldwide point out that LGBTI people's accounts of sexuality education show that this educational field is mostly articulated from a heteronormative prism, ignoring those forms of sexuality that do not conform to socially dominant parameters. This makes LGBTI people feel invisible, sexually unprepared, and ashamed (Currin et al., 2017; Hobaica & Kwon, 2017; Jones et al., 2016; Sweetnam et al., 2013).

In the Spanish context, current empirical studies on the LGBTI community in secondary education are also limited. A systematic review of the main scientific databases yields only three studies, which demonstrate that harmful stereotypes, homophobic attitudes, and limited conceptions based on heterosexuality are still entrenched both in teachers and in the contents worked on in secondary education (Díaz de Greñu & Anguita, 2017). Those studies also reveal that transgender identities are completely excluded from the contents addressed in sexuality education (Granero, 2021). Although secondary education is a context of greater visibility for diversity compared to previous educational stages, social stigmas and aggressions towards those who belong to the LGBTI community continue to persist (Contreras-Salinas & Ramírez-

Pavelic, 2016). It is observed that exclusion and discrimination exist in different areas of secondary education, and especially in sexuality education.

It is within this frame of reference that the present paper becomes the first study on sexuality education that explicitly analyses the existing discrimination in the social sphere that affects the LGBTI community in sexuality education. It enables us to find out how discrimination takes place in educational contexts and which consequences it may have in student ideology.

#### **Literature Review**

There are certain implicit socio-cultural rules regarding sexuality every person should abide by from the perspective of *biological determinism* (Suárez, 2005). These rules constitute what Warner (1991) defined as a *heteronormative system*. Heteronormativity dictates that every person should be classified into a single binary sex category, which is referred to as *monosexuality* (Platero, 2014). Starting from this first classification, each person belongs to one of the two binary gender categories (man or woman), *gender binarism* (Platero, 2014), and, as a result, adjusts to pre-established behaviour and appearance models, *gender expression*. (Pichardo et al., 2015). Likewise, the people in each of these categories should feel attracted to the opposite (binary) gender, *compulsory heterosexuality* (Fonseca and Quintero, 2009).

Any person or form of sexuality that deviates from these patterns is socially perceived as immoral, defective and illicit (García López, 2015). Other forms of sexuality are generally unknown, looked down on, and made invisible for not conforming to the dominant canons, and for destabilising the hegemonic categorisation system (García López, 2015; Moreno and Puche, 2013; Preciado, 2003). This is the case of intersexuality, transgender identities, and non-heterosexuality.

This is reflected in the Report on the Evolution of Hate Crimes in Spain (Muniesa et al., 2023). The report shows that 459 hate incidents towards the LGBT community were recorded in Spain in 2022. Sexual orientation and gender identity were the second factor with the most incidents after racism and xenophobia.

The concept of *intersexuality* refers to people who are not considered within the binary sex categories of male and female<sup>1</sup> because of their physiological characteristics. Intersexual people thus break with the linearity of the requirements determined for such a categorisation model based on biological criteria (García & Gregori, 2018). This normative linearity is defined in the case of the *male sex* category, including individuals possessing testicles and a penis as main genital organs, XY chromosomes, and a hormonal prevalence of androgens. In the case of the *female sex* category, the main genital organs are the ovaries and the uterus, XX chromosomes and a hormonal prevalence of oestrogens.

The relationship between (biological) sex categories and gender leads to two classifications considered useful to see to those gender forms that do not correspond to the one assigned on biological grounds. On the one hand, the term *cisgender identities* is used when a person's gender coincides with the one given at birth under normative biological criteria. On the other hand, *transgender identities* are those that refer to people whose felt gender does not coincide with the one assigned at birth on the basis of such physical criteria (Aguirre-Sánchez-Beato, 2018). Finally, the term *non-heterosexuality* refers to affective-sexual orientations whose

affective-sexual desires are directed towards people of the same gender. The use of this term, instead of *homosexuality*, is not casual but causal. Its use is meant to broaden the single and generalised conception of homosexuality as the expression of affective-sexual desire between people of the same gender and, consequently, to avoid the exclusion of affective-sexual orientations in which intra-gender relationships can develop, as in the case of bisexuality (as the affective and/or sexual attraction towards people of the two binary genders).

According to research conducted by Alonso and Zurbriggen (2014) and McNeill (2013), it can be said that schools reproduce hegemonic models of sexuality through three mechanisms: 1) by transmitting discourses within everyday school life about what is right or wrong, licit or illicit, normal or abnormal, healthy or unhealthy, while educational and academic authorities approve of those discourses without questioning them; 2) by silencing those ways of living, thinking, being, and desiring that are considered a minority, or different from what is established in the school curriculum; 3) by perpetuating the relationship between one body, one gender, and one normative sexuality in the contents addressed. All three mechanisms are being used while educational and academic authorities approve of them without raising any objections.

According to McNeill (2013), "within schools, sexuality education is perhaps one of the most explicit sites of the regulation of gender and sexuality" (p. 828). UNESCO (2021) pointed out the little attention, or lack of attention, numerous countries pay to the LGBTI community in their educational systems. In some countries, measures that further exclude LGBTI people are being adopted.

Several studies (Elia & Eliason, 2010; Wilson & Wiley, 2009) show that sexuality education has always been characterised by a heteronormative ideology, assuming and prioritising heterosexuality, marginalising non-heterosexuality issues, and reflecting intolerant behaviour towards sexual minorities.

UNESCO (2018) defined sexuality education as follows:

Process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to: realize their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives (p. 16).

It is therefore crucial to address non-heterosexuality, transgender identities, and intersexuality in depth from the perspective of sexuality education.

However, the prevailing sexuality education model could be labelled, in the words of Hobaica and Kwon (2017), as *heteronormative sex education*, implying the invisibility and neglect of the LGBTI community in the contents and discourses of sexuality education.

For their part, Jones and Hillier (2012) acknowledged the presence of binarism in discourses within sexuality education taught in some Australian schools. Yet, LGBTI identities and corporealities were excluded from the content taught.

In the light of the concepts outlined in the literature review, the following research objectives were established:

- 1. To study the extent to which the LGBTI community is represented in sexuality education
- 2. To identify and analyse in which ways LGBTI people are excluded or subjected to discriminatory attitudes within the context of sexuality education

# Methodology

This research is framed within the qualitative research paradigm. It aims to understand the social world from the study of specific contexts by means of immersion, interaction, understanding, and interpretation in the field and with the people involved in it (Flick, 2014; Taylor, Bodgan & DeVault, 2016).

In order to answer the objectives stated above, an ethnographic approach was adopted. Ethnography involves the collection of data on aspects of a specific social community (Flewitt, 2011). These data were obtained from a wide variety of information sources (e.g., interviews, videos, teaching materials, etc.) (Angrosino, 2012) that were collected by the different actors involved. The use of the ethnographic approach involved framing, conceptualising, interpreting, writing, and reporting on the basis of an in-depth and extensive study.

The methodological design involved a collective case study. According to Stake (2006), the collective case study, or multiple case study, is the in-depth and detailed study of a set of cases (parts or members of a group that includes them) with the aim of understanding them, both individually in their specificity, and collectively, together with the other cases that make up what the author calls the "quintain."

The cases under study are two secondary schools (*Institutos de Educación Secundaria*, or *IES* in Spanish): *IES Pedregal* and *IES El Saliente*. However, the units of analysis in both cases consist of the participants in the research.

### **Participants**

The cases participating in this research meet three main selection criteria: school ownership, the level of commitment to the programme analysed, and having wide experience with regard to carrying out sexual education activities within the *Forma Joven* Programme (one of the schools started using it when it was first set up, and the other one included it a few years after the programme was launched).

It should be noted that both secondary schools are state-owned and are ground-breaking when it comes to holding workshops on sexuality education. The final sample consisted of a total of 136 participants: 117 students (n=83 *IES Pedregal*; n=34 *IES El Saliente*), 11 tutor teachers (n=6 *IES Pedregal*; n=5 *IES El Saliente*), 3 healthcare professionals (n=1 *IES Pedregal*; n=2 *IES El Saliente*), 3 coordinators (n=2 *IES Pedregal*; n=1 *IES El Saliente*), and 2 headteachers (n=1 *IES Pedregal*; n=1 *IES El Saliente*).

Case 1 "IES Pedregal" provides services to students from families whose socio-cultural level is classified as medium-low. The families have usually completed compulsory secondary education, and to a lesser extent tertiary non-university education. Most family members have a job, although they do not consider it stable. Regarding access to materials, most of have material and educational support at home (e.g., computers, tablets, Internet connection, study

space, etc.). *IES Pedregal* has been implementing the *Forma Joven Programme* since 2004. The delivery of the programme is organised by means of weekly one-hour workshops from December to May, addressing sexuality education with the different groups of second, third, and fourth-year students of compulsory secondary education, as well as vocational training students. These workshops are hosted by a nurse from a health centre in the neighbourhood. She has 5 years' experience in teaching the programme at this secondary school.

Case 2 "IES El Saliente" is located in the suburbs of Almería, and is referred to as an area with social transformation needs by the authorities. This means most of the students come from low socio-economic family backgrounds. In this case, the majority of the families have not completed compulsory studies and are unemployed. Their homes are characterised by being particularly socially and economically vulnerable. "IES El Saliente" has been implementing the Forma Joven Programme since it was founded. The programme is delivered to third and fourth-year compulsory secondary education students through one-hour workshops from February to April on a fortnightly basis. Sexuality education is the main topic addressed in these workshops, prevailing over other contents.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The procedures used in the data collection process were based on non-participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and an analysis of documentary sources. The use of different data gathering techniques allowed us to complement the information obtained with each technique so as to perceive affirmations or contradictions, as well as to increase the depth and diversity of the object of study in this research.

Non-participant observation was conducted by the researchers in 23 sexuality education workshops of the programme to gain knowledge and understanding directly from the workshops being studied (11 were carried out at IES Pedregal, and 12 at IES El Saliente). Individual interviews were also conducted with the directors of both secondary schools, the IES Pedregal healthcare professional, the Forma Joven coordinators of both schools, the IES Pedregal tutors, and a transgender student at IES Pedregal (she was interviewed separately at her own request, so as not to feel inhibited by her peers). The data gathering process was completed with group interviews, of which 22 were conducted with students from IES Pedregal (group of 2 to 5 people), 10 with students from IES El Saliente (groups of 2 to 5 people), 2 with tutors from *IES El Saliente* (groups of 2 to 3 people), and 1 with 2 healthcare professionals from IES El Saliente. The topics addressed in the interviews were chosen according to the nature of the participating groups. On the one hand, the students discussed the following central themes: contents developed in affective-sexual education, impressions of the sexuality education they received, potentialities and limitations found in this educational process, presence of non-heterosexual, transgender and intersexual identities in sexuality education and how they are addressed, as well as possible discrimination they may have perceived, amongst others. On the other hand, the following topics were discussed with the healthcare professionals: internal functioning of the programme in the centre (organisation and coordination, content selection, etc.), training received regarding the programme, available resources, contents worked on in sexuality education, knowledge of and possible prejudice against the LGBTI community, etc. In both cases, the development of the interviews was used to further understand and co-analyse the observations and interpretations derived from the documentary analysis.

Finally, with the aim of performing a detailed analysis of the materials used or distributed within the framework of the workshops, 14 documentary sources were analysed, based on the learning resources used during the workshops (see Table 1).

**Table 1**Documentary and Audio and Video Resources

IES Pedregal	IES El Saliente
Leaflet: "Sexuality". Handed out during the workshops held with second-year compulsory secondary education students	Video: "Styles of loving" from the Spanish TV programme <i>El Hormiguero</i> , used in the workshops held with third-year compulsory secondary education students
Leaflet: "Contraceptives" leaflet handed out during the workshops held with third-year compulsory secondary education and vocational training students	Video: "What is sexuality?" used in the workshops held with third-year compulsory secondary education students
Leaflet: "HIV" handed out during the workshops held with fourth-year compulsory secondary education students  Workshop slides: "Sexuality: myths and truths", used with second-year compulsory secondary education students	Workshop slides: "Concepts of Sexuality", used in the workshops held with third-year compulsory secondary education students  Workshop slides: "Let's play Do you dare?" used in the workshops held with third-year compulsory secondary education students
Video: "Your children are asking for it. Talk to them", used in the workshops held with third- year compulsory secondary education and vocational training students	Video: "How to put on a condom" used in the workshops held with third-year compulsory secondary education students
Workshop slides: "Sexually Transmitted Infections", used in the workshops held with fourth-year compulsory secondary education	Video "A communication problem", used in the workshops held with fourth-year compulsory secondary education students
students	Workshop slides: "Myths of romantic love", used in the workshops held with fourth-year compulsory secondary education students

Source. Elaborated by the authors.

# **Data Analysis**

Observations, (individual and group) interviews, and documentary sources were analysed using a qualitative comparative analysis (hereafter referred to as QCA). QCA was conceived as a case-based method for "comparing wholes as configurations of parts" (Ragin 1987, p. 84), this being the essence of the method. QCA allows comparing cases to identify the necessary and sufficient social conditions with the aim of achieving an optimal outcome. It is developed through a structured analytical procedure (Mello, 2021), which, in our research, was negotiated with the participants.

Although there is undoubtedly more to QCA, this concise definition captures the essence of what the method is about. It is a comparative method that considers cases as combinations of conditions. The emphasis on cases and their complexities also reflects the origins of QCA as a qualitative method. QCA compares cases to identify necessary and sufficient conditions for a

result. This is done through a structured analytical procedure and a software-based algorithm – all of which will gradually be introduced into this research.

The analysis process was sequenced in two stages. In the first stage, a content analysis was carried out. The category system set up for the data analysis allowed conducting a multi-stage thematic analysis (see Table 2). The researchers followed the guidelines developed by Glaser and Strauss (2017), and performed an analysis based on an approach of constant comparisons amongst researchers. In the first stage of the analysis, two researchers independently performed the first coding and categorisation, which was subsequently reviewed by two other researchers from the team to ensure the category system designed was applied properly. It is important to highlight that the category system used in the analysis was the result of a negotiation process between the researchers and the participants. In order to guarantee the quality of the study, different techniques were used to ensure veracity, such as investigator triangulation, that allowed discussing and contrasting perceptions, understanding, results, and interpretations during the analysis process; data triangulation, seeking coherence between the results obtained by comparing the information collected; methodological triangulation, by contrasting the information obtained from the different data collection techniques; and respondent validation, whereby the results obtained were presented and discussed with the participants with the aim of analysing their credibility and appropriateness to reality (Sandín, 2000).

**Table 2**Categories Used for Analysis

Central themes (CT)	Categories (C)	Subcategories (S)	
CT1-Non-heterosexuality	C1.1-Heterocentrism	C1.1.1- Relationships and desires reduced to men and women, C1.1.2- Men were linked to the action of penetrating and women to being penetrated, C1.1.3- Sexual relationships with people from the opposite sex	
	C1.2-Relationship between non-heterosexuality and STI		
	C1.3-Homophobia		
	C1.4-Monosexuality of desire	C1.4.1- Bisexuality as a undefined identity	
	C1.5-Heteronormativity		
CT2-	C2.1-Ciscentrism	C2.1.1- Being a man or	
Transgender community		woman is determined by biological attributes, C2.1.2 Ciscentric views of students not refuted, C2.1.3- Transgende identities not addressed	
	C2.2-Binarism (gender)		
CT3 - Intersexuality	C3.1-Binarism (sex)	S3.1.1- Superficial and limited manner of addressing intersexuality, S3.1.2-Limiting sexual options to binary ones S3.1.3- Pathologising	

Central themes (CT)	Categories (C)	Subcategories (S)	
		intersexuality,	S3.1.4-
		abnormal intersexuality	
	C3.2-Monosexuality (sex)	S3.2.1-Sexual	mono-
		categorisation,	S3.2.2-
		intersexuality as undefined	
	C.3.3- Misconceptions		

Source. Elaborated by the authors

In the second stage, the results of the thematic analysis were collated with the participants through various co-analysis sessions. The new information and interpretations provided were studied on the basis of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (2003), and multimodal critical discourse analysis (Kress & Van-Leeuwen, 2008; Machin & Mayr, 2012), where participants' perceptions and experiences are represented in the multimodal discourses through various paths of representation. This type of analysis aims to reach a shared interpretation (Campbell, 2018) on the basis of the preliminary results obtained through the thematic analysis, providing a more reflexive and constructive character.

This research work followed the internal regulations of the bioethics committee of the *Universidad de Almería*. Participation was voluntary, and followed the rules of informed consent, limiting the use of information to research purposes only, and guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.

#### Results

The results obtained, structured in accordance with the central themes, are presented below. The results regarding non-heterosexuality are shown first, followed by those on transgender identities and, finally, the ones on intersexuality.

### **Non-Heterosexuality**

The research results show how the work on non-heterosexuality at *IES Pedregal* was limited to the concept of "respecting differences", as well as a brief explanation about it during moments isolated from the rest of the contents covered (i.e., what homosexuality and bisexuality consist in). Thus, highly relevant dimensions were overlooked, and were instead addressed in relation to heterosexual relationships (e.g., love, sex, and affective relationships). This is in line with the students' conception:

- -Clara: I did not like the fact that we did not work as much on homosexuality.
- -Cristina: True. It should have been dealt with much more. (Interview with students, IES Pedregal).

Consequently, this fact might affect the way in which students establish their perception of heterosexuality as "normal", as opposed to homosexuality, which was considered as something unusual, or "abnormal".

If you have never been taught this in secondary school or primary school and you see it in the street, you think that it is something abnormal. It is better to be taught this and that you respect it (Javier, homosexual. Interview with students, IES Pedregal).

Likewise, non-heterosexual students argued the need to address non-heterosexual identities to reflect their realities, as well as the necessity to address specific needs and tackle homophobic behaviour:

They should worry more about identifying the problems that we have. I mean, if you're gay, you have certain problems, and if you're straight, then I don't know what problems you have, but I do know they're different. For example, when you realise that you are homosexual you have this feeling of uncertainty. You don't know what's happening to you, you know? (Carlos, homosexual. Interview with students, IES Pedregal)

I think it is necessary to work on non-heterosexual identities because children in particular are very homophobic. I speak from experience. (Beatriz, homosexual. Interview with students, IES Pedregal)

The only moment in which non-heterosexuality was addressed in an integrated manner was when dealing with the human papillomavirus, in line with the stigmatising and pathologising socio-cultural thinking traditionally assigned to relationships that do not correspond to the models of heterosexuality, whereby sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are linked to non-heterosexuality.

If it progresses over years, HPV can cause cervical cancer in women and penile and anal cancer in men. (Workshop slides "STIs", IES Pedregal)

In addition, heterocentrism also prevailed in the contents covered, reproducing a vision of desire that was limited to heterosexuality as the only option, since sexual and affective relationships and desires were implicitly reduced to the couple model consisting of a man and a woman.

Given that most of the fears associated with the first time fall on the girl, it is best to look for a posture in which she feels comfortable. Above all, it is best to let her control the situation, so that she can interrupt penetration whenever she desires. ... A good posture can be one in which the boy lies on his back and the girl sits on top of him. (Leaflet "Sexuality", IES Pedregal)

In terms of sexual practices, men were linked in an implicit way to the action of penetrating (but not being penetrated), whereas women were attributed the role of being penetrated by men.

In the case of men, the frenulum is not always torn during the first sexual relationship given its elasticity. (Healthcare worker. Observation in the workshop delivered to the group 2C, IES Pedregal)

Meanwhile, a heteronormative perspective was shown in assuming that the sexual relationships women have are with people of the opposite sex:

In the case of women, condoms are used to avoid pregnancy and, in the case of men, also to avoid STIs. (Healthcare worker. Observation in the workshop delivered to the group 2A, IES Pedregal)

The hymen is a thin, elastic membrane that may remain in some women after introducing a finger or a penis. (Workshop slides, IES Pedregal)

Similarly, a monosexist understanding of affective-sexual desire was shown in which bisexuality was considered an ambiguous identity, as it was explained in the following way: "when you feel attraction towards both sexes, it is not very well defined" (Leaflet "Sexuality", *IES Pedregal*). An understanding of bisexuality as an incomplete orientation that lies between the two dichotomic forms of desire (heterosexuality and homosexuality) was hence conveyed.

At *IES El Saliente*, homosexuality was covered more in-depth in the contents. The training sessions stood out for their interactive nature, considering students' contributions, or encouraging knowledge building through asking questions. The sessions were also characterised by their in-depth and globalised nature, which granted students a wide-ranging approach in different dimensions that went beyond the purely explanatory ones, in order to address different aspects related to equality among non-hegemonic affective-sexual orientations (i.e., rights, sexual pleasure, analysis of social normativity, normality of homosexuality, etc.). The work in this school also focused on challenging and addressing the homophobic manifestations that emerged among the students. These events were taken as an opportunity to develop skills, values and knowledge about the social conditioning factors that influence LGBTI-phobic attitudes. All this was addressed from a transcendental and reflective point of view, using educational methodologies and contents based on empathetic and critical work.

The doctor asks students whether they know what homosexuality and heterosexuality are. A student answers that homosexuality is with the same sex, while heterosexuality is what is normal. The healthcare workers indicate that homosexuality is also normal. Homosexuals like people from the same sex, but it is something normal too (Observation in the workshop delivered to group 3A, IES El Saliente).

When you grow up, your personality arises and you, like everybody else, decide how you want to dress and, perhaps, you discover that you are a girl and that you like girls, or vice versa (Doctor. Observation in the workshop delivered to group 3C, IES El Saliente).

This holistic approach to including non-heterosexuality into the contents addressed contributed to the students' perception of non-heterosexuality as something normalised and characteristic of the diversity that makes up our realities, implicitly referring to the egalitarian and non-monosexual approach that these workshops maintained:

- -Interviewer: And what did you work on in the workshops?
- -Hajar: They explained that two girls can make love, just like two men.
- -Bilar: They also said that there are women and men who like women and men. We also learnt that we should respect them.
- -Rebeca: Sure, we learnt that they are people just like everyone else, they are just attracted to people of the same gender. (Interview with students, IES El Saliente)

# **Transgender Identities**

Regarding the transgender community, it was observed that, at *IES Pedregal*, it was only addressed in a workshop with one participating group, and its delivery was not considered in the other groups. Addressing transgender identities was limited to the purely conceptual level, without talking about the transgender community from a comprehensive and in-depth perspective (i.e., sexual, affective, emotional, critical, and social dimensions), and it was focused on binary possibilities.

Sexual identity is about feeling like a man or feeling like a woman, it does not have to be linked to biological sex (Healthcare worker. Observation in the workshop delivered to group 2C, IES Pedregal).

We talk about a transgender woman when she undergoes surgery to be a woman and vice versa (Healthcare worker. Observation in the workshop delivered to group 2C, IES Pedregal).

Furthermore, a ciscentrist understanding of gender categories according to physiological characteristics was transmitted in this secondary school: being a man or a woman is determined at birth on the basis of certain biological attributes (i.e., chromosomes, genitals, etc.).

Sexual arousal: Boys: erection of the penis and rising of the testicles; Girls: lubrication, erection of the clitoris, increase in the size of outer and inner labia (Workshop slides, IES Pedregal).

The healthcare worker comments that when the penis enters the vaginal opening, there is a kind of membrane with an opening in the middle, and there are women whose membrane is very elastic and is not going to tear by penetration (Healthcare professional. Observation in the workshop delivered to group 2C, IES Pedregal).

For this reason, a transgender pupil from this school made the following reflection on the need for a greater focus on transgender identities:

I would like trans identities to be dealt with in the same way as other content. You can go to your doctor for advice on contraceptive methods and sexually transmitted diseases, but there is no possibility of being advised on transsexuality so easily (Leo, transgender student. Interview with students, IES Pedregal).

Transgender identities were not addressed at *IES El Saliente*. It was observed that biological characteristics were attributed to each of the gender categories, thus transmitting a ciscentric view that, in its turn, reduced gender possibilities to binary ones.

A foetus does not know if it will be boy or girl until a certain point where the clitoris stays in the case of girls, or stretches on and becomes a penis, in the case of boys (Doctor. Observation in the workshop delivered to group 3A, IES El Saliente).

After ejaculation, the man must withdraw his penis before losing his erection (Video "How to put on a condom", IES El Saliente).

Men and women are equal in rights but are physically different (Doctor. Observation in the workshop delivered to group 3A, IES El Saliente).

Likewise, in both secondary schools, the ciscentric views expressed by students were not refuted.

# **Intersexuality**

With regard to intersexuality, the research results show it is addressed in a superficial and limited manner at both secondary schools, as it was only considered in a specific moment of a workshop delivered at *IES Pedregal*. Meanwhile, at *IES El Saliente*, addressing intersexuality was reduced to one moment, and in response to a student's question about it (it was not planned). This approach was limited to its biological explanation, thus excluding other aspects of learning (such as values and attitudes), and other dimensions beyond its definition (i.e., affective, sexual, critical, or social aspects), while intersexuality was portrayed as chromosome abnormalities.

The healthcare worker explains what sexual identity is by saying that we are born with a biological sex and that some people do not have a very defined sex, these are intersexual people (Observation in the workshop delivered to group 2C, IES Pedregal).

[...] another student asks if it is possible to be born a woman with a penis and the doctor replies that it is, that people can be born with anomalies and she adds that, depending on the chromosomes, the person belongs to one or the other gender (Observation in the workshop delivered to the group 3B, IES El Saliente).

The data also reveal that discrimination with regard to intersexuality occurs in the contexts under study, by transmitting monosexist, binarist conceptions (i.e., establishing the two binary categories of sex as the only possible ones), and even erroneous beliefs about it.

The healthcare worker explains sexual categorisation: When we are born, we have one sex: male or female. However, there are some people for whom their sex is not very defined, and they have chromosomes which are a bit different, so we do not know very well if these people are men or women. Moreover, they do not have well-differentiated organs (Observation in the workshop delivered to group 2A, IES Pedregal).

When we are born, our sex is determined as female or male (Healthcare worker. Observation in the workshop delivered to group 2B, IES Pedregal).

Conceptions making intersexuality invisible were also found among the healthcare workers who held the workshops.

When you produce a foetus, you do not know if it is boy or girl, but if you took it out, it would always be a girl. The cells that will give rise to boys and girls are the same, but you say, «this is going to result in the ovary» (Interview with healthcare workers, IES El Saliente).

In the two cases under study, the binary sex categories were often given attention to in the different workshops, but without referring to intersexuality. Given this situation, students acquire a dualistic understanding of biological sex possibilities, thus excluding the ones that differ from those considered "normal" or "natural". It hence contributes to a lack of knowledge that gives rise to stigmatisation. This understanding corresponds to that of the students who were interviewed.

- -María: But that is like a mutation.
- -Yolanda: That's awful.
- -María: That is not normal.
- -Dolores: Of course, that is not normal.
- -Marga: It is not normal. (Interview with students, IES Pedregal)

The needs, interests, and concerns of students to address intersexuality within the space of affective-social education were not addressed in the workshops.

I want the thing about intersex to be explained to me. It has not been explained. (Amir. Interview with students, IES Pedregal).

From a holistic understanding at the macro-level, this absence of an in-depth, non-stigmatising approach to intersexuality may be due to a lack of scientific-academic knowledge, and to the reflection of social structure and normative conceptions of sexuality and bodies reproduced in social institutions such as schools (Granero & García, 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to promote the debate about the normativity that dominates the education sector, which would allow binarist and monosexist understandings and dogmas to be challenged.

Sure, because the few times you go there you say «we are going to work on things that at least I am comfortable with because I have the answer to any question». So, for me anything that has to do with the human body, and that is more focused on health, is much easier. (Doctor. Interview with healthcare workers, IES El Saliente).

Finally, it may be said that the LGBTI community was not conceived as a topic to be addressed from the perspective of the people involved in the coordination and implementation of the *Forma Joven Programme* at *IES Pedregal* (i.e., coordinators, headteachers, and healthcare professionals). Furthermore, the LGBTI community was not considered as a content or objective of the programme, although numerous exclusionary and discriminatory conceptions were reproduced in it. This fact may have prevented reflecting on the activities carried out with regard to the presence of affective-sexual diversity, and how it is addressed.

Meanwhile, at *IES El Saliente*, non-heterosexuality was considered by some of the people who were in charge of teaching the programme, whereas transgender identities and intersexuality were not. These perceptions focused on a public health perspective of sexuality related to prevention. According to the informants, this is because of the following four factors: 1) the medicalisation of sexuality; 2) the fact that the initial aims of the programme were focused on the prevention of STIs and unwanted pregnancies, which could be an additional challenge, making room for working on new social problems and conflicts; 3) the fact that the LGBTI community is considered a minority in the population, and therefore having less impact in the contents to be worked on with students; 4) the lack of knowledge of healthcare and educational staff, which is why it is necessary to address non-hegemonic forms of desire, identity, and corporeality in education. It would encourage a change in conceptions, beliefs, and practices, allowing a more inclusive approach to sexuality education, far from the existing one.

#### Discussion

In the light of the results, it cannot be denied that sexuality education is not conceived as a space to address non-hegemonic orientations, identities, and corporealities within the context of our study. Instead, in agreement with the results found by De Almeida (2015) and Granero (2021), sexuality education relies on a traditional approach to health that focuses on potential risks involved in sex, such as STIs and unwanted pregnancies. It is therefore essential to rethink what goals should be achieved in sexuality education, and how minority sexualities should be represented and addressed in this educational field. It is a pressing issue, given the considerable number of examples of exclusion and discrimination observed.

As shown in the results, the increased presence of exclusionary views, the current lack of knowledge, the transmission of discriminatory concepts, as well as silencing and superficially addressing the LGBTI community, except for homosexuality at *IES El Saliente*, are fundamental reasons for the need of in-depth work on non-heterosexuality, transgender identities, and intersexuality. As Rivers and Noret (2008), and Smith et al. (2008) point out, and as the LGBTI students participating in this study commented, such views and concepts may lead to discrimination of students who belong to this community. It also causes the development and reproduction of discriminatory and sexist, homophobic and transphobic attitudes among students (Granero, 2019). Sexuality education activities hence become useless, as the realities and needs of LGBTI people are not considered (Estes, 2016). According to the participating LGBTI students, there is an urgent need to address the feeling of exclusion, and those educational deficiencies that enhance the existing social discrimination.

Socio-cultural discriminations in the sexuality education activities analysed were also observed, something that has not explicitly been addressed in studies conducted so far. The results show how heterocentric and ciscentric attitudes, as well as sex and gender binary and monosexist concepts and misconceptions about the LGBTI community, were reproduced. This means sexuality education activities actually give rise to non-egalitarian concepts, and contribute to creating heteronormative curricula (Hobaica & Kwon, 2017).

Bearing in mind Sánchez's contribution (2009), ignoring non-normative ways of being, feeling, and living sexuality, as well as the existence of discriminatory conceptions in educational workshops, bring about and legitimise the "normalisation" and "naturalisation" of hegemonic orientations, identities and corporealities, hence letting them prevail as dominant sex-gender-affective identities in the *status quo*. Likewise, reproducing a perception of sexuality that is limited to normativity contributes to the classification, hierarchical organisation, and disciplining of desires, identities, and bodies. All this legitimises and produces in students the establishment of naturalised subjectivities in the exercise of exclusion, discrimination, and oppression towards the LGBTI community, thus contributing to social censorship.

The results also reveal the need to design action plans that foster work on the LGBTI community within the framework of formal education.

In this regard, UNESCO (2018) proposes a fundamental strategy to design and deliver comprehensive affective-sexual education based on scientific evidence, as well as international technical guidelines. Such actions should be oriented not only to educational institutions, but also to training the staff involved in providing sexuality education (i.e., educational and healthcare staff).

Education should focus its efforts on creating the conditions for the youngest generations to develop the necessary skills for a sustainable life. The processes of educational guidance in particular should take a comprehensive format that considers personal, work, and community dimensions. The skills to be pursued in young people should help individuals to make sense of their lived experiences in the dialectic interaction with their context (Arthur, 2017; Patton & McMahon, 2017). In a world where manifestations of sexuality, as well as the ways of experiencing, and expressing it, this may seem complex because of the emerging diversity that exists. However, sexuality education still cannot be addressed in a simplistic way. Education in general, and sexuality education in particular, should address two fundamental questions: "What kind of citizens do we want to educate?", and "Are we meeting the needs and concerns of the whole student body?" According to these questions, educational practices should be organised and developed to try and achieve the acquisition and construction of the necessary learning. Therefore, sexuality education will have to be provided from an all-inclusive, democratic, in-depth, and egalitarian education in order to educate "in, from, and for" the existing affective-sexual diversity. It should aim not to reproduce conceptions that counter the equal rights and opportunities of the LGBTI community.

The presence of the LGBTI community cannot exclusively be reduced to the discourse of tolerance, thereby perceiving non-hegemonic sexualities as "the other". Instead, it should be fully present in the curriculum in a cross-disciplinary manner. Comprehensive training should be provided to non-heterosexual, trans, and intersexual students in all the dimensions that make up the educational field of sexuality (i.e., sex, affectivity, love, relationships, and rights) (Platero, 2014). Paying attention to the content of the messages transmitted in the discourse becomes an essential requirement, in the sense that they become channels for transmitting values and views that shape student thinking. These values may convey exclusionary or, on the contrary, egalitarian views, and are often transmitted in a subtle and unconscious way through the implicit discourse that emerges from the opinions and values that have been internalised by the communicator (Granero, 2023). Hence, changing the dominant paradigms that are often

present in teachers and imperceptibly transmitted to students, is vital given its widespread presence in social normativity. This is what is metaphorically called "using rainbow-coloured glasses" to see the socially hidden reality. Sexuality education would hence cease to be a mechanism for reproducing exclusion and discrimination, and would become a space for the establishment of democratic values, based on respect for and appreciation of the existing social diversity. The aim is for those principles to be reflected in the recognition, acceptance, and inclusion of affective-sexual diversity in our society.

### **Limitations and Future Research Agenda**

The main limitation in this study was the difficulty encountered by the participants in assuming an active role in the co-analysis sessions, fundamental for the equitable nature of this research. Moreover, as the research process followed an open planning and ad-hoc design, negotiated with the co-researchers, it required a lot of time and dialogue. This created an additional difficulty at times. Some reluctance from Muslim students to participate in the interviews when discussing sexuality during the Ramadan period was also observed. Finally, a possible limitation of the methodological design should be noted, as the research was conducted at only two schools.

Our future research agenda is characterised by three main challenges. On the one hand, we aim to design integrated plans for affective-sexual education. We consider it is key to work in a coordinated and collaborative manner with authorities, families, young people, educators, associations, etc. in processes of co-design and co-evaluation of plans and interventions for affective-sexual education. On the other hand, we seek to expand the research to other socio-cultural levels to analyse in depth what happens in higher socio-economic and cultural levels. Finally, it is considered crucial to work on improving initial teacher training to promote a fairer and more inclusive education.

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#### **Notes**

1. Terms used by Coll-Planas (2010) to highlight the conceptual differentiation between the categories of sex and gender

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